

Christ Church  
“Ministry Transitions”  
31 January 2016

Jesus was empowered by his baptism at the Jordan River, left there full of the Holy Spirit, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.[where he fasted for 40 days and was tested by the tempter] After this time, Jesus returned to Galilee filled even more with the power of the Spirit, and he [began his ministry.] News about him spread throughout the whole countryside. He taught in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been raised. On the Sabbath he went to the synagogue as he normally did and stood up to read. The synagogue assistant gave him the scroll from the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because the Lord has anointed me.  
He has sent me to preach good news to the poor,  
to proclaim release to the prisoners  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to liberate the oppressed,  
and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the synagogue assistant, and sat down. Every eye in the synagogue was fixed on him. He said to them, “Today, this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it.”

During the month of January, we have been considering those influences from his childhood experiences and early adulthood that may have impacted his choices. We really know very little, but as we too have been raised by parents and made decisions along the way to adulthood using our best information and experiences at the time, we can speculate about what some of these things might have impacted Jesus.

Jesus was likely much loved. He heard the voice of God say, “this is my Son,

with whom I am well pleased.” He was a responsible son, raised by devout, hard working parents. He wasn’t born into a royal family, or wealth. He knew well the conditions of his times, and the struggles that many around him experienced daily.

After his baptism, he went to the wilderness to fast and pray and consider his next moves. He struggled and won in his battle with the tempter. Strengthened with resolve, his ministry began.

When he entered the synagogue that morning after returning to Galilee, he knew who he was. He stepped up to the altar with confidence to read that day’s scripture. It opened to the passage from Isaiah. Please join me in a call and response, repeating a line after me -

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because God has anointed me.  
to preach good news to the poor,  
God has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

Jesus’ ministry begins there and he sets a tone for his mission as he says, “Today this scripture is fulfilled.”

And we also have our marching orders. Very soon, Jesus would call his disciples to be “fishers of men” who will pass this message on. Here we are, still doing this today in word and deed.

The bold preacher Nadia Bolz Weber has this to say about some of what Jesus might say if he were here today -

The Spirit of the Lord has anointed him to bring good news to the

poor.

\_to bring gifts of fine wine and rich food to those who exist only on McDonalds because it's the only food in walking distance from their decrepit neighborhoods

\_The Spirit of the Lord has anointed him to forgive all your student loans.

\_ to bring living water to the people of Flint Michigan and Rwanda and Haiti

\_ to endow us with a sense of worth that has nothing to do with bank accounts and status

I imagine Jesus standing here and saying that The Spirit of the Lord has sent him to release the captives

- to free the addicts from the needle and the bottle and the laptop

\_ to remove the feeling of worthlessness from the depressed

\_ to bring rest to the sleep\_deprived parents of babies

\_ to give a sense of belonging to the alienated

\_ to forgive the sinner

and then he says that he has also come to bring recovery of sight to the blind.

\_ to forever change the way we see those whose abilities differ from our own.

\_ To illuminate for us the ways that human sin tears at the fabric of all humanity

\_ To allow us to see who we really are, to again glimpse the image of God in ourselves and others

\_ To give us a glimpse of heaven in the here and now. To show us that the Kingdom of God is at hand.

\_ To show us what it looks like to love what God loves

\_ To allow us to see ourselves as God see us. So that we see how

there really is no longer a “them” there is only an “us”.

The Spirit of the Lord has sent him to bring freedom to the oppressed, the over worked, the under\_appreciated, the last chosen, the unlovely, the despised and unseen, the overly\_proud, the parts of ourselves that are so small.

And maybe that is what our ears might hear were Jesus to stand here -

And then he sits down. And the eyes of the whole congregation are fixed upon him. No one moves. Not even the kids. And then he says, this is fulfilled today....

Jesus’ ministry began and continues. We are called to stand and reach out and act, right from the very beginning of his ministry.

Now we come forward in time to our ministry.... nearly 2000 years later. 16 months ago, I was asked by our conference Bishop and District Superintendent to step up, to stand with you in ministry here at Christ Church. Most of you know that at that time, we were in the middle some difficult times. Because this is my home church, and I have been blessed in many ways in the last 30 years here, when asked, I said, Yes. As I look back now, it was like I symbolically stepped up to the altar and read the scroll and went to work, because ministry doesn’t happen without work..... And Support.

