

First Presbyterian Church
October 29, 2020
Transitional Thoughts

The scriptures tell us to speak the truth in love. In saying things that people in the province of Galatia did not care to hear, Paul asked them, "Have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?" While truth may be in short supply and carry little currency at present in our national discourse from those that espouse alternative facts and alternative truths, truth must always remain valued by the church. This coming week we will proclaim the truth of the church triumphant as we observe All Saints Day. On November 22 we will celebrate the Reign of Christ and acknowledge the truth of our faith: That Christ is the head of the church.

We are also dealing in our lives at present with the truth of a church in transition between ministers. At the same time, we are all dealing with the truth of a nation in transition between the way things were before the pandemic and what it will be when the pandemic is more controlled and we can return to a more normal existence. People who study transitions tell us that the beginning of transition is the time of most anxiety. It is also a dangerous time, they tell us. Because organizations can plan for change and lay plans; but transition is more than planning for gradual change. Change and transition involve a three-step process. It involves members of the organization who go through three stages: (1) An ending; (2) a "neutral zone;" and (3) a new beginning. The ending is a letting go of what was, which may include grief, anxiety, anger, conflict. The second phase is a time of acceptance and understanding that the old ways of doing things are changing. It is in the second phase that transition is the most dangerous and the most filled with opportunities, the literature tells us. The third step is the new beginning.

There is a frustration, I know, that has been thrust on the church with the dual transitions. There is transition not only from one minister to the next but there are also the challenges posed by the pandemic to "be church" while at the same time doing it in a way that protects and serves those who are more at risk. I wish it weren't so. I wish this interim ministry was more like others. But the truth is, it isn't. And, the truth is we are still in Phase Two of the federal government's CDC Guidelines and the Governor's Proclamation. We are in the Fall. Hospitalizations are on the rise and the experts tell us it will be this way for perhaps upwards of a year longer. I wish it weren't so, but it is. In the meantime, we will continue to "be church," and "do church," in the most meaningful and creative ways we can. From the worship perspective we intend to continue the online services as well as the live services on Sunday mornings. During this time the session has labored to be responsive and responsible. Their positions and tasks are not the most enviable ones right now. They deserve our thanks, encouragement and prayers.

And speaking of session, I have nothing to report from last night's meeting because last night's meeting didn't occur. We discovered on Tuesday that the sanctuary has a

lighting issue. The electrician was called but wasn't able to fix or define the problem before last night's scheduled meeting. The session will meet as soon as possible after the electrical issue has been resolved.

Finally, I want to let you know that I will be gone after Sunday's services for the next two weeks. When the search committee interviewed me, I let them know that Jill and I had sold our home in Iowa and I would need to go back for packing, storing of goods and closing. In addition, my son and his fiancé, who had to postpone their marriage this summer, have decided to have a small ceremony with family and few friends. So, I will also be celebrating my son's marriage. For the next two weeks Lance Jones will be filling the pulpit and bringing you online services.

The Lord bless you and keep you this week.

Brad

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