



## I'm Keeping The T-Shirt

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This article is not attempting even a smidge of theological or spiritual insight. It's purely personal. I think it's summed up well by my article's title and my parting words at the May 24 Presbytery Gathering, "I'm keeping the t-shirt."



For those of you who attended the Presbytery Gathering last week, you might have noticed that your Presbytery staff wore matching t-shirts. These were extras from Presbyterian Youth Triennium in 2019, and the staff claimed them to wear at our quarterly gatherings. Then, you know, COVID. May 24 was our first chance to wear them at a Gathering in person.

May 24 was also my last chance to wear it as your Presbytery Executive. My term officially ended yesterday, May 31. And yet, here's another Fresh Impressions article...hmmm.

I'm glad to report that the Milwaukee Presbytery has invited me to continue part-time as your bridge executive, while you begin the process of searching for an interim executive. So, I'm keeping the t-shirt...for a while. For the next several months as you identify your hopes for the interim time, I will work with the staff and our many devoted Presbytery leaders to keep things moving forward. My hope is to ease the transition, so that your interim executive can hit the ground running.

By the end of this month, I will have physically relocated to Boise, Idaho. My house is under contract, and the moving boxes are starting to pile up in the garage. That means, of necessity, I will be working virtually/remotely. Thanks to COVID, we've learned to do that well. My telephone numbers and email remain the same; I will continue to be a small square on a Zoom screen. In that sense, nothing changes.

The other change, however, will be more noticeable. I will be working part-time. Council and Personnel are doing a thoughtful job of helping me to discern what tasks of the Presbytery Executive I should continue and what might be done by others or be allowed to lay fallow for a time. Our intention is to make sure the important ministries of the Presbytery continue during the gap. We will let you know as my job responsibilities gets sorted out, so that you know who to contact for what. For now, however, please feel free to reach out to me just as you always did.

The reason my work will continue part-time only is that I am also going to work part-time for the Boise Presbytery. I have been called to serve as their Transitional Presbyter/Stated Clerk, doing much of the same type of interim work that you'll be doing in Milwaukee. The Boise Presbytery is exploring its vision for the future and whether and how it might collaborate with neighboring presbyteries. Their transitional work, like yours, is good and timely. My work for Boise Presbytery starts today, also virtually for a time.

Richard Rohr wrote a wonderful chapter that characterizes "in-between times" called "[All Transformation Takes Place in Liminal Space](#)," in his 2004 book *Adam's Return*. His words capture our gap time together and perhaps do offer that smidge of spiritual inspiration that we need:

"Liminality is an inner state and sometimes an outer situation where people can begin to think and act in genuinely new ways. It is when we are betwixt and between, have left one room but not yet entered the next room, any hiatus between stages of life, stages of faith, jobs, loves, or relationships. It is that graced time when



we are not certain or in control, when something genuinely new can happen. We are empty, receptive, an erased tablet waiting for new words. Nothing fresh or creative will normally happen when we are inside our self-constructed comfort zones, only more of the same. Nothing original emerges from business as usual. ...

“Much of the work of the biblical God and human destiny itself is to get people into liminal space and to keep them there long enough to learn something essential and genuinely new. It is the ultimate teachable space. In some sense, it is the only teachable space. ...

“The bubble of usual order has to be broken by a bit of whimsy, holy uselessness, deliberate disruption or displacement, learning to walk in the opposite direction. In liminal space we sometimes need to not-do and not-perform according to our usual successful patterns. We actually need to fail, fast, and deliberately falter to understand the other dimension of life. ...

“None of us like to live in the insecurity of waiting without clear direction, meaning, or closure. True biblical faith, therefore, will always be the minority position, in my experience. God has to teach you how to go there, trust the emptiness, and stay there until you are led back out. ...”

May we linger in this teachable space with grace and expectation for what the Spirit is doing in our midst. I look forward to accompanying you on this phase of the journey.