

Leadership for the Church of Tomorrow

An Address Given by the Bishop of Niagara at the Annual Bishop's Company Dinner
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So, a talk on the leadership for the church of tomorrow. What *was* I thinking? It's a pretty lofty topic. A pretty BIG topic. It's also one of those things that seemed like a good idea at the time. But of course, when I sat myself down to write it, it was much more complex and multi-layered than I'd originally planned. So, let me say straight up that I don't have a crystal ball. But I do have some experience, and some observations; some testimony from leaders who are on their way to the future church, and not surprisingly, some opinions.

We need to start *somewhere* to try and get our arms around this subject. So let's start in Niagara.

I am told reliably that among the many and varied pearls of wisdom with which Bishop Ralph has blessed us with over the years is the following statement on leadership. When asked what kind of people make good priests: he is purported to have said those who love Jesus and love people. Is that right Bishop Ralph? And I think that's a pretty good place to begin.

Because those are eternal qualities, aren't they? They don't change. That's also a good thing to get straight from the start. But that's about it actually. The rest? Well, the rest is all discernment, creativity, adjustment and confidence and optimism.

But we should also start with a bit of reality: We've all been hearing for decades how the church across the West is declining. And chances are you've felt it too. I could give you a bunch of hard data but well, let me tell you a story instead.

This may help us understand what's happening. This is a story about a bridge. There was a bridge in the city of Choluteca – in southern Honduras on the Choluteca River. It's a beautiful silver bridge - a gift from the nation of Japan to Honduras – and it was constructed using the most modern technology available. But, in 1998, Hurricane Mitch devastated the country of Honduras by leaving behind 75 inches of rain in less than four days.

Choluteca itself was heavily damaged and it received more rainfall than any other place affected by the hurricane. But a strange thing happened to the bridge. While the bridge itself was in near perfect condition after the storm, the roads on either end of the bridge had completely vanished, absolutely leaving no trace of their existence.

But even more amazingly, because of the massive flooding caused by the hurricane, the Choluteca River (which is several hundred feet wide) had carved itself a new channel and no longer flowed beneath the bridge at all; the bridge now spanned dry ground with the result that this beautiful bridge quickly became known as "The Bridge to Nowhere."

So, after the cleanup from the hurricane, some designers and engineers suggested that their next challenge was to figure out how to redirect the massive river so that it flowed back under the bridge! What kind of a crazy idea

was that??? In order to keep the bridge, people were now talking of rerouting the river in order to fulfill its purpose. Why not extend the bridge over the river?!!!

Well, in many ways, many of our churches are acting exactly like “The Bridge to Nowhere”. We seem to be growing increasingly separated from the very people we were commissioned to connect to Christ. Many of us are waiting and hoping for the day when, miraculously, people will once again start flowing back into our churches in the same way as they once did in the past. But you can imagine – rather like the river that has found a new way to flow – that that just isn’t going to happen.

The fact is, the rules of engagement have changed. What we have been doing to attract membership in our churches is no longer as effective as it once was.

Our social and religious landscape has changed. Whether that’s because people have a huge number of choices for the ways to spend their time now, or it’s because of the pace of post-modern life, the reality is, church attendance is slipping and there’s no doubt that this is unsettling, perhaps even alarming to many of us.

So that’s the not so good news. We’ve been looking a lot like the Choluteca Bridge. But it’s not *all* bad news. Here’s the thing: because of all these changes, a new mission field has opened up. There is a large demographic to whom we can offer the good news of the Gospel. They consist of the un-churched (those folks who have had no previous experience of, or contact with, the institutional church) and the de-churched (those who have quit our communities for a variety of reasons). These folks are just like you and me – they have a spiritual hunger and are seeking to satisfy it in different ways. They are honest seekers after spiritual truth and there are a lot of them. And a lot of them are young.

So, there’s good news – lots of good news actually: because we don’t have to be the bridge lamenting that the river has changed course. We can begin to think what it might be like to extend the bridge over where the river now flows. It requires a new paradigm – or world view – or if you like, a different lens through which to see the church. And some pretty focussed and intense planning and building for the future too.

And it requires a re-think of our leadership too; what we look for in a leader for this context.

Things have changed in other ways too. You and I know this. How have they changed? Link between church and culture has been at the least impaired and at the worst, broken. Sometimes gently by attrition, sometimes brutally by out and out abuse.

