

SECTION D

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Rev. Michael L. Ebersole

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Ordination Story

It was September 2018, when I began my call to serve College Hill and St. John's Baseline churches. And it was shortly thereafter, when after the people had some time to get to know me and my story, that a frequent visitor to College Hill – a young man in his 90's – approached me with an extended hand, and asked if he could ask a personal question. He asked me, "How in the H*** did you go from being a truck driver to being a preacher?" And while I've had similar thoughts at times, my response to him was simply, "By the grace of God."

Yes, before my arrival in Bloomville, I had invested about thirty years in the field of transportation, with that time being almost evenly split between being a truck driver and being in management positions. But in 2013, I decided to put more of my time toward ministry, and in time, toward seminary studies.

Backing up a bit, I was born in Shelby, Ohio, and First UCC is my home church, and where I was baptized and confirmed. But many years later, while a student at the University of Dayton, I became a Catholic in 1983, while leaving "church" altogether in 2002. It was 2007 when I felt God tugging at my heart to find a new faith community, and "luck" had me return to the United Church of Christ that same year, as God led me to St. Paul UCC in Wapakoneta, where I was welcomed as a member in 2008. My experiences at St. Paul in particular, awakened God's call in my life. My time at St. Paul was a blessing, and the wonderful people at Wapak will always be, a special part of my discernment and call, because of the love and care they shared with me.

I would be remiss if I did not mention my stops at St. John UCC, Mansfield; Sylvania UCC; and Calvary UCC, Crestline. Although my time at each was relatively short, the good people at each church blessed me in many ways, and I feel lucky to have been part of these communities.

As my discernment became more serious, my initial desire was to answer God's call as a chaplain. At least, that's what I thought God's call was. And that was my vision during most of my years at United Theological Seminary in Dayton. And it's funny when I look back on "my" call, because Katherine Beckett shared with me one day while we were at lunch, that when we have dreams and make plans, that God will come along and change them. And God did that!

College Hill and St. John's Baseline called me in early 2018 while I was still a seminary student, to see if I had an interest in being a student pastor. Honestly, I had never wanted to be a pastor. But, as God would have it, two interviews, a trial sermon, and a membership vote later, God landed me in rural Crawford and Seneca counties, into what has been a joy in my life. I've never felt more welcomed and loved. And I'm so thankful for these wonderful people who were so very patient and supportive through my last years of seminary and CPE. They truly bless me.

The scripture that I chose for my ordination, was Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet - whereby giving them an example to follow, so to do as He had done for them. As I follow Jesus' example and serve, I no longer make plans - but instead, welcome whatever it is that God will have me do. For I am truly humbled and blessed and thankful, that God called me to ordained ministry.