

**“Empowering the Church”**  
**Isaiah 42: 1 – 9, Matthew 3: 13 – 17**  
West Swamp Mennonite Church # 2  
300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Kick-Off Meditation  
January 8, 2017

When my three brothers and I were little and wanted something from Mama, we would send my brother, Sam, to ask her for it – especially if it was something we thought she would have a problem with.

It might be a place we wanted to go like the swimming hole or down to the neighbors. It might have been something we wanted like a toy or some money. It might even have been to ask her if we could walk up over the mountain to Grandma’s house. It seemed we were always trying to persuade Mama of something and she needed convincing.

And so we called on Sam. He could convince Mom of just about anything. He was logical in his thinking just like her and he could reason with her and would not give up until he got what we wanted. It did not always work but Sam was the best agent we had to work on our behalf for what we needed or wanted at the time.

An agent is someone empowered to act for another. And in our scriptures today, both Isaiah and Matthew speak to this theme of empowering another to help carry out God’s mission in the world. In Isaiah, God gives his blessing to this servant - agent who will work on His behalf to bring justice and be a light to the nations. God empowers his servant-

agent to bring healing for those in need, and to keep the special covenant relationship established by God.

Isaiah sees himself as a servant-agent of God empowered to give a word from the Lord to the people of Judah. At times this servant-agent is Cyrus, the newly empowered Persian ruler who defeats Babylon and graciously allows God's people to return to Jerusalem. More often this servant-agent is Israel or her descendants Abraham/Isaac/ or Jacob who were blessed as God's covenant people and called to be a blessing to their neighbors. Other times the servant-agent is the righteous remnant of Israel who have forsaken other gods and remained faithful to the Lord alone.

Later, New Testament authors like Matthew quickly point to Jesus as this specially anointed servant-agent; the one in whom God is greatly pleased on his baptism day. Jesus now becomes the one newly empowered by God and the Spirit to carry out God's mission of healing and service; the One that will be a witness to the nations of God's love and forgiveness.

Jesus though is not about to keep all this power for himself. Beginning with John the Baptist, Jesus longs to empower his followers and eventually his body, the Church to be servant-agents for God's mission into the future. Down through the centuries we have been handed God's power as baptized and Spirit-filled members of God's faithful community.

Through Jesus, we too have been made God's agents; workers on God's behalf, called and empowered by the Holy Spirit to heal, serve, and give witness. This is the solid foundation we have for our work and our worship here at West Swamp. With every baptism, the Holy Spirit empowers this church for God's mission. A mission we have been invested in for the last three hundred years.

It has taken many different shapes and produced various fruits over the years. But as God's servant – agent, this church has always sought to live, love, and serve on God's behalf. Empowered by the Spirit to heal and serve; to worship, give witness, and to keep on singing until our work is done and God calls us home.