

Kristin Galle

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SPEAKERS

Kristin Galle, Mary Wilson

- M** Mary Wilson 00:03
Hi, I'm Mary Wilson and today is October 19th, 2020. In the midst of the pandemic that is ongoing and changing our lives in many ways, I'm interviewing today, my friend Kristin Galle. Kristin, would you share what type of ministry you have and have had in the past years?
- K** Kristin Galle 00:23
Yes, I'm Kristin Galle, and I am professional interim minister. I am ordained with the United Church of Christ and have full standing with the Christian Church Disciples of Christ. I have and have served a number of churches with the Disciples and about three churches with the United Church of Christ. I've also served as interim in two congregations that were Presbyterian Church, USA, PCUSA.
- M** Mary Wilson 00:56
Okay, so Disciples, UCC and Presbyterian.
- K** Kristin Galle 01:02
Yes. I also actually did one short interim, was sort of finishing up another interim, with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, the ELCA.

M

Mary Wilson 01:12

I was going to say, in my mind, there was a Lutheran Church in there somewhere.

K

Kristin Galle 01:15

Yeah. I keep in touch with a lot of - with the mailings, from Bishop Mike Reinhardt, who is the Bishop of the Gulf Coast Synod, which is sort of the eastern side of Texas with Houston and into Louisiana. One thing which might be of interest to the study is as the pandemic was sort of winding up, as people were starting to consider closing, and then how to close, and churches, buildings, all these different standards and suggestions. It was actually often the Bishop Mike, the Lutherans, who would send out something first. Then the Disciples would be the next day, and then the UCC and the Presbyterians sometime later. In fact, often what I started doing then was taking some of that information and forwarded it on to my contacts with especially the UCC and the PCUSA - like Campbell Levitt, in the Conference office, South Central Conference office, and Lynn Hargrove, who's with the PCUSA in the general, in the Greater Houston area, the New Covenant Presbyterian. I started sharing some of that.

M

Mary Wilson 02:40

That's interesting. That's interesting.

K

Kristin Galle 02:42

Yeah. Things like building care and the things about aerosols and singing, and then even, I think it was Bishop Mike first who said, "Okay, we're starting to hear that ministers are really burnt out because they made it through Lent, they made it through Easter, they didn't have a break after Easter." Then by May and June you were starting to hear that ministers were like, "Ah, I haven't had a break, I haven't had a vacation." He said, "Make sure and take care of yourself." Then the next day, I heard, I got a similar email from the Disciples. Then it was about that time that it started really hitting the news too that some of the news lines were saying, "Hey, this is getting to be a problem."

M

Mary Wilson 02:43

Yeah.

K

Kristin Galle 03:27

Anyway, it was interesting of these sort of four mainline denominations that I have some communications with.

M

Mary Wilson 03:34

Well yeah, that definitely gives you a broader perspective. I think probably most of the folks that I've talked to who are very focused on their specific congregation, you can see the communication going on all across the state in a lot of different ways. What is your sense of things now? How people were doing come October? It's been seven months.

K

Kristin Galle 03:59

Yeah. The other thing that has happened is that I was working at a downtown church in Austin as interim. I started there in September of 2019 and they were going through a change in bylaws as well as their pastor having just retired. Part of my job was to help them get through the new bylaws and elect the people from the congregation to new positions, and have that appointed. That [was] their voting year and budget year is from July to June, so I had until the end of June to get everything in line for the new leadership that would start July 1.

M

Mary Wilson 04:58

Right.

K

Kristin Galle 04:59

That meant doing some identity work and some studies about - they'd already had the bylaws passed, but what it would mean, tangibly, to enact those. We were doing monthly activities. I've made some presentations to some of the main leadership in October and November. We took December off. We had congregational meetings on Sundays - one Sunday in January, and in February, and had others planned, and then COVID hit. We'll talk about that in a minute, but so it was a struggle then with, I'll say, in mid March. March 13th, Friday the 13th, I had a zoom meeting with, there was four of us online. We had already pre-established if there was anything important, emergency wise, it needed to be made, a decision that needed to be made, it would be the senior myself, the associate pastor, the board chair and the upcoming board chair. Us four would be the four people that would make that instant decision. We met on Friday and decided it's hot enough. We need to move to online worship, starting the 15th, Sunday the 15th. The associate and I met on Saturday and said, "okay, you do this, I'll do this and we'll get together later on

