

When his time of service was ended, he returned to his home.

*Luke 1:23*

### **Separation Ethics**

It's now less than two months until I retire. I apologize to those who are probably tired of me talking about this; you're probably saying to yourself, "retire already!" What with Advent coming up, don't worry—I won't be focusing too much more on this.

I do feel the need to say what I anticipate will happen after December 31. I figure that I should do something similar to what we ask of pastors when they leave their church. That is, I will not be in contact with Presbytery folk for at least a year, and will likely not be involved after that unless invited by my successor. There is a Presbyterian exception to this, which is that pastors might stay in contact with their "friends." Honestly I never understood that, because there are varied understandings of what a "friend" is. And those who know me well know that much of what I talk about is work-related, so it would be difficult to have even a friendly conversation without straying into talk about the Presbytery, and that would be frustrating to me.

As I think about my role in the Presbytery, besides falling into a clerical role quite often, I'm aware that I carry quite a bit of organizational memory. I intend to offer to my successor that they can contact me if they want some background—but I'm quite aware that this might not happen, as people often find their own answers as they relate to congregational leaders. And that's OK—after all, this is an opportunity to try new things, and not be trapped by my peculiar viewpoints!

I do worry for myself, because I rely on work to structure my days. In fact, I am blessed to have been employed pretty much continuously since college, so I don't know what life will be like without a job. I told a friend who retired a few years ago that I'm afraid I will be terribly bored, and he said that I will enjoy the boredom. We'll see. I will continue to serve on the national and synod levels, and I do feel called to volunteer in interfaith efforts to rebuild Altadena, though I don't know exactly in what capacity. Oh, and I am getting closer to deciding to rebuild on my property. But I trust that God will let me know how I can be useful in the future. The good folks in Hawai'i have contacted me, and though I don't see myself going immediately, who knows? I may go back eventually.

While I worry about my boredom, I do not worry about the Presbytery. I fully expect that there will be some adjustments, but you all will figure out what needs to be done. Like in times of COVID, priorities will become clear, and some of the adjustments will be corrective in nature. I trust that God will send a gifted and committed person to support the Presbytery, and I will be excited to see what will happen with the perspective of a new leader. I'm also very grateful for the leaders we already have in the Presbytery, both new and "veterans"—together you will carry on the culture of welcome and openness to God's leading that is such a distinctive gift of San Gabriel Presbytery.

As I write this, I wonder if I'm being too vague. In the next couple of months, I will try to address some loose ends—but again, there will always be loose ends, and sufficient grace and gifts to deal with whatever comes up. God has blessed this Presbytery so much, and there's no reason to think God won't continue with the blessings!

Thanks be to God, and to you,

