



Board of Ordained Ministry

The United Methodist Church of Greater New Jersey

2017 Ordination Candidate Profiles

How to Use the Ordination Booklet

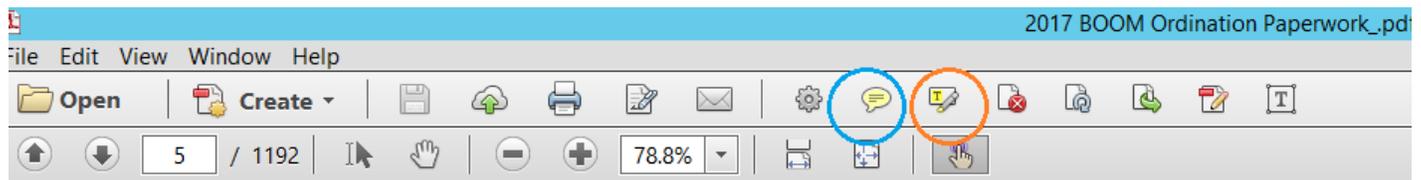
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 - “Back to the Table of Contents” & “Back to the Candidate Profile”
- Note page
 - Located right each after candidate profile; you can write a memo on a Note page and save

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Adobe Acrobat Pro



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NOTES

Ordination Sermon: “Do You Love Me?”

Sermon Series: “Powerful Questions Jesus Asks to Unlock Abundant Life”

Scripture: John 21: 1-19 John 21:1-19 (CEB)

21 Later, Jesus himself appeared again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. This is how it happened: ² Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus^[a]), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee’s sons, and two other disciples were together. ³ Simon Peter told them, “I’m going fishing.”

They said, “We’ll go with you.” They set out in a boat, but throughout the night they caught nothing. ⁴ Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples didn’t realize it was Jesus.

⁵ Jesus called to them, “Children, have you caught anything to eat?”

They answered him, “No.”

⁶ He said, “Cast your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.”

So they did, and there were so many fish that they couldn’t haul in the net. ⁷ Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It’s the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard it was the Lord, he wrapped his coat around himself (for he was naked) and jumped into the water. ⁸ The other disciples followed in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they weren’t far from shore, only about one hundred yards.

⁹ When they landed, they saw a fire there, with fish on it, and some bread. ¹⁰ Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you’ve just caught.” ¹¹ Simon Peter got up and pulled the net to shore. It was full of large fish, one hundred fifty-three of them. Yet the net hadn’t torn, even with so many fish. ¹² Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples could bring themselves to ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came, took the bread, and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

¹⁵ When they finished eating, Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

Simon replied, “Yes, Lord, you know I love you.”

Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” ¹⁶ Jesus asked a second time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Simon replied, “Yes, Lord, you know I love you.”

Jesus said to him, “Take care of my sheep.” ¹⁷ He asked a third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was sad that Jesus asked him a third time, “Do you love me?” He replied, “Lord, you know everything; you know I love you.”

Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ I assure you that when you were younger you tied your own belt and walked around wherever you wanted. When you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and another will tie your belt and lead you where you don’t want to go.” ¹⁹ He said this to show the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. After saying this, Jesus said to Peter, “Follow me.”

Composition of the Congregation

This sermon was preached at the 9:00am and 11:30am Sunday worship services of the Bridgewater United Methodist Church, in Bridgewater, NJ on September 25, 2016. The early worship service is considered the “traditional” service offered by the church and the later service is labeled “contemporary/family.” The earlier service typically attracts 90-150 attendees per week and 90 were present during the morning I led. This early service attracts both some young families and more of the eldest members of the congregation. The second service attracts 40-60 participants weekly, and there were 45 present that morning.

The contemporary service features the unique feature of having at the front of the sanctuary a blanket spread out and chairs removed as an area for small children and babies to sit with their parents. There were at least 10 children in this area the morning I preached. They are lively and at times loud, which is demonstrated on the video of my sermon.

Bridgewater is a relatively large, (population 45,000) and growing suburban township located in the center of Somerset County. The community is 75% white, 17% Asian, 2.5% African American 2% other and 7% of population identify as Hispanic/Latino of varied races. There is a significant influx of Asians to Bridgewater. A nearby large Hindu Temple both attracts and is evidence of this population. The church reflects this diversity fairly accurately and has seen in particular a growth in Asians, especially Chinese and Indian families.

The church in general has a predominately middle class, college educated population.

Do You Love Me?

John 21:1-19

Good Morning! Jesus asked Peter, “Do you love me?” Let us Pray.

I was in Houston a few weeks ago at the World Methodist Conference and

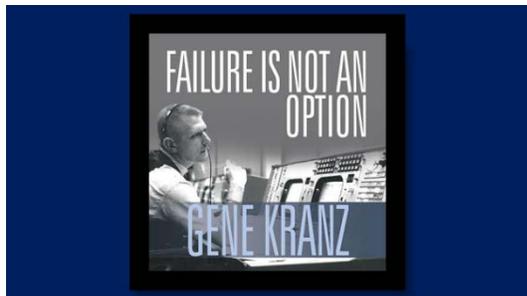


while I was there I took an excursion to tour the NASA Space Center. **I went with a**

Russian pastor and I thought that was really

cool to be doing so I took a picture of us

together at Mission Control. We were both really struck by one of the most



powerful messages we heard over and over:

“At Mission Control, failure is not an option.”

I remembered an interview run by NPR earlier this year about the 30 year



anniversary of the Space Shuttle Challenger explosion

when seven people died. **Bob Ebeling** was an engineer

assigned to the flight launch. When he was

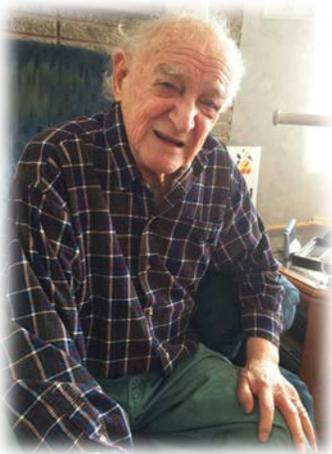
interviewed in 1986 he said, “You know, I knew

something was wrong. The night before the launch, I

even told my wife, ‘It’s going to blow up.’ He and four others had put a warning in

a report and asked that the launch be delayed, but, as he recalled, they didn't push it hard enough. He said, "I could have done more. I should have done more."

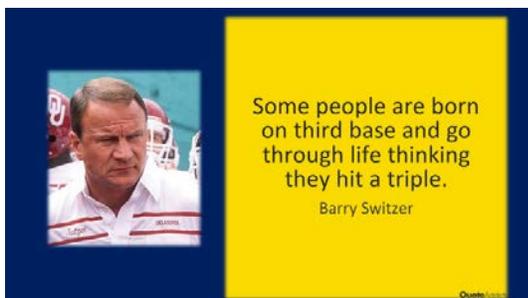
He retired soon after. He suffered deep depression and he's never been able to get past the guilt. **When NPR interviewed him this year**, sitting in the same



living room, his eyes watery and his face grave he said the same thing. "I could've done more. I should've done more." He resolved he's an inadequate person. He didn't argue the data well enough. He said he's prayed about this for 30 years. He spoke softly as he said "I think that was one of the mistakes that God made. He shouldn't

have picked me for the job. But next time I talk to him, I'm gonna ask him, 'Why me? You picked a loser.'" It was chilling to hear someone still grappling with a failure 30 years later. **BLANK**

Failure is a disturbing concept. It's a word many of us are challenged by. I grew up believing that failure wasn't an option. My parents were raised poor and worked hard to better themselves. So they instilled in me early on that I had been given



much and therefore much was expected. This quote from football coach **Barry Switzer** pretty much sums up what I was taught:

“Some people are born on third base and go through life thinking they hit a triple. They somehow think they earned or are entitled to the advantages they’ve received.” “Beth, you’re on third base but you didn’t hit a triple. You’re privileged. But you are being given every opportunity to hit them.” And as a first born child, I internalized that to mean that I had to always hit at least a triple. **BLANK**

But of course I’ve had failures: relationship failures, faith failures, moral failures, career failures and ministry failures. And when I’ve messed up, I’m pretty hard on myself. It’s painful. And it takes time to get over; To figure out how to get back up. And I know I’m not alone. Some people see their entire lives as a string of failures and they define themselves that way. Some have never really been in a position to experience much of what the world calls success. Others see through the eyes of having been raised by a Tiger Mom. You know, the mom who pushes “You gotta be the best, you gotta be the best.” They feel such pressure.

I used to direct a bible study program in a women’s prison. There was a woman there who’d been the chief accountant in the Governor McGreevy administration. She’d seen a lot of success in her life. She was also married to a prosperous Wall Street guy. They’d been living the dream. Then, he lost his job. They’d been living a lifestyle that displayed their success. Without his income, things started getting tighter. And as she put it, “he went home and he wasn’t getting up and he wasn’t getting another job and the money wasn’t coming in and the Lexus lease was

coming due, and the country club dues were coming due and all these things were coming due! And there I sat with access to money.” Sure enough, when the McGreevy Administration began to be investigated, she was the first to go down! In prison, she talked a lot about how she had succumbed to her pride. That she’d needed to keep up the façade of success to everyone else. She stole not out of need, or greed, but out of pride. (Pause) The fear of failure and being seen as a failure is very real.

Some people feel because of their moral failures that they’re failures to God and not worthy of relationship with God.

Our passage this morning is God’s answer for people who’ve ever grappled with failure. It helps us see that our identities in Christ aren’t about success or failure. In fact if that’s our identity then we’re missing way more that’s available to us! It attests that God is full of grace because God works through failures and turns them on their heads. God helps us to change our paradigm and recognize that thinking about life through a success/failure lens is missing greater points.

The story starts out after the crucifixion, after Mary Magdalene had discovered the tomb empty. It’s after Jesus appeared to the disciples in the Upper Room, breathed the Holy Spirit on them and commissioned them to go out and make disciples.(Pause) Peter’s been silent as he’s grappled with all that’s happened after

he's denied even knowing Jesus. Remember, Judas had hung himself after his failure. But what does Peter do? He declares he's going fishing. Remember he's a former fisherman. The others follow him.

Often times when people have things go wrong in their lives, their immediate response is to go back to what they know. Go back to what worked. Go back to what was safe. Go back to what was comfortable. For some people it's going back to the job. Or back to the garden. Or the mall. Or their home country. Or the bar or some seedy habit. Somewhere they can hide and feel safe. But as we know, you can't hide from God. The Lord loves you too much and won't leave you alone.

So the disciples go out in the boat. And the story gets real familiar, right. It starts sounding like when the disciples were first called by Jesus. They go out in the boat and they catch nothing. And there's this lone figure on the shore that says "Cast your nets on the other side." So even in their retreat Jesus is there helping them. And they catch 153 fish. This is how God works. When we follow the Lord's instruction, whether we understand what we we're doing fully or not, we find fish. And when they do this, John recognizes this as some kind of déjà vu of what's recorded in Luke; when they came in from fishing and Jesus told them to go try again and they did and their nets broke from catching so many fish. So John cries out, "It's the Lord!"

And when Peter recognizes that the Lord is there helping them, he gets excited and he jumps in the water. He leaps forward to Jesus. He lets his heart take over. When you fail, the liberating moment comes when you recognize the hope that abounds in God's grace. When you recognize Jesus sitting there with fish and bread. Then you must move past the focus on failure and leap toward God! Go to God and let God help you with your concerns! You won't be disappointed as this story illustrates.

The rest of the disciples follow Peter. They get to the shore and see Jesus has a campfire. When you look at the actual Greek text it says it's an *anthrakia* fire. Anthrakia means charcoal. The Bible only mentions an anthrakia fire in one other place. You know where? It's the charcoal fire where Peter warmed his hands when he denied knowing Christ three times the night before the crucifixion. Whoah.

You see Jesus doesn't help us ignore or forget our failures. He's right there with us, helping us go through them, redefine them, deal with them and move past them. How does he do it? In the story we see him have the disciples bring their fish up to the shore, and he combines some of them with the fish he's already got and he makes a nice meal over the fire.

When the meal ends, Jesus looks up at Peter and asks, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" Is he pointing to the fish or is he pointing to the

other disciples? If he's pointing to the fish, he's showing Peter that Peter has, in the face of his own failure, turned back to fishing for fish. "Simon, do you love me more than these?" (Point to the fish). He's asking, "You want to go back to fishing, back to your former life, or do you want to continue to follow me?" When any of us messes up before God, isn't that sometimes the question that tugs at our hearts?

(PAUSE)

But perhaps it's more than that. Could he also be asking Peter if he loves him more than the fish they've caught together, if he loves him more than the accomplishments, the wins they've had together? Is he asking if it's just the successes that're what Peter's love for Jesus was really about. And isn't that a question we come to typically when we've had a failure, particularly in ministry? Is it about our love of Jesus, or the accomplishments? (PAUSE) But there's even more to it than that.

This is where our text gets most interesting. Jesus asks Peter, "Do You Love me?" three times. And our English translation fails us. In the original Greek, Jesus asks Peter if he *agapes* him. Peter responds "Yes Lord, You know that I *phileo* You." Jesus answers "Feed my lambs." Again Jesus asks Peter, "Simon Son of Jonah, do you agape me?" And again Peter responds "You know that I *phileo* You." "Tend my sheep." But the third time, Jesus asks, Simon, son of Jonah, DO

you *phileo* me?" And Peter's grieved. "Lord you know all things. You know that I *phileo* you."

Now many have heard agape love means an all-encompassing love and phileo means brotherly love, right? And as such many believe agape is the only appropriate love for God. But actually, there's more to it than that. In some Greek lexica, the distinction is this: phileo refers to the emotional aspect of love...feeling it in the heart. Agape refers to the active display of love...expressing it through our actions. So, Jesus was, in effect asking Peter "Have you been acting like you love me more than fishing or the fish we've caught together?" (PAUSE)

But, remember, Peter is the disciple who proudly proclaimed, "I will never turn away." What is Jesus is pointing to the other disciples, not the fish, he's asking "Have you been acting like you love me more than all the other disciples, as you've boasted?" (PAUSE)

Whichever the meaning, Peter knows his actions have not been what they should have been. So he replies, "Lord, you know I have a deep love for you in my heart."

And Jesus isn't disappointed with that answer. He's pleased. He's teaching Peter that the deep love in Peter's heart is key. That's why Jesus' response "Feed my sheep" makes sense. If Peter had not given a good answer, Jesus would not have trusted him to feed the sheep.

Then Jesus tests Peter, checking if this vote of confidence he's just been given now leads Peter back to big, prideful claims about himself. He asks again, "Simon son of John, do you agapeo me?" And how does Peter respond? Does he say "Yes, I agapeo You!"

No, Peter answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I phileo you." (*Yes, I've learned the difference.*) So Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." (*You have the right heart to take care of the Church, Peter.*)

Jesus' third question challenges Peter's claim. He asks, "Do you really love me in your heart?" Peter's response is telling. He says, "*Jesus, you know everything about me, even what's in my heart; you know that I love you in my heart, though my actions of late may not have shown it.*"

Jesus again responds, "Show it by feeding my sheep."

Peter went on to serve Jesus out of a heart of love like few others in history. He learned to have a balanced love-- both in heart attitude and actions. (PAUSE)

Jesus didn't meet Peter by berating him. He didn't reject him. When Peter plunged into the water to race to be with him, Jesus cared for him and took him through a restoration process to help Peter get back up. And not only was Peter restored, he recognized what Jesus had just done for him – he'd reached down and pulled him up out of his ditch of despair! And in his gratefulness and deeper relationship with Jesus because of it, he accepted a higher level of responsibility

that no longer was just fishing for followers – but caring for God’s sheep. Because he got it now. He’d repented by recognizing his previous approach to following Jesus was futile and he leaped forward to follow Christ in abandonment. He’d grown. (PAUSE)

What we’re called to understand is that Peter traded in just focusing on having a determined, agapeo love to also once again surrendering to his deep heart-felt, phileo response to Jesus. Doing this restored him and put him back on the road to service. He traded in having pride based on success to being a hero of faith and love for God. And his ministry took off!

(PAUSE) What a lesson for us all – We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us but nothing we do will have true power unless it’s done out of a pure love that isn’t focused on success and accomplishment, even success and accomplishment for Christ, but rather is focused on Christ. That’s the love that wells up and propels us further.

The question Jesus asks after you’ve failed in anything, is, “Do you love me?” Make your identity not be about winning or losing, but about your love for God. Be someone who’s driven by that phileo relationship with Jesus Christ. And that love will give you passion to serve that doesn’t burn out.

If you’ve given up because of some kind of failure, if you’ve run back to your previous brand of fishing, or if you’ve dug down deeper in your determination to

win because failure just isn't an option, recognize you're in a losing cycle with that kind of focus and give it up. Become a hero of the faith instead and surrender your will again to Jesus. Repent-which means change direction - and accept God's forgiveness. It's there for the taking. Allow the Holy Spirit to restore you, to rekindle your phileo for God. Free yourself from the need to win and the inevitable devastation of failing. Become fueled purely by passion for Christ, not just doing or winning for Christ. When you do this, concern about "failure not being an option" is erased.

We need to also apply this understanding as a church body. As the Church, we need to not focused purely on our performance in improving the number of people in the pews or to the amount of money in the church account. We shouldn't fixate on preserving our tradition or making sure we're following the latest trends. We shouldn't be absorbed with being entertaining enough or even spiritual enough. We should first whole-heartedly leap into the water toward Christ, with getting to him being our first focus. When that happens, big things happen. That's being heroes of faith. PAUSE

Jesus asked Peter, Do you love me? (PAUSE) Amen.

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Sermon Series: “Powerful Questions Jesus Asks that Unlock Abundant Life”

Series Central Idea: Ultimately, the questions of Jesus invite us to explore the hidden chambers of our hearts to address the real needs of our lives.

Sermon 1: What Do You Think?

Scripture: Matthew 22:42

“What do you think about the Christ?”

Central Idea: Jesus wants to know what we think. But even more so He wants us to be rich thinkers toward the things of the Spirit and the Kingdom (or Kindom) of God.

Sermon 2: Do You Want to be Healed?

Scripture: John 5:2-9

² In Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate in the north city wall is a pool with the Aramaic name Bethsaida. It had five covered porches, ³ and a crowd of people who were sick, blind, lame, and paralyzed sat there. ⁴ ⁵ A certain man was there who had been sick for thirty-eight years. ⁶ When Jesus saw him lying there, knowing that he had already been there a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?”

⁷ The sick man answered him, “Sir, ⁸ I don’t have anyone who can put me in the water when it is stirred up. When I’m trying to get to it, someone else has gotten in ahead of me.”

⁸ Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” ⁹ Immediately the man was well, and he picked up his mat and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath.

Central Idea: Jesus invites us to commit to and participate in our own Spiritual healing and development.

Sermon 3: Why Worry, Doubt or be Afraid?

Scripture:

Matthew 6:27-28 Who among you by worrying can add a single moment to your life? And why do you worry about clothes? Notice how the lilies in the field grow. They don't wear themselves out with work, and they don't spin cloth.

Luke 24:38: *"And He said to them, Why are you disturbed and troubled, and why do such doubts and questionings arise in your hearts?"*

Matthew 8:26: He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you people of weak faith?" Then he got up and gave orders to the winds and the lake, and there was a great calm.

Central Idea: Each of us should honestly assess why doubt has any part of our thought processes and remove it. The Holy Spirit will guide us through this process if we are willing.

Sermon 4: Do You Love Me?

Scripture: John 21: 1-19 John 21:1-19 (CEB)

21 Later, Jesus himself appeared again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. This is how it happened: ²Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus^[a]), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee's sons, and two other disciples were together. ³Simon Peter told them, "I'm going fishing."

They said, "We'll go with you." They set out in a boat, but throughout the night they caught nothing. ⁴Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples didn't realize it was Jesus.

⁵Jesus called to them, "Children, have you caught anything to eat?"

They answered him, "No."

⁶He said, "Cast your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some."

So they did, and there were so many fish that they couldn't haul in the net. ⁷Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It's the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard it was the Lord, he wrapped his coat around himself (for he was naked) and jumped into the water. ⁸The other disciples followed in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they weren't far from shore, only about one hundred yards.

⁹When they landed, they saw a fire there, with fish on it, and some bread. ¹⁰Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you've just caught." ¹¹Simon Peter got up and pulled the net to shore. It was full of large fish, one hundred fifty-three of them. Yet the net hadn't torn, even with so many fish. ¹²Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples could bring themselves to ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus came, took the bread, and gave it to them. He did the same with the fish. ¹⁴This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

¹⁵ When they finished eating, Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

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Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” ¹⁶ Jesus asked a second time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

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Jesus said to him, “Take care of my sheep.” ¹⁷ He asked a third time, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

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Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ I assure you that when you were younger you tied your own belt and walked around wherever you wanted. When you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and another will tie your belt and lead you where you don’t want to go.” ¹⁹ He said this to show the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. After saying this, Jesus said to Peter, “Follow me.”

Central Idea: Our love for Jesus through our failures brings about restoration as we shift to living by faith rather than dying for success.

9:00 a.m. Traditional Worship Service

+ Call to Worship

One: God of every good gift:

All: We come to worship today seeking many things.

One: Some of us are seeking peace,

All: Some are seeking healing,

One: Some are seeking answers,

All: And others are looking for the right questions.

One: We trust you, that you will give us what we need;

All: Food for our deepest hunger.

+ Opening Hymn **O How I Love Jesus** UMH#170 vs1, 3

Time of Prayer (unison)

Loving God, we come to worship today because we love you, and we want to love you more. We come to worship needing love in our lives: love for family, friends, strangers, enemies. In this hour of worship, touch our hearts, fill our hearts, open our hearts to your love which passes all understanding.

Sung Prayer *Live in Charity* TFWS#2179

Gospel Lesson John 21: 1-19

One: This is the Word of God for the People of God! **Mary Beth Gruber**

All: Thanks be to God!

Time With Young Disciples see screen for words

all children are invited forward as we sing

+ Song of Preparation **His Name is Wonderful** UMH#174

Witness to the Word *Do You Love Me?* Rev. Beth Caulfield

+ Response **Lord, Just as I Am, Without One Plea** UMH#357 vs3, 5, 6

+ Prayer of Confession UMH p8

+ Passing the Peace **Worthy of Worship**

Wor - thy of wor - ship, wor - thy of praise,
 wor - thy of hon - or and glo - ry;
 Wor - thy of all the glad songs we can sing,
 wor - thy of all of the off - 'rings we bring. You are
 Wor - thy, Spir - it, Cre - at - or. You are wor - thy,
 Sav - ior, Sus - tain - er. You are Wor - thy,
 wor - thy and won - der - ful; Wor - thy of wor - ship and praise.

Our Gifts Making a Difference

Worship Through Giving

+ Doxology

UMH#94

Prayer of Dedication

Sharing in Holy Communion *All are welcome to receive the sacrament.*

The Communion bread is gluten free, the cup is grape juice.

Communion Responses

TFWS#2257

The Lord's Prayer

UMH#895

Prayer after Communion

UMH p11

+ Closing Hymn **Tú Has Venido a la Orilla** UMH#344 vs1, 3, 4

Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore

Jason will sing the first verse in Spanish. You are invited to join in if you would like.

+ Benediction

(unison)

One: And now go out into the world confident that Jesus loves you, no matter what. He asks you "Do you love me?" Do you love Jesus, Church?

All: Then go, know that you are blessed and respond to His love. For You are people of God!

10:30 a.m. Contemporary Worship Service

Welcome

+ Worship in Song **Your Love is Amazing**

1. Your love is a - maz - ing, stead - y and un - chang
 2. Your love is sur - pris - ing, I can feel it ris -
 - ing. Your love is a moun - tain, firm be neath my feet.
 - ing, all the joy that's grow - ing deep in - side of me.
 Your love is a mys - tery, how you gent - ly lift
 Ev - ery time I see you all your good - ness shines
 me. When I am sur - round - ed, your love car - ries me.
 through. I can feel this God song ris - ing up in me.
CHORUS
 Hal - le - lu - jah! Hal - le - lu - jah! Hal - le - lu - jah!
 Your love makes me sing. Hal - le - lu - jah! Hal - le - lu -
 - jah! Hal - le - lu - jah! Your love makes me sing.

How Majestic is Your Name

O Lord, our Lord, how ma - jes - tic is your name in all the
 earth. O Lord, our Lord, how ma - jes - tic is your name in all the
 earth. O Lord, we praise your name. O Lord,
 we mag - ni - fy your name; Prince of Peace, might - y
 God; O Lord God Al - might - - y.

+ Passing the Peace

Worthy of Worship

Wor - thy of wor - ship, wor - thy of praise,
 wor - thy of hon - or and glo - ry;
 Wor - thy of all the glad songs we can sing,
 wor - thy of all of the off - 'rings we bring. You are
 Wor - thy, Spir - it, Cre - at - or. You are wor - thy,
 Sav - ior, Sus - tain - er. You are Wor - thy,
 wor - thy and won - der - ful; Wor - thy of wor - ship and praise.

Time of Prayer

Gospel Lesson

John 21: 1-19

One: This is the Word of God for the People of God! **Mary Beth Gruber**

All: Thanks be to God!

Time With Young Disciples

+ Response to Scripture **I Love You, Lord**

TFWS#2068

Witness to the Word *Do You Love Me?*

Rev. Beth Caulfield

+ Response *All Who Are Thirsty*

All who are thirs - ty, all who are weak, come to the foun - tain. Dip your heart in the stream of life. Let the pain and the sor - row be washed a - way in the waves of God's mer - cy as deep cries out to deep. We sing Come, Lord Je - sus, (Ho - ly Spir - it, come. come. Come, Lord Je - sus, come. Ho - ly Spir - it, come.)

Our Gifts Making a Difference

Worship Through Giving

+ Doxology

With one voice we'll sing to the Lord, and with one heart we'll live out God's Word. Till the whole world sees the Re-deem-er has come, for we dwell in the pre-sence of God's peo - ple.

Prayer of Dedication

Sharing in Holy Communion *All are welcome to receive the sacrament.*

The Communion bread is gluten free, the cup is grape juice.

The Lord's Prayer

UMH#895

Communion Hymn *Come to the Table of Grace*

Come to the ta-ble of grace. Come to the ta-ble of grace. This is God's ta - ble; it's not yours or mine. Come to the ta - ble of grace.

2. Come to the table of peace... 3. love... 4. joy

Prayer after Communion

(unison)

Eternal God, thank you for this holy mystery. Thank you for meeting us at this table and giving yourself to us. Send us into the world, strengthened by your Spirit, so we too can give ourselves for others. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

+ Closing Song *At Your Name*

1. At your name the moun-tains shake and crum - ble.
2. At your name the morn - ing breaks in glo - ry.
At your name the o - ceans roar and tum - ble.
At your name cre - a - tion sings your sto - ry.
At your name an - gels will bow, the earth will re - joice
your peo - ple cry out. Lord of all the earth, we shout your name, shout your name, fill - ing up the skies with end - less praise, end - less praise. Yah - weh, Yah - weh, we love to shout your name, O Lord.
There is no one like our God. We will praise you, praise you. There's no one like our God. We will sing! We will sing! There is no one like our God. We will praise you, praise you. There's no one like our God. We will sing! We will sing!

+ Sending Forth



- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
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September 25, 2016

Bible Study: “Exploring Questions Jesus Asked in Matthew through Wesley”

Series Central Idea: Jesus’ questions invite us to explore the hidden chambers of our hearts to address the real needs of our lives.

Setting and Purpose: This study was taught at the GNJ Mission and Resource during lunchtime. It followed a precedence set by Rev. Dr. Rich Hendrickson for occasionally offering a study at the Conference Office. All staff were invited, but I had hoped to particularly attract our young adult staff as I am currently working on a GNJ goal of attracting more young adults to small group ministry. Participation ranged from 3-9 people. The bulk of participants were our young adult employees, particularly from the Communications and Administrative staff. Most participants were white, middle class but there were also African Americans, Asians and Hispanic participants.

I chose the Gospel of Matthew for a bible study *initially* because I wanted to explore this Gospel that is said to expand most on the Pharisees and the Sadducees as Jesus’ major opponents.¹ What I found as I studied this theme was how powerfully Jesus’ *questions* often confronted them directly or challenge our own Pharisaic and Sadducaic tendencies. The purpose of the study became, however, to follow up on a theme that was introduced by Bishop Schol in his various communications to the staff and GNJ in general about challenging issues GNJ is facing. He has repeatedly commented and preached that Jesus asked powerful questions and it is in grappling with questions we learn and grow. I wanted to explore that theme by looking at the questions Jesus asked and include in that exploration a look at Wesley’s interpretations of Jesus’ teachings on these themes and then also wove the Pharisee and Sadducee concerns into the study.

Lesson 1: Why Worry, Doubt or be Afraid?

Scripture: Matthew 6:27-28; 8:26; 14:29-31

Central Idea: Honestly assessing our fears, worries and doubts helps us grow in faith. The Scriptures and the Holy Spirit will guide us through this process if we are willing.

Learning Goals:

- Jesus challenges our tendencies and rationale for worry, doubt and being afraid.
- Fear/worry/doubt and faith are in tension and combat one another.
- We need to honestly and objectively assess the reasons and value in our worries/doubts/fears having any part of our thought processes

¹Attridge, Harold W. *The Harper Collins Study Bible: NRSV, Student Edition*, New York: Harper Collins, 1989, p. 1667.

- Asking the Holy Spirit to identify and confront the worry/doubt/fear in our lives and direct us to remove it from our lives is a sound strategy.

Lesson 2: Do You Believe I Can Do This?

Scripture: Matthew 9:27-30a

Central Idea: In the act of healing, the focus is not on the act of healing, but on the Lordship of Jesus Christ who reclaims all life.

Learning Goals:

- The Blind man asked for mercy from Jesus, not healing, yet Jesus chose to heal him.
- Jesus' healings were a way of drawing people to Christ
- The movement of God on behalf of God's people is always toward wholeness and healing, even while this healing may not always come in the form that we expect or even desire, nor may it come in our expected timing.
- "Do you believe I can do this?" is a personal question, done away from the crowds

Lesson 3: What Do You Think?

Scripture: Matthew 17:24-27; 18:12; 21:28-32; 22:42

"What do you think about the Christ?"

Central Idea: Jesus wants to know what we think. But even more so He wants us to be rich thinkers toward the things of the Spirit and the Kingdom (or Kindom) of God.

Learning Goals:

As we read the Word and pray. . .

- God wants us to think
- Jesus wants to know what we think.
- Jesus invites our questions/Jesus is not afraid of our questions.
- Jesus answers our questions.
- The sincerity of our heart, context and our spiritual maturity affect what we hear from Jesus

Lesson 4: Why Are You Thinking Evil Thoughts?

Scripture: Matthew 6:22-24; 9:1-6; 12:22-28; 22:15-22; Galatians 5:16

Central Idea: Jesus recognizes evil motives against the witness of God and calls them out

Learning Goals:

- Jesus knows our thoughts.
- We should pay attention to the motives of those around us toward Christ.
- Jesus dealt with skeptics by engaging them through questions. We can do the same.
- As we pay closer and closer attention to the Spirit of God worldly concerns and evil thoughts will lose their grip because our focus and goal becomes the Kingdom/Kindom.

Bible Study: “Exploring Questions Jesus Asked in Matthew through Wesley”

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- Asking the Holy Spirit to identify and confront the worry/doubt/fear in our lives and direct us to remove it from our lives is a sound strategy.