And while we may sit back and tut tut at the misfortunes of other denominations facing terrible and tragic scandal, the fact is, it touches us all. Every Christian and every Christian leader bears the touch of these times.

And so, a new relationship is emerging – one where a complex negotiation between Institutional religious culture and secular culture is underway.

But here’s the good news, this culture is not *necessarily* resisting the Gospel.

It's the Gospel delivery system, aka the mainline church, that is deeply suspected, contested and scrutinized. You know this. You know that even if a priest and a parish is doing good ministry, it's enough to simply criticize it in slightly shady terms and get a response. In a #MeToo and #ChurchToo culture, the institutional church is increasingly walking on eggshells. And may I say, as difficult as this is, it's probably no bad thing. We *do* have a lot to answer for. All of us. Both actively and passively. And that's why corporate confession and a humble church and humble leaders are so important in this new normal.

So we have a tough sell. What do we do about it? Well, may I say, from the perspective of a church historian, we've been here before. As Archbishop Rowan Williams has said, we are in a period right now similar to the period following the Reformation in which the English priesthood had to find new meaning in their vocation. You know our history the whole system was destroyed, and the monasteries and convents all abolished. The whole ecclesiastical landscape had altered and priests – and especially religious – had to find a new identity. And they did – as pastors and preachers – and a new identity was born. Well, we are in a similar time when the ecclesiastical - and secular landscape – is undergoing seismic shifts and we are reinventing ourselves once again. And it is an important moment. In fact, I'd compare it to another moment - You remember Kodak?

There was a time in living history when by using that phrase “kodak moment” meant a moment worthy of capturing with a photo. Many of us remember that with nostalgia, right? Except now, unfortunately, there's a new Kodak moment – and this one represents the point at which executives in that huge multinational company *failed* to realize how consumers were changing and how the markets had evolved in new directions *without* them; *without* the company – which no longer exists as its former self but is vastly reduced and specialized. It has virtually disappeared from sight and culture. The new Kodak moment is something that executives at Blockbuster, Research In Motion, and very sadly today, Sears etc,... know about all too well.

It turns out that there are two reasons this happened to Kodak. First, it comes down to a reluctance to read that cultural landscape and take seriously the changes that were happening and to work with that change. That sense of being “too big to fail” bred a kind of complacency. Second, and I think that this is the most important thing for the church - the sense of *urgency* with which to change was largely underappreciated or frankly nonexistent among these profitable businesses.

So how do we meet this moment? *Not* with panic. First and foremost, this is God's church – and God's got this. Seriously. But with urgency. Urgency isn't the same as panic.

The church has been living with change since forever. In every age it has had to cope and roll with the motions of culture. The question is what is our faithful path to change *now*?

You know, this may even be good for us. I know I'm an optimist by nature but even when I put on my “Eeyore” hat, I still can't see this season as entirely doom-laden. The church is always at her best when she is uncomfortable. #truth.

I think the urgency is beginning to communicate itself to us. Through the numbers and the issues that we're facing. And we are and will figure it out: through faith, and observation -- and experimentation and by going back to first principles. We're on it. That's the good news. We're on it.

But we need leaders who can traverse this terrain. Leaders who have the skills - maybe not all of them but who have good instincts and who are formable.

But first, let's take a look at what the new mission field looks like. What this new normal that we're in looks like. That might give us some clues about the kind of leader we need into the future.

So remember our two definitions: the *Unchurched* – are those who have had little or no meaningful contact with the institutional church.

And the *Dechurched* – are those who have quit our churches for any number of reasons. Now just a word here – these are the folks we want to reach, right? We don't want to achieve what's called "transfer growth" or more colloquially, "the circulation of the saints."

For a couple of good reasons. It's not actually real, empirical growth. And anyway, that group of church people who just move around? They're shrinking very quickly. And that group of unchurched people? – they are the fastest growing group in our culture. Makes sense that we put our effort and time and resources into understanding them and sharing the Gospel with them. They are the future. And they are the group with whom we struggle most.

So let me tell you a bit about them: the following observations are a mixture of conversations with leaders who are already working in this new mission field, with some significant Canadian leaders – our own Professor John Bowen among them - some work of Canadian culture watchers – mixed with some of my own observations borne of experience ministering in a secular environment.¹ They are in no particular order.

