

GO. TRAVEL LIGHT. DO THE WILL OF THE FATHER!

St. Matthew's Anglican Church

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In the Old Testament and the New Testament, God gives imperatives to his faithful people. There are clear commands that they discern, deep within in their hearts.

GO

In one of the earliest stories of the Bible, Abraham is called to leave all that is familiar. "Go from your country and your kindred...to a land I will show you"! Genesis 12:1-4

Moses also receives a command from the Lord to go. "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, Thus says the Lord..'" Exodus 9:1.

Jeremiah also hears the same imperative. "The word of the Lord came to me saying, 'Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem". Jeremiah 2:2 So many of the prophets experienced that same compulsion to go in obedience to the voice of the Lord.

We hear the same word on the lips of Jesus as he sends forth his disciples, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...." Matthew 28:19

As each of the commands in the Old Testament, came with a promise, Jesus says to them, " I am with you always, to the end of the age".

And members of the early church also heard a "Go" after the persecution of Stephen. Scripture says of them, " now those who were scattered went about preaching the word". (Acts 8:4)

Well how does the direction to "Go" that we have heard, square with our commitment to Christian unity? We place a high value on unity. We place a high priority on the words of Jesus himself in John 17 "that they all may be one!"

The unity that Jesus calls us to is a unity with the Father. That is the source and bedrock of all Christian unity. Christian Communion must be based on harmony with the will of the Father. This is so much more than institutional uniformity. Unity with the Father must be found through the Holy Spirit, and in humble reverence for the Holy Scriptures.

Anglicans believe deeply in unity. But it is not unity at all costs. We are a Reformation

church. Anglicans were birthed because they placed unity with the Father, and reverence for Scripture, ahead of institutional uniformity, however desirable that might be!

Just as the first reformation had to await the coming of the printing press, so the present reformation had to await the internet revolution and globalization. In 1998, the bishops of our communion determined that North America no longer had a divine right to implement changes in teaching that would affect all. The global Anglican family was coming of age, and North America no longer held the right to be the centre of the universe!

The vigorous and growing Churches of Africa, Asia, and the global South were now dominant, and they insisted on their voice in determining the future course of Anglicanism. Many of them achieved their vigour through roots in the evangelical, charismatic or Anglo-catholic revivals. Many had undergone persecution. They knew that they needed a faith worth dying for! The ever changing values and human wisdom of North American Christians would be inherently defective for the adversaries they were facing abroad.

So discerning the "Go" actually promotes Christian unity. It keeps us united and in full-communion with the vast majority of Anglican around the world! We have a new found solidarity with evangelicals, Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Reformed, Pentecostals and Adventists, many of whom have come to our aid and assistance. We are in harmony with all Churches that honour our two thousand year old beliefs about: the person and work of Christ, the value of human life, family life and sexual morality, lifestyle requirements for ordination, and the centrality of Scripture in shaping our beliefs and our future. A new Province has come together across North America that rivals the Sunday attendance of the Anglican Church of Canada itself. In solidarity with Christians around the world, and in faithful commitment to the precepts 2 millenia of faithful witnesses, we are on the doorstep of embracing a new and hopeful future.

But most importantly, in hearing the "Go", we seek deep communion with the Father, with his Will and with his Word!

The Word of God is irrepressible! China is a good example. After decades of persecution, it is estimated that there are 60-80 million Christians in China!

I play that coin operated game with my grandchildren where you have a mallet and you bong heads that pop up. The more you suppress authentic Christianity, the more it just keeps coming back!

Now the parish family of Saint Matthew's has also heard "Go". Over many years, you have prayed, struggled, discussed, and discerned the voice of the Lord. The fullness of time has come to step bravely into the future!

TRAVEL LIGHT

The exodus people went from being being settled slaves to being pilgrims and pioneers. They had to learn to travel light. "In this manner shall you eat, your loins girded, your sandals on...staff in hand; and you shall eat in haste". (Exodus 12:11).

It adds in verse 17, " and you shall observe the feast of unleavened bread.." Unleavened bread is the pan bread that is for travelling people, pilgrim people!

We hear similar words from Jesus (Luke 12: 35-38). "Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit."

For twelve years, as Bishop of Yukon, I piloted the four seater, high wing, Church Plane. Travelling light was essential to the safety of the mission! Andy Fairfield is an ACNA Bishop in New England. I knew him as the priest pilot in Alaska. He used to tell his passengers, that they could only bring what they can carry on their lap! Otherwise they would bring enough Caribou to last all their cousins the next winter! The weight and balance of small planes in the mountains is crucial. Carrying passengers you had to measure and limit your fuel. There could be no frost on the wings. Everything had to be carefully clean, trim and balanced.

This is exactly the kind of advice that Jesus gives us for ministry!

Gather up your robes, ready for action. In other words, avoid entanglements!

There are physical entanglements. As a past Bishop of Algoma I know all about those: stained glass, pipe organs, heritage designations, roofs and cemeteries! Although you have lost much, you are also being liberated to focus on mission and the job at hand!

A Globe and Mail article told of ad executives who anonymously place this ad for the public good. "Don't carry grudges, they weigh a ton!!!"

Entanglements and encumbrances are not simply physical. There are also emotional and spiritual encumbrances that need to be discarded before we set off. We cannot afford to take with us a drop of bitterness! Travel light. Each faithful command to Go comes with a blessing worth much more than anything left behind.

How nobly you have thought and acted over so many years. It is a great credit to you. It is a great credit to the remarkable leaders that God has given you! A clear conscience is

invaluable equipment for the journey ahead. We go out to proclaim Christ's astounding love. Only take with you what is fully compatible with that astounding love!

Remember Christ told us that those who leave lands or family for his sake will be recompensed greatly.

DO THE WILL OF THE FATHER!

For everyone called to go on a greater journey found that this was for a divine purpose. For Abraham it was so that all of the peoples of the earth might be blessed. For Moses it was that God's people might find freedom and fulfill their destiny. For a Jeremiah it was that he might faithfully deliver the word of the Lord. For the disciples it was so that they could take the knowledge of salvation and eternal life to all people.

Jesus taught that his whole purpose was to do the will of the Father. "For I have come down from heaven not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me." John 6:38

Jesus called his followers to a radical obedience to the will of the father. They were to become "children of the most high." Obedience is not popular in our day. But the basic premise of Christianity is the summons to surrender ourselves to the Lord.

If people in our day want to mix little bits of this and that together truly brewing unique religion that is civilized genteel and palatable. They want to take their religion in the same way they blend their coffee. This has been going on since the beginning of time. But Jesus has called us to new way of living. He calls us to a radical obedience to the will of the Lord. There is a surrender of the heart involved. And that surrender leads to transformation. It is not a blind surrender. It is a surrender to the leading of the Lord. We put ourselves in the way of grace. We open our hearts to the full force and power of God's Holy Spirit.

God is calling this parish on and a great adventure.

Once there were few parishes standing alone against insurmountable odds. Today there are 25 partner parishes across to British Columbia, 50 plus parishes across Canada, and a 700 plus parishes all across North America. There are up to 100,000 worshipers praising the Lord with you each Sunday all across the continent. The Anglican church in North America is respected and recognized by the vast majority of Anglicans all around the world!

All of this has happened in just a few short months. Your courage has changed the future course of the Anglican world. Just as in the past, obedience comes with a promise. God is faithful!

Go, travel light, do the will of the Father!

My final thought for you, is from the words of Jesus himself. Matthew 19: 27 to 29.

"Truly I tell you, ...when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, ...everyone who has left houses or brother or sisters or father or mother or children or fields, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and will inherit eternal life."