

May 31, 2009

Dear Burns Church Family,

In Deuteronomy 1, we read these words:

These are the words Moses spoke to all Israel in the desert east of the Jordan: "The LORD our God said to us at Horeb, 'You have stayed long enough at this mountain. Break camp and advance into the hill country...See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land that the LORD swore he would give to your fathers – to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – and to their descendants after them.'"

At the beginning of 2009, I included these words in my annual Pastor's Note to the congregation. I challenged us to always listen for the voice of God in our lives and to be ready to leave what is comfortable and predictable and go where God is telling us to go. I called for us all to be ready when our Commander-in-Chief calls out the order to "Break camp and advance!" I told you that, as His people, our job is simply to obey.

If you have been around for all or even part of the nine years that I have served here at Burns Church, you will undoubtedly know a few things about me. First and foremost, you will know that I am not perfect! But you will also know that, even though I don't do it perfectly, I do always strive to practice what I preach and live out my sermons in my daily life. The same is true for Karen and for us as a family. The desire of our hearts as individuals, as a couple, and as a family is walk in obedience to the voice of our Lord.

About six months ago, I was contacted by the Interim Moderator of a church and asked to consider allowing my name to be part of their discernment process as they searched for a new pastor. Karen and I talked and prayed about it and sensed God calling us to at least enter the process. We clearly communicated to this church that we were happy at Burns and in Brooklin and were entering this process simply out of obedience to God. Over the course of the last few months, God has been faithful to us. Our Commander-in-Chief has spoken very clearly and given us our marching orders. In many ways we are comfortable here. We love Burns, we love each one of you, we love Brooklin, we love our home. We are comfortable and content. But God has spoken to us and is clearly calling us to "Break camp and advance!" Our job is simply to obey.

With all of this in mind, we stand before you this morning with equal amounts of sadness and anticipation to announce that we will be concluding our ministry here at Burns at the end of June. This summer we will pack up and move our family across the country where we will assume a new ministry as I become the Lead Pastor of Coquitlam Presbyterian Church in beautiful Coquitlam, British Columbia. As a good Presbyterian, I must hasten to add that this ministry call will not be official until both Presbyteries have approved it over the next month. Remember the Presbyterian motto: "Everything decently and in order!!" ☺

(OVER)

We love Burns Presbyterian Church. We love each one of you. You and this church are precious to us. This was the place nine years ago that offered us healing when we needed it most. You are the people who welcomed all three of our children into the world (some more literally than others!). This was the church family where they were each baptized and began their faith journeys with Jesus. Burns Church will always hold a special place in our hearts. But it is time for us to “Break camp and advance.”

The next number of weeks will be extremely difficult and busy for us. We have much to do to get ready for our move across the country. Your patience, understanding, and help will be greatly needed and appreciated. We also look forward to some special times with many of you over the next few weeks as we conclude our ministry here. And...we look forward to more special times ahead with many of you in our new home in British Columbia! Please know that no matter where we live, we always have time & room for great friends! 😊

As we leave Burns, our prayer is that God will show Himself strong to us all. Our honest prayer for Burns is that the LORD will continue to do awesome things in & through this place! Take heart my friends: You are deeply loved, each one of you. Loved by us and (more importantly) loved by our God. As we journey forward, let us all remember: This is His church...and He has promised to build it. Our job is simply to obey.

May our God bless each one of you.

Love,

Graeme & Karen 😊