

November 6, 2011

Scriptures Genesis 32:22-32

John 20:1-16

Scripture Lessons. In Genesis, Jacob is spending the restless night before he meets up with his brother, whom he betrayed. In this time of accountability, coming to terms with what he did, he meets God and wrestles with God. God blesses Jacob's persistence and struggle with a new name, Israel. Jacob also gets a dislocated hip.

In John 20 we find the account of the post resurrection appearances. The elements which I highlighted draw out that which is usually covered over: **the loss and uncertainty** which was the fact into which the resurrection interrupts.

We live in a time of loss and uncertainty. How will God interrupt us?

**"Death, taxes and the interim:  
Wrestling with God"**

*I : the interim*

The First point is that the interim time in a church's life is not an accident, it is not incidental. It is unavoidable – like death and taxes.

Like other times of change in our relationships, whether death of a loved one, or divorce, or empty nest, the interim is about you as you. (As opposed to you –in-a-relationship)

What is exciting for a church is that there is nothing that a church can't do. This is because you are the church. (What is corrective is that we often think that the pastor – while representing the church – is the church. The pastor is merely a servant of the church. The life of the church belongs to the church – through its Session)

*II: my service to you as interim pastor*

I come to you as your pastor and as your interim.

As your pastor (interim) I pledge to you

Continuity (we will keep going those parts of your life which need to be maintained).

Presence (as your Pastor, I am here for you. Whether it is baptism, or funeral or hospital visit I will be here for you.)

Resource (I will act as a resource both for your interim search and for your congregational life).

I am here. My general rule will be to be in Amelia Wednesday through Sunday. I hold office hours every morning. And in an emergency I am never more than 2 hours away. You should have a feeling that I am available.

There is an important rule for our time together. It is a foundation for healthy relationships. Communicate your expectations FIRST.

If you have an expectation, please share it. Please share it FIRST. That way we both have the best chance of fulfilling our interaction.

If you want a visit. Please ask. If you know someone who needs a visit, please ask.

**What I ask of you is: Please ask.**

As your Interim (Pastor) my tasks are

To lead you to assess your history (what from your past should be at the heart of your future).

To assist you to clarify your identity (not just who you are, but who you intend to be as God's people in this place).

To assist in transitions of power. The transition is a time when people change what they do and how they do it. We work together to make these transitions orderly and effective.

Denominational linkage – who we are in Christ. It is part of identity and history that we are Presbyterian. We will explore who we are in Christ, in the larger sense, both denominationally and ecumenically. In service and in mission.

Preparations for the new installed Pastor. In matters great and small, we will prepare for your next relationship, with your installed Pastor.

*III: unusual circumstances*

All of these transitions and concerns are taking place in a larger context which I summarize with this question: What time is it?

I ask what time is it because we do not live in ordinary time. We live in a time of profound change. We live in a time of economic change which is severe and global. We live in a time of demographic change as the baby boom generation departs the work force and enters retirement. We live in a time of cultural change because the cultural support for the church has faded and changed shape. We live in a time of technological change which makes some things easier and other things more complicated.

*IV: the interim exploration*

It is in this midst of this unsettling time that we will work together through your interim. We will explore together

- the new life in Christ
- the shaping power of God's Word
- the peace of reflection and contemplation
- the understanding which is gained through art and music in our worship
- the joy of fellowship in Christ

It is my honor and privilege in Christ to serve as your interim pastor as you prepare for your next installed pastoral relationship.

Pastor Dave