

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent  
Deuteronomy 26:1-11;

14 Feb 16  
Luke 4:1-13

So here we are (or were), coming to the conclusion of this service together as Madison Christian Community. Though I've been tasked with giving final words, a summary drawing it together, really I had better just wrap it up quick, because we've got families who are headed off for tobogganing or brunch groups, or just leaving!

But even that fact that there's more coming is exactly appropriate for this moment. You've engaged in diligent, faithful planning and deliberation over the past year and a half. That has led to this moment, to welcoming two new pastors simultaneously for the first time in MCC history, and now this first shared Sunday service. You may feel that the journey is complete, that you've reached the destination you were seeking on the Road Ahead. Like our Deuteronomy reading, you may anticipate that this—at last—is the Promised Land, that God has brought you to a good place.

But, of course, in another way we're just getting started. There's so much more good to come as we're "sharing the road." Incidentally, if you were looking to sing that sending-hymn-unofficial-MCC-theme-song of ours in Greek, you'd use the word "synod." Where an "exodus" is a road going out, synod is the word for being on the way together. Those are fitting words to reflect on at the end of this worship service. In just a few moments, there will be an exodus, meaning you're going to leave, to go out from this nice, warm, assuring gathering to the chill isolation of doubts and trials and

temptations and just regular routines. As Jesus insisted over against the devil, it is an unmiraculous life—no magical fast food, no apparent guardian angels, no clarity of majestic divine authority. That may be difficult and disappointing.

Yet even as you go out—yearning to be back here, with those who believe like you do, and try to live life like you do, and where you're again reminded and assured of God's blessing—even as you go out, just because you're leaving doesn't mean that you are being scattered. Many of us will go separate directions, but this isn't just a fragmentation or, as we considered on Ash Wednesday, a disintegration.

For starters, you're still community. You are God's people. Deuteronomy declared the whole batch a bundle, from those engaged in the holy priestly tasks to the aliens who seemed so different, all in it together, cared for by God, even the crops growing from the soil part of the God-given community.

Beyond that, one more word for us. (You're already discovering I'm a word geek, or to use the word-geek-word, a "lexophile." Words are "affectious" to me, to use Sam Szalkowski's spelling bee word.) "Community" is to be joined as one, in service to each other, from Latin. Similarly, you are "companions," those who have shared bread. You will not be separated by distance or discord. Through this meal we shared, the Holy Spirit does her work of binding us together in the Body of Christ, members of one another, companions broken to sustain each other, to nourish and enjoy and provide. You don't go alone!

Dear companions, sharing the road, how  
good it is!