

## Where is God Leading us?

It's a question we ask a lot, "What do you want from me God? What can I do?" We ponder what can be done and wait for God to answer. But have we truly prepared ourselves for the answer He gives us?

I asked the same question about a year ago, what do you want me to do Lord? I didn't know it then, but his answer was "CHANGE" Change is scary, change is transforming. In the book of Isaiah, my own transformation became clear. Isaiah 43: 18-19 says "Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness..."

I am about to do a new thing... that is change

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But we are not talking about physical areas on a map today, we want to examine the Edgelands in our lives. Are there places in Cheyenne we don't want to go to, why do we avoid those places... have we forgotten our neighbors there? Do we know who are neighbors are around our homes? Our Jobs? Our church? Or in the Edgelands of our lives?

The Church of England launched a movement to reach the Edgelands within their churches. I was blessed to travel to Leicester, England to study and learn about fresh expressions. Now imagine the whole population of the state of Wyoming, in a space that is about the size of Cheyenne and Laramie together, that's a lot of people.

What they discovered is with all those people, only a few would go to church, why? They were left in a metaphorical Edgelands, forgotten or left out and uncomfortable with church. The bigger problem, more than their church attendance, is these people were not experiencing the love of Jesus.

What I was taught there was not what I was expecting. I could go on for hours about the experience, just ask Alek, Father Rick or my husband Norm. I won't torcher us today with that. **I will tell you that I learned a new way to approach change, loving my neighbors and how transformation is natural and a gift.**

Today we read that Moses was transformed just from talking with God. They talked as friends, or neighbors. Friends trust each other and talk to each other. Moses never knew where he was going with God, and it didn't matter, he trusted God and that's all that mattered.

The scriptures are full of examples of how to love our neighbors. Neighbors are not just the folks that live next door to us, they are anyone of any race or creed or social background, and sometimes they are in need. However, a lack of love is often easy to justify. Yet they are still there, in our Edgelands waiting for transformation.

In our Gospel reading we read that Jesus had a transformation in front of Peter, James and John. They heard a voice from heaven that was everywhere and nowhere all at once. They had seen the same glow upon Jesus, his entire body, as what happened to Moses's face. This must have been a wonderful moment on the mountain.

Just 8 days before Jesus said some would not die without seeing the kingdom, how lucky Peter, James and John were to witness this transfiguration, and later the resurrection and ascension, then to continue the work of Jesus by spreading the word and building the church after Pentecost. Followers would not have to wait for a future Messiah, the kingdom was among them just as it is for us today.

In this transfiguration of Jesus was joined by Moses and Elijah. Peter wanted to build structures for them like shelters. He must have been thinking of the festival of Tabernacles, where shelters were set up to commemorate The Exodus, God's deliverance from slavery in Egypt. The children just learned about this last week downstairs.

Peter wanted to keep Moses and Elijah with them, but it was not what God wanted. Peter's desire to build shelters for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah may have shown his understanding that real faith is built on three cornerstones: the law, the prophets, and Jesus. But Peter grew in his understanding and eventually he would write of Jesus as the chosen and precious cornerstone of the church much like we hold the holy Trinity: father son and holy ghost in our hearts.

So, in the scriptures today we know that Jesus was changing, the cornerstone of our faith, that is exciting!!

We too have exciting experiences, so much that we want to stay right where we are on our mountains; away from the reality and problems of our lives.

So what does this have to do with Fresh expressions? We retreat to our mountain top every Sunday like Peter, James and John right here at St. Mark's. And it is good. Please keep doing that. How about our neighbors? How about those in our Edgelands, look around... are they here? Probably not and for many reasons. We feel safe and secure in our church walls. There will be some called to go down the mountain, or outside the church walls and bring the transforming love of Christ to our neighbors in our Edgelands, this is also good.

We need times of retreat and renewal, but only so we can return to reality and minister to the world. Our faith must make sense off the mountain as well as on it just as our love and the love of Christ brought from the mountain top to our Edgelands.

I think it's wonderful to speak of Fresh Expressions on transfiguration Sunday. Transfiguration is a complete change of form or appearance into a more beautiful or spiritual state. Fresh Expressions is a way to show the love of Christ to others, to bring the mountain top to them, where they are. Or in other words: bring church to people who do not know God's love and power of salvation, in an environment that is comfortable for them. So more like mission work, in our own back yard.

Fresh expressions could look like:

- a group of moms getting together at a park to work out, then doing a devotional and praying together, Yeah, I guess that's my church.

- A group of men who go hiking and experiencing God's creation together while learning that Jesus died for them, then having communion together, Yeah, I guess that's my church.
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Cheerfully in Christ

Candy Snead, CMA, DOK  
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