Jesus knew he was going to need help too, and soon called his disciples. We have disciples here at Christ Church, too. I couldn’t have done what I have done here without all of you. Please know that I deeply appreciate all the efforts that you have each made in your commitment to Christ Church. A few years ago, we were emotionally and spiritually on shaky ground. Very

thankfully, today we are on firm holy ground.... our spirits have been lifted and we are moving forward into the future with renewed enthusiasm (hands) and excitement. All of you contribute to who we are as a church. Thank you so much for your continued support. And I also want to highlight a few individuals.

We have two wonderful, hard working lay leaders. Anne Colby and Linda Carroll who are always there to lend a hand. They have unique gifts and together are a formidable team. Thank you to Anne (who is off in Sunday School - please be sure to thank her for all she does here) and Linda for all the ways you bless and support Christ Church.

Myra Gaiser is our Ad Council Chair. In addition to all the ways she supports us here, she has also been an invaluable sounding board and support for me.

Robin Brown stepped up last year as our SPR chair. Her experience and calm and graciousness is demonstrated in many ways.

In addition to all the hands on efforts made by many, there are some of you who have been my cheerleaders.... and have let me know you are here for me and for us as a church.... Lois Nimmo. She is behind the scenes, but really does keep her eyes on us, watching out for us. I love working with Cindy who is always going the extra mile for us. Thank her when you see her.

We have a strong commitment to caring for each other through prayer and visits. And there are many ways we serve the wider community, through our Pantry and connections to NBOP and others. Thanks to all who help with these efforts, especially John as the chair of our Social Concerns ministry.

There are many who prefer to remain in the background, but without whom we could just not do what we do here..... all of our trustees, Ron and his guys,

our finance people Bob Gaiser and his whole committee.... I especially want to lift up Lisa Norton who has been our financial secretary for more than 15 years. And Ray Magnuson who in addition to financial support greets me with a smile every Sunday as he brings me pins the mic on me.

Thanks to Carol-Jean who works with me to fine tune our worship experience.

I could not name all of you, so please do not feel left out.... I appreciate you all. By attending church, bringing something for a potluck, helping in Sunday School, being part of a work day, working in our Rummage sale or at the garden or Pantry, singing in the choir.... there are many ways that you step up.... Now this kind of sounds like a farewell, but it is not. You all know that starting February 1<sup>st</sup> - tomorrow - Lindsey Kerr is joining us as our pastor. All of the help and support that I have received is still needed as we continue to maintain this wonderful momentum and move forward. Lindsey brings enthusiasm to us. She attended Pizza on Earth and texted me yesterday that she already feels “At home” here at Christ Church.

We don't know exactly what the future holds. We do know that we have been called to be disciples.... to preach the word of God's love and to be of service to others. We are also called by John Wesley who took his faith in God and Jesus very seriously when he said we must Do Good, Do No Harm, and Stay in love with God.

So, over the next several months, I will be passing some of my leadership to Lindsey. I have been asked to stay on as your Lay Minister, and Lindsey has been clear with me that she thinks of us a collaborative team. The other day I was describing to her that I would now be able to step back, and she grabbed my sleeve and pulled me to her. She and I are in ministry together. WE (gesture) are all here in ministry together. This is one of the great strengths of

Christ Church. We are the church, together, being God's heart and hands and feet.

As Lindsey steps up to join us, we will also strengthen our ties with First Church. Lindsey, Blake and I have begun this by sharing the same Lenten theme, using the book, Naked Spirituality by Brian McLaren. Brian says, I'm convinced that what matters most and is available to everyone is daily, ordinary spiritual experience. We can all find, expand, and hold a quiet, sacred space at the center of our lives, a space where we experience vital connection to the living God. We can all learn to tap into the quiet current of sacredness and love that runs from the Creator through all creation.

Over the next few months, our worship theme will give us opportunities to go deeper and discover ways that we can more fully connect with God, as we journey toward Easter.

A vital church is one that follows the path Jesus has set before us. A vital church also encourages a deeply rooted connection to Spirit..... as we Stay in love with God.

Nadia's description of the scene as Jesus stepped away from the scroll and sat down was....

And then he sits down. And the eyes of the whole congregation are fixed upon him. No one moves. Not even the kids. And then he says,

"Guys, stop looking at me \_ you have what you need. It's all here. Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

We have what we need, right here. Blessings on us all as we are called forward with enthusiasm and willingness.