

# First Presbyterian Church

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June 17, 2021

Dear Friends,

Twenty-four years ago, Tyann and Will and I left our life-long home in Miller and moved to Dubuque, Iowa, where I enrolled in seminary and Tyann did everything else. We did this because it seemed like the right thing to do, though it was hard for us to leave, and there were many good reasons to stay here. Over the next many months, we began to understand what had happened as a call from God.

When first we were approached about coming back to Miller to serve this church, we answered that it would be a complicated thing to try to do, fraught with certain dangers. But over time, we began to feel that God had called us here, despite our reasons for thinking it might not be a good idea. I think it was a good idea, and I believe it was a call from God.

The thing about God is that you never know when God will call you to something new. And I will be the first to tell you that when that happens, things sometimes get hard. Last Sunday, we accepted a call to serve another church, Hope Presbyterian Church in Spicer, Minnesota. We will begin our work there in early August.

We have struggled with this decision for almost two years. The idea of leaving friends and family, and the only church we have ever served, made the idea of leaving just about impossible to consider. Yet, in the end, we decided to go from here for the same reason we decided to come here in the first place. We feel called to do so.

Throughout our on again/off again conversations with the church in Minnesota, at several points, we decided that we would be staying in Miller. But the door remained open, and in fact, kept re-opening. Each time we would say “no,” and

each time we had a worse and worse feeling about saying that. We had the distinct idea that this was in fact, a call from God—the same sort of thing that brought us here, twenty-one years ago. I really did begin to wonder if I could remain a minister if we were not willing to accept what we believed God was calling us to. And so we stopped saying “no.”

There is a process in place, and the wheels have begun to turn in the direction of finding your next pastor. Please know that the session has been informed of all of this, and is ready to make sure that everything stays on track in the interim.

There is more to say about all this, and I hope we have a chance to talk more before our work is done here in mid-July. But whatever else happens, please know that we are more grateful than we will ever be able to say, for the love and grace we have known from all of you. Our time here has been a series of experiences that have literally changed our lives, and we are thankful to you and to God for having had the opportunity to serve this church.

Blessings,

Brian Jones