Step 1: Homework to be completed before Group

meets: <http://www.npr.org/2015/01/16/377517810/world-with-no-fear>

Step 2: Scripture

Matthew 8:26 (CEB): “He said to them, “**Why are you afraid**, you people of weak faith?” Then he got up and gave orders to the winds and the lake, and there was a great calm.”

Matthew 6:27-28 (CEB) “Who among you by worrying can add a single moment to your life? And **why do you worry** about clothes? Notice how the lilies in the field grow. They don’t wear themselves out with work, and they don’t spin cloth.”

Matthew 14:29-31 (CEB)

“And Jesus said, “Come.” Then Peter got out of the boat and was walking on the water toward Jesus. But when Peter saw the strong wind, he became frightened. As he began to sink, he shouted, “Lord, rescue me!” Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him, saying, “You man of weak faith! **Why did you begin to have doubts?**”

Group Discussion Questions

What are the correlations between the NPR interview and the Scriptures?

What are the differences?

Why do you personally fear, worry or doubt?

Describe a time when God helped you overcome fear, worry or doubt.

Step 3 John Wesley's Blog on Worry <http://johnwesley1703-1791.blogspot.com/2011/12/strong-thoughts-on-christians-who-worry.html>

Do you agree with Wesley? Why or why not?

What connections do you find between the NPR interview, the Scripture given and Wesley's blog?

How does knowing that Wesley wrote this BEFORE his Aldersgate experience help you interpret it?

What can you apply from this lesson to your life?

Step 4 Wesleyan Small Group Questions:

- 1) How is it with your soul?**
- 2) How has your spiritual walk been this week?**
- 3) How can we pray for you?**

End Time with Prayer.

4. Annotated Bibliography

Attridge, Harold W. *The Harper Collins Study Bible: NRSV, Student Edition*, New York: Harper Collins, 1989

Student Bible.

Copenhaver, Martin B. *Jesus is the Question: The 307 Questions Jesus Asked and the 3 He Answered*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2014.

Through Jesus' questions, he modeled the struggle, the wondering, the thinking it through that helps us draw closer to God and better understand, not just the answer, but ourselves, our process and ultimately why questions are among Jesus' most profound gifts for a life of faith.

Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary Year A,B,C

By Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011. Essays by Larry D. Bouchard, Alan Gregory, David Bartlett, and Patricia Tull.

With this twelve-volume series, Westminster John Knox Press offers one of the most extensive and well-respected resources for preaching on the market today. The twelve volumes cover all of the Sundays in the three-year lectionary cycle, along with moveable occasions.

Green, Joel B. *The CEB Study Bible*. Nashville: The Common English Bible, 2013.

Study Bible.

Radmacher, Earl D. *The Nelson Study Bible*. NKJV, Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 1997.

Study Bible.

Wimberly, Anne E. Streaty. *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education*. Nashville:

Abingdon Press, 2005.

Professor Wimberly's book offers story-linking models for Christian education based on African American tradition. The model links personal experience, bible stories, stories of heroes of the

faith and challenges participants to build their own model of ethical thinking from their analysis of information presented.

Additionally these websites were accessed that contain the recordings, videos and articles used for class discussion:

<http://www.npr.org/2015/01/16/377517810/world-with-no-fear>

<http://johnwesley1703-1791.blogspot.com/2011/12/strong-thoughts-on-christians-who-worry.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0hPJIRmh1ko>

<http://place.asburyseminary.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1148&context=asburyjournal>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IjdkttHn99M>

<http://www.umcmission.org/Find-Resources/John-Wesley-Sermons/Sermon-70-The-Case-Of-Reason-Impartially-Considered>

<http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-118-on-a-single-eye>

5. Lesson Evaluation

I designed this study utilizing a teaching model developed by Anne Streatty Wimberly which in essence says:

- 1. Engage students with a current/everyday story**
- 2. Introduce Biblical Text**
- 3. Share a Hero of the Faith's interactions with the theme you are exploring**
- 4. Invite Spiritually alert decision-making/reflection**

I found this model extremely helpful for engaging the topic in an interesting, relevant, deep and affirming way. I think I had more millennials who joined the study because of the introduction of the “everyday story” piece and how I advertised it. I taught the study on Thursdays, but on Tuesday sent out the recording or video of the everyday story we would be engaging to the entire staff as a kind of teaser. I think it worked as interests were peaked in our younger employees. I did not get any staff over 55, however. I am not sure if it was because of these teasers or not. But given that this is a reverse trend from what one typically finds in our churches and meets a goal of reaching more young adults in small groups, I am going to maintain this kind of approach as one of my methods in the future.

I also incorporated Wesleyan Covenant group questions at the end of each lesson. Though they were improving as we went along, the reaction to this was mixed. I credit this to several things:

1. The lessons were long and we were running out of time often when we got to the questions so we were rushed.
2. I think sharing about these soul issues in a work environment might have been hard for some.
3. The questions, though modified from Wesley, were still very penetrating. In the future I might build up to such questions and start with softer, less threatening questions.

I also think this idea of offering a bible study during the week at the workplace could be an effective model to be further explored. Many employees bring their lunch to work and lunchtime is frequently spent alone at their desks. This seemed to be a welcome time of engagement to some people. Adding a small group/bible study to their schedules at other times of the week is often burdensome as such time is often occupied.

I think what I most learned from the study, however, was how differently the younger generation does approach many issues. They appear to be comfortable claiming faith in the midst of their own cynicism and doubt which is more developed, I think, than most in older generations. Also when we discussed fear, I really gained a new appreciation of how this post 9/11 age group whose parents raised them to be very cautious, really sees the world through a heavier lens of fear than most other Americans I have encountered. They appear to be more inclined to see the world as a dangerous place. This gives me thoughts about how to preach to and teach them in the future.

PRACTICE OF MINISTRY

1. What do you think are the most effective means of doing evangelism in the 21st century? How have you lived this out in your current context of ministry?

Living a life out loud that is a witness to the love and power of Christ is the most effective form of evangelism and must be done in contexts that are relevant to those being evangelized. As my current appointment is focused upon developing leaders within the church, I must be more creative in ways to bring evangelism into my ministry. Thus I am even more purposeful in socializing beyond the Church. Because of my full work and family schedule, I have found utilizing social media to be very helpful for my pursuits at evangelism. For example, most of my “friends” on Facebook do not actively profess or live Christian faith. I share much about my ministry work with them through our common social media bond. I also share my life as an example of balance between social life and work, healthy but not rigid eating and exercise habits, works of piety and works of service/justice, showing imperfection but also standing for righteousness, etc. Sharing authenticity about who I am as a Christian and what that means in my daily life is most effective.

2. What makes a congregation vital, and how do you measure it? How would you envision working with a congregation to become more vital?

As emphasized in the GNJ Strategic Plan, vital congregations are Spirit-filled, forward-leaning and welcome all people (Gal.3:28). They make disciples of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:18-20) and are communities that serve like Christ through justice and mercy ministries (Micah 6:8, Luke 4:17-21). They have inviting and inspiring worship; engaged disciples in mission and outreach; generous giving; active Small Group ministries; attention to and success at achieving professions of faith; gifted, empowered and equipped lay leadership; effective, equipped and inspired clergy leadership; and strong children’s and youth ministries. Vitality can be measured against GNJ’s Strategic Plan Goal (41% highly vital congregations by

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2018) and Objectives (which identify metrics around the markers of vitality). VitalSigns Dashboard is an excellent tool for congregations to measure their progress against these markers.

My Conference Staff/Connectional Ministries role is focused on increasing congregational vitality. I engage congregational leaders through both Team Vital and as a resource specifically focused on developing Small Group ministries and Spiritual Visioning. When I move back into a local church role I see myself strategically leading the congregation to engage with the Conference resourcing strategies I am currently a part of creating and implementing.

3. What is your personal approach to conflict? Provide an example of where you have been involved in resolving conflict. What did you learn?

Conflict is inevitable. It can be a healthy vehicle for ministry work, relationships and any other product to become enhanced as people openly express their differences of concerns, goals, opinions and needs. Avoiding or squelching conflict therefore is not the most productive approach to success. Guiding conflict to such a productive state, however, is crucial. This is an acquired skill and can be a cultivated gift (peacemaking). When I was the pastor at North Hunterdon, we had much conflict among the leaders of our Thrift Shop ministry as a new team began to work with the team that had started the shop 35 years earlier. I helped them respectfully express and turn each perspective and concern into unified goals by gently addressing disrespectful behavior and most importantly praising progress as they worked through issues.

4. What is your theological and practical understanding of itineracy?

Itineracy encourages on a sacrificial level trust in God by both Elders and congregations as personal preferences often must be surrendered to a greater common good. For many, overcoming the tension inherent in the system regarding trusting God vs. humans who administer the appointment process is another key component of faith development. As the system also offers a parsonage system, personal living needs and care are addressed for Elders in a unique way. As congregations maintain the parsonages, they practice acts of sacrificial grace. Elders, then, learn to focus less on worldly comforts and more fully on caring for the congregation and other ministry responsibilities. (excerpted from Caulfield Itineracy Report submitted to BOOM 12/18/2014).

I believe in and am open to the itineracy system. On a practical level, the system offers opportunities for Elders' varied gifts, graces, talents and skills to be utilized and to be developed.

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However, as 1) the profile of Elders has evolved from single or primary breadwinner plus trailing spouse white men to include women, ethnic minorities and people with a variety of complex family and career situations 2) the parsonage and itineracy system have become more expensive and 3) more merit is being given to longer-term appointments, the itineracy system itself continues to evolve. At present the system in GNJ offers more “guided flexibility” than in the past as more consultation with Elders about their personal situations is taken into account in the process. Elders are being offered the opportunity to view and apply to appointments and Elders are asked to understand that placing limits on their own flexibility may necessitate less than full-time and even no appointment. The key today to a successful itineracy program and personal experience for Elders is prayerful, honest communication with District Superintendents and God.

5. How do you engage all age groups in your community?

In the area of small groups, for example, I encourage local leaders to tailor their offerings to the interests of those in the church and in their surrounding communities. I also encourage them to look at the demographics of their attendees and of the community (including by using such tools as Mission Insight). Thus I have seen, for instance, Denville Community Church start a high-adventure small group that attracts young adults and Rockaway UMC start a Zumba Class Small Group and many, many more niche groups that are showing success at growing disciples.

6. What is your understanding of pastoral authority, and how do you intend to exercise it in your place of ministry?

Pastoral authority comes from being called by God. Its understanding is enhanced by the pastor’s ongoing presence in the midst of the church family as she/he performs the responsibilities of the role. 1 Peter 5:3 describes a balanced pastoral ministry: “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock.” A pastor is “the steward of God” (Titus 1:7), and she/he is answerable to God for his/her leadership in the church. Pastoral authority also functions on a broader community level and is directly affected by the church’s credibility

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in that community as it finds ways to love its neighbors in practical ways. I am intentional to remember these points as I act as an overseer/leader of the church and its mission (1 Tim 3:1), shepherd the body of Christ as a diligent caretaker (1 Tim 5:7), feed the flock with God's word (1 Peter 5:3) and guard the doctrine of the church (Titus 1:9). These areas of pastoral authority are pronounced in BOD ¶139 that declares Elders called to ministries of Service, Word, Sacrament and Order.

7. If you could choose *anyone* to mentor you in leadership skills, who would that be and why?

John Wesley. He was first and foremost interested in developing his own relationship with God and then that of others. He was truly pious and made holiness a goal. His acts of mercy and justice were both personal and community-oriented. He was a systems genius, methodically building ministries. He ministered contextually and strategically. He ministered in a rapidly changing culture. To consult with him would be a real blessing!

8. Describe a situation in which you felt a need to assert a professional boundary in the practice of ministry.

Being privy to confidential matters that are dealt with by the Conference Resource Team (Cabinet and Connectional Ministries Teams), I face boundary issues frequently as I work with local church leaders. For example, I have faced more than once the situation of working with a church on its Team Vital or Small Groups ministry plan knowing of issues within the church or of issues that may affect the future of the church's leadership or ministry avenues that are not appropriate for me to discuss with the church leadership. My personal practice is to try to think through this aspect of the context as I engage with the church so that my interactions will be most productive for making disciples and changing the world while maintaining professional confidentiality boundaries. Leading my ministry efforts with prayer is essential!

9. How have you worked through the experience of forgiving someone?

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For me the first step is recognizing the difference between a disappointment in a relationship and a deep hurt. I have never been one to hold a grudge. I much prefer to move passed the slight and restore the relationship quickly rather than dwell on it. Over the years I have gotten better at confronting individuals with my feelings on such issues when I recognize it is important to correct a behavior that might become or already may be a pattern in their relating with myself or others. I am also quick to recognize that there may be a simple misunderstanding that needs to be cleared up.

Deep hurts I work through more slowly. I first allow myself time to feel the pain. As I counsel others, it is better to acknowledge rather than bury the hurt. As more of an extrovert, feeling the pain includes talking about my feelings with close confidants who empathize and support me without judging as I express my hurt.

I plead God's lead in the process. I ask for discernment about my own mistakes and/or growth opportunities as a result of the situation, help with the pain, and courage to forgive. I resolve to seize the opportunity to spiritually mature but allow myself space and time to do so. I understand biblical principles about the need to always forgive, for personal spiritual, emotional and physical health *and* for community health. I understand forgiving is not forgetting and also to never forget to forgive. I look for the right opportunity to seek reconciliation. I also have learned that my freedom in forgiveness is not dependent on others' acknowledgement of wronging me, request for forgiveness or repentance. When I realize that I have truly forgiven someone, I celebrate and thank God.

10. What are you doing to help those around you to take good care of themselves?

As a leader who loves people, in addition to praying for others and teaching about caring for oneself as a Christian principle, I see modeling by caring for myself as an important part of my ministry. I exercise regularly, have an active family and social life and adhere to Sabbath. I try to

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live out loud being a human who is intentional about developing my faith, caring for my body, mind, emotions and relationships, but at the same time is flexible and forgiving to my own limitations. In addition to preaching and teaching and raising my family with a lot of emphasis on self-care, I share my life on social media, which I see as a ministry. My hope is that my posts or tweets give folks pause to think about what principles, activities and perspectives make for abundant life in the midst of common struggles.

11. How have you invited someone to faith and seen their faith develop?

I think specifically about Anna, a neighbor for the past 4 years. The relationship we have built has bolstered both of our faiths. Slowly building relationship without a prescribed agenda has been important. After getting to know one another and her becoming comfortable understanding who I was, she opened up to me that the church she attended made no positive difference in her life and felt oppressive in its demands. She attended not out of faith but out of cultural and family duty. Over time I shared more about my faith and its fruits. She asked lots of intimate questions and I was comfortable in boldly sharing.

I've seen her faith develop as she now enjoys membership in a different church with passion and revels in her relationship with God. She continues to question me and I delight as her subject matter goes deeper and closer to the heart. For example, we have talked about raising teenagers in the faith with healthy sexual boundaries and following the spirit's lead in understanding the Bible. Last week I shared with her that the Bible can be understood contextually as we spoke in depth about the woman at the well. I also broadened her understanding by explaining Mary Magdalen was not a "whore" and talked about patriarchy. We have discussed what God might think about interracial dating and marriage. We have a

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wonderful relationship that now is built more on sharing about God with one another than anything else. My “technique” is based on relationship first.

12. What have you overcome to come to this season in your ministry?

Over the long term, I have overcome resistance to the call. While once the idea of giving my will to service to the Lord was terrifying, now I feel unbelievable joy and passion for my ministry and know that I am blessed. Like everyone else, the struggles of my life have indeed appeared daunting with varied crises that have caused emotional pain, including the demands of raising my family, keeping a healthy marriage, the illnesses and deaths of those close to me and relationship struggles. The demands of my work are very high as well. But what I have truly overcome in regards to all these things is the temptation to face them alone, without faith or without arming myself with the ways of God. I do truly believe Romans 8:24-28. I have also grown more cognizant of temptation to believe that my struggles are on level with everyone else's. I have become more empathetic and sympathetic as I have gone further in my journey.

13. How would you describe your prayer life in this season, and how has it changed over your journey?

I see my prayer life like water. It is a necessity and refreshes my soul. It has changed to a cherished habit rather than a required discipline. I delight in my time with God. It starts before I get out of bed. It extends to the first thing I do in the morning. It is a walking and talking relationship with God throughout my day as I am cognizant that we are to pray without ceasing (1 Thess 5:15-18). It is aided at times through fasting. I not only leave space for God to examine me and speak, but am currently experimenting with making that the primary purpose of my prayer time. I delight in praying with others, although at the moment I am keenly aware that there are more people I need to take the lead with and invite to pray together. I have regular, intimate prayer partners.

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But I also have periods when I am too tired, too hurt or frustrated to pray with any heart. I have developed patience with these times and know from experience that they are only seasons. Thus I receive prayer as a living entity that ebbs and flows in its vitality.

14. When you read the Bible, how do you hear God's voice? What example might you give of how you responded?

I read the Bible first for personal revelation. Even when I am studying for sermons or other teachings and reading commentary based on various critical reading methods, I am looking for God to speak to me, as I believe I can teach others best through my own connection. I recognize that I hear God's voice contextually, calling or responding to me based on where I am in my heart as I read, what intellectual objective I am reading with, and with which emotions I may be grappling with. I don't necessarily think about those things as I read, but instead read with an anticipation that God will meet me wherever I am as I read with intention of hearing from God.

There are times when I have read in a state of crisis, looking for help and hope and the verses have soothed my soul. I think of when I was grappling with my surprise pregnancy a few years ago and wondering where I could meet God in it. The lectionary reading at the worship service I attended one Sunday included 1 Peter 2:9, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people who are God's own possession. You have become this people so that you may speak of the wonderful acts of the one who called you out of darkness into his amazing light." That verse lit up my soul as I began to see my pregnancy as a blessing for me and others that would bear witness to God's goodness. I thanked God for the reminder of who I was and moved forward with a new sense of hope.

There are times when I have been convicted by the Word and have been driven to repentance and restoration. I have been given wisdom for approaching life and for particular situations. Sometimes the words strike me instantly, others the connection comes over time.

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15. How has your family of origin influenced your call?

They gave an initial lens for understanding my call. Evangelical and spirit-focused faith were important to my parents. My mother taught that God wanted a personal relationship with me and to cherish that fact.

My parents grew up poor. They were driven to improve their stations in life and moved us from the Deep South in pursuit of the American dream. They emphasized and demonstrated ministry with poor children and the mentally disabled. I rode the bus my dad drove to the “projects” to pick up kids for church. I remember him going to a sanitarium for mentally handicapped kids to minister. He also taught a special needs Sunday School class.

As the family moved around the country, I began to recognize the privilege I experienced, often at the expense of others, especially minorities. I became personally burdened and learned to have voice against forces of oppression. Hence family life was instrumental to my call.

16. Interview three people to tell you what they see in your ministry. What did you hear in these conversations?

Thank you for this exercise. I interviewed Rev. Varlyna Wright, Rev. Michelle Ryoo, and my husband, Tom. Foremost I heard 1) much desire to support me in my ministry efforts and 2) affirmation of my calling to ordained ministry. I felt cared for and honestly spoken to. Varlyna and Michelle spoke directly about my respect for and strong effectiveness in cross-cultural competency and cited several examples, including how I search out cross-cultural opinions on issues before I instigate ministries, how I am approachable, how I show comfort and desire in approaching and learning from others different from myself. They described me as having a sacrificial and compassionate heart, being passionate about my ministry, thorough, well-prepared, calm, having good listening skills and able to bring meetings to practical conclusions. They both gave the same advice as a growing edge: I need to allow people to know me better.

Beth Caulfield

Tom pointed out he sees me striving to answer God's call, having desire to help people to understand God's word in a way that is meaningful for their daily lives and to want to apply it to their lives. He sees sincerity in my asking for God's guidance in delivering the message God wants delivered, diligence in preparation of the message, a caring and desire to change people's hearts and an effectiveness in all of these areas. He cited as a growing edge continuing organizational relationship-building so that others have better opportunity to know the real me.

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BOD-2012 PARAGRAPH 335 QUESTION RESPONSES**a) Theology****1. Give examples of how the practice of ministry has affected your experience and understanding of:****a. God**

Working with a wide range of churches in my Conference staff role, I have seen how the Holy Spirit works contextually as God seeks to draw all into relationship. I agree with Wesley's theological stance that God is willing that all persons be saved based on such experiences.

I see God being experienced and perceived in many ways. I've heard a Native American pastor call upon God as "Grandfather" as he opened his prayer at a Committee on Native American Ministry meeting. I've heard congregations comforted as male and female Christian leaders alike have routinely referred to God as "Mother" and the Holy Spirit as "She." I've felt the power of "old-time religion" as "Almighty God our Father in Heaven" has been called upon in some of our southern New Jersey, Korean, Hispanic or in African American churches. I have challenged myself to and seen many other pastors artfully teaching their congregations to think of God as beyond gender. And I have seen God being referred to in each of those ways in settings where the reference fell flat for many, as the name did not match the connection and/or context that the worshippers understood. Thus I have seen more emphatically the importance of doing ministry in context – just as God does. I've learned at least an appreciation for the nuances involved in keeping contextual balances when helping people connect with God and teaching them something new for the sole purpose of helping them better connect with God.

Yet even as people express their understandings in diverse ways, when they connect and share with one another about their experiences of God, they also find commonality. They find they do "know the same Jesus" and can recognize God's Spirit in one another, and this draws even the most diverse groups of people together. Thus my understanding of God as a "uniter, not a

divider” has grown when I have visited churches of different cultures and I recognize God’s presence in diverse worship experiences and styles.

As I have worked with church leaders in starting and growing their small group ministries, I see how as people get together and share about their experiences of God, they recognize God in one another’s stories and each person’s faith is grown, both the storytellers’ and the listeners’. The same happens with those who have not been aware of their experience of God before. Everyone’s awareness grows through experience of small groups. I see this directly as I train church leaders by leading them through small group experiences to teach them.

I pastored a small church that was very simple in its faith. It had no prayer warriors, lacked interest for in-depth study of Scriptures or theology, had poor stewardship habits, minimal interest in reaching out to their community in new meaningful ways, lacked passion in the worship service and were very insular – they loved one another but did little to be hospitable and attract new members. Their focus was their relationships with one another and many seemed to miss the connection with God through one another. Their church was a vehicle for their connection to each other. Their focus was on maintaining that connection, rather than expanding it to include and serve others or to reach their own lives in deeper ways. As a result they were struggling as a church. I learned that God wants and expects more for us than that– we are to move on to solid food, make disciples, and serve. God never leaves us alone and patiently awaits for our attention, but if we do not follow God’s lead through the Spirit to risk moving outside ourselves, to be accountable to God’s ways, to be intentional in serving and to our own faith-development, then our experience of and witness for God is muted. I have a new understanding that in God’s love and wisdom, God encourages and rewards hearts that are actively following the lead of the Spirit into greater relationship with God by following God’s ways.

(b) Humanity

As a pastor, I have intimately seen more of the challenges of breaking cycles of sin. I think particularly of sins of addiction and abuse that often are passed from generation to generation. As I have counseled folks who deal with these very real pressures from the past in their lives their sin has become very understandable to me, very human. I have become less judgmental. It causes me to recognize that only God's grace can break us free and that such grace is indeed, mystery. That grace can come through a number of vehicles, but they all ultimately witness to the love of Jesus Christ and are shed light upon and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

That same grace propels people to combat the sins of injustice and to address the often devastating results, such as poverty. The love of God in hearts raises human behavior beyond human complacency and other limits. In my Conference Staff role, I have been privileged to witness many instances of this throughout the Conference. For example, as Champion for Team Vital, I produced/directed with our Conference Communications staff a promotional video that featured First UMC of Bridgeton, NJ. The community the church is located in has changed from a predominantly middle-class white community to a poverty stricken minority community. Rather than abandoning their church or isolating themselves from the multi-cultural community, the congregation chose to embrace the mission field it has been given. They requested a pastor who would better reflect their changing demographic. Following the direction of the District Superintendent, the pastor quickly connected with other churches in Bridgeton and together in less than 6 months they created an after-school program that assists with homework, teaches the Bible and feeds 75 children in the community. That is humanity connecting through God's grace and love. The church is highly vital. I got an intimate look at this and was able to share with others about it through my ministry.

(c) The Need for Divine Grace

I concur with John Wesley that we are utterly unable to even choose grace without grace. While I've been in commissioned ministry, one way I have become more keenly aware of God's *prevenient* grace has been through my encounters with people who wrestle with their own worthiness to worship God. I better recognize God working in those who believe they are too far gone in their sin to go (or return) to church, to pray or have any other relationship with God. They exhibit shame in their interactions with me. I recognize the pain in this level of understanding can be an avenue through which the Holy Spirit is readying their souls for the Good News of the Gospel. This conviction is a form of God's grace and is indeed needed. Sometimes experiencing the pain of perceived rejection can make the realization of forgiveness and acceptance that much more poignant in our lives.

Likewise, God's prevenient and sanctifying grace leads us all in recognizing God's loving presence through the events, trials, circumstances and environments of our lives. As people recount their stories to me with such phrases as "but by the grace of God," "it had to be God that did that," and "God is so amazing" I better recognize that they are experiencing God's grace in such revelations that is propelling them to search deeper for God and God's ways.

I now appreciate better the need to follow the lead of God's grace in sharing the Good News. Whether it be in a chance meeting, a scheduled counseling session, a hospital visit or even from the pulpit it is God's grace that empowers me to be effective in sharing the Good News. When I ready myself for such encounters, it is most freeing and empowering when I recognize the leading role that God's grace plays in my mission to share the Good News. I also recognize God's grace in impressing upon me when I have missed or refused such opportunities. As a Christian, I need this grace to strengthen my walk with God.

Finally, I continue to marvel at God's grace in propelling, preserving and empowering my own ministry endeavors and path. I live a very full, abundant, life with a husband, two teenagers, a six year-old, a newly widowed mother with many concerns and I have a very pressing Conference ministry position. In the midst of all this I am working on my ordination paperwork. Although at times I feel stretched close to a breaking point, God is always there to comfort and see me and my family through. I marvel at the support of friends, family, the Word and the Spirit's presence in nature and even strangers that always restores my soul. Only God's grace could do this for me. I have tears as I write this.

(d) The Lordship of Jesus Christ

My ministry experience has brought me more clarity and concern that many professing Christians show little growth in their appreciation for nor practice intentional efforts to hand more and more of their lives over to Christ. Thus they are not truly making Jesus the Lord of their lives in more than a nominal sense. I believe much of this is because they have both not educated themselves through available resources and because we as pastors do not offer enough enticing opportunities for solid food to be tasted and appreciated. So, my practice of ministry, particularly from the pulpit, has led me to be more focused on for example, encouraging reflection on specific practices related to continued sanctification in terms of personal holiness and social justice. I am convinced that people need concrete instruction and examples for making Jesus Lord of their lives so that they are challenged to grow in their faith concretely as well.

My theology has also been reinforced, however, in seeing how indeed Jesus is Lord and the Holy Spirit is working through and in spite of me to make his Lordship evident to all. This both challenges me to give my best in ministry and yet relieves me from responsibility for the final outcome. This theology helps keep my pride in check when my ministry and witness are

effective and also comforts me when I fail. I also see how the itineracy system accentuates Jesus' Lordship as churches learn to trust in a consistent Jesus Christ, not a consistent pastor.

(e) The Work of the Holy Spirit

My appreciation for pneumatology grows as I continue to experience the Spirit at work in my own ministry and in other's lives. For example, I have become even more reliant on seeking the Spirit's guidance for visioning in my ministry and then trusting that vision and not backing down until it comes into fruition. When I was first appointed to North Hunterdon UMC, these needs of the church stood out to me: 1) they had a poor self-image as a faith community 2) they were virtually unknown by the surrounding community 3) they had minimal engagement with mission 4) they had no stewardship plan 5) their plan for making disciples consisted of a poorly run and attended annual Fall festival that was ineffective and a source of contention within the church and 6) they were struggling to find willing talent to lead their music ministry for worship 7) they could do much better at engaging the gifts within the congregation.

I prayed and received a vision: A Fall Festival of Hope to raise money for A Future with Hope, featuring diverse, high quality Christian bands and solo artists. It would rely on donations from local businesses for food to sell and items to auction off and was advertised extensively through local media, surrounding churches and businesses. I pitched the idea and the church leaders got excited. We prayed extensively together and set a date for the event - less than 10 weeks away. Virtually everyone in our tiny church got involved. Through the power of the Holy Spirit we pulled it off – we had 5 musical acts – including a Caribbean Steele Drums band, two outstanding praise bands, two teenage bands, and a liturgical dance group from Christian Love Baptist Church in Irvington. We brought in Lou Strugala, the Construction Manager for A Future of Hope to preach. We raised over \$4000 and spent less than \$150 of church funds on the event! Our little country church of 30 hosted over 200 people. The event was covered by local media

and one reporter told me “something special was happening that day – I felt so uplifted.” As we linked our festival to the Future of Hope Campaign, we used the accompanying sermon series and stewardship campaign (the first campaign in many years) to bring more vitality to the regular worship service. The church gained pride, confidence and vision. THAT was the Holy Spirit. I remember this event and my faith in the power of the Holy Spirit is bolstered.

(f) The meaning and significance of the Sacraments

My experience has given me a greater appreciation for the lack of understanding for the sacraments that exists in our churches and certainly our society today. Too many people partake in these opportunities for mysterious connection with God without much education and/or reflection on their significance. At the same time, my own personal grasp of the powers of the connection with our Trinitarian God, the hope and joy involved and the potency of human inter-connectivity through the Sacraments has deepened and tightened within and around my soul. Thus I am more focused on the Sacraments.

My interest in educating others about the sacraments has grown and my efforts in doing so have increased. From the pulpit, in Christian education classes I’ve taught, pastoral counseling sessions and in general discussion I have been intentional in explaining the purpose and power in the Sacraments and have seen that power put into play in people’s lives by such education. For example, one time a church member’s husband, who was a staunch non-believer and resented the Church, did finally attend a worship service for the first time. He sat stoically and acted uninterested, making it clear that he was there simply to appease his wife. When the time came to receive Holy Communion, he refused to come forward (in spite of being invited to an open table). But tears welled up in his eyes as he intently watched others receive the elements. I saw how God works through the Sacraments from a perspective I had not appreciated before.

(g) The Kingdom of God

My understanding of the kingdom of God, the Resurrection and eternal life is predominately drawn from Scriptures. With this foundation, I believe the kingdom of God exists in the world today, is in the hearts of every believer and is also to come in the future. As I have experienced through ministry the desperate need for love, hope, peace, joy and meaning in life for so many, I have become more intentional about preaching and teaching about the abundant life that is available through the kingdom of God as we follow Christ and cultivate the fruits of the Spirit. It is a theme that surfaces in most of my sermons. Thus it is also easier for me to explain the grace and hope in John's message to "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is near" (Matthew 3:2) as he prepared the way for Jesus to come into the world as its teacher, healer and Savior.

