
Letters to a Young Episcopalian: Education

This letter is part of a series of fictional letters by Canon George Maxwell intended for Episcopalians young and old who wonder what it means to be faithful in the world today.

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Dear Anna,

I enjoyed spending the summer with you. I'm missing you now that you have gone off to college. You are a long way from home!

A friend died unexpectedly last week and one of the stories shared at her funeral made me think of you.

A young Episcopal priest was leaving to spend her summer working in a Kansas hospital. She was worried about being so far away from home, and how she was going to react to the pain and suffering that are part of the daily life of a hospital chaplain.

Apparently, my friend bought her a pair of red shoes and painted them with glitter. Then she gave them to the young priest with a note quoting The Wizard of Oz, "If you ever feel too lonely, just click your heels together, say, 'There's no place like home,' and you'll be there."

I wish I had been creative enough to give you a pair of ruby red slippers before you left.

You haven't moved to a hospital in Kansas, but you have set out on an adventure that promises to change you.

You are going to meet so many new people, learn so many new things, and have so many new experiences. It's exciting. As you learn to see things through their eyes, your vision of the world will expand.

Yet, you will have to think critically about these new ideas in order to make sense of them.

After all, ideas are not good just because they are new. The cutting edge of today will be the old fashioned of tomorrow. Ideas are not true just because someone else believes passionately in them. And, as you reminded me this summer, something isn't right just because everyone else is doing it.

I have always admired the deep instincts that you have developed about what is right and what is wrong. Trust those instincts. As you are learning to see the world through the eyes of so many new people, remember that you are still seeing the world through your eyes as well.

There will be times when you find yourself standing uncomfortably alone. Don't worry.

All you have to do is close your eyes, click your heels together, and say, "There's no place like home," – and you'll be there.

When you open your eyes, you will find all of us who know and love you standing there, right by your side.

Your affectionate uncle,

Ames

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