

# Plans

The year was 2008. I had completed three years of seminary for a Master's degree, and one year of chaplaincy for certification. I was working in three different churches, living with two dogs in a one-bedroom apartment in Indiana, looking for a full-time position in a church close to Virginia, because my parents were ageing and I was certain that God wanted me to participate in their care. I was feeling five years of *a whole lotta alone* because I'd sold my house in Houston, thus had no home to return to; the seminary friends I'd made had moved away with new jobs and churches of their own; I was tired all the time, because of working three jobs; and I was shaking my fist into the air because God had left me there. I was qualified; I was certified; I was ready, yet I was all alone in Indiana.

And then, I saw it – a write-up on the Presbyterian job site for a church in Texas. *Texas! That's the wrong direction. I'm supposed to move East!* As I read that write-up, describing a small church and the pastor they were seeking, I knew that it described me. I knew they were looking for me. But I wasn't supposed to return to Texas. My elderly parents needed me – in Virginia. So I ignored it.

And then, the email came through. A person I did not know, from somewhere in Dallas, TX wanted to know if I would consider a church. She wanted to know if I was available for a conversation. Well, I knew the drill. Finding a church, and having a church find you, takes a minimum of one year. Sometimes longer. But, I guess I could have a conversation. Yes, the church was in Texas, but a conversation wouldn't hurt. So, I agreed.

Very late that night, I got a phone call from a dear friend in Florida. Was she hurt? Was she sick? Why was she calling so late? She had been on the phone with people from TX, talking about me. *What? They were checking my references? They hadn't even talked with me yet!* In coming weeks, I spoke with people from that church in Henderson, TX, and I spoke with leaders from a COM in Dallas, and we exchanged paperwork, and articulated theology, and listened for the voice of God. I attended a meeting of Grace Presbytery in Waco, TX where the Moderator was an Elder from that church. After examination on the floor of Presbytery, he called for a vote. But instead of saying "Aye," he asked those in agreement to stand. Then, that Moderator (whom I had met only that morning) mouthed the words, *You just got a standing ovation!*

The Presbyterian journey that takes a minimum of one year, took us only five months.

I have begun my seventh year with you. We have turned grieving into joy. We have turned drudgery into dancing. We have grown and built and struggled and learned and we are closer than we've ever been to bringing in the Kingdom of God. And we have done it together. Why? Because my plans don't always look like God's plans. God's plans are always better.

It is my honor to serve with you.

*Candice*

*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord. "Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*

— Jeremiah 29: 11