

THE COLUMBUS Telegram

top story
PASTOR PROFILE

Rev. Stewart wants Columbus to care for each other

LIZ MORALES lmorales@columbustelegram.com Jan 4, 2018 Updated 21 hrs ago



The Rev. Cindi Stewart is grateful to be able to grow her congregation's faith at First United Methodist Church.

Liz Morales, The Columbus Telegram

COLUMBUS — Two roads diverged in a yellow wood for the Rev. Cindi Stewart while she attended Doane College.

Stewart double-majored in English and philosophy/religion and realized in the middle of her collegiate career that she could not follow both paths.

So she looked down one road as far as she could and saw God calling her to the ministry.

The initial goal the senior pastor at First United Methodist Church had in mind was to become a secondary English teacher. Even though she traded her teacher's apple for clerical robes, she never lost her love for Shakespeare and Robert Frost.

"When I got the call in the middle of college to become a pastor, it really challenged my sense of what I thought my life would be like," Stewart said. "But I always like to say, God doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called. He prepares the path."

After graduation, the Syracuse native served as a youth director for churches in Colorado, Kansas and eventually back in Nebraska at Westridge United Methodist in Norfolk. She then attended Sioux Falls Seminary, where she was ordained in 2006.

It was in 2014 when she answered the call to become pastor of First United Methodist Church in Columbus.

"The two primary influences for my faith were my Grandma Susan and the faith of my church," Stewart said. "I grew up in UMC in Syracuse. They raised me and influenced my faith."

This influence inspired Stewart to center the attention of her congregation on a special lesson — compassion.

"The Holy Spirit has given us all spiritual gifts," Stewart said. "We can use them to build the kingdom. I always encourage people to use their gifts to serve God."

These gifts will come in handy as Stewart has another lesson in mind.

"This year the focus will be 'today,'" Stewart said. "What can we do today to know God and serve others? We will start taking each day at a time and not focus too far ahead."

When she is not on duty, Stewart enjoys spending time with her family. Husband Klint and daughters Isabelle, 19, and Emma, 15, keep her busy at home along with the occasional crochet craft.

The past four years have met the Stewart family with kindness.

"It's a tremendous blessing to be here," Stewart said. "This church is a very, very generous church and I'm so blessed to be a part of it. We engage in outreach and missions, I think it's so fun to be a part of it."

The community is also a blessing.

"It's a community that's forward-thinking," Stewart said. "It's a city of progress that embraces the future. In the time I've been here, 38th Street has exploded. It is so exciting to see it build and grow and that the people continue to work together to take care of each other."