

A few days ago, I was asked to serve as a lay liturgist at my church in Chicago. It's an interesting congregation. About half of the 80 or so members are African immigrants from different countries (Nigeria, Cameroon, and Kenya) while the other half are a mix of people reflecting the neighborhood where the church is located: African-Americans, white folks like Pam and myself, and a few Asians. The 3 or 4 kids (ages 6 to 10) who attend worship during these covid days are usually from the families of African members.

After saying yes to being lay liturgist, I was then totally surprised to learn — in the absence of our pastor — that this would include a new task to lighten the load on the guest preacher. I was requested to prepare and deliver the “children’s lesson” during the worship service. “It’s Transfiguration Sunday,” I was told, “so anything you can say about that would be good.”

Yikes! Well, I gave it some thought and my script is below. It involves a photo, prints of which I gave to all of the children.

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CHILDREN’S LESSON, Transfiguration Sunday, February 27, 2022, by Terry Bergdall

In the United States, we had a holiday last week called “President’s Day.” It’s a time when we celebrate past Presidents who especially remind us of qualities that make us proud to be Americans.

But today, we also are global citizens, not just Americans, and this causes us to think of other great Presidents. Here is a picture of one. *(Give each child a photo of the young boy standing in front of a poster of Nelson Mandela; the boy is copying Mandela’s famous “fist in the air” salute.)*



This photo shows a young boy who is following the example of Nelson Mandela, the first black President of South Africa.

Mandela spent 27 years in jail because of the work he did to make South Africa a better place to live for everyone, not just a few. That was very hard punishment, but when he was released from prison, he continued to do that same work. Once again, it was for EVERYONE. That’s why Mandela is now a hero for many people all around the world.

Heroes are important because they are examples of doing what we think is most important in life even if it is difficult. This has always been true.

When Jesus finished his work more than 2,000 years ago, people began to say he was like other heroes that were very important to them during those times, Moses and Elijah. Then, as people talked and repeated the stories about Jesus more and more, Jesus himself became a new hero. And he still continues to be one for us today.

Heroes are important because they show us the possibility of being the kind of people we **WANT** to be.

When you go home today, you might put this photo at a place in your room to remind you about the importance of carefully choosing your own heroes. Amen.