

## What has Mission done for Me?

Think back to when you first remember Church. Perhaps you remember when you were a child, sitting under the ACW/UCW table as your Mom and other Moms met to plan teas and community suppers etc. At first glance, it may not seem that much has changed as we continue to have Harvest Tea, Cookie Walk, Valentine's Supper, Irish Stew Supper. We gather at the kitchen table to share fellowship.

Think back to the home in which you were raised. Did both your parents work? Did Dad work and Mum worked at home keeping the family clean, fed and entertained? Keeping the house clean and cupboards full? Think of the home when you grew up and lived on your own, perhaps you got married straight from home. Did both you and your spouse work?

Think to when your children got married. Who looked after the house? Did both spouses work?

The world has changed vastly in the last fifty years. There was a time when the standard of living was based on the income from one partner, let's say the husband. He worked to be able to pay the mortgage, feed the family, afford a vacation once a year. Perhaps enroll the kids in skating in the winter and soccer in the summer?

Then the world went to war, then suffered a terrible depression. Went to war again, enjoyed a baby boom. The cost of living increased and the wages did not raise to meet them.

It now takes two spouses to work full time in order to enjoy that which we did with only one parent working. With two spouses working full time there's not a lot of time to spare for things like socializing, volunteering, involvement with Church.

The pattern of Church hasn't changed much in the past fifty years. We allow women to be Ordained, even to the offices of Bishop, Primate and Moderator.

It has been said that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing again and again expecting a new outcome. Which is where we find ourselves today, in Churchland.

In the Diocese of Kootenay we have just completed a five year project called Together in Mission. The Diocese was able to raise \$1.7 million. This fell short of the original \$2.2 million goal set five years ago. However, two exciting new ministries have come from the campaign. The Creative Ministries Fund and the Faith Formation Fund. Both of these are to encourage congregations to think "outside the box" or even "outside the walls" of how we are Church in the world.

Let's face it...the days of the field of dreams theology "If we build it they will come" are done and dusted. Another way to phrase that now could be "If we feed them they will come" as witnessed when we had the Covenanting Service. We enjoyed over 70 people joining us from the community of Fernie, Windermere Valley, Cranbrook and Kimberley.

When we host our community suppers the community responds. We see familiar faces at the bake sales, teas, cookie walks and stew suppers. And yet, when Sunday morning

comes around where is everyone?

There was a time in the Anglican Church when most congregations received Communion twice a month and the United Church received Communion 4 times a year. Today the "norm" is monthly in the United Church and weekly for the Anglican Church.

It is generally understood that the Minister is an Ambassador for the Church, she is seen out in the community; acting as moderator of a community conversation, sits on international boards, is Chaplain to the Legion and is generally recognized around town.

Is she the only Ambassador? Nope.

Let me ask you something...when was the last time you invited someone to worship?

The last time you personally invited a friend or neighbour to come and worship here?

Here's an interesting statistic. When the Minister invites a member of the community to worship, there is a 50% chance they will attend. When a parishioner invites a friend or neighbour that number jumps to 80%.

What's your favourite thing about worship here?

What excites you about coming to Church in Fernie?

What are you proud of in the way we worship together?

Let's turn our attention to the scripture for today...

In the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah tells us about "For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice for ever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight". (Isaiah 65.17-18, NRSV)

The old is passing away; the former things shall not be remembered. Be glad in what I am creating...we can no longer stand at the gate of "we have always done it this way". We need to trust in God and step outside what makes us comfortable. The way things have always been done is no longer working.

Why?

Well, for many of the reasons stated above. It's not that people today have no faith. It's that they express it differently. Society yearns to have a deeper relationship with each other. We live in a deeply divided world. We live in an increasingly individualistic society. Instead of gathering at Church on a Sunday morning, you'll find coffee shops, hockey arenas and soccer fields filled with people gathering together.

How come they aren't at Church?

Let's look to the Gospel for today. In Luke's gospel we hear "'When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately.' (Luke 21.8) and "But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be

brought before kings and governors because of my name. This will give you an opportunity to testify. So make up your minds not to prepare your defence in advance; for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict." (Luke 21.17, NRSV)

In other words, what we know now will come to an end and there will be a new way.

Terrifying thought, yes?

If we are Resurrection people, we should be prepared to die in order to be born anew. Right?

Let me ask you this...do you believe that every good gift has come from God? Yes?

If so, then giving 10% away should not be a hardship as you get to keep 90%. Right?

When was the last time you did something for someone else without expecting thanks or recognition? Family doesn't count in this instance...

A random act of kindness...such as holding open a door, paying for the coffee order of the person behind you in line, complimenting a stranger on her dress, speaking kindly to the person in line behind you at the grocery store.

Have you ever had someone do one of these things to you? To smile at you when you're having a crappy day? How did that make you feel?

We need to step outside the box of what it is to be a Christian and step into the place of being a follower of Jesus. We need to boldly go where we have not gone before.

Imagine it...a storefront with comfortable chairs, a coffee and tea station.

A place for young mums to come for coffee and conversation while their kids play.

A place where kids come after school for home work help.

A place where guys can come together to talk about unemployment or health concerns.

A place where a community meal can be shared.

Cooking lessons are given. Bible Study or book studies are held.

A place where community gathers and sings together.

And once or twice a week they come together to have Church.

Imagine.

If you go back in Scripture and read the words of Jesus, when he addressed a crowd he did not stop to ask if they were worthy. If they were baptised. He didn't ask them if they believed the same things he did. He simply taught them. Healed them. Fed them with the word of God and with the bread of life and water of eternity.

Why can't we do the same?

Let us dare to imagine a place where mission is a foundational part of who we are and what we do.

A place where the lonely find friendship. The poor find rest and solace.  
The frightened feel safe and the marginalized feel they belong.

The old model is no longer working. What can we do to meet the needs of society while also meeting our needs? The answer is out there...the solution is to be found...but brothers and sisters I cannot do it alone.

Let us dare to go where we've not gone before.

Where the old life has passed away and the new life is beginning.

A new life motivated not by fear, or money, or worth. But of love.

As both Isaiah and Luke tell us, it is possible.

Dear Lord, show us the way.

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Mission Sunday – 17 November 2019  
Isaiah 65.17-25  
Canticle 12 – Isaiah 12  
2 Thessalonians 3.6-13  
Luke 21.5-19