in the day and put it together." Yeah, everything went crazy. We had to transition to online board meetings through zoom, those kind of things, and get all the nominations and appointments made by - that could be approved in June meetings. In the meantime, they were searching for their next installed pastor because I was the interim. They did go ahead and push that forward with all guns as well. They were fortunate, they did find someone who was willing to say yes, I'll pick up and move to Austin in the midst of pandemic. My contract did end at the end of 12 months, which had been the original plan, so as of the end of September. My point on this is that during that time, during the last number of months, I've also been in search. Not only have I had this listening into the other denominations, I've actually been talking with other churches as they're in search and trying to figure out what they're going to do next, how they're doing worship next, how their pastors are doing. I know one church that I talked to as far as possibly doing an interim. It was, I can't speak for the last pastor, but left suddenly, left in an unplanned way, shall we say, during the pandemic, sort of that impression of. I've been hearing in the news that there are, at least, pastors that are saying, "I'm done with this, there's too much change."

M

Mary Wilson 08:18
Wow.

K

Kristin Galle 08:18

As I say, I don't know that for certain, but I'm starting to get a sense that there is some of that. There are some pastors that are like, "I was close to retiring, I was tired, I can do this online thing, I'm going to keep going for a little longer." There are some that are saying, "This is too much change and I don't - I wasn't trained to do this," which none of us were. It's hard. I know that I've talked to some colleagues that are very uncomfortable doing the in-person worship. Yet the church leadership, as far as the volunteer elected leadership, is so anxious to be in person, face to face, without masks and all that kind of stuff. It's tough for the pastor. Of course, there's plenty of news stories even in Houston, right, which I get. I'm close enough to Houston, and I have someone staying with me that has a subscription to the Houston newspaper - that if people get sick there are incidences where it's the pastor that gets it the worst and dies. And we as pastors know that.

M

Mary Wilson 09:35

Right. Right. Right. I mean, there's not a risk free way to meet in person. Like, that seems

clear to me, but [laughs].

K

Kristin Galle 09:48

It's a tough place to be in and it's a tough, it's a really interesting time to be looking too. Because even during the summer, I was talking with, I was interviewing with a church that was meeting with the worship team. Limited amount of the congregation was meeting as well as another group that was meeting in their sanctuary space at a different point in time during the day. There was singing going on. We had done one interview with, at least one interview, on zoom. I got contacted and was asked if I would drive down for a face to face interview. I had originally agreed to that and the numbers in that town were very low. Then the week beforehand, they started spiking really high because it was a vacation spot too and it was right after Labor Day. And so, I talked to the search chair and asked her about it and she said, "Well, yeah, the numbers are crazy because all those vacationers came in, but we're doing okay. Oh yeah, our music director had covid, but we got the building cleaned, and you're still coming down to meet in our building, right? Because we really want to show you our building." I was like, "I would feel more comfortable if -let's do one more by zoom." She was disappointed, but arranged for that to happen, and she said, "Well, the rest of us will all be at the building." Well, in the actual interview, nobody was in the building, so it wasn't just me that felt uncomfortable with that or seem to find it easier, shall we say, to do the interview by zoom. They did decide to go in a different direction I think for a number of different reasons, not just that, probably. There were some other things going on. I can't say that was the only reason why I didn't get the job, but do you take a job or are you trying to keep yourself alive? For me, that's not a mild thing in that I am a mild asthma sufferer. I'm prone to pneumonia anyway, so a disease like that I feel would be difficult for my system.

M

Mary Wilson 10:55

Yeah. It sounds like, without trying to read people's minds that I've never met, that there may be some differences of opinion within that leadership as to how to proceed right now anyway. Well, how is the search going beyond that? I mean, are you in conversation with anyone that looks like it may turn into something? Or is it just?

K

Kristin Galle 12:45

I have, and I'm looking off to the side here because I put another screen over here because I wanted to have some notes for myself. I've been in conversation with eight churches. There's three that have said specifically no and there's two that are

probably leaning that direction about probably not.

M Mary Wilson 13:15
Okay.

K Kristin Galle 13:15
Just because of my hesitation of.

