

A REFLECTION FROM OUR CLERGY INTERN, DeWAYNE DAVIS...

I Don't Know How to Say Goodbye . . . So I Won't

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

--Numbers 6:24-26

When I accepted the call to embark on the journey to ordained ministry, I knew that I would have to leave home, spiritually, physically, and emotionally. While I prepared myself to leave home, I was not prepared for the kind of transformative experiences of welcome and service I would receive among new people and new communities into which I would go. That failure to see was my own—years of rejection and condemnation from the religious tradition of my youth created resistance to the idea discovering new communities of love and acceptance. Even the love and embrace of my home church could not break down that resistance.

It may come as a surprise to many that, before I came to Metropolitan Community Church of Northern Virginia, it seemed a world away from me. I knew wonderful people who attended here and had heard stories of its history and its people, but it was an unknown place to which I would go away from my place of safety and community. I was plagued with doubt and no small amount of resistance, leaving the place of worship that had loved me back to wholeness and leaving behind my husband and friends who would remain there.

When I first walked through the doors of MCC-NoVA on that first Sunday that I began my service with you, I decided to place my focus solely on the benchmarks and processes required by the seminary and the denomination for completion of the degree and for ordination. *Get in and get it done.* But your unconditional love and your radical hospitality would not let me off so easily. You embraced me with warmth and generosity and without a hint of discomfort or hesitation. You shared your time and prayers with me as though I had been with you all along. You cared for me as only a loving family would care for its own. And you saw in me the minister and servant that sometimes I doubted I was or ever could be.

And a funny thing happened. My heart got in it. I really began to experience MCC-NoVA to the fullest—the community, the relationships, Communion, the holy conversations, the spiritual formation, the classes and the retreats, the fun and the laughter, the games and the potlucks, and the singing and the dancing. Every activity and every encounter brought more learning and new insight. I saw and felt the care and concern in the eyes and touch of every embrace and every encounter. Before I could put words to it, I was being pulled into a community of lives entrusted where we were keepers of one another and parties to a covenant of service and ministry to each other and to the community. I have had an indescribably powerful and transformative experience living and serving in community with you.

I am now being called to take all that I have learned and experienced into new places and new ministries, which means I must take my leave of this community that has been my family for nearly two years. Upon announcing that he was leaving as pastor of the historic Riverside

Church, the Rev. William Sloan Coffin said in response to questions about what he would do with his life, “. . . the children of God are simultaneously burdened and liberated by a call to participate in the decisions of an ongoing creation.” We don’t always know where we are going, but we know that we have to go. Upon taking my leave from MCC-NoVA, that is the reality into which I will step. But I am confident and comforted in knowing that during my time of serving and being in community with you, I have experienced a profound touch of God’s anointing, and I know that I am ready to go wherever God sends. You helped me confirm a sense of purpose for my call, and it involves being ever prepared and willing to participate in God’s ongoing creative work in the world. I remain committed to living and working as hard as I can and in whatever way that I am privileged to do so to embody and manifest the reign of God to a fearful, chaotic world hungry for spiritual renewal.

I don’t know how to say goodbye so I won’t. But this isn’t really a goodbye. There is no need for that because deep within me, you won’t leave me and I know that I can’t leave you. And of course, our paths will cross again. I will confess that I have been changed because of you. You unleashed and deepened every part of me that desires to love, to serve, to give, to nurture, and to embrace because you loved, served, nurtured, and embraced me. Thank you for all that you have done for me. I cannot repay the love and kindness you have shown me, but I will do my best to live and walk worthy of the love, trust, and respect you so freely gave me.

May God bless and keep you and give you peace.

Love,
DeWayne