

Interim pastor will lead church through transition

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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Being born and raised in northwest Iowa helped ease the culture shock of coming to Gothenburg after many years of city life.

So did a welcoming congregation at the Evangelical Free Church.

Doug Monkemeier retired after 40 years as a full-time minister with most of his time spent leading large congregations in or near cities such as Chicago, Seattle and Vancouver, British Columbia.

While retirement allowed for plenty of travel and relaxation, Monkemeier wasn't quite ready to give up his pastoral duties all together.

In 2011, he joined Interim Pastor Ministries and learned the ins and outs of guiding a congregation from one pastor to another.

That's how he got to Gothenburg in December as E-Free's interim pastor.

Monkemeier said as an interim pastor, his mission centers around five basic tasks: provide closure, aid in spiritual renewal, offer structural review, assist in developing a new vision and assembling a profile for a permanent pastor search.

"Part of the advantage is that I'm more of a consultant," Monkemeier said. "At the same time, I would hope that 40 years of pastoral experience counts for something."

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The timeline for completing all five things is a tentative schedule that lasts six months to a year, he said.

“I’ve broken it down into quarters,” he said, “and I’ve added a fifth quarter in case I have to go overtime.”

Monkemeier said he has begun by looking at the church’s history and current makeup to see how changes have affected the congregation.

“I’ll take a look at where they’ve been, where they are now and where they want to be,” he said.

At the same time, Monkemeier continues to carry on all of the pastoral duties for the church.

He said with a variety of youth activities, the E-Free church and its volunteers have made a strong impact on Gothenburg’s young people.

“That’s a tremendous ministry,” he said. “We have lay ministers covering significant areas right now. The risk is that they’ll get burned out.”

Monkemeier said he hopes the church can hire both a youth minister and a church pastor before the end of the year.

“The church has had total turnover in staff,” he said. “That’s part of the transition that needs to be weathered.”

Monkemeier earned his bachelor’s degree from Moody Bible Institute in Chicago with a history degree from San Jose State.

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He earned his master's in divinity from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, IL, and a doctorate in ministry from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA.

Monkemeier and his wife, Merri, enjoy traveling, especially to see their oldest daughter and family in Amman, Jordan.

A younger daughter is in graduate school in Washington, living in her parents' home in Gig Harbor, WA.

In his spare time, Monkemeier enjoys sailing.