M Mary Wilson 13:18
Meeting in person?

K Kristin Galle 13:19
Meeting in person as much.

M Mary Wilson 13:21
Wow.

K Kristin Galle 13:21
I've said that, "Look, I don't mind coming and meeting leadership and doing some social distancing leadership, but I have some - we would at least need to talk about what this will look like." So we'll see. And also, to say that some of these are interims and some are not, there's been a couple that are permanent. My first call was a permanent installed. Then after that, I've done a lot of either interims and have really felt a call to doing that interim work of helping people through transition times, sort of that. I've also done some chaplaincy work too in the hospital and with hospice work of helping people through crisis. By doing interim work, it's sort of helping a whole congregation that's going through a transition and crisis, and people in general don't like change. In churches, we like to have our safe comfortable spot. It is a definite call to say, I will help you through this, you will make it through this. You will not only survive, but if we do this right, you'll have a better sense of yourself and you'll not just survive, but thrive. That's what I tend, but part of me said, "Well, maybe it would be nice to have some stability and be planted someplace, but this is a crazy time to be looking for that type of call in a sense."

M

Mary Wilson 14:45

Well, right, but if churches are looking for interims, they're also looking for permanent.

K

Kristin Galle 14:52

Yes, yes. Oh, yes.

M

Mary Wilson 14:54

That's the thing. I mean, I know churches in transition right now as well. It strikes me that even though we have this worldwide pandemic that we're in the middle of, and don't have an end in sight, that there's a part of life that just continues. This changes pastors and [they] go through things, and now we just have this on top of it. Are [you] seeing a spike in changes, a spike in ministers stepping down?

K

Kristin Galle 15:36

I don't think so yet. I don't think so. Hopefully, it won't be, but in a sense, I'm watching for that. Because there was already talk about sort of the demographics of ministers and congregations, and that there might be more retirements going on. I've always listened to that with a little grain of salt because 19 years ago, when I graduated from seminary, they were saying that at that time. I never saw that there was an imbalance there, so I'm not sure. I do know that all the way around, there are stresses on the system. Some of that stress is with the pastors and saying, as far as leading through change, and some is with the congregations. With the church that I was at, I think we were able to transition pretty well to sane, to keeping worship going, and also, some of the leadership groups and fellowship groups. We started in March, as I say, first with zoom and we probably did that for about three weeks. And that church, the congregation was used to a more formal service. For them, we ended up transferring to YouTube and also to pre-recorded. That way we could have the different pieces of the worship service pre-recorded not only by myself and my associate, but also by the different roles in the church that were usually our worship leader or liturgist, elders at the table praying for the communion elements, and blessing the offering, and musicians, and things like that. All those pieces could be pre-recorded by different people, dumped into a common drive, and we had a volunteer that could knit those together. We had a worship service that at least felt similar, comfort wise, similar to what it had been. It wasn't in the sanctuary, but it was almost more than if we had been in the sanctuary. Because if we'd been in the sanctuary, it would be echoey, the volume wouldn't be right, we couldn't have as many people, we couldn't have the singing because it is a church that's in the middle of the university campus. They're very

familiar with studies and science and realistic things, and they aren't going to just ignore that. I think we were able to put together a good worship experience, as good as it could be online. Also, already, they were having a lot of their donations mailed in. They already had the setup to do electronic giving, it just hadn't been stressed yet. We had already been dabbling in it because not only could they give online, but they also have a service that you could do the text giving.

M

Mary Wilson 18:48

Oh, okay.

K

Kristin Galle 18:49

Especially if there's a special offering. We had set it up for even before Easter, so if you wanted to buy your Easter Lily, you could do it by text. It could be broadcast in the service - "We're having a special offering for this denominational group, or this whatever, for flowers." You could just text it in.

M

Mary Wilson 19:10

Impulse buying.

K

Kristin Galle 19:12

What's that?

M

Mary Wilson 19:13

Impulse buying [laughs].

K

Kristin Galle 19:14

Exactly, impulse buying, exactly. I think it was in January, we had someone talking about the special offering and saying, "Okay, you guys need to get out your checkbooks and write the check." I was like, "Oh, yeah, most people in this congregation don't carry checks." We really pushed to make that change already. By going into the pandemic time, it was just in our recorded pieces talking about [how] you can give online, you can give this way. Actually, the offerings were coming in on the regular basis. The only difference was is that that church had come to rely some on some rental income, which wasn't coming in the same way.

