

Pentecost 21: **Making “Go” Happen**

I want to talk today about some of the aspects of the ministry campaign and about what we are trying to accomplish. The campaign title reflects the goal- “For Generations to Come...Go.” I’m praying that after my talk today, will know why you should make the campaign successful. My question for you is “How can I help make “Go” happen?”

I’m inspired by the verses from 1 Corinthians 15:57-58, *“But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ. So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord.”*

When you think about what it means to be a Christian and a member of a church, you probably envision being with a group of people who believe as you do, that you are a sinner and that you are saved because Jesus died for your sins. After all, isn’t that what Christianity is about? Well yes, but is that all church is about?

(The fill ins are coming up. Even if you don’t usually look at them I encourage you to do so today. They are in your bulletin.)

Jesus was always straightforward about God’s commands. He said they were summarized in two statements. Love God. Love your neighbor. But to make sure we could actualize these commandments, Jesus gave two direct commands to his followers, the people who would gather together and become the first church.

A. First Jesus commanded them to “Love each other.”

“So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.” John 13:34

B. Later he commanded them to “Go and make disciples.”

“Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations.” Matthew 28:19

These two commands are often summarized in two words as the basic tasks of the church. If you are doing fill ins, write the word ministry next to fill in #1 and the word mission next to #2. We usually think of ministry as the care for the people of God. We think of missions as the care for those who need to hear the Gospel. We do mission and ministry not just to be nice, or to fulfill our personal needs, but because our Lord Jesus directly told us to do them.

Think about that. The church is not just a nice place to visit with people like you. Its function is not just to provide for your needs. Its function is not just to give you a place to get your children baptized, or to get them married, or even to get them buried. It provides all of those things of course. (Fill in C)

C. The Christian Church and Good Shepherd congregation as a part of the Church exist to put the commands of Jesus into action.

Jesus replied, “But even more blessed are all who hear the word of God and put it into practice.” Luke 11:28

And in John 8 verse 31: So **Jesus** said to **those who** believed in him, “If you obey my teaching, you are really my disciples.

This campaign isn't being done to make some of us happy, or to raise money, or even to put more people in our pews. These things might happen, but the point is to follow Jesus's commands.

As I said earlier, the goal of our mission and ministry campaign is summarized in the title: “For generations to come...Go”

Say that aloud with me please: “For generations to come...go”

This campaign is designed to enable us to follow Jesus commands for ministry and missions.

The people working on the campaign, the leaders of the congregation, lots of us have identified some issues in our congregation that hamper us in our quest to follow the commands of Jesus. In order to make the “Go” in our title really happen, the campaign is designed to address those issues.

First we face the issue of **workload**. Fill in D1

God has blessed me with over 75 years on this earth. In that time, I've noticed, as I'm sure most of you have, how much more complicated and complex life has become. Just think about technology.

1. Phones
2. Tv
3. Internet refrigerators!
4. Zoom and working from home

In addition to the basic complexity of technology, we have demanded more and more from our government and our institutions. Many of you know I was a career public school teacher and administrator. When I began teaching in the 1960's my job wasn't much different than it was for those who taught in the previous 40 years. As a high school teacher, I saw about 180 kids a day, more than 35 in each class. Can you imagine that today: parents, special ed., teacher unions, government regs.

As a school superintendent, I had to sign a document that said my school was teaching everything that state law required. The list was mostly curriculum things when I started, but every year the school was responsible for more and more things. From bike safety to anti-communism to safe sex to bullying, the list continued to grow and so did the responsibilities of teachers and administrators. The list grew to several thousand items. It took more people to accomplish the task.

The same thing has happened in churches. The ministry and mission responsibilities for pastors have grown geometrically. It is no longer possible for one person to meet all the needs, even if the church is relatively small. When the membership of a church exceeds 150 or so regular attendees, it has reached the limit of what one person can manage. We are blessed with Pastor Don, who works hard for the congregation he has served for so many years. But even his commitment and effort cannot solve the issues of greater demand for service. Generally, all that can be done is meet existing needs. There is little opportunity to take on new tasks or outreach.

