

Imagine if God escaped one day, got away, got out.

Out of the cages of our creeds and confessions, the bars of our beliefs, the narrow doors of our doctrine, the limitations of our assumptions, the confines of our interpretations.

What if God escaped one day and came in here and said here I am, what are you going to do with me? What are you going to do with my presence?

A royal invitation was sent out to the entire kingdom. Bring to the king your finest flavours, to see which taste will please the royal tongue the most.

And people busily began creating lovely teas and juices, dainties and morsels, and rushed to the palace to please their dear king.

A poor peasant man also felt compelled to go, and though he had nothing to offer, nothing but an empty old jar, he began his journey to the palace.

On his way he met a coco farmer. Where are you going asked the coco farmer. I'm off to the palace to please the king's palate the poor man said proudly.

Let me come too said the coco farmer, and he tossed a beautiful coco bean into the jar.

Soon they met a sugar cane farmer. Where are you going asked the sugar cane farmer. We're off to the palace to please the kings palate.

Let me come too said the sugar cane farmer, and he tossed the sweetness of his fields into the jar.

Soon they met a dairy farmer with a lovely jersey cow. Where are you going asked the dairy farmer. We're off to the palace to please the kings palate.

Let me come too said the dairy farmer and he poured rich and creamy milk into the jar.

It was hot during the last part of their journey and the sun warmed the mixture in the jar.

The four were escorted into the ball room where the king was surrounded by all things savoury. They bowed and offered the jar and just as the king was about to raise it to his lips, the ball room doors flew open and in with a furious flurry came the kings arch enemy, sword unsheathed and eyes flashing. Loud gasping, then hushed silence filled the room.

Impulsively the king extended the jar to his enemy, impulsively the enemy took the jar and raised it to his lips and let the warm milky chocolate caress the inside of his throat.

All violent sentiment left him, and he approached the king with a gesture of reconciliation.

The people of the Exodus were on a wilderness journey and on that journey they repeatedly recognized that God was present with them and they acknowledged that presence by building a tabernacle, a church, a dwelling place for God.

The Lord said to Moses, tell the Israelites to take for me an offering; from all whose hearts prompt them to give you shall receive the offering for me. This is the offering that you shall receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze, blue, purple, and crimson yarns and fine linen, goats' hair, tanned rams' skins, fine leather, acacia wood, oil for the lamps, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, onyx stones and gems to be set in the ephod and for the breastpiece.

And have them make me a sanctuary, so that I may dwell among them.

They built this sanctuary by combining their resources, pooling their gifts, blending their contributions, mixing their offerings. And they built something beautiful. And I imagine it to have been a sanctuary with some portability, a bit nimble and porous, allowing light to come in, allowing breezes to blow through.

Because we don't want to try to contain God, or tame God, or domesticate God. Because then it becomes necessary to have riots in the temple, for temples to be destroyed, for stones to be rolled away from tombs, for reformations to happen, for Rosa to stay seated on the bus, for Idle no More and for leaders to be told to stop feeding us fear. When we try to colonize God then things are not as they should be.

We must build our temples lightly.

Osler Mennonite Church is a dwelling place for God, a sign of divine presence. It is built from the generous and constant contribution of many gifts. It is a place of peace that points to reconciliation. It is sacred. It must be held gently and lightly.

I want to offer you the word lightness. Lightness has as its opposite the word heaviness. The ponderousness that is far too subject to the one directional wishes of gravity. Gravity that slows us down and stops us, that brings down the corners of our lips into expressions of drowsy despair.

It was expressions like that, no doubt, that prompted a young Jewish rabbi to say, here take my yoke, its light.

There is something very profound that builders of fine acoustic guitars know. They know the importance of building an instrument that is so fiercely strong that it has the ability to support a lifetime of the immense strain and stress and pressure of tightly strung strings, and at the same time the ability allow the wood enough freedom and flexibility to vibrate and push the sound. The strengthening does not come from smearing on more glue and adding more and heavier braces. This balance of strength and flexibility comes from the particular shaping of the braces and how they are placed in relation to each other and in relation to the rest of the wood. It comes from the kind of wood and how it's been seasoned.

The world is full of heavy solid guitars that will never bend or break, but sound lifeless. The world is full of warped and wobbly guitars that cannot stand the pressure. But every once in a while the builder finds the moment

and feels the magic and brings into being an instrument that comes to life and sparkles and sings.

This is a wonderful image for the church, reminding us that we must be deeply rooted and robustly structured, but light and agile enough to live.

The church is light, like a snow flake. A snow flake floating and dancing, out of its own control, spirited along, finally finding the tongue of a thirsty dying soul, just in time to save a life and sacrifice herself.

The church is light, like a piece of paper. A piece of paper that folds into an airplane that takes flight across the street and around the world.

Let's not be fearful desperados, clinging desperately to what is familiar. Let's be fearless divas instead, liberated to embrace our church, yet hold lightly to its structures.

Rooted a million miles deep into the soil and able to soar among the clouds.

And what we thought was a yoke on our shoulders is actually wings that set us free to fly above our fears.

Set free to go skipping through fields of daisies shouting a salvation that actually saves, set free to burst into places where God dances with us, leads us in steps that are new, twirls us about, and never steps on our toes, at least not by accident.

Let's break open the heaviness of the shell, the cumbersome component of our structures, let's break open the jar that contains our fragrant beauty, and with our collective hair scandalously undone, pour ourselves lavishly all over each other's feet.

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