Some of the churches that I've even done preliminary interviews with, that haven't gone much further, I've said, "Look, there are some things." I've been able to give them some ideas. I'm the kind of person that I would rather share more ideas even if it's not a long term relationship that I'm going to have with them. I know two churches that I'm involved with that have used a different service for doing the - being able to listen to the service even if you don't have a screen. Which for the church that I was at, we just continued to show the YouTube service on zoom because on zoom, you can still phone in and have a phone line that you can phone in. There's also another service, I think Twilio, where you can basically buy a dedicated phone line, and then for pennies per person kind of thing, you can set up a phone line that they can call in and listen to that service. I know it, so I shared that information with a couple churches that were like, "Oh, we didn't know how." And if I got an older congregation that they don't have a screen or they don't have a smartphone, and all they have is a flip phone or landline, they're very disconnected. It's very difficult, which then it creates the push to we have to get back together, but there's other options.

Mary Wilson 21:32

M

Yeah, it's a challenging time for sure to figure out how to one, have a meaningful service, and to have people feel connected. What do you think worked in the congregation you were in last that helped people feel connected to one another?

Kristin Galle 21:52

K

Well, some of the things that really help is because what they did do is they'd had the basic zoom program for a while, but what they did is they upped it so that you can have different accounts under the same auspice. Each of the Sunday school classes, and a book study class, and some other things had their own dedicated portion. There was two classes in specific that said they started having a larger attendance because they had some older members that weren't driving anymore, and so, hadn't been coming. They could now attend and they were delighted to be able to see their old friends again. There was actually a larger attendance in worship because there were friends who had moved away that realized, "Oh, I can go to church here again." Plus, I know that there were some people who were sending their links to friends and family of saying, "Hey come see what we're doing here." So it might not always be on that Sunday morning at 10:45, which was their worship time, and they would start it at 10:45. Some churches will just go ahead and post it whenever it's available. What that church did was say, it's going to premiere at that time and then it's available on YouTube after that. We could watch the statistics and the demographics on that. People would start to watch on Sunday and then over Monday and

Tuesday and even some on Wednesday, the viewership would go up. Then after Wednesday, nobody else watched it. If you put all that together, there was more people that were watching it than would have been in the sanctuary. Then when you count, which I figured was valid, when you would say that maybe even if only half of those people or a third of those people had more than one person watching a screen, then that would really bring it up. If you do some things like that of saying, "We've got a quality service here and ways to connect," and they were still advertising book studies and social gatherings. There was a social hour that was just basically a happy hour that they would have one evening a week of saying, "We don't have an agenda here, just grab a drink of anything and come socialize with us." The choir continued their meeting not to sing together, but to socialize and chat together because choirs tend to be a very tight group. I think that was doing well. The other thing that was doing well was that they were starting to plan with technology to continue doing this even though the church was in the middle of the university campus. They didn't have good equipment in the sanctuary for either WiFi or they didn't have any video screens or anything like that. I had a good sound system, they had recently had the sound system worked on and the sound system was good and beautiful organ, all that kind of stuff. When I had started there, I had thought, "Oh, well, this would be something I'd like to get them to sort of up their game on before I'm out." A couple leaders had said, "Oh, don't even try. They have no interest in having screens and they like what they're doing, and that's fine." It was with a certain amount of amusement that it was either in April or May that the board passed to approved, I think it was like \$10,000, to put different screens and stuff in the sanctuary. And they were going to be on stands and movable, so they would be in three different parts in the sanctuary because it's one of these long sanctuaries so that everybody could see. Then if there was going to be a special event or wedding or something where they didn't want the screens to mess up the view of their sanctuary, those could be rolled out and they could be used for other events. I was just like, "Okay, I'm amused now." It wasn't even me that brought that proposal forward. It was just we know we need[ed] to do this because people are really enjoying this online experience and we want to be able to continue it in addition to meeting in person when we're able to. So, there is this sense of, there's things that are changing, and what can we skim off the top as far as the good changes that we can carry over into that next era?

