

Reflections on My First Pastorate – First Presbyterian Church, Bloomington, IN
June 1975-December 1979
Rev. James L. McDonald

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First Presbyterian Church, Bloomington, IN holds a special place in Dean's and my hearts. Our years in Bloomington provided a nurturing, supportive, loving community that helped us move into adulthood, professional ministry, and family life. We were received with open, accepting, and gracious arms in June 1975 and released with profound expressions of love, appreciation, and gratitude in December 1979. We both remember our four and half years in Bloomington as some of the best years of our lives.

The Call

The story of how I came to Bloomington carries a number of different lessons. In the spring of 1975, I was a senior M.Div. student at Union Theological Seminary in NYC. Dean was finishing up her coursework as an M.Div. student but needed to complete her master's thesis requirement before she would be graduated. Early in the year Paul Miller made a trip east to visit his alma mater Princeton Theological Seminary and UTS to interview interested prospective students for assistant pastor. At least one of the reasons why Paul came to UTS was undoubtedly his friendship with Sid Skirvin, the UTS Dean of Students, who had been a colleague in ministry with Paul in Wilmington, DE. Sid encouraged me to talk with Paul (and probably vice versa).

This is the power of networks in the Presbyterian Church. To a large extent these networks still exist, but they have been fractured by changes in both the church and culture. There was in those years a strong "old boys network" and a competition by seminaries to maintain a hold on certain prized congregations. There was even a "farm system" of congregations that fed seasoned, eloquent preachers to the largest and wealthiest congregation (the term of art is "tall steeple churches"). I doubt that FPC was part of the system, especially given Joe Walker's affiliation with the former Southern Church (PCUS). I was blissfully ignorant of this dynamic in the Presbyterian Church (and other denominations as well). But looking back, I am glad for the relationship between Paul Miller and Sid Skirvin.

I still remember how impressed I was with Paul during our hour-long conversation at Union. I was looking for someone who could be a mentor to me in my first parish, someone who could "show me the ropes" of pastoral ministry and congregational life. My meeting with Paul convinced me that he could be just that.

I also remember saying to Paul, "You've been at First Presbyterian for 10 years. Are you planning to leave anytime soon?" Paul assured me that he had no

plans to leave, and that Bloomington was a place where one could easily settle in for a long, long pastorate.

Somehow, I made the cut with the FPC search committee and I was brought out for a weekend of conversation. I later learned that the committee had actually offered the position to another candidate but that he had turned FPC down for a church in Ohio. This is just one of the several times when I have been the second choice for a position, but through happenstance (I would call it the work of the Holy Spirit) the committee returned to me rather than start over again, offering me the position.

Another connection to Bloomington was Ted Miller, a classmate at Union. Ted was the son of Taulman and Mary Lou Miller, stalwarts of FPC. Ted helped Dean and me understand just how magnificent it would be for us to come to Southern Indiana and become part of the First Presbyterian Church community.

Taul was a professor in the I.U. Economics Department and he and Mary Lou had worked in Afghanistan with the U.S. Agency for International Development. When they returned, Taul hired an assistant named Dolly Youssef, who later moved to Washington, DC, and became the administrative assistant to Art Simon, the president and founder of Bread for the World, and his successor, David Beckmann, my boss. Dolly remained at Bread until she retired in the mid-2000s, but we didn't discover our mutual Bloomington connection until a conversation we were having about the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 following 9/11.

Mary Lou was an amazing woman. She could organize anything, but when she was first assigned a leadership role, she would fuss about how she didn't have the ability to get it done. Then she would pull it together with aplomb and grace. The Millers gave us the furniture that furnished our first apartment. She was also among the coterie of babysitters for our sons.

Ted was also a Presbyterian minister, recently retired after serving congregations for 40 years, his last in Cedar Rapids, IA. He and his wife, Sally, now live in Chicago. Ted's son, Daniel, lives 15 minutes from us here in CA. Small world.

The First Summer—A Summer of Firsts

In mid-June, a fellow M.Div. student (Ken Sehested) drove a small rental truck with our family's earthly belongings, while I drove our used Saab in tandem from NYC to Bloomington. Somewhere in western PA, the clutch on the Saab gave out, and with neither money nor time I elected to continue the trip without a working clutch. The rest of the ride was a bit jolting, to say the least. In the end neither the clutch nor car survived. (In one of my early sermons, I alluded to this experience as "my saab story, pun intended.") Dean and our 15-month-old son,

Andy, flew in a day after we arrived, and the three of us settled into our Meadow Park apartment.

