

My memories about First Church actually begin in May of 2006. I had passed my first round with the Board of Ordained Ministry the previous November, and was going to be “commissioned” as a probationary elder at the upcoming Annual Conference. The problem was that the Conference was just three weeks away and I had yet to hear of what my first appointment was to be. I wondered if maybe they had forgotten about me.

My cell phone rang as I drove through the streets of Maplewood, NJ where I was wrapping up my responsibilities as a “church hire” doing visitation at the local United Methodist Church. I pulled over to take the call from the Superintendent of the Metropolitan District, whom I had known for some time. My mind raced. The Metropolitan District? Was I being appointed to a church in Manhattan? The Bronx?

My speculation was short-lived as he simply told me to call someone I’d never heard of – a “Reverend Pinckney.” Unable to control my curiosity, I begged him to tell me where I was being appointed, but he remained tight-lipped. After a few minutes, I realized he wasn’t going to give it up, so I gave up.

Except... I made one last-ditch attempt to find out if he thought I’d gotten a “good” appointment. I asked him, “How should I feel about this?” He didn’t give me the answer I wanted. He responded, “Your first appointment is always special.”

His answer is the reason I will always remember that conversation – that, and the fact that he was right.

Pastor Jim