Mary Wilson 26:43

M

Yeah. I get a sense, at this point, from the interviews I've done, that every congregation is seeing that there are some changes that are going to be possibly permanent ones. And creativity that they've tapped into that could also be permanent and good despite the frustrations of some of this. Well, I do want to back up, we jumped

right in the pandemic. I actually usually start these interviews with getting some background on the minister herself. I want to go back and talk more about you, your story, your life story, and things that have shaped you and brought you to where you are today. What are some of those catalytic events in your life, I guess, is the way to phrase it?

K

Kristin Galle 27:41

There's always so much. Don't ask a pastor to start talking about such a broad topic. As a child, I was in a family that had drifted away from the church, so I have memories of not being in church. Then a grandfather that came and lived with us, and both sets of grandparents were the kind of when they came for a visit, you found a church to visit. When grandpa came to live with us for a while, we found a church to attend, and that was in Austin and that was when I was in that junior high type age. Not only did I find a church home there and have a memory of that, but also found some really good friends, family friends, a whole family of friends. The parents were friends and the kids were friends too. I also have memories of, and he was a minister. He was actually on Conference staff.

M

Mary Wilson 28:39

What denomination?

K

Kristin Galle 28:41

With United Church of Christ, South Central Conference. He was the associate Conference minister when the Conference was big enough to have not only a Conference minister, but two associates.

M

Mary Wilson 28:52

Oh, wow. Okay.

K

Kristin Galle 28:53

Anyway, I remember him referring to stories in the Bible, as if I should know them. Like, "Oh, the prodigal son," and me having no clue what he was talking about and feeling unnerved by that. I try to remember that in a sense of that, not only as a grown up, but a minister saying, there are people that won't know our church-y language and won't know our code phrases. Again, the daughter in that family was my age. When she would say, "So you're going to come to Sunday school," I was like, "Sure."

"Are you going to come to confirmation?" "Sure." "Are you going to go to church camp, as Slumber Falls?" "Sure." Having no clue of what I was getting into, but those were very shaping experiences, especially church camp and stuff. Confirmation was very important to me since I was in a new junior high - that I was the awkward junior high student and that was one place that I could ask all the questions and really explore and it was great. Church camp was great too because there were adults that were very supportive and friends along way. Also, I had a summer job in a sense. My first summer out of high school, it was summer adult leadership training, the SALT program, which you may be familiar with now, Mary. At the time, it was in congregations, not in the campground, which it is now. I was actually matched with the congregation and the minister, who let me sort of explore what leadership in the church would be like. At the time, I thought, "Well, I enjoy hanging out at church and I'll see what it's like to be a more active lay leader." And by the end of that summer, I was going, "Mmm, maybe there's a call here." I went to college, met someone who is not interested in church, and married too young, and had a couple kids, and sort of drifted away from that for a while. As things were starting to get rocky there, and I was trying to figure out, "Okay, what am I really supposed to be doing with my life," that call came back really strong. I started in the licensed ministry program in the state of Iowa, where I happened to be living at the time, and did a year of that program before that marriage did fall apart. I was able to move back to Texas, move in with my parents, even for a couple years as an adult in my 30s. [I] went back to school, went to seminary at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. I lived with my parents for two years and had them help and then was able to get another grant and move on to campus. My kids got the experience too of being friends with other kids their age, who had these silly adults who were going back to school, and play on the playground that was right outside my apartment window there, and things like that. It was a little bit of a long road and part of it was, "Do I really want to do this?" And finally realizing that God was going to keep after me. That call kept coming back to me. Once I said yes, especially when I was in Iowa, once I put my house on the market and said, "Yes, I am making this move," everything started coming together really fast. As I described in one message, at one point, it felt like that scene in Mary Poppins, where the kids are riding on the merry go round, and then the horses jump off the merry go round and start racing across the field. I felt like I was going "Okay, I'm coming as fast as I can." There was a lot of affirmation in that, of things that were happening around me, but also people that were affirming me during that time.

Mary Wilson 29:12

M

That would not be the same thing as suggesting that it was easy.

K

Kristin Galle 32:55

It was not easy. It was a struggle along the way. It was a struggle. I looked at three different seminaries and the one in Austin was the one that really spoke to me in a lot of ways. Seminary was not easy either, but in some ways, it was such a wonderful [time]. It was like sort of pulling up to a feast as an adult, returning to school and being able to really dig into things that were fascinating. Even the hardest class that I was in that I had to struggle to get my B in, it was still good. It was still really good.

