

Dear Friends,

Oh, my. As I have driven around this new place, it seems as if I've gotten lost every where I've tried to go. Who knew Route 5 has so many versions? There's 5S, 5A, 5 east and west. Who knew there would be so many different ways to get to any one destination?

So I've spent a considerable amount of time this summer and fall trying to figure out where I am and how I get to where I need to be. I've had to allow a little extra time. I've had to keep a sense of humor. I've had to remind myself from time to time to take a deep breath as I feel the frustration level rising. And I've had to be intentionally aware of my surroundings, paying attention to street signs and landmarks along the way. Sometimes I've even had to stop and ask for help!

While I've been late to arrive more often than not, little by little I'm beginning to know my way around. And I've learned a lot along the way!

I've learned that sometimes I've simply not gone far enough. I've turned back too soon. When I finally arrive, I'm startled to realize how close I had been. If only I had gone a little farther! I had simply given up too soon.

I've learned that somebody else *telling me* how to get there isn't quite as effective as driving it myself.

I've learned that along the way, the scenery can be breathtaking if only I look up, look around and enjoy it.

I've learned that when I'm looking for one thing, I often find something else, too.

Sometimes life is like that, isn't it? Sometimes, for all our best efforts we find ourselves lost. The familiar ways, the tried and true directions just don't seem to be working. It feels like that kind of a time in the church.

The old rules, the old ways just don't seem to produce the results they once did. While we figure out where we want to go and how we're going to get there, let's enjoy the way. Let's pause from time to time to take a deep breath, to offer up a prayer, to seek discernment. Let's not give up too soon. Let's ask for help when we need it. Let's not forget that there are several different ways we can go to arrive at our destination, and that sooner or later we really do end up where we need to be.

I'm glad, friends, we're on this journey together.

Now, all of this said, with Christmas around the corner, I just might add to my wish list a GPS tracking device. *Oh, Mike...*

Blessings of peace and love, hope and joy as we await anew the birth of the One who guides our way, Jesus the Christ,

