

Good chilly morning to all!

January 27, 2019

One of the most valuable and important aspects of being a pastor is to be able to change direction quickly when circumstances demand it! Rev. Dr. Sharon Munson, the District Superintendent of the UMC in New England, was to preach this morning and I was to lead worship. Karen called me yesterday afternoon, and in a very deep and husky voice said she had a terrible cold and wouldn't be able to be with us this morning. I told her I was sorry to hear that and to "take two cookies and not call me in the morning!" And so, I e-mailed Mimi and told her I would be preaching this morning, not the Rev. Dr. Munson! Being able to changing direction quickly, it's part of being a pastor, it's part of being a human being, isn't it?

As much as we'd like to think we know how each day is going to go, sometimes we have to change direction quickly -- because of illness, because someone else can't hold up their end of the daily deal we are all dealt, because Mother Nature throws us an icy curve or a dangerous storm. Life is filled with changing directions. Perhaps that sounds trite or too obvious to even consider. But the older I become, the more I realize the ability to change directions is probably one of the most important and helpful skills we can learn. Whether it's because someone is sick and can't fulfill an obligation they have promised to meet, or because the weather is throwing us a curve, or because a new medical diagnosis is upsetting all our future plans, or because a loved one has died and left us behind.... we need to be able to change directions. We need at least a willingness to face whatever is coming with new energy, acceptance, and the determination that we will make the best of whatever happens. BUT, that's not easy, is it? It's not easy for me anyway.... Granted, this morning, if after seven years of seminary and eighteen plus years of pastoring and preaching I can't put together a sermon quickly, then I've not learned much along the way! It's the bigger, life altering changes of direction that are harder to accept and deal with successfully that are the problem, aren't they? Be they changes of direction we want -- new relationship, new baby, new job, new challenge.... or changes of direction we don't want -- failed relationship, baby grown and moving out of the house, job lost or retirement, challenge of failing health.... those are the toughies, eh?

How best to face and deal with those life altering changes of direction.... How do you do it? I do it in several different ways. I'm an introvert -- so I find spending time alone with my thoughts about how to proceed is helpful. I like to read -- so going to a written source of strength is helpful -- be it the poetry of Mary Oliver, on an on line source like [www.gratefulness.org](http://www.gratefulness.org), or a reflection in a back issue of *Christian Century* (a journal I recommend!) or getting lost in a TV drama like "Vera" on Acorn. Sometimes forgetting the challenges to come from an unexpected change of direction helps me to get back to it with a clearer head and a manageable level of acceptance of what is to come. And then there are the companions in my life whom I can call upon to listen to me. I always remember a calendar picture of a cat I had some years ago. Underneath the lovely drawing of the cat perched on the arm of a chair were the words, "Sometimes all a person needs is a good listening to!" I've come to believe a "good listening to" is far more helpful than a "good talking to".... Sometimes just putting the worry, the confusion, the stopping-the-heart reaction to a change of direction out into the air for another body to hear is enough.... enough to help me get through whatever it is that is immobilizing at that moment or time in my life. How about you? What do you do?

So these are my "Sunday words" and questions on this last Sunday of January, 2019. Thanks for reading. Thanks for being on this always-life-changing journey with me. Blessings, Susan