

February 9, 2017 ***Unity in the midst of Diversity*** Milepost 285

The movie *Groundhog Day* (1993), set in Punxsutawney, PA, was added to the US National Film Registry in 2006. Creative difference conflicts on the set between actor Bill Murray and director Harold Ramis, were legendary. An interviewer recently baited Murray by asking for his perspective on the conflict. Murray simply replied, "We made a great film, isn't that what's important?"

This story illustrates the essential role of vision in a community. A clear goal can transform what appear to be obstacles, into material with which to build. You could say we are making a movie in transition: everyone has a role, and the Holy Spirit is directing. As we are learning from Ephesians, Shalom's story is part of God's secret plan from the beginning, to save the world through Christ's formation of a barrier breaking community. Keeping God's plan to save the world front and center, enables our creative differences as individual living stones, to be built together into a spiritual building which displays God's manifold wisdom to the principalities and power in the spiritual realm (Eph. 3:10).

As we live into the vision which is beginning to emerge, we will recognize the following...

- A clear and congregationally owned direction reduces the chance of being derailed by future challenges which are inevitable. Vision enables us to *separate what seems urgent from what is actually important*.
- *Differences become assets, instead of liabilities*. Conflicting views can lead to creative answers which neither party had in mind, when we speak the truth in love within community.
- *No one individual gets it right on their own*. Healthy relationships are essential.
- *Talking about the vision won't get us there*. Living into it creates forward momentum.
- *The Spirit brings unity in the midst of our differences*, when we allow the Spirit to lead.
- Fear of failure is a major factor in keeping a congregation in status quo mode. *We learn more through trying new things, and making an occasional mistake, than by playing it safe*.

Keep praying for leaders who gather Sunday afternoon to continue the process of discerning a clear and unifying vision from January vision group conclusions.

–Gary Martin