

Upstate N.Y. cleric named to lead Presbyterians as senior pastor

Garry to take charge in mid-November

■ **By MARLAINA COCKCROFT**
SPECIAL TO THE MIRROR

The Rev. Dr. Fred Garry has been elected senior pastor and head of staff at First Presbyterian Church of Metuchen. He assumes his new position Nov. 13.

"For pastors, what we look for is a sense of calling. Is this where I'm supposed to be? Is this what I'm supposed to do?" said Garry, 51, who



GARRY

has served as senior pastor at a Presbyterian church in Watertown, N.Y., for 15 years. "When I read over the dossier for Metuchen, and I talked to them, I just kind of knew this is where we're supposed to go and what we're supposed to do."

The church's nominating committee on Oct. 7 selected Garry, ending a search that spanned two interim pastors. Rev. Ellen Clark Clemot, after serving for three years, left over the summer to pursue other career options. Rev. William "Tex" Culton of Pittstown, retired but formerly the pastor at Frenchtown Presbyterian, stepped in temporarily to replace her.

As of mid-October, Garry hadn't yet relocated but was already "answering six or seven emails a day." He and his wife, Kathy, raised their six children in Watertown, about an hour north of Syracuse.

First Presbyterian's nominating committee reached out to him in June, he said, and the interviewing process took about two months.

Garry, a minister in the Presbyterian Church since 1994, has acted as the senior pastor for congregations in Ohio, Washington and New York. He received his master's degree and doctorate in ministry at the Princeton Theological Seminary and did fieldwork at Trenton Psychiatric Hospital. He has also served as chairman of the board for Samaritan Medical Health Systems in Watertown.

Before he sets goals, he wants to hear what Metuchen congregants have to say. "The congregation already is involved in really wonderful ministries and directions and so on, and for a period of time I'm going to be listening to see where I believe we're being called to go together," he said.

According to a statement from First

Presbyterian, Garry's accomplishments include growing membership at his previous church and helping inmates at a correctional facility earn college credit and reduce their sentencing.

There are some things he will have to get used to, Garry said. "I'm going to have to learn how to drive again. Driving in northern New York is very different from driving in New Jersey."

One thing First Presbyterian has in common with other churches Garry has served in is its historic nature. "A 300-year-old Presbyterian church, they truly are who they are," he said of the Metuchen church, the borough's oldest institution. "And they're a glorious congregation," he said.

The Watertown church is 215 years old and his previous churches were 150 and 180 years old, "so Metuchen beats them," he said. "They're the winner."