

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY – The Rev. Mitchell Trigger

My religious life has been an interesting hodge-podge. I was born and baptized Roman Catholic, but have little memory of that. My mother had a serious conflict over the burial of my grandmother and we switched to the Episcopal Church, in which I was confirmed and often served as an altar boy. At the beginning of high school, my family moved from the St. Paul, Minnesota, to a small town in northwest Iowa. The only choices for church were Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Methodist. I began attending the Methodist church on my own, and my parents and siblings followed a few months later.

I was heavily involved in the youth activities at church, attending not only our local youth group, but also serving on a district youth council. I originally planned on attending college to major in theology, but after working at a local radio station, I changed to mass communications. I worked primarily in radio, in all aspects from on-air talent to station management.

Because her parents had retired from Iowa to northern Arkansas, Sue wanted to move there because she was also offered an opportunity in Christian Education at the local Presbyterian church. Being the supportive person I am, we moved to Arkansas and got married that same year. It was a wonderful time for us over the next eight years, as Sue had tremendous success as a Director of Christian Education and I had similar success in radio, ending with a brief stint on local TV.

I was also active in church and produced and edited our church's worship service for broadcast on local cable TV. An unusual incident occurred. The pastor had a serious heart attack and required a quadruple bypass. The Session did not know where to turn for pulpit supply, until someone came up with the brilliant idea of asking me to fill in. I agreed and spent a number of weeks preparing and delivering the sermon at church each week. Each week I was congratulated for my sermon and each week I felt progressively more guilty. Who was I to be preaching to people? What did I know about God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit? It nagged at me for quite a while and started the thought in my head that maybe I should be doing something more. After the encouragement of a number of friends and church members, I came to the same place as my wife Sue did at the same time. We would attend seminary.

I can honestly say that the last 22 years in ministry have been a real joy, even during the most difficult challenges. I have had the opportunity to explore a variety of interests, both in my personal ministry and with the congregations I have served. I am passionate about social justice concerns, especially the basics of hunger and homelessness. We have been blessed to find colleagues in ministry both within the Presbyterian church and in other denominations and faiths, that have worked hand-in-hand with us to meet the needs of the poor in our community. I have been blessed to know incredible hospitality from Muslim friends in my community and from refugees and Palestinian rights activists in the West Bank.

The most important part of my ministry has been, and always will be, with the congregation I serve. I have had the opportunity to learn conflict and mediation skills to assist not only my congregation, but others in my presbytery and synod. It is a pleasure and privilege to not only build up individual disciples, but more importantly, our entire church community. I have had an opportunity few ministers have, and that is to work with a colleague as talented as my wife Sue. We have used our complimentary skills and talents, together with a shared love for ministry and social justice, to build up our mutual ministry and to challenge each other to grow in our ministry and our marriage.