

# Byron United Church of Christ

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5 May 1984

Pastoral Search Committee  
United Evangelical United Church of Christ  
East Avenue and Dillon Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21224

Dear Members of the Pastoral Search Committee,

I am writing this letter in response to the discussion as to my possible pastoral inexperience. Although I have been ordained for only a short period of time, I have spent many years on pastoral and/or educational staffs of six churches. Many of these experiences occurred as part of my seminary training. Although I was a seminarian, I was functioning as a pastor. I was regarded as a pastor by the people involved in the following experiences. All of the experiences at Byron United Church of Christ occurred after my ordination. I have served on the staffs of the following churches:

Byron United Church of Christ  
Xenia, Ohio 120 members

Faith United Church of Christ  
Lancaster, Pennsylvania 450 members

Protestant Community United Church of Christ  
Essex, Maryland 350 members

Trinity United Church of Christ  
Hanover, Pennsylvania 2,000 members

First & St. Stephen's United Church of Christ  
Baltimore, Maryland 350-375 members

St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Baltimore, Maryland 350 members

I would like to share some of my experiences in the following areas:

- Worship Leading
- Visitation
- Counseling
- Christian Education
- Conflict Mangement
- Evangelism and Church Growth
- Administration

### Worship Leading

My experience varies from leading worship in a church of 120 members to leading worship in a church of 2,000 members. Throughout my experience, worship leading has been strongly emphasized. I have led worship in all of the churches for whom I worked. In all cases, I did so on a regular basis. In the cases of Byron Church and Protestant Community Church, I prepared liturgy and preached on a weekly basis. Also, I have led worship in many of the Chesapeake Association churches on an occasional basis. In all of my experience, I have been given complete control of the worship setting. I developed the liturgy based on the traditions of each congregation.

### Visitation

My work at Byron U.C.C., Faith U.C.C., Protestant Community U.C.C., First & St. Stephen's U.C.C., and St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church all involved visitation. I did regular shut-in visitation, including administration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. I was able to develop a one-to-one relationship with the shut-ins I visited. I also did visitations to nursing homes and hospitals when parishioners were in the care of these institutions. With many of these visits, pastoral counseling was involved. I learned the importance of visitation in bringing new members to the church. I have instituted a program at Byron Church whereby every visitor to the Sunday Morning Worship receives a visit within two weeks. I developed this program during my time at Faith U.C.C.. It has been directly effective in recruiting over 50% of Byron's new members.

### Counseling

My work at all the above churches involved counseling in one form or another.

At Byron U.C.C., Faith U.C.C., Protestant Community U.C.C., and First & St. Stephen's U.C.C., I was available for walk-in counseling. This is the most challenging and rewarding form of counseling. I was able to develop in-depth relationships with people who needed an empathetic ear.

In many cases, pastoral visitations also led to pastoral counseling.

I have developed a system of appointment counseling, which deals with spiritual, emotional and/or mental issues. Counseling by appointment is also used for pre-marital counseling, marriage counseling, pre-baptismal counseling, and pre-membership counseling. This skill was utilized at Byron U.C.C., and Protestant Community U.C.C..

### Christian Education

I have been extremely active in Christian Education in most of my church experiences.

At St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church, I developed and presented the curriculum for sixth grade Sunday Church School. At Byron U.C.C., I developed a Confirmation program and have presented the program to several classes. I have also developed the curriculum for High School Christian Education at both Trinity U.C.C. and Faith U.C.C..

My programs of study were original material, using the Bible, denominational curriculum, and personal past experiences as resources.

## Conflict Management

One of the unspoken roles of the pastor is that of conflict manager; someone who can help resolve the many small conflicts which arises in all congregations. In dealing with the conflict when it is small, we are able to keep conflicts from getting large and out of control.

In my experiences as pastor of Byron U.C.C. and interim pastor of Protestant Community U.C.C., I had to deal with conflicts on a regular basis. At Protestant Community U.C.C., I was able to deal with a conflict situation in the music program. Many influential members were dissatisfied with the organist. Due to prompt attention I gave to the conflict, the parties involved were able to successfully, and happily resolve their differences.

Byron U.C.C. was riddled with conflict when I began my ministry here. As a result of many conferences, meetings, and hours of empathetic listening, Byron Church has been healed from its previous hurts.

## Evangelism and Church Growth

I have had extensive experience with several evangelism programs. I worked with neighborhood door-to-door outreach programs at St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church, First & St. Stephen's U.C.C., and Byron U.C.C.. At First & St. Stephen's U.C.C., and Byron U.C.C., I coordinated the outreach efforts.

At Byron U.C.C. and Protestant Community U.C.C. I worked on an "in-reach" program to activate inactive members. At Byron Church we were even able to activate members who were inactive for 10 years or more! The program was also very effective at Protestant Community Church. The weekly attendance grew dramatically as a result of my efforts in reaching inactive members. Byron Church won this year's award for the greatest percentage of growth in our U.C.C. program area. As I mentioned in the visitation section, my program of visitation to church visitors has been largely responsible for that growth percentage.

## Administration

Among the many other roles of the pastor is the role of executive director. Charged with the everyday operation of the parish, the pastor must make many administrative decisions.

At Byron Church and Protestant Community Church, I have made such administrative decisions every day. As a member of the Church Council (with voice, but without vote), I have motivated the council to implement improvements. My advice and leadership has been sought out frequently. I have prayerfully led my congregations to the actions which praise the Lord.

I have used my experience in all six churches, and in other employment, to come to terms with the nature of the role of pastor. I have been in a variety of church situations and have become aware of the similarities and differences of being the pastor of churches of various sizes and geographical locations.

One similarity in my experiences with church people is that regardless of the church size, or its location, people have the same basic needs and require the same basic pastoral skills. It is my hope that I have shown you that through my experiences in these six churches, I have developed the skills required to meet the pastoral needs of United Evangelical United Church of Christ.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to call or contact me.  
I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Your Brother in Christ

*Pastor J. Stephen Fair*

Rev. John Stephen Fair, M. Div.,  
Pastor