



Rev. Geoff Ross

Geoff's Journal

Summer 2017

“Do Not Be Afraid....”

By now the news of Rebekah's departure is out – and starting to sink in. While I knew about her leaving before she made it public, her news came as a surprise. I know that we will miss Rebekah and the many things she has done over her time at St. Andrew's, but I'm sure I speak for you when I say that we also wish her well as she moves on in her ministry at Graceview Presbyterian Church, Etobicoke. Personally, I will miss Rebekah both as a colleague and as a friend. I came to St. Andrew's to be a part of a team – and in many ways it was to work with her (I decision I never regretted). Over our five years serving together I have valued her opinion, creativity, generosity, and her passion for ministry and her faith. I always enjoyed hearing her preach and always trusted her instincts. Working with her made ministry easy – and fun. I have two favorite pictures of the two of us – I will remember the laughter, joy, and ease of sharing our co-joined ministry together. I will miss working with Rebekah but I know that teams change and players get traded; it's all part of God's plan.



Rob Bell, in his book *Drops Like Stars*, wrote about the “art of disruption” in which he highlighted our human tendency to make plans, and assume that things are either always going to stay the same or go the way we plan them to go. The problem is they don't. Surprise! And we're blindsided, finding ourselves suddenly in a new place, a place we haven't planned on being in, or had not have imagined. He goes on to say that this is the way life is – it's the way the world is. We cannot control, or coerce, the events around us – the disruptions that occur – to fit our plans; but what we can do is choose how we react to them.

Many of the most significant moments in our lives – or throughout history – come not because they happened according to “plan” – or all went right – but because they didn't. Think about the course of your life – or the history of St. Andrew's, Brampton: often it was the difficult or unexpected, maybe even tragic, moments that resulted in the most significant change. Sadly, in some cases, the change resulted in an inevitable, undesirable outcome but even in those cases, Bell says, we have a choice as to how to respond. These moments open us up and frees us to see things in new ways. Yes shocks, surprises, setbacks – even suffering – upset us (and our carefully constructed plans) but they also create new opportunities. While not part of our plans they're part of God's. And, as such, it's up to us to respond to them faithfully.

Jesus spoke often of how we should not count on our plans – that we should put our trust in God alone to provide, and this is what I said to the Session at a meeting we held after Rebekah made her announcement that she has been Called to be Graceview's new Minister. As we expressed our sadness at her leaving we acknowledged that to be “Called” is to follow God's will and that we are to put our trust in God's plan for Rebekah, for Graceview, and for us at St. Andrew's. We gave thanks for Rebekah's ministry – for the relationships that have been made and the experiences we have shared together – and then we asked God to open our hearts, minds, and eyes, to ‘see’ His evolving plan for us as we move forward. I can report that by the end of the meeting, rather than reacting negatively, seeing her news as a setback, the Session choose to see this disruption as God's opening up for us new opportunities for St. Andrew's growth. While this was an informal discussion the meeting ended with a strong sense of hope: Friends, God still has plans for St. Andrew's, Brampton. “Do not be afraid.” (1 Chronicles 28:20)