Two to three years ago now the Seminary decided it would try and bring all of its professors into the 21st century by giving us a quick lesson on social media with a plea for us to at least get on Facebook and LinkedIn and if possible create our own website. So I dutifully set up a Facebook page and a LinkedIn site which, if truth be told, I rarely go to or use so I was surprised when all of the sudden I was getting emails and messages forwarded to me from the LinkenIn site congratulating me on my anniversary.

I sat there racking my brain thinking what anniversary were folks congratulating me on so I finally had to go to my own LinkedIn site to look. Anyone want to guess what the anniversary was? Marcia and I have been at First Baptist exactly one year this month, so happy anniversary to you too!

I had to chuckle as I thought back to when Marcia first told me about First Baptist and your desire for us to be your Transitional-Interim pastors for the one thing that was asked before we were hired was since you had already heard Marcia and knew she could preach, you wanted to hear me to make sure I could cut the mustard (so to speak) so that first Sunday I came and preached and then Marcia and I waited to hear if my preaching was good enough. It must have been for here we are!

We came soon after your beautiful farewell celebration for Marvin and Terry and then our work began as we all began to realize all that Marvin and Terry did for as each season of the church year came and we prepared for the activities the question we always asked was, “well who did the preparation for that before” and the answer would often be, “Marvin did” or even more often, “Terry did”. So partly I am here this morning to say “Congratulations! We survived the year together!” and “Congratulations, YOUdid it!”

It is one of the things I most enjoy about the transitional-interim process is watching a church after it realizes their pastor has gone begin to pull together and start working as a team to do what needs to be done for the ministry God has called them together to do.

This past week Rebecca was doing a paper for one of her classes about what FBC’s theology of doing a church bulletin was (you probably never knew there was a theology of doing a church bulletin) and my answer was just a small picture of how FBC is coming together to work as a Team. As I thought about the worship service which is what the bulletin represents and all that has to happen on a Sunday morning I realized Marcia and I pick the scripture, hymns and put the sermon together, Nancy and Rebecca put together the children’s sermon leaders and children’s church, W/E board under Gayle now puts together the worship Leader list, The Deaconate under Laura and the W/E Board under Gayle with the help of Charles lines up our ushers, Terri puts together the anthem and any special music and makes sure we have our organists and pianist, the trustees make sure someone opens up the church and has the heat going and lights going and the counters lined up to, and Doris types the whole thing up into the bulletin we receive every Sunday. It is a team effort!

We are beginning to work well together as a team, but I would like to take you back to those first days when Marcia and I first came. I know I had to prove I could actually preach a decent sermon, but beyond that how did you come to trust us? What was that process like for you?

I ask this because of the sermon series Marcia and I are now doing which not too subtlety is called “When Newness Comes.” Your search committee has exchanged profiles with a number of pastors who are interested in being the pastor here at First Baptist Church and as they enter the interviewing process it is time for Marcia and I to begin to prepare you for the pastor God is preparing for First Baptist Church.

The scripture lesson is a fascinating one that comes early in the Gospel of Mark and gives us some insight both into Jesus as leader and the disciples as his followers and the trust that was still growing between them. Up until this point in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus had been baptized by John, called the disciples to follow him, healed people of their diseases (which made people question where he got his power from that Marcia preached on last week) and was trying to teach his followers what it means to follow God so the life event of today’s text catches them completely off guard in a number of ways.

The first is that once Jesus was done teaching the crowd, he didn’t stay with them 24/7, he needed his time away too! Scripture is full of instances where Jesus either got away by himself, (as your Pastor will need to do also), and instances like this where he got away with what I would call his leadership team. I am guessing in the past First Baptist has had retreats with either the steering committee, or staff members, or various committees. It is one of the ways the pastor and the leadership team get a chance to get to know each other better.

It is often these times away where you get to see each other in a different light. It is one of those scripture passages I wish I could ask Jesus what was going on for he gets in the boat, trusts his disciples to get him where they need to go and promptly falls asleep. I’m curious as to whether that sleep is from sheer exhaustion of working with the crowds of people all day. I’ll be honest, after services on Sunday and then the various committee meetings that go sometimes to mid-afternoon, the first thing I do when I get home is take a nap!

Or was Jesus so secure in his trust in God’s care and in his leadership team, the disciples, he just went to sleep until he knew he’d be needed again? Or, did he know this was to be a test for his leadership team? If it was a test for the leadership team, they didn’t do so well!

I can only imagine that Jesus AND the disciples were all ready to get away from the crowd and to cross over to a space were they could just relax. In the middle of the crossing is when the waves and the wind picked up and things took an unexpected turn as they often do in ministry. As the disciples start to focus on the wind and the waves they come to the conclusion that this situation is beyond their control and they have a couple of options here:

1. They could all work together and try and ride it out
2. They could all cry out to God and ask God what their next steps should be if any.
3. They could wake the sleeping Jesus and ask his advice, or
4. They could do what they chose to do and that is, wake Jesus and blame him for going to sleeping!

Instead of coming together and asking God for help, they fall apart and all blame their leader: Of course it’s got to have been Jesus’ fault that they were in this predicament to begin with, right? He’s the one who wanted to cross over to the other side. This storm they are in is his fault. And the more they focused in on the storm, the more frightened they became. At least they knew who to run to even if they did end up waking him up!

I’m not sure what the storms are in your life but I do know if you haven’t waken Jesus up yet in your heart and soul, now is the time to do so! Tell Jesus this has gotten beyond your control and the waves look too big and the wind is just too strong and Lord, I need you now! Show me what to do or not do next. Help me. You may be surprised that the moment you turn to Jesus instead of focusing on the wind and waves, the storm suddenly doesn’t seem so bad. There is a light on the horizon where the clouds appear to be breaking up and the sun shining through!

Jesus response was to rebuke the wind and the sea and then his leaders by asking them if they had no faith? Did they not believe even in this storm God would be there for them? Do we not believe even in the storms of our lives that God will be there for us taking us step by step, wave by wave if only we ask?

We’ve had our storms together this past year, first Marvin and Terry leaving, then Deb leaving, then Headstart leaving, the boiler needing fixing, and now the tower falling down, just to name a few. We could have focused on the problems and starting blaming everyone for all that might be perceived as going wrong. I praise God that you did not, but instead turned to God and figure out how to pull together to get things done.

And here we are, a new website up and running, a new Sunday School class added to our program, new people choosing First Baptist Church as their Family by Choice. People for whom Terry and Marvin are simply names they have heard about. And whatever doubts we have about the futre pastor we continue to work together upholding the search committee in our prayers and trusting God will guide us through until you final get to meet your next settled pastor and the fun of learning about each other and the trust begins. AMEN.