

May 8, 2020

Navigating Mistakes

For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle.

—James 3:2 (NRSV)

In the translation of the Bible called *The Message*, the passage reads this way: “We get it wrong nearly every time we open our mouths. If you could find someone whose speech was perfectly true, you’d have a perfect person, in perfect control of life.”

In this time of global pandemic, church leadership are trying to continue the mission of the church in uncharted territory. We don’t have a map for this part of the journey, so we are bound to make some mistakes.

After last week’s announcement about the upcoming special meeting, it was brought to our attention by a member of the church that we may not be following our own church bylaws. So, we are backing up, retracing our route to go the right direction. My apologies to the Search Committee for the Minister for Spiritual Formation and Theater and to Seth Patterson for this unusual, yet necessary, detour. Details of the special meeting will be forthcoming.

Some of you will remember the sermon I preached about the Lewis and Clark expedition as a metaphor for church work at this time in our history. When Lewis and Clark reached the Continental Divide, they expected to find a river that would allow them to paddle easily to the Pacific Ocean. What they saw instead were the Rocky Mountains.

That’s the type of challenge the church is facing today. Tod Bolsinger, author of *Canoeing the Mountains*, writes that new challenges are so daunting, so new and so unexpected that the old solutions won’t work. “It’s not going to do you any good to paddle harder,” Bolsinger writes. “You have to make an adaptation, and the key to adaptation begins with going back to your deepest core value.” And so as we move forward I would hope you will offer the leadership of the church some grace as we figure out together responsible ways to carry out the ministry and the mission of the church in these unprecedented times. The writers of our bylaws never imagined a time when we could not meet in person.

We are entering a new day, new terrain and a new adventure. We are not alone. The Spirit of God goes before us. The mission and purposes of the church will continue. We are heading into uncharted territory and are given the charge to lead a mission where the future is nothing like the past. Thank you for your support!

Paula