

Interim Ministry Testimony

By Hank Anderson

A few years back, my journey through ministry took an unexpected turn. For some 30 years, my wife and I served a series of churches as co-pastors. Our ministry together had been fulfilling. Our gifts and interests were complimentary, and we enjoyed working with one another. But, my wife began sensing that God was calling her into hospital chaplaincy. Preparing for that shift, however, required a year-long CPE residency. So, the question became what was I going to do for a year? Complicating the issue was that we didn't know where we would end up after her residency.

To that point, I had never considered interim ministry as an option. It simply didn't have much attraction. But in this case, it seemed to fulfill a need. I was blessed to receive a call to serve as the interim minister at First Christian Church in Pekin, IL. While there, I discovered interim ministry as a calling.

I discovered that as an interim minister I could help congregations re-envision their future, and that was tremendously energizing. My focus in ministry has always been centered around helping long-established congregations experience renewal. Working with congregations in transition allows me to live out that ministry in a compact and focused period of time. Fortunately, the congregations I have served have been seeking new direction and a renewed sense of vitality. As a result, they have been very welcoming of the leadership I have been able to provide.

Including my student churches, I have now been in ministry for over 40 years. While I still have a few years before retirement, I know that the end of my career is near. What started a few years ago as a stop-gap effort to tide me over until my wife finished residency, has become a fulfilling season of ministry. In fact, I cannot think of another more exciting and fulfilling season in my career.

As I was considering the possibility of taking on that first interim, someone far smarter and wiser than I, told me that interim ministry "is where the action is." He was right. And I am thankful that I stumbled into this specialty in pastoral ministry.