

From the Pulpit of Trinitarian Congregational Church Sunday, January 4, 2015

Guest Preacher Rev. Susan Boone: Musing From the Bike Path: Part II

Back in August of 2013, when the search process was in its early stages some of you may remember, or perhaps not (I won't take it personally) I reflected on what it was like to look at the world from a different perspective, from the outside looking in, from the bike path of life. Well it's a year and half later, I'm still peddling away on the bike path, on the outside looking in, and here for better or worse are more of my musing.

I have been in this business for over 20 years. I've been a settled pastor, an interim, a long term supply, a wandering minstrel, and served on committees that deal with churches and clergy, in the good times and the bad. This does not make me an expert by any means, but it's all you have right at the moment.

Over the years you have been fortunate to have what every church in their heart of heart dreams of. You had a full time pastor, a man with a wife and family who lived in town ever at your beck and call. But let me tell you times have changed (and I know we hate change and no one ever said it was easy) and the old model of what your expectations might be has changed in that time.

Let me tell you a little story of my first church. It was a tiny church up in the hills of Chester literally in the middle of nowhere, a hard 45 minute drive from where I lived. We had a pretty successful go of it for quite some time, until the travel finally did me in. All the while I was there I had a second job and sometimes a third. I don't think that in living memory they had ever had a pastor who lived nearby, who didn't need another job to pay the bills. And for them that was just the way it was, and I think because of that and their isolation they knew what it was to be in community and they made it work. They had an amazing capacity for ministering to one another. And in the end that's what it's all about, because, you see, those of us up here in the pulpit, we're really just passing through. It's the church community, it's you out there who are the permanent fixtures, who are in charge of your own destiny. You are the glue, the community that makes it work, and you are in charge of success and failure, even if the person up here fails.

We are at a cross roads and I know the road may not look the same, but my advice from the bike path of life is to take it with joy, optimism, and a sense of adventure. In another sermon I gave here once upon a time (see I do keep track of these things... it was a stewardship sermon) I asked you what your dream was and reminded you that the issue is not whether there is enough money to do what you want to do, but the challenge is to figure out what it **is** you want. And once you've figured out what it is you REALLY want, all things are possible if you want it bad enough and are willing to put your financial and spiritual efforts behind it. It matters not how big or how small you are or how different the landscape looks, you can figure it out, just be creative

There is a story of a tiny chapel in Yorkshire England where at the end of each pew there is a tall candlestick. Each family when it comes to church for vespers brings its own candle, lights it, and sits under its glow for the evening service. If a family is absent its pew goes unlighted and to that extent the light of the entire church is diminished. And so each family feels that its light is necessary. And so for us in this epiphany season, in this season of light, as we move into a new phase of our lives we should together bring our lights to bear and combine them: as bright or as tarnished that they may be, as flickering or as steady as they may be and be God's people, become light, become one in the Spirit.

And finally these words from Paul's letters to the Colossians (2:12-15): *As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience. Bear with one another and forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you. Above all clothe yourselves with love which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts to which you were called in one body and be thankful.*

Be thankful!