

Sermon: “We Begin, Again” (notes only, see audio file for complete sermon)

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A. Response to intro of the Transition Team

They’re to hold me accountable—tell me if I done good; make sure I know it when I screw up. You can do this too.

And I’m going to hold them accountable—the TT has been vested with power by the congregation; to do the job it needs to do, the TT must accept that power and resp., and act with confidence, reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of—not in the fear of God, but in the knowledge that to let the minister, or any leader, become an, is to invite unhappy consequences. I hope this TT will model speaking truth to power for the future Committee on Ministry, which is charged with exactly the same kind of work in relation to the new settled minister. You can do this too. You must.

We shall be friendly, but accountable to each other. We shall be, yes . . . ‘accountabilibuddies.’ Lovingly keeping each other honest. Hope you will too, here, and with everyone you meet.

B. WA open house extra boost—

Regarding the WA open house, I’d just like to add a few words of welcome and encouragement. It’s wonderful way to be involved: you will have a say in what ideas or events warrant the attention of a service, and then you will get to shape the service, and—if you like, participate in some of them. It’s important fun, and good, safe, public speaking experience.

C. A little about me

Influences

Confessions: I like food a little too much, I like drink a little too much, I like exercise a little too little.

I am informed by history and poetry

I translate & appropriate “amen, God, Christ, redeemer, Satan, sin”

D. Liberal religion (speaking to the visitors too)

Doxology:

Love is the doctrine of this church (doctrine of biblical infallibility)

Quest for truth is its sacrament (not, say, transubstantiation)

And service is its prayer (not prayers to a God who might answer)

We are religious liberals. As the name implies, we are generous & free

We gather in churches like this because it helps us to be religious without being told what to believe, and having to believe impossible things.

We employ reason. We believe that religious truth does not contradict truth from any other source. This is why we welcome, not fear, the discoveries of science. We say, oh, that's is that works. A Deistic Unitarian might say, yes, God works in mysterious ways, but those works are getting less mysterious every day. "God is still speaking."

We believe in progress. Things are not fixed. Revelation is not sealed.

Because of this, our religion is always up to date, ahead of the crowd of slow adopters. The worst of today's right-wing demagogues is far more liberal than most 19th C. radicals. They just take so long to get with it. (Unless those tea-baggers destroy the GOP . . . 20 years from now . . .

We do not persecute others for their beliefs. Funny story . . .
[Tell the story of "The Baptist on the Bridge."]

E. The Five tasks of IM; my method (1 per next 5 Sundays—then a quiz)

#1—Coming to Terms with our History

#2, Discovering a New Identity

#3: Taking Note of Shifts of Power

#4: Re-Thinking Denominational Linkage

#5: Commitments to a New Leadership and a New Future

We begin, again. We all know that if you fall off a horse, you're supposed to get back up, and right away. When we fail, we're supposed to think about what happened, and then begin again. And yet again. Because we, the heroes of this story, will often fail.

I'm beginning again, in the sense of starting a new career. I've never done this before, full-time, all the aspects of ministry. I will make many mistakes.

This congregation is beginning again, in its search for a settled minister. I've been told that some congregants think of this interim year as a "do-over," that you're taking a mulligan on last year!

This is normal. So let's begin, again. Maybe, with some luck and a lot of honesty and a lot of generosity we can make it work this time. Let's give it our best shot, shall we?