(h) Resurrection and eternal life

Death and dying are horrible realities in this world. My ministry allows me to enter into the personal sufferings of those grappling with their own death and that of others in a more intimate way than I had ever experienced before. People turn to me as a messenger of hope and it is my pleasure, gift and responsibility to offer it to them. Even when, I too, am hurting because of the suffering or death of another, the realities of resurrection and eternal life I espouse in my ministry comfort me on a new level as I sense the purpose of my calling in such times. Most of my growth during my provisional time in this area comes through on my own personal challenges this past year: the untimely death of my father and the death of one of my very best friends. I do not know that I would have been strong enough to have been there for my friend and her family nor to have been a rock for my mother if it were not for the hope I have rehearsed through my ministry in resurrection and eternal life for those who are in Christ.

(2) How do you understand the following traditional evangelical doctrines:

(a) repentance

I understand repentance to be turning away from sin and turning toward God. It comes with an understanding that we are sinners, that sin is wrong and that as such we need to change both

our heart attitudes and conduct. My ministry experience has affirmed 2 Corinthians 7:10 (NIV): "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death." To me worldly sorrow is akin to regret and remorse, with regret being an intellectual response that says "why did I do that?" and remorse being a bit deeper feeling of disgust and pain, involving both the intellect and heart. Neither causes people to change their ways. I think of someone I counseled several times regarding her sorrow for her sinful actions toward her family. Yet she always justified her actions based on her family's treatment of her and spent our sessions focusing on how God needs to change her family, that they were causing her to sin. Finally I explained that true repentance brings in our own will. To truly repent one must have a change of will. We have to be willing to take responsibility and act differently. She never came back to me after I responded so. "Godly sorrow" is the catalyst that brings us to true repentance. I do not believe she was considering her actions fully as they existed before God, she was focused on her own feelings about them and therefore she was not truly repentant.

As I pondered her state, I could not help but consider my own regarding my own family situation at that time. I recognized my own sin before God and my own need for repentance. I thank God for forgiveness.

(b) justification;

I understand justification to be pardon from both the guilt and power of sin, made possible by faith, which is the *only* necessary condition of justification (Romans 4:5). As Wesley identified extensively, justification is not when one becomes just and righteous, *that* is the fruit of sanctification. Justification is what God has done for us through his Son; sanctification is what God works in us by the Holy Spirit. It is also the human realization of God's gift of grace.

And so the Good News of the freely given gift of justification is not only a pillar of my own personal faith, but is a central part of the message of my ministry: Through Jesus Christ God has

done the work that frees us from a certain death sentence that we deserve. It is a privilege to aid in and witness in others an understanding of this basic principal, especially for the first time.

(c) regeneration;

I understand regeneration as that act of grace concurrent with justification but not at all identical to it. It is a ‘vast inward change’ (Wesley) that opens up a lifelong quest for holiness. While justification is God doing something for us (turning us from enemies to children of God), regeneration is God doing something in us. When we are born again, our spiritual senses that have lain latent are enlivened by God through the Holy Spirit. It is regeneration that turns us from sinners to Saints (Wesley). Thus as BOD ¶102 states, “new birth is the first step in this process of sanctification.” Seeing the enlivening of others through the Spirit, when their “eyes of understanding” are opened to see our invisible God is a privilege of ministry.

I remember thinking this Wesleyan analogy when I took a new believer of North Hunterdon UMC through a series of orientation teachings of the UMC before bringing her into church membership. Even when learning some of the more mundane basic points about church membership, she grasped the information with excitement and marvel, finding deeper meaning and seeing God in ways that perhaps I had grown too accustomed to and had lost appreciation for. Her newly experienced regeneration in turn, refreshed me.

(d) sanctification? What are the marks of the Christian life?

Sanctification is the continuous process through which we are perfected. Wesley said perfection is perfect love, a love that excludes sin, “filling the heart, taking up the whole capacity of the soul. It is love rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, in everything giving thanks” (JW Sermon 43). To me reaching perfection means reaching a state of being able to not sin (which is different than no longer being capable of sinning). We do not sanctify ourselves through works but rather are sanctified by God through God’s grace; it is neither “warranted by

our efforts nor limited by our frailties” (BOD ¶102). Sanctification continues what God does for us by fulfilling our potential according to our original design when we have been justified and regenerated. It is a sovereign act whereby God sets people apart so that God’s purpose in the world is accomplished through them. Our role is to respond to God’s lead toward sanctification by cooperating with what the Holy Spirit is doing through us.

Marks of the Christian life are faith, hope and love (Wesley Sermons 18, BOD ¶102) that certainly become evidenced through good works. I think the biggest marker of my growth at this time is that as my Christian walk matures, my thirst for perfection increases, even as my appreciation for God’s relationship with me through my imperfection also increases. I find the more time I spend developing spiritual disciplines, the better I become at following God’s lead in my thoughts, actions and works and in practicing the disciplines as well. I have faith and hope that one day I, too, will be able to always turn away from sin as I will live in a perfect state of love.

(3) How has the practice of ministry informed your understanding of the nature and mission of the Church? What are its primary challenges today?

I affirm how the Preamble to our Constitution captures the nature of the church as:

“a community of all true believers under the Lordship of Christ. It is the redeemed and redeeming fellowship in which the Word of God is preached by persons divinely called, and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ’s own appointment. Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit the church seeks to provide for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers, and the redemption of the world.”

My primary growth has been in my understanding of the challenges facing the Church in its mission to be Christ to the world. I understand more that the challenges vary by context.

Geographic location, cultures, social concerns, socio-economic factors and churches doctrinal matters are just a few factors that weigh heavily on how the Church must carry out its mission.

My conference staff position has given me a better view of these varied contexts as I partner with churches throughout one of the most diverse Conferences in the U.S.

I see as a primary challenge that we acknowledge the importance of context in strategically approaching our mission. The Holy Spirit recognizes the immediate needs of lives and focused on the circumcision of hearts both individually and communally based on what is going on at that place at that particular time. Therefore, as the complexities of context appear to be more pronounced, it is even more difficult and at the same time more necessary that local churches spend more time discerning and understanding their own local community contexts, ministry gifts, and denominational context to be effective in their ministries. From a Conference perspective, I find it crucial that we recognize and appreciate that same diversity that exists in our approach to offering partnership and resourcing to local churches. As a second tier of challenge and spiritual growth churches need to then move beyond their own myopic ministries and communities and use their lenses to help one another in ministry. My work championing Team Vital helps accomplish this.

(4) The United Methodist Church holds that Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason are sources and norms for belief and practice, but that the Bible is primary among them. What is your understanding of this theological position of the Church, and how has your practice of ministry been affected by this understanding?

I continue in my understanding and faith that “every scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for showing mistakes, for correcting, and for training character,” (2 Timothy 3:16CEB), and thus not only agree with my UMC colleagues on this important point but also strive to use scripture first in my own discernment process for theological, piety, social and justice issues that I consider. It is indeed my goal to consider tradition, experience and reason alongside the Bible, but because of my faith I am intentional to be cognizant when any of these three sources do not come into alignment with my understanding of Scripture.

This approach also spurs me to be evermore so intentional about studying and growing in my understanding of Scriptures, both by looking at the text and through it. My ministry has shown

me that many are now choosing to read, understand and teach the Bible using techniques related to one method or the other, rather than using both tools. I find it imperative to understand, teach and preach that, for example, as *Revelation* may be a commentary on empire or consumerism, it is also undeniably a statement assuring hope that there will be a resolve to evil in this world.

I utilize the Wesley quadrilateral in examining my own faith for holding the Bible as primary. As the Bible tells me, as our Wesleyan and in fact most of all Christian historical heritage tells me, as my life experiences have always come to reveal to me and as my intellect tells me how to approach matters of faith, I come to the conclusion that the Bible is more reliable than any other source for directing my life, my core beliefs and ministry. Certainly there are popular concerns and challenges to that approach that I must face in my life and ministry, but the Bible tells me that there will be, tradition and history give me constant reminders that such occurrences are not new, and my head helps me to put such challenges into perspective.

(5) How has the practice of ministry enriched your understanding of the meaning and significance of the sacraments?

In addition to my answer to question 1 (f), I recall that I previously spent much time in a tradition that put less emphasis on the sacraments, and in fact practiced baptism and the Lord's supper as solely "symbolic" rituals. It was not until I was in a seminary Worship class with Dr. Heather Elkins that I really began to comprehend the holy power in their connectivity and mystery. Once I grasped that importance and began seeking it out for my own experience, I did receive such experience and continue to do so. I entered commissioned ministry striving to educate others on this significance to the sacraments. I have grown during this time also, however, in learning appreciation for how others have different ways of grasping such experience and responding to it than I do myself and this difference does not diminish either experience. This appreciation gives me more confidence in administering the sacraments.

b) Vocation**(1) How has the experience of ministry shaped your understanding of your vocation as an ordained elder?**

More so than ever I recognize God's grace-filled call in my vocation. I have a heightened awareness of how the experiences of my life leading up to my ordination have equipped me for the particular ministry experiences I am having. For example, having spent over ten years as a human resources manager/professional that specialized in employee relations, equal employment opportunity and leading major changes in corporate approaches to issues such as healthcare benefits, I have insights, sound skills and confidence for ordained ministry that when handed over to God make my ministry more effective. I found myself confident and competent in handling some major employee relations and legal issues when serving at North Hunterdon UMC. I recognized that I was at the right appointment at the right time. Likewise, in my current Conference staff position, I recognize my previous profession as a corporate business leader in major, bold, and cutting edge corporations has served as an asset in providing me with skills in understanding how to strategically move the Conference forward.

I benefit in my ministry from the experience of over ten years of being a stay-at-home mom which gave me both incredible multi-tasking skills and an ability to sacrifice. My years as a Division 1 college athlete gave me a consciousness of taking care of my body, being a team player and a life-long outlet for stress – all important to my ministry. Eight years of teaching Community Bible Study before going to seminary taught me how to read and interpret the Bible from my own heart, not just from studying commentaries alone – something that is a key to my ministry. CBS also gave me experience ministering to a variety of cultures and denominations, a valuable skill in my current Conference staff role.

My BA degree from UPENN in Communications has given me a strong sense of the importance of effective communications across all media. My seminary experience at Drew

unleashed in me a heightened boldness in my creativity which informs me. My husband, with his gifts, experience and partnership is also an important part to my equipping. Finally, I am amazed at the support of close friends that I have now gained from within the ranks of the UMC ordained that surround and support my vocation. God has truly equipped me and I am in awe!

c) The Practice of Ministry

(1) How has the practice of ministry affected your understanding of the expectations and obligations of the itinerant system? Do you offer yourself without reserve to be appointed and to serve as the appointive authority may determine?

The BOD is very clear about the centrality, rationale and obligations of the itineracy system (¶¶338;425-430). As I have worked within the system and spent time carefully examining it I have seen and been told much about its benefits and challenges from District Superintendents, long-time clergy, female clergy, ethnic minority clergy and of young clergy with young families (see my Itineracy Report submitted to BOOM 12/18/2014). I have seen purposeful strides by our current Bishop and Cabinet to be more transparent, more clear and to re-examine and improve the appointment-making process with an eye to encouraging more open communication from clergy to better use the itineracy system in the changing realities of today's world. One evidence of this is the clearly stated expectations now prominently placed on the Conference website in the documents "Appointment Making Values," "Appointment Practices," "Commitments and Understandings," "Discipline on Appointments," "GNJ Appointment Mission" "History and Theology of Appointments" and the "Transition Resources" that are available. I believe the key to operating successfully within the itineracy process is open, honest communication between elders and the Cabinet, one's family members and God. I have an even higher trust that God will indeed lead us through the process as we follow God. Thus I offer myself without reserve to engage in/submit to the itineracy and appointment-making process.

(2) Describe and evaluate your personal gifts for ministry and how they have resulted in fruitful ministry. What would be your areas of strength and areas in which you need to be strengthened in order to be more fruitful in ministry?

The gifts I currently recognize in myself include creativity, vision, strategic leadership, teaching, preaching, prophecy, and exhortation. I have much passion and energy for my current work and I know it comes from the Lord. When I became Director of Small Groups, which was a new position for the Conference, I quickly grasped the need to develop and carry-out an action plan for establishing 1) A “toolbox” of resources for equipping leaders for building and enhancing their small group ministries 2) a racially diverse Small Groups Resource Team of clergy and laity, located throughout the conference who multiply my efforts 3) a strategically chosen “appearance” schedule that maximizes my influence around the conference and 4) a strong promotional and communications plan about mine and others’ work that includes useful webpages, videos, a social media campaign, strategically written articles, etc. I am a leader and model for the Connectional Ministries Team in this approach to my work. I am achieving measurable fruits. My work receives praise from Bishop Schol and other Conference leaders.

When named the Champion of Team Vital for the Conference, I devised a comprehensive



approach to developing the Team Vital resource, assessed the skills, gifts and interests of the project and planning team members, empowered and motivated them around the basic tactic that I developed, worked hard alongside them and we have successfully launched an enormous, effective and key program to the GNJ Strategic Plan resource in only nine months! I am genuinely proud of this team and feel privileged to work with and learn from the special people that are involved. I believe my work in Team Vital also showcases many of my gifts.

My gift of creativity has been enlivened especially through Team Vital. I am amazed at the number of “crazy” ideas I have hatched and brought into fruition with this team, including the “Catch the Wave of the Spirit” surfing display and video that we launched at the 2015 Annual Conference. I also see myself growing in my confidence in this area, especially in recognizing when my creativity comes as a direct vision from the Lord. That was the case with the “surfing” and “two are better than one (Eccles 4:9-12)” themes. I fought many battles in several circles to make this happen, but I knew that the Lord was on my side. I am humble enough to say that this does not happen with all of my work, but I do recognize that it did in this case, as it has in other times. Thus I believe I have a primary gift of visionary leadership.

I believe each of my gifts are most enlivened and continue to grow in me as I am intentional in offering them to the Lord for use and for Holy-Spirit driven guidance. I try to be deliberate about this in all of my work and I feel driven to teach others to do the same. So for instance, whenever I start a meeting that I lead, whether it be for Team Vital, Small Groups or some other endeavor, I start with scripture, a short devotion/discussion and prayer all aimed at emphasizing some facet of God’s ownership of our work. I look forward to being strengthened in all the gifts for ministry as I gain experience and continue to follow God’s lead. I particularly am cognizant that my ministry would benefit greatly if my gifts and skills in evangelism improved. I am intentional about seeking opportunity for growth in this area through prayer and learning from others.

(3) For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness to the Christian gospel and in consideration of your influence as an ordained minister, are you willing to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life; and to this end will you agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to physical health, intentional intellectual development, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, integrity in all personal relationships, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge and love of God?

With the help of our Lord, I do. I am particularly attentive to my need for the discipline of physical exercise and to being very intentional to balance family and marital life with my Church ministry calling. This intentionality helps me in all other personal habits.

(4) Provide evidence of your willingness to relate yourself in ministry to all persons without regard to race, color, ethnicity, national origin, social status, gender, sexual orientation, age, economic condition, or disability.

In my current role I interact with the breadth of diversity within the Conference and it is imperative to meeting the strategic plan goals charged to my role that I not only relate well to all persons but model this for the Conference. Thus in virtually all of my work I have the privilege of being intentional about diversity considerations. I am part of a multi-cultural Connectional Ministries Team, lead a diverse Team Vital project Team and program that emphasizes that local church leaders engage the wide variety of differences and cultures of their communities and congregations. Of my own volition I have been intentional about building a Small Groups Resource Team of clergy and laity from around the Conference that are diverse. Finally, when I consider my most inner circle of friends, they happen to represent a broad spectrum of diversity. When I reflect on this I recognize this to in part be a result of me being drawn to and energized by developing diverse relationships that I learn from and feed my faith in God.

(5) Will you regard all pastoral conversations of a confessional nature as a trust between the person concerned and God?

Yes, by the grace of God I will continue to do so.

(6) Provide evidence of experience in peace and justice ministries.

As a pastor in the local church, I led the congregation to observe the UMC's Peace and Justice



Special Sunday. I am personally active in speaking out with, through and to community groups and individuals regarding hydraulic fracking and related gas pipeline endeavors that are harmful to people and nature. As

the Staff representative on COSROW, I took leadership in bringing attention to and space for

sexual ethics training held in the Spring of 2016. I attended the Global United Methodist Clergywomen's gathering in August. I am developing an intercultural competency evaluation tool for our Conference resource tools of Team Vital, Coaching and PACE groups for the Northern Region. I am engaged in Conference staff discussions and action planning led by the Bishop and other Conference leaders regarding peace and justice issues.

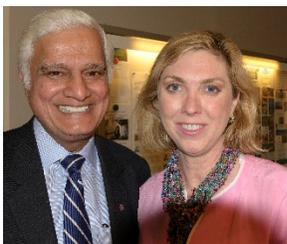
In addition to the questions from the BOD,

1. Explain the threefold aspects of Wesleyan grace and how have you encountered these in your own ministry/life.

In Wesleyan terms grace is God's unconditional decision to overlook our sin and pursue relationship with us that gives us eternal life and perfects us. Prevenient, justifying and sanctifying grace are available to all people. It is through God's prevenient grace that I became aware of my need for God and convicted of the sin-laden state that I and the rest of the world reside in. It is God's justifying grace that that has granted me salvation through faith. God's sanctifying grace has begun and will complete the process of perfecting me, whether in this world or the next.... I find the most thorough description of this Wesleyan view on Grace comes from the Book of Discipline, Part II, ¶101.1 – Our Doctrinal Heritage. (Caulfield submission to BOOM, 2012).

To me the Holy Spirit is God's luring love. This Spirit is present in prevenient, justifying and sanctifying grace that works actively in the world drawing people to God and to call Jesus Christ Lord and Savior. My overwhelming experience is that it is God's Spirit and grace that draws me or others closer to God and propels my ministry forward. "Not, by might nor by power but by my Spirit says the Lord God Almighty" (Zech 4:6) is therefore a life verse for me.

A very personal example of God's sanctifying grace is when I took a very difficult trip to



Paris to comfort my close friend who was dying. I was nervous about what I would say and how I would balance our needs as friends and her need for a minister. I questioned what I believed about death in a new way as I needed to tell someone that I loved dearly my views, give her

permission to let go and die, and encourage her to follow where God was showing her peace.

While there I attended the American Church in Paris and was surprised to see that one of my all-time favorite speakers and apologists was the guest preacher: Ravi Zacharias. His presence was a

comfort to me that God was with me. His words from the pulpit were reassuring to my doubts. When I met him after the service and among other things he told me that he attends a UMC church in Atlanta, I felt emboldened and equipped as the right person to minister to my dear friend. I recognized God's grace blessing me through the hardship I was facing. Not only that, but this experience with my friend who died beautifully and whose family's faith became stronger as prevenient grace drew them closer to God as they witnessed her grace-filled fight with cancer and death, has further sanctified me by erasing my fear of the loss from death and truly helped me celebrate God through it.

2. Share an instance when you found yourself in ministry with someone whose theology was radically different from your own.

In the past couple of years I have worked with a church who has a Director of Music, Worship and Arts who openly declares he is an atheist. I have preached there twice and am the facilitator for their Team Vital. My approach has been to show him love and grace and appreciation for his gifts while at the same time ensuring that the Wesleyan beliefs and values I represent and lead others in command in our UMC ministry endeavors together.

3. Describe how your image of God has changed over your journey. What has informed this?

In addition to my answers in Para 335 Questions 1a, d and e, my appreciation for God's vastness and love continues to grow and thus my image of God has become more intricate. It has been informed through my personal time with God, practice of ministry and fellowship with other believers. More metaphors for God meaningfully grace my vocabulary every day – fountain of life, potter, shepherd, bread of life, light of the world, mother hen, rock and redeemer and much more continue to unveil new revelations. Areas I would never have considered God's presence in, such as delight in my own pleasures and trials continue to amaze and challenge me in new ways. God's blessings are truly new every morning.

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POLITY

1. Explain the role of deacons, elders, and local pastors in the UMC and how they are each uniquely called and function in the church.

The ministry of Deacons is word, service, justice and compassion. They teach and proclaim the Word, contribute to worship, assist Elders in administering the sacraments, form and nurture disciples, conduct marriages, bury the dead, embody the church's mission to the world, and lead congregations in interpreting the needs, concerns and hopes of the world. They may be granted local sacramental authority to administer the sacraments in the absence of an Elder, within their primary appointment in cases where the mission and ministry of the church might be extended (§328). Deacons thus are specialists who serve as bridges between the world and church.

Elders are generalists ordained to a lifetime ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service. They serve "the local church and in extension ministries in witness and service of Christ's love and justice. They are authorized to preach and teach, provide pastoral care and counsel, administer the sacraments, and to order the life of the church for service in mission and ministry as pastors, superintendents, and bishops (§340). They lead worship, prayers and people to Christ.

The local pastor takes on the same responsibilities as an Elder, but is not ordained, and serves under the authority of a license for pastoral ministry. The local pastor's authority is only within the appointment setting and does not extend beyond it (§340). They may vote on all matters presented to the Annual Conference, except constitutional amendments, election of delegates to General or jurisdictional conferences, and matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy. Except student local pastors, they may serve on any board, commission, or committee with voice and vote, except on matters of clergy character, qualifications, status, and ordination, as on the District Committee on Ordained Ministry. They are not eligible to vote on or serve as delegates to the General, jurisdictional, or central conference. (§318.5)

2. What is process for setting a pastor's salary? Who can change it, and when can it be changed?

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According to ¶252.4d, the P/SPRC is charged with making annual recommendations to the Church Council for the pastor(s)' salary and other matters of compensation and support, reporting budget items to the committee on finance. The Chair of Church Council then presents the recommendation to the Charge/Church Conference for approval. Changes to the salary would need Charge Conference approval in consultation with the district superintendent (¶247.13).

GNJAC has established an equitable compensation scale which takes into account the training and years of service of the pastor (¶604.13). If a local church is unable to pay the equitable salary, then, in consultation with the DS, the Conference may be requested to supplement the salary. The decision to support full-time pastoral leadership resides with the Bishop and Cabinet. Churches that are financially able are urged to pay salaries commensurate with the professional training and experience of their pastors and in keeping with salaries paid similar professionals including other clergy in their community. It is a matter of justice, fairness and respect.

3. The Education committee wants to update the curriculum being taught in the Christian Education program. What specific guidance does the BOD give you in dealing with this issue?
You (the pastor) are charged to give oversight to the educational program of the church and to encourage the use of United Methodist literature and media (¶340.2.c.1.a). To assist you, the General Board of Discipleship sets standards and provide guidance concerning programming of the Church, including the church school (¶1110.7). They or their material can be consulted. No curriculum that does not adhere to the doctrine and polity of the UMC should be used.

4. You have discovered a need in the community for a soup kitchen, and wish to recommend that this be a priority for the congregation, using the facilities of the church. What parties and processes need to be involved?
The Church Council, who are responsible for planning and implementing programs of nurture, outreach, and witness, will be involved and approve the plan (¶252). The Board of Trustees will be involved and focus on the facilitation of the plan and any concerns related to any outside organization's use of the facility (¶2533.3). I will stay involved as the leader of the church

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into service (§340.2.d), as the administrative officer of the local church (§340.2.c.1), and as a member of the Church Council (§252.5.1). We may be assisted as needed by the DS who acts as an extension of the superintending role of the bishop (§403.2). We will be responsible to the Charge/Church Conference.

5. A constituent of your church comes to speak with you about their call to ministry. Describe the basic steps that are involved in seeking ordination.

In accordance with §310, I would have them read *The Christian as Minister* and *Understanding God's Call: Ministry Inquiry Process*. The candidate should then write to the DS to apply for admission to the candidacy program and to be assigned a candidacy mentor by the district committee. His/Her candidacy mentor will work with them through the discernment process which includes psychological testing as prescribed by the BOOM. After completing the first two sections of the *Candidacy Guidebook* with the mentor, the candidate makes a commitment to the form of ministry felt to be most appropriate and requests a recommendation from their SPRC and affirmation from their Church Conference. The candidate is then examined by DCOM to become a certified candidate. The candidate may then apply for license as a local pastor after fulfilling education requirements. Progress in the candidacy process is reviewed annually by the DCOM as recommended by the charge conference. Once the candidate has been certified for at least 1 year (but no more than 12) and has fulfilled service, undergraduate and graduate education requirements as outlined in §324, he/she may apply for Provisional Membership. He/she must submit to BOOM a satisfactory certificate of health, respond to written and oral doctrinal exams, and other documentation as stated in §324 and as the AC BOOM requires. Candidates who have been probationary members in full-time appointments for at least two full annual conference years may be admitted in full connection in the AC and ordained as a deacon or elder and will submit the required documentation to and undergo examination by BOOM as outlined in §330

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and ¶335 respectively. Upon satisfactory completion of these requirements, the candidate may be ordained and operate in Full Connection as outlined in ¶329 and ¶333 respectively.

6. Describe the general structures of the Annual Conference and how each body functions.

The Annual Conference is a regional body, an organizational unit and a yearly meeting. As a regional body it is described as the basic unit or “fundamental body” of the UMC (¶11) and refers to a geographically-based form of connectionalism. The U.S. has 57 annual conferences and there are 76 annual Conferences in Africa, Europe and the Philippines.

As an organizational body, the Annual Conference has a central office and a professional staff. It is led by a bishop, the bishop’s cabinet of district superintendents, connectional ministries staff and other extended cabinet staff such as a treasurer and director of communications as required by the BOD. It sets goals and provides resourcing for effective ministry within its jurisdiction to inspire, teach and assist local churches in forming disciples.

Annual Conference meetings are where clergy and laity gather for worship, fellowship and to conduct the business of the conference. They usually last 3-5 days and provide a connection for ministry beyond the local church (¶601). The bishop presides over these meetings where reports of past and ongoing work are given and future goals, budgets and programs are adopted. Clergy members are commissioned, ordained and retired, and every 4 years delegates for Jurisdictional and General Conferences are elected and changes to legislation are voted upon.

7. Describe the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of the United Methodist Church.

The General Conference serves as the legislative branch of the denomination and operates through a meeting session that occurs every four years. It opens the BOD for change through proposed resolutions and the sessions themselves give opportunity for greater discussion on issues. Clergy and Lay delegates to General Conferences are elected from Annual Conferences. Bishops preside over General Conferences but they do not vote.

Bishops vote at the Council of Bishops, the executive branch of the UMC. The Council of Bishops comprises all active and retired bishops of the UMC. It meets twice a year. “The Church expects the Council of Bishops to speak to the Church and from the Church to the world and to give leadership in the quest for Christian unity and interreligious relationships,” (§422.2).

Finally, the Judicial Council serves as the judicial branch of the UMC. It has 9 members elected by the General Conference. It determines the constitutionality of acts or proposed acts of the General, Jurisdictional, Central and Annual conferences. It acts as a guardian of the BOD, determining whether acts or other official business of the UMC (such as the interpretations given by bishops) conform to it and does so in accordance with procedures established by the BOD.

8. What is your understanding of the theology behind Shared Ministries giving (apportionments)?

Shared ministry giving offers opportunity for spiritual growth and social justice engagement as participants allow their faith to inform their sacrificial giving on a broader level than can often be accomplished in local ministry giving alone. It is a connectional way to respond to the Great Commission. As individuals and as local churches, we would never be able to share the Gospel or the love of Christ as far or to as many people as we do when we are connected and share resources for ministry. We are called to love our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:31-32) and thus to respond to their needs accordingly. This is a decidedly inclusive call.

9. You have an idea for a unique form of ministry. How does the Book of Discipline guide us in seeking affirmation for ministries that are beyond the local church?

What is the role of extension ministry in the life of the church?

Extension ministries serve in settings beyond the local UMC church in the witness and service of Christ’s love and justice. At least 120 days before my desired appointment I should submit a request to the Cabinet and BOOM describing the proposed setting for the ministry, explain why I feel called to it and what gifts I would bring, offer evidence of God’s grace and share plans to fulfill my ordination vows through it. In consultation with the cabinet and BOOM, the bishop may

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make the appointment before the next annual conference (§344.1.d.1). The appointment would be reviewed annually (§344.2.a, §344.2.b). I would still be affiliated with a charge conference in my annual conference and report annually to them my pastoral duties and the fulfillment of ordination activities (§344.3).

10. In what ways does your upbringing, your cultural context, your personal experience shape your understanding of our polity?

Our personal experiences, the people we encounter, our community concerns and what we have been taught all factor in. An asset I bring to ministry is my diverse background and the lens that comes with working in a staff position that partners with the great variety of churches across the most diverse state in the U.S. I was born in the American South with parents who grew up in poverty and instilled their values and concerns in me, but at the same time moved our family all over the U.S., exposing us to a variety of cultures, socio-economic realities and communities of a variety of ethnic makeups. I achieved an Ivy League education and a graduate degree. In my secular career I worked in human resources for large and small companies and attended to the concerns of blue collar, professional, service workers and executives throughout the U.S. I have lived outside the country – thus as a foreigner who had to learn the local language, customs and culture- and have traveled to poverty-stricken as well as wealthy nations. I have led ecumenical ministries and have worked closely with leaders of other Christian and Jewish denominations.

At the same time, I understand that I have never been poor, live in a wealthy area that lacks diversity, have been married most of my adult life and never divorced, enjoy white, heterosexual privilege, have been marginalized by misogyny and patriarchy, hate hydraulic fracking practices for extracting natural gas from the environment and was raised to see through a lens of American superiority. All these factors, and more, affect my appreciation for church polity. I pray in a true Wesleyan spirit that I am going on to perfection, but I am not there yet!

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BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

My faith journey began before I was born. I was taught that my salvation had been prayed for by my ancestors, in particular my great-grandfather whom I never met. My Christian faith was nurtured especially by the deep faith of my mother and grandmother. I made a personal commitment to Christ at the age of thirteen. I did not perceive a call to active ministry, however, until my early thirties and not to ordained ministry until my forties.

When in my early thirties, I was invited to attend a para-church small group Bible Study program called Community Bible Study International, I accepted the invitation because I was told I would get “two hours of adult conversation and your kids will be taken care of.” My life changed forever. We were living in Paris, France, and the Bible Study group enjoyed the diversity of people from all over the world, all walks of life, various faith backgrounds, denominational and non-denominational affiliations. We also became members of the American Church of Paris that was led by Rev. Dr. Larry Kalajainen of the UMC and had the same diversity in its attendance. What I grasped was the richness of people “from every tribe, tongue and nation” coming together to study God’s Word, share their thoughts and experiences in relation to it and build incredible bonds that overcame many differences. My entire family’s life changed dramatically. I became a small group leader and then the Director for the entire program. Upon return to the United States, I led a Community Bible Study program with 150 adults and 100 children in Flemington and also started programs in two New Jersey State prisons. As a member of Clinton United Methodist Church, my faith continued to be fostered and mentored by Rev. Galen Goodwin and later Rev. Dr. Lew Hiserote.

God’s intentionality for my life in ministry was further evidenced to me in 2008 when I had a very vivid dream that directed me to go to seminary to become better equipped for more influential, full-time ministry. I enrolled at Drew Theological School on a 100% tuition scholarship and graduated with several honors/prizes, even after experiencing a surprise pregnancy at age 42 while in the thick of my studies and family life with older children.

I was commissioned in 2012 and appointed to North Hunterdon UMC in the Raritan Valley District. In the very short time I served there, I enjoyed seeing vitality rise at North Hunterdon as our attendance at this small church doubled, we put on a highly successful Community outreach event benefitting A Future of Hope, moved the church from paying less than 20% to 100% of its shared ministry responsibilities and resolved some very serious administrative and leadership problems at the church. It was a challenge to my heart to leave North Hunterdon when I did, but in 2013 I was re-appointed as Director of Small Groups and Spiritual Visioning for the Conference as part of the Connectional Ministries Team. I also lead the Team Vital Resource for the Conference. I very much so enjoy my role(s) and feel in sync with God’s calling on my life. I have a passion for seeing the GNJ Strategic Plan realized and believe it is key for making new and growing more disciples of Christ who by following the Holy Spirit’s lead are transforming the world.

