

The Uniform

October 7, 2012 – Installation of Diana Sullivan

I Samuel 17:31-40

When the words that David spoke were heard, they repeated them before Saul; and he sent for him. David said to Saul, "Let no one's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are just a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth." But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father; and whenever a lion or a bear came, and took a lamb from the flock, I went after it and struck it down, rescuing the lamb from its mouth; and if it turned against me, I would catch it by the jaw, strike it down, and kill it. Your servant has killed both lions and bears; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, since he has defied the armies of the living God." David said, "The Lord, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine." So Saul said to David, "Go, and may the Lord be with you!" Saul clothed David with his armor; he put a bronze helmet on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail. David strapped Saul's sword over the armor, and he tried in vain to walk, for he was not used to them. Then David said to Saul, "I cannot walk with these; for I am not used to them." So David removed them. Then he took his staff in his hand, and chose five smooth stones from the wadi, and put them in his shepherd's bag, in the pouch; his sling was in his hand, and he drew near to the Philistine.

David was just delivering lunch to his brothers when he heard this ginormous Philistine issuing his challenge. The Israelite army was afraid and no one wanted to take on the giant. So in front of all these seasoned soldiers David steps forward and says, "I can take him." He was pretty sure of himself, and why not. He'd killed lions and bears as a shepherd what's the difference? David exuded so much confidence that Saul told David to go for it. "May the Lord be with you!" king Saul said to David – which is the religious equivalent of "good luck!"

Saul then did what made sense to him – he prepared David for battle. He loaded David up with armor, strapped on a sword, and there David stood. He was so loaded down he couldn't move. This might be the standard uniform for battling giants but for David it just got in the way. It didn't fit.

So David peeled off all the armor and all the traditional expectations and he went with what he knew. He picked up his staff, the one he carried every day, he chose five smooth stones, and he got his well-used sling in his hand. He drew upon his personal experience and trusted his God given ability.

For years ministers were shaped and formed to fit the uniform – there was one way to do ministry and one way to become a minister. As a result, many people, with incredible abilities were denied opportunities to serve. But all that has changed. Finally, we are starting to appreciate what king Saul learned all those years ago. There is more than one way to kill a giant and one uniform does not fit all.

David didn't just wake up one day and say, "I can kill a giant." He was born a shepherd and he honed his skills as a shepherd. He had experiences that gave him unique abilities and he had

gifts that that were uniquely his own. He was filled with the spirit of God. Then one day he was confronted with a situation and he knew in his heart it was his moment to answer the call.

Diana didn't just wake up one day and say, "I'm a minister." She grew up in the church, the daughter of a Disciples of Christ minister. She was active in youth group. She learned the discipline of sports. She was and is gifted with the ability to observe people and possessed with the desire to lift people up. She started college, got married, started a family, and understands what it is to love fiercely. The gifts for ministry were always there, her life experience helped to hone them. She began her work with us handling all our administrative details and she made it a ministry.

Then one day we were in need of someone to fill the shoes of Associate Minister and with a nudge from God she had the confidence to say, "I can do that." And we had the good sense to say, "The Lord be with you!"

What she has done already this year is not really a surprise, it is more like amazing. She has worked closely with our youth sponsors to breathe new life into our youth ministry. She has gone to concerts and games and gone out of her way to forge relationships so vital to ministry. She planned mission opportunities for our youth and our church to teach us about homelessness and the joy experiencing what can happen when we work together. She worked with our youth to plan and lead an inspiring Youth Sunday worship service. She directed a week of Junior Camp at our Christian Conference Center. She planned and went on two mission trips, one for our Chi Rho youth and one for our CYF youth and coordinated over \$10,000 in fundraising to make those trips affordable. She has taught classes, recruited teachers, researched curriculum, instigated a youth choir and youth band (that you will hear in the very near future), preached, led worship, planned a family festival. She knows how to make things happen, which is why the Region is glad to have her leading a team to plan a new conference center facility. She has done all of this while working on her college education and raising a family.

Just like David amazed a weary army with his confidence, skill, and willingness to trust God; Diana has amazed us with her confidence, skill, and willingness to trust God. We now have the privilege of watching her live into her call as we benefit from her service. So we join together now to publicly affirm her call, pledge our support, and open our hearts to her ministry with us.

I now invite Bill Spangler-Dunning, our Regional Minister and President, to come up and lead us in a service of installation for Diana Sullivan.