

Spiritual leadership has its ups and its downs. The ups are moments we treasure forever; moments when we share Peter's desire to build some tents and stay on top of the mountain forever. We hope those moments will never end. As much as we treasure the ups, the downs are the moments that transform us.

Peter, James, and John have an incredible up moment; they see Jesus' blaze with heavenly glory; they see Moses and Elijah speak with him; they see God put his seal of approval on Jesus up on that mountain.

No wonder they want to stay! They felt good! Everything was so clear! They were on top of the world! Put up the tents, light a fire, it's time for s'mores!

Then the cloud comes. Then things get confusing; then they lose sight of Jesus. They hear the voice of God declare, *Matthew 17:5 (NRSV) "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!"*¹

Elders and Deacons, we are called to lead Pennside in cloudy times. Sometimes standard operating procedure works. Sometimes it doesn't. The pace of life has picked up. So have the challenges; the way forward isn't always forward; sometimes it's two steps forward, one step back, and one step to the side. The right way to go isn't always clear. Sometimes, we muddle through the best we can and it feels like there's more perspiration than inspiration involved. Dare we allow one another to see us sweat?

One writer put the leadership challenge this way: We are not asked to subscribe to any utopia or to believe in a perfect world just around the corner. We are asked to be patient with necessarily slow and groping advance on the road forward, and to be ready for each step ahead as it becomes practicable. We are asked to equip ourselves with courage, hope, readiness for hard work, and to cherish large and generous ideals."² - **Emily Greene Balch**

These are cloudy times, but God is in the cloud! And God will speak to us from the cloud. God will show us the way. So our first priority is not setting the agenda, or putting out this month's fire, or making sure we're sticking to our budget. No, our first priority is worship! Our first priority is listening for the voice of God!

¹ *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. 1989. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

² Emily Greene Balch, "Verse and Voice" email from Sojourner.com. March 2, 2011

Elders and Deacons, lead Pennside in worship! Lead Pennside by being in worship! Coming every-so-often is not good enough! Set the standard for us all! Challenge us to deepen our discipleship with the example you set!

These are cloudy time. Remember: God is in the cloud! When we feel lost in the mist, it's easy to panic. We confuse activity with productivity. Sometimes, the best thing we could do is nothing, so I pledge to remind you and I challenge you to remind me, to stop, to pray, to worship, to center ourselves in the love and mercy of God. In 2011, remember, we're not just leaders; we're spiritual leaders; our leadership is by faith, not by sight, especially when we're leading through the cloud.

Peter, James and John have been put in their place. They're grabbing grass and holding onto the mountain for dear life. Any pretense that they know what to do has vanished. Then they felt a hand on their shoulder. They heard a voice they knew and loved say, "*Get up and do not be afraid.*" And they got up and followed Jesus down the mountain to the cross.

Jesus' touch transformed them. Jesus' touch will transform you, so remember this day. Remember that today, when we lay hands on you, or as we remember the day hands were laid on you, remember today that Jesus touches you and says to you, "*Get up and do not be afraid.*"

"The question should not be 'What would Jesus do?' but rather, more dangerously, 'What would Jesus have me do?' The onus is not on Jesus but on us, for Jesus did not come to ask semi-divine human beings to do impossible things. He came to ask human beings to live up to their full humanity; he wants us to live in the full implication of our human gifts, and that is far more demanding.³" - **Rev. Peter J. Gomes**

Peter, James and John lived up to that high calling; they lived up to their full humanity, and they helped launch a spiritual revolution that has been changing the world for 2000 years. Elder and deacons, their baton is in your hands. This is your time. "What would Jesus have us do?" Lead us in discerning the answer! Lead us for we are sent to serve!

These are cloudy times, but God is in the cloud! "*Get up and do not be afraid.*" Challenges lie ahead, and we are up to the challenge! Remember this day; this day, elders and deacons, Jesus puts his hand on you; a touch that transforms. Amen.

³ Rev. Peter J. Gomes, "Verse and Voice" Sojourner.net. March 1, 2011