

Annual Conference Celebration of Ministry: *New Leaders* (D. Burns, 2019)

They capture my attention over the intercom
Sharing serious instruction with subtle sarcasm
In the aisles of the runway ready
Boeing something-or-other
(hopefully the safe one and not
the one they accidentally built
to fly downward instead of upward)

But that's why they've interrupted my
Minor land war in search of an armrest
To remind us that it's rude to point
With fewer than two fingers at an exit
And if the flight becomes a cruise
This uncomfortable cushion can float.

Not that there's much sea between
Detroit and Dallas but still its useful
To know that slides can erupt from the sides
In the extra-leg-room emergency row
And the trick is to swing out the window
And slide to the ground
And take off
Running.

That's what they tell us:
If we go down, get off, get out,
Go, go, go, far away from this
This flightless abomination of
Humanity's hubristic aspiration
Designed to tempt the grip of gravity
But unlikely to succeed.

So when the plane inevitably falls from its perch in the sky,
Run.
Away.

This is the smart thing to do.

So how dumb must I be to go the other way and climb aboard the plane with the oxygen masks hanging
down and ask for a job?

The engines are stalling and the captain is calling
With emergency instructions for the crew and
Here I am
Ready to go.

Ready to sacrifice myself for the sake of the sinking craft which surely cannot be saved
And I lash my limbs and my fate to the behemoth the heavens can no longer lift
With binding cords of covenant to a fractured connection of embittered intentions.

I don't bring much of use with me,
No experience in overhaul and repair,
Just a few classes, some field study,
A dream or two, a calling,
A set of fresh eyes.

I mostly make mistakes
But at least I make them quickly
And alongside the many
The still here and the newly arrived
Together we try our hardest
To ensure that even if
We go down in flames
This holy wreckage
Is immortalized
not as a warning
But as a reminder:

We are meant to fly.

We are meant to soar to the highest of heights,
And touch the face of God.

And so.

Perhaps it is time for the ones who
Run the wrong way
Who throw rules to the wind
And stand before the throne
Ready to die but not be silent.

Perhaps it is time for the ones who
Are full of hope
And too new
To know any better.

And perhaps
We have been
placed here
By God
(And the Bishop)
For such a time
As this.