

ALL SAINTS' WATERLOO

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH SERVING BELGIUM

Chaussée de Charleroi 2, 1420 Braine-l'Alleud, Belgium • +32 (0)2 384 7780 • www.allsaints.be • info@allsaints.be

WHO ARE WE TO BE?

A mission statement is a declaration of a group's core purpose and focus, that normally remains unchanged over time. Mission statements say what is important to you – they tell where you are going and who you will spend your time and energy with along the way. Most often we think of a Mission Statement as being for an organization – for a business, or a group.

This past Monday, President Obama's Inaugural Address came across to many people as a Mission Statement for the United States, as he spoke of a journey that the country is moving on, toward the vision of the country being a certain way.

The Convocation has a Mission Statement – we adopted it at convention last October. It reads: The Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe is a welcoming community that knows God loves all people – no exceptions. We celebrate our diversity of languages, cultures and nations. Worshipping together, we rejoice in reaching out to the world and becoming One in Christ.

The Anglican Communion World-wide has a bit of a variation of a statement. It is to say "We know we are doing our Mission when we do certain things." Those certain things are called the 5 Marks of Mission – and they have also been adopted by The Episcopal Church. They are:

1. Witness to Christ's saving, forgiving, reconciling love for all people.
2. Build welcoming, transforming communities of faith.
3. Stand in solidarity with the poor and needy.
4. Challenge violence, injustice and oppression, and work for peace and reconciliation.
5. Protect, care for and renew life on our planet.

And of course, we here at All Saints' have our own Mission Statement. Anybody know it?

All Saints' Mission:

We welcome all with joy to our spiritual home.
We seek to share and to deepen our faith
and our love of God through
Anglican worship, pastoral care, Christian nurture, and vibrant community
life.

Having a Mission is important – As that great philosopher, American baseball player Yogi Berra said: “You gotta be careful if you don't know where you're going, otherwise you might not get there.” (If you don't know where you're going, you might not get there.)

Our Old Testament reading today tells about when the people of Israel didn't know their Mission. They had been held captive for years, and then they were freed and allowed to go back to Jerusalem. They returned from Exile -- but now what? For years, all they could aim for was to get home. But now that they were there – Mission Accomplished – they didn't have a Mission anymore. So the prophet Nehemiah & and his scribe, Ezra gathered them together to hear the scripture – and what they heard in the scripture was their Mission. The people wept, as they realized that they had fallen far short of the mission God had for them. But at the same time as they wept with guilt, the people were also inspired, so excited and motivated, that they wept for joy -- now they had a purpose, and knew where they were going!

Of course, if a group of people needs to know where it's going, it makes sense that an individual person does to! And that's what Jesus announced in the Gospel today – he took the words of the prophet Isaiah, changed them a bit - and announced His Mission:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

The Good News of Jesus – his Mission, was to bring hope to people with little or no hope, to the poor.

The Good News of Jesus – his Mission, was to release the captives – to release us from whatever ties us down, or holds us back - from doing Our Mission.

The Good News of Jesus – his Mission, was to help the blind see – to open Our eyes - open our eyes to the needs of those who suffer in our midst – and – open our eyes to the glory and beauty that God has put all around us, to rejoice in it, and in our maker.

The Good News of Jesus – his Mission, was to let the oppressed go free - to free us as well from our self-limiting ideas of what we can do, or how we can bring change for the good.

The Good News of Jesus – his Mission, was to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour – that is, a time when there will be justice, and debts will be forgiven – each

child of God will have the same opportunity to shine, and live a full and wholesome life.”

This was Jesus’ Mission statement.

Now – it met with a mixed reaction – you’ll have to come back Next Week to hear how the people responded to Jesus’ words that day, when he said them.

But today – let’s hold these words for ourselves. We are followers of Jesus. If we truly follow him – his Mission forms Our own personal mission.

We, as Christians, need to ask ourselves:

“How can I ‘bring good news to the poor...proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, let the oppressed go free, and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor?’”

“How can I possibly do all this?”

It is overwhelming to think of trying to do All this!

How can I possibly do it all?

Only Jesus could.

It is too much for me to take on – only the Son of God could do all this.

But here’s where Paul’s words to the Corinthians come in – I don’t Have to do it All! You don’t have to do it All. Because we are each members of the whole body of Christ – so we combine our gifts, combine our talents and, as the Church, the living body of Jesus today – we do it together!

Here at All Saints, some read, some make coffee, some bake, some teach, some greet, some lead prayers, some lead music, some manage finances, some make worship beautiful, some clean up, some drive... just to name a FEW of our ministries, our parts in working toward the church’s Mission here.

We each have particular gifts we are the best at – being the hands or feet or eyes or ears – all needed.

And these things are just what we do IN the church – the bigger part of being Christ’s body is what you do every day, where ever you live and move and have your being.

Where you work or play or study or shop - you may bring good news, you may help free, you may help open eyes, you may right wrongs, helping bring justice. That is your part – your Mission.... May God give You the wisdom and courage to Be Christ’s hands and heart in this world – every Day. Amen.

Rev. Sunny Hallanan