"Problem-based" mission is a problem: If we're waiting for unchurched people to show up because their life is falling apart, we're going to wait a long time. Sure, there are always people in crisis who seek God out. But many, maybe even most, are quite content with their lives without God. And some are quite happy and successful. If we only know how to speak into discontent and crisis, we will miss most of our neighbours. Living lives of meaning and making a difference *because* of their beliefs is the language that they speak.

Guilt is not a good motivator: Unchurched folks just don't feel guilty about not being in church. It just doesn't have a pre-ordained place in their lives. This is a big part of the issue. And to that point - if they do begin to attend church, their attendance patterns will likely be erratic. So working hard at providing many points of connection is crucial to welcome them when they are there. And to be honest, we can only expect what we model, . . . *Just sayin* . . . although I know the church of the holy comforter is tempting!

Not Atheists: Most unchurched people are spiritual people. But by the same token they're not sure what being a "Christian" means. We must never forget that that label has been co-opted in this environment. As Bishop Curry has been quoted recently saying, the voices of moderate Christians are not being heard. So we need to

¹ The following characteristics are loosely based upon a blog by the well-known Pastor of Connexus Church: Carey Nieuwhof who is a keen culture-watcher and social analyst. He is always informative. I have contextualized his observations for an Anglican sensibility. <https://careynieuwhof.com/15-characteristics-of-todays-unchurched-person/>

make that clear. We can't make any assumptions about what people understand about the Christian faith anymore. Moving forward, clarity is paramount. Actually for our *own* sake, clarity is important. It is just as true today as it was for St. Paul, that we need to be ready to make an account of what we believe. Because you can bet there are plenty of people who'd like to get hold of the definition of Christian whose definition you or I would be very reluctant to line up with. Be ready to make an account of the hope that is within us.

So, we really need to understand that there is no possibility of a revival as such. For a revival you need something to revive. Culture watchers tell us that we are on the 2nd to 5th generation of unchurched people, so that means there isn't anything to revive. We can't call them back to something they never knew.

Thinking here primarily of the dechurched, it turns out that a surprising number of people have tried church at some point – earlier in their lives. But they left for any number of reasons – but mostly because it probably wasn't a good experience for them. And what makes a good experience? I think I can safely say one important thing: being warmly welcomed and helped through the whole thing: from first seating to coffee hour is a very good start. Worship, and sacred space and putting our faith into action by making a difference in our communities are other things that make for an authentic Christian experience. Lots to think about here.

Giving: Offering any percentage of your income to something other than personal or family related expenses is radically countercultural. In core *Anglican* circles that is exceptional. Of course, we hope that every Christian gives out of the overflow of what they themselves have been given by God, but it is a journey – maybe of a lifetime. So this will have a crucial impact on our stewardship talk (as in, we *need* some!) and on our ministry plans short: medium and longer term.

Now this one is very very important and it's one that we need to take very seriously. And it may make us feel uncomfortable. **The unchurched want us to be unambiguously Christian.** They want us to follow Jesus, authentically. I said this may make us feel uncomfortable because somehow we seem to have bought in to the idea that we need to back off on our core beliefs in order to be relevant/attractive. So then I'd ask, what *exactly* are we asking people to join? I'd also offer the observation that there is a big difference between being authentic, and loving but clear in our identity and giving away the farm just to fill a space.

Transparency and authenticity are core values. And if they understand and appreciate the faith they're discovering, it will spread. They will invite others.

One size does not fit all, spiritually speaking. We need flexible and accessible Christian discipleship and nurture opportunities that allow people many points of entry and integration throughout the church year. This is HUGE. Crucial in fact.

You know, I'll bet that a lot of that actually sounds really familiar to most of us.

The unchurched and de-churched aren't so different from us actually. It's just that the church actually *found* us, laid hold of *us*, and has blessed *us* and is part of our lives. And we can't let *it* go and it can't let *us* go. What a gift and a privilege. And it's one that we want to pass on.

So to recap, we now have the beginnings of a handle on our changing culture – let's call it post-Christendom. If Christendom is the time when you could call our culture Christian influenced, we are now in a time in which that is no longer the case.

We now have a bit of a sense of the worldview of unchurched people – the fastest growing demographic in our society.

Now it's probably time to answer the question: what kind of person – who loves God - is able to understand all that and more, work with it to lead the church of the future?

Well, here I want to pause for a moment and ask you to do something for me. Would you close your eyes for a moment? And just take a few seconds to think about something. Try and call to mind the person you first remember sharing their faith with you. Maybe it was by example. Maybe it was through words or service. But whoever it was that first showed you what it was to be a follower of Jesus – maybe it was your mother, or father, or your priest. Maybe it was a friend – could even have been a stranger. But whoever they are, hold them in your mind and in your heart – you can open your eyes now. Try and keep that person in your consciousness as I continue.