Midweek, I had pulled into the church parking lot and walked in the door of First Presbyterian for the first time, wearing blue jeans, a white T-shirt, a beard, and looking rather, well, scruffy. Inside to the left was the church office and the first person I encountered was Mildred Thornburg, then FPC's amazing and awesome church secretary. Mildred did not bat an eye (though I can only imagine what was going on in her mind). She was gracious and sweet, but clear. "I have the bulletin for Sunday and I'd like you to approve it," she said. In that split second, I realized that I needed to make a huge and rapid shift from being a student to being a professional. It wasn't a moment too soon.

One of the amazing things to me was Paul Miller's trust in us—congregation and new pastor. Paul had left on his sabbatical at Ghost Ranch around May 15, about a month before I arrived. He would not return until the end of August. So for my first three months, I was on my own. Of course, Paul had made meticulous arrangements for carrying on in his absence. But for me, beginning my first months of ministry without someone's daily direction was bracing and ultimately a great gift. As I was to discover in time, the summer schedule was a bit more relaxed than the fall.

My first Sunday at FPC was also my first Sunday in the pulpit. The liturgist was Katherine Cunningham, who with husband Kurt Kabot became good friends, even to this day. My sermon was "Invitation to Connection." I doubt anyone remembers it...

Shortly after worship ended and Dean and I were sitting down to lunch, Jim Coppedge called to say that Dean Malicote's sister had had a stroke and was in Bloomington Hospital--my first pastoral call, four days into the job. As I drove to the hospital and walked to the room, I prayed over and over: "Lord, let your Holy Spirit be with me and among us." One doesn't forget these "firsts" in ministry.

In part because of these visits with her and her sister in the weeks before her sister died, Dean Malicote became a good friend during our years in Bloomington. No doubt it didn't hurt that she shared the same first name as my wife—two women with a name that most people associated with men.

During the course of the summer of 1975, I conducted my first funeral and my first wedding. What I was learning was something important and intangible, something not taught in seminary. One absorbs only through experience the deep insight of what it means functionally and fundamentally to be an ordained minister. It is a holy power, a sacred trust, conferred not by virtue of one's own skill, intelligence, experience, wisdom, or abilities, but by God and through the work of the Spirit.

People came to me, as they do with other clergy, and shared their most vulnerable feelings, toughest questions, greatest fears, deepest desires, and fondest hopes. As an ordained minister, it is a special privilege and a holy obligation to be with people during the most important moments of their lives—the good, the bad, the ugly, the difficult, the joyful, the celebratory, and the sad.

Once someone is ordained and takes on that role and responsibility, he or she cannot escape the fact that for most people we have become holy people, ambassadors for Christ, God’s intermediaries. (As I say to seminarians now, “Ministry is not about us and it’s all about us.” This is the deepest challenge of ministry—sorting through our personhood and our vocational responsibilities from the roles and responsibilities given to us by God and by others. Both matter, but they are not the same.)

So, it was humbling and not just a little stressful to sit with a young couple that had come wishing to be married and asking for my counsel. I was 27, fresh out of seminary, and 3 years married. (But one also remembers that priests, who are put in that same position, never marry, and few of us who counsel a family at death and conduct a funeral have yet to experience our own deaths.)

And during my first memorial service – for a member named Anna Jean King, who died of cancer in her late 40s – I nervously started the service by calling her *Billie* Jean King (a celebrated, world class tennis player), to the consternation of the family. Alas, those of us who take on the mantle of minister are continually reminded of our frailty and foibles even as we accept the sacred trust that God has given us. And the longer one is in ministry, the more one realizes just how many failures and missed opportunities one has had in terms of this gift and sacred trust.

My formal ordination as Minister of Word and Sacrament took place in St. Louis on August 3 in my home church, Berea, by the Presbytery of Elijah Parish Lovejoy. But emotionally and spiritually I was moving rapidly to a new location: First Presbyterian Church, Bloomington, IN, in the Ohio Valley Presbytery. It was here that my ordination became palpably real.

