

## Unfamiliar Territory

I don't know about you but when I hit unfamiliar territory when I am trying to get somewhere, it is like someone has pushed a giant panic button. My heart beats faster, body parts tighten up and my mind starts to race. That's when I usually take most of my wrong directions...well, that and in rushing.

A number of years ago, I had taken the wrong highway to visit some of my family on the way back from Ottawa. I called my brother-in-law and he tried to steer me in the right direction but I was so beside myself that I couldn't even listen or grasp what he was saying and drove in the opposite direction. What should have taken two hours, took five. He still shakes his head when that story comes up!

I needed to stop and get re-oriented but I was so bent on getting *somewhere* that I just kept going. This is not the wisdom way. When we hit unfamiliar territory on our spiritual journeys, we have to acknowledge that we don't know where we are and we don't know where we are going. But when we stop to acknowledge this, the quick answer is not the goal. In fact, answers aren't why we are here. We are here to find the questions that will make this unfamiliar place a place where we discover God anew, where we learn about ourselves and where we are strengthened to continue a transformative life.

I am often drawn to these verses from Hosea.

Hosea 2:14-16

“But then I will win her back once again.

I will lead her into the desert  
and speak tenderly to her there.

<sup>15</sup> I will return her vineyards to her  
and transform the Valley of Trouble into a gateway of hope.

She will give herself to me there,  
as she did long ago when she was young,  
when I freed her from her captivity in Egypt.

<sup>16</sup> When that day comes,” says the LORD,  
“you will call me ‘my husband’  
instead of ‘my master.’”

An unfamiliar place is a place of hearing, not the answer, but the questions that lead to wisdom and intimacy with God.