



February 20, 2020

Greetings Partners in Ministry!

Something that I often hear from my colleagues after they have taken a new call is, they wish the interim pastor who preceded them did more “interim” work. Things that you think would be cleaned up and organized during the interim process were left untouched. This meant the new pastor needed to spend a fair amount of time and energy on task that should have been done before they arrived, thus slowing down the process for real growth and ministry in their new call.

We are having many conversations at our COM (Committee on Ministry) meetings about the current and future role of interim ministry. We are realizing that the trainings and teachings for successful interim ministry need to reflect the ministry of churches today. Interim ministry is a unique calling and there are plenty of pastors called to this work.

A shining example of this was the Rev. Diane Hutchins. I didn't get the chance to cross paths with Diane in the presbytery, I was only able to witness the ripples of where she had been. Her name was often mentioned in conversations about good leaders and moderators of this presbytery and where she offered ideas about vision and direction. Her memorial service was last week at Providence Presbyterian Church in Fairfax and it was there when the full impact of Diane's gift to the presbytery sunk in. During the service someone listed the names of the churches where Diane had served as an interim pastor. As those churches were being read, I realized that ALL of them were healthy and in good shape. That is a testament to not just great interim work, but great leadership. Not many leaders, be it pastors, football coaches, or CEOs can say their track record is anything close to that of Diane's. From what was shared about her life at her service I can only assume it was because she didn't make the work about herself. It was obvious she wanted each church she served to be the best reflection of Christ as possible.

So may your ministry be modeled after Diane's. One that has its foundation in the health and wholeness of the body, not just the self. May your leadership be remembered not for how good you were, but for how good the place was after you left.

John