M

Mary Wilson 33:40

When we stop recording, you can tell me which class that was [laughs].

K

Kristin Galle 33:45

It was great and I still will refer back to some of the things in that class. I really enjoyed, I should say, I really loved being in seminary. I sort of would get frustrated with some of the students that felt like, oh, well, I just have to check this off, so I can go ahead to the real work of being a minister. For me, I just realized that this was a feast of taking in all that good stuff, of packing it away in your lunch basket, in your tool chest because knowing that I would have to be unpacking it for a long time. As I finished up -

M

Mary Wilson 34:21

Actually, let me ask you one thing. Did the grandfather, who had come to live with you when you were younger, was he alive when you went to seminary?

K

Kristin Galle 34:29

No, no, none of them were.

M

Mary Wilson 34:31

Just wondering.

K

Kristin Galle 34:31

Yeah, yeah. If you'll allow me to go off on a little bit of a tangent here, what I actually had to do was finish up my bachelor's first before starting seminary. I did that at St. Edwards. And part of it I did through what's called their New College program, which

is for silly adults finishing up their degree. I was in English and in Religion, and part of it was with their New College program, you could look at it. If you could look at a course description and say, I already have learned all this and here's the essays and here I can justify why I've already know this topic, and then submit that and have it reviewed by a professor in that topic and say, "Yes, she already knows that, she doesn't have to take the course, we'll call it a pass." I did that for a number of courses because I was a returning adult. I did that actually for seven, which was a big chunk. I had to turn in a huge binder, but it helped me get done quicker.

M

Mary Wilson 35:39

That's almost a year's worth of courses.

K

Kristin Galle 35:42

Almost Yeah. I was really struggling to get all that done and on a time frame that would put me into seminary that next fall, which was what I wanted. I had a deadline there. I was struggling with that, but I got it done. About that same time, I was also in conversation mildly with a congregation that another grandfather from my past, a great great grandfather from my past, that we had been doing some genealogy studies. I was still on the mailing list from this other church. I had seen on their church newsletter that they had a scholarship program that they didn't have anybody to give it to, and they were gonna just retire it or something. I called up the pastor who I had met, I said, "Pastor Dan, I have an idea for that scholarship program, I'd like to apply to that." He said, "Sure, I'd be happy to put your name forward for that. It's not going to be very much, just a couple hundred dollars." I said, "Hey, that would really mean so much to me as far as getting books and just feeling like there was an affirmation from this connection from my past." Well, the day that I got everything turned in and was like, "Whew, that's done." It was only a couple weeks after that phone conversation in which the pastor had told me it's probably going to take a couple months to do because of how churches work. Two or three weeks later, I got home, I went to the mailbox, and there was a letter and a check giving me that scholarship and that money. I felt like it was these ancestors from my past patting me on the back and encouraging me on so, it was lovely.

M

Mary Wilson 37:30

And you know, as it turns out, pastors need affirmation. I'm really so glad you shared that story. That's great.

K

Kristin Galle 37:40

The other part is that on my mother's side, well, on both sides actually, but there's pastors on both sides of my family. My mother's father and her stepfather, the grandfather that I knew, who had been friends in seminary, both of them had a love of ancient Greek, the biblical Greek, koiné Greek. I have a couple of their Bibles, of my grandfather's, my natural grandfather's Greek testaments, and a study one where he has his handwriting and his study notes from it. While I was in seminary, I met this rather attractive Greek tutor. I brought one of those in to show Dr. Allsup, who was our Greek professor, but also this Greek tutor that I was interested in, and used it as a way to woo him and he is now my husband, so.

M

Mary Wilson 37:56

Who also is a pastor and who I have also interviewed for this [laughs].

K

Kristin Galle 38:43

My kids especially and other people think it's really amusing that I used a Greek Bible to entice someone to be interested.

M

Mary Wilson 38:55

Well, I'm gonna go out on a limb here and say, there's probably not too many similar stories out there [laughs].

K

Kristin Galle 39:04

Hey, I worked with what I got.

M

Mary Wilson 39:07

You go. How long now have you been a pastor or minister, 19 years?