Paul Miller Returns – My 16-month Tutelage in Pastoral Ministry

At the end of the summer, Paul Miller and his family returned from Ghost Ranch, the students and faculty of the university came flooding back, and the fall start-up for church and community changed the pace and tightened the schedule. As I wrote in my Christmas letter that year: “Things kind of took off in the fall and we’ve been flying—sometimes high, sometimes low—ever since.”

Paul came back refreshed, energized, and loaded with ideas for ministry. One of those ideas focused on music. He wanted to introduce the congregation to the songs of Avery and Marsh. During the entire week before the first service we co-officiated at the start of September, Paul couldn’t stop talking about his

excitement at singing these new songs. The service also was going to feature a new film from the denomination's headquarters that reminded us that Presbyterians embraced both Order and Ardor. I believe in Paul's mind, the new songs of Avery and Marsh represented the Ardor side of hymnody. Paul had paired one traditional hymn "O Day of Resurrection" with the Avery and Marsh "Every Morning Is Easter Morning."

Because the film was being shown from the chancel area, Paul and I began the service sitting in the pews, next to each other. As Lidetta Matthen played the opening hymn, Paul began to sing with gusto. To my surprise, however, Paul was a monotone. There he was, singing away, off-key but making a joyful noise to the Lord, with enthusiasm and ardor. And I, a bundle of nerves at that point, began to laugh uncontrollably. I was totally embarrassed by this, but I could not stop. In fact, the more I tried to stifle myself, the worse it became. I don't remember how it ended, but Paul was gracious and I suppose that those in the pews around me were equally forgiving. I never heard a word about it. It makes me cringe to this day to remember that moment.

Paul and I worked well together. When we first met I told Paul that I wanted to learn every part of ministry and didn't want to be pigeon-holed into only Christian Education and Youth Ministry. I was ready to learn ministry and wanted to participate in everything—worship, preaching, stewardship, education, mission, pastoral care, everything. Paul agreed and during our time together he was very generous in sharing the work of ministry with me, including the pulpit and pastoral care.

One of my more vivid memories is of Paul sharing memorial services with Joe Walker, who had retired from ministry in 1965 after 20 years as First Presbyterian's pastor. (Paul talks more about Joe and Audie in his reflections.) Joe was also an inspiration to me, and the two of them together were amazing. Both were gracious and humble. There was no overblown ego in either one of them. Instead, the families of the deceased felt surrounded by God's love and the pastoral care of the church. Every one of those memorial services was a powerful witness to the resurrection and a fitting remembrance of the deceased. Sometimes Paul preached, sometimes Joe. Sometimes Paul prayed the pastoral prayer, sometimes Joe. I have never seen a better relationship between pastors than what I saw in them. It was wonderful, even if a rarity.¹

In my life there have been four men who have been wonderful mentors; Paul was one of them. One of the things he told me early on has stuck with me to this day. "Jim," he said, "you have to be pastor to the entire congregation." What he meant was, in ministry you don't have favorites or play favorites. You don't cotton to ideology or political points of view. You don't just spend time with the

¹ I still remember one of Joe's last sermons: "The Dark Mystery, and the Bright" about how God was able to use the Church, including us, for good, even with all our flaws, weaknesses, and limitations.

people to whom you're naturally drawn. Instead, you see everyone as a human being loved by God and redeemed by Christ, a part of the human family. As human beings each of us struggles to break free of our fears, shame, guilt, and anger, hoping to find others with whom we can share our burdens and find fulfillment and meaning in life. As ministers of the Gospel we are here to love and serve others, without partiality. This is not easy for any of us. And it doesn't get easier with age, either.

One focus of our work together was for each of us to call on every member of the congregation over the next several years. This was invaluable in so many ways. Of course, with my special focus on youth ministry I began by calling on the families with middle and senior high school youth. These families—Ackerman, Burkhead, Cooper, Darling, Dodd, Gray, Hepfer, Klein, Little, McCloskey, Miller, Moir, Noblitt, Pollock, Reinier, Rice, Riggins, Ruff, Talbot, Weisstein/Schroeder, Westfall, and maybe several others that I've failed to remember—became the core supporters of the youth ministry program during those years.