My husband (Tom) and I live in Clinton Township with 2 of our 3 children: Amber (17) and Camille (6). Our son TJ (20) is a sophomore at Birmingham Southern College (a UMC affiliated, liberal arts school in Birmingham, Alabama, not far from where I was born). On the Conference website I am described as someone who “enjoys deep, spirit-led conversations, nature, exercise, exploring new restaurants and international travel.” That sounds like me, I probably wrote this, I do not remember, it has been a very action-packed and fruitful 2 ½ years!

Rev. Lorie “Beth” Caulfield

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Husband: Thomas J. Caulfield, III, PhD

Married 6/25/1991

Children: Thomas J. Caulfield, IV “TJ” (age 20)
Amber J. Caulfield, (age 17)
Camille J. Caulfield, (age 6)

2016- Present **Board of Trustees, Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association.** Ocean Grove, NJ.

2014 – Present **Director of Small Groups**
UMC of Greater New Jersey Annual Conference *Ocean, NJ*

- Leader and originator of the Conference Small Group Ministry Resource Team that has led the conference to surpass its strategic plan goal for small groups two years ahead of schedule.
- Champion of TEAM VITAL, a connectional strategic ministry action planning and leadership development resource that currently has 80 churches participating.
- GNJ Northern Region Leadership Team member responsible for programming including Regional Days of Learning
- Monthly contributor to the *Connection*, GNJ Connectional Ministry Team’s blog.
- PAcE group facilitator
- Coach for Pastors (currently 75 credits toward ICC certification)

2013 – 3014 **Sr. Pastor** *North Hunterdon UMC* *Hampton, NJ*

2008 – 2013 **Drew Theological School** *Madison, NJ*
Master of Divinity Degree May, 2013
GPA: 4.03, *Betty H. Welsh scholarship recipient (100% tuition)*

2007 - 2008 **Teaching Director** *InPrison Community Bible Study*
Instigated weekly bible study programs at Edna Mahon Women’s Correctional Facility and Mountainview Youth Correctional Facility (men ages 16-35). Recruited, trained and shepherded small group facilitator/volunteers from diverse faith and ethnic/racial backgrounds. Prepared and delivered weekly lectures. Class ranged from 8-80 incarcerated participants weekly (avg. 35).

2004 - 2007 **Teaching Director** *Community Bible Study* *Flemington, NJ*

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Shepherded an interdenominational class of 150 women and 75 children from over 30 churches. Responsibilities included shepherding a leadership team of 24 women and preparing and delivering weekly lectures.

- 2001- 2003** **Teaching Leader** *CBS International* *Paris, France*
Shepherded an ecumenical and international class of 50+ men, women and children from over 15 countries. Our class met at St. Joseph's Catholic Church and I was the first non-Roman Catholic chosen to lead the class.
- 1999 – 2013** **Homemaker**
- 1994 - 1998** **Human Resources Manager** *Lockheed Martin Corp.* *Moorestown, NJ*
Niche areas of expertise/contributions: Employee/Labor Relations, Management Development, Equal Employment Opportunity Officer (Special assignments in harassment prevention, investigation and remediation), organization design
- 1993 – 1994** **Human Resources Representative** *U.S. Healthcare* *Blue Bell, PA*
Niche areas of expertise/contributions: Employee Relations, Management Development, Equal Employment Opportunity Officer (Special assignments in harassment prevention, investigation and remediation), organization design
- 1992 - 1994** **Villanova University** *Villanova, PA*
MBA Coursework (22 credits) GPA 3.43
- 1991 - 1993** **Human Resources Representative** *Honeywell Intl.* *Ft. Washington, PA*
Niche areas of expertise/contributions: Employee Relations, Management Development, Equal Employment Opportunity Officer (Special assignments in harassment prevention, investigation and remediation), organization design
- 1990 - 1991** **Human Resources Supervisor** *International Paper* *Putnam, CT*
Maintained HR responsibilities at 4 locations in the Linerboard Division: Putnam, CT; Geneva, NY; Suffern, NY; and Presque Isle, ME
- 1988 - 1990** **HR Management Trainee** *International Paper*
Part of a competitive corporate training program with 6-9 month assignments including at a unionized paper mill in Vicksburg, MS, Corporate Headquarters in Memphis, TN and a folding carton facility in Clinton, IA. Special Assignment also in innovative healthcare plan design.
- 1984 -1988** **University of Pennsylvania** *Philadelphia, PA*
B.A. in Communications from the *Annenberg School for Communication*
Economics minor from the *Wharton School.* GPA 3.21
- Summer, 1987** **Advertising Sales Intern** *Ohio Magazine* *Cincinnati, OH*

Summer, 1986	TV Programming Intern	<i>WGBY PBS Station</i>	<i>Springfield, MA</i>
Summer, 1985	Security Guard	<i>Monsanto</i>	<i>Indian Orchard, MA</i>
1984	Westfield High School Diploma awarded.		<i>Westfield, MA</i>

Other Ministry Leadership Experience:

Inspirational speaking/teaching engagements - featured speaker at various church revival meetings, women's retreats and other faith-based organization functions.

Additional Ministry Training:

Results-Based Management, The White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives and the **United States Department of Labor Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives**. Training for improving faith-based organizations' skills in measuring, managing, and communicating results and effectiveness. **2009**

Publications:

Article "The Spirit's Lead" published in United Methodist Women's *Response Magazine*, July/August, 2013.

Article "Surprise Midlife Pregnancy: Burgeoning Trends" published in *Celebrate Life Magazine*, May/June 2012 issue.

Article "Unexpectedly Expecting" published in *Prism Magazine*, Sept/Oct 2012 issue.

Article "My Surprise Blessing" published in United Methodist Women's *Response Magazine*, October, 2012.

Languages:

Fluent French. Primary language English.

Other:

- Sprint and Long Jump Coach for Hunterdon Lions Youth Track & Field Club, 2010-2012.
- Received **All Ivy League Track and Field** honors for 4 years (7 seasons) while competing for PENN.

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CORLEW, DAWN

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NOTES

Sermon Title: Aspire to Do More
Text: Luke 18:1-15
Bergen Highlands UMC
October 23, 2016

Composition of Bergen Highlands United Methodist Church (BHUMC)

Bergen Highlands UMC is located in Upper Saddle River, NJ. BHUMC is located in an affluent suburban town in Northern Bergen County. It is considered a bedroom community of NYC. Our congregants come from several of the surrounding towns. Our worship service is an blend of traditional and informal music and worship. We are a smaller congregation with an average of thirty (30) in worship. We have a few youth and eight (8) children who attend worship and Sunday School. We make sure that the kids and youth are involved in worship as acolytes, reading and help as needed with passing out materials for the service. It is my priority to make the worship service kid friendly and that kids feel they are valuable part of worship. The members of the congregation are diverse in age. Many of the members are retired or nearing retirement. There are some families and a couple of singles. Our congregation consists of lawyers, small business owners, musicians, doctors, teachers, and those in the financial industry. An interesting dynamic in our church is there are some stay at home dads. We do have a part-time organist/music director. Our choir director is a retired Metropolitan Opera principal soprano. In our worship service, we have an adult choir and children's choir. The adult choir sings weekly and the children's choir sings once a month. We have a liturgist and a lay reader who participate in worship each Sunday.

Aspire To Do More

Text: Luke 18:1-14

WOW! Indulge me for a moment.... many of you know that on Saturday nights, I turn into a pumpkin at 9:00 pm and I don't like to stay up late. However, last night was different.... My CUBS, the CHICAGO CUBS were playing the National League Championship game. And they WON!!!! After 71 years, they are finally going to the World Series. 1945 was the last time they went, was anyone around for that series?? Since 1945, the Chicago Cubs had 4 failed trips to the NLCS... (most recently last year, which I went to one of the games). But they came back this year under the leadership of Joe Madden and they are on their way to the World Series. It has been since 1908 that they won a world series.... As someone put on my facebook page last night... "Happy for the *long suffering* get Cubs fans". In other words... we have been waiting a long time. Since the end of WW2, fans have patiently, persistently year after year cheered for our CUBS believing this is the year and finally we have won the National League pendent! Oh and did I say...we are World Series bound. Persistence paid off. They aspired to do more from last year and now they are off to Cleveland for the World Series.

A famous inventor said ... **"three things that are most essential to achievement are common sense, hard work and stick-to-it-iv-ness."**¹ Anyone recognize these words by the famous local inventor? Who is the inventor? Thomas Edison.

He has over one thousand (1,000) patents to his name and most famously known for his three (3) inventions: phonograph, light bulb, and motion pictures. His first invention was the electric vote recorder. He was not always successful and there were a lot more things that he invented that failed. But he kept at it; he knew about **"stick-to-it-ive-ness."**

¹ www.thomasedision.com/quotes/html. Accessed October 18, 2016.

Two great examples of aspiring more even in the face of failures, in the face of being turned away. They wanted more and did not give up.

Today, the parables that Mike read provide us with examples of people who aspired more and did not give up. In the first parable, Jesus tells the story of a woman, actually a nobody at that time because she was a widow. Widows did not have any respect in the community. There is also a Judge (one who should have been respected) but he did not show respect for others or even God as the scripture says. Into this story comes the powerless woman who persists in making requests to the judge. Actually, she has no voice because she is a woman. She goes beyond her confined role and she boldly appeals fervently to the judge.

On the surface, this parable is about prayer and the persistence in praying. Jesus desires his followers to pray constantly and to not lose heart. He knows life on earth can be filled with difficulties and trials. Illnesses, disease, accidents, economic troubles, broken relationships, addiction and other heartaches can wear people down, leaving them discouraged and disheartened. *Can anyone related?*

Here in the face of adversity, the widow boldly goes before the judge. At first the judge refuses to respond to the widow's request. He seems to underestimate the persistence of this nobody and by the end, the judge has been worn down, and in order to get rid of the widow, the judge complies and fulfills her request. We don't know what her request is. We don't know if it was worthy or not. We do know that the judge does not respond out of a sense of justice or out of compassion. He wants her to be gone.

Jesus connects this parable to God. If an unjust judge can respond to the persistence of someone in need, imagine what God can do with our prayers. We can be sure that God does hear our prayers, hears our pleas and cries both day and night, even though we may not see the

immediate results. The story tells us that God has not forgotten us even though we grow impatient losing hope and faith.

This parable is deeper than just prayers not being answered and our persistence. If an unjust judge can respond to the persistence of someone in need, imagine what God can do with our prayers for justice. When it comes to issues of justice and the cries from the helpless, God will respond. Sometimes it may be us that God will use to respond. We are the ones to bring a justice forward. We are to be the voice for the injustice. We are to stand up for justice. When people around you begin to talk about a certain group of people.... we are to stand up for justice. When people are living in an unjust situation, we are to stand up and fight for their justice.

It may be difficult to do but Jesus knows when we stand up for justice with persistence and prayer, we are changed. “Our prayers might begin by telling God how to do business and to focus on our own way, but prayer has the ability to transform us. At some point we shift to God’s will and a prayer for God’s justice to prevail.”²

What inspires you to keep going in your prayers? What inspires you to keep going in your stand for justice? What issues of justice concerns you? How do you pray for those issues?

In the second parable, Jesus tells about those who trust in themselves and judge others with contempt. Two men are praying in the temple. One is a Pharisee, and the other is a tax collector. *The Pharisee knows the law. He is a disciplined, faithful man and would do more than the law requires. He tithes and fasts twice a week (although only once a week is required). Consequently, he is pleased with himself and confident of God’s favor. His prayer is “God, I*

² Daily Discipleship, “A New Persistence”, October 21, 2007. www.elca.org/dailydiscipleship. Accessed October 18, 2016.

thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.”

The other man in the story is a tax collector. Tax collectors of that time collected for the government and they would collect for themselves some extra to supplement their own income. No wonder the tax collector could not look up to heaven, but instead beats his breast as he makes confession to God. He knew he wasn't perfect. Far from it. So he begs for mercy saying “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.”

In the first century, the Pharisee would have been perceived to be more faithful and righteous before God. It was easy to pray, “Thank God I am not like that other person.” We judge others all the time, often unaware of the other person's internal struggles and prayers. At times, we may miss the opportunity to meet and learn from amazing people who are deeply trying to be faithful in difficult times and circumstances.

In Jesus style, he uses a parable to reverse things and turn the situation around. The sinner who collects taxes and is despised by others finds God's favor. God saw the tax collector's heart. This does not mean God approves of cheating one another. But the tax collector comes before God in humility, acknowledging his sinfulness and shortcomings. He is relying on the mercy of God. The Pharisee who appeared to do everything right did not find favor with God. His prayer to God revealed his heart and his own pride of perceiving himself as a more righteous man than the tax collector.³

The Pharisee thought he knew it all. “He uses the first-person pronoun four times in rapid succession--“I..., I..., I..., I...” In assessing his own character, he compares himself only to the worst elements of his society, and pronounces himself excellent by comparison. When

³ Daily Discipleship, “A New Humility”, October 28, 2007. www.elca.org/dailydiscipleship. Accessed October 18, 2016.

picking a standard by which to measure ourselves, we need to look higher. The only faithful standard is Jesus. If we compare ourselves to Jesus, our sin will be obvious and we will not be tempted to the kind of pride that taints this Pharisee.”⁴

My dad used to say “some people are so spiritually minded they are no earthly good.” The Pharisee cannot see that his religion is to change him and change the world around him. We may be good, religious people, even generous to the church. But are we allowing God to use us to make a difference in the world.

Lately in my devotional time I have been reading the gospels and I have been paying attention to the questions that Jesus asked. Verse 8 provides us with one of those questions:

“When the Son of Man (Jesus) comes, will he find faith on earth?”

Jesus reminds us that when he comes back for the second coming, will he find faith on earth?

This question is for us. For us, who live in world that is filled with chaos, a world filled with uncertainty in our politically system, or in a world where there is injustice in the world. In a world where people show hatred for the other and act on that hatred with violence. In a world where people are hungry and have food insecurity. **In this type of world, Will Faith be found?**

Will Faith be evident?

Jesus reminds us that faith is active...actively hoping, never ceasing in our prayers. Faith is active in a humble worship that informs us how we live our life. We are in the midst of Stewardship Campaign; we know that stewardship is more than finances. It is about our time, our lives and what we do with our lives. ***It is about asking the question.... Will Jesus find faith in me?***

⁴ Kuli Fisi’iaha, “God’s Grace, available to all”, October 27, 2013. www.methodist.org.nz/board_of_ministry/refresh/10_minutes/archives_10_minutes_2013. Accessed October 18, 2016.

Today, we are challenged to aspire to do more...To act boldly and to live justly

To be persistent in prayer like the widow.

To fear God and respect others

To be resistant to injustices in the world.

To be filled with humility as we worship GOD!!!

To not be concerned with others think or do but to be concerned with what God thinks of us.

To share Christ to all people...to both tax collectors and the religious ones.

We are called to aspire to more in our life as followers of Christ?

How will you respond?

Will you be like the widow?

Who lacks powers but is the persistent one and stands up for justice.

The judge?

Not to be bothered by the "things that don't matter"

The tax collector?

Full of humility and knows that it is only God who saves us. And all we need is God's grace and love in our lives.

Dare I say like the Pharisee?

Only concerned with being good but not concerned with our dependence on God?

We are called to aspire to do more in our life.... let us aspire to the life of Christ.

One story about Mother Teresa is a story about a visit that she made to the legendary Washington lawyer, Edward Bennett Williams, to ask for financial support for one of her good causes. Williams was one of the best known trial attorneys of his day; his clients included singer Frank Sinatra, a soviet spy, the Unification Church leader Sun-Young Moon, among others. Well connected politically, he had access to every president from John Kennedy to Ronald Regan. Also an avid sports fan, at one time he owned both the Washington Redskins football team and the Baltimore Orioles baseball club. His biographer described him saying, “He wanted power and... he was an effective crusader for individual freedom.” The biography tells a story about when Mother Teresa visited Edward Bennett Williams because she was raising money for an AIDS hospice. Williams was in charge of a small charitable foundation that she hoped would help her cause. Before she arrived for the appointment, Williams said to his partner, Paul Dietrich, “You know, Paul, AIDS is not my favorite disease. I don’t really want to make a contribution, but I’ve got this Catholic saint coming to see me, and I don’t know what to do.” They agreed that they would be polite, hear her out, but then say “No.” Well, Mother Teresa arrived. She was like a little sparrow sitting 3 on the other side of the big mahogany lawyer’s desk. She made her appeal for the hospice, and Williams said, “We’re touched by your appeal, but No.” Mother Teresa said simply, “Let us pray...” Williams looked at Dietrich; they bowed their heads and after the prayer, Mother Teresa made the same pitch, word for word, for the hospice. Again, Williams politely said – “No.” Again, Mother Teresa said, “Let us pray.” Williams, exasperated, looked up at the ceiling and cried, “All right, all right, get me my checkbook.”⁵

May we aspire to do more in our faith and in our actions.

Thanks be to God, Amen!

⁵ Tom Long, “Praying without Losing Heart,” October 7, 2007. www.30goodminutes.org. Accessed October 20, 2016.

THE ORDER OF WORSHIP

Sermon: *Aspire To Do More*
October 23, 2016

Prelude

During this time the congregation is gathering in the worship space. The choir is ready for the worship service. I have spent time with the choir to remind them that they are examples for worship; they set the tone for worship.

The candles are lit to remind us that Christ is the Light of the world and his presence is with us. The children help acolyte. After the candles are lighted, the liturgist and I process into the sanctuary. We pause at the altar for prayer.

Welcome

The liturgist or myself welcome the congregation, new visitors and offer a reminder of why we are gathered here for worship. For me, it is important to have laity involved in worship. The liturgist leads worship from the Welcome to the Psalter reading. The lay reader reads the scripture lesson.

Call To Worship

I chose to open with the praise song "*We Bring the Sacrifice of Praise*" (The Faith We Sing, #2013). We are in the middle of our Stewardship campaign called "Aspire to Do More." Our stewardship campaign is about all areas of our lives and using them for God even if it requires us to sacrifice something.

Opening Hymn

I chose "*Gather Us In*" (TFWS #2236). The song is a reminder of the purpose and nature of the church and why we gather to worship; it also reminds us that all people are welcome.

Opening Prayer

The opening prayer is said in unison. It is a prayer to acknowledge who God is and to remind us of the work we called to and ask for God's help.

Passing the Peace

We share the passing of peace to recognize our brother's and sister's in Christ.

Psalter

We read responsively the lectionary Psalm.

Children In Worship

This part of the service is a priority for me. I want the kids to know that they are a vital part of the congregation. During this time, I share about the scriptures that are used in the service. I try to find ways for them to participate and interact during this time rather than talk at them.

Prayers of Praise and Concern/Lord's Prayer

In our congregation, we share our concerns and prayer with the entire congregation. After everyone has shared we take time for silent prayer for confession/personal requests. After the silent prayer, I lead in a Pastoral Prayer. We closed the prayer time by lifting up our voices together in praying the Lord's Prayer. The kids are in worship so they are learning the Lord's Prayer.

Offering/Offertory/Doxology/Prayer of Dedication

The offering is in the service at this time for a very practical reason. We are a small congregation; our Sunday School teachers sing in the choir. So the kids stay in worship until the offering is over so that the teachers can sing in the choir and sometimes the Children's choir sings during the offertory. Theologically, I also want the kids to understand that the offering is a part of our worship time. After the offering, the children go to Sunday School.

Announcements

We use this time to share the events in the life of the church. We keep it with the offering so people hear the events in the middle of worship rather than at the beginning or ending when people may arrive late or leave early.

Hymn

We follow the offering time with a hymn to focus on the scripture and sermon. I chose "Take My Life, and Let It Be" (The United Methodist Hymnal #399) to tie into the theme of our Stewardship Campaign.

Scripture

I used the gospel reading from the lectionary. The lectionary texts lend itself to the theme of our Stewardship Campaign.

Sermon

The purpose of the sermon was to remind the congregation that as stewards we are to be active in the areas of justice, prayer and worship.

Stewardship Moment

This was a time to remember our membership vows and that we all have a responsibility to be involved in the church. We made a bookmark with the five areas (presence, gifts, time, service and witness) that we commit to by being a member. We handed these out to the congregation at this time.

Church Litany for the Mission of BHUMC

This was the congregational response to the sermon and stewardship moment.

Closing Hymn

I chose "Song of Hope" (TFWS#2186) as our response to go from the place and live out our faith.

Benediction

The Children's Choir sings our benediction and then the light of Christ is carried out of the sanctuary.

Does the Order of Worship help deliver the theme of the sermon? Explain

Yes, I tried to reinforce that stewardship is about being stewards in all areas of our life. The call to worship, songs, scripture and sermon all served to remind us that stewardship is more than just finances; it is a lifestyle of our whole being.

Lord, we receive your grace to cultivate our own lives of faith, to nurture our faith in our children and youth, and to inspire others to believe in Jesus.

Let us be motivated by the compassion of our Lord to lives of daily service, within and beyond the household of faith.

Lord, we receive your grace to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, visit the sick and the prisoner. These and other acts of service we will do humbly, as unto you. Amen.

***CLOSING HYMN** "Song of Hope" TFWS#2186

***BENEDICTION**

***POSTLUDE** "Verset, Magnificat IV -Toni" G. Carissimi

(Please remain standing until the Light of Christ is carried out of the Sanctuary.)

SERVING IN WORSHIP TODAY

Sunday School: Pat Hiler/Victoria Broadbent
Nursery:
Greeter:
Liturgist: Doug Swenson
Lay Reader: Michael Grottola

UPCOMING EVENTS

OCTOBER 26 Wednesday 7pm, Bible Study group meets.

SERVING THE CHURCH

Ministers	The Congregation of BHUMC
Pastor	Rev. Dawn Corlew
Choir Director	Mrs. Betsy Haley
Organist	Dr. Steve Freides
Secretary	Mrs. Janice DeLeonardis

BERGEN HIGHLANDS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors



The Rev. Dawn Corlew
318 W. Saddle River Road
Upper Saddle River, New Jersey 07458
Church: 201-327-3960
Office Hours: Mon., Tues., Thurs., 10am–2pm
Wed., 9:30am–12:30pm
Email: bergenhighlands@optonline.net
www.bergenhighlandsumc.org

[Back to the Candidate Profile](#)

Bergen Highlands United Methodist Church

Sunday, October 23, 2016 at 10:15 am
23rd Sunday after Pentecost

Welcome to Bergen Highlands UMC!

Thank you for sharing in our worship this morning.

If you are visiting, please fill out a visitor card found in the back of each pew, and place it in the offering plate.

*Please stand as you are comfortable.

PRELUDE Flor Peeters
"Invention on the Chant, "Veni Creator Spiritus"

WELCOME

***CALL TO WORSHIP** (responsive)
Choir singing: *We Bring the Sacrifice of Praise* (TFWS#2031)

We come joyfully to the house of the Lord.

We bring our praise and offer our lives to God.

This is our gift and our sacrifice - an act of devotion to God.

Let us celebrate God's love with our voices and our lives.
(All Singing)

We bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the Lord.

We bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the Lord.

And we offer up to you the sacrifices of thanksgiving; and we offer up to you the sacrifices of joy.

***OPENING HYMN** "Gather Us In" TFWS#2236

***OPENING PRAYER** (in unison)

Lord, everywhere we look we see the imprint of your creative love. The wondrous works of nature show your majesty. As we gather today to celebrate your love and creation, keep us mindful that we are part of that created order, meant to be stewards and not destroyers. Prepare us to work for you in ministries of peace and justice. AMEN

***PASSING THE PEACE**

PSALTER (sung response) Psalm 65 UMH#789

CHILDREN IN WORSHIP

Kids Church: Children 4 years and older can go to the Fellowship Hall after the offering and prayer time.

PRAYERS OF PRAISE AND CONCERN

LORD'S PRAYER UMH#895

OFFERTORY

***DOXOLOGY** UMH#95

"Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow"

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

***HYMN** "Take My Life, and Let It Be" UMH#399

SCRIPTURE Luke 18:1-14 (NT p.81)

The Word of God for all People. **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON Pastor Dawn Corlew

"Aspire to Do More "

STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

*CHURCH LITANY FOR THE MISSION OF BHUMC

Let us reaffirm our commitment to be the people of God, daily being transformed by the power of God's sanctifying grace.

Lord, we receive your grace to grow in ways that faithfully demonstrate your presence and power in our lives.

Let us resolve, as we grow, to keep our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith.

Lord, we receive your grace to follow Jesus, devoting our hearts to learning what it means to be more like you.

Let us consider what it means to be people of faith, changed from the inside by our encounters with the risen Lord.

THE BOOK OF COLOSSIANS
BIBLE STUDY

SETTING AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The Bible Study will be taught at Bergen Highlands UMC, a suburban church in Bergen County and Palisades District. It will be used for the weekly Bible study group that meets on Wednesday evenings. It is a small group that ranges from 4-6 in attendance. It is an adult Bible study, the members range from 60-68 years in age and all have been Christians most of their lives. The group consists of members who have a M.D. /PH.D., retired teachers and a business man. It is an upper middle class group.

The purpose of the Bible Study is to learn more about the books of the Bible. Also, there has been a request from the group to learn more about Paul and his writings. The book of Colossians will address both of these needs.

OUTLINE OF BIBLE STUDY

WEEK 1 – OVERVIEW OF COLOSSIANS AND CHAPTER 1

Scripture: Colossians 1:1-23

Key Concept: To give an overview of the book of Colossians, explore the background of Colossians and answer who is Paul? It is a little book that has big theology.

- A. Background Information (Col. 1)**
 - a. Authorship – Col. 1:1,4:18
 - b. Location of Colossae
 - c. Church of Colossae – Col. 1:2,7
 - d. Theme of the Book of Colossians (Col. 1:19-20)
- B. Who is Paul?**
 - a. Jewish (Galatians 1:13-14/Philippians 3:5-6)
 - b. Tarsus of Cilicia (Roman citizen Acts 21:39)
 - c. Educated in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3)
 - d. Apostle (I Corinthians 15:5-8)
 - e. Prisoner (Acts 21/22)
 - f. Paul's purpose in writing to Colossians (Col. 2:2)
- C. The Essence of the Gospel, Jesus and Prayer (Colossians 1)**
 - a. The Essence of the Gospel
 - i. What is the Gospel?
 - ii. Fruit of Gospel
 - b. The Essence of Prayer (Colossians 1:9-14)
 - c. The Essence of Jesus (Colossians 1:15-23)
- D. Applying God's Word**
 - a. What ways do you see the qualities in verses 10-12 developing in your life?
- E. GO and DO**
 - a. Send a note to someone this week to encourage them and write a prayer for them.

WEEK 2 – WHO IS JESUS?
Scripture: Colossians 1:24- 2:23

Key Verse: *“For in him (Christ Jesus) the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness of him, who is the head of every ruler and authority.”*
Colossians 2:9-10

Key Concept: To explore the marks of Christian maturity. To explore theology through song.

- A. The Glory of Christ - (Col.1:24-2:5)**
 - a. Sing “Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow”
 - b. Share background of “Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow”
 - c. Define Doxology
 - d. Colossians 1:23-2:5 is part of a hymn and doxology of the 1st century church.
 - e. How do hymns help us learn theology?
- B. Living in Christ (Col. 2:6-23)**
 - a. What metaphors does Paul use to explain what life in Christ means?
 - b. What marks of Christian maturity are developing in you?
 - c. What current philosophies/human tradition can distract us from knowing the fullness of Christ? (Col. 2:8)
- C. Applying God’s Word**

Thank God for all you have because you have received Christ.
- D. GO and DO**

Read Colossians 2:9-15 inserting your name every time Paul writes “you” or “us.”

⁹For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰and (add your name in the blank) _____ has come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority.¹¹ In him also _____ was circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ; ¹²when _____ was buried with him in baptism, _____ was also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³And when _____ was dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of _____ flesh, God made _____ alive together with him, when he forgave _____ all _____ trespasses, ¹⁴erasing the record that stood against _____ with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it.

WEEK 3 - THE NEW LIFE DRESS CODE

Scripture: Colossians 3:1-17

Key Concept: The call to follow Christ is a matter of having a radically different lifestyle. When we are followers of Christ, there is a dress code that we are to wear. People will know us by our style of dressing. How are you dressed as Christian?

- A. Why do we need a New Wardrobe? (Col. 3:1-5)**
- a. What do you think Paul means by “things above” and earthly things? (vs. 1-2)
 - b. How can we set our hearts and minds on things above rather than on earthly things?
- B. Before and After Pictures (Col. 3:5-11)**
- a. When you need to feel like a “new person” what outfit do you like to wear?
 - b. Make a list of the Before Christ Picture
 - Use the image of dirty clothes and what life was like before Christ
 - b. Make a list of the After Christ Picture
 - Use the image of new clothes and what life is like after Christ.
- C. The Garments of Grace (Col. 3:12-17)**
- a. Who are we in Christ? (vs. 12) - What is the designer label?
 - God’s chosen ones
 - Holy
 - Beloved
 - b. What are the new clothes we are to wear?
 - c. The Essential Piece of Clothing - The Little Black Dress
 - a. Love (Col. 3:14)
 - b. What does LOVE look like?
 - c. I Corinthians 13:4-8
- D. Applying God’s Word**
- We get too used to “earthly nature” clothing. Which aspect of your old nature feels like a comfortable old sweatshirt to you now? Why is it hard to get rid of that old sweatshirt?
 - With what piece of Christ’s wardrobe would you like to replace it?
 - How would doing everything “in the name of the Lord Jesus” transform what you have to say and do this week?
- E. GO and DO**
- Handout the memory verse card for Colossians 3:17. Memorize this verse in the coming week.
 - Reflect each evening on the difference it makes to speak and act in the name of the Lord Jesus.

WEEK 4 – HOW TO LIVE AT HOME, AT WORK AND WITH OTHERS

Scripture: Colossians 3:18-4:18

Key Concept: Following Christ and his ways impacts all relationships in our lives as well as how we live and work.

- A. Relationship with others at home and at work (Col. 3:18-4:1)**
- a. Discuss the Household Code
 - Husband-Wife Relationship
 - Parent (father) – Child Relationship
 - Worker – Boss Relationship
 - b. What difference would it make in family/work relationships if people wanted to please God (vs 20) and encourage each other (vs 21)?
- B. Relationship with God and others (Col. 4:2-6)**
- a. Define devotion. How is prayer a devotion to God?
 - b. What does it mean to be full of grace and seasoned with salt life?
- C. How do others help us grow?**
- a. List all the people mentioned in chapter 4 (Col. 4:7-18)
Write their names and qualities
Of all the qualities listed, which do you wish was said of you?
- D. Applying God’s Word**
- a. Select one of the instructions addressed in the book of Colossians. Ask for wisdom and grace in applying that principle in your life, your home, your work and with others.
- E. GO and DO**
- a. Pray that your life will demonstrate your desire to please and honor the Lord Jesus at home, on the job and with others.\
- F. Closing**
- Sing “Lord, Be Glorified”

In our lives, Lord, be glorified, be glorified.
In our lives, Lord, be glorified, today.

