



Pastor's Ponderings - September 2022

Leslie and I arrived here in Boston at the beginning of May 2019. We came here from Georgia because we wanted to move back to this area, and because Faith Church was looking for a pastor and offered very much the kind of ministry context we hoped for: a friendly, caring, and open-minded congregation, a livable housing situation, and a well-cared for church building. The invitation to come here as "Transitional Pastor" was very appealing. A Transitional Pastor is common for churches that have recently lost a pastor and are in a period of "transition," a time of re-evaluation, discernment, and change. It can be difficult to discern what kind of pastor a church needs at any given time, and discernment often takes months or years when it comes to discerning the direction the life of a congregation (or one's own life) will take. We need to allow time for the Spirit to soak into our being and clarify the direction of God's will. A Transitional Pastor generally serves for one or two years to help a congregation clarify its own character and calling and therefore clarify what kind of leadership it wants and needs. Sometimes the gifts and inclinations of the pastor serving as Transitional Pastor turn out to match the needs and inclinations of the congregation, sometimes not.

Although my original Transitional agreement was for two years, I have now been here more than three years. In the fall of 2020, six or seven months into the COVID crisis, the church board and I agreed to extend my time as Transitional Pastor a third year due to the extenuating circumstances. It was difficult to discern and clarify the character of the congregation and the direction of its future during a time when nothing had been normal for nearly half the time I had been here, and the future seemed unknowable. Not just the church but the whole society was in unplanned transition.

Now, after a third year here, I feel clear that this church is the ministry I am called to at this time. And the board has agreed that I can and do serve the needs of this congregation as it moves toward its future. The transition of the society "after COVID" is not yet over. We still do not know if or when we will return to normal or what a "new normal" may look like. Perhaps the same is true in our church. We are still making changes and still discerning our future. But at this point the board and I feel that God has called us together as a team to do the work of the church and the work of God in the world around us. We are hopeful you will agree. A congregational vote regarding my call will take place on Sunday, September 25.

I am very pleased that God has brought us together and brought us to the point in our lives together. I hope and pray that you will take seriously your own role as members or friends of the congregation in discerning and committing to the future of this church.

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