I know you were probably expecting me to talk exclusively about professional vocations tonight. And I will – in a minute. But I believe that the renewal of our church, of our living faith, actually starts at a much more foundational or even cellular level. I have often heard the lament of the baby boomers whose children have given the church a miss. It's very painful that that has been so. I won't posit any reasons for it – you probably know them anyway. But what I do know is that the renewal of the church and her leadership begins at home.

It begins at the dinner table with praying Grace, and then an explanation of why we do that – because everything is a gift from the Creator and we are simply saying our thanks. It begins at the Easter or Christmas dinner tables when we remember why we celebrate on those days – that Jesus rose from the dead – came as one of us to love the world. It begins when we make everyday decisions in the light of our knowledge of the Gospel: how to vote – for the good of us all and not only for our own gain; how to spend our money in just ways; how to advocate for the needs of others. This is called Christian formation and its bedrock folks. It's bedrock. Because it's out of this kind of formation and reflection that we call leaders who can shape our church for the next season.

So, you can see that finding the leaders for the church of tomorrow is not just my job, nor the job of our present clerical leaders, but it's everyone's job. It's deeply rooted in Christian formation in our homes and in our churches. That's called Apostolic Succession. We are all the result of apostolic succession - handing on the faith generation by generation – and fulfilling our roles as the apostles of Christ. And that's not in the fine print on the Christian contract – that's the headline. The Great Commission and all that.

Christian leaders do not appear fully formed – they are nurtured and led and formed and supported long before they ever engage with the structures of the institutional church. So, we all have work to do. And if you haven't been doing it, you need to start – with love, gently – I mean don't go pouncing on the next young person you meet, but you need to start. Share your faith in the way that is natural to you because it has an impact.

Right. So, when potential Christian leaders do emerge – what qualities will we be looking for to meet this new normal?

Shortly after my consecration, Professor John Bowen, who makes a habit of mentoring missional leaders, arranged for me to meet with some of those leaders in Hamilton. These are people from many denominations: including our own. It was what I can only describe as a numinous experience. There were about 10 of them that first time. And as I listened to these people of all ages who were church planters – beginning churches from scratch or re-booters – helping to bring new growth to an old and dying church – I realized that I was in the presence of people who were actually building the church of tomorrow! Facilitated by John, we had what was for me, an important discussion about leadership. And in preparation for this evening, John very kindly gathered them again and we spoke in even greater detail a couple of weeks ago. I thought it would be important to make sure that my own observations were grounded in praxis. So, what follows was informed by that very important discussion. I am in their debt.

1. **People who are not afflicted by “terminal nostalgia”** - not afflicted with the burden of preserving the outward forms of the institutional church at all costs. But people who want to share the Gospel of Christ – lovingly, authentically. And if that supports the institutional church so much the better.
2. **Humility:** Those who operate in the reality of our culture – so who have an awareness of our personal and corporate sin as church. And aren’t afraid or threatened by confession of that sin. If we don’t confess it with humility we’ll never be allowed in to people’s lives again. Trust begins with honesty.
3. **Those who knows it’s not about us** – we need a focus on those outside the church - and so the leader of tomorrow’s church will need to know how to say ‘no’ and mean it to the things that are self-indulgent and not directed toward those who do not know the name of Jesus.

I know this is challenging. I get it. You will think – why is that nasty new Bishop Susan trying to take away the comfort of my tradition?

I’m not. I make common cause with you about that. I LOVE the institutional church. I adore the Book of Common Prayer. I simply live for Anglican chant and Renaissance Polyphony and all that great, great stuff. Seriously. Ask anyone who really knows me. That is my happy place. It’s like taking a warm bath. When it’s about me, that’s what I like. I warn you – as I’ve warned our good Mr. Dean – that’s probably what my funeral will look like if anyone remembers how to sing Anglican Chant by then! It’s going to feel a lot like the seventeenth century in that funeral. But I ask you, since when is being a Christian about me?

But when I’m thinking like a Christian, I’m not thinking about me – about what I like. I’m thinking about what will make Christ known – and him crucified and risen. Then suddenly everything is on the table. And oh my goodness it’s *uncomfortable*.

