

PASTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

2021 was a year of discernment. Soon after the Pastor Nominating Committee was elected at last year's annual meeting, I met with them to share thoughts and expectations. I encouraged them to search for the best candidate for Federated's next solo pastor. It might be me; it might be someone else. Without going through the search process, there was no way of really knowing. I also shared that Federated Church is not obligated to offer me the position – nor was I obligated to accept if offered. Our common obligation was to seek God's will through the process.

Part of my discernment was seeing if God was leading me elsewhere. To be honest, I thought God was calling me away from Federated. It felt like I did all that I could as acting senior pastor. I was uncertain as to whether there was more I could offer as the next pastor. It was a matter of discerning where God might be leading me and my family.

Just as our PNC had their MIF (Ministry Information Form), I had my PIF (Personal Information Form) on the CLC (Church Leadership Connection) – in case you have not noticed, Presbyterians like to use acronyms. This meant that as the PNC was looking at potential candidates, I would have to look for potential churches. From the get-go I decided not to pursue a call in a community that is smaller and less diverse than Columbus; this was primarily for the sake of our children. I learned that there are A LOT of Presbyterian churches in small communities looking for a pastor, and I felt lousy each time I declined their interest. There were several churches I interviewed with, and with some of those there was a second interview. Yet, there was no clear sense of where God was leading me. Through a pastoral colleague, I learned there is a difference between feeling called away from and being called to a particular ministry. This made me question my initial thoughts of God calling away from Federated.

There was also the uneasy feeling of what happens if the PNC chooses another candidate. That would mean that I'm unemployed, which was a scary thought. But I realized that if the PNC did find someone else to be the next solo pastor, then I would trust their judgment in doing what is best for Federated Church. That dispelled my fears.

I had to trust God through the search process, regardless of how long it takes. Since I believe that God works through community, it was helpful (albeit surprising) to be unexpectedly invited to meet with our PNC last December. They offered me the solo pastor position, but I was not ready to give my reply. The following weeks were filled prayer, conversations with mentors & friends, and serious consideration for what my acceptance would mean.

I realized that with all the ups and downs of trying to discern God's will in 2021, my accepting the offer to be the solo pastor for Federated Church actually means more discernment of God's will, in 2022 and beyond. We will discern how the Spirit is leading us as we seek to follow Christ.

Grace and peace,

Edward