First Presbyterian's youth work was boosted considerably by a young man named Chris Best. Chris was an IU freshman in 1975 and hailed from Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church outside of Philadelphia. In early September, he walked into my office and told me that he had had a wonderful, meaningful experience in his church youth group and wanted to "give back" and "pass it on." Could he help out with the youth groups at FPC? he asked. What a Godsend he was!

Chris was an amazing youth group leader and fun to work with. He brought a comedian's sense of humor, but also a knack for designing programs that engaged the kids with each other, with the questions and resources of faith, and with the church. He made the kids feel comfortable and accepted. With Chris it was okay to be goofy and it was okay to be vulnerable. He gave them permission to be themselves and encouraged them in their personal growth and Christian faith.

Except for one year when he studied in Edinburgh, Chris and I worked together with the youth of First Presbyterian throughout his college years. He and his family now live in the Los Angeles area, where he works as the Senior Recreation Supervisor for youth and older adults with Community Services for the city of Beverly Hills. (Some may remember that Chris is a wicked tennis player.) We are still friends today.

Paul returned with a passion for the opportunities offered by Ghost Ranch and very quickly it was decided that in June 1976, the senior highs would go there for a weeklong work camp. A number of fundraising activities were organized to earn enough money to cover the cost. One was a spaghetti supper in which the cooks miscalculated how long it would take to boil water in the large pots used to cook the spaghetti, resulting in a very prolonged dining experience. A very excited band of teenagers, together with Dean, Chris Best, and I spent the week working

on the adobe houses that the ranch was constructing that year. That group of youth bonded in ways that have held together remarkably across the years.

That trip made such an impact that we organized a second trip during spring break in 1979. A different season in New Mexico, it snowed for part of the week we were there. The day we returned was the partial nuclear meltdown at the 3-Mile Island nuclear power plant.

Dean does not have the fondest memories of the 1976 trip to New Mexico. By June she was six-months pregnant with our second child, and the arid clime, thinner air, and soaring daytime heat of New Mexico did not make for a comfortable week. Two weeks after we returned to Bloomington, we moved from our Meadow Park apartment into our own home at 1718 Circle Drive. Dean also found a way to finish her M.Div. degree thesis and graduate from Union in May before the trip. In August, she began working at the campus ministry center as a program associate with Jack King, Bob Epps, and Roger Sasse. In September we welcomed Matthew into the McDonald family. Whew! I'm exhausted just writing all this. It's hard now to remember how much energy and drive we had then.

One of the things that made this possible was the wonderful group of surrogate grandparents, along with some equally marvelous babysitters, that had begun to care for Andy and then Matthew after he came along. Early after our arrival, Mac and Ruth Fleming began to take in Andy for a full day every week. And the Burkheads—Barbara, Martin, Marta, and Kiah—were often part of our household, or we theirs. Our boys, now 41 and 38, remember them all with great affection and love. In fact, we named our third child, daughter Ruth, after Ruth Fleming.

In October, I lost my maternal grandfather, Lee Walden, who lived outside of Chicago in Homewood, IL. He was 77. We were close and it was a big loss for me.

A Year of Transition; the Jim Steele Era Begins

On January 2, 1977, I was installed as the Associate Pastor, a call of the congregation.² The next week was Paul Miller's last Sunday, following his call to become senior pastor of the Wyoming Presbyterian Church outside Cincinnati, OH. Appropriately, Lidetta Matthen asked the choir to sing "The Shepherds' Farewell" from *L'enfance du Christ* by Berlioz as a tribute. The next day I took on new duties as the interim pastor. In November, the PNC brought Jim Steele forward as the new senior pastor, and I stepped back into the role of Associate Pastor.

² Note: The PCUSA no longer has the category of Assistant Pastor, which at that time was a position that could be filled through a call of the session. I believe that Dean was the last person to be installed as such, when she became the Assistant Pastor at Old Pine Street Presbyterian Church on December 29, 1985, two days before the provision expired.

I am not proud to say this, but Jim Steele and I did not get along very well. It was a difficult relationship and I was as much to blame as anyone. Looking back, it was not easy for me to accommodate myself to a new senior pastor after Paul's departure and after having a taste of "being in charge." I was not quite 30, and I still had a lot of growing to do emotionally and professionally. In an objective sense, I probably should have started my search for a new position. But Dean and I were now deeply embedded in the life of First Presbyterian and Bloomington itself. Andy and Matthew were 4 and 2 years old. It would have been wrenching for us to pull up our roots after 2 ½ years and move on.

