



Christ Church of Atlanta
P.O. Box 76320
Atlanta, GA. 30358
Phone: 404.255.5033
Fax: 404.255.5383

Newsletter – January 2012 – Alfred Sawyer

The Rudder

Back in the mid-1980s, when we were living in Israel, I decided it would be fun to learn to sail. From our house in Jerusalem it was only a short 45-minute drive to the Mediterranean. It just so happened we had expert sailor in our congregation, a Scotsman with years of experience sailing who had recently retired after a career in the merchant marine.

The Scotsman (who shall remain nameless) and I drove to the marina in Tel Aviv one beautiful summer day and proceeded to rent a dinghy, an appropriate craft he explained for my novice status. As is typical of late summer days in Israel, there was a stiff breeze. Unusually, however, the wind was blowing from the northeast. Not a problem, explained the Scotsman to my trusting self. We could get back to shore by doing something called "taking", a manoeuvre which allows one to sail against the wind.

Off we went, and before I knew it, we were several hundred yards off shore making pretty good headway. And then it happened. The rudder, which steers the boat and is therefore an essential piece of equipment, broke off and floated away! We were now at the mercy of the wind and whatever currents were swirling around the Med on that August afternoon. So much for tacking. We were headed for Egypt, Libya or even worse--the Gaza Strip.

The Scotsman lowered the sails, but that didn't help. The friendly shore of Israel was getting more and more distant. We had no way of calling for help, there was no radio on board and this was before the day of cell phones. At this point the "expert" mariner, the Scotsman, panicked. We were up the proverbial creek, only this time it was a 2,000 mile-wide ocean with no one around to rescue us.

The Scotsman then stood up in the boat and began to scream for help. I figured if he was scared I should be too. It was at this point I had a flash of insight, which in retrospect, I believe was from the Lord. I looked down at the center of the boat and saw the top of a board which served as a keel. I pulled out the centerboard and immediately realized it could be used as a paddle! An hour and a half later the Scotsman and I had paddled our way back to the rocks that lined the harbor of the Tel Aviv Marina. We managed to pull the Dinghy onto the rocks and we swam the rest of the way back in to shore.

I learned several lessons from this sailing venture. First, sailing is a lot of work compared to flying an airplane. I have since sailed much bigger boats with much more secure rudders and you are constantly doing stuff. More importantly, I learned that a rudder is not an optional piece of equipment.

God has provided each of us with a rudder which won't break off or fail us. God, speaking through Isaiah, says, *"And your ears shall hear shall hear a word behind you, saying, this is the way, walk in it, when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left."* (Isaiah 30:21)



Christ Church of Atlanta
P.O. Box 76320
Atlanta, GA. 30358
Phone: 404.255.5033
Fax: 404.255.5383

God does not want us to drift aimlessly through life at the mercy of whatever winds happen to be blowing. He has a purpose, a direction and a destination for each of us. My prayer for all of us at the beginning of this New Year is that we will allow the Lord to be our Rudder and our Helmsman and that the Wind of His Spirit will guide us safely to the Harbor He has prepared for us.

Have a blessed 2012!

- Alfred Sawyer, Rector