4. **They love Jesus.** This is pretty important, crucial, non-negotiable. Straight up, unless our leaders know, love and want to follow Jesus, and not only that – but also want to share Jesus - we’re done. Before we’ve begun, we’re done. Being a motivator or a deeply ethical person or a good speaker is not enough. It’s not *nearly* enough to counter this culture. Our leaders must love Jesus. Full Stop. I’m going to do a “mic drop” on that one and move on.

5. **They can start new things.** Seriously. Doesn't even need to be religious things. Just that they can demonstrate the analytical qualities that make them see that something new needs to be done and that they can then follow through with an idea, resource it and bring it to fruition. I don't even mind if the thing they started "worked." Failure is valuable too, as long as they can reflect on it and learn lessons from it. After all, it was Winston Churchill who said that "Success is moving from failure to failure with no loss of enthusiasm." There's truth in that axiom. The impulses to think, and to try are at the root of it. And we need thinkers and tryers.
6. **They love people.** Because my goodness they'll need this attribute. As the church gets leaner, it will also get meaner. Coping with decline and tilling the soil for the future is a tough task that involves loss and grief and patience to wait for the green shoots of growth.
7. **Mobility:** folks who are willing to *go* for Christ. To *go* and preach the word. Mobility is a key issue - one I am super sympathetic to. There are spouses' concerns, schools, housing, health concerns etc, . . . but the fact is, we need to go where the mission fields are. So the leaders of the next generation should expect not to find themselves in an exceptional space if they are asked to *go*. Even if it's not a comfortable place. We need to be honest about that and realistic about that. And that will mean that spouses will have to be on board too and that really isn't a space we've been in for a long while.
8. **They need to cultivate effective preaching skills.** Preaching is more important than ever. Really. In this digitized world, the word – the written, spoken and proclaimed word is more important than ever. But in a particular way. A way that uses the culture to preach to itself. A way that makes a convincing argument for this faith. These are muscles we haven't flexed in a very long time, so they feel like new skills.
9. **People who understand money and the promise of our resources.** Now this one is tricky. I do not mean that they are simply good money managers. But that they truly understand money. The possibility that money represents. I have often said to Jody Beck, our excellent Director of Finance at the Diocese that meeting with her and discussing the budget is like therapy. I know that sounds odd. But it really is like therapy. If we hold the Christian view that money is not ours to hold onto but it is a gift from God's hand and a tool to build God's kingdom if rightly used, our attitude toward it becomes transformed. We often lament that we don't have more because we can't achieve as much of that building the kingdom as we'd like. So we need folks who can preach about true stewardship, and use the money we hold in common to do ministry. You notice I have not once said anything about paying the bills, nor about buildings. I leave it to you to parse the priorities in that absence.

But above all, we need leaders that:

10. Can lead with heart.

That's *exactly* that kind of shift that we are being called to make as a church – and that will take a different kind of leadership too.

We are in an important moment. A moment that requires that we begin with heart.

One of my favourite C.S. Lewis quotes – and you know that if Anglicans don't quote scripture, they quote Lewis – is that no one, no one is *argued* into faith. Faith is the hope of things unseen. Not for nothing does St. Paul talk

about *certain hope* – not empirical evidence, not management theory, nor ecclesiastical entertainment. I find this movement of the heart so very, very attractive. I believe it's where Jesus lived with his disciples. So someone who gets this profoundly and begins with heart but is real. ***That's a leader for the times.***

I mean, *I* find that very attractive. It's really one of the primary reasons that I feel myself drawn – even at my age - to what we might call hipster culture – because it is itself a search for authenticity, for what is *real*, for what is sometimes gritty and conflicted and stripped bare. You notice how many micro-breweries or artisanal cheese factories or whatever are around suddenly. It's a search to get back to basics; to do things with your hands again. You notice the prevalence for tattoos – for marking the skin indelibly with that which is most important to you. It's a thing. And it strikes me as an almost sacramental act. An outward sign and seal of an inward grace. And it reminds me very much of the sign of the cross that we give at baptism – I mark you with the sign of the cross to show that you are Christ's own forever. That's pretty indelible too. I find tattoos fascinating. Don't worry I won't get one – tempting, but I won't.

And a search for authenticity is what's at the bottom of all of it. In a digitized and mechanized world, in a world where friendship is commodified and connection is virtual, there is a search for the human again. For the organic, the grounded, for *heart*. And I believe that as the church we need *desperately* to be there ready to speak into that movement of the heart. Not so that we can build the church of yesterday again. It's gone folks. We need to acknowledge that and move on.

