

At the Doorframe

Recently my son moved to live with his Yia Yia (Greek for ‘Grandmother’). He starts Uni this year and it’s only half an hour on a tram from there, as compared to 2 hours on public transport from here. My other two younger kids are working, heading into senior school years and going out with friends. They are moving fast towards independence, too. But with this first mover it all suddenly feels REAL to BE an empty nester, and big change is coming for me – whether I like it or not! It feels like it’s looming over me, ready to crash. An approaching big birthday is also on its way, and I can no longer drive along in the role I’ve had as “MUM” - where I know what to tweak and look out for on the way.

Whilst all this makes sense and shouldn’t be a surprise – (I mean, every year they get older! How did I not really see this coming??) – but for me it still feels like a shock that crept up and said “BOO!”. This is freakishly challenging for me. My emotions and ‘known’ schedules are all over the place, I’m happy, excited, scared (for them and for me), off balance, chaotic, in a space with schedules and responsibilities changing so fast! It’s like driving onto city streets and navigating them years after I last drove there and having stayed on country roads only for the last 20 years. I’ve lost my first kid to adulthood!!! He’s actually not coming back *here* to “home”!! Everything is changing all at once! I’m not ready for it. And I’m not entirely sure who or how I come out the other end! Or who with! Or doing what?!

Co-incidentally, I’m also rereading Susan Beaumont’s *“How to Lead when you don’t know where you are going”*. It’s all about places and spaces where identity, and roles, and where to next, are up in the air – liminal spaces. For Narnia fans, it’s that doorway from “The Last Battle” where an old world is on one side and a new one the other – but in that place where you are framed by the doorway you are in neither world; you can see into both, but you aren’t in either “world”, new or old. You’re a tourist, not a resident – but you’re about to move in to the new!

Some of you may have been in these places and spaces, and may know the feelings and disorientation. Susan’s book talks about this sort of thing for Congregations. What is it like to be forced to acknowledge that things aren’t like they were? That they’ve changed, and where we are headed is not certain. Many of our Congregations are in this situation. We are in Liminal Space – the doorway. Susan’s book explores the blessing and potential of this time, as well as the disorientation and challenge. She reminds us that to change and be something and “someone’s” who are not who we were, is a very GOD story. She reminds us of Joseph; from favoured son to chunked down a hole and sold as a slave; of Israel, enslaved by Egypt; of Ruth, torn from her homeland and husband. We as Church know these stories! We know how they end. In blessing – as well as unexpected futures and identities for those who experienced them!

And so, I will leave you here in my unfinished and unresolved, liminal, confused, beginning of a story – because many of you are in them too. We’re walking them together, working out who we were, who we are, who we will be – as individuals and as Church.

Feel free to read along with me: *“How to Lead when you don’t know where you are going”* by Susan Beaumont. And feel free to share your thoughts and stories too, as Congregations and as individuals - looking for the blessings in the unexpected, and celebrating “God with us” on the road.

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Photo by Lester Priebbenow, LCAVD Bishop

