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In 2002, I found myself amid a struggle with the policies of the Presbyterian Church (USA), of which I was a member and an Inquirer for Ordained Ministry, regarding their lack of full inclusion of all God's people in service to the church. Having been a RP (Religious Program Specialist, aka, Chaplain's Assistant) in the Navy, I was slightly familiar with the UCC but had never attended a worship service—a trip to the UCC website changed that.

After traveling 1.5 hours to attend worship at High Point UCC, Union, KY from my place of residence at the time, Lexington, I was filled with excitement and a little fear when I walked through the doors. What if I don't feel welcomed? What if the theology is way off? Or, just what if this is really where God wants me to be? I recall sitting in the service from the opening words, through the sermon, gathering around the Table, to the benediction...wiping away the tears from my eyes! My heart full of joy and warmth—I knew then that I was home, a few months later I requested my Letter of Membership to transfer and began my journey within the UCC.

Despite my geographical distance, I became active in the missions of the church, served as an Elder on Church Council and the Youth Coordinator of this small congregation. After completing my undergrad, I was admitted to Lexington Theological Seminary and began the In-Care process (as it was known at the time). During the years through personal trials, employment changes, High Point closure/membership move to St. John UCC, Bellevue, KY—I found myself taking a sabbatical from seminary, this "short break" would span a decade and a move to Southern Indiana.

Three years ago, I found myself walking through the doors of St. Marks UCC in New Albany—just as with my experience from 2002—I knew I was home. With conversions with Pastor John Manzo, I began to re-examine my calling and purpose in the life of the church. With the love and support of St. Marks, I took the step to return to not only my education but to active ministry.

I currently serve as Director of Youth Ministry at St. Marks, a position in which had begun as a designated interim last December. I once again graced the grounds of seminary when I began my M.Div studies this past September at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. The greatest benefit of the experience thus far is being able to live on campus, something that I had not been able to do my first go around.

What is my biggest challenge in being a MID (Member in Discernment)? Hmm...not referring to the process in the old term—"In-Care"—lol. I have learned in this current process that having taken a 10-year break, I have come to appreciate the "life wisdom" of being an older student.

I am tremendously thankful to have the love and support from my fiancé Mikhail Heaven, my family and friends, my St. Marks family, and our Wider Church family. AND ESPECIALLY to the FANSITIC teens and Little Tots that I am blessed to work with each week! I truly believe that without each of you this journey would not be possible.

When reflecting on my hopes for the future, what is next and where I feel God is calling me, I hope to continue to be open to the movement of the Spirit throughout my discernment process. To be able to proclaim with excitement, "Here I am Lord!... I will go Lord, if you lead me!"