

On the Way to Where?
February 6, 2011

The Rev. Susan Dee Reisinger
State College Presbyterian Church
Sunday, February 6, 2011

ON THE WAY TO WHERE?

Almost everyone loves a good story. Children seem to thrive on them - and love to hear them over and over again. Adults, too, can be entranced by a story that tells of a dangerous or mystical time in someone's life. At most family gatherings we share tales of our lives and activities. In after-funeral parties, we comfort ourselves with stories of how the one who is gone from us has touched our life, with humor, joy, help or advice. We seem to love these yarns.

Do you know someone who reads the end of a mystery book after they have barely begun it? They want to know how it comes out in the end before they have barely begun the story. There is something in us that wants to know how the story is going to come out. We want to be able to predict how things will turn out.

On the Way to Where?

February 6, 2011

When Abram and Sarai were asked by God to leave their homeland and travel to an unspecified land where God would lead them, there was no peeking for the end of the story. When couples stand before witnesses and pledge their love to one another - we cannot know what will happen in their lives and relationships in the future. When we go off to college it is impossible to predict what our future might hold. Years from now we will know more of how our story goes - but until our deaths, there are twists and turns we cannot predict.

In other words, we are all in the same position in which Abram and Sarai and their family found themselves. We are living the story of our lives without being able to peek at the end and see exactly how it comes out. We like to pretend we can predict the trajectory of our lives. But the truth is, we are all traveling without maps, just as Abram and Sarai did. The fishermen who followed Jesus might have thought they had their lives down pat - some were married - they all had a job -

On the Way to Where?

February 6, 2011

they thought they knew where their lives were going. Then a teacher and worker of miracles showed up in their lives - and suddenly they were travelling a whole different road - an unknown road. The way it seemed to be working out was turned inside out.

Abram and Sarai had no map for their journey. There was no GPS programmed to tell them where to turn and which route to take. They were simply to follow God's direction - even though they couldn't see God in person. Simon, Andrew, James and John could see Jesus, but still they made a brave choice - a choice that would put a lump in the strongest persons' throat. They left their nets and followed Jesus the text says. It is a simple sentence. But think about it. They walked away from all they knew to follow this itinerate preacher and healer. Their friends and family must have thought they had lost their senses, just as Abram's extended family must have thought he'd gone off the deep end.

On the Way to Where?

February 6, 2011

Yet today we celebrate Abram and Sarai, Andrew, Simon, James and John as pillars of faith. We look at them and see what they could not see - the earthly ends of their stories. We try to convince ourselves that the choices they made were a lot easier than any choice we must make. Although those choices were long ago - I have to believe they were made with a great deal of fear as well as a great deal of hope. And yet, a large part of what made them pillars of faith was their willingness to take that large step into the unknown. They were willing to follow the call of God as they heard and understood it.

Right now, the future of the worship and ministry of this congregation is unknown. Truth be told it ALWAYS is, but when a loved pastor retires, all the cards seem to be thrown up in the air. Oh, we can keep the organization going. We know how to do that pretty well. We can keep all the activities running - we are committed to them, and have

On the Way to Where?

February 6, 2011

people who put in a lot of hours and heart. But these pesky questions remain. Where are we going? How will we get there?

Over the next year and a half we will spend a lot of time and effort trying to answer those two questions, as well as a few others. We will try to envision the story of this congregation as it walks into the future. Hopefully many of you will be part of that process. We will have some markers to help us on the way.

Mission Study -

formation of PNC -

their search.

We can outline the process all we like - but the largest and most important piece will be missing if we don't recognize, as Abram and Sarai did, who we need to trust in this journey. God told them to go and then made a number of promises.

I will show you a land - God will lead the way

On the Way to Where?

February 6, 2011

I will make of you a great nation - God will use this church in the way

God chooses.

I will bless those you bless, and curse those you curse.

that's a pretty heavy burden, and I hope it isn't always true I don't want my hasty curse on someone else to become true for all time.

I will bless you so that all the families of the earth may be blessed through you. - God's purpose is never just for us.

I'm sure you noticed who is doing the work here - God is.

The fishermen by the Sea of Galilee were called from their work to follow Jesus - he didn't make any promises then, except to make them fishers of people. But later he made a promise - the same promise God has been making since the beginning. Go - go into the world, and I will be with you always.

On the Way to Where?

February 6, 2011

It is God's presence, and God's leading for which we need to listen in the process ahead of us in this congregation. Of course, we must listen to one another's voices. But above all, we must listen, individually and collectively for the voice of God's Spirit to lead us. There will be sometimes when we need to stop talking and begin to listen for the voice of the Spirit whispering in our hearts.

And right from the beginning we need to be holding each other, and this congregation in prayer - both asking God for what we need, but also (and maybe especially) listening to what God is saying to us, where God is wanting to lead this congregation. That may mean letting go of some of our agenda, and our plans. It may mean walking into unknown territory.