

How Much [Transition] Is Too Much [Transition]?

Hopefully most of you didn't feel any impact from the changes in leadership that took place in the life of the Florida Conference this summer. But some of you did... and some of you have been telling me your stories. Thank you for letting me listen, and I hope there were no impacts so damaging that we can't find our way to repair. I won't pretend that it's possible to just pick up and continue on as if nothing happened. After any storm, there's a period of assessment before the real rebuilding can take place – just ask our friends in our Panhandle churches, who've weathered Isaias this week – and sometimes it can take a little while to discover where the new cracks and fissures might have formed. I just found a new one this week! All that is to say, it's going to take a little time to learn what we need to learn about ourselves, in order to be faithful followers of Christ in this new era in the life of the Florida Conference, but I'm committed to that journey, and I hope you'll join me on the road.

Meanwhile, your Conference staff and Board have been trying to do what they can to be faithful servants of Christ's church, and faithful stewards of the Conference's resources. One big piece of that effort is the Board's decision to sell the Conference office building in Orlando at 9300 University Boulevard. Some of you have never even driven past the place, and some of you have fond memories of worshipping and working there. It's a beautiful building and piece of land, but in the last six years, the overall expense of owning the building has doubled. Repairs and maintenance costs, in particular, have tripled in that period. Building management tasks became increasingly burdensome on staff time and energy. Some of you have engaged in similar discernment in your local churches: there comes a point when we have to acknowledge that we may not have the capacity to maintain the building we have, and it may not be faithful stewardship of our resources to try. The Board acknowledged this difficult reality, and discerned that their best course of action was to sell the building.

We've now passed the due diligence period, and the sale looks to be on track for an early November closing date: the former church building is going to become a school for kids with special needs. In choosing from among multiple offers, the Board selected a buyer that was missionally aligned with us, as one of the key factors that constitute the "highest and best" offer for the sale.

Meanwhile, we have been looking for a new home for our Conference office, and we have found it: a suite in an office park in Orlando, just a mile or two up the street from the building we're leaving. The comprehensive lease offers us cost stability and predictability for at least the next 5 years, and the opportunity to shift our energy and attention more fully onto our mission: resourcing the churches and clergy of the Conference.

Of course, this move also introduces another short-term disruption to staff and Board functions. We're still finalizing details, but we know that the final days of October and first days of November will be taken up with the physical move, a potential disruption in internet connectivity, and the need to set up the computing infrastructure of the new space. Our staff will try to be as connected and accessible as they reasonably can, but there will almost certainly be a few days when we'll need your understanding and grace as we make the transition to the new space.

And by now, we know how to adjust and walk together through all kinds of transitions, so I trust we can weather the impact of this one, together, as well.

P.S. As of this writing, the Docusign "ink" on the lease isn't yet dry... as soon as we're able, we'll send out the new address, and we look forward to being able to invite you all to a "housewarming" of some kind in our new digs soon!

Rev. Mary Nelson | Bridge Conference Minister
Florida Conference UCC
10.15.26