

Rev. James Rodden

I wish to tell you a little about my history. I was born on June 3, 1956, in Takoma Park, Maryland. My parents moved in September 1958 to Manassas Park, and I have lived in Virginia ever since. My parents raised my sister and me in the Southern Baptist Church. We went to church on Sunday morning and Sunday evening and, of course, Wednesday night prayer service. I had no lack of religion growing up, and this base, I believe, led me to a life lived in God's graceful service.

My formal education was in the public school system of Prince William County. I went to Manassas Park Elementary for grades 1-4, and Bennet Elementary for grade 5. My Middle School journey was at Marsteller Middle School. I graduated from Osbourn Senior High School (Go Yellowjackets) in 1974. This is the last graduating class from Osbourn as a county school the next year the school became the city of Manassas' high school.

My college career began at Northern Virginia Community College. I received an Associate Science degree from NVCC and transferred to George Mason University. I attended GMU part-time while working for the government and starting a family. In 1987, I graduated from GMU with a Bachelor of Individualized Studies (BIS) Degree in Communications and Philosophy, and Religion.

In 1986, I entered Wesley United Methodist Seminary earning a Master of Divinity Degree in 1989. I have twice attempted to return to school for a Ph.D., but in both cases, God had other plans for me.

I first felt the call of God some 45 years ago. It began by leading me to teach a young adult class in my home church. In teaching, God's call seemed to quiet down. But after one year, I felt like there was more I could be doing. This led me to be placed on the finance committee. This still left a hole in my heart. It left me feeling that I needed to do more. That year at the charge conference I became the chairman of evangelism.

I was still teaching Sunday school, finance, and planning, and implementing an evangelism program for our church. Then three events happened that would make God's call very clear.

In February of 1982, our church suffered a devastating fire. The insurance covered the rebuild, but we worshiped in the nearby Episcopal church. This event drove home the importance of prayer. Many of the church prayed and some of them met in small groups in people's homes. Experiencing this firsthand drove home the fact that prayer works, lesson one learned.

In June of that year, we received two new pastors. One of the new pastors drew my attention. He was young and full of new ideas and ways of doing things. This pastor and I became good friends, and I would go to him to seek direction on God's call.

As my friendship grew with the young pastor I just knew he would be important in helping with my call.

In September, we were able to return to our church. At the charge conference that year I was removed from finance and evangelism. A new young adult Bible Study began, taught by the new senior pastor's wife. My class ended, and I was left with nothing to do. I still had a deep yearning to work in any way I could for God.

I went to our associate pastor, my new friend, with all I was feeling. He heard me out and then asked me one question, "Has it ever occurred to you that God is calling you into the ordained ministry?" There it was the last thing I had ever thought about. It did not take long in prayer for me to make a decision and I have never looked back with any feelings.

Fast forward 36 years and here I am at White Stone United Methodist Church. Over that time I have served

where God and the bishops have sent me. Along the way, I have pastored many loving and caring people. Some have come to know Jesus, some renewed their commitment to the Son, and many have deepened their faith.

I believe God has placed me here so that together we can renew the fire of God and serve the people in this area. Let us do this together.