Even the early church faced problems like these. Listen to this reading from Acts chapter 6:

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. ² And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. ³ Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. ⁴ But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." ...⁷ And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

When we first began talking about a transition from our present pastor to a new one, many of the church leaders saw an opportunity for growth. The present workload precluded growth. Perhaps working with a full-time pastor and a part-time one would allow us to explore our ability to meet both our ministry and our mission goals. In addition, if the plan worked, it could develop into permanent positions for at least 2 professionals, and perhaps even having two working full-time. Exploring this concept is made possible by Pastor Don's interest in working part-time as he eases into full-time retirement. The ministry campaign can provide the resources we need to put Jesus' commands into action in Canandaigua. As the verse says, we need workers for the fields. *"The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields."* Luke 10:2

That brings us to the D2 fill in, the issue of **finances**.

If we are to carry out the Lord's commands for ministry and mission in our congregation, we must take special care with finances. It will require money to follow the commands of Jesus. God has richly blessed the members of this congregation. The campaign presents and opportunity for us to give in response to all he has given us.

We recognize one issue in the search for a new pastor. We need to fairly compensate those who work for us. Our Eastern District President Dr. Chris Wicher once told me that "Good Shepherd Canandaigua is a unique congregation. It will need a unique pastor." Replacing our unique Pastor Muller with another unique pastor may involve unique salary costs. We will certainly have higher costs if we have up to two full-time pastors.

As it says in 1 Timothy, *Elders who do their work well should be respected and paid well, especially those who work hard at both preaching and teaching. 1 Timothy 5:17.* The campaign will help us prepare and save for some of increasing costs.

Finances are also involved in D3, the issue of **training**

Pastors can lead, direct and counsel, but the bottom line is that all of us are to use our talents. As we read in 1 Peter 4:10, "God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual **gifts**. **Use** them well to serve one another." But perhaps each of you has had this answer when asked to serve, "I don't know how!" That is why we need to develop ways to do what the verse for the fill-in says, *"Equip God's*

people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. Ephesians 2:12. Lot's of us are already working on this:

Vision Team

Concept of discipleship training

Participation on various teams.

Bible classes, small groups, sermons

But we all need to grow in order that we can "Go" forward. As the writer of Hebrews says: *Let us stop going over the same old ground again and again, always teaching those first lessons about Christ. Let us go on instead to other things and become **mature** in our understanding, as strong Christians ought to be. Hebrews 6:1.* The campaign will help us develop the resources we need to do this work.

And of course, we have the issue D4 –the issue of facilities

We need facilities to serve our needs. I will leave the discussion of the specifics of our facilities to those with more knowledge than I, but always remember the words of the psalmist: Lord, I love the house where you live, the place where your glory dwells. Psalm 26:8 This house belongs to who we stand for and who we love, our Lord Jesus Christ. The campaign will provide the means we need to upgrade and improve our church so we can do a better job with mission and ministry.

So how do we carry out the commands of our Lord. Well, I encourage you to get involved in the campaign. Commit to its success. As the last fill in says, we will make the "Go" happen if we all **commit ourselves** to the Lord. We must do so if we are to follow the direct commands of Jesus.

You can make this choice by loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and committing yourself firmly to him. This is the key to your life. Deuteronomy 30:20

So what makes the go in our campaign happen? The answer is simple, we do!! Each of us using the gifts God has given us, and working in conjunction with other member of our congregation, can make the campaign successful. Together we will strive to go and do missions and go and do ministry. And the fruits of our labor will affect not only this generation but generations to come.

This is what our Lord commands. How can we do anything else?

Your question to consider is "How can I help make "Go" happen?"

We pray:

Heavenly Father, we offer ourselves to you as grateful followers of Jesus and at his command. Amen