K

Kristin Galle 39:13

19 years. I graduated and was ordained in 2001. I started my first, I was ordained as you know, with the United Church of Christ. You go through the entire ordination process, examination process, at the same time that you're doing your doctor or, excuse me, masters of divinity work. I got both of those done about the same time, but you

also have to have a call to be ordained. I'd gotten approved. My first call was actually, even I was going through the process with the United Church of Christ, I needed to find a call within a certain geographical area for family reasons. My first call was with the Disciples of Christ, which is a sister denomination. It's easy to sort of be ordained in one and work in another right, have your pension in either one. As one mentor said, "When the money is that close, you're pretty darn close." Anyway, so I got my first call.

M

Mary Wilson 40:16

[Laughs] we like each other enough to put our money together, then yeah.

K

Kristin Galle 40:21

They thought about merging in the early 80s and decided to keep dating, but not get married, basically. My first call was with the Disciples of Christ. I was ordained [at] the end of August, I started on September 1st, and 10 days later, the towers fell.

M

Mary Wilson 40:39

Oh, wow. What was that like as a new minister? I remember where I was that day, but I was not a pastor then.

K

Kristin Galle 40:47

It was another tumultuous time. I was in my office when someone came in to tell me that the second tower had been hit, and I hadn't known about the first one. But that one tower had been hit, the plane fell, had flown into the second tower. It looked like it was not an accident, an attack. It was a church where I was the associate pastor, permanent associate, but actually, there was an interim senior pastor there. That senior pastor did not handle the stress well and didn't know how to handle it well, and he didn't last. And I'm just saying this to you now, making that connection from then to now, maybe that's why I probably have my antenna up and looking for how do ministers handle stress and change. His idea of how to handle the stress of that was to do more extracurricular activities that were good for him, but not great for the church. It's not that it was terribly unhealthy, it was just that he just wasn't spending the time with the congregation that he needed to. They went ahead and released him. I was, as a brand new ordained pastor, their solo person for seven months of that first nine months, which had some great things to it and was also stressful.

M

Mary Wilson 42:27

Well, on that it also means there's another transition for you to go through when the senior person then gets hired when you've been basically doing the work.

K

Kristin Galle 42:40

The new senior came on and seemed to be rather threatened by the fact that I knew the congregation well, that I was telling him about everybody in that first week. I suddenly realized at one point, I'm saying too much. I need to let him get to know it. Then I remember the first time I preached while he was there, and coming out of the sanctuary, and turning around and looking at his face, and it was like, "Oh crap, she can preach too." He started encouraging me to leave, shall we say. I was only there at that church for a total of two years and then needed to find another place and that's where I've been doing either interim or chaplaincy since, and I've felt a real call of interim ministry. I've been working with groups and people during times of transition, change and chaos.

M

Mary Wilson 43:33

For a long time.

K

Kristin Galle 43:35

For a long time. Even though I don't technically have a call right now, I'm doing some research and some writing and sort of a lot of reflection that I haven't had time to do for quite a while because previously, my position as interim, it has been in much demand. I've often had one lined up right, sort of back to back, with only a few days at most a week in between. It is stressful to go, to link with a congregation, to learn to love them, to love them well, and then say goodbye. And immediately go to another place and say, move people aside in my heart and get to know another group. Even though it wasn't planned for me to take a little time off, and there's a certain stress on not being connected to a church, it's also, I think God is taking care of me too, and preparing me for whatever is next.

M

Mary Wilson 43:36

Well, I do find it interesting that you mentioned earlier that maybe for the first time in quite some time, you would consider a settled pastorate. I know that's a term UCC uses, I'm not sure if anybody else does that. It's curious that you would consider that in a time where everybody is in transition, so it's almost like it's not something new that you're

considering, but just signing on for more of it long term.