In our homes...
In our church...
In our world...

DETAILED LESSON PLAN

WEEK 3 – A NEW WARDROBE

Scripture: Colossians 3:1-17

Key Concept: The call to follow Christ requires a radical different lifestyle than our world. When we are followers of Christ, there is a dress code that we are to wear. People will know us by our style of dressing. How are you dressed as Christian?

Learning Goals (What do you want your students to learn from this lesson?)

1. To have a deeper understanding of how Christ had changed and impacted our lives.
2. To remind us that being a Christian has some very specific ways we are to live out our lives.
3. To reinforce the understanding that all we do is for the glory of Jesus (Col. 3:17). It is not for us or about us.

Teaching Strategies - Describe your methods for communicating the lessons.

The most effective method for communicating the lesson is through conversation and dialogue. There will be time for large group discussion and smaller group discussion. The members will pair off into small groups to come up with “Life Before and After Christ” pictures. I will use two tangible illustrations: a comfy, holey, ripped sweatshirt and a little black dress.

Teaching Aids

- Opening Prayer for International Peace
- Before and After pictures
- Before and After charts on paper
- Have clothing to contrast the old (old comfy sweatshirt) and the new (little black dress)
- Handout/Memory card for Colossians 3:17

Opening Prayer (Rev. Elizabeth S. Tapia, Global Ministries)

It is International Day. Talk about the history of the day. Share in the unison prayer:

Gentle Spirit; breathe in us the wind of truth, wisdom and righteousness. May your Presence inspire us to create labyrinths of peace.

Compassionate One, make our hearts burn with love, honoring all peoples and creation. Bless all nations, every family and community while we seek to work for justice and unity.

Prince of Peace, lead us to ways of healing and reconciliation we pray with those who suffer and struggle. Bless us with your reconciling love that knows no boundaries as we seek to live in community, justice and peace. So be it.

Read Colossians 3:15

“And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.”

Discussion Question

- *How does the peace of Christ help us be peacemakers in our world?*
- *Discuss what Paul means by Peace.*
“Literally what Paul is saying “Let the peace of God be the umpires in your heart. He uses a verb from the athletic arena; it is a word that is used of the umpire who settled things in any matter of dispute. If the peace of Jesus Christ is the umpire in any man’s heart, then, when feelings clash and we are pulled in two directions at the same time, the decision of Christ will keep us in the way of love and the Church will remain the one body it is meant to be. The way to right action is to appoint Jesus Christ as the arbiter between the conflicting emotions in our hearts; and if we accept his decisions, we cannot go wrong.” (William Barclay, The Daily Study Bible Series: The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians, page159.)

A Why do we need a New Wardrobe? (Col. 3:1-5)

*****Group Discussion*****

- a. What do you think Paul means by “things above” and earthly things? (vs. 1-2)
- b. How can we set our hearts and minds on things above rather than on earthly things?

B. Before and After Pictures (Col. 3:5-11)

**** *Have the members pair off to make the before and after pictures of Christ. Have them come back and share with the larger group their before & after charts*****

- a. When you need to feel like a “new person” what outfit do you like to wear?
- a. Make a list of the Before Christ Picture
 - Use the image of dirty clothes and what life was like before Christ
 - Fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, disobedience, greed, anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive language and lying.
- b. Make a list of the After Christ Picture
 - Use the image of new clothes and what life is like after Christ.
- d. Use the metaphor of putting on new clothes. Paul uses this image twice. We change our clothing on a daily basis to clean clothes, we as people of faith are being renewed daily as we follow Christ.

C. The Garments of Grace (Col. 3:12-17)

*****Use the fancy Black Dress as an illustration to point out the label and what makes the Black Dress an important part of a wardrobe.****

- a. Who are we in Christ? (vs. 12) - What is the designer label?
 - a. God’s chosen ones
 - b. Holy
 - c. Beloved

****We are hand made by the best Fashion House and Designer****

Why does Paul begin this section by reminding us of who we are in God's eyes?

- b. What are the new clothes we are to wear?
Compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, bear with one another, forgive, love, peace, Christ dwelling within us, gratitude
****Discuss what each of these "pieces of clothing" look like when we wear them.****
- c. The Essential Piece of Clothing - The Little Black Dress
 - a. Love (Col. 3:14)
 - b. What is Love? I Corinthians 13:4-8
Put your name in the place of love.
i.e. Dawn is patient, Dawn is kind.

D. Applying God's Word

****Group Discussion. Use the illustration of the old comfy sweatshirt; it's familiar, comfortable, raggy but we still like it.****

- We get too used to "earthly nature" clothing. Which aspect of your old nature feels like a comfortable old sweatshirt to you now? Why is it hard to get rid of that old sweatshirt?
- With what piece of Christ's wardrobe would you like to replace it?
- How would doing everything "in the name of the Lord Jesus" transform what you have to say and do this week?

E. GO and DO

- Handout the memory verse card for Colossians 3:17. Memorize this verse in the coming week.
"And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."
- Reflect each evening on the difference it makes to speak and act in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Closing prayer

Ask for prayer request, hold hands around the table and close with The Lord's Prayer.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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EVALUATION

I used Colossians 3 for the evaluation. We had six attendees; one of the participants was new to Bible Study. At the beginning of the session, I shared the key concept for the evening. Colossians 3 is a very practical chapter on Christian living. The group prefers a large group conversation and dialogue style for learning. I had the group divide into pairs to discuss the “Life Before and After Christ” activity; they were less focused during this time than when they were in the large group. I also used two pieces of clothing: an old, ripped, stained yet comfy sweatshirt and a new black dress to illustrate the chapter. I felt that this illustration was a strength but no one mentioned it in the evaluation.

At the outset of the session, I shared that I wanted their feedback and there would be an evaluation at the end of the class. I provided an evaluation (see attached) and had them fill it out in the class. The best thing they liked about the Bible study session is the group discussion, interaction among the participants and the freed to express differing opinions. I asked what could be improved in my leadership; a few said be more specific with practical ideas and relate it to the current world. However, others said this class was practical and very applicable to life. Everyone comes to Bible Study with different needs, wants and ideas which provide for good discussion.

I was prepared for the Bible Study and enjoyed the opportunity to hear the participant’s thoughts and evaluation. I value their input; it helps as I prepare the lessons so that it fits the context of the group. The group has attended church for most of their lives but they know very little about the Bible. I try to provide a theological foundation of the passage but also need to have practical everyday life stories for the illustrations with this particular group.

**BIBLE STUDY EVALUATION FORM
OF COLOSSIANS/CHAPTER 3**

1. What did you like about this Bible study (chapter 3)? _____

2. What would you change about this Bible Study (chapter 3)? _____

3. Which questions were the best at generating conversation?

4. Which chapter was your favorite? (Circle One)
Chapter 1 Chapter 2 Chapter 3 Chapter 4
5. How would you rate the group leader's questions in terms of their ability to generate good conversation? (Circle One)
Weak Okay Good Very Good Excellent
6. How was this bible study different from others you've been a part of? _____

7. Did you choose to read Colossians 3 before the Bible Study started?
(Circle One) YES NO
Why or Why not? _____
8. Do you now feel better informed about the book of Colossians (Chapter 3)?
(Circle One) YES NO
9. Rate your understanding of Colossians 3 before completing this study. (Circle One)
None Very Little Basic Somewhat-informed Well-informed
10. How has your respect and love for Christ grown through this study?

11. Rate your likeliness to get involved in another Bible Study at church. (Circle One)
Not likely Somewhat Likely Likely Very Likely Absolutely
12. Give any additional feedback about your experience. _____

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this evaluation.

1. What do you think are the most effective means of doing evangelism in the 21st century? How have you lived this out in your current context of ministry?

I think the most effective means of evangelism are through established, authentic and trusting relationships and presence with individuals. It is through the safety of my presence and relationship that I can share God's love with others. I am very intentional in building relationships with people in the community. As a result, people know me; they know that I care and I am present in the community. This is foundational for when people have spiritual needs they know they can come to me. Also, I let people know that I pray for them and this had led to conversations which I would deem are 21st century evangelism.

September 10th was the annual township event, Upper Saddle River Day. Our church had a booth highlighting the church and some of the congregation helped serve food. The volunteer coordinator told me "your church has the nicest people and you are willing to help out whenever needed." What a great way to build trust, be known and involved in the life of the community.

I share a story about an unchurched woman in our community. I met her at one of our "Best Stuff Sale" at church. Over the years, I have spent time with her at various community events and volunteer opportunities. Two years ago, her husband became deathly ill. It went undiagnosed for almost a year. During that time, when I would see her I would listen and encourage her. I also told her I would pray for her and her husband. I would call her as well as send cards. In April 2016, she attended a funeral at my church. We were talking and she said "I don't think prayer works and I don't believe in it." On Sunday, October 23, 2016, I was volunteering at the local museum. She came up to me with tears in her eyes; she said "I want you to meet my husband. He is here and doing so much better. Thank you for all your support

and prayers. I believe in prayers and they have made all the difference.” Both of these examples capture 21st century evangelism.

2. What makes a congregation vital, and how do you measure it? How would you envision working with a congregation to become more vital?

The matrix of inspiring worship, professions of faith, generous giving, and serving in mission are markers of a vital congregation. These areas reflect spiritual growth and they provide valid resources for monitoring vitality. However, some vitality and growth cannot be quantified numerically. There are many ways that I see vitality in my congregation. It is in one-on-one conversations when I hear about people's lives and how God is working in them. These conversations can take place in person, emails, texts and other forms of social media. I look for growth in people's faith as it relates to everyday living. I'm called to plant seeds, help nurture people in their faith in all aspects of their life and to provide an environment where they can be vital and flourish. It may be years until you see the full fruit of that growth but the growth is happening. In September 2015, a young couple visited the church. They attend regularly in worship, participate in different events and are now members. When I first visited them, they mentioned that they are going through a difficult time and need to be at church. I have spent several hours with them as they deal with their various issues. It was not until recently (a year later) that they guy acknowledged he needed God and did not want to continue in the path he was going.

Small groups are a great place to see congregations become vital. It is in small groups where people can be nurtured by each other and be real about their faith. Small groups were a successful part of our Wesleyan heritage for spiritual and numerical growth. A family in town sends their son to our Vacation Bible School (VBS). One day, the mom texted to ask me if our church had Bible Study. She has joined our Bible Study and helps with VBS. Her daughter

helps at VBS and occasionally comes to youth group. Prior to VBS and Bible Study, they were not a part of our church.

Our Summer Café Style Worship is an area where I see vitality. Due to the low numbers in worship attendance in the summer, we do Café Style Worship. We meet in our fellowship hall around tables, we have food and drink, and the format of the worship has elements of prayers, songs, bible discussion, large and small group discussion, and interactive learning opportunities. The Café Style Worship is a vital ministry at our church. Even though we are small, the people are growing in their faith. I have been told from parishioners they have learned so much from worship and they are refueled and ready to go back into the world for service.

3. What is your personal approach to conflict? Provide an example of where you have been involved in resolving conflict. What did you learn?

I believe that conflict is a part of being in relationship with one another. My personal approach in resolving a conflict is to first understand the situation and the persons involved. I try to create a space where people can share how they honestly feel without being judged. I listen to what is being said and wonder what is under the surface. I ask of myself, “What role do I play in this conflict? How do my actions, words, or non-actions affect the conflict? I seek to be self-differentiated but am aware that at times I am blinded by myself. I seek resolution even if it takes time and may not look like what I thought the resolution should be.

When I was a part-time local pastor, I tried to employ this approach with a conflict that involved three men, ages 84 and older, who held the power in the church. I made some decisions and took actions that they felt I should not have done. As I listened, I heard a pattern. I was their first female pastor, I was young, and my role was only in the sanctuary with Christian Education. I tried to help diffuse the conflict, apologize when I knew I was wrong but ultimately, it was my presence. As I listened, I heard multiple times there were a lot of issues going on in

their personal lives. After several attempts to try to resolve the conflict, including help from the DS, a mediator, and the Bishop, it was decided by all parties I needed to leave the church.

I have learned that conflict is hard and difficult. People do not like conflict and will avoid addressing it. This only causes conflict to fester and grow. Sometimes the conflict is not even about me but rather the other person and they don't even understand it. I have learned to look at the role I play in conflict. I have learned that there are some conflicts that will not be resolved and sometimes the only way to resolve the conflict is to be removed from the situation where conflict is present.

4. What is your theological and practical understanding of itineracy?

In seminary, the polity professor asked “Do you trust in the itineracy process to hear God’s call?” I remember saying “YES!” I continue to say, yes, because it about trust, obedience and being responsive to God’s call in my life. It is allowing God to use the Bishop and cabinet to prayerfully discern God’s call for the local churches and clergy as they make appointments. It is about being obedient to that decision and responding by saying “Here I am, Lord, send me.”

5. How do you engage all age groups in your community?

Intergenerational ministry is important to me. It is important for the young people to hear from the older persons. It is equally important for the older persons to learn from the young people. We have senior fellowship groups who meet at our church; I will spend time with them at their meetings and have gone on some of their day trips. I am mindful that not all people are able to come out to worship and other events due to their age, I make sure that I visit them and bring communion. I send bulletins from church with notes from me, the Upper Room devotional and call them. I make sure that others will visit them in addition to the pastoral visits.

For the younger kids and youth, I involve them in the life of the church. It is a priority of mine for children and youth to be in worship and to understand it. We have VBS and other opportunities geared for their age group. I make sure that I am present at the various events and love being involved with the VBS in the summer. At all the events, I make sure that we have all ages represented as best as we can. I know that the kids and the youth in the church know that their Pastor supports and encourages them to be a part of the church. In fact, one parent of a two year toddler uses the phrase “Pastor Dawn is waiting for you” every Sunday morning to get him to move faster and get out the door.

6. What is your understanding of pastoral authority, and how do you intend to exercise it in your place of ministry.

I understand that I am responsible for the word and order of the church. My leadership style is servant leadership; I lead by example and empower people to make decision. However, I understand the biblical and polity foundations for actions and decision where that I need to exercise my pastoral authority. I am willing and responsible to make the hard calls. I had a situation when a member of the SPRC wanted to have a birthday party at the church. The member wanted to provide alcohol at the party. We do not allow alcohol on the church property but the member wanted me to make an exception for them. I could not make it an exception. I needed to be consistent with our policy and share about our liabilities and responsibilities. I also shared that we use the same space for NA and AA groups who are struggling with addictions. The member understood and respected my position. They held the party at the church without alcohol and everyone had a great time.

7. If you choose *anyone* to mentor you in leadership skills, who would that be and why?

Abraham Lincoln overcame several obstacles to become the President of the United States. After several failed attempts to be elected to public office and as the least likely to win

the presidency, he became the sixteenth President. His time in office was one filled with conflict and disunity. He had to lead the United States during one of its darkest times. He faced the conflict with tenacity and did not give up his belief for a reconciled country and to abolish slavery. He was a man of action and he must have had great negotiation skills to accomplish what he did by ending the war. He was a good orator. I would like to learn from him how he made his decisions.

8. Describe a situation in which you felt a need to assert a professional boundary in the practice of ministry.

A man in the community came to worship one Sunday. I had an unexpected internal reaction to his presence and made sure that all the kids were safe. During the preaching time he had his eyes closed with a big grin on his face. The following day a letter was in my mailbox from this person. The letter contained lewd, sexual desires (telling what he liked), and inappropriate comments about me ("you are a shapely, spiritual, and sensual woman"). Immediately, I checked the various sex offender registries but did not see the man's name listed. I shared the letter with the SPRC Chair and told him that I was going to talk to the man and needed the chairperson to be with me. Based on a message left on the church voicemail, I knew the man would be coming to the Wednesday Night Bible Study and Dinner. When the man arrived at the church, I immediately asked him to meet me in the office with the SPRC Chair. I shared with him that the letter was inappropriate and if he was interested in having a personal relationship with me that he was not welcome at the church. This decision was agreed upon mutually by the SPRC chairperson. The man immediately left and never returned to the church.

9. How have you worked through the experience of forgiving someone?

Based on the conflict situation mentioned earlier, I have had to forgive the three men involved. One of the men called me the devil and told me "that the Lord told him to get rid of

the devil in the church.” This man disrupted worship a few times to underestimate my pastoral authority. Also, he physically pushed me out of his way. I was angry at this man and at the other men who allow this type of behavior to occur by justifying him. It took me a while to forgive them. During the conflict, I would pray for them and ask God to help me see them above the conflict. I asked the Lord to help me forgive the gentleman for his wrong actions towards me. There were times I did not feel like forgiving him but I still “exercised that forgiveness muscle.” It was a process. I am so thankful for the Book of Worship and “An Order of Farewell To A Pastor” (p. 598). On my last Sunday at the church, I was intentional to include this in the order of worship. The words were more for me than the congregation. Some of the phrases that the congregation say are “We receive your thankfulness, offer forgivenessWe ask your forgiveness for our mistakes.” The liturgy allows for me as pastor to say “I ask forgiveness for the mistakes I have made....I accept your gratitude and forgiveness, and I forgive you.” Even though none of the men personally said “I’m sorry” or “Forgive me”, the liturgy said it for them. With time, prayer and hope for forgiveness, I have forgiven the three men.

10. What are you doing to help those around you to take good care of themselves?

I recently did a sermon series on "I Love Sundays" about how and why Sabbath is important. I continue to have congregants tell me something they heard and learned from the sermon series. I remind people that we are to take care of not only the spiritual aspect of our lives but our body and mind. I practice my Sabbath day and let people know about it so that they see it lived out.

11. How have you invited someone to faith and seen their faith develop?

Every Sunday in my preaching, I invite people to faith. However, in the 21st century, the invitation to faith is more than preaching. I invited a nominal, unchurched, new family in church to watch the TV show “Live Passion” on Palm Sunday with me at the parsonage. Throughout

the show, we discussed what the passion meant for them. I will hear comments about their faith based on the discussions we had while watching the show. I have seen their faith develop through conversations via texting, conversations at coffee shops, and through worship. I have gotten texts late at night regarding a crisis they were going through and have been able to respond to them. As of result, these crisis moments have become pivotal moments in their faith development.

12. What have you overcome to come in this season in your ministry?

I think the system of transferring my ordination from the Assemblies of God denomination to a full elder in the UMC has been something that I have had to overcome. It has been a long process and at times discouraging. However, it has made me more resolved that God has called and equipped me to serve people as an ordained elder in the UMC tradition.

13. How would describe your prayer life in this season, and how has it changed over your journey?

My prayer life has evolved from the daily prayers of just requests to listening and hearing God speak to me. My prayer life is more meditative and reflective. I incorporate Lecto Divina and praying in color as part of my prayer time; these forms of prayer help me to reflect.

14. When you read the Bible, How do you hear God's voice? What example might you give of how you responded?

As I read the Bible I interact with the text as a dialogue. I ask "God what do you want me to hear from you?" Right now I am going through the gospels looking at the powerful questions Jesus asked. As I read the scripture, if Jesus asks a question in the text, I ask that question of myself. For example, as I read about the ten lepers who were healed in Luke 17:11-19 and only one came back to Jesus to give thanks. Jesus asks, "Were there not ten cleansed?"

Where are the other nine?" I don't want that to be said of me, "Where is Dawn?" I want to be where Jesus is and to express my gratitude.

15. How has your family of origin influenced your call?

I was raised in a pastor's home. My family encouraged me to do whatever I wanted to do in life. When I received the call at age 16, they helped facilitate and encourage my response to God. They never pushed the call on me in the way that "I had to do this" because my father was a pastor. This has allowed me to know that I am called because of God; it is my call.

My family also influenced me with a deep faith and reliance on God that helps me in ministry.

They helped me to see people in the church for who they are and not to take things personally.

Most importantly, my family has taught me about relationships and how important relationships are in ministry.

16. Interview three people to tell you what they see in your ministry. What did you hear in these conversations?

I enjoyed and appreciated the interviews with the people in my church. I was intentional to select people who would give honest feedback. I have a good rapport with all of the persons I interviewed but one gentleman can be a bit difficult and he will let me know if he doesn't agree with me or if I am wrong. I heard a consistent theme that I am a people person and interact well with people. I create an environment that is welcoming and affirming to all people. In this environment I have the ability to listen to people and appreciate what they are saying even if I don't agree with them. I also heard that I have openness to new ideas and I am not afraid to try new things. Sometimes more than the congregation wants but it pushes the congregation to move.

I asked for areas of improvement; this too was consistent. I need to work on communicating with others and be more responsive to emails. I don't always respond right away

to emails. I may respond but it will be later and people would appreciate a quicker response. I appreciated hearing this because it is something that I can address right away. I know that I am not strong in vision and planning; one person affirmed this in me. I asked for ways of how to work on these areas and he gave me good feedback. This exercise reminded me how important communication is for a leadership. A leader communicates, communicates, and communicates!

Paragraph 335 - *The Book of Discipline 2012*

A) Theology

1) Give examples of how the practice of ministry has affected your experience and understanding of:

1) **God** is Love. Love is the driving force for God. It is love for the world and humans that God sent God's "only begotten son" to restore the communication with humanity. I try to share God's love to all people; it is foundational for me in ministry. As I minister with people who may not be "loveable", I remind myself that God loves this person. There are times that people are difficult to work with but the example given by God helps me to love them anyway.

2) Humanity

God created humankind in the image of God's self (Imago Deo). To be created in the image of God is to reflect God's character of love, righteousness, faithfulness and justice. However, we as humans fall short of God's image in our lives. One of the difficult things of being in ministry is seeing people addicted to mind altering substances. Drug abuse is a prevalent issue in our community. In our church, we have lost a member to drug overdose and there are members who struggle with drugs. We need God's grace and intervention especially in the area of drugs and alcohol. I have had opportunities to talk with members who feel that people could give up these addictions cold turkey. Through conversations and the issue affecting us immediately, they have begun to understand how much all of us need God's grace. It is not just the drug addict, it is them who also need God's grace.

3) The need for divine grace

It is through grace that humans are able to live in God's presence. It is through grace that we are to understand what our neighbors are going through in their lives and not to be judgmental about their situation. It is grace that guides me as I seek to minister to people.

4) The Lordship of Jesus Christ

Since the beginning of the first century church, Scripture gives reference to hymns that were sung acknowledging the Lordship of Jesus. The hymn of Philippians 2:11 states “every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.” Against the background of the early Christians, with emperor worship, the statement, Jesus Christ is Lord, is an acknowledgement to all people about powers the Lordship of Jesus. It is a result of the resurrection of Christ, that Jesus can be called Lord.. Jesus Christ is the Lord is a confession of who Christ is in a person’s life and church. According to Romans 10:9, to be Christian is to say Jesus is Lord. Thus there is no allegiance and loyalty to anything or anyone other than Jesus. With the upcoming elections, we did a bible study on The Beatitudes and Sermon on the Mount. This lead to several “interesting” conversations of what Lordship means against the political background. We are to vote but do we vote as kingdom citizens or American citizens? It was the first time many had thought about how they voted as Kingdom citizens under the Lordship of Jesus.

5) The work of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit empowers the community of believers to witness the deeds of God to the world. I am reminded of a Holy Spirit moment when we hosted a game night for our community and church. Nobody from the church came to the event and the volunteers where very disappointed. However, a group home for boys that has attended our church came late, we did not know they were coming. It turned into a great evening of games but also a time of singing gospel songs and concluded the evening with prayers. The boys hugged the volunteers and said that they liked coming to our church. As we were cleaning up, one of the volunteers said, “that was a Holy Spirit night.” Indeed, it was!

6) The meaning and significance of the sacraments

Sacraments are a visible promise and means in which God's grace is given. The

Sacraments are pillars in the life of the church that remind us of God's active present in our lives.

The UMC recognizes two sacraments in which Christ participated: The Lord's Supper and Baptism. Both are reminders of God's grace extended to humanity. The document, *This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion*, says 'that sacraments are God's "show and tell," communicating with us in a way that we, in all our brokenness and limitations, can receive and experience God's grace.'

7) The kingdom of God

Mark 1:14 says that Jesus came preaching, "Repent for the kingdom of God is on hand." The kingdom of God was inaugurated with Christ and continues today. It will not be complete until the return of Christ, the second coming. The kingdom of God is already but not yet. The kingdom of God is not about a physical or geographical place. It is about a way of living where God reigns and God's laws are obeyed. Through the use of parables, Jesus taught the first followers what the kingdom of God would look like if realized. The church is to be a sign of the kingdom of God at work in the world through service and mission. Matthew 5:16 reminds the church that we are to shine our lights brightly so that people are directed to God.

8) Resurrection and eternal life

Resurrection and eternal life is about new life and hope. Hope when situations are dark and there seems to be no way out but know that God will show up. Jesus gives the best example of this in his death and resurrection. In Jesus' resurrection, we are given new life. I Corinthians 15 reminds of the power of resurrection and eternal life. Every time we come to The Lord's Supper we proclaim in the Great Thanksgiving this new life from the resurrection and the hope of eternal life. We long for the day when we will all "feast at the heavenly banquet table." We proclaim it as we live in the new and abundant life given to us through Jesus but we wait for that day to come.

2) How do you understand the following traditional evangelical doctrines:

a) **Repentance** is the beginning of new life in Christ. It is acknowledging the need for God's grace in our lives.

b) **Justification** is receiving the pardon and forgiveness of sins. It is given to us freely even when we do not deserve it. We are being restored to the relationship with God for which we were created.

c) **Regeneration** is that moment when we are given new life in Christ. We are given a fresh start in life. It is the first part of sanctification.

d) **Sanctification** is the continuous process of becoming more like Jesus or becoming closer to the image of God. It is our dwelling in God and God dwelling within us. It is the process of becoming perfect in love. As Wesley would say, "go on toward perfection."

What are the marks of a Christian life?

The marks of the Christian life can be seen in what Wesley called the "works of piety" and the "works of mercy." The "works of piety" include prayer, Bible reading, participating in worship. The "works of piety" are about loving God with your whole heart, mind and soul. The "works of mercy" are those actions of helping the poor, feeding the hungry, and serving others. The "works of mercy" are about loving your neighbor as yourself.

3) How has the practice of ministry informed your understanding of the nature and mission of the Church? What are its primary challenges today?

The church is a reflection of the diverse kingdom of God. An inclusive church reflects God's creation; it signifies diversity. An inclusive church represents the gifts of all God's people. An inclusive church and ministry allows for all people to be involved and participate in the life of the church. It is open, accepting and supporting of all people to worship and participate in the life of the church and ministry. The Book of Discipline states "inclusiveness

means the freedom for the total involvement of all persons who meet the requirements of the United Methodist Book of Discipline in the membership and leadership of the Church at any level and in every place.”

To the best of its ability and context the local church should strive to be inclusive of all people. For example, my community is very monoculture and has three churches (2 protestant and 1 catholic). Last year, a Coptic Orthodox Church was looking for a facility to rent for their church. They were denied building usage from several churches in the areas. It has been two and half years that we have opened up our facilities them. It is exciting to have the first historical Christian church in our community. I have heard several comments from people in the community about "those" people. It has given me a great opportunity to respond and educate people on the diversity of God's kingdom.

I have also been in ministry in urban, international and cross cultural settings. This has shaped my understanding of God's global church and those who are a part of the church. My life has been enriched by the inclusive church in which all people are able to share their gifts with each other.

The challenge for the church is remain open to the changing nature of society and to respond accordingly. As a church, it is a challenge to be proactive rather than reactive to culture. At times it can be challenging for the church to reflect the diversity (economically, family structure, family origins, faith traditions) of God's kingdom and include others in the church but we are called to be the church for all people.

4) The United Methodist Church holds that Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason are sources and norms for belief and practice, but that the Bible is primary among them. What is your understanding of this theological position of the church, and how has your practice of ministry been affected by this understanding?

I think the theological tool of the Quadrilateral helps one to understand God's specific revelation about God's self through scripture. It is an informative and organized manner of looking at and dealing with issue that arise. Scripture is the primary source in looking at the Christian doctrine and faith. Scripture bears witness to the revelation of God and to Jesus. Scripture gives principles that can be applied to human situation not specifically addressed within Scripture. I find the quadrilateral is helpful in discerning situations that arise within the local church. There is a youth in the church that attends a catholic school. He was told in one of his classes that women are not allowed to speak in church therefore women cannot be pastors. He asked me about the verse in I Timothy 2:12 and I Corinthians 14:34 that says women cannot speak. I was able to use Scripture and Jesus' example in the gospel of how he treated women changed their status. We discussed the cultural context of scripture and what it meant for the first century audience and what it means for us today. I was able to use tradition of the UMC and the ordination of women and that women have been supported in ministry. I also used reason with him, especially since his mother is a successful senior partner in a NYC law firm. We discussed how it would be discriminate if his mother could not be lawyer. We discussed how women are holding position in leadership in several sectors of society. We talked about my calling and experience as a female pastor in ministry. It was a good conversation using the quadrilateral. I have used the quadrilateral in Bible Study as a foundation for discussion on issues that may be difficult or not clear for people.

5) How has the practice of ministry enriched your understanding of the meaning and significance of the sacraments?

The more I am in ministry, the deeper the meaning of the sacraments become. The sacraments are a means of God's grace. The sacraments are reminders of one's faith. They strengthen and confirm people's faith in God. The sacraments become touchstones for people

wherever they are in their journey of faith. The sacraments become unifying moments for believers within the church. The Lord's Supper reminds us that we are all welcomed at the table and in need of God's grace. Baptisms remind us individually of our baptism and of those we are. They also remind the church of our calling to help each other in our journey of faith.

B) Vocation

1) How has the experience of ministry shaped your understanding of your vocation as an ordained elder?

When people find out that I am pastor, they are surprised. Surprised that I am down to earth, I don't always wear a collar. I jokingly say to them "I know I can't believe they let me be a pastor either." As I deal with people in their life crisis moments or in their joy filled moments of life, I always give thanks that they trust me to be a part of those moments. I feel honored to be with them in those moments. As I walk along side with them I understand the depth of my call to ministry as an ordained elder. At times I feel the weight of being a representative of the church, a representative of Jesus Christ but I would not trade it.

C) The Practice of Ministry

1) How has the practice of ministry affected your understanding of the expectations and obligations of the itinerant system? Do you offer yourself without reserve to be appointed and to serve as the appointive authority may determine.

Yes, I offer myself without reserve to be appointed and to serve as the appointive authority may determine. I understand the itinerant system to be a part of God's dynamic call in my life; calling me to respond and trust God. As I am in ministry, I am reminded of our itinerant system that pastors come and go in the life of the church. It helps keep the professional boundary clear so that I don't cross the line of being over friendly. As I am involved in people's lives I am their pastor first.

2) Describe and evaluate your personal gifts for ministry and how they have resulted in fruitful ministry. What would be your areas of strength and areas in which you need to be strengthened in order to be fruitful in ministry.

One of my personal gifts for ministry is interpersonal relationships. I am able to connect with a variety of people in the church and in the community. It has opened doors for the church from community members who say our church is the friendly and willing to help people. I build relationships which result in people (who are not a part of the church) to call me and ask for help. I was recently asked to be apart of a community cares program because our church is willing to help. I am called upon to participate as clergy in Girl Scout Awards, Eagle Scout Ceremonies and other ceremonies in town. My gift for connecting with people has helped the community to see that Bergen Highlands UMC is a vital part of the community.

