

From the Pastor

February 2019

A Message from Rev. Kurt Landerholm



Forty years ago I was in a battle. Perhaps it is better stated that I was in my eighth year of fighting. God began tugging on my 18-year-old heart and I was pushing back. The relentless battle was a deep sense of call to ordained ministry and my resistance to the call. I argued with God that I was not cut of that fabric. I insisted that I could not do pastoral ministry and I was certain this could not be the call of God. But God continued to burden me until I gave in and answered the call. I was 27 years old, leaving work I enjoyed and my home state of North Dakota. I traveled across six states until I arrived in Wilmore, Kentucky for a three year masters of divinity program. My struggles weren't over, I continued to question the call while arguing with God. In my 6th and final semester, I took a class called "A Systems Approach to Church Administration" where I came to peace with the call. I remember the words of the professor who shared that we should pastor out of authenticity. That was freeing for me as I realized I didn't have to conform to anyone's expectation of who I should be, nor my own expectation, but I just needed to be myself. That was incredibly freeing.

On July 1, 1982, I began as a pastor in a quiet community along the Ohio River. In my 37 years as a pastor, I have found ministry to be a great joy and blessing. I have greeted each day with enthusiasm and passion for the opportunity to serve a church and serve alongside church members.

As December 1, 2018 neared I had to make a decision about retirement. As you can imagine, that was not an easy choice. I love what God called me to and I have deep appreciation for this congregation that I have been honored to serve. Knowing I will be age 67, I submitted my request for retirement status. On June 30, I will end seven years of appointment at Mentor. I do so with deep respect and love for each of you.

I will savor and enjoy the last months we have together. July 1 will begin a new chapter in my life. Nancy and I do not have any clear plans for the future, but staying in the area has great appeal.

Our United Methodist system has flaws, but by God's grace and the faithfulness of those called to serve, it is a system that works amazingly well. That was displayed when just two weeks after the public announcement of my retirement, it was announced that Bishop Tracy Malone intends to appoint as the new lead pastor, Rev. Sondra Snode.

I have known Rev. Snode from afar for many years and quite closely over the past six years as she served as our district superintendent. She is a wonderful pastor with compassion, servant leadership, anointed preaching, and a passion for Jesus. Pastor Snode is a pastor who has been loved by her congregations and respected across our conference for her leadership. Over the past six years, she has been my pastor. I can assure you that the congregation is blessed.

Transitions are not always easy and for some harder than others. We own and recognize that. As I step away on June 30, I will have been the 90th senior pastor over the congregation's 201 year history. For me it has been a great ride and I so appreciate being one of the many shepherds of this great congregation.