

Last Sunday, three young adults stood up here after completing a year of service and self discovery sponsored by and surrounded by the great cloud of witnesses that is this parish. We, as a worshipping body filled with the Holy Spirit, commissioned them to go out from this place and continue the good work they had started among us. We commissioned them to go into the world armed with the knowledge of the love of this community and the love of God and live out their baptismal vows in a profound way. Elizabeth and I spent this week celebrating them and commemorating their time spent with us and then we sent them off.

In a few minutes, we are going to commission a team of All Saints' youth to leave the comfort of their lives, families and homes for a week to plunge into the short but intense work of a mission trip, changing and being changed by the world of poverty and injustice they see out there.

Earlier this summer, we commissioned a group of youth pilgrims to go on their journey to Ireland to explore Celtic spirituality and deepen their own faith and later this morning, we will commission a group of adult pilgrims heading out to Canterbury, England at the end of this week to learn more about our Anglican heritage, where we came from and why we do what we do.

In our Psalm this morning, we are reminded of the fact that we are deeply connected to our creator. God is everywhere we might choose to go. We can't hide our selves, our hearts or our minds from the one that created us and wants all good things for us. We are accompanied by a God who will show us the right path and then allow us to chose that path and forgive us if we don't.

We commission these people and these journeys not to claim them as our own, not to brand them as belonging, although those things are true, but for other reasons: First, we commission to remind them that this is a journey set apart. This is not a regular graduation, this is not a youth group lock in, this is not a tourist adventure. This is a God-journey, made of bigger, tougher, deeper stuff than any of the others. We leave knowing that the journey will change us, our perspectives, our faith, our relationships. We will return with new sight.

Second, we commission to remind those of us still here that there is a world outside of our church doors calling us into it. Not just as tourists or observers, but as pilgrims and missionaries. We are called into the world to better it, to drag it—sometimes kicking and screaming—closer to God. These few being commissioned are doing something important, and there is important work to be done here, too.

Our pilgrims and missionaries have work to do. That has been true for generations. Our brothers and sisters leaving for these adventures this week are not going on vacation. We are trusting that they will use this time to grow closer to God, to pray for themselves and for others, to do good work in the world, to seek growth, to seek God.

Those of us who remain behind will be charged with keeping these missionaries and pilgrims in our prayers, preparing ourselves for whatever they bring back.

Our formation programs at All Saints' are committed to providing opportunities for transformational journeys for as many of our community as are willing to participate. While baptism and Eucharist are all the preparation we need to go into the world, pilgrimages and mission journeys are created to help us refocus, to reframe, to recommit to those things we promised at our baptism.

And because we know that these journeys need marking in the life of the community, we commission those taking their leave to go out and do these things, for themselves, for this community and for the community of God's world.

Part of the service of commission is to remind us, as Psalm 139 does, that we are accompanied by God. When we travel through darkness, when we hit a spiritual wall, when we are frustrated by injustice, when we are stymied in our growth, God is there.

And when we experience a great awakening, when our souls fly, when our minds and hearts and arms are open to the experience laid before us, God is there.