

I have been adjusting to retirement for a full year. I am enjoying classes at Tennessee Tech. I am available for substitute teaching in Cookeville and provide transportation for cancer patients. I have been exercising regularly with other people who suffer from Parkinson's disease. I have done lots of journaling and long overdue repairs and maintenance around the house. It took several months to recover from the storm damage of Memorial Day weekend in May. There is still work to be done.

I am certainly a different person than I was nearly two years ago. It has been gradual movement toward clarity and self awareness. It is an ongoing process. One of my favorite hymns is Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart. I ask no angel visitant, no opening skies; but take the dimness of my soul away.

Although I was raised Roman Catholic, I discovered my true family of faith when I became involved in the PCUSA as teenager. I was ordained in January of 1975. I've been away from the PCUSA for nearly two years and I'm lonely for a church family, where I can participate fully.

One of the areas of learning was to better understand the lack of affirmation I felt from my mother. She expected me to be a priest and let me know on a regular basis that I had disappointed her. I looked for affirmation from others. I have learned to recognize situations which could lead to trouble. I have come to more fully accept my responsibility as supervisor. I was primarily responsible for maintaining boundaries and for distinguishing between personal and professional relationships and I failed. I learned that I was neither above nor beyond temptation and that what I thought was empowering would, in reality, become enabling.

During my time of temporary exclusion I have receive spiritual care from a variety of sources. Nevertheless, I yearn to return to active status within the PCUSA, to use my talents and gifts for ministry. I have always been called to be a witness for peace and

justice, from the civil rights marches of the sixties to the rejection of White supremacy and anti Muslim activities today. I hope to stand for justice again, as a minister and representative of the PCUSA.

One of the strengths of the church is the relationships that are built and maintained across time and distance. I believe we stand in the tradition of Paul and Calvin, both of whom were avid letter writers and maintained numerous relationships. Over the past forty three years, I have served seven churches as ruling elder, youth worker and pastor. I have served three Presbyteries in a variety of capacities. I have developed strong friendships that have supported and strengthened me. I have been told that I've done the same for others. I have also benefitted from the wisdom and experience of retired ministers in churches I have served. I can be that kind of resource for others.

I have come to experience God in a more personal, intentional way. Without the support of the church, I have more readily depended on God directly. I can tell others that there is forgiveness and peace after turmoil. I believe repentance is a daily challenge of trying to make good choices. Calvin certainly recognized that our progress of faith is never without its setbacks.

For 62 years I was the responsible son. In my 63rd year, I gave in to temptation and became the prodigal. It was a failure of personal morality and a failure of leadership on my part. My actions caused a great deal of pain for a number of people and I am sorry. Now I stand at the door and humbly knock, waiting to be taken back into the PCUSA family and restored to ordered ministry, where my gifts may once again be utilized.

Peace,

Rev. Patrick Handlson