

Retirement Statement

Dennis Neenan

I write this on July 31, 2020, the day before I officially become a retired Full Elder in the United Methodist Church. This day of coming retirement started with my first ever “I have an announcement” expressed to my Mom and Dad, sister and, at the time, two brothers. I shared as we were leaving the church parking lot that I was going to be a minister. It was in the spring of 1962. And here I am 58 years later.

My heart was touched that Sunday long ago. The call was, of course, to the parish ministry and it was in such a setting, Arlington UMC, in Arlington, KY in 1971 that the call was further refined into a specialty ministry defined as an extension ministry of the local church.

The dream, as we say, came true conference year 1980 with my appointment to Wesley Housing Ministries, now known as Wesley Living, to provide ministerial services. Since that year, my name has been personally read by the Cabinet or implied read in a blanket approval when conference was extra-long, 39 consecutive times.

I am most grateful for the opportunity provided me to be in Older Adult Ministry and that it is much more than I ever imagined it to be. The fruits thereof I will be sharing as my pastoral care initiative in this new world I am entering into. Stay tuned.

My utmost respect for all parish ministries who balance so many responsibilities related to word, sacrament, order and service. I too, have kept the same promise in this specialty ministry. But I must say, I have from the beginning been given the gift to serve the Word and Table as both Elder and as Deacon without a lot of meetings and administration. This is why I tip my hat to you as you fulfill the two most important duties worship and pastoral care will all your other obligated tasks specified in the Discipline. My love for this ministry has never flagged in zeal. As dedicated now as in the beginning - more so in fact.

I thank all of my ministry colleagues and laity for all the prayer, encouragement, and affirmation given me all these years. I am still in need of them. I thank all associated with Wesley.

Over the years, both clergy and laity friends have shared “you were perfectly cut out for this ministry - in just the right spot.” But I must say, if it had not been for sisters and brothers in Christ standing with me I would have never been able to share these words. Another colleague shared an opposite sentiment in 1980. My friend said, “I can’t see why you are so thrilled. They are old people and their lives are over. You will be wasting your time. I just don’t understand you and you are foolish.” My response was gracious, “one’s prune is another’s plum.” I’ve had a “plum of a ride.” And about not being understood and foolish – I plan to stay that way.

I conclude by saying my most special thanks to Marilyn, who has journeyed this life with me, so far 49 years, and our daughter, Faith, both of whom have unconditionally loved me, forgiven me, and blessed me with undying support to my commitment.

Sincerely and Prayers,

Dennis Neenan