**Ministerial Meandering**

*If you love them…*

I remember reading Kahlil Gibran; he wrote, ‘“If you love somebody, let them go, for if they return, they were always yours. If they don't, they never were.”’

This helped me at a time when I had separated from a serious girlfriend of several years’ standing, and has been a source of comfort since.

However, it is not an easy thing to do, for we encircle what we love with the coils of a rock python, and guard it with the tenacity of a lion over it’s kill.

The problem with that is that it gradually destroys the object of our love, until it becomes unrecognizable.

Possessive love is never healthy; it suffocates, it demands, and seeks to control. There is no room to breath in such a relationship - no room for growth, no space for freedom of expression. It is doomed to a slow and painful death that the possessor is often the last to recognize.

In our church this year we have seen two couples that I ultimately refused to marry - because of just such domineering and controlling relationships. Both the men involved expected not only to get exactly what they wanted from the church, but also thought they could also come in and demand positions of substance within the church - right off the bat - without having been to church at all beforehand, or contributed anything at all; apart from their opinions on how things should be run.

How different, then, that our Creator - though in the position of ultimate authority - should choose to give us free will! The choice to make our own decisions is an immense gift, but carries with it massive responsibility

But do not think that being given this freedom means that we are being cast away to sink or swim on our own. Yes, we are being let go, but we still have the choice to ask for God’s guidance **every day.** How many of us fail to ask for God’s hand until we are sinking in a quicksand, or going down in the ocean of troubles for the third time?

Why are we so reluctant to hold onto the steady hand of Christ - as I asked last Sunday? Do we really make such a wonderful job of driving our own destiny?

Jesus (in Jeremiah 29) said, ‘For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

In last Sunday’s gospel, Jesus also said, ‘And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me…’

This does **not** mean that all our actions are preordained, but **does** mean that if we turn to our Creator in the example of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit, we will find that the **choices are still ours**, but He is only too willing and able to guide us along the right paths - if we choose to take His hand.

It is a hand that does not crush or control, it is a hand that loves and leads.

That’s the hand I want to hold.

Philip+