No – so that we can build the church of tomorrow. There is an Anglican moment out there, but it is not your Grandmother's Anglican church. God is doing something new through us. Who knew? Through *Anglicans*. And it's been quietly going on for a couple of generations – we've been led by love. We've followed kicking and screaming – at each other mostly – but who says transformation is easy or neat? We've had the worship wars; we've had the culture wars; we're *having* the gender wars and there are more battles to come and we'll have those too. Out loud, in public. That's challenging and sometimes embarrassing but it is real and honest. And I think we need to hold that up as another movement of the Spirit in a culture that is so often unreal and dishonest. That we're willing to do the work to follow the Spirit of Jesus even though it looks like the valley of the shadow of death - we are being led.

So, in every age, we have different emphases. Not so long ago we needed those with corporate skill to deal with the post-war numbers and affluence the church experienced, and then we needed people with prophetic skills to break down the barriers and obstacles that the institutional church placed in the way of the Gospel.

We'll always need those prophetic skills, but no one could possibly claim that the church is the big corporate and socially influential entity it once was – if it ever really was in the first place. That has to be recognized as a fallacy on the level of the *Da Vinci Code* now.

But we are in an *Anglican* moment when the task before us is *Re-missioning* our church. But that entails remembering who we are and whose we are.

And the shape of our leadership has to reflect this.

What I'm praying for is that this would be light and delightful work. That as you leave this place, you too would be praying for that one or two people who you believe have the charisms of leadership for the church of tomorrow. That you would take it upon yourselves not to pressure them, but *invite* them to think about what it would be like to serve God and to make a difference and to love people. To have a fidelity to place and community that gives them a groundedness and a sense of belonging that is real and substantive. That would you remember as you leave tonight that this sacred responsibility is one that we all share. *All of us.*

And if you're here tonight and feeling convicted that *you* perhaps have these charisms – talk to your priest. Begin a journey of discernment. With courage, with bravery. Friends, these are brave times. This is a moment – actually it's more than that: it's an *Anglican* moment.

Poor Canon DeForest, I fear we're all going to make quite a lot of work for him and the Candidates Committee in the coming years. But my God what a good problem to have.

You have been very patient and kind to listen to me. I've talked for far too long. That'll teach you to give me a microphone and a captive audience!! But I hope you sense the commitment I have for this work. And I hope it catches. I hope and pray that you have a sense of optimism and commitment to our beloved church because I truly believe we have everything – *everything* we need to build the church of tomorrow.

Thank you.

And a deep and grateful thank you for you – for attending this evening, for your gracious attention, for your help in supporting our leaders through the Bishop's company. We literally could not do it without you.

And now, by way of closing remarks, I'm going to send us with prayer. You have a part in this one too – when I say "and all the people said" you say "amen".

The Lord be with you... *and also with you.*

Sending Prayer:

God of all our yesterdays, todays and tomorrows, we give you grateful thanks for those people whose life and witness; gentleness and bravery; strength and tenderness taught us to live and love in Jesus' name. They handed on the faith to us and my Lord we are grateful receivers – may we do likewise with the same apostolic spirit. And all the people said: **Amen.**

Loving God, comfort of the discomfited, settle in us as we go from this place. Settle in our hearts, and create the change that is necessary for your Word to live and transform this church of yours. Give us generosity and spirit for the work ahead. And all the people said: **Amen.**

Loving God who calls us all – everyone – by name, to be the face and eyes, and ears and hands of Christ in own ways, in our own places – help us to have the eyes to see and the ears to hear those whose gifts our church needs. And all the people said: **Amen**

Loving God you tell us the stories of how you use the weak to lead the strong and the sinner to lead the righteous. Use *us* as you have always used your people - however weak and sinful we may be to build your beautiful, brave, mysterious church to reflect the light of your love for all people. And all the people said: **Amen**

Loving God, we remember tonight those who we see no longer – who now worship on another shore in your heavenly presence – whose faith and witness and fine leadership we uphold and remember with gratitude: for Steve Hopkins; Rob Fead and Jean Archbell, Duncan Lyon and Gerald Shantz. Rest Eternal Grant Unto them and let light perpetual shine upon them. May their souls and all the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace and rise in glory. And all the people said: **Amen.**

And now may the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. And the blessing of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you – and those you love – now and forever. Amen.

Safe home folks!