Our readings today caution us about making assumptions. Our assumptions are often wrong. The process of choosing of a new king to replace Saul illustrates this very well. Saul was not doing a good job as king, he wasn’t following the path that God had laid out for him, one that would have been good for his kingdom and the people within it. So God asks Samuel to help identify a new king. Of course, we know the story…God chooses the very youngest and least known children of Jesse the Bethlehemite. David was a mere shepherd and spent his days and probably many nights in the fields away from the eyes of the community. It turns out he is the one God has prepared for this role from birth. He was certainly not the one Samuel had assumed that God would pick. The Episcopal church like most churches has wrestled with our assumptions about the LGBTQ community. Some churches have used their “religious freedom” to exclude businesses run by the LGBTQ community from selling their wares to people who are offended by their lifestyle. We have excluded transgender people from bathrooms, sports and many have been murdered on the streets. It was not until 2015 that people of the same sex could be lawfully married and attain all the benefits this legal union provides. The reasons given for these exclusions have mostly been based on assumptions. There has been fear attached to these assumptions. Some people say that it is unnatural for people of the same sex to be together because they can’t reproduce. People say that two men or two women cannot be good parents or that their children will be confused by their parental roles, yet I have seen countless examples of loving same sex parents. Children do not judge or discriminate until they are taught by the outside world to do so. Transgender and non- binary people are sometimes viewed as people who have weird sexual preferences or who are confused by their sexuality and gender’. Transgender people simply do not identify with their biological assigned gender identity. Who they choose to have a relationship with is is no different than how anyone else chooses a partner. They love who they love just like any other human being on this earth. Throughout history we have constricted gender to certain constructs that are just not accurate. They are man made and I mean that literally. People who are LGBTQ are human beings with no more or less sinful or deviant ways than the rest of the population. Someone asked me a very good question the other day why many people even cisgendered people or people who identify by their birth gender sometimes identify what their pronouns are on their signature on emails or in zoom boxes. The reason is that we cannot assume which gender anyone identifies as and to misidentify someone’s pronouns is harmful and hurtful. When we constantly miss gender people and make other assumptions about who they are we cause an incongruence that can lead to self hate within that person. This is Pride month and I hope you will consider breaking down some of the barriers including both language and thought patterns that you and I have likely grown up with that constrict and are harmful to those that do not understand themselves in gender binary terms. This is not the only area we make assumptions in this society. We are just now breaking racial barriers that have been falsely constructed in the last thousands of years that have led us to believe that blacks are somehow inferior to white people. Another area assumptions are made about a specific group of people was talked about in a podcast this past week that pointed out a rarely talked about assumption in our society but one as ancient as humanity. In true form I cannot remember the name of the doctor who was the guest of this NPR podcast but she talked about the issue of womens healthcare. She described her own experience as a child and having a mother who would not talk to her about her menstrual cycle and her difficulties finding answers from her physician. It has been expected and understood until very recently that it was ok for woman to suffer during this time even if it was debilitating. For instance, this doctor had to frequently take two sick days from school a month growing up because of pain and cramps and that was considered ok. No help was offered. It’s not because there was no help available it’s because it was not a concern of male doctors throughout the ages. Things are slowly changing but we can see how the assumptions in our society have led to many forms of discrimination and exclusion. Women could not vote until the 20th century and highly qualified women have been excluded from many professions and sports until recently and there is still much work to be done. We don’t know who God has prepared for what tasks in this world. We do know that it is not always those we might expect or have been led to believe deserve it or are entitled to certain positions in this world. We have to prepare ourselves to be surprised. We have to believe that people are capable of things that are not necessarily just the people that have always done it but that there are others who possess the God given gifts and talents who have previously not been considered. What can we do to believe in someone who has never experienced love and support from society before? What can we do to break down society’s stereotypes and assumptions to raise up people to utilize their gifts and talents no matter how they identify, what class they were born into, what gender, what geographical location, what language, what color, whatever the barriers society has placed? The gospel tells us that no matter how small the potential appears to us there is nothing beyond God’s power and nourishing without the capability and capacity to turn something or someone into something beyond our wildest expectations. We should learn to expect that healing and miracles and potential can astound us and should astound us frequently. If a tiny mustard seed can grow to be food and shelter for birds and people, then all things are possible. The fruits of our labors may not be visible in one lifetime, but the seeds can be sown, the seeds will continue to grow and it’s the planting of them that makes the growth possible. It has been said that St. David’s always finds a way, whether that be through finding funds to survive, people to do the work or finding ways to reach out to the community. While that may be true I wonder how can we work on planting seeds intentionally and not just expecting a miracle or savior to come along from the community? How can we through planned giving, through education, through opening up ourselves beyond our assumptions, begin to move forward in ways that more closely resemble God’s ways? Our faith can lead us in the right direction; but I invite you to be open to the unexpected. I invite you to be open to unexpected ways to connect and collaborate with people and communities that are new to us and beyond our expectations and vision. I invite us to remember that even the tiniest of seeds planted can turn into something beyond our wildest imaginations.