



LIVING WATERS ANGLICAN FELLOWSHIP

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**“Do not despise these small beginnings, for the Lord rejoices to see the work,
to see the plumb line in Zerubbabel’s hand.”**
(Zechariah 4:10)

Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

I hope this letter finds you well and rested as this new season begins and we return to routine. This fall marks our third year as a church family. As we give thanks for everything that God has done in and through us these past two years and look forward to the year ahead, I would like to share my heart with you. Our decision to leave the Anglican Church of Canada—especially St. John’s—and to join ANiC was not an easy one. However, after accepting what was clearly God’s call, Kathy and I had big dreams for this new church that God was calling us to plant. God has been so faithful in establishing and providing for Living Waters and we have much to be thankful for! We have settled into the Senor’s Centre and are already feeling like a family, our worship is joyful and honouring of God, and we have a committed Parish Council and Executive team. However, I have to confess that there have been times along the way when I have struggled with discouragement. I have been disappointed that more ‘conservative’ Anglicans from other churches in Kingston have not joined us. I have found balancing different expectations around music and worship difficult. And although it is not about numbers, I have been disheartened by the fact that our Sunday morning attendance has fluctuated so much from week to week, and instead of growing, we have so far, remained fairly small.

However, I take great comfort in the fact that many of God’s projects are slow to start. Five centuries before the birth of Jesus, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the Israelites returned from exile in Babylon to find Jerusalem in ruins and their beloved temple destroyed. With great enthusiasm, they set about to rebuild. However, they got little farther than laying the foundation before opposition set in. Israel’s neighbours fought the project at every turn, and eventually managed to get a restraining order to halt construction. Enemies mocked, supporters became discouraged, and for years the site stood silent. Zerubbabel felt like a failure—his grand dream had fizzled—and so he busied himself with the task of building his own home instead. Zerubbabel was probably like many of us when failure looms. What little confidence we have ebbs away and we try to protect ourselves from getting our hopes too high again. We look at the ground rather than the sky, at the past rather than the future. I have to admit that I’ve been guilty of doing all of these things over the past few months.

Thankfully, Zerubbabel’s story doesn’t end there. One day, God sends the prophet Zechariah to offer encouragement to His people—words that pierced Zerubbabel’s heart and filled him with fresh hope; “This is what the Lord says to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts. Nothing, not even a mighty mountain will stand in Zerubbabel’s way; it will become a level plain before him! And when Zerubbabel sets the final stone of the Temple in place, the people will shout: ‘May God bless it! May God bless it!’ ...Do not despise these small beginnings, for the Lord rejoices to see the work, to see the plumb line in Zerubbabel’s hand.” (Zech 4:6-7, 10)

To Zerubbabel, the task that God called him to seemed impossible—like an immovable mountain—and he was guilty of despising the small start. The word ‘despise’ means ‘to dislike, hate, look down on, or devalue.’ We despise something when we regard it lightly. However, God delights in taking the insignificant and making something out of it; He delights in taking what is weak and small and doing great things. We see this throughout Scripture: Moses’ rod delivered a nation from Egypt (Exodus 4:1-9); five smooth stones felled a giant (1 Samuel 17); a handful of flour and a jar of oil sustained a widow through years of famine (2 Kings 4:1-7); five barley loaves and two small fish fed a multitude (Matthew 14:13-21); and a mustard seed grew into a great tree for birds to find shelter (Matthew 13:31-32). Through this prophecy, God was reassuring Zerubbabel that his progress, although small, was an earnest down payment of his great and final success—a success that God would bring through the power of His Spirit and not by human strength or might. These words gave Zerubbabel the encouragement and hope he needed to press on.

Whenever God calls us to a new task, our vision can easily be distorted by small beginnings. We want what we want, but there’s a gap between dream and reality—there’s a gap between where we currently are and where we want to be. Sometimes this gap requires of us a period of hard work, or new skills and disciplines, or a tearing away of old habits and mind sets; or just the persistence to show up again and again when we would rather quit. It also means having patience and trusting that God knows what He’s doing. When we have big dreams in our heart, the small things can sometimes be frustrating. However, the reality is, small beginnings are the first steps towards a larger goal or dream. Steps that often come with hard work, slow progress, and many set backs. Nevertheless, whatever God calls us to do, we need to heed Zechariah’s words; “Do not despise these small beginnings, for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin.”

The Bible is clear that God’s people will be rewarded for loving and serving Him. However, it doesn’t say when we will be rewarded, or even how. One reason for this is that God doesn’t want us focussing on our rewards—or even on the end product—but on doing the work He has assigned us to do. And He expects us to perform our work faithfully, whether we see the outcome we want or not. In Luke 16:10 Jesus says; “He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much.” Before the Lord entrusts us with big assignments, He tests us in smaller ones. And often, our small beginnings are a test of our heart and a training ground to prepare us for the big things that are to come. I believe that God is watching us to see if we are willing to trust Him—if we can be faithful in the little things.

Friends, we are in the day of small beginnings, and as we start our third year together, I would like to hold this verse from Zechariah before us as an encouragement and a reassurance that despite any frustration, fear, or discouragement on our part—despite our small beginnings—God is rejoicing to see the work begin and He will be with us every step of the way. The Lord is building His church in, through, and among us—not by our power or might, but by His Spirit. Living Waters Anglican Fellowship is all God’s idea and all God’s work. Our role is to be faithful in the little things and to trust what we read in Philippians 1:6 that “He who began a good work in us will be faithful to complete it!” Let us press on together! Forward, Always Forward. Everywhere Forward!

Faithfully,

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