In fact, Dean was ordained at First Presbyterian Church that same year, in October 1978, a joyful celebration. In June, she had received her first call to serve as the Stated Supply of the Jordan Village Church in Poland, IN, about 45 minutes northwest of Bloomington. The congregation had about 60 members and met just twice a month for services, so our boys continued to be fully engaged at FPC. Dean had also just become the coordinator of the Hunger Task Forces for both the Presbytery and the Presbyterial (the women's organization of that time). In September, she spent 17 days on a Billy Graham Tour of the Holy Land (Greece and Israel) with my parents and grandmother, a life-changing experience. A slew of congregational members pitched in to care for the boys and me while Dean was gone.

As 1979 began, I started my search for a new position. In November I received a call to become pastor of Tabernacle Church in Philadelphia, PA, a federated congregation with the United Church of Christ and the United Presbyterian Church USA. As I wrote in our 1980 Christmas letter, "Leaving was not easy. Each of us in our own way had experienced a special kind of love and regard from our neighbors and the people at First Presbyterian. Each of us had grown. Each of us had been blessed by angels in human guise who had nurtured and supported us. With each passing year our friendships had expanded and deepened. We cried a lot, rejoicing with an exceedingly great joy while saying goodbye to people who had enriched our lives beyond measure and to a place that had provided fertile soil for growth."

Here are some of the things that have stayed with me across the years about my experience in Bloomington.

Sports

Hoosier Hysteria. Coming from NYC to Indiana was a shocker to my system and sensibilities. I wasn't quite sure how I felt about all the hoopla surrounding Bobby Knight and the Hoosier basketball program--not because I had other team loyalties, but because I had never paid much attention to basketball or to the Big 10. I quickly learned that one does not schedule a meeting or any event on the same night as a basketball game. I remember going to a Rotary Club meeting where Bobby Knight spoke with candor, humor, and bravado about how IU would be the NCAA champions in 1976. He was right:

1975 was the end of the John Wooden/UCLA era with his 10th NCAA win, this one over Kentucky, who had earlier beaten IU. The Hoosiers went undefeated through the entire 1975-1976 season. People either loved or hated Bobby Knight. Most loved him in that era.

Golf, Running, etc. Paul Miller was a golfer. He, Bill Cuttino, and a doctor whose name I've forgotten played every Thursday from about March 15 to November 15. Paul asked me to join this threesome on the IU golf course. It was never more than half a day, morning or afternoon depending on the season. But it was a welcome break in the week. Back then, a yearly IU course membership cost \$180. Even on my Assistant Pastor salary (\$11,000 + benefits my first year), I could afford that and so availed myself. I played a lot of golf during my years in Bloomington. The years since then haven't come close.

Paul was also a runner, as were others in the congregation. Jerry Ruff and his son Joe, Dale Hepfer, and Mickey Klein were serious runners. Jerry used to run from his house to work. The Northwest YMCA opened as a new facility and several people invited me to join them at 6:00 a.m. for a morning jog. That got me started on something I continued for almost 40 years until plantar fasciitis got the best of me a few years ago.

At various times during my Bloomington years I played squash, tennis, and softball with various people including Bob Sackman, Frank Westie, Carl Zager, Michael Shoys, Ray Crowe, Joe Hartswick, and Chris Best (and I'm sure I've failed to mention others as well). For me, these outings were never about the game and always about building relationships and growing in personal maturity and Christian faith. I have come to regard regular exercise as an important component of a balanced life.

This was the era of the Big Red Machine, too. The Cincinnati Reds were one of the hottest teams in Major League Baseball, having won back-to-back World Series in 1975 and 1976. During those years, we thought nothing of driving over to Riverfront Stadium and back to watch an evening game. Who wouldn't want to catch the artistry and razzle-dazzle of Joe Morgan, Johnny Bench, Dave Concepcion, Pete Rose, Ken Griffey, Jr., Tony Perez, George Foster, coached by Sparky Anderson?

Music.

