

To be or not to be...

By Steve Welker

In 2011, I had the chance to attend a UCC History & Polity Class. Being a Disciples of Christ pastor for many years, I sought answers to what was next in my life and ministry. Enter a discussion about interim ministry at that class, and in 2012, I took the Interim Ministry Network training, resigned from my senior pastor's position, and entered the world of Interim Ministry. So, my response was to the question posed, "To be or not to be...[an interim pastor?]" The response was a resounding "yes!"

I served as an interim pastor since 2012. In February of this year, I "retired" from full-time interim ministries. Yet, the joy I have shared in being an interim pastor has kept me from saying "no" to part-time interims, and I have served one since "retiring!"

What is the joy that interim ministry brings to me that, perhaps, a settled position as pastor did not? Well, I am not there to "fix" anything in the congregation.

(1) journey with them during a transition time, to seek an understanding of who they are as a community of faith with a non-anxious presence;

(2) seek and confirm their vision and mission and evaluate if their programming is meeting both;

(3) reflecting on their model of leadership to see if it is still the most efficient at the current time

(4) maintain contact with association and conference ties in as many ways as possible;

(5) and finally, to help the congregation and search team to prepare for life after the transition, and help their search team in any initial questions they have concerning the search process

My joy in interim ministry comes from helping the congregation through those five "tasks" moving them from where they were to where they will be when a settled pastor is called.

Of course, there will be times when a congregation will need to spend more time in one of those areas due to previous issues of hurt, loss, or grief. However, if the congregation willingly responds openly and honestly to the questions I present to them concerning previous issues, we find a common ground and a place to "begin again" in the life of that community of faith!