

Rev. Stephen P. Ruelke was elected as pastor of Calvary Presbyterian Church on February 8 and begins his position on April 1, 2009.

Seeking to live his faith, hear God's call and help others searching to find meaning, Steve brings to us a life of faith most recently expressed in a street ministry to the homeless and disenfranchised in Newburgh along with a set of professional and personal experiences that ground his relationship to God and to all who encounter him.

Steve was ordained as a minister in the United Church of Christ in April of 2006. He earned his Master of Divinity degree magna cum laude from Drew University and his undergraduate degree in geography at the State University of New York at New Paltz.

In 2004, he and his wife Ruth moved to Newburgh. They began ministry work in 2005 and established Ecclesia Ministries of Newburgh in 2006. It provides outreach advocacy and worship on the streets to homeless and disenfranchised of the City. As well, he has served as Associate and Interim Pastor of North Congregational United Church of Christ in Middletown. During his time there he launched "God Talk" a weekly spiritual journeying program at a local diner.

His "day job" is Newburgh's City Assessor, which draws upon his extensive experience in property appraisal. Prior to moving to Newburgh, Steve lived in New Paltz. There he founded and ran a weekly newspaper (Huguenot & Highland Herald), was Executive Director/Project Manager of the Wallkill Valley Land Trust which coordinated the effort to create the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail and served in several capacities on the New Paltz Town Board and School Board.

He was called as a part-time designated pastor, which means he will officially spend 25 hours per week with us for three years. After two years, we will all assess how the relationship is working and may decide to continue as is, to call him as a permanent pastor or make a change.

Steve has a passion for ministry and a vision for building a faith community that serves, grows and prospers. We chose him as our minister because of this vision. When the Pastor Nominating Committee spoke with Steve, he asked us what we were excited about, what was working, what our recent Mission Study meant to us and how we were implementing it. As we shared ideas, we felt that all sorts of things were possible. He reminded us of why we're here: to do the work of the Lord that we are called to do, and he made us feel that we can do that while holding on to many of the things we love about our past and present. All of a sudden, instead of focusing on the challenges we face, we were excited about the possibilities for our future and open to the possibilities that are out there for us.

We invite you to visit us, to meet Steve and to be inspired to join our journey as Calvary moves into the future to which God calls us.