

Church of the Transfiguration Parish History

In the mid 1950's several parishioners of All Saints Episcopal Church in Frederick, Maryland initiated conversations with the Diocese of Maryland concerning the establishment of a mission church closer to where they lived in the community of Braddock Heights, Md. By May of 1962, Bishop Noble C. Powell had agreed that the community of Braddock Heights should have its own place of worship. Land for just this purpose had been previously purchased by the Diocese in 1956.

Worship services in Braddock Heights began with twenty interested families, many of whom had been parishioners at All Saints Episcopal Church. The first church services were held in the recreational hall at Vindobona Nursing Home about a mile and a half from the present church site. A stated goal of the original founding members was that church life and worship be conducted in "an open and friendly style." This approach to all aspects of parish life voiced by the founding members remains very much a cornerstone of Transfiguration to the present.

The first vicar to serve the congregation was the Rev. Wade L. Hampton who served from 1962 to 1963. Reverend Hampton's ministry that first year was to get the congregation firmly established. An interesting portion of Rev. Hampton's legacy to Transfiguration is that his daughter, Barbara, and is still an active member of the congregation, having served on Vestry and as Senior Warden at various times through the years.



In the summer of 1963, the Reverend William Speer became the second vicar for the new congregation. Following Reverend Speer's arrival, ground was broken for the first church building with Bishop Powell officiating at the ground breaking service on September 8, 1963. By this time the congregation had chosen the name "Transfiguration" associating the location with the story of Jesus' transfiguration on a mountain top.

In October of 1963, just two and a half years after the first worship services were held in the recreation hall of the Vindobona Nursing Home, the first building of the new Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration was consecrated by Bishop Harry Lee Doll. In less than ten years a dream had become a reality from the purchase of land in 1956 to the consecration of the first building in 1964.

Transfiguration's first church building carried forward many aspects of local Episcopal history. The altar, stained glass windows and some pews came from Zion Episcopal Church in Urbana, Maryland which had been destroyed by fire. Additional pews came from a private Virginia estate chapel while other furnishings were given by various parishioners as memorial gifts.

Soon after moving into their first church building, the parishioners of Transfiguration had a Vicarage built next to their new church building. Many Vicars and Rectors have lived in the Rectory; at other times, the Rectory/Vicarage has been used as the church office and meeting area or rented out. In the winter of 2011 the original Rectory building was completely renovated. In June of 1967, the Reverend Stephen Rudacille became Transfiguration's third Vicar staying with the congregation for four years. He was followed by the Reverend Jonathan T. Ford.

Reverend Ford served the Transfiguration parish for eleven years. Because of the growth the Transfiguration parish had experienced during its first twenty years, planning for the expansion of the church facilities began under the leadership of Fr. Ford in 1980. In addition, and of great personal and historical significance for this relatively new congregation, during Reverend Ford's final four years of ministry this mission church took a momentous step of faith and became a Separate Congregation with full parish status— no longer receiving support from the Diocese of Maryland.

In July of 1984, Reverend Patrick A. Pierce became Transfiguration's fifth Vicar and in 1987 its first full time Rector helping the congregation to celebrate its twenty- fifth anniversary. In just 25 years, the Church of the Transfiguration had grown from the original mission of twenty families meeting in a wood fire heated hall with a part-time vicar to meeting as a separate congregation in worship space with a full time Rector.



After Reverend Pierce decided to leave Transfiguration in July of 1988, the Reverend Doris Mote became the church's Interim Rector in September of 1988. As Transfiguration's first full time Interim Rector, Reverend Mote assisted in the re-organization of the church's ministries in addition to guiding the congregation through the transition period between settled priests.

In November of 1990, the Reverend Julian Eiben accepted Transfiguration's call to become its second full time rector. Fr. Eiben's ministry was instrumental in assisting the congregation with maintaining a focus on increased church growth and the continued development of plans for new construction.

Expansion of the church facilities had been a frequent topic of discussion periodically since the 1980s. These discussions culminated in 1993 with the purchase of an adjacent plot of land destined to be site of a new church building and enlarged parking area. In addition to providing Transfiguration with the acreage necessary to expand, the newly acquired parcel came with a four unit apartment house known now as Transfiguration House. Transfiguration House is now a separately incorporated ministry providing lower cost housing for qualified tenants for a limited period of time.



With Reverend Eiben's departure in late 1999, the Vestry called Reverend Thomas Staup to act as the church's second Interim Rector. Reverend Staup would help lead Transfiguration into a new century, a new church building, and a new settled ministry during his four years as Interim Rector. He is well remembered for encouraging a healthy collaborative leadership style between clergy and lay leaders that is a hallmark of Transfiguration at all levels to this day.

Ground was broken under Reverend Staup's leadership for the new church building in the spring of 2003. In February of 2004, the Reverend Henry Sabetti accepted Transfiguration's call to be the third full-time rector. During the first year of Rev. Sabetti's ministry, the first worship services were held in the new church building on the Feast of the Transfiguration, August 4, 2004. A few weeks later, on

September 12, 2004, the new church building was dedicated by Bishop John Rabb. The former church building became known as Memorial Hall and is now used for various hospitality functions, assorted group and committee meetings, and ministries. Rev. Sabetti's strong sense of outreach and mission work helped establish permanent community relations in the surrounding area, and helped to forge a lasting spirit of outreach at COTT.



In 2012 Transfiguration called Rev. Gordon DeLaVars to serve the parish as rector. He served the community faithfully through the COVID-19 outbreak, instituting Zoom services. Fr Gordon strengths included a pastoral gift for one on one communication and "deep listening". He consistently provided thought provoking sermons that often include personal life experiences, replete with movie references. As a lifelong music lover and supporter of worship through music, he initiated an expansion of the music program at Transfiguration to include a Minister of Music, organist and choir mistress.

In 2016 the original church building was rededicated as Memorial Hall following a renovation to serve as a fellowship space with large open spaces and light cooking facilities. Memorial Hall is used regularly by parishioners and community alike, including local clubs, musical groups, and AA.

Notably, Rev. Gordon served past his retirement age to shepherd Transfiguration through the end of the COVID-19 event and was officially retired in January of 2023.

Following Fr. Gordon, Transfiguration was served by Interim Rev. Lesley Hay and is currently in the care of two members of retired clergy within the parish, Rev. Gilen Thompson-Uberuaga and Rev. Ellen Hurwitz and supply priests with support from the Diocese.

