

## *Chapel Words (April 20, 2010) “Keep on Rowing”—Rhodri Samuel*

Have you heard the 60's classic-"Keep on running" by The Spencer Davis Group. Check it out on YouTube:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H6LVI1gDswg>.

I am not going to talk about running but I am going to talk about rowing. So I won't keep you very long.

The Copeman's boys have volunteered to sing—

*Row, row, row the boat,  
Gently down the stream,  
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily,  
Life is but a dream.*

How many of you have been in a rowing boat? It is a very relaxing activity for the lazy, hazy days of summer.

Now let's talk about SLS rowing program and the University Boat Race. How are these boat rides different?

The Boat Race began in 1829 when a Cambridge University student sent a challenge to his friend, who was studying at Oxford, to a rowing race. This tradition has carried on to the present day, with the loser from the previous year's race challenging the opposition to a rematch.

The Boat Race takes place on the Thames and up to 250,000 spectators will crowd the banks of the river to watch the race, and millions will watch on TV. Cambridge are currently in the lead with 80 wins to Oxford's 75. This year's race was won by the underdogs Cambridge with Shawnigan alum, Geoff Roth '05 (Ripley's) sitting at number 2 in the boat.

Crews must be students at the universities. The Cambridge crew is known as the Light Blues, the Oxford as the Dark Blues. Potential oarsmen start training in September, the squads being chosen in about December. Each member of the squad undertakes a grueling programme of daily training from September to April, both in the gym and out on the river. They have to keep up with their studies as well!

Do the Shawnigan coaches sing this before a regatta?

*Row, row, row the boat,  
Quickly down the stream,  
Strain at the oars with all your might  
And we'll beat that other team!*

Sometimes life goes along quite smoothly. Sometimes work is not too much of a challenge, there is not much pressure at school, sometimes we get on fine with our family and friends. That's like the lazy, hazy, merrily, merrily boat ride!

But then there can be days, or times in a day, when life requires tremendous effort. Maybe our family seem to be in a bad mood, maybe schoolwork seems to be particularly hard, maybe we just feel as though we have got out of the wrong side of bed! Today for example could bring many challenges, this is when we need the other boat song.

Sometimes working in a team can be a big struggle. You may want to work really hard and someone else in your team doesn't, or everyone else may seem really enthusiastic about a task and you just can't be bothered with any longer. You have heard about team building and the term, "you are only as strong as your weakest link."

Think again about the Oxford–Cambridge Boat Race. Imagine if one rower in the race just decided to stop rowing. His legs could be sore, his arm muscles are aching badly, he is too cold and he just wants to get back into the clubhouse

This could be even more serious if you were a soldier and part of a team. Many men and women are serving overseas in places like Afghanistan. It is very hard in these countries. Imagine if one or two soldiers in a regiment just decided to quit?

Where do rowers and soldiers and ordinary people get the strength and resolve to keep going when things get tough? Many find that they are able to keep going more than they ever imagined possible. They can push that bit more, they can try that bit harder, they can keep going that bit longer. It's up to them to decide to do so! Some look to God for help. There is a well-known hymn that our soldiers fighting battles overseas might draw strength from:

*O God our help in ages past  
Our hope for years to come  
Our shelter from the stormy blast  
And our eternal home.*

God can be our help, our hope and our shelter when the going gets tough.

Please bow your heads:

*Thank you for this new day.*

*Today may be an easy day, with lots of joy and fun and peace.*

*Or today might have big challenges for us.*

*Thank you that we have a strength within us to overcome many obstacles.*

*Our bodies are strong, we have lots of people willing to help us and we are loved by our families and friends.*

*Thank you that you want to share this day with us too, giving us help and hope and a place of shelter.*