



I began attending First Congregational United Church of Christ (FCC) in 2006 and joined a year later. Over the years, a variety of ways to be involved have come my way, including being the moderator in 2016. In March of this year, I was granted Lay Minister standing by the Southeast Association of the INKY conference. In that capacity I serve FCC in the areas of pulpit supply, pastoral care visits, adult education and worship leader coordinator. I also continue to serve on a board and participate in several church activities.

At various times in my life I have felt a call to ministry when there were always obstacles that I didn't know how to move. When I was a teenager, my church pastor told me that women couldn't be pastors, and that sure seem to be the truth since up until then I had never met one. After high school, the need to earn a living, and family issues, kept me close to home in the Fort Wayne area. Even if there was a seminary somewhere that accepted women, I didn't see how I could get there. In 2000 my job was downsized and I was freed—actually compelled—to seek another path. I joked that God kicked me out of my comfy nest! I completed the Master of Pastoral Theology distance education program from St. Mary of the Woods College in 2006. Shortly after I was offered a position as a chaplain for a hospice company, which I held for nearly 10 years. It has been a long and winding road, but in 2008 I enrolled at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis and graduated in 2012 with an MDiv.

The greatest benefit of seminary was the field education component. I did my student teaching at St. John Cumberland where the congregation accepted me, encouraged me, and affirmed me beyond my wildest expectations. Field education also introduced me to the back story of being a pastor—the challenges and pit falls. It was eye opening.

A defining moment? Well, as you can probably tell, I've been in discernment about ministry for a long time, long before I became a member in discernment (MID) in the UCC. I have learned many things about myself during that time. Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) had a great influence on my formation of pastoral identity. For example, once I was sent to give care to a Catholic family whose daughter was very ill, probably dying. This was in a Catholic hospital and I began to tell myself, "They are probably expecting a priest; they are probably wanting and needing a priest. My presence will just upset them." I entered the room with this thought in mind. Surely my presence wasn't what God intended for this devout family.

When I later processed this with my ever-so-wise supervisor, she pointed out that, as I told in my story, the family had welcomed me in. The father took my arm and brought me to the bedside. The family gathered round and asked me to pray. "See?" my supervisor said, "they needed a priest and you are the one God sent. They accepted you to be their priest at that moment." That was a great insight for me, who tends to second guess people (and even God!). It was a defining moment.

Related to this tendency of mine to second guess, my biggest challenge in discernment has been to find my voice and the courage to speak. I have wrestled with writing nearly all of my major papers and certainly all of my sermons! I spend an inordinate amount of time on such projects and keep studying the topic until the time is nearly up—not a promising trait for a pastor!

My hope is that serving as a Lay Minister at FCC will help me to clarify my call. I feel a strong call at this point in my life to continue serving at FCC. My hope is to complete my ecclesiastical paper, receive privilege of call, and hopefully find a way to be ordained at FCC in a part time capacity in an associate role similar to what I'm doing as a Lay Minister.