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Much of the news these days focuses on reporting catastrophes, terrorist attacks, wars, famines, squabbles in Parliament, name calling in public, and other *negative* news, that **real** good news gets buried and never heard! Someone takes the decision it's not worth reporting the fact, every day some 200,000 people around the world are lifted above the US\$2-a-day poverty line, or more than 300,000 people a day get access to electricity and clean water for the first time, is not news worthy. Would people really object to learn, globalisation has also helped lift hundreds of millions of people above the global poverty line, a development goal that has mostly occurred in South-East Asia¹.

Bad news needs to be put in perspective. Its a tall order, but if mainstream media won't do it for us, perhaps it is our responsibility to change it, by finding and reading good news. We should take responsibility to change what others won't change, for the sake of the sanity of our souls!

Change is happening everywhere. To start with, over the past 12 days we have changed diaries and calendars!

Over the next few years, we as a nation will journey through change; nations across the world will experience change as elections take place in several countries; businesses and economies will change. Believe it nor not, each one of us will change! We will be a year older in 2019, perhaps our hearing or our sight will require changes in device or prescription. Change is inevitable; it happens around us and it happens in us and to us.

As a church, we embarked on a journey of change on 23 May 2018 when we moved out of our church building into this temporary place, and this

¹ GlobalCitizen.org 7 Charts That Show the World Is Actually Becoming a Better Place

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year, God willing, and the builders' construction schedule permitting, we shall move out of here before year's end, into our new church!

There are many **theories of change**. Having been involved in the management of organisational change in my professional career, I can state with certainty: theories of change are meaningless because most are written with Frank Sinatra's doctrine: **I did it my way!**

This is the challenge of change: change is unique to each situation; no one can, therefore, assure another **with certainty**, the change they plan will end up exactly as they wanted. This is the nature of change; it has a momentum of its own. You might remember seeing TV footage of floods across the world, where water flows in torrents. People may have planned for, and put in measures for "flood control", but ultimately water flow has its own momentum.

So it is with change. We can expect and plan for it, we can install measures to harness it, but even the best business are often overtaken by change, often to their detriment and sometimes to their demise.

I have discovered, the best way to deal with change is to go with the flow. Let me explain. This can be extremely dangerous because it can land us in places we don't want to be! Some places might be pleasant and some not so pleasant.

Over Advent, Christmas and Epiphany we heard the life-stories of the priest Zechariah, Joseph and Mary, the band of astronomers, and each's response to change in the circumstances of their lives.

The Bible offers us many examples of people responding to change: Abraham accepted significant change to his life when God said, *get up and go*; Jonah fought change by going in the opposite direction; David the

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shepherd had to accept change when Samuel anointed him as the king of Israel, and so on.

The passage Phil read to us is an important one. 4 - 5 million people who escaped slavery in Egypt and lived as a people-in-transition in the desert for 40 years, were about to change from being the descendants of Joseph in slavery, to being a nation of free people, under God.

Moses led them out from Egypt. They fled until they were hemmed in between Pharaoh's mighty army chasing them down and the expanse of the Red Sea before them, God delivered them by parting the waters, and looked after them for 40 years in the wilderness of the desert until the last of the ones who escaped Egypt had died, and new generation who had grown up as free men and women were ready to possess the land God was about to give them. God told Moses he would not enter the land, but Joshua the son of Nun will lead the people into the the land where they would settle.

God told Moses to *"encourage (Joshua) for he shall cause Israel to inherit"*² the land. God was asking Moses to be a mentor to Joshua, to help him understand God's plans and to discern his own role in God's plan.

The page before our text today, is the last page in the Book of Deuteronomy where we learn, Moses was 120 years old when he died, he was in perfect health when he died (his vision was perfect and so was his general strength and vigour³), and God buried him in the land of Moab, and no one knows where that is. The final eulogy for Moses at the end of the book of Deuteronomy reads, *There has never been another prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face-to-face. The Lord sent him to*

² Deuteronomy 1:37-38

³ Deuteronomy 34:7

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*perform all the miraculous signs and wonders in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, and all his servants, and his entire land. With mighty power, Moses performed terrifying acts in the sight of all Israel.*⁴

We turn the page and the history of Joshua begins with God commissioning Joshua into leadership, spelling out important conditions:

First, *"Moses my servant is dead. Therefore, the time has come for you to lead these people, the Israelites, across the Jordan River into the land I am giving them".*

Two details God is very specific about: the people who will cross the river Jordan are the *the Israelites* (the descendants of Jacob whom God renamed as Israel), and the second is something all leaders of nations should note carefully: God said, *to the land I am **giving them!*** God did not say to Joshua, the land I am **giving you**, rather the land I am **giving them**.

God blesses people with the security of land and house and home. The land does **not belong** to the leaders of nations. Many leaders act as if the land is theirs to do as they please. This is in clear violation of God's law.

Next, God confirms He is man of His word, *I promise you what I promised Moses*. God defined the borders of the land and confirms to Joshua, *No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. For I will be with you as I was with Moses. **I will not fail you or abandon you.***

This last promise is significant. God promised Jacob when he had to run away from his father's home having cheated his brother of his birthright and his blessing, *I will never leave you nor abandon you.*

⁴ Deuteronomy 34:10-12

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Moses quoted God when he commissioned Joshua in front of all Israel, *It is the Lord God who goes before you. He will be with you; He will not leave you, nor abandon you.*⁵

When David commissioned Solomon he promised, "Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Don't be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. He will see to it that all the work related to the Temple of the Lord is finished correctly."⁶

What a wonderful promise to give someone who is standing at the threshold of a project or a job, or perhaps a young person finishing school or university, feeling inadequate and ill-equipped, ***Don't be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or abandon you.*** God who has looked after me, taught me not to fear what lies ahead, not to be discouraged when things don't go my way, this my God is also with you. He will walk with you. He will not fail you, nor will He abandon you!

First, God makes His commission very clear - you are to lead these people, the Israelites, to their new home, which I am giving them, not you!

Second, God makes clear what He will do: I will make you strong so that no one can defeat you; I will be with you always, and I will not leave you nor will I ever abandon you.

Finally God says to Joshua, *Now you know what I want done, and what I will do for you, let me tell you who I want you to be, and what I want you to do.*

- *I want you to be strong in character and show courage*

⁵ Deuteronomy 31:6, 8

⁶ 1 Chronicles 28:20

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- *I want you to be careful to obey and follow the law I gave Moses. If you obey and follow it strictly, you shall have success, wherever you go.*

To make sure Joshua understood God's instructions very clearly, God repeats both instructions before releasing him to go do what he must.

As we journey through change, transitioning from a temporary place of worship to a more permanent place of worship, God's advice to Joshua is very timely.

The new building being built for us across the lot, is not my building, nor does it belong to anyone in particular; the building belongs to us all; it is our inheritance. We have inherited it from the riches God has entrusted to us. Together, we shall inherit the building and pass it on for generations to come.

God promises never to leave us nor abandon us. He will journey with us all the way; when we make mistakes, He will correct us and continue to journey with us. The thought of abandoning us does not cross His mind!

This is what God will do for us. Only He expects us to grow in faith, to develop strength of character and to be courageous in expressing our faith, and to honour Him by living in obedience to His law.

It's not that difficult. *The Lord your God is with you, wherever you go!*

AMEN.