

Sweltering temperatures that are soaring past the 90°F mark confirm that summer is well underway here in Washington, DC. Family traditions for rest and relaxation at one's beach home might be an option to getting some rest. Perhaps one may have browsed the pages of *Condé Nast*, *Food and Travel* or *Wanderlust* magazines for ideas of holiday hideaways.

The American Automobile Association, more commonly referred to as Triple A (AAA) is a North American federation of motor clubs. More than 60 million members in the United States and Canada receive all sorts of benefits, some of which include travel services and roadside assistance. The motorist group has forecast that 47.9 million people will travel during this July 4th weekend. These numbers are expected to be confirmed, even with the expected record-breaking high prices of gasoline. This reflects a 3.7% increase in the number of travelers over numbers seen in 2021. Predictions also state that 42 million will hit the road. Unexpected flight cancellations and other air travel issues have contributed to people opting to travel by car.

Triple A offers advice on when one should leave for the Independence weekend getaways, prior to which one should check the car's battery, engine, and tires before one sets off on the journey. They also add that drivers should be kind and patient. If one were to travel within a 50-mile radius from Washington, DC, what would the traveler encounter? The Netherlands Carillon in Arlington, the Potomac Heritage National Scenic trail and George Washington's Mount Vernon present some options for mini excursions.

Things become a lot more complicated if the destination one proposes to reach is beyond a 50-mile radius from home. Whether one chooses to travel by boat, plane, train, bus or car, such a trip would require a lot more planning. One has to consider the length of stay and what activities will be involved, so that the appropriate clothing may be packed. I can just imagine what it

would be like to take a family on vacation. By a show of hands, is there anyone here who has ever had to pack for their spouse, the kids and then pack your own bags? I applaud you for managing to do all that and still be able to smile this morning.

When one has as large a packing list as that, thoughts of using a suitcase rather than a carry-on bag enter one's mind. Perhaps several suitcases are needed when the whole family travels together. Can you imagine what it would be like to make travel plans for a group of people larger than your own family?

I typically travel light when I am going to see my siblings because they still have some of my wardrobe at their home. However, we will soon be travelling to a reunion to see our friends who we have not seen in years! One of the most important considerations for my luggage is packing enough shades of lipstick: they have to include a fuchsia, burgundy, red, blue, and bronze to go with the different outfits that I will wear each day. My other dilemma is making sure that I have a good variety for my wardrobe: dresses, jeans, T-shirts, presents for my nieces and nephews and the types of shoes that I will wear when I'm on holiday.

Thinking about the choice between wearing sneakers or flip-flops reminds me of a short trip that my siblings and I took to see our grandparents. They lived on my Uncle Harry's farm, which was located 11 Km or approximately 7 miles from the main shopping district of Lusaka, Zambia. Luncheon always felt like a feast at Grandma and Grandpa's home. The treat came shortly after we finished the meal. Many fruit trees grew on the farm, affording us the opportunity to choose fresh, tree-ripened mangoes, guavas, paw paws, a variety of bananas, pears, and oranges. We often enjoyed our dessert outdoors, either in a shady spot on the patio or under the sycamore trees that grew in a grove close to the cottage.

It was soon time to settle in for story-telling, when Grandma decided to send my brother Twale on an errand up the hill to the main house. He was to deliver a message to our Uncle Harry who had just arrived at home from his medical practice.

My brother stepped onto the sun-bathed patio. Just as he was about to knock on the glass-paneled red door, he noticed the unwelcomed, self-named “butler” before his knuckles were going to meet its mouth. It was a large cobra that had risen up to his height and fanned out its neck to appear as a hood. Cobras can grow to the length of 3.2 meters or 10^{1/2} feet. Their venom is a deadly neurotoxin and can stop the functioning of one’s heart and lungs. It is needless to say that Twale turned and ran a about a quarter mile marathon for his life, all the way back to the cottage.

All this talk about numbers that measure the length of particular snakes, or the distance from one place to another reminds me that humans have always sought to quantify our possessions. People also have a need to enumerate the groups and gatherings in which they participate. The fourth book of the Hebrew Bible or what we often refer to as the Old Testament is the Book of Numbers. The book is the culmination of the story of the people Israel’s journey from their oppression in Egypt toward the Promised Land. It provides census information that tells us the size of the population of those liberated from bondage. In chapter 11 of this book, we learn that there were 70 elders who were appointed by Moses.

In our Scripture reading this morning, our translation of Luke says that Jesus sent 70 people out in pairs. The original translation of this testament, which is called the Septuagint (LXX), has that number listed as 72. According to Luke’s view of the story of salvation, the number reflects all of humanity. The number 70 appears in Genesis 10 where the lists of all the tribes of the earth are named as descendants of Noah. Likewise, Jesus sends out the 70 people to go out to the places

that he intends to visit before he goes to Jerusalem. He coordinated such a large group to prepare the people to receive Him, and to spread the good news of the coming Kingdom of God that was being fulfilled in his presence.

The Lord gives them specific instructions about their travel. They are to take no purse in which to accumulate wealth and they are to take only what they are wearing for the trip. No iPods, no iPhones, no books that will distract them from their mission. The missionaries are given the apostolic authority to heal people's diseases, cast out demons, and to bless people with a peace that announces the kingdom of God. The mission calls for a courageous embrace of intentional poverty and vulnerability in travelling lightly, and to become dependent on the hospitality that is offered by others.

In Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus gives all who would be His disciples the Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. We are to teach everyone to obey what Jesus continues to teach us, and we are to remember that Jesus is with us wherever we are sent. Georgetown Presbyterian Church, what is your long range plan for the ministries that will be made manifest in and through this church?

Joining medical missions to different nations that lack the physicians, nurses and equipment for special surgeries might be one to consider. The doctors that perform life-altering reconstructive surgeries for children born with cleft palates and cleft lips, radically change the lived experience of those kids. They are no longer seen as outcasts destined for a mendicant life, but now have a better trajectory of living in their societies.

The demons preying on people, that you and I are called on to remove from our society, include those of systemic poverty and discrimination due to a person's color, religion, or sexual

orientation. We have the power and authority to alleviate people's suffering and that is why God is sending us to do something about it.

We are also asked to offer the peace of God's Kingdom, the *shalom*, to everyone because we are all equally created by God. We should be rejoicing in the freedom that is experienced here in the United States of America, and yet my Twitter feed and other social media are filled with posts about the celebration of the 4th of July being cancelled for many female friends and acquaintances. All of the inhabitants of this land deserve equitable shares of relief from oppression in any form.

Finally, beloved, when the 70 return to tell Jesus about the success of the mission trip and report on the demons that they were able to cast out, Jesus reminds them that He has given them the power to tread on snakes and scorpions. The snakes and scorpions that we in this church need to crush underfoot include those called "doubt", "fear of the other", "selfishness" and "lack of trust" in God's providence as the Holy Spirit leads us. God is doing a new thing and the Spirit is leading us to respond to the call to new ministries. Some people react to the movement of the Spirit by shouting "hallelujah". Most of us Presbyterians respond decently and in order, by jotting down sermon notes on our bulletins. We are, after all, God's Chosen. However it is that we are called, and wherever we are sent to reach out to others, may the staff that you carry be your faith in Christ Jesus, a faith that continues to grow through worship and Bible study and ministry. May all our work for the Kingdom be done in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto the One who sits on the throne, and the Lamb, forever and ever. Amen