

*March 27, 2020*

## **Moving through the Fog**

Several years ago, Andrea and I took a kayaking trip to a small island called Vargas, off the shore of Vancouver Island. It was supposed to be a five-day guided trip, but we were the only ones who showed up. After a few hours of instruction on how to “rescue ourselves,” we packed up our kayaks and went on our way. Now, Andrea and I are relatively experienced kayakers, but we had little experience on the ocean.

We ended up having a great time on this little island, exploring its sandy beaches and forest trails. When it was time to leave, we walked down to the shore only to see that we were socked in by fog. We could not see Vancouver Island, even though it was only five miles away. What to do? We waited and waited and waited. A local from the island assured us that it would burn off eventually.

A few hours later, the fog lifted. We hopped into our kayaks and started paddling fast, always keeping an eye and ear out for large ships and float planes, when, suddenly, we were enveloped by fog again! What I learned in the fog is that it takes a combination of faith and paying close attention to those things immediately around you—the surrounding sounds, ocean swells and land smells—to move forward, but most importantly, to trust the compass even if it doesn’t “feel” right.

We are in the fog and it changes daily, lifting for a while and then settling in again. We have great resources that are guiding us through this. The MN Conference UCC Minister, Shari Prestemon, and Minnesota Governor Tim Walz are providing solid leadership and direction.

Because of the information we have now, **we will not be holding in-church worship services until mid-May**, and possibly for a longer time. Because we house the Groveland Food Shelf and Academia Elze, which are considered essential, we will continue to have limited custodial and security staff on site. Governor Walz’s executive order gives faith leaders and staff permission to record and broadcast spiritual support during this time. We are taking every precaution while doing this. We are trying to err on the side of caution.

Until the fog lifts, we need a spiritual awareness that uses all our senses. And we can turn our magnetized hearts to God, who is our compass. We can stay calm, connected, and stay the course.

Sending you shouts of love through the fog!

*Paula*