

Meet Pastor Sue Brown

Pastor Sue Brown is in her seventh year as quarter-time pastor at Mars Hill United Methodist Church in Maine.

Pastor Brown said she is “not looking for something bigger and better,” or like George Jefferson seeking to “move on up to the East Side.”

“I remember being told by other clergy wait until the first year is over, the honeymoon will be over,” she said. “It’s not over.”

And that’s one reason, despite spending seven years making the 3-hour drive each week from her home in northern Maine to Bangor Theological Seminary to earn her M.Div., she chose not to pursue ordained ministry.

Another factor shaping her decision is that she works in her husband’s private engineering business.

“My husband’s business can’t itinerate,” she said. “I did a lot of praying ... I don’t feel God is calling me to be moving around. This is where God has placed me.”

Being bi-vocational means that she doesn’t have time that others might take for granted, but since it is a family business she has the flexibility she needs to “go when I have to go,” she said.

Her congregation, whom she called “an absolute joy,” had experienced a “revolving door” in terms of pastors for several years. They would have a pastor for only a couple of years before they would be appointed elsewhere.

Pastor Brown said she’s happy to provide continuity, and reassure members who have asked: “What if they take you away from us?”

“I had to say, ‘no one is going to take me away,’” she said. “They can send me home, but they can’t tell me I have to itinerate.”

Pastor Brown was also a teacher before joining the family business. In fact, when she first went to seminary she thought she may have been being called to serve as an education director. Her teaching experience has shaped her ministry, she said.

“It informs everything I do,” she said. “Folks say ‘we can tell you’re a teacher.’ For one thing, I am very aware, maybe from teaching, that folks in the congregation are not all in the same place or have the same learning styles.”

It’s important to understand, Pastor Brown said, especially in preaching, to speak to everyone. “What I say should be understood by anyone in the congregation,” she said.

That means doing her homework, she said, and delving into commentaries, background and history so she can present the scriptures in a way that is “interesting without going over anyone’s head.”

She feels like Mars Hill, which has an average attendance of 30-35, is growing, and she’s happy to be a part of that.

“I have a heart for what I do. I feel called to do it,” Pastor Brown said. “Serving with folks is so fulfilling as we accomplish things together.”

“We have a Sunday school now,” she said. “For us, that’s a huge thing. We had not had any kids in years. We’re doing something to bring God’s kingdom for the future.”

Asked if she has advice for those who wonder if they are feeling a call to serve as a licensed local pastor she offered this:

“You have to have a heart for Jesus, a heart for the people, and have to be able to love everybody,” she said, and once you sense you are being called:

“Surround yourself with other local pastors, elders, laity who can confirm that for you, and support you and encourage you to explore and find out. Test it out with those who have been there.”

