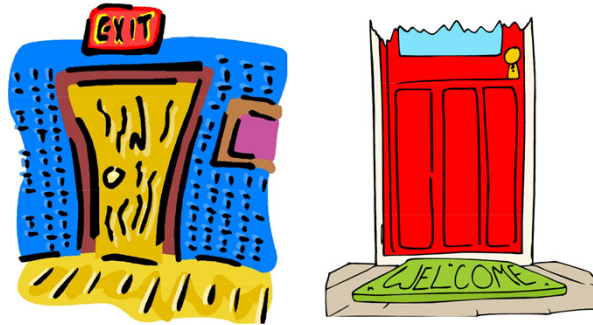


Exit and Entrance: Patterns, Emotions and the Wilderness



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Exit and Entrance: Patterns, Emotions and the Wilderness - 1

Fresh Start

Talking Points

To begin a new life requires relinquishing the old. The Israelites who had known Egypt and God's miracles in the desert could not cross into the Promised Land because they had not let go of the old life and believed (Numbers 14:20-24). Being able to let go of their slavery was essential to becoming a free people under a new covenant with God.

That new covenant included dwelling together and knowing each other to an extraordinary degree. "I will put my dwelling place among you, and I will not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people." (Leviticus 26:11-12). Learning how to know the "other" and be known by them is one of the challenges of a new ministry.

Leaving one place/situation and moving to a new one is emotional work – even if the change is longed for (e.g., getting married, graduating from school or being a new rector/associate or, for a congregation, calling a new leader).

Think of a time in your past when you made such a change (not your current situation). What were some of the emotions you felt at that time?

Do a quick brainstorming, capturing the words on a flip chart – frequently these are a mix of hope-filled words like excitement, anticipation and anxiety-filled words like fear, loss.

“All changes, even the most longed for, have their melancholy; for what we leave behind us is a part of ourselves; we must die to one life before we can enter into another.”

Anatole France

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Fresh  Start

Talking Points

It is no wonder that change evokes such mixed emotions for, as French Nobel laureate Anatole France notes – it is not possible to enter into a new life without dying to the old one.

Just as the Israelites had to “let go” of Egypt and their understanding of themselves as slaves in order to enter into a new covenant with God so we must let go of the past in order to enter the future. It is like moving from Washington to New York – we have to say good-bye to Washington AND give up our image of ourselves as Washingtonians before we are freed to make new friends and become real “New Yorkers.”

Patterns of Exit and Entrance

What are some of your patterns:

- In a job situation?
- Within your family?

What are your congregation's patterns or rituals for:

- Saying good-bye to key people
- Welcoming newcomers?

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Fresh  Start

Talking Points

We all have grown up with patterns (or ways or systems) for saying “good-bye” and “hello.” Think about your own experiences in this regard.

What have you done in the past when you have left a job? When you started a job?

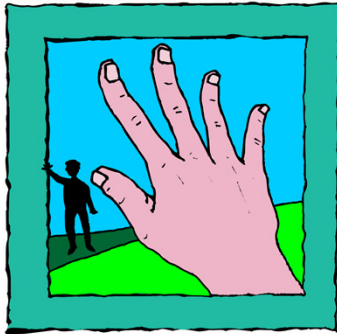
What does your family do when it enters or leaves the grandparents' house?

Hold a general discussion, maybe capturing some of the ways in which people say “good-bye” and “hello” in job situations and in personal ones – these might include bringing gifts, having a “good-bye” party, seeking out special people, making sure that everyone has your new address, etc

Now think about your current congregation -- What are its traditions around saying “good-bye” to key people or welcoming newcomers?

Hold a general discussion, maybe capturing some of the traditions on a flip chart.

The Exit



- How did you say good-bye to your former congregation?
- How did they say good-bye to you?
- What about your family?
- What was left undone?

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Fresh Start

Talking Points

Consider the exits related to the current transition. First, let's look from the perspective of the clergyperson (you!). Think about these questions and jot down your response on the Handout I am about to give you.

Distribute Handout 1. The clergy are asked to reflect on how they left their previous position. If this is a clergy-only group, after they have had a few minutes to respond to the questions, ask them to share their observations within their small groups or facilitate a large group discussion. If discussion occurs in small groups, have the groups share their general observations with the large group.

If this is a mixed clergy-lay group, move immediately to the next slide and ask the laity to complete Handout 2. Then in congregation teams ask people to share their respective experiences of the "exits".

The Former Rector/Assistant's Exit



- How did your congregation say “good-bye?”
- What was left undone?

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Fresh Start

Talking Points

What about the former rector/assistant? How did the congregation say farewell? Are there still things that need to be done to close that relationship?

Distribute Handout 2. If this is a clergy-only group, give them a few minutes to complete the handout and then have them share their observations in a small group or facilitate a large group discussion. If discussion is done in small groups, have the groups share their general observations with the large group.

If this is a mixed clergy-lay group, ask the laity to complete Handout 2 then have the clergyperson and lay leaders share their respective experiences of the “good-bye” in congregation teams. Ask the teams to share their general observations with the large group.

The Entrance

- How were introductions handled? How about for family members?
- What was the first Sunday like?
- What still needs to be done?



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Fresh Start 

Talking Points

Now let's look at entering the congregation. Please take a few minutes to read through the questions on this sheet and jot down your responses to them. After a few minutes, we will begin our conversation.

Distribute Handout 3 and give participants a few minutes to jot down their responses. Have them share their responses in small groups (congregation teams) or facilitate a large group discussion. If the discussion occurs in small groups, facilitate a sharing of the groups' observations in the large group.

The Wilderness. . .

What was/is it like?

Who were/are:

- Satan
- Beasts
- Angels



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Fresh Start

Talking Points

The time of moving from a safe place we know to a new place we are not sure about is a familiar theme in Scripture – it is known as the “wilderness” time. The Israelites left Egypt and wandered for 40 years. And in the brief passage from Mark that we read earlier, Jesus is driven into the wilderness for 40 days following his baptism. These wilderness experiences are often where we find God most present and ourselves most open for reflection and exploration. So let’s think about how this transition time has been so far. Take a few minutes to read the questions on this sheet and jot down your responses and then we’ll open our conversation.

Distribute Handout 4 and give participants a few minutes to jot down their responses. Have them share their responses in small groups (congregation teams) or facilitate a large group discussion. If the discussion occurs in small groups, facilitate a sharing of the groups’ observations in the large group.

Acknowledgements

Who were/are the angels:

- For the clergy?
- For the lay leaders?
- For the congregation?

How should they be thanked?



Thank You!

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Fresh Start

Talking Points

Friends, family, lay leaders in your new congregation – all can have served as angels during this time of transition – ministering to you OR to the lay leaders who shouldered extra burdens of leadership during the “wilderness” OR even to the congregation at large. Who are these people? What have you done to thank them? What still needs to be done?

Facilitate a general discussion, capturing ideas for how people might be thanked.

What do you need from God?

- What angels would you like to visit you?
- What prayer do you have for yourself and for your congregation?



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Fresh Start

Talking Points

What do you still need at this point in the transition from your angels? From God?
What prayer do you have for yourself and your congregation at this time?

Facilitate a general discussion and end with a rereading of Mark 1:12 - 13.