

**The Celebration of a New Ministry: The Installation of Lisa Wiens Heinsohn  
Ephesians 4:14-21; Psalm 146; Luke 4:14-21  
Blair Pogue**

Dear Bishop, people of St. John's, Lisa's family and friends, clergy friends, and members of Lisa's fan club from St. Matthew's, St. Paul: it is my great pleasure and privilege to be your preacher tonight.

I have known Lisa Wiens Heinsohn since 2009 when the Holy Spirit brought her to St. Matthew's. She is hands down one of the most gifted Christian leaders and preachers I've ever experienced, and she is passionate about God's people inside *and* outside the church. I saw her spiritual leadership gifts right away and hired her as quickly as possible. While at St. Matthew's Lisa was involved at Youthlink, a nonprofit in Minneapolis providing friendship, housing, mentoring, job coaching and many other services to homeless young adults. Without an official title, Lisa served as a spiritual director and chaplain to these youth, and both she and they were transformed by their relationships of mutual respect, learning, and care.

I'm afraid I've never participated in the life of St. John's – for obvious reasons -- but have many friends including Marianne Budde and Devon Anderson who've been and are currently part of you faith community. I've heard about your leadership in the Cities, commitment to social justice, passion for intellectual engagement with the Christian faith, service to the wider church, and love for liturgy and the arts. I have a feeling that your relationship with Lisa will be a match made in heaven.

I wasn't surprised that the first part of the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of Luke's Gospel is one of tonight's scripture readings. My guess is that if you surveyed Episcopalians across the state of Minnesota, many of them would cite Jesus's inaugural sermon in the Nazareth synagogue as their favorite scripture story. This scene is Jesus' first public appearance and act of ministry in Luke's Gospel. While the Spirit of the Lord is clearly upon Jesus, what happens doesn't take place in a vacuum. While the Spirit clearly works in and through Jesus during his bold public reading from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah and his audacious statement "today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing," his words, presence, and clarity of vision come from years of corporate and personal prayer, reading scripture, and hearing others explain the meaning of various scripture passages, beginning in the womb. Here I think about my own son fluttering inside me when I was pregnant every time he heard the church organ or a song by U2. Even before he became a rabbi, Jesus was formed by the Jewish faith and traditions of his community, bathed in it, so much so that his faith was like the air he breathed.

The passage from Isaiah highlights the fact that God has anointed the prophet to bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed to free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. Sounds like a good Episcopal mission statement. The passage answers the question, "what kind of Messiah is Jesus going to be?" and

also gets at the character of Jesus' ministry. Clearly Jesus is going to be a prophetic Messiah, one who will announce good news to all those who suffer, go unseen, and are estranged from the larger community because their particular circumstances make them and others think they are out of favor with God. They are not only suffering from hunger, exposure to the elements, blindness, imprisonment, and debt, they are suffering from isolation and the inability of the people around them to see them as God's beloved, whole human beings worthy of respect and of giving and receiving love.

It's easy to hear this passage from Luke and to think Jesus is calling us to political and economic reform. I don't doubt that he is calling us to challenge the political and economic systems that favor some at the expense of others, but I think Jesus is inviting us into something deeper and more profound. In his books *A Nazareth Manifesto* and *Living Without Enemies* Anglican theologian and priest Sam Wells talks about the ways Christians tend to interface with people in our communities who are poor, suffering, and marginalized. He argues that there are four main "modes of mission," meaning the kinds of outreach faith communities tend to engage in. The first is "working for." It involves meeting needs and assumes that the church has abundance and those they are working with have a deficit. The second mode of mission is "being for." It involves having the right attitudes and ideas and taking the correct public positions. The third mode of mission is "working with." This category includes community organizing and joining networks and movements. The fourth mode is "being with." Being with involves presence, participation, relationships, listening, sharing stories, and wonder. According to Wells, 90% of Jesus' ministry in Nazareth involved being with those around him.

The gift of Jesus' ministry and leadership was that he gave himself to the people around him. As Luke Timothy Johnson puts it, "rather than picturing Jesus' work in terms of political or economic reform, Luke portrays his liberating work in terms of personal exorcisms, healings, and the teaching of the people. The radical character of his mission is specified above all by its being offered to and accepted by those who were the outcasts of the people (*Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Luke*, 81)."

Jesus' incarnational ministry of being with others was powerful and transformative, and through it the Holy Spirit moved people from a place of isolation and estrangement into community. Being with asked a lot of Jesus and it asks a lot of us his followers. In our time-strapped culture, giving our time, attention, listening presence, and whole self to another person, and especially to someone who feels invisible, is one of the most powerful gifts we can offer. When we remember that our loving and gracious God is first and foremost a community of persons who are different and yet reconciled to one another, living a life of mutual love, support, and indwelling, we are reminded that participating in God's life more fully involves slowing down, taking a deep breath, prayerfully letting go of some of the things that keep us from having any bandwidth, and allowing ourselves to be present to God and the people around us.

Lisa Wiens Heinsohn is uniquely qualified to help you participate more fully in God's life by being with others. She is trained as a spiritual director, and is

an excellent listener. She has a daily spiritual practice, and knows how to work with leaders and practitioners already in your midst to apprentice you into the rich daily practices that comprise the Way of Jesus. She will not only help you deepen St. John's communal outreach ministries, she will help you know that your primary ministry is where God has placed you Monday – Saturday. You are first and foremost God's ambassadors in your homes, neighborhoods, workplaces, and the places you volunteer. The work of the church – meaning all of us, not just Lisa – is to encourage and equip one another in our primary calling, to live as Jesus' follower in daily life.

My prayer for you and Lisa in the days ahead is embedded in tonight's reading from Ephesians:

I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.  
*Amen.*