

Mike Hurley mans the pulpit at Conley's UM Church

By Tom Walsh

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It was after a service given more than a decade ago at Conley's United Methodist Church in Angola that Mike Hurley first felt a calling to the ministry. The preaching of the Gospel that day left such an impression on him that he later found himself focused in prayer, pondering what to do next with his life.

It was on that fateful day when Hurley decided to put all of his faith in Jesus that his life turned completely around. It is hard to believe, says Hurley, that only 12 years later he is now pastor of the church where he first felt called by God.

The Rev. Hurley received his new appointment late last month after 17-year Senior Pastor Randy Booth left June 22 for a ministry in Wisconsin. It was a suitable decision for him to take over the position, said Hurley, as Booth played an instrumental part in his religious conversion and is a good friend.

"Now that Randy is gone, I have some big shoes to fill," said Hurley. "I'm also very pleased to be called back to the area where I grew up."

Hurley, a native of Lewes, was born at Beebe Medical Center. He was also raised in the area, graduating from Cape Henlopen High School in 1970. Hurley admits that the days of his youth were not filled with religious fervor and during his teenage years he felt particularly disconnected with God.

After years of working with Keebler Cookie Co. and serving in the National Guard, Hurley began to find structure in his life. He met his wife, Ann, in 1976 and they married the following year. His wife, a member of Conley's Chapel, was the first person to bring him to the church that he serves today.

The long religious journey that Hurley would later embark upon would send him away from home for the next 12 years. After graduating from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., he was appointed to a position serving three churches in lower Delaware. These included Ellendale United Methodist, Chaplain's Chapel in Bridgeville and St. Johnstown United Methodist in Greenwood. Four years later he was moved to St. George's in Clarksville where he served for the next eight years.

Today, Hurley is happy to be back in the area with extended family and old friends living nearby. He also enjoys returning to the location from which his religious roots stemmed. "The thing I love about Conley's is that all the members are heavily involved in doing the work of the Lord," he said. "Everyone here is so dedicated to bringing the message of hope to the community."

In the future, Hurley hopes to take the Gospel to those who need to hear it most, he said.

He added that he doesn't plan to bring many changes to Conley's, as he will continue to lead the church in its normal ministry and missions. "This church is known for its living nativity and living Easter and we hope to keep those traditions alive every year," said Hurley. Other programs that he will continue to support include Bible study, prayer groups, soup dinners for the needy and groups that fight narcotic addiction.

Hurley also hopes to offer youth-oriented programs that encourage a younger demographic to become involved in the church. "I hope to bring everyone closer together and closer to God," he said. "The members of this church have a great potential. I will try my best to help each one of our members grow in faith and love."

Church offers three weekly services

The three weekly services held at Conley's UM Church are 6:30 a.m. on Saturday, and 8:45 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. on Sunday.

Contact the house of worship at 302-945-1881.