

**Reflection: June 26, 2022**

**2 Kings 2:1-2, 6-14; Galatians 5:16-20, 22-25;  
Luke 9:51-53, 56-62**

When I checked the lectionary readings for today, my first thought was to put them aside and choose something different. But then I got to thinking that maybe they were destined for a day like this, as I come to my last worship service with you as minister at St. Andrew's. The O.T. reading recounts a portion of the story of the prophet Elijah, who in some ways was the greatest of all God's prophets, but like all people, his time eventually comes to an end and the ministry to which he had committed himself is passed on to another, to his successor Elisha. And so, we are reminded: God's work will go on, and God will raise up new servants to replace those whose time is over.

In the part of the story found in today's reading, Elisha is granted his request to have a double portion of Elijah's spirit. Now in terms of the Mosaic law governing family inheritance, that would have been the portion received by the firstborn or elder son. It's been suggested that what Elisha is truly seeking here is whatever has sustained Elijah through the joys and sorrows of his ministry. That's what Elisha wants.

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And once Elijah is gone, transported to heaven in a vision of chariot and horses and fire, Elisha takes up the cloak left behind by Elijah, he strikes the water of the Jordan, the water is divided to the right and the left and he, like Elijah before him, passes over the dry land, carrying on the ministry now entrusted to him. This act of power over the waters is a sign that Elisha will now carry on the history and inheritance for the people.

Just as Elisha asked for a share of Elijah's Spirit, we, too, are all given the opportunity to share in the gifts of the Spirit. In Galatians we are reminded that we have each been fashioned for a unique purpose; each been given unique gifts; each been blessed with varying abilities.

In the ministry we have shared together, I have witnessed and experienced you exercising your gifts for the building up of this particular body of Christ, and for the purpose of our mission in the community and world around us. I know that some of you, like myself, may be growing weary as you do more than your share of the work.

And so I urge you all, during this time of change and transition, not to give up, not to become stagnant, not to expect the next leader to come and do for you what you

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are called to be doing for yourselves ... but rather to choose to be actively involved, sharing fully in the vision of a community led by the Spirit—a community marked by love, gentleness, self-control, joy, patience, peace, faithfulness, kindness, and generosity.

And don't be afraid of trying something new ... of doing things a different way. See this time of transition as an opportunity, together with Rev. Ji, to set your priorities for the work and ministry of this church and enjoy the journey of carrying on God's work in this place. Support him, as you have supported me, in the unique gifts and leadership abilities he has to offer. Know that his style and what he brings to your life together will be different from what I have brought, but trust that God has been at work in the discernment of those you appointed as your Search Committee, and God will continue to provide for you into the future.

When I was a child, my friends and I would manoeuvre our way along the sidewalk, skipping and jumping and calling out a little rhyme that went: "Don't step on the cracks, or you'll break your mother's back."

The cracks in the sidewalk marked the transition from one slab of pavement to another, and the rhyme that we

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sang as children seemed to recognize in some way that transitions can be hazardous places. The "cracks" -- the times of transition in our individual lives often bring out strong emotion:

- putting the kindergartner on the school bus for the first time,
- watching the graduate march down the aisle in cap and gown,
- the mother crying at a wedding,
- the once-healthy person suddenly becoming a patient,
- the transition between life and death,
- even coming to the end of a long pastoral relationship.

Change is a natural part of life ... but it is often fraught with *reluctance* to let go of that which we know, what has become our comfort zone ... and *worry* about what is next.

Fearsome ... emotion-laden ... beautiful at times ... but generally accompanied by some anxiety - such are times of transition.

Today begins a time of transition for me as I move into retirement, and for you as a community of faith, as you

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prepare for new ministry leadership in the person of Rev. Ji who will join you in October. Over the next three months you will navigate your way with pulpit supply which will include a variety of gifts offered by those who are members here with you, those who exhibit both a skill and willingness to provide worship leadership. You will have the support of a supervising minister appointed by the Regional Council to be present at meetings requiring ministerial presence, and to assist in times of pastoral emergency such as funerals.

And you will begin the letting go of the pastoral relationship we have shared and enjoyed over the last 20 years to make space for the welcoming of a new relationship which will lead you into the foreseeable future. And you must, both individually and collectively, continue to exercise your own call to ministry and discipleship within this congregation and community and the wider world.

Living through life's transitional times is not easy. Feelings of grief for that which is lost, or about to be lost, can seem overwhelming. Sometimes there is a feeling of being stuck between the has-been and the not-yet -- No wonder children are afraid to step on the

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cracks in the sidewalk: They know, intuitively, that transitions can be dangerous or difficult places.

Singer and poet Leonard Cohen wrote words to a song called "Anthem" stating that nothing is perfect, that everything has cracks ... and that is how the light gets in. The cracks in our lives -- the times of transition -- can be unsettling, even disturbing, but they're often the times when the light gets in. And my friends, you can count on God's light guiding and leading you on the way, even though that way may be uncertain, not totally revealed yet.

But remember ... God is faithful and calls each one of us to faithfulness to the way of Jesus, to the exercising of our own spiritual gifts, and to the work which is both God's and ours. Jesus explains to would-be followers, that to follow him is not an easy life ... that the life of discipleship may require one to leave what they know and even whom they love ... and that once one has committed to this life of discipleship there is no turning back. May you, the disciples of St. Andrew's United Church, be blessed in your continued ministry as the wonderful congregation you are!

Thank you for all you have shared, for the love and support you have shown to me and to John, for the ways

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in which you have blessed *my* ministry because of *our* ministry together.

The prophet Isaiah speaking to a people in transition, offered these words from God:

*Watch for the new thing I am going to do. It is happening already--you can see it now! I will make a road through the wilderness and give you streams of water there.*

Watch for the new thing ... And may God bless you richly from the fullness of his grace.

And thank you ... thanks to all of you.

Or as Elvis would say, just before exiting the building:  
***Thank you; Thank you very much!***

Let's sing together, Great Is Thy Faithfulness