

Adrian D. Shelley

Northwoods Presbyterian Church

I was born in Virginia, raised in South Carolina, and went to college at the University of North Carolina. The summer after my sophomore year, Debbie and I met while selling Colliers encyclopedias door-to-door. We were the top two salesmen in the state. She transferred to the University of North Carolina for her junior year, and we were married over Christmas our senior year. Marrying Debbie is the best thing that I have ever done. When we graduated, I was commissioned into the US Navy and was an officer for several years. Debbie got her MA in Communication while I served on two different destroyers.

After the Navy, we went to Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge where I earned an MBA and she earned a Ph.D. in Communication. We moved to Houston for my first job. Over the next 41 years I had jobs in finance. The last was as the Treasurer of Swift Energy Company. I retired in April 2016. Debbie taught at the University of Houston-Downtown for 25 years. We have two children: Lauren who is a high school English teacher and Adrian who is an attorney and head of Public Citizen of Texas. We have been active at Northwoods Presbyterian Church since 1976. I have served as an elder and as a leader and member on many committees. I have also tutored at an elementary school, attended two UN COP meetings, led classes on climate change, and served on numerous boards. Currently, I serve on the board of Northwoods Early Learning Center Preschool, Texas Impact, and Theatre Under the Stars.

When I first retired, several of my friends were involved in hospital visitation, including Bill Owen and John Leslie. I felt called to this ministry. I took the training with POPS which was very helpful. Debbie said from the very start, "This is not something you will enjoy," and she was right. I was assigned a particular floor at Memorial Northwest Hospital, where my children were born. I went every Friday afternoon for 3 or 4 hours, visiting as many rooms as I could. I did this for 10 weeks. I would try to listen to patients, comfort them, and have a prayer, but I was not good at this. I felt like I interrupted families, I didn't have much knowledge or interest in their illnesses. I do not believe I was helpful. After I stopped visiting, our Pastor Anne Marie from Northwoods asked me to visit members of our church who were hospitalized, and I was much better at this. I continued to visit until COVID began, and Anne Marie left Northwoods. I have made a few visits for POPS as requested. We have been blessed in many ways and I am grateful to God.