

From the Pastor

August 23, 2008

A strange and wonderful thing happened this summer. It was unexpected and took me quite by surprise. I guess you could even say that I was startled by it. I certainly had not predicted it. What was this unanticipated occurrence? It is simply this: I became the pastor of Second Presbyterian Church.

You probably find this announcement somewhat curious. After all, I have been climbing into the pulpit, providing pastoral care, carrying out administrative duties, and generally doing the tasks of ministry for the last two years. If anyone had asked either of us (pastor and congregation), we would have claimed one another. My name is on the sign out front and my study is ---well, comfortably lived-in.

It occurs to me, however, that the beginning of a pastoral relationship is like an arranged marriage. Those arranging the marriage (we would like to think God) have a pretty good idea that the two entering the covenant are a good match for one another in gifts and temperament. Still, one can only claim, from the moment the call paper is signed, that love that we know in Christ. Is it any wonder that the early days are filled with the growing pangs of a new relationship?

So, what happened this summer? The week before I left for vacation in July, I was walking across the balcony in Niccolls Hall. I am sure my mind was crowded with a number of things and I was walking with that definite gait that people have learned to recognize. (Folks in the hospital have often said to me, "I heard you coming down the hall.") All of a sudden I was stopped in my tracks by an overwhelming sense of love for this congregation and gratitude for the privilege of being your pastor. It was the most remarkable moment. Brief—but recognizable as a moment of God's grace. In that moment I became your pastor in a way I had not been previously.

That sense of grace resides in me as I return to my work following vacation, and I feel a new joy in my ministry with you. For my part, it is confirmation that the vows we took two years ago truly "took" and we are on our way. We have much good work ahead of us and we are blessed with an amazing array of gifts in this congregation to tackle that ministry.

May the God who called us in to ministry with each other continue to guide us, challenge us, and give us deep joy as we labor together.

Grace and peace---and love,
Mary Gene