

Meet Pastor James Mercurio

Meet Pastor James Mercurio who is serving three United Methodist churches [Danielson](#), [Moosup](#) and [Oneco](#) in Connecticut. He served as an associate pastor at Moodus UMC, also in Connecticut, from 2010 to 2012. He was first appointed as a licensed local pastor there, quarter-time, in 2012. He has served his current appointment since 2014.

One of the biggest challenges Mercurio has faced as a pastor came shortly after he was named pastor at Moodus UMC. On Dec. 14, 2012, 20 children and seven adults were killed in a shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

Watching the events unfold on TV that Friday, he wondered how he would preach on Sunday – particularly on the selected theme: joy. “It was the scariest ride to church for me that day,” Pastor Mercurio said. He asked himself how he was going to lead the church in worship and “even talk” about joy. Then he remembered Paul’s Letter to the Philippians in which he says: “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, rejoice.”

Paul writing from prison, possibly facing execution, and still being able to rejoice in the Lord was inspiring, Pastor Mercurio said.

“It got me thinking about how much we needed to hold on to faith at that point,” he said.

“What we are facing today is not necessarily a victory for evil. The victory remains with



the understanding that we have been saved through Christ.”

The worship “went pretty well,” he said. Later at an ecumenical candlelight vigil he was asked to read from John 14:2, and felt at a loss.

“God could not have made it any harder on me that day,” said Pastor Mercurio, who is the father of five. “As I stood there, the Holy Spirit took over. I said, “You don’t know who I am, but like you and most here, I’m a father ... I have to figure out how to have the courage to get them on the bus tomorrow morning.”

Pastor Mercurio said he feels called to ordained ministry, and is finishing his bachelor’s degree; he plans to attend Boston University School of Theology. Still, he said, licensed local pastors make a unique contribution.

Up until last year, Pastor Mercurio was going to school, holding a job and serving churches – along with raising a family – which meant, he said, that “dust doesn’t settle on my shoes.”

He’s now left his casino job to concentrate on his ministry and his education.

“I gave up a career, but gained fulfillment in my life,” he said. “I couldn’t see myself doing anything but be in ministry to God.”

Though leaving his job was a good decision, he said, he believes his work in business administration and marketing has strengthened his ministry. “We all bring our history with us,” Pastor Mercurio said.

“Every last piece of my history – the things I have succeeded and failed at – have crafted me into who I am today. ... I have fallen back on marketing methods I used (in order) to help the church find new ways of doing church and budgeting to be economically viable and socially responsible as well.”

One of the challenges, he said, is that licensed local pastors, many times, are sent to serve churches that are struggling.

“A lot go in to churches that have really serious fractures and dysfunctions, and are not prepared for that,” Pastor Mercurio said.

“What saved me was my business background.”

In fact his advice to other licensed local pastors: Take business administration classes. His experience in business and managing people has served him well, he said.

“We rely on the Holy Spirit and need to be very spiritual and make that connection with God,” he said. “But we are responsible for the business of the Church and holding ourselves accountable to that.”