

December 17, 2018



Dear Family of Skyland,

After TJ Knapp read the announcement on Sunday of my upcoming Renewal Leave, I shared a few words. I want you to receive these thoughts also in this letter, in case you did not hear them on Sunday, December 16, 2018.

Since April of this year, I have been in discussion with TJ Knapp, Beth Crissman (our District Superintendent), and the Staff-Parish Relations Team. In part, this possibility of a Renewal Leave has been under consideration. The conversations have been not if – but when would be the best time.

Last Winter, I had several reactions to an accumulation of stress due to the many changes occurring in my life. The move to Skyland was one of these. But not the most challenging. I have made many changes with my calling in ministry across the years. But the changes in my and Linda's family have been the largest challenges. Since then there have been more. The death of Linda's brother, Henry Fisher. And the almost daily care of our mothers who need attention to help them stay safe as their health declines. As well as needing to assist with the oversight of my brother Rodney's health care in Statesville.

I am very appreciative of the support and encouragement of the members of the SPRC. If it hadn't been for the trust I have in them as sisters and brothers in Christ, I do not think I would have listened as deeply to their loving encouragement to take this time for Renewal.

I thank Beth Crissman, our D.S., whom I have known for many years. She and I have gone down a number of roads in ministry together. And again, her support for me and our church means so much.

I agree. I need to take a break and get renewed. I had a week at the Davidson Clergy Center week before last. During that week, I experienced confirmation that this Renewal time is the right step and just in the nick of time for me and for our family. I have served under appointment in the WNC Conference for 38 years (starting in 1980 for two part time years). During all these years I have never availed myself to this opportunity. And it is time to do so. This will be a time to enrich my own development and to align myself with the Spiritual Call of this stage of life often referred as the Sandwich Years - sandwiched between the needs of our elders and the needs of our children/grandchildren.

I trust that our family, Linda, and myself will have your prayers and love as we take this time to focus on ourselves for a while. I will carry the church through the first Sunday of the New Year, January 6, and then back away into a season of quiet self care. I plan to see you soon.

Your Brother in the Journey of Life and Faith,

Rev. Wes Sharpe

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