One of the delightful aspects of coming to Bloomington was the extraordinary place of music at Indiana University and consequently at First Presbyterian Church. The Jacobs School of Music is the largest accredited school of music in the United States and consistently ranks among the top schools in the country. The Musical Arts Center is one of the premier performance centers in the world. During our sojourn in Bloomington, Dean and I took in numerous performances, including one of the annual performances of Wagner's *Parsifal* (at the invitation of Alice Duncan) and several of the Madrigal dinners that occurred

every year in December. What an absolutely magnificent treasure, and a tremendous perk for a young pastor beginning his ministry.

My grandmother was an accomplished organist, pianist, and voice teacher, serving as Director of Music at a large suburban congregation when I was growing up. From her I inherited my love of music and the desire to play an instrument, beginning clarinet and piano lessons at the age of 8. While at Union in New York, I had taken flute lessons at the Manhattan School of Music and I was determined to continue my study in Bloomington, which I did. I had several terrific graduate students as teachers, including Kazuo Tokito, who now plays piccolo with the Philadelphia Orchestra.

I used to practice in my office from time to time, and Lidetta Matthen, FPC's Director of Music, decided that perhaps I could play from time to time in worship, which I happily did.

I was also encouraged by a number of people in the congregation, notably Barbara Roberts, who was an accomplished pianist, to join the Community Chamber Music Association. The association offered free concerts throughout the year by organizing ensembles of various instrumentations to perform a variety of works. For any given concert, one might become part of a flute trio, a woodwind quintet, or a flute soloist accompanied by a pianist. The music was supplied and the ensembles figured out their own rehearsal schedules in preparation for a particular concert. It was marvelous, and such a gift for the musicians and the community itself. I believe the organization is still going strong today.

One of my favorite memories was probably from Advent 1976, when the senior high youth learned and performed the first three songs from *Godspell*,³ a Stephen Schwartz musical that had opened on Broadway a few years earlier. They worked hard and gave terrific performances, which were woven into the service.

Small Group Bible Study.

One of the very special gifts to Dean and me was our participation in several different Bible study groups. One met for breakfast once a week; another on Sunday evenings. (I can't really remember, but I doubt that they ran concurrently.) The folks who were part of these special times for Bible study, personal sharing, and prayer were Mac and Ruth Fleming, Deborah (Baude) Robinson, Alan and Sue Boyd, Margaret (Herlin) Harter, Jean Beckman, Jean and Steven Gerber Shank, Ann and Bob Martin, Bennie Koch, Hallie Craytor, Chris Ianucelli and Phil Thorpe, and Wim and Rae Verhoef.

The Larger Community.

³ The three numbers were *Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord*, *God Save the People*, and *Day By Day*.

Associate Pastors Group. Almost immediately after arriving, I was invited to join a group of associate pastors and priests who were meeting for fellowship and support. This was a small, but steadfast group that consisted of Rev. Bill Davis from First United Methodist Church; Fr. Chuck, Associate Priest at St. Charles Catholic Church; and the associate rector (name forgotten) from Trinity Episcopal Church.

Meeting weekly on Wednesdays over lunch, this was truly an exceptional experience of ecumenism. We talked about what was going on at our respective congregations/parishes, but also learned in a convivial and congenial atmosphere about the practices and differences among our traditions. This is where I first heard, among other things, that we Protestants should just acknowledge that preaching is one of our sacraments. I also learned from this group about a particular liquor store that gave clergy a 10 percent discount! (This probably no longer exists...the clergy discount, that is.)

This group made yearly pilgrimages to St. Meinrad's Archabbey in Spencer County, where we were greeted with the warm hospitality of Fr. Damian and the other Benedictine monks. St. Meinrad's is one of only two Archabbeyes in the United States. At that time David Buttrick, one the premier preachers of the Presbyterian Church, was teaching homiletics at their nearby seminary and theological school.

University Baptist Church. Some of you will remember that this congregation that was nested at First Presbyterian Church for 20 years (1972-1992). Ron Liesmann, their pastor, was very much a part of our monthly staff lunches and I appreciated his own ecumenicity and personal warmth. He was a quiet, evangelical presence in the building, much appreciated. The congregation eventually left the increasingly fundamentalist Southern Baptist Convention and joined the more moderate Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. They now have their own building.