K

Kristin Galle 45:10

That is something that I'm reflecting on too because every time that I've been open for search, it's been very clear that I needed to take an interim. That those were the calls that were open at that time, that somebody absolutely needed what a person like myself, I'm not saying myself personally, but a person like myself, who would take good care of them, who wasn't going to take advantage of the situation, try and stay, try and manipulate things, et cetera. It seemed very clear that this was a ministry, this was a calling. The times that I've interviewed for a permanent position, I've always gotten the questions somewhere along the line, versed in different ways, spoken in different ways, saying, "but why would you stay with us, you always move?" And it's like, I haven't been given that opportunity, in a sense. It's hard to answer that question sometimes because there's part of me that thinks it would be lovely to be able to settle down and see people through a couple chapters of life, not just one year. Sometimes it's a year, a year and a half or so, a year and three quarters. I've been thinking about trying to make that transition after this last call, but then with pandemic, it's like, maybe this is what I'm made for, to keep doing this leadership in transition bit. As someone who grew up, faith wise, in the United Church of Christ, which tends to, or at least the church that I grew up, tended to stress a whole lot more on freewill than God's providence. Being someone who's done interim and had to really rely on the providence of God, of where's the next call coming from, each and every year or so. It's a struggle.

M

Mary Wilson 46:01

But you're married to a Presbyterian minister.

K

Kristin Galle 47:18

I know. I know who I argue with theologically all the time. It's like, wait a minute. I could go into stories on that, where it's like, I argue with God, and then just what I need happens at just the right time. After 19 years of this, I'm starting to go, "Okay, there may be some plans in there beyond the best ones that I make." Because I think that I make great ones, and then what actually happens is better.

M

Mary Wilson 47:56

Yeah. Well, I want to ask one last question and it's a very open one. Is there anything about yourself, your ministry, or anything that we've touched upon that you thought, "Oh, I

want to say more about that," and then we moved on. Is there anything you would like to add that you think we need to include in here that we haven't so far.

K

Kristin Galle 48:19

It's not a novel thought to myself, an original thought to myself, but it's one that was shared at one seminar, something that I was on, but that I've shared with other people. Is that at a time when there's a lot of energy spent on when do we get to go back to the way things used to be, that I think that we should look forward to what can be better. And as someone who has leaned a lot during my interim ministry, especially on Isaiah's voice of God saying, "Behold, I am doing a new thing; do you not yet perceive it?" And there's a lot of things that are horrible about the pandemic and justice wise. I could really go off on a rant on that, but there are, I think, to try to discern what God is wanting us to notice and what could be better, and what we can learn about connecting with people and in creating community in different ways. For instance, when I talked about that people would watch on Sunday, but then also watch on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. Oftentimes, I've talked with congregations about - I know that we're all very comfortable with our Sunday morning worship, but if we don't make worship available at other times, at a different time other than Sunday morning, then we aren't making ourselves available to anybody who's working the gig economy. Because if you're trying to put a living together doing two or three different part time jobs, you probably aren't going to have a reliable schedule that you know exactly when you're going to be free. And most likely, it's not going to be free on Sunday morning, if you're working at a restaurant or a gas station or wherever it is. You're probably going to be busy, not have that be a reliable time that you're off. And so, we're not available to the part time workers. We're not open to the part time workers and to a lot of different people like that. And so, to have an event like this that's causing lots and lots of churches to go, "Oh, we can not only have a service that we are making available, the people can attend in their PJs, in their living rooms, or wherever, but they can also do it on their own time schedule." I mean, even my 84 year old parents, my dad will watch my husband's service on Saturday night when it's available, and then he would watch mine on Sunday afternoon, and their church service on Sunday morning, so he could get through all three of them.

M

Mary Wilson 51:17

Wow.

K

Kristin Galle 51:17

I know. And these are the parents that, as I say, when I was growing up, were not active in

church, but now they are. That's a whole nother story. But to say that church can be available when it's convenient for you or when you need that Sabbath time. Even this past month, I was doing pulpit supply for a pastor friend of mine, a colleague, and saying we're pleased -

M

Mary Wilson 51:48

He may have mentioned his wife was doing it.

K

Kristin Galle 51:49

Yeah. With that service as well as the one I was doing in Austin, I would say, "And we're pleased to present this recorded service so that it is available for you when you need Sabbath time, and we pray that this will be a good Sabbath time for you." So that's one thing that as someone who has been in the business of trying to institute change, I'm looking at all this change going on around us, and not all of it is bad.

M

Mary Wilson 52:19

Right, keeping the church open even more. Great. All right. Well, I'm gonna go ahead and stop the recording.

K

Kristin Galle 52:27

Thank you.