An area that I need to strengthen is in long term planning. I see the big picture (I'm visionary) but do not always implement because I don't always see the details. As one of my parishioners likes to remind me "thinking ahead is your greatest asset." He has helped me to grow in this area. The area of administration is a growing edge for me.

3) For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness to the Christian gospel and in consideration of your influence as an ordained minister, are you to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life; and to this end will you agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to physical health, intentional intellectual development, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, integrity in all personal relationships, social responsibility, and growth in the grace and knowledge and love of God?

Yes, with God's help!

4) Provide evidence of your willingness to relate yourself in ministry to all persons without regard to race, color, ethnicity, national origin, social status, gender, sexual orientation, age, economics condition or disability.

I am comfortable in working with all people in ministry. I have lived and worked in the inner city of Chicago, on the Southside. Currently, I live in an affluent community and it is religiously diverse. I work side by side with those in our community regardless of their religious label; we work together for the good of the community. I also promote the good of Paterson and

needs of the community. As I work with youth and young adults, there is a fluidity of sexual orientation. I am comfortable with youth asking questions about their sexual orientation and try to create a safe place for those wondering about sexual orientation. I have lived in Ethiopia and traveled to other countries that provide me with openness to people regardless of their race, color, ethnicity or national origin. This willingness to relate to all persons in ministry is a strength of mine. The tagline of the UMC "Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors" is a perfect fit for me.

5) Will you regard all pastoral conversations of a confessional nature as a trust between the person concerned and God?

Confessional and confidentiality is very important to me. I let people know that all conversations will be held with confidentiality except for 2 areas where I am ethically responsible to report: 1) if the person has a plan to hurt themselves 2) or a plan to hurt others. I must report these to proper authorities. I have had to report a situation once in the course of my ministry and the person was aware of my responsibility if they told me the situation. They wanted me to call the authorities because they felt there was abuse happening in the home.

6) Provide evidence of experience in peace and justice ministries.

For me, peace and justice ministries takes place everyday. We are called to walk justly and to be peacemakers. Nearly every Sunday, I lift up ways in which we can be peacemakers and stand up for justice in the pastoral prayer and in the sermons. In conversations with parishioners, when I hear things that may unknowingly be unjust, I try to share how we can stand up for justice in that area. There are many perceptions that people have that can create unjust comments or reasons not to help the "least of the least". When these perceptions come up, I am able to respond as a voice for peace and justice.

I have noticed that women feel comfortable to ask questions about relationships and the treatment of the women (most recently in the public area with Donald J. Trump). They will text/call/fb message about what I think of certain situations. Hopefully, I able to best of my ability provide answers that reflect justice.

My local church has an Egyptian Coptic Orthodox Church worshipping in our facilities. With global events surrounding the Middle East, I have heard comments from neighbors and community people...."those people" how are they? A neighbor told me "ever since they have moved into the building the trees on their property line are dying. They are putting something in the grass." This has offered me ample of opportunities to remind people that "those people" are literally their neighbors. They have a right to worship freely and have asked is this a situation of "not in my back yard". It has caused some uncomfortable conversations but they have to be had.

Additional Questions

1. Explain the threefold aspects of Wesleyan grace and how have you encountered these in your own ministry/life.

The metaphor of the house is perfect for understanding Wesleyan grace. "Wesley likens the process of salvation to a house. Prevenient grace serves as the porch, justification as the door, and sanctification or holiness as the rooms of the house wherein we are called to dwell."

(Runyon, Theodore. The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today. Page 27)

Prevenient grace is God's grace that is "wooing" us to God. We don't even realize that it is God preparing our heart to be open to God's grace.

Justification is our acknowledgement to God's grace in our lives and the need to be reconciled with God. When we are justified we receive God's forgiveness and love through Jesus Christ.

Sanctification is the renewing of our fallen and sinful being. It is the process of every aspect of our lives being renewed in Christ and God's grace. Paul writes in Philippians 2:12-13 that this is the "working out of our salvation with fear and trembling." We are in the process of being perfected.

So many times people do not realize that God has been preparing their hearts and calling out to them. What they call as coincidences are really those God-incidents calling and inviting them into relationship with God. As a pastor, I am to look for these God-incidents and help people see them in their lives. It is exciting to see people awoken to God's grace. After they are awakened to God's grace, as Pastors we are to help cultivate and nurture them to a place of saying I need/want God in my life. Recently, I had a conversation with a guy who was tired of living the way he was living and he said, "I need God." He said, "I don't want to sin anymore, I want to do the right thing." As I reminded him, this does not make everything perfect but it makes it easier knowing that God is there with you.

2. Share an instance when you found yourself in ministry with someone whose theology was radically different from your own.

Our church rents out its chapel to an Orthodox Coptic Church. They do not believe that women can be pastors or even deacons in the church. When we first met, they could not believe I was the pastor. They would always seek out the men to talk to with them. The deacons are used to me and now call me Pastor. However, they have priests who come from Egypt and it interesting to watch the priest's reaction when they find out that I am a pastor like them. Anytime I meet with someone whose theology is radically different from mine, whether if it is a different religion or difference in how they interpret scripture, I seek to be patient and try to understand how they believe the way they believe. I try to find the common denominator of our faiths. I belong to an interfaith clergy group that includes, Christian (some very conservative to

progressive in theology), Jewish and Muslim clergy. This group reminds me that it is possible to share in ministry together and that most of the time we have more in common than we realize.

3. Describe how your image of God has changed over your journey. What has informed this?

For the first twenty-eight years of my life, I had a limited view of God. My view of God was one of a conditional God. A God who would only love me if I did certain religious acts or works of piety. I had God in a box. Because of the diversity of faiths, my perception of God changed after a trip to India. I realized God is bigger than I could imagine and perhaps more people were experiencing God rather than my limited western view allowed me to allow others to experience God. God is bigger than anyone can imagine or define. . The reason for this is because God is love. God is a loving God, who loves all people, because they are created in God's image. Love is the driving force for God. Being in conversation with people of different faith traditions continue to help my image of God to grow bigger.

1. Explain the role of deacons, elders, and local pastors in the UMC and how they are each uniquely called and function in the church.

Deacons (para 328, 329) are called by God and ordained to serve as a servant to the community and Church through the ministry of Word, Service, Compassion and Justice. In the local church, they help connect the church in its worship with its service to the world. Often times they serve in hospitals, general UMC agencies, counseling or social service organizations. As of May 2016, at the General Conference, they were given the authority to serve and preside over the Sacraments in their role and ministry contexts.

Elders (para. 332) are called by God to serve the church as an ordained minister for the ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order and Service. They serve the congregation by preaching and teaching, by presiding over the sacraments of Communion and Baptism. They serve through limited pastoral counseling, leading people to worship and to know Jesus, and equipping the church for ministry and missions. They are also responsible for the administration of the church and being faithful to the Book of Discipline. The Bishop through the itinerancy system appoints them to the local church.

The Local Pastor (para. 316) is a person called by God to serve the local church. They are not ordained as elders but licensed and appointed to a local church to preach, lead worship, officiate weddings and funerals, preside over the Sacraments, and fulfill the duties of a pastor. They have the authority of a pastor only within the setting of the appointed local church.

2. What is the process for setting a pastor's salary? Who can change it, and when can it be changed?

When a Pastor is newly appointed at a local church, the salary is set by the District Superintendent. Subsequently, the Pastor's salary is based on the recommendation by the SPRC committee. The SPRC consults the Annual Conference guidelines. Once the SPRC has set the

pastor's salary it is presented with the budget at the Church Council. The only place the salary is approved or changed is at the Church Charge Conference.

3. The Education committee wants to update the curriculum being taught in the Christian Education program. What specific guidance does the Book of Discipline give you in dealing with this issue?

In para 256.1, a) The Education Committee and ministries are to support the formation of Christian disciples for the transformation of the world. Also, these groups are to create opportunities for people of all ages to experience God's active presence in their lives. It is their responsibility in consultation with the Pastor to provide curriculum that is approved and aligned with the UMC. As pastor, (para 340.2c(b) I am to give oversight to the education program of the church and encourage the use of United Methodist literature and media. Cokesbury has curriculum to purchase that is aligned with UMC theology and The General Board of Discipleship of the UMC provides information on approved resources.

4. You have discovered a need in the community for a soup kitchen, and wish to recommend that this be a priority for the congregation, using the facilities of the church. What parties and processes need to be involved?

This becomes a collaborative effort between the Trustees (para 2533) and Church Council (para 252). It needs to be approved by both the Trustees and the Church Council. It also needs to be a collaborative effort with other organizations in the community and the local board of health. The process needs to ask the questions of: Where does the funding come from? How is this sustainable? How is the building safe and conducive for the outreach? What is the mission of the soup kitchen?

5. A constituent of your church comes to speak with you about their call to ministry. Describe the basic steps that are involved in seeking ordination.

Since they are a constituent of the church, they need to become a member and need to be in service at the church. They need to be a member for one year before applying for the candidacy process (para. 310). Their involvement in the local church needs to be a leadership role for at least a year. After being a member for one year, they can write to the District Superintendent to share their call, ask for admission to the candidacy process and the assignment of a mentor. After meeting with mentor and going through the candidacy book, the candidate will meet with the SPRC of the local church to be interviewed. If the SPRC has approved the candidate for ministry, the candidate shall be presented at a charge conference to be recommended to District Committee on Ministry (DCOM). As they meet with the DCOM, the person will have to go through the required steps for ordination.

6. Describe the general structures of the Annual Conference and how each body functions.

The Annual Conference (para 601-657) brings all the various UMC ministries, districts, local churches, clergy and laity together in a given area established by regional boundaries, i.e. we are a part of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference (GNJAC). The Annual Conference structure has a Bishop and Cabinet, Districts, local churches and general committees. The Bishop and the Cabinet, which is made up of the District Superintendents, Director of Connectional Ministries and others who may be needed at the Connectional Table. The function of this body is the responsibility for the appointment of ordained elders to church or extension ministries. They are also responsible for making sure that the mandates, policy, and decisions made at General Conference are being carried out according to the Book of Discipline.

Each year, or as needed if a special session is called, a conference is held for the work of that Annual Conference. The yearly conferences are composed of both clergy and laity.

Each Annual Conference is composed of Districts, which are led by District Superintendents. The District Superintendents, appointed by the Bishop, are to oversee the work of the local churches in their respective districts. In the GNJAC, the District Superintendents are also resourced as Mission Strategist's and to help the churches to be in and on mission.

There are several committees within each Annual Conference. Some of those committees include the Conference Committee on Episcopacy, the Board of Ordained Ministries, Board of Laity, Conference Board of Church and Society, Young Adults and Children's Ministries, the Conference Council on Finance and Administration, and Camping Ministries. Each of these conference committees or boards work together for the good of the respective Annual Conference and to help the local church to do ministry, to support the clergy and laity within its conference. Each body of the Annual Conference works in the spirit of connection.

7. Describe the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of the United Methodist Church.

The Legislative branch (para. 501) is the General Conference (para. 13-31), which meets every four years. It is the highest legislative body in the UMC and is composed of both laity and clergy members. The purpose of the General Conference is to set the policy and approve legislation. The General Conference is the only branch that has the authority to speak officially for the denomination.

The Judicial branch is the Judicial Council (para.55-57 and 2601-2612) which meets twice a year and is composed of both laity and clergy. The Judicial Council determines the constitutionality of any act of the General Conference, Jurisdictional Conference or a Bishop's decision in their Annual Conference. They also provide the clergy with the guarantee to a right to trial by a committee if charges are brought against a clergy person. All decision's made by the Judicial Council are final.

The Executive branch is the Council of Bishops (para. 49), which is composed by all the bishops of the UMC; they meet once a year. Their role is to oversee the church, the mission and ministries of the church. They are responsible for making sure rules and policies set at General Conference are being implemented.

8. What is your understanding of the theology behind Shared Ministries giving (apportionments)?

As the UMC, we are connectional in ministry. Shared Ministries is the financial way to demonstrate this as a local church. Through the shared ministries giving, the local church is able to have a greater impact in missions by giving with the other churches to support the annual conference and general ministries of the church. Theologically this reminds me of the Macedonian churches helping the other churches. (2 Corinthians 8 & 9).

9. You have an idea for a unique form of ministry. How does the Book of Discipline guide us in seeking affirmation for ministries that are beyond the local church? What is the role of extension ministry in the life of the church?

As an ordained elder, you can be appointed to a ministry beyond the local church (para. 343 and 344). It should be a ministry that gives witness to Christ's love and justice in the world. This is an appointment that the clergy seeks on their own but prior to any interviews the clergy must be in conversation with their DS and/or the Bishop. The extension ministry must be approved by the Board of Ordained Ministry and the Bishop before the clergy is appointed. The clergy are still a part of the itinerant system and are responsible for providing annual written reports to the Annual Conference for which they belong.

10. In what ways does your upbringing, your cultural context, your personal experience shape your understanding of our polity?

I did not grow up in the Methodist tradition. I grew up in a tradition that had a congregational based polity as well as a call system for pastors. I have had to learn a lot about

the UMC polity and continue to learn about polity. If I have any questions I look in the Book of Discipline and confer with other colleagues. Personally, the polity of the UMC represents community and connection. I appreciate the connectional system of the UMC that is not only local but also global.

**THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FORM**

Name Dawn R. Corlew Date 10/12/2016

Address 314 West Saddle River Road Upper Saddle River NJ 07458
Street City State Zip

Home Phone (201) 394-1618 School or Office Phone (201) 327-3960 Birth date March 26, 1969

Sex: M _____ F X E-mail pastordawn@gmail.com

Ethnic Origin: Asian _____ African American/Black _____ Hispanic _____ Other: _____
Native American _____ Pacific Islander _____ White X

Local Church Bergen Highlands UMC City/State Upper Saddle River, NJ

Conference Greater New Jersey Annual Conference District Palisades

Briefly describe your involvement in your local church, such as your leadership positions, groups you enjoy, church activities, etc.
I am the pastor at Bergen Highlands UMC. I have served as an Associate Pastor and Youth Pastor at other churches.

Describe your church involvement in activities beyond your local church, such as district or annual conference work, church camps, workshops, outreach, etc.

Currently, I serve on the District Superintendency Committee.

<u>Your Educational Background</u>	<u>Dates Attended</u>	<u>Degree or Credit Hours</u>
High school <u>North Platte Senior High</u>	<u>1984-1987</u>	<u>Diploma</u>
College <u>North Central Bible College</u>	<u>1987-1991</u>	<u>B.S. Cross Cultural Ministries</u>
Graduate School <u>Eastern University</u>	<u>2004-2006</u>	<u>MBA in International Economic Development</u>
Theological Seminary <u>Palmer Theological Seminary</u>	<u>2002-2006</u>	<u>MDIV</u>

Course of Study for Ordained Ministry Yr.1 _____ Yr.2 _____ Yr.3 _____ Yr.4 _____ Yr.5 _____

Advanced Course of Study: _____ Semester Hours Credit _____

Marital Status: Single, never married X Married, in first marriage _____ Married, in second or more _____
Widowed _____ Separated _____ Divorced _____

If married, spouse's name _____ Birth date _____

Date of Marriage _____ Spouse's occupation _____

Your children, if any:

<u>Name of child</u>	<u>Date of Birth</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Education</u>
_____	_____	_____	_____

Describe your community involvement and volunteer work, such as participation in community organizations, social clubs, service agencies, and other non-church-related volunteer service:

I am member of the local Lions Club and a docent at the local museum. I also help the garden club at the local museum.

Your childhood family and other significant relatives:

Name	Relation	Age	Sex	Education	Marital Status	Occupation
<u>Ray Corlew</u>	<u>Father</u>	<u>70</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>B.A. in Pastoral Ministries</u>	<u>Married</u>	<u>Retired clergy in the Assemblies of God</u>
<u>Pat Corlew</u>	<u>Mother</u>	<u>70</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>LPN</u>	<u>Married</u>	<u>Retired Nurse</u>

Your work experience, such as current employment, previous employment, and military experience, if any.

I have worked with urban ministries in a faith base non-profit. I have done church planting and was a part of the pastoral leadership team for the church plant. I worked on a college campus with students and with inter-faith groups as the College Ministries Coordinator. I have also lived overseas in Ethiopia doing work in Microfinance and missions. I have also served as a youth pastor.

Have you served as a local pastor, diaconal minister, deacon or elder in The United Methodist Church? Yes No

If Yes, what Conference? Greater New Jersey Annual Conference

Conference Relationship	Indicate Date	Indicate Date
Consecrated Diaconal Minister	_____	Probationary Member _____
License as a Local Pastor	<u>2010</u>	Deacon in Full Connection _____
Associate Member	_____	Elder in Full Connection _____

Have you had a change in clergy relationship with a conference of The United Methodist Church? Yes No

If Yes, what Conference? _____

Change in Conference Relationship	Indicate Date	Indicate Date
Discontinuance	_____	Location _____
Leave of Absence	_____	Retirement _____

Disability Leave _____
Termination by action of the annual conference _____

Withdrawal _____

*** Note *** **If additional space is needed, please use a separate sheet of paper and attach to this form**

Greater New Jersey Annual Conference

Board of Ordained Ministry

DAWN R. CORLEW, MDIV

314 West Saddle River Road
Upper Saddle River, NJ 07458

609-338-9711 (cell)

pastordawn@gmail.com

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

- Experience includes several years of ministry experience leading programs in church, higher education and faith-based, non-profit organizations; including: pastoral and administrative positions.
- Energetic and ambitious worker; works well with others as part of team, but also a self-starter, who can work on own with minimal supervision.
- Strong presentation, public speaking and preaching skills.
- Skilled at capacity building through volunteer enlistment and motivation.
- Proven ability to adapt readily to challenges and crises.
- Effectively manages stressful situations.
- Committed to reconciliation and justice issues within local communities.
- Passion to see people's lives transformed by Jesus Christ.
- Have traveled and lived abroad in various countries in Latin American, Africa, Europe and Southeast Asia.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Pastor

July 2012 - Present

Bergen Highlands United Methodist Church, Upper Saddle River, NJ

- Provide leadership for 35 member congregation.
- Lead worship and preach weekly on Sunday mornings, as well as weekly Bible Study.
- Participate in mission and outreach.
- Actively involved in the Community.

Associate Pastor

August 2008 – June 2012

Medford United Methodist Church, Medford, NJ

- Provide leadership for 400 member congregation in partnership with Senior Pastor.
- Lead worship and preach weekly on Sunday mornings for three different worship services.
- Oversee Christian Education program which includes Confirmation, Retreats, Adult Bible Studies, New Member Orientation, Baptism Seminars, Vacation Bible School
- Supervise Youth Program and 2 part-time Youth Directors, which include planning and leading: retreats, service opportunities, scholarship program, B-1 Hunger Event.
- Oversee the Nurture Committee Programs which include Community Outreach through Dickens Festival, Live Nativity, Advent Dinner, Lenten Dinners and other seasonal events.
- Oversee the Outreach Committee Programs which include Angel Tree for Migrant Workers, Migrant Outreach Festival at Christmas, Outreach with Turning Point Ministries, Neighborhood Center of Camden, Christian Caring Center and other national and international projects.

Pastor

Fall 2006 – Summer 2008

First Baptist Church of Ardmore, Ardmore, PA

- Provided leadership for a 35 member congregation that was in transition through pastoral care and business administration.
- Lead worship and preaching weekly on Sunday mornings, as well as weekly Bible Study.
- Assessed, designed and developed business procedures for the church.
- Designed a strategic plan with the church council and congregation.

Chaplain

Fall 2007- Present as On-call

Hospice for the Visiting Nurses Association of Greater Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA

- Chaplain for the patients who requested chaplaincy through the Hospice program.

- Provided pastoral care for patients and family members who were in the dying process, death and grief of a terminal illness.

Research Assistant

Fall 2005

WISDOM Microfinance Institution, S.C., Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

- Designed and implemented research design on HIV/AIDS, OVCs and Microfinance integration.
- Designed Company Profile for marketing materials.
- Evaluated and made recommendations of the various Branches and Sub-branches.
- Assisted with staff development training on Delinquency Training
- Preached in rural, local churches
- Guest lecturer and chapel speaker for Addis Ababa Bible College

Youth Director

2003 – 2005

Medford United Methodist Church, Medford, NJ

- Organized and implemented all spiritual, social, educational and physical activities for junior and senior high students.
- Planned and directed programs for 20 senior high school students.
- Assisted confirmation program for 55 middle school students.
- Worked with volunteer staff of 20.
- Worked with eight-member advisory board to improve existing programs or develop new programs.
- Participated in leading the worship service on Sunday mornings as needed for 400-member congregation.
- Preached in the Sunday morning services, children's sermon and spoke at women's groups in the church
- Started as an interned and moved into being the first hired Youth Director.

Student

2002 – 2004

Palmer Theological Seminary (formerly Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary), Wynnewood, PA

- Student Chaplain for the Student Body.
- Preached in chapel services.
- Teacher's Assistant for Church History professor.
- Involved with the International Student Fellowship.
- Organized and planned chapel services and banquets for International Student Fellowship.
- Planned and worked with Racial Reconciliation Forum.

Program Director

1998 – 2002

TURN (Twin Cities Urban Reconciliation Network), Minneapolis, MN

- Directed MetroLINC volunteer placement program with 60 nonprofit and faith-based organizations.
- Placed over 5,000 volunteers annually into community service projects.
- Organized and implemented the \$375K grant-funded MetroLINC program.
- Organized, developed and implemented several weeklong urban mission trips for youth and college students each summer and spring break.
- Organized women's golf tournament fundraiser.
- Consulted suburban churches on how to partner with urban churches for ministry.
- Developed and supervised the internship program of TURN.
- Supervised two program assistants.
- Worked with a six member advisory board.
- Preached and worked with several churches from various denominations: Baptist, Presbyterian, Church of God, Covenant, Lutheran, and Methodist.

College Ministries Coordinator

1995 – 1998

North Central University – Student Life Department, Minneapolis, MN

- Provided training workshops on career development for graduating seniors.
- Facilitated volunteer placement for all students to do community service in churches and local communities.

- Developed and organized community outreach project with Minneapolis Parks & Recreation Department beginning with 300 youth and growing consistently each year.
- Led annual service trips to various U.S. urban cities.
- Advised student organizations, service projects, and traveling teams.
- Made presentations at chapels, churches and community organizations.
- Taught Student Leadership course each year.
- Supervised 15 student workers.
- Served on Multicultural Diversity, Community Youth and Family Services Committees.

Consultant

Summer 1997

North Central University – City Gate Grant, Minneapolis, MN

- Researched articles on urban issues implemented into curriculum and as resource library.
- Developed supplemental material to City Gate curriculum written into program for distance-based learning for urban leaders.

Youth Director

1995 – 1997

Cannon Falls Assembly of God, Cannon Falls, MN

- Organized and oversaw all spiritual, social, educational and physical activities for junior and senior high students.
- Co-led and organized a mission trip for 65 senior high students to Argentina and Chile to speak in public schools about life in America in addition to singing as a choir and performing mimes and drama.

Office Manager

1993 – 1995

North Central University – Student Life Department, Minneapolis, MN

- Supervised student workers.
- Supported six administrators.
- Coordinated and fulfilled daily office duties.

Children and Youth Volunteer Worker

1991 – 1993

Risen Savior Assembly Church, Chicago, IL

- Planted this new church as part of a six-member team and still in existence today.
- Developed and organized spiritual, social, educational and physical activities for over 45 junior and senior inner-city high youth.
- Designed marketing material and made presentations to churches, youth meetings and church services to promote awareness of church's ministries.
- Raised funds for the church.

EDUCATION**Masters of Divinity**

May 2006

Eastern University - Palmer Theological Seminary, Wyncnewood, PA

MBA, International Economic Development

December 2005

Eastern University, St. David's, PA

BS, Cross Cultural Ministries

1991

North Central University, Minneapolis, MN

CREDENTIALS

May 2015, Provisional Candidate for the United Methodist Church in the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference.

July 2010, Local Pastor for the United Methodist Church in the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference.

May 1997, ordained with the General Council of the Assemblies of God, Minnesota District Council.

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CUPERWICH, KYLE

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NOTES

I. Preaching and Worship

Sermon and Congregational Background Information

1) *Sermon Title:* “The Potter’s Touch”

2) *Scripture Text:* Jeremiah 18:1-11

3) *Congregational Background:*

- Califon United Methodist Church is a small church located in Califon, NJ. Califon is a small, rural community in Hunterdon County with a majority White/Caucasian population. The church is known in the community for their Top O’ the Barn Thrift Store.
- Attendance at the 10 a.m. Sunday worship service typically falls between 18-30 congregants with a wide variety of ages represented. Worship on Sunday mornings is traditional, yet incorporates some contemporary elements from time to time. When there is a fifth Sunday in a month, the church gathers for “Breakfast Church”; a service that incorporates breakfast, discussion, and Holy Communion into the worship experience.
- Since I began my appointment at the church on July 1, 2015, I have been primarily using the lectionary for preaching. This sermon was preached during a worship series entitled “The Art of Justice” that followed the lectionary stream containing the book of Jeremiah. The lectionary text for the sermon that follows is from the week of September 4, 2016 and was preached on September 11, 2016.

Sermon Manuscript: “The Potter’s Touch”

As I was reflecting on the passage from Jeremiah for this morning, I was reminded of my time in elementary school. Growing up during those years, the one class I really was not a fan of going to was art class. I was not very good at drawing and painting. It was a subject that I just really didn’t get too excited about. There was one art lesson, however, that we did pretty much every year that was a favorite of mine; making a sculpture out of clay. Many of you gathered here may have had some experience with clay in art class during your school years. There was something exciting and wonderful about taking a big hunk of clay and creating a work of art. I loved having the feeling of the clay in my hands and being able to mold it into something beautiful.

Each of us in class received a hunk of clay from our teacher. We would work for a few class sessions, pinching, squeezing and carving. We would stretch the clay into various shapes and figures that our little imaginations could think of. We were able to continually mold and create as long as the clay was soft. In the corner of the classroom, there was a big oven called a kiln. After few days of molding, our teacher would take our shaped pieces of clay and put them in the kiln. We would come back to class and receive our piece of clay, but after being in the kiln, the clay was different. It was now a hard sculpture that could not be manipulated. If we tried to manipulate or change the shape of the clay, it would break. If the piece was dropped, it could possibly shatter. Any imperfections or mistakes in the sculpture that were made could not be removed. Since the clay was hardened, it could not be changed or molded.

Jeremiah learns an art lesson with clay in the passage that we read this morning. The Lord speaks to Jeremiah and says, “Come, go down to the potter’s house, and there I will let you hear

my words.” So Jeremiah goes down to the potter’s house, and as he explains, he sees a potter there who “was working at his wheel. The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter’s hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as seemed good to him.”¹ The potter was doing his life’s work by taking this big block of clay, shaping it, and working out the imperfections in order for it to become a vessel.

As Jeremiah is watching the potter at his craft of moving and shaping the clay, God speaks to him and explains what he is to learn from this moment and the message he is to share with his people. God says, “Can I not do with you, O house of Israel, just as this potter has done? Just like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.”² Just as the potter devotes their life to forming and shaping clay into beautiful vessels, God’s work in the world is one of forming and sculpting. With the care and attention of a potter, God’s hand is at work forming art of justice and healing. God is at work forming a people who will live out the justice and promise that God has for the entire world. The God that formed the universe who (as we read in Genesis) created all there is and called it good, is continually at work in imagining, forming and molding the world into the good it is supposed to be.

God does not stop the lesson with Jeremiah there. Right after this profound statement about God being a potter, God explains how the molding works. God says to Jeremiah, “At one moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, but if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will change my mind about the disaster that I intended to bring on it. And at another moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, but if it does evil in my

¹ Jeremiah 18:3-4, NRSV

² Jeremiah 18:6, NRSV

sight, not listening to my voice, then I will change my mind about the good that I had intended to do to it.”³

We see God presenting a choice through these words. God was going to be the Potter, and God’s people in the nation of Judah, who Jeremiah was addressing, had to decide what type of clay they would be. They could be flexible clay. They could remain clay that is moldable by the touch of the Potter. The more flexible to the Potter’s touch they become, the easier it is for the Potter to mold the clay into the beautiful creation it is supposed to be. “If a nation” is flexible by “turn[ing] from its evil” allowing God the Potter to mold them into what they are supposed to be, that’s when they will experience God’s justice and presence in the fullest. That’s when their imperfections would be smoothed out and their world would be made right as it was intended to be. Or, God’s people could be like clay that has just come out of the kiln. They could be clay that was no longer moldable and that was breakable. They could allow themselves to be hardened and become dry by the temptations and influence of power and corruption in their society. They could “do evil” and “not listen to [God’s] voice.” They could continually live in their world and let their imperfections overtake them.

God tells Jeremiah to urge God’s people to “turn now! Turn now all of you from your evil way, and amend your ways and your doings.”⁴ God wanted to be the Potter and wanted Israel to “turn.” God wanted Israel to be flexible and “amendable” so they can truly live as God intended, so they can experience relationships as God intended, and so they can interact with the world as God intended. God wanted to be the one to form them and God was going to them through

³ Jeremiah 18: 7-10, NRSV

⁴ Jeremiah 18:11, NRSV

Jeremiah and saying “change you ways...allow me to mold you. Don’t dry yourself out. Don’t enter the kiln and become rigid and breakable.”

The words we read in Jeremiah continually call out to us today. We live in an anxious time where the questions of “where is God in all this,” “why did God let this happen,” and “why can’t God fix this” arise more and more as we hear about what goes on in our world. As these questions are asked, maybe we need to look at ourselves. Maybe we need to look at ourselves and ask “do we let God be the Potter?” Do we live as though we are clay that entered the kiln; baked and immovable, un- moldable and stuck in our own ways?

Do we truly allow our lives and world to be molded by God when God reaches out to us or do we say no to the Potter’s touch? Do we remain flexible to move with God’s touch of grace, so the imperfections in our lives and world can be removed and both can be transformed into the beautiful vessel that God intended? God’s justice, the act of God making everything in the world right, involves molding. It involves shaping and touching our world and our lives. Yet, how often do we not allow God to mold us? How many times, as individuals, and even as a church, do we lose hope and rely on our methods, our quests for power, our treasures, our status, our own strength, our own rules and traditions that we think are transforming us but are in fact keeping us in the kiln?

Injustice in our world occurs when we become rigid. Injustice and all that comes with it- harm, death, destruction- occurs when we resist the Potters transforming touch on our lives. When we respond to God and allow God’s grace to touch us and mold us, and when we repent and turn away from lives in the kiln and listen to God’s voice, then we will become the holy human beings that we were created to be; holy vessels as God intended. As we become molded

vessels individually and as a church, God uses our newly molded lives in order to mold the world in which we find ourselves.

We believe that Jesus shows us exactly what it is like to be molded by God. He lived his life in a way that responded to God's touch and movement, even when that led him to the cross. In his resurrection we get a glimpse of what we can hope to be molded into; a new life that will never end in a new creation where all is made right. This is the hope that we live in each day. So I ask you, as God moves in your life, do you remain flexible clay? Or have you found yourself hardened by the kiln; resistant to the God that can mold your life and world? Being molded is the only way we can see God's justice and intentions become a reality. Let us pray...