Community Engagement. Paul Miller's extensive involvement in the larger Bloomington community, along with the service rendered by many others FPC members, including Jim Ackerman who served several terms on the City Council, made it easy and logical for me to also become engaged in the wider community. Late in my tenure I served a term on the Community Service Council, the county Community Action Program board, and one of the United Way evaluation teams. It was baptism by immersion (i.e., non-Presbyterian) in the intricacies of local problems and politics.

A word about the times.

Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter were the U.S. presidents of that era. Ford took office in August 1974 by saying "our long national nightmare is over," a reference to the Watergate scandal and the resignation of Richard Nixon. But Carter's years in office were fraught with difficulties as well, including an era of

economic stagflation and the 1979 Iranian hostage crisis, when the U.S. Embassy in Teheran was stormed and American personnel were held for 444 days.

The winters of 1977 and 1978 were extremely cold, with temperatures at zero and below for extended periods and large accumulations of snow that stayed for weeks on end. We were required to reduce our energy consumption, especially electricity, and for a time the City of Bloomington turned off the streetlights to conserve. A shortage of coal led Indiana University to close the campus for almost three weeks in March 1978, the most extended closure in its history.

Random fact: The McDonald household did not have a television set. I personally did not own a TV from 1966-1980. Dean and I made the conscious decision not to have one in the house when our boys were young. That didn't keep them from watching programs at other kid's houses but Andy was 6 and Matthew 4 before they were able to watch in their own house. Our first was a small black-and-white set given to us by Mary Lou Miller when we left Bloomington. She felt we should have it.

McDonald Family Update.

In July 2011, Dean and I moved from Washington, DC, where we had lived for 21 years, to San Anselmo, CA, in Marin County, 20 minutes north of the Golden Gate Bridge. The move came after I was elected the 11th president of San Francisco Theological Seminary.

During the 1980s I served Tabernacle United Church in Philadelphia as pastor. In 1990, we moved to Washington, D.C., so I could begin a PhD in International Relations at American University. After finishing my degree, I joined Bread for the World as an international policy analyst in 1998. I served with Bread for 13 years, mostly as the Vice President for Policy and Program.

While we were in Washington, DC, Dean served as Associate Pastor for Congregational Care at Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church for 11 years until early 2001. She also served as Director of the College of Preachers at the Washington National Cathedral for five years, taught religion at the National Cathedral School for Girls, and became the first chaplain of the National Presbyterian School, a K-6 independent school on the grounds of National Presbyterian Church.

She earned a D.Min from Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary (now Palmer TS) in Marriage and Family in 1986 and was certified in 1990 as a Marriage and Family Therapist through AAMFT. Since coming to California, she has moved into semi-retirement, but gives some time to counseling, teaching adult education classes in area churches, occasional preaching and retreat leadership.

Her big love is gardening. She has taken upon herself the mission of landscaping the area surrounding the President's house, a Julia Morgan-designed craft-style house built in the early 1920s. She is now completing her certification as a master gardener through the Cal. State Extension Service in Marin County. At home, her constant companion is our 13 lb. "dog-like" ball of cotton known as French Fry.

Andy just turned 41 this month. He, his wife Sarah, and their two children, Lulu (8) and Parke (5), live in the Park Slope neighborhood of Brooklyn. Andy, who has always had the "gift of gab," is now making money at it. As a managing director for BerlinRosen, a strategic communications and creative services firm, he heads their national issues advocacy practice. He is currently working on efforts to support fast food workers and jail reform. Before this, he worked for the Pew Charitable Trusts, and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). He was also Press Secretary for the late Senator Paul Wellstone. Sarah is a women's health nurse practitioner working in a mobile medical clinic for Planned Parenthood, providing treatment for HIV and Hepatitis C around NYC.

Matthew is 38 and lives in Seattle with his wife, Lily, and their two children, Aoife (4) and Marco (2). Matthew and Lily met their freshman year at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) in 1994. They represent the right-brain side of the family. (Matthew is actually a lefty.) Following their graduation they moved to Brooklyn, where they were engaged in the fashion and furniture communities for 10 years. Matthew worked in retail stores in Soho, selling high-end designer furniture and housewares at Moss (now closed), then Cassina.

