

Almighty God, consuming fire of love
 You have given us the vision to be
Anchored in the Love of Christ
Committed to Your mission, and
Transformed by the Holy Spirit;
 We seek to honour You in living worship
 to embody and proclaim the Good News, and
 to grow communities of faith:
 Set us ablaze with Your love and power
 to build up Your Church
 and serve You in the world to Your praise and glory.

In Jesus' name we pray, **Amen.**

Anchored... Committed... Transformed... ACT

Anchored in God's love... Committed to God's mission... Transformed by the Holy Spirit

This is the Provincial Vision and Mission statement that we are exploring and busy with at this time. Last week Claire looked at being Anchored in God's love and how the gift of God's love compels us. We need to affirm and recognise the active workings of God's love in our lives, before we can go on. We need to accept and embrace the love that God shows us. Do you know in your heart of hearts that Jesus loves you? Knowing you are loved makes a world of difference and isn't this what we most long for?

If our identities are anchored in God's love, it will inspire us to work for God's Kingdom (PAUSE) IF we all agree that God is love, and God loves us, and the sign on the cross was a sign of this love, then wouldn't our natural response be to love back? If we really love someone, then we generally want to do something for them, right? When you hear a friend is sick or in need, often our response would be, "what can we do to help or comfort them?" This is expressed in our own different and unique ways.

We may phone them, drop in and visit them. We may take them flowers, soup or a knitted scarf, but these are all expressions of our love for them.

We may check in with them, by sending a text message, or for those of you, who are Blackberry fans, may want to bbn them. Whether at school or work you may offer to collect missed assignments and guide them through it, but these are all expressions of our love for them.

And no matter how small these may seem, they are often *the* most powerful ways to show our love and make the most significant difference.

The love we receive from God compels us to do something for Him as well as for others. This brings us to today, being committed to God's mission. Just like any relationship or friendship that we want to grow, we need to be committed to it. The Dictionary's definition of the word 'commit' is to "Use **entirely** for a specific person, activity, or cause". So being committed to God's mission means that we will be **used entirely for God's mission**; our good and bad, our weaknesses and strengths, our joys and pains, all of these will be used. And this may seem daunting, but with the love of God and knowing we are loved, it makes the journey bearable and we know we are capable of doing anything in and through this love.

A story that demonstrates being committed to God's mission is this story about a well-known Indian evangelist named Sadhu Chellappa. Chellappa was on a mission trip to a village north of Madras when in the middle of the night he suddenly sensed God speaking to him: "Leave this house quickly and run away!" - Not exactly a convenient thing to do. But Chellappa was used to obeying the Lord without debate, so he dressed

quickly and ran into the darkness. After a while, he was in open country. As he passed under a large tree, he felt God tell him, "Stay here and start to preach! Now even for an experienced evangelist, this was puzzling--because there was no one to be seen. Why did God want him to preach to an empty field in the middle of the night? But he stopped under the tree and began to preach the gospel.

Finally, he reached the point at which he called on his unseen listeners to give their lives to Jesus. He was surprised to hear a voice from the top of the tree and see a man climb down, crying. The man tearfully gave his life to Jesus. When Chellappa asked why he was in a tree out in the middle of nowhere, the man admitted, "I came out here to hang myself."

If Chellappa wasn't committed to God's mission, a man would have died, not knowing God, not knowing the love God had for him and at the same time the world would have lost another soul which could have been saved. Whatever God may ask you to do- whether it seems small and insignificant, big and daunting- you are called to be faithful and committed to God's mission. Every morning when we wake up, perhaps we could start the day praying: "Lord, what have you got in store for me today? Please guide me, take me and use me for your glory."

I can relate this to my own journey here in Grahamstown. At the beginning of the year Grahamstown was a daunting reality on my path, and I was scared of the unknown realities that I was going to face. Now being in Grahamstown is totally out of my comfort zone, I am away from family with whom I am really close; I live in community with many different cultures all around me, and in my personal space... I am placed in a situation where my previous securities that I have built up for myself don't work and I am left vulnerable, confused and alone. But it is in this situation, here in Grahamstown that my relationship and dependence on God is deepened and I can hear God more clearly. It is here that I rely on God more fully and place my security in Him. It is here that I'm learning that I can stand on my own two feet, although wounded, lonely and heartbroken, and keep walking because I know I am loved by God and God has my past,

present, and future in His Hands. And because of this, my only response can be to give back to God, to trust Him and obey where He is sending me and what He is calling me to do. And I have to be committed to His mission, which is in Grahamstown at the moment.

If this is what it means to be committed, then what is God's mission?

Jesus described his own mission by quoting Isaiah, when He read this scripture in the synagogue: Luke 4:18, 19 "*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.*"

The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ. (PAUSE) Based on Jesus' mission statement, The Anglican Church has identified what we call "The 5 marks of mission" which are:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

The Ephesians reading this morning also gives us an idea of God's mission. God's mission is for all, Jews and Gentiles, Catholic and Protestant, old and young, poor and rich. God knew and still knows the bigger picture and therefore it was important to reconcile the Jews and Gentiles and breakdown the barriers between the two, showing us still today that under Christ we are all one. This was all made possible because God loved His

people so much, even though they failed Him, and so sent His Son to be a living example for us and show us the way back to His love. Christ is the ultimate example of God's love in the world and if we follow Him we will be fulfilling God's mission in the world today too.

What does this mean for you and me in practice? How can I live in such a way that demonstrates I am committed to God' mission? Using the basis of the 5 marks of mission, we could:

- 1. Share your faith or what God means to us or even an answered prayer with a friend.
- We could live prayerfully – by praying for our loved ones as well as the world
- We could share our journey of faith and life experiences with the younger generation
- We could possibly be less reserved and sit closer together at Church demonstrating the oneness of a community... And I'm assured you wouldn't be sitting in another person's place
- 2. You could encourage your children to bring their children for baptism and later Children's Church or volunteer to teach our children in Children's Church
- 3. We could offer the gift of hospitality, by maybe serving tea at Church or welcoming a new family in the Church for tea
- 4. We could look at the change in the world differently and embrace that times are changing
- We could be more vocal in speaking out against injustices and to seek ways to make a positive contribution to the life of our community
- 5. We could be more disciplined about recycling
- Or be more attentive and take seriously the need to reduce our carbon footprint and find ways to conserve energy in our homes and use water wisely

- 1. Share our faith or what God means to us or even an answered prayer with a friend
- We could live prayerfully – by praying for loved ones, the Church community and the world today
- We could share our faith our journey of faith and life experiences with others
- We could let our guard down and lift up our voices as we praise God in the hymns we sing at Church
- 2. We could volunteer to teach our Children in Children's Church or invite new believers to our Bible studies
- 3. We could offer the gift of hospitality and company for a homesick student, a single parent, the weary lecturer or the lonely grandparent
- 4. We could be more vocal in speaking out against injustices and to seek ways to make a positive contribution to the life of our community
- 5. We could be more disciplined about recycling
- Or be more attentive and take seriously the need to reduce our carbon footprint and find ways to conserve energy in our homes and use water wisely

There are so many ways to be committed to God's mission. And isn't it wonderful that we can commit ourselves anew to this mission when we pray: we offer ourselves to you... to be a living sacrifice... And today as we pray these words, I invite you, and urge you, to commit yourself anew to God's mission.

So if we are anchored in God's love, it compels us to be committed to God's mission... and the next step is to be transformed by the Holy Spirit... And this will be explored next time.

Amen