Order of Worship

Theological Significance of the Service

The order of worship at Califon UMC is an adaptation of “An Order of Sunday Worship Using the Basic Pattern” found in the *United Methodist Hymnal* and the *United Methodist Book of Worship*. Below is the description of worship on September 11, 2016:

Gathering- After a choral prelude and a welcome to worship, the congregation is invited to pass the peace of Christ to one another. This peace reflects the peace that Christ passed to the disciples shortly before the resurrection.⁵ A call to worship then follows the passing of the peace. The Collect for Purity, where God is asked to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts and “inspire us” by the Holy Spirit so we may love “perfectly”, is always part of the call to worship.⁶ Not only does this prayer stem from ancient liturgies, but it also speaks to the Wesleyan understanding of sanctification and perfection. An opening hymn is sung after the call to worship that praises God’s power and work. The unison prayer that follows reflects the biblical theme for the day. The opening prayer for worship on September 11 was taken from the resources of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library.⁷

Prayers of the People- The prayers of the people are recited after the unison prayer, rather than at the traditional location following the sermon, to allow children who take part in Sunday school later in worship to participate. There is a sharing of prayer requests, joys and concerns prior to the prayer. Additionally, church announcements are shared as part of the prayer requests. The prayers begin with a silent confession of sins and pardon, followed by the lay liturgist leading the congregation through a general litany of prayer petitions. After each petition ends in “merciful

⁵ John 14:27, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”

⁶ *The United Methodist Book of Worship*. (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1992), 33.

⁷ *The Revised Common Lectionary*. Vanderbilt Divinity Library. < <http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/prayers.php?id=278>>.

God”, all respond with “hear our prayer.” This responsive practice reinforces the point that the entire body of Christ gathered together in that place is involved in the prayer; not just the pastor. These litanies follow the Revised Common Lectionary and our adapted from the book *Praying the Scriptures: Litanies for Sunday Worship* by Jeremiah D. Williamson.⁸ After the litany, the joys and concerns that were shared are lifted up by the pastor. The prayer ends with the choir singing a brief response that petitions God to hear our prayer.

Reading of Scripture, Young Disciple’s Time and Sermon- Scripture passages are read each week by the lay liturgist. The bible passages recount God’s work in the world, God’s interaction with humanity, and also point to Jesus; God’s Word that “became flesh and dwelt among us.”⁹ Each week, a passage is read from the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament Epistles, a responsive reading from the Psalter in the *United Methodist Hymnal* is recited, and a passage from the Gospel is read with the congregation standing. Following the reading, the children come forward for a special message or prayer before Sunday school. A hymn that reinforces a theme from the passages is sung in order to prepare for the witness to the word through the sermon.

Response to the Word- Following the sermon, the congregation stands together and prayerfully recites the Apostle’s Creed. The creed summarizes the good news that we are responding to in faith and also acts as a reminder of our baptism; it is this creed that forms part of our baptismal liturgy. Following the creed, the Gloria Patri is sung; a traditional praise for the Trinity¹⁰. The offering that follows the Gloria Patri is not simply an offering of monetary gifts, but an act of the congregation once again offering their lives to God. The offertory prayer prayed each week by the pastor reflects the wording found in the liturgy of the Great Thanksgiving. The prayer

⁸ James D. Williamson. *Praying the Scripture: Litanies for Sunday Worship*. (New York: Church Publishing, 2014).

⁹ John 1: 14

¹⁰ *The United Methodist Book of Worship*. Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1992), 71.

celebrates God's work through Jesus and all offer themselves "in union with Christ's offering for us."¹¹ After offering themselves and their gifts to God, the congregation can now come together and pray the Lord's Prayer; the prayer that Jesus taught God's children to pray.

Sending Forth- Following the dedication, a closing hymn is sung that expresses the congregation's response to God's work. The service concludes with a blessing upon the congregation and a call to go into the world as disciples of Jesus Christ strengthened by the Holy Spirit.

Questions

1) Why did you choose the hymns used in the context of this service?

*The United Methodist Music and Worship Planner 2016-2017*¹² is used as a resource for selecting hymns. "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty" is a hymn of praise that speaks to God's sustaining and protecting reign. Verse four is particularly fitting with the service's theme; it speaks of the Lord who will "nourish thy life and restore thee, fitting thee well for the tasks that are before thee."¹³ The hymn "Spirit of the Living God", which follows the reading of Scripture, asks the Holy Spirit to "fall afresh" to melt, mold, fill and use us; imagery that fits with the theme of molding.¹⁴ The closing hymn, "Have Thy Own Way, Lord", invites God to work within us as we cooperate with God. Verse one names God as the potter and petitions God to "mold me and make me after thy will, while I am waiting yielded and still."¹⁵

2) What was the purpose of the sermon?

This sermon continued to dive further into the concept of justice; the act of God making

¹¹ *The United Methodist Book of Worship*, 27

¹² David L. Bone and Mary J. Scifres. *The United Methodist Music and Worship Planned 2016-2017*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016)

¹³ *The United Methodist Hymnal*. (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), 139

¹⁴ *The United Methodsit Hymnal*, 393

¹⁵ *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 382

all things right. The main point was to stress that God continues to work in our world and that when God reaches to us through prevenient grace, we have two options. We can either move with that grace to allow God to mold us and our world into what it is intended to be (the process of sanctification), or we can resist God's grace at work and witness the negative consequences. The sermon's purpose was to leave hearers asking the question, "do I let God mold in my life and through my life, or do I remain fixed and rigid in ways that do not allow me to experience God in the world?"

3) Does the Order of Worship help deliver the theme of the sermon? Explain.

The Order of Worship delivers on the theme of the sermon through the various prayers and hymns used. The call to worship speaks to the God who is the source of our lives and who shapes our lives. The unison prayer speaks of God as Creator who "form[s] us on the wheel of life as a potter molds the clay", and the congregation prays to be "shaped into holy vessels" for service in Christ's name.¹⁶ In the Apostle's Creed, that is recited every week, we affirm that God is Creator once again and that we look to the resurrection; the product of God's "molding". In the offertory prayer, we offer thanksgiving to the God who "with love formed us in [God's] image."¹⁷ We offer ourselves and gifts to God in order to continue to be molded and shaped as individuals and as the church.

¹⁶ *The Revised Common Lectionary*. Vanderbilt Divinity Library. <<http://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/prayers.php?id=278>>.

¹⁷ *The United Methodist Book of Worship*, 27

We Come Together to Worship

September 11, 2016

10:00 a.m.

WE GATHER IN GOD'S NAME

Choral Prelude

Words of Welcome

*Passing the Peace of Christ

*Call to Worship

One: Glory to God: the holy and blessed Trinity.

ALL: Let the praises of God ring out. God is the source of our life.

One: Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires, and from you no secrets are hidden. Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen! We praise the God who shapes our lives!

*Opening Hymn

"Praise to the Lord, the Almighty"

UMH 139

*Unison Prayer

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Let us pray...

ALL: Creator God, you form us on the wheel of life as a potter molds the clay. Shape us into holy vessels, bearing the mark of your wise crafting, that we may remain strong and useful through years of faithful and obedient service in Christ's name. Amen.

WE OFFER OUR PRAYERS

- Sharing the News, Events, and Happenings of the Church
- Sharing of Joys and Concerns
- Silent Prayer of Confession and Words of Assurance
- Prayers of the People (after each petition ends in "Merciful God," all respond with "**hear our prayer.**")

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD PROCLAIMED

Scripture Readings

Jeremiah 18: 1-11
Psalm 139 (UMH 854)
*Luke 15: 1-10

Time with Our Young Disciples

*Hymn

"Spirit of the Living God"

UMH 393

Witness to the Word (Sermon)

Rev. Kyle Cuperwich

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

*The Apostle's Creed

UMH 882

*Gloria Patri

UMH 71

Offering Ourselves and Our Gifts

Offertory

*Doxology

UMH 95

*Offertory Prayer

*The Lord's Prayer

UMH 895

WE ARE SENT OUT TO SERVE

*Closing Hymn

"Have Thy Own Way, Lord"

UMH 382

*Benediction

*Postlude

All are invited to **stand as they are able.*

UMH stands for *United Methodist Hymnal*. All hymns and liturgy are found in this book unless otherwise noted.

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II. Bible Study

Book Studied: Ruth

1) Setting and Purpose of the Study

This Bible study took place at Califon United Methodist Church; a small rural congregation in located in Califon, NJ in Hunterdon County. The borough's demographic is mostly White/Caucasian, and this is reflected in the church. This Bible study took place over the course of 4 weeks in the spring of 2016 and was held for 45 minutes before Sunday worship at 10 a.m.. Attendance at the study ranged between 2-5 people and consisted of middle-aged adults.

The purpose of the study is to go deeper into a book of the Old Testament (from here after referred to as the Hebrew Scriptures) to see how that book speaks to us today. When I came to Califon in July of 2015 and reviewed previous study topics, I realized that there was very little attention paid to the Hebrew Scriptures. I also encountered some confusion from church members over these Scriptures since they can be hard to comprehend, as our culture is far removed from the ancient contexts. I discerned that Ruth would be a good place to begin looking at the Hebrew Scriptures as it raises ethnic, class, and gender issues and is told from the point of view of two widows; individuals who were at the lowest levels of poverty¹. In a world and church that is increasingly divided politically and ideologically, a mindset can arise that leads one to not see God at work in groups of people of a certain life situation, race, class, or identity. In this study, I seek to show how God works through those who are often looked down upon or overlooked, and how Christians are called to address their situation.

¹ Lind Day. "Ruth: Introduction." *The CEB Study Bible*. Ed. Joel B. Green. Nashville: Common English Bible, 2011

2) Study Outline

A. Lesson 1: Introductory material and Ruth 1:1-22

1. Introductory material²

- a) There is no direct reference to the author of Ruth. Jewish tradition does say that Samuel wrote the book, however the references to David (4:17, 22), if original, rule out this possibility.
- b) The events are dated to the period of the Judges of Israel (1:1). It has been suggested that Ruth was transmitted orally in poetic form before being written down sometime between 950 and 250 B.C. Ruth can be divided into four different scenes that tie together. Chapter 1 takes place in the area of Moab, a land east of the Jordan River. The rest of the book takes place in Bethlehem and the surrounding areas.
- c) The book of Ruth speaks about ethnic, gender, and class issues. Ruth, being a Moabite, was an enemy of Israel. Ruth and Naomi both find themselves in the lowest level of society. Despite their status and place in society, we see that their situation actually plays a bigger role in God's overall plan.

2. Troubles in Moab (Ruth 1:1-22)

- a) Key Concept: Our attitudes and life situations can cause us to write off God's work when it happens in unconventional ways.
 - i. Supporting Point: Naomi and her family find themselves in distress. They flee from famine in Judah to the territory of Moab; a land that was enemies with

² Bill T. Arnold. "Ruth." In *Asbury Bible Commentary*. ed. Eugene E. Carpenter and Wayne McCown. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992. Accessed via Bible Gateway. <<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/asbury-bible-commentary/RUTH>> Adapted.

Israel. On top of that, Naomi's husband, Elimelech, dies along with her two sons. This leaves Naomi and her Moabite daughter-in-laws, Ruth and Opah, as widowed women with no resources. (1:1-5)

- ii. Supporting Point: Once Naomi hears about the famine ending in Judah, she decides to return home. She has no means of support and is quite bitter. Yet Ruth and Opah, knowing they will be strangers in a land where they can be seen as enemies, insist on going with her. Naomi insists that they stay in their own land and live their lives with new husbands. (1:6-13).
- iii. Supporting Point: Opah decides to go back to her homeland, to "her people and her gods", and Naomi tells Ruth she should do the same. Ruth vows, however, to be with Naomi till she dies. Naomi would go to Bethlehem with Ruth, now a stranger in enemy land, staying by her side. Toward the end of the passage, Naomi still proclaims that God has returned her "empty," despite having Ruth by her side (1:14-22)

b) Summary and Application: After fleeing her homeland to enemy territory, Naomi finds herself in a situation where all her means of support are gone. While Naomi is in a bitter state of loss, Ruth, her daughter-in-law from an enemy people, promises to stick with her. While coming to terms with Ruth's company, Naomi still seems to miss how God is providing through this woman of an "enemy nation." As people who follow God today, we too can fail to see when God works outside of established means, especially in times of distress. We need to be open to seeing God work outside the box in order to provide the support we need, even if that is through an enemy or a person who is not "one of us."

B. Lesson 2: Ruth 2:1-23

1. Key Concept: God appears in those who are viewed as “despised” and in the lowest levels of society.

- a) Supporting Point: The women find themselves without support or food, so Ruth tells Naomi that she is going to “glean” from a field for food. Hebrew law called for the food on the edges of the field or any forgotten crop should be left for those who are poor and/or foreign. (Leviticus 23:22, Deuteronomy 24:19-22). She happens to go to a field that belonged to Boaz; a man of wealth and status who is related to Naomi’s former husband. In verse 6, it is emphasized twice that Ruth is from Moab; a country the Israelites despise. It appears that the author is placing great emphasis on Ruth’s status and heritage for a reason (2:1-7).
- b) Supporting Point: Despite Ruth being a “stranger,” Boaz tells her to glean in his field. She inquires with Boaz as to why he finds such favor with her even though she is “a foreigner.” Boaz says he has been told all about what Ruth has done for her mother-in-law Naomi, and how she left her homeland to live with her in a foreign one. Boaz follows with “May the Lord reward you for your deeds, and may you have the full reward of the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge.” (2:12). From looking at Boaz’s words, it can be said that he saw in Ruth, this foreigner, a display of the very character of God; a character seen throughout Scripture. Just as God goes to extreme lengths to stay with the people of Israel through times of trial, Ruth goes to extreme lengths to stay with Naomi in her time of trial (2:8-16).

- c) Supporting Point: Ruth goes home to Naomi, and explains her encounter with Boaz. Unbeknownst to Ruth, Boaz happens to be in the kin to Naomi's husband. Naomi exclaims, "Blessed be he by the LORD, whose kindness has not forsaken the living and the dead" (v.20). This act of gleaning brought blessing to both Ruth and Naomi. Interestingly, in verse 21, Ruth is referred to as "Ruth the Moabite." Once again her nationality is made known, and once again we see a blessing unexpectedly brought upon someone outside of God's people.
2. Summary and Application: Throughout the chapter, we see that God can be found in those who in the lowest parts of society; in this case, the refugee. Boaz saw something special about Ruth's character, despite her being a Moabite and despised by Israelite society. In Ruth's actions, we can see God's character; just like Ruth does not leave nor forsake Naomi, God does not leave nor forsake. Ruth discovers that she and Naomi will be blessed through this encounter with Boaz, since Boaz is a relative. The scene from chapter two proposes questions for our contemporary situation. In our modern day, there is great debate over the treatment of those who come to our country, state and communities to seek refuge. Will we be like Boaz, who sees God's character in one who is a stranger? How will we respond to a refugee? Are we open to seeing a blessing in unexpected relationships with these new strangers?

C. Lesson 3: Ruth 3:1-18

1. Key Concept: As people of faith, we are called to provide compassion and service to those in desperate situations.
- a) Supporting Point: As the harvest ends, Ruth and Naomi do not see a huge change in their circumstance. As a result, they come up with a plan to get Boaz' attention

beyond simply gleaning in a field. Naomi sees Ruth's future security in marriage to Boaz. Naomi tells Ruth to "wash and anoint [her]self, and put on her best clothes" and go meet Boaz on the threshing floor that night after he falls asleep from eating and drinking. When she arrives there, she is to "uncover his feet" and do as Boaz commands. The phrase "uncover his feet" in ancient culture often referred to a sexual act. The two women decide to take their destiny into their own hands, even if that means doing something taboo and scandalous (3:1-7).

- b) Supporting Point: Boaz is startled to find his "feet uncovered" with a woman lying next to him on the threshing floor. Ruth identifies herself and says that she is his "next-of-kin" (3:9). Boaz, rather than chastising Ruth, is impressed by what she is willing to do, saying that "this last instance of loyalty is better than the first" (3:10). As a result of her loyal activity, Boaz promises to do all that she asks to help her. He tells Ruth that there is one who is closer in kin that can marry her, but if that man is unwilling, Boaz himself will marry her. Boaz sends Ruth home (3:8-13).

2. Summary and Application: In chapter three, Ruth takes matters into her own hands to get Boaz' attention. Ruth resorts to something that appears to be taboo; she goes to Boaz late at night on the threshing floor. Instead of looking down at Ruth, Boaz praises her for her taking the risk, and commits to helping her. In our world, there are those (such as migrants and refugees from others countries) who will go to desperate measures to control their destiny. This may lead to taboo or even illegal activities that can put their lives and reputations at risk. As people of faith, we can learn from Boaz's reaction to Ruth. We are called to commit to helping those unexpected people in our midst who are

desperate. It is a message that Jesus himself reiterates in Matthew 25:31-46 in the parable of the sheep and goats.

D. Lesson 4: Ruth 4: 1-22

1. Key Concept: Taking a risk to support those deemed unsupportable can bring us into God's overall plan; a plan we may not even see in our lifetime.

a) Supporting Point: Boaz acts upon his promise to Ruth. The next day, he assembles the elders of the village at the city gate, as was custom, and goes to Naomi's nearest of kin to offer him Elimiech's inheritance to redeem. Boaz first offers the land to the nearest-kin, which he offers to redeem. Boaz then adds that as part of the "deal," Ruth the Moabite would also become his wife. The nearest-kin then backs out of the deal in order to protect his inheritance, and offers allows Boaz to take his claim. Boaz then receives blessing from the elders to take Ruth as his wife and carry on Elimiech's name. (4:1-12).

b) Supporting Point: Boaz and Ruth are married, and Ruth bears a son. The women then praise Naomi for her new grandson, saying "your daughter-in-law, who loves you and who is better to you than seven sons, has given him birth" (4:15). The final verses state exactly how the relationships in the book play out in God's plan; Ruth's son, Obed, would be the father of Jesse, who would be the father of David, the most celebrated king of Israel (4:13-22).

2. Summary and Application: The story of redemption comes to its conclusion, and we see how the story is part of God's overall plan. As modern readers, we are presented with a choice. We can make the choice of the nearest-kin who turned down his right to take care the land, Naomi and Ruth. It appears that he wanted to protect his image and

inheritance by not marrying a Moabite woman. How many situations in our life are we presented with the opportunity to support someone yet are afraid to take the risk? How often do we not act in order to save our “inheritance”-our job, our comfortable relationships, or way of life? It takes courage to make Boaz’s choice and to support those who are not supportable in the eyes of others. It takes a lot of courage to make Boaz’s choice and to support those who are not supportable in the eyes of others. When we make an unexpected choice like Boaz, our actions could in fact impact God’s overall plan beyond what we can comprehend in our lifetime.

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3) Detailed Lesson Plan- Lesson 3: Ruth 3: 1-18

1) Prepare the computer, television screen, and power point beforehand. Invite participants to round table and have introductions as necessary (2 minutes).

2) Opening exercise: Looking at the news (15 minutes).

- Show the video “As Sweden Offers Shelter, Denmark Tries to Discourage Refugees” from the PBS NewsHour (<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/sweden-offers-shelter-denmark-tries-discourage-refugees/>). *Follow-up questions: 1) What are your initial thoughts on the video? 2) Why are refugees from Middle Eastern conflicts trying to make their way to Sweden and Denmark, despite the danger? Do you think they have other options? 3) What is reaction like in Sweden and Denmark? How are they the same and how are they different?*

3) Diving into Scripture (15 minutes)

- Looking at the broad picture (change Power Point slide)
 - Read Ruth 3:1-18 straight through. *Follow-up question: 1) What stuck out to you during this first reading?*
- Looking at the smaller pieces (change Power Point slide)
 - Read Ruth 3:1-7 once again.
 - ❖ As the harvest ends, Ruth and Naomi do not see a huge change in there situation since they met Boaz. They decide to come up with a plan to get his attention beyond simply gleaning in the field. Naomi see Ruth’s security in marriage to Boaz. Naomi tells Ruth to “wash and anoint [her]self, and put on her best clothes” and meet Boaz on the threshing floor

after he falls asleep that night after eating and drinking. When she arrives there, she is to “uncover his feet.” This is a phrase that is often used in ancient culture to refer to sexual acts. It is clear that the women desecrated to take control of their destiny, even going as far as taking part in taboo activities that can have severe consequences.

❖ *Follow-up questions: 1) What can lead someone to become desperate to take their destiny into their own hands? 2) What are situations in our world where you see people trying to control their own destiny out of desperation? What opinions often arise about them? 3) Have you ever been in a situation where you decided to control your own destiny? What was it like?*

- Read Ruth 3:8-13 once again (change Power Point slide).

❖ Boaz is startled by Ruth’s appearance in the floor next to him “with his feet uncovered” (3:10). Ruth identifies herself as his “next of kin” (3:9). Interestingly, Boaz is impressed with Ruth, saying “this last instance of loyalty is better than the first.” Boaz promises to help Ruth. He will arrange a meeting with a closer kin that can marry her, but if that kin is unwilling, Boaz himself promises to marry Ruth.

❖ *Follow-up questions: 1) What do you notice about Boaz’s reaction to Ruth’s actions? 2) Where you expecting Boaz to react the way he did? 3) What can we learn from Boaz’s response to Ruth’s desperate action?*

- 4) Tying it all together (8 minutes-change Power Point slide).

- Before giving answers, ask the group “What message(s) can we take away from looking at the scene in chapter three?”
- Key concept and points to take away
 - ❖ Key concept: As people of faith, we will be called to provide compassion and service to those in desperate situations.
 - ❖ This chapter shows Ruth taking her destiny into her own hands. Ruth resorts to a very risky action; she goes to Boaz alone late at night on the threshing floor. Instead of looking down at Ruth for violating social norms and boundaries, Boaz praises her for her taking the risk, and commits to helping her.
 - ❖ In our world, there are those (such as migrants and refugees from others countries) who will go to desperate measures to control their destiny. This may lead to activities or actions that can put their lives and reputations at risk.
 - ❖ As people of faith, we can learn from Boaz’s reaction to Ruth. We are called to commit to helping those unexpected people in our midst who are desperate. We are called to show compassion; compassion Jesus himself reiterates in Matthew 25:31-46 in the parable of the sheep and the goats.

6) Closing Prayer (2 minutes)

- All pray together: Dear God, in a world divided politics and views, help us to have the compassion of Boaz on those who act in desperate ways to better their lives. Help us sympathize with their situations, and work with them so they may truly feel your blessing, love, and grace. In Jesus name, Amen.

4) Annotated Bibliography

Arnold, Bill T. "Ruth." In *Asbury Bible Commentary*. ed. Eugene E. Carpenter and Wayne McCown. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992. Accessed via Bible Gateway. <<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/asbury-bible-commentary/RUTH>>

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Miller, Stephen M. *The Complete Guide to the Bible*. Uhrichville, Ohio: Barbour Publishing, 2007.

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5) Evaluation

Overall, I felt that my lesson and the Bible study in general were successful. The major strength of this particular lesson was the use of the PBS Newshour video on the reaction to the influx of desperate refugees in Sweden and Denmark. The video provided a contemporary image to relate to the discussion of Boaz' reaction to Ruth's desperate activity. The lesson flowed very well from one question and section to another in a way that fostered discussion. In reviewing the study materials, I felt that I included just enough background and historical information in a way that did not overload participants. Taking into account the flow of the lesson, the media that was used, and the types of questions that were asked, I felt that the information was conveyed in a clear manner.

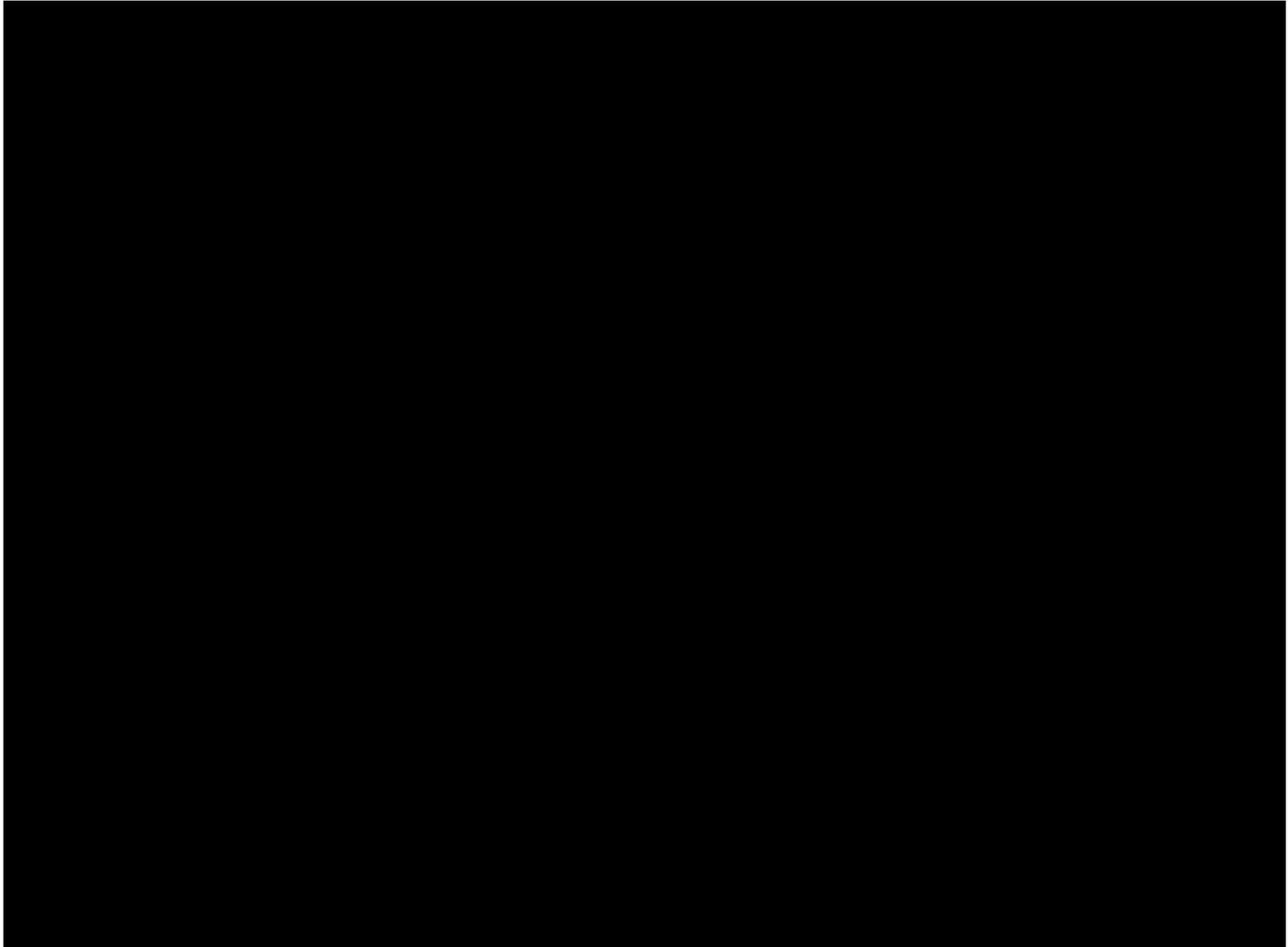
One area of attention that needs to be addressed in a future study is the spelling and grammar on the Power Point slides. During the lessons, participants did point out some grammatical mistakes. In order to allow maximum clarity and to not create distraction, I need to remember to carefully spell check the slides. At the conclusion of the study, I asked the participants for some basic feedback. The participants appreciated that the study related to modern times and beliefs and that good discussion came about as a result. There was an appreciation for the consistent format between all the lessons and that there was a smooth flow to the information provided.

***The Book of Ruth:
Seeing God Outside the Ordinary***

Chapter 3

Opening Exercise: Looking at the News

(Click on the video in slide show mode to play)



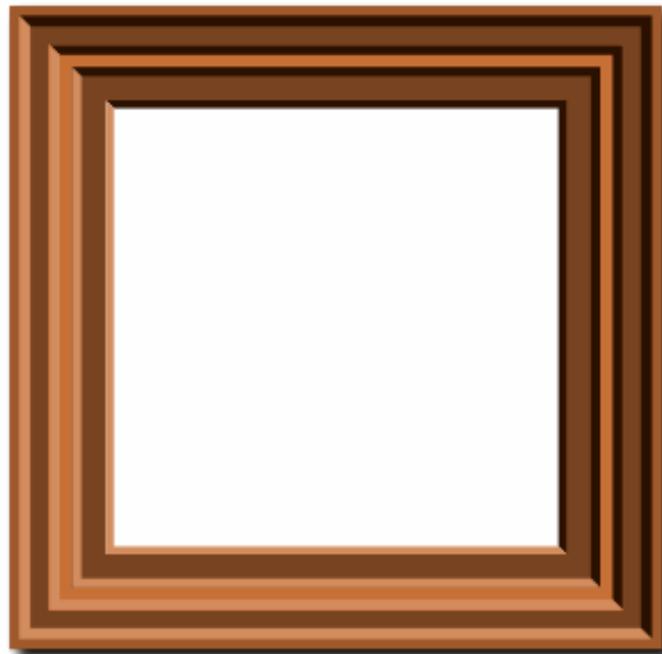
Reflections on the Video

- 1) What are your initial thoughts on the video?
- 2) Why are the refugees from the Middle East trying to make their way to Sweden and Denmark despite the danger? Do you think they have other options?
- 3) What is the reaction like in Sweden and Denmark? How are they the same and how are they different?

Looking at the Whole Picture

Read Ruth chapter 3 in it's entirety.

- What words, images or phrases stuck to you in during this first reading?



Focus on the Smaller Pieces

Read Ruth 3:1-7

- 1) What can lead someone to become desperate to take their destiny into their own hands?
- 2) What are situations in our world where you see people trying to control their own destiny out of desperation? What opinions often arise about them?
- 3) Have you ever been in a situation where you decided to control your own destiny? What was it like?



Focus on the Smaller Pieces

Read Ruth 3:8-13

- 1) What do you notice about Boaz's reaction to Ruth's actions?
- 2) Where you expecting Boaz to react the way he did?
- 3) What can we learn from Boaz's response to Ruth's desperate action?



Tying it All Together



- What message(s) can we take away from looking at the scene in chapter 3?

Tying it All Together

Key concept: As people of faith, we will be called to provide compassion and service to those in desperate situations.

- This chapter shows Ruth taking her destiny into her own hands. Ruth resorts to a very risky action; she goes to Boaz alone late at night on the threshing floor. Instead of looking down at Ruth for violating social norms and boundaries, Boaz praises her for her taking the risk, and commits to helping her.
- In our world, there are those (such as migrants and refugees from other countries) who will go to desperate measures to control their destiny. This may lead to activities or actions that can put their lives and reputations at risk.
- As people of faith, we can learn from Boaz's reaction to Ruth. We are called to commit to helping those unexpected people in our midst who are desperate. We are called to show compassion; compassion Jesus himself reiterates in Matthew 25:31-46 in the parable of the sheep and the goats.

Closing Prayer

- **All: Dear God, we pray for those who feel desperate in their life. We pray that we may have compassion on those who have no hope and those who have taken matters into their own hands. Help us serve those who are most in need with your heart. Amen.**



Art Work Sources

Clip Art Panda. <www.clipartpanda.com>.>

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III: Practice of Ministry

1) What do you think are the most effective means of doing evangelism in the 21st century? How have you lived this out your current context of ministry?