In 2009, after a move to Seattle, where Lily's family lives, Matthew became the assistant manager at Barneys New York in their downtown Seattle store. He recently switched jobs, moving back into the furniture and design world. When they lived in New York, Lily developed her own young women's fashion line, Yellow is Gold by Sunshine & Shadow, which was sold through Urban Outfitters and other boutique stores. She closed her business several years ago to focus her attention on their children.

None of you have met our daughter, Ruth, who was born in 1981. She is now two-thirds of the way through a double masters degree program (Public Health and Public Policy) at the Univ. of Michigan. Before starting the program in 2013, she worked on Capitol Hill for seven years, first for Steny Hoyer of Maryland, then for Jim Cooper of Nashville, TN. She is a delightful human being. I wish you all knew each other!

Epilogue

Paul Miller's reminiscences stretched to 36 pages, but he was First Presbyterian's pastor for 12 years. I was there for four and a half, so it's only appropriate that this sojourn down memory lane is much shorter, though much longer than I expected to write.

At the same time, as I read over what I've written I realize how much I have omitted from this narrative. There are yet a host of people who deserve mention because they were important to Dean and me and our boys. For example,

- Carol McClintock worked patiently with me to help improve my voice production and public speaking
- Vic and Virginia Dixon Bowen were octogenarian newlyweds when we first arrived, but they took us under their care, providing food and counsel regularly. Virginia joined forces with the Coppedges to help me celebrate my 30th birthday.
- Steve Pierson came over one weekend and helped me put up a swing set for our boys our backyard. He, Ruth, and their boys were good friends with our family for the short time they were in Bloomington.
- Steve Schechter and Jerry Ruff were our boys' pediatricians.
- Susie Nicolino and Dean were in a bowling league together.
- Lois Meessen headed the worship committee and encouraged the congregation's creativity in this area. She also made several of the stoles that I wore, along with numerous paraments that adorned the sanctuary.
- Bob and Cora Sudbury were salt of the earth members of the congregation. I remember one particular Sunday dinner with them at our house, when our son Matthew, probably a year and half old, nonchalantly drank an entire bowl of pickle juice without making a face. Bob was stunned, and then couldn't stop laughing.

Bill May, then chair of the I.U. Religion Department, and I had numerous conversations about lots of subjects, theological and otherwise, often over lunch. I still remember his lectures on Augustine and Kierkegaard, and have read several of his books and monographs since then as he's moved into biomedical ethics. Bill was the M.C. at our farewell party in December 1979. Bill and Beverly are now worshipping at Saint Mark Presbyterian Church in Rockville, MD, where Dean and I were parish associates before we moved to California. Our paths did not cross there, but we have stayed in touch nonetheless over the years.

Then there's Floyd and Holly Arpan, always erudite, always generous, and often extremely funny. I remember Holly saying one time, "We all have clay feet, but some of us have clay that extends all the way up the leg..." She is also known to have said, "I'm more likely to be burned as a heretic than as a martyr." Holly made the Christmas stockings that hang on our mantel to this day every Advent-Christmas season. She also organized the Charivari that welcomed us into our new house on Circle Drive. In this particular version of that custom, we were given a stock of canned goods with the labels removed so that we would have to open the can before we could discover what we were going to have for dinner that night.

One of the things I cherish about First Presbyterian Church is its openness, its embrace of differences, and its deep, caring community. A

university town church is a very special thing if it can maintain a balance between town and gown—never easy, but always worth the effort. As a faith community, FPC was a place where people could bring their questions, doubts, and uncertainties to the table for conversation. It was a place where people could lift one another up in prayer, and offer solace and compassionate care. It was a place to explore, seek, and grow in faith, community, and service to others. Political party and ideology didn't matter; our faith journey together came first. An important insight for me was that liberal and conservative mattered much less than whether someone was open or closed. What mattered was the relationship. First Presbyterian Church was a place where people checked their pedigrees, educational degrees, faculty rank, managerial status, or any other social distinctions at the door. We were all one in Christ. That made for a strong, vibrant, life-giving community and made it possible for the church to be a witness to the good news of the Gospel in the larger community and the world itself.

We were so blessed to be among you! As another James once put it, I count it nothing but joy. We are grateful to God for our time together in faith.