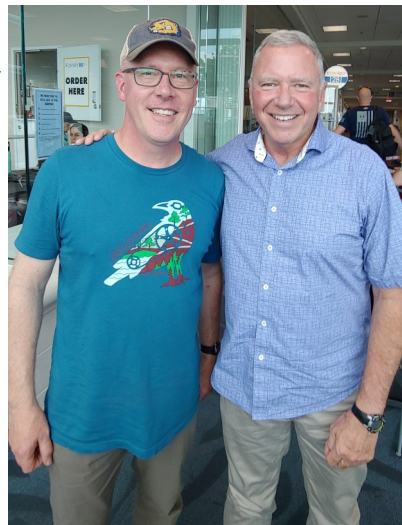


## *The Reverend's Ruminations - June 2021*

Summer greetings to you and yours! It's hard to believe that the last time I shared my "ruminations" in the April newsletter I had just found out I would be attending the Air Force Basic Chaplain Course at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama. The time seems to have flown by, and here I am back in Minnesota after successfully graduating and being declared "worldwide qualified" by the USAF Chaplain Corps College. As the highest-ranking student in the class, I was appointed as the class leader, which meant that I was in charge of distributing information to my classmates, making sure that each of them was present before class started, and even inspecting dress uniforms prior to graduation. None of that was new to me after years of enlisted and officer service in the Army, so it was a good ministry I could offer to both the faculty and my fellow students. There were several others with some prior service in either the Army or the Navy, and a mix of ages that even included one six months older than me! I wish I could say I now know the Air Force chaplaincy inside and out, but there will still be things to learn as I continue my service.



The casual picture to the right (taken at the airport after graduation) is me with the Air Force Chief of Chaplains, Major General Steven Schaick—who happens to be ordained in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) just as I am. He was the featured speaker at our graduation, and spoke passionately about the future of the chaplaincy from his perspective leading the corps for the past several years.

Speaking of graduation, I'm certainly not the only one. Graduation season is upon (or even past) us after a second strange, COVID-influenced year for students, teachers, and parents alike. This year's seniors did get to have some of the "normal" experiences that the class of 2020 missed, but it was challenging. Ellen and I cannot believe that we'll be "empty nesters" in the fall; it seems just yesterday that both our children were snapping those first-day-of-school photos with backpacks nearly as big as they were! Where has the time gone? We wish all our graduates well as we pray for their success and safety.

One of the points I made during our VERY busy Pentecost/Confirmation/Communion/Graduate/Teacher Recognition Sunday is that no matter our physical age, the journey of our faith is ongoing. Our new class of confirmands are not "graduating from" anything, but rather "into" adult membership and additional church involvement. This is actually true for each church member. The journey of faith is an ever-winding road, and none of us are fully mature in our faith until the day we meet God face-to-face—so we must find ways to feed our Christian curiosity and bolster our faith. Sunday School classes will be taking a break for the summer months, but I encourage everyone to take advantage of the church's ongoing subscription to RightNow Media as a free way to encounter new and exciting paths to support your faith journey. This online streaming service offers thousands of great Bible studies, Christian movies, faith conferences, and children's programs—and even includes an archive our First Congregational UCC worship services. If you encounter a study that you'd like to share or have us offer as a class in the fall, please let me know!

As we march headlong into summer, we would do well to contemplate these words from God, as told through the prophet Isaiah:

*"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it." (55:10-11, NRSV)*

May your summer be filled with warmth, family, and a chance to rejuvenate your soul.

Yours in Christ's service,

*Rev. Cory Germain*