The church faces a challenge when it comes to evangelism in the 21st century. No longer are people attracted to church simply because there happens to be a church building in the neighborhood with programs. Evangelism in our culture needs to be incarnational and relational, just as God became incarnate as a human being through Jesus and walked among us. God became one of us in order to relate to us and call all people into a new creation. Through Jesus, God built a relationship with the earliest disciples and walked with them where they were to transform them. An incarnational and relational model of evangelism involves the church going into the community to build relationships and walk with people where they are to bring transformation. I have adapted this incarnational model in Califon by becoming a member of the Califon Recreation Committee and attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. By becoming part of the Recreation Committee, I've discerned how the town interacts socially so the church and community can connect. By connecting with Alcoholics Anonymous that meets in our building, I have been able to listen to the stories of faith that have opened doors to sharing the love of Jesus.

2) What makes a congregation vital, and how do you measure it? How would you envision working with a congregation to become more vital?

The second chapter of Acts gives us a window into a vital church; a church that “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the community, to their shared meals, and to their prayers...They would sell pieces of property and possessions and distribute the proceeds to everyone who needed them. Every day, they met together in the temple and ate in their homes. They shared food with gladness and simplicity. They praised God and demonstrated God’s

goodness to everyone.”¹ A vital church, grounded in the life and teachings of Jesus, forms a holy community, practices in sharing gifts to meet other’s needs, and engages in Spirit-filled worship and prayer. A vital church takes risk and makes sacrifice in order to spread God’s reign of love. Vitality is not measured so much by numbers and statistics. It is measured by the stories of God’s love and transformation working through the church to change lives; stories such as one overcoming addiction or a family discovering the riches of Scripture for the first time. It is measured in the amount of risk the community of faith is willing to take in ministry; risks such as a small church with limited resources packaging 12,000 meals for those facing hunger. As I have done in my appointments, I envision working with a congregation to be more vital by prayerfully bringing church leadership together to learn about their community and share their experiences of the life in the church. I would challenge the congregation to develop ways to live out the second chapter of Acts in the context in which they find themselves.

3) What is your personal approach to conflict? Provide an example of where you have been involved in resolving conflict. What did you learn?

My approach to conflict involves attentively listening, fostering open communication, and seeking appropriate resources. I began my appointment at Califon United Methodist Church when the congregation was going through a steep decline in attendance, leadership conflict, and tension between the church and the thrift store. In order to discern the roots of the conflict, I began by listening to leaders through one-on-one conversations, written communication, and interaction in meetings. After listening, I began to foster open communication by asking leaders to come together face-to-face with me in person, either after worship or at another time, to bring about a resolution and minimize gossip.² I then sought appropriate resources to solve the conflict. In the case of Califon, this involved using connectional and non-connectional resources

¹ Acts 2: 42, 45-47, CEB

² Matthew 5:22-25 speaks about offering resolution to disputes before going to that altar as part of the Sermon on the Mount.

such as the conference Director of Stewardship and Visioning, my District Superintendent, and a church consultant. The conflict at Califon taught me the importance of face-to-face communication when solving conflict and the importance of reaching out to connectional leadership when help is needed. I have learned that I cannot solve every problem on my own, and that the United Methodist connection is an invaluable resource in conflict resolution.

4) What is your theological and practical understanding of itineracy?

In Scripture, Jesus would “send” the disciples out in ministry. In Luke 10, Jesus sends the disciples out into the “harvest” in order to announce the Kingdom of God.³ In John 20, the resurrected Jesus stood in the midst of the disciples and announced “as the Father sent me, so I send you.”⁴ After Jesus’ ascension, the disciples are referred to mostly as “apostles”, coming from the Greek term for one sent as a messenger.⁵ Jesus’ act of sending disciples into the world provides the basis for itineracy. The bishop appoints and sends to places of ministry ordained elders, provisional elders, and associate members who have been called by God and affirmed by the church to devote their lives to ministry leadership. Consideration is given to the gifts and evidence of God’s grace in the person being appointed, while at the same time meeting the needs, characteristics, and opportunities of the local church and extension ministry settings. Licensed local pastors, who are not itinerant and may hold secular employment, are also appointed to be sent to provide pastoral and sacramental functions to churches as the Spirit leads. Through itinerant ministry, the church works with the movement of the Holy Spirit to send labors to where they are needed to harvest the mission field.

³ Luke 10:1-20

⁴ John 20:19-23

⁵ William D. Mounce. *Interlinear for the Rest of Us: The Reverse Interlinear for New Testament Word Studies*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 801

5) How do you engage all age groups in your community?

As a pastor, I am a firm believer in inter-generational ministry and work toward forming strong inter-generational relationships. I have served in two small church appointments where I have put in place opportunities for as much inter-generational ministry as possible. I strive to have youth and young adults active in worship and ministry as often as possible alongside those of older generations. At Califon, this means taking steps such as arranging our traditional order of worship in order to allow youth to participate as much as possible before Sunday school, exploring alternative worship experiences that foster contact across generational lines (such as breakfast and dinner church), and encouraging the young adults to participate in music ministry and service projects. While recognizing that changes are needed to reach younger generations, I make conscious efforts to respect and recognize the traditions and needs of those of older generations.

6) What is your understanding of pastoral authority, and how do you intend to exercise it in your ministry?

I understand pastoral authority as grounded in service. A pastor is called to serve in the manner that is displayed in the ministry of Jesus Christ. As the pastor serves where they are appointed, they are called to provide leadership and order in building the body of Christ to extend service to the world. Pastoral authority involves equipping all members and constituents of the church for ministry to their context. It is not the pastor's responsibility alone to minister in the name of Jesus; all are called through baptism. As a pastor, I live out the call to bring order to the church by encouraging and holding accountable those in the church to live out their baptism. I hold the expectation of lay leadership to take responsibility and ownership of the ministry of the church. When a person in leadership does not fulfill their responsibilities, I work with them to find an outlet for ministry more suitable to them. As pastor, I guide the congregation in

visioning and making sure ministry is carried out in accordance with the larger covenant established in the *Book of Discipline*.

7) If you could choose *anyone* to mentor you in leadership skills, who would that be and why?

Given the opportunity to choose anyone as a leadership mentor, I would choose Pope Francis; the current head of the Roman Catholic Church. His leadership style is one that is pastoral and lead by the Spirit. He is one who is not afraid to take risks to be with the least and the lost, and is not afraid to lovingly tell others when change needs to be considered. Francis is a man who has an attentive listening ability and desires to empower rather than control. He strives to build relationships with those of differing opinions and beliefs while sticking to his convictions. I see Pope Francis as one who displays Christ-like love and leadership that is needed to engage the church and world in the 21st century.

8) Describe a situation in which you felt a need to assert a professional boundary in the practice of ministry.

When I began my current appointment at Califon, I had to establish professional boundaries with one of the leaders of the church. This individual, when communicating via email, would send very long messages about church matters frequently. When I first arrived at the church, I would answer her emails regularly, and was appreciative of the suggestions they contained. As time went on, the frequency and length of her emails increased, with non-emergency messages being sent to me while I was on vacation and throughout the night. Many of these messages revolved around the ministry of the church and should have been brought up in settings such as church council. It appeared that through her messages, she was trying to pull me onto “her side” in church matters and position me against others. As I realized she was overstepping her bounds, I began to minimize my responses to her emails, and would not be

quick to respond. Once she realized I was not responding quickly, the frequency of the emails died down and proper boundaries were restored.

9) How have you worked through the experience of forgiving someone?

I have discovered that the act of forgiveness is one that is learned and does not come instantaneously. I have come to an understanding as to why Jesus included a petition on forgiveness in the prayer he taught us.⁶ Part of the experience of forgiveness that is essential for me is confessing to God and someone I trust that I feel anger and pain. It is not until I confess out loud that I am angry or hurting that I find the strength to forgive. Once I recognize the pain, I am able to move forward. This was the case when I had to come to a place of forgiveness when my first marriage engagement fell apart. In the midst of my anger and pain, I had to verbalize my feelings. It was then that I was able to confront my ex-fiancée to forgive her and seek forgiveness. Without an act of confession, forgiveness would have been heard to come by, maybe even impossible.

10) What are you doing to help those around you take good care of themselves?

To help those around me take care of themselves, I try my best to model a life of self-care. I am one who is very strict about taking a least one day off a week, scheduling time for family and friends, engaging in physical activity, and making sure I take time for vacation. I also understand that sometimes, one must say “no” to participating in a certain activity or opportunity in ministry in order to maintain proper balance. This mentality of self-care is one I encourage in church leadership. While serving at Califon, I have had to tell a leader to “take a break” from particular activity in order to avoid burn out. Paul refers to our bodies as a “temple for the Holy Spirit” in First Corinthians⁷. Proper self-care allows for a disciple to keep that temple in the

⁶ Matthew 6:9-15; Luke 11:2-4

⁷ 1 Corinthians 6:10

best condition for God's use.

11) How have you invited someone else to faith and seen their faith develop?

I recall guiding a friend from high school to faith in Jesus Christ. It was a multi-year process where I was able to see God's prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace at work. In high school, she was drawn to listening to Christian music and would often talk about her experience of God. About two years later, when talking to her again, she still had those feelings of God tugging on her heart, and I invited her to be a follower of Jesus. She decided to follow Christ and accept God's forgiveness, but still had to overcome fear of telling her Jewish family her decision. I continued to guide her by giving her ideas for books to read and listening to her struggle. After about 5 years of guidance, she was able to explain to her family her conversion and was baptized. She is now an active member of a church and has continued to grow deeper in her faith.

12) What have you overcome to come to this season in your ministry?

To come to this season of ministry, I had to overcome the obstacles of shyness and anxiety in particular social settings. Growing up, I was one who had anxiety expressing my thoughts or ideas. Public speaking was something that I did not enjoy, and approaching new and unfamiliar people to start conversation was challenging. There was a time in my life, especially later in high school, where I felt guilty over the fact that I was not "outgoing." It was during my college years that I began to see God help me find my voice. I began to take risks and speak to strangers more frequently. I began to lead Bible studies on campus, and later at my home church. Over time, the anxiety of engaging with new people and sharing my thoughts has decreased. While I am still growing in this area, I am amazed at how much God has helped me overcome these obstacles and guilt to find my voice.

13) How would you describe your prayer life in this season, and how has it changed over your journey?

My prayer life is an area that I am continually trying to deepen. In the beginning of my Christian journey, I often had difficulty praying. When I would spend time alone with God and pray extemporaneously, I would often have trouble concentrating and feeling a connection with God. Since I began pastoral ministry, I have discovered the liturgical prayer resources of the *Book of Common Prayer* from the Anglican tradition and the *A Lukan Book of Hours* developed by the Order of St. Luke. By using the liturgy as a guide, I have been able to bring the focus and connection to my prayer life that I craved. Using the rhythm and words of prayer in these resources, I have increased my time in prayer during a typical day, I have incorporated more Scripture into my prayer, and I have experienced a deeper and healthier connection with God.

14) When you read the Bible, how do you hear God's voice? What example might you give of how you responded?

When I read the Bible, I hear God's voice profoundly in the accounts of pain and trial. The Bible is the narrative of God's relationship with God's people, and this narrative does not avoid the pain and struggle that is involved in any loving relationship. The book of Psalms in particular speaks to the human struggles of finding God in the midst of trial. I recall hearing God's voice through a passage from Psalm 71 during a time of depression in college. In this psalm, the psalmist writes, "You who have done great things, O God, who is like you? You who have made me see many troubles and calamities will revive me again; from the depths of the earth you will bring me up again. You will increase my honor, and comfort me once again."⁸ It was at this lowest point in my faith where I felt God speaking these words of reassurance to me. A few days later, I was presented with the opportunity to voluntarily enter a hospital to seek

⁸ Psalm 71:19-21, NRSV

treatment. It was during this hospital stay where my calling was confirmed. Through words of pain and struggle, God's voice became clear to me and transformed my life and my calling.

15) How has your family origin influenced your call?

I grew up the son of middle-class New Jersey natives in East Brunswick, NJ. During my childhood, my parents instilled values that would mold and shape me to become a disciple and pastor. My parents were very good stewards with what we had, especially with finances. When we did spend money, we would spend it on things to do as a family, such as summer vacations and trips that would bring us together. Along with stewardship and contentment, I was taught the importance of serving others, putting others before myself, respecting others property and time, and always being a gracious host and visitor. These attitudes that were instilled by my parents gave me the perspective that values relationships over material things, the needs of others before mine, and the image of God found in all people. These values given by my family allowed me to hear God's call into ministry, to discover my gifts, and to be a good and thoughtful steward of the resources needed for vital ministry.

16) Interview three people to tell you about your ministry. What did you hear in these conversations?

In my conversations, I heard that I am a person who is approachable and communicates well with multiple generations. I am decisive, but at the same time I'm able to work with the congregation and empower rather than control. I am a person who is traditional and biblical while being inclusive and bringing relevance to the Bible and tradition. I have a local and global perspective, and I know how to choose appropriate ministry opportunities for the congregation. I was also commended as one who strives to connect with the surrounding community in new ways. During the course of my interviews, there was nothing in particular mentioned that I needed to work on. One interviewee said that there were no "red flags" that have come to mind.

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IV: Theology, Call and Doctrine (Paragraph 335 in the *Book of Discipline*)**1. Give examples of how the practice of ministry has affected your experience and understanding of:**

a) God- The language of Word and Table I, found in the *United Methodist Hymnal* and *Book of Worship*, has had a profound impact on my understanding of God. As I pray this Eucharistic prayer in my ministry setting, the love of God as displayed through each person of the Trinity- the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit- comes alive. The imagery of God the Creator, who “formed us in [God’s] image and breathed into us the breath of life” reminds me of the divine image that is in all people. This same Creator reaches out with an unfailing love despite my imperfections.

The God who created all things came to us through Jesus, the Redeemer. As the prayer states, Jesus came as a human being “to preach good news” that the “time had come when [God] would save [God’s] people.” In order to show the depth of God’s love, Jesus “healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with sinners.” Through his suffering, death and resurrection, Jesus “gave birth to [God’s] church, delivered us from slavery to sin and death, and made a new covenant” with us. As a member of God’s church started by Jesus, I am called to model my life after Christ. This prayer reminds me that I am an extension of the redeeming ministry started by Jesus, and I too am called to preach good news to an anxious, divided, and violent world. I am called to associate with the unloved and unwanted and join with others in offering a “holy and living sacrifice in union” with what Christ has offered.

In the language regarding the Holy Spirit, I am reminded that God is the Sustainer of all things and God is the one who brings about a new and holy creation. Just as the Holy Spirit is poured out on ordinary “gifts of bread and wine” to “make them be for us the body and blood of Christ”, the Holy Spirit is poured out on ordinary people so God may be made tangibly present.

The Holy Spirit works to make us “one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world until Christ comes in final victory.” When this liturgy is celebrated, I am reminded of the God who empowers me to reflect Christ and unite me with other in God’s divine activity.¹

b) Humanity-In Genesis, both men and women are created equally in God’s image and are given the task of being stewards, or managers, of creation.² God desires to be in relationship with humanity and for humanity to be in relationship with one another. Within my context of ministry, I have talked through preaching and teaching about God’s desire to be in relationship with all people and that God models for us how to be truly human in Jesus Christ. Through my work with Alcoholics Anonymous and Hunterdon Family Success Center, I model God’s desire to be in relationship with all people, including those struggling on the margins of society.

c) The Need for Divine Grace- Through the illness of sin, relationships between God and human beings broke down. God does not want to give up on humanity, and Scripture testifies that God’s unmerited love has been continually been reaching out to us. God’s grace is at work in order to bring healing from sin, reconciliation between all things³ and restoration of the tarnished image of God in creation. Jesus came to free creation from the chains of sin and death as God’s ultimate act of grace.⁴ God’s grace is needed to transform us here and now so we can have an active faith as holy people who transform the world. In my ministry context, I stress that salvation is much more than “getting into heaven after you die.” My goal in preaching and teaching is to push the members of the congregation to respond to God’s grace through action, and to spread that grace to others.

d) The Lordship of Jesus Christ- The statement “Jesus Christ is Lord” is a statement of allegiance

¹ Eucharistic prayer found in *The United Methodist Book of Worship*. (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1992), pgs. 36-38

² Genesis 1:26-30

³ Colossians 1:20

⁴ Mark 10:45; Matthew 20:28

acknowledging Jesus is in charge. “Jesus is Lord” implies lordship over all things in heaven and on earth and over the church; the body of Christ that continues the ministry that he began.⁵ “Jesus is Lord” implies lordship over the hearts of an individual; that they will follow Jesus above all else and be a representative of him.⁶ In my experience in interacting with parishioners, I see that it is becoming harder today for one to live a life that displays the lordship of Jesus. It is easy in our interconnected and busy culture to forget the commitment that comes with confessing Jesus as Lord. I emphasize the fact that calling Jesus Lord means that following Jesus first wherever we find ourselves in life. This may mean saying no to opportunities and people who can bring worldly success, and purposely finding time and means to build a relationship with God.

e) The work of the Holy Spirit-In the Eucharistic prayer found in Word and Table I, the church prays that “by [God’s] Spirit, may we be one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world until Jesus comes in final victory, and we feast at his heavenly banquet.”⁷ The work of the Holy Spirit unites us with Christ by working within us to make us holy and bring us to new life.⁸ The Spirit reminds us of all that Jesus has said and done⁹ and gives us the assurance that we are God’s children through a life of faith.¹⁰ It is the Holy Spirit empowers the Christian community for a mission and ministry in the world that brings God’s reign to the present.

f) The meaning and significance of the sacraments- The sacraments are an outward sign through

⁵ Colossians 1:15-23

⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:20

⁷ *Book of Worship*, pg. 38

⁸ Romans 8:5-11

⁹ John 14:15-17, 25-26

¹⁰ “The Confession of Faith of the Evangelical United Brethren Church: Article III-The Holy Spirit.” *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012), paragraph 104, page 71; John 1:10, Romans 8: 15-17

which God channels prevenient, justifying and sanctifying grace.¹¹ The elements of water, bread, and wine, remind us of what God has done and is doing for and in us. Baptism is “God’s word to us, proclaiming our adoption by grace, and our word to God, promising our response of faith and love.”¹² Baptism is an act symbolizing the washing away of sin and the entrance into a new life in the body of Christ as an active member of God’s reign. As we work as members of God’s reign, we are nourished through the bread and cup of communion. There, we are presented with what Christ has done for us and experience Christ’s living presence at the table; a foretaste of God’s heavenly banquet. The sacraments are a powerful means of grace that bring God’s presence to us in a tangible way, which can speak to a culture that relies on tangible experiences. In my ministry, I try to connect the church to these tangible experiences as much as possible. I stress an increased celebration of Holy Communion so we can dine with Christ at the table. In weekly worship, we recite the Apostle’s Creed of our baptismal liturgy to provide a link and reminder of our baptism. At baptism, I ask the baptized (or the parents of the baptized in infant baptism) to make a profession of faith and join the church, realizing that in baptism, a covenant with God *and* a covenant with the community of faith is being made.

g) *The kingdom of God*- The kingdom of God is God’s reign in the world. Inaugurated through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God’s reign is a present reality of restoration and justice, while also being a future hope. Jesus calls us to pray for God’s Kingdom to come and for God’s will be done *now*, on earth as it is in heaven.¹³ I recall a sermon I preached on the account of Jesus turning water into wine in John chapter two. Just as Jesus transformed the ordinary jars of water into extraordinary wine, God wants to transform our jobs, family life, education, and

¹¹ John Wesley. “Sermon 16: The Means of Grace.” Wesley Center Online. <<http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-16-the-means-of-grace>>

¹² *Book of Worship*, page 81

¹³ Matthew 6:9-10

church life into something extraordinary that reflects God's rule.¹⁴ Our vocations as employees, students, parents, siblings, and participants in the church are to be done for God's Kingdom¹⁵ as a foretaste of the new heaven and earth.¹⁶ N.T. Wright sums this up beautifully in *Surprised by Hope*, a book I used for Bible study at Bernardsville UMC. He writes, "What you do in the present—by painting, preaching, singing, sewing, praying, teaching, building hospitals, digging wells, campaigning for justice, writing poems, caring for the needy, loving your neighbor as yourself—will last into God's future. These activities are not simply ways of making the present life a little less beastly, a little more bearable, until the day when we leave it behind altogether. They are part of what we may call building for God's kingdom."¹⁷

h) *Resurrection and eternal life*-The church universal has sealed the belief in the resurrection and eternal life in the early creeds of the church.¹⁸ The Gospels tell us that Jesus rose to new life in bodily form from the dead three days after his death and appeared to his disciples. This resurrection of Christ is the central part of the Christian faith, and without the resurrection, the Christian faith would have no meaning.¹⁹ The resurrection tells us that death is not the final answer, but that new life is given through faith in Christ; a new life of never ending communion with God. That new life with God is called eternal life.²⁰ Those with eternal life realize that their lives and work have an impact that transcends the time and place in which they walk on the earth.

2. How do you understand the following traditional evangelical doctrines:

a) *Repentance*- Repentance is the act of turning from one way of life to another way of life; a life

¹⁴ From my sermon "Transforming Your Jars of Water," preached January 17, 2016 and Califon United Methodist Church.

¹⁵ Jesus reflects this mindset in Matthew 25:25-46 in the parable of the sheep and the goats. The sheep and the goats are judged for what they do now in the present time. What they do in the present, they do for Jesus.

¹⁶ Revelation 21:22

¹⁷ N.T. Wright. *Surprised by Hope*. (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), page 193

¹⁸ Belief in the resurrection is found in the Apostle's and Nicene Creeds (*United Methodist Hymnal* #880-882)

¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 15:14,17

²⁰ John 3:16

that reflects God's love in Jesus Christ. In the Common English Bible, a translation I have used in my ministry setting, the word for repentance in the CEB is translated as "change[ing] your hearts and lives."²¹ In repentance, our deepest desires, thoughts, and motives change to reflect the character of Jesus. Part of this change involves a humility that leads to the recognition of our sin. We recognize that we have fallen short in what we were created to be, and God has the cure to our situation that will transform us.

b) Justification-Justification begins at the moment where God looks at us and says "you are forgiven." At the moment of justification, our relationship with God changes from being one of estrangement to one of reconciliation and friendship. While leading a mid-week gathering of prayer and discussion at Califon UMC, an individual described a powerful justification experience. He was once angry with God after the tragic death of his son, and he thought God was mad at him. After he confessed his anger at God, he experienced God's forgiveness and now has a deeper relationship with God.

c) Regeneration- Regeneration means "born anew," a term Jesus uses in the Gospel of John.²² When one is "born anew," they are experiencing life in a whole new way. As I explain in discussions that arise in ministry, those who experience regeneration begin to see God at work in the world where they once did not. They begin to view themselves, humanity and creation through the lens of how God sees these things; through a lens of love and justice. It is as if one receives a new pair of glasses; their vision before wearing glasses is blurry, but the new glasses allow them to see around them clearly.

d) Sanctification and marks of the Christian life- Sanctification is the process of being made holy and being set apart for God. Sanctification is the act that God does within us; an act where we are

²¹See Matthew 3:2 in the Common English Bible, "Change your hearts and lives! Here comes the kingdom of heaven."

²² John 3:3,7, Common English Bible

“washed from [sin’s] pollution, saved from its power, and are enabled, through grace, to love God with all our hearts.”²³ It is God’s sanctifying grace that works in bring out the marks of the Christian life. These marks, or “fruits of the Spirit” as Paul calls them, are “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”²⁴ The process of sanctification leads us to reflect God’s image fully so we may head Jesus’ call to be perfect as God is perfect.²⁵ As I explain to my congregation, this perfection Jesus calls us to means that God’s sanctifying grace transforms our thoughts, actions and desires to make us mature followers of Christ who transform the world.

3) How has the practice of ministry informed your understanding of the Church? What are its primary challenges?

I have come to a clearer understanding of the church as a living being made up of believers who are empowered and connected by the Holy Spirit. The body of Christ grows, adapts, changes, and engages in new people, places and experiences; just like the human body. The primary challenge for the church is fully living life as a body; a life of mission rather than maintenance. Intentionally going to where people are living and working, and encountering them in the midst of their lives is a task that is often neglected. In 2015, I saw the church as a living being clearly when I walked with Gladstone United Methodist Church through closure after 177 years of ministry. While it was once a vibrant church, membership and ministry dwindled severely. The time had come to honor the faithful servants called to that location for a season in the church’s life. At the same time, however, the greater body of Christ was still living and breathing in new places. Gladstone’s assets will be used by the church to engage in new places and experiences as it continues living beyond that space.

²³ *Book of Discipline*, “The Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church: Of Sanctification,” paragraph 104, page 70

²⁴ Galatians 5:22-23, NRSV

²⁵ Matthew 5:48

4) The United Methodist Church holds that Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason are the sources and norms for belief and practice, but that the Bible is primary among them. What is your understanding of this theological position of the Church, and how has your practice of ministry been affected by this understanding?

Scripture is the primary source of faith and living for Christians and contains all things that are necessary for salvation.²⁶ The teachings of Scripture are reflected upon through the lenses of tradition, reason, and experience. Through the lens of tradition, the reflections of the church's saints who have studied Scripture before us are examined to enlighten our thinking. Through the lens of experience, we discern how the gospel presented in Scripture speaks to us today in order to communicate and live out its promises in a contemporary context. Through the use of reason, we clearly state why we believe what we believe and bring critical thinking into the work of theology. The use of the church's theological position has helped greatly in contexts such as the Bible study I lead with members of Alcoholics Anonymous. In this setting where many have questions or doubts about God and the Christian faith, looking at Scripture through the lenses of tradition, reason and experience have brought about discussion that speaks to the realities of everyday life today.

5) How has the practice of ministry enriched your understanding of the meaning and significance of the sacraments?

The sacraments are central acts that bring the gathered community of faith closer to God and one another. In our baptism liturgy, the community of faith recalls God's mighty acts of love and justice throughout salvation history that involve water. The congregation then witnesses yet another part of this salvation story right before their eyes as the waters of God's cleansing grace are poured upon a new Christian. As God's covenant made through Christ is reaffirmed through

²⁶ *Book of Discipline*, "The Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church: Article V-Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation," paragraph 104, page 70

the baptismal waters, the community of faith gathers together to reaffirm their commitment to their baptismal vows and to the new person entering the body of Christ. This promise is made to those who are infants and to those who are adults. I can recall the first time I administered baptism at Bernardsville UMC. The infant I was baptizing was fascinated and excited by the pouring of the water in the font and upon his head. Not only was he touched by God's grace, but his mother who was holding him was moved by his excitement, and pointed this out to me during the ritual. I caught a glimpse at that powerful moment of how God's grace at baptism moves beyond the individual being baptized to the entire community of faith through the Holy Spirit.

In Holy Communion, the body of Christ is taking part in a ritual that, like a magnifying glass, brings the real presence of Jesus Christ into focus. The ordinary elements of bread and wine are used as a tangible means to convey God's grace to us. Through the celebration of the liturgy, the Holy Spirit points to what God has done in history, celebrates what God is doing in the present time, and gives us a glimpse of the future new heaven and earth that we are called to live into here and now. As I witness congregants come to the altar rail in the celebration of this sacred meal, I see the beautiful act of humanity coming together despite division and difference to meet the risen Christ and receive the comfort and nourishment he gives.

B. Vocation

1) How has the experience of ministry shaped your understanding of your vocation as an ordained elder?

Ministry is not simply a job; it is a way of life. I am reminded of Paul's words to the church in Corinth; "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ"²⁷ As one who is called to lead a congregation of disciples, I need to reflect Christ through how I live and interact with my parishioners, family and friends beyond Sunday morning worship. As I imitate Jesus in

²⁷ 1 Corinthians 1:11, New Revised Standard Version

leadership meetings, social settings, and times of pastoral counseling, others will be able to learn from my example and imitate Jesus. Living ministry takes prayer, study, and accountability to other elders and ministry leaders. As I have served churches during difficult moments in their life, I realize just how much I cannot live out my vocation without community. It also requires humility to step back and focus on building strong and healthy personal relationship with God and those closest to me personally, just as Jesus did throughout his ministry.²⁸

C. The Practice of Ministry

1) How has the practice of ministry affected your understanding of the expectations of the itinerant system? Do you offer yourself without reserve to be appointed and to serve as the appointive authority may determine?

As the disciples are sent in the Great Commission to “go and make disciples,” those who are ordained as elders are told to go by the appointive authority (the bishop and cabinet) to an appointment and make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. As an elder, I offer myself for itinerant ministry, knowing that my family and I will be serving in a diverse conference in situations that are outside of our comfort zone. This will require times of sacrifice from me and my family. There are times where an elder may have to ask for a reconsideration of an appointment from the bishop for missional reasons, and that appointment may or may not be reconsidered. Throughout the whole itinerant process, we trust that the Holy Spirit is at work guiding the church in vital ministry in the world.

2) Describe and evaluate your personal gifts for ministry and how they have resulted in fruitful ministry. What would be your area of strength and areas in which you need to be strengthened in order to be more fruitful in ministry?

An area I am passionate about and gifted in is worship. I have great interest in exploring the liturgical traditions of the church and thinking of new ways to express them to connect with

²⁸ I find the act of Jesus intentionally taking time away from the crowd that followed him in order to pray, and strengthen his relationship with God and his disciples (those closest to him), helpful in reinforcing the need for me to do the same as I live life of ministry. Examples found in Mark 6:46, Matthew 14:23, Luke 9:18, and John 6:15.

our culture. This interest led to the development of new worship services at Califon UMC such as breakfast/dinner church and a mid-week gathering based around discussion of Scripture, prayer and communion. I also have developed the gift of leading the church in connecting with the community. In my appointment setting, I am always looking for new individuals, organizations, businesses and outlets to connect with in order to have the church truly be a center in the community that lives out gospel hospitality. A farmer's market in Califon that is a partnership between the church and the local business association is a fruit of these new connections. One area that I need to strengthen is in the area of children's ministry. While I enjoy working with children, I do find it challenging to keep their attention and speak to them in creative ways that are engaging. It is my hope that with more experience I will grow in my ability to minister to young children.

3) For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness to the Christian gospel and in consideration of your influence as an ordained minister, are you willing to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life; and to this end will you agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to physical health, intentional intellectual development, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, integrity in all personal relationships, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge and love of God?

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus calls the listening crowd to be a light in the world so that all may know God's love.²⁹ As a disciple, I strive to show this light not only through words, but through my entire livelihood. My very body is a temple for God's Spirit to dwell and to work through, so it must be cared for properly.³⁰ My actions also must reflect one who hears and believes in the teachings of Jesus³¹ so those I encounter may come to know him. In order to further the presence of God wherever I am led, I am committed to dedicating myself to the

²⁹ Matthew 5:14a

³⁰ 1 Corinthians 6:19

³¹ James 1:22

highest ideals of the Christian life. It is through living out these ideals that I will grow closer to God, and others who do not know Jesus will know that he is real and still at work. I will look to my fellow colleagues in ministry for guidance and accountability as I live out these high ideals.

4) Provide evidence of your willingness to relate yourself in ministry to all persons without regard to race, color ethnicity, national origin, social status, gender, sexual orientation, age, economic condition, or disability.

The church consists of persons from all backgrounds and walks of life that are “one in Christ Jesus.” through the Holy Spirit.³² As I have experienced in my work with Alcoholics Anonymous and the Hunterdon Family Success Center, the church is called to me in ministry in an increasingly diverse society. In Christ, walls of division are broken down