

Reflections on the Shared Journey-

This past Sunday (April 6), we celebrated another step in Denise Luper's journey into ordained ministry. Let's briefly recount that journey.

In April of 2004, Denise announced to us that she had identified a call to ordained ministry and - in pursuing that call - had applied for and been accepted in Brite Divinity School at TCU. She also communicated her interest in ordained ministry to the district superintendent. In the 2004 charge conference, upon the recommendation of our SPR Committee, we as a congregation voted to recommend her for ordination.

Since then, Denise has pursued two tracts: her schooling at Brite and the ordination process in the Conference. Denise began her studies at Brite in the fall of 2004 and has been faithfully pursuing them since that time. In the ordination process, she met first with a clergy guide, working through an assigned workbook. Then, as a declared candidate for ministry, she met with the District Board of Ordained Ministry. She also worked with a clergy mentor in the process toward ordination. This process is designed to help her clarify her call to ministry and document her growth as she has pursued ministry.

In January of 2006, SPR created a staff position for Denise – Part-time Assistant to the Pastor. This role was created to allow Denise to use her gifts for ministry at SJA while giving her on-the-job training and financial support for her schooling. In the spring of 2007, SPR petitioned the Bishop and Cabinet to appoint Denise as a Part-time Local Pastor at SJA. At Annual Conference in June of 2007, she was officially appointed as Associate Pastor (part time).

This past week (April 2), Denise met and interviewed with the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry. That board unanimously approved her ordination as an elder in The United Methodist Church – the focus of our celebration this past Sunday. She will be consecrated as a probationary elder during the ordination service at Annual Conference on June 3. She will serve as a probationary member for a minimum of 3 years before being ordained and received as a full member in the Conference. In addition, she will graduate from Brite on May 10.

The next step for Denise – after consecration – is a place of full time ministry. Our district superintendent informed us this past week that Denise will be appointed as Associate Pastor of First United Methodist Church of Weatherford, effective June 15.

Being a part of one's journey into ordained ministry is a unique privilege for a congregation. We have been blessed through Denise and her ministry as well as through sharing this journey with her. We will celebrate her ministry at SJA between now and her leaving after Annual Conference – both formally and informally. I encourage you to affirm Denise and her ministry during this time.

I am grateful for the blessings of shared journey – with Denise and with you.

Grace and peace, Steve