

The Road Less Traveled – November 1, 2019

Hanging on the wall in my office is one of my favorite mementos of my journey toward ordained ministry. It's not my seminary diploma, and it's not my certificate of ordination. It is a print given to me by the bishop who ordained me. It is simply a progression of names, starting with mine at the top. "William Lee Trigg was ordained elder in Waco, TX, 2011, by Bishop John Michael Lowry."

But it doesn't stop there. It continues by listing the bishop who ordained the bishop who ordained me, and the date it happened. And the bishop who ordained that bishop, and the date it happened. And so on. Until finally it reaches the bottom of the page, where in 1792 the future Bishop William McKendree was ordained by Bishop Francis Asbury.

If you are not a student of Methodism, that may not mean much to you. But to me it is a huge deal. In 1784 two men became the first superintendents in the fledgling Methodist movement in the United States, a title that would later be changed to bishop. They were consecrated by none other than John Wesley, the Anglican priest who started the Methodist movement in England. I am always humbled to look at that print on my wall and realize I am part of a lineage that goes all the way back to the beginning. In fact, every United Methodist pastor can trace his or her ordination back to either Asbury or Thomas Coke, the other man consecrated by Wesley.

It's a reminder to me always that nothing about my journey happened without others. When I was a young adult, sticking my toes in the water of faith and church, pretty much for the first time, I was surrounded by people who encouraged me, who taught me and who challenged me. I remember Tom Potenza, the first pastor I ever really listened to. I don't remember any of his sermons, but I remember being awakened for the first time to the power of the Holy Spirit moving through a room. I remember people from our church in Joliet, IL, who invited Melissa and I to go camping, to teach Sunday school and serve as Confirmation mentors. I remember Barb Donica, probably the finest pastor I have ever known, who invited me to take an active role in leading worship. When I demurred and said I wasn't ready for it, she reminded me that "God knows what you are ready for."

I remember my first Disciple Bible Study and the members of that class who celebrated with me when the Bible really came alive for me. And I remember the faces of the people who celebrated Christ's work in my life when I announced that I was being called into the ministry. None of them were surprised. I was the last to know.

There is power in community, and we are all the living, breathing results of that community.

That's really what we celebrate this weekend. Sunday is All Saints Sunday, when we remember and honor the saints of our church whom we lost over the past year. We will speak their names, a bell will toll, and we will give thanks to God for their lives and ministry. But we don't just remember and honor the past this weekend. We also remember the

present and look toward the future. Because although those that we honor have departed this earth, they have not departed our church. Their ministries, their legacies live on in each of us. Because we knew them. We served with them. We watched them. And we learned from them. And there is a little piece of them within each of us. We are their living legacy. And because we are, they will never be gone.

Rev. DeAndrea Dare will be preaching at all of our services on Sunday, as I will be out of town. And I can think of no more fitting person to be here in my place. Because she, too, has a legacy at Aledo UMC. She not only served here faithfully, but she continues to inspire, challenge and model a life of service through her current ministry to families who have lost children. Through her ministry, some of you have heard a new calling. Which means that you will in turn touch others. And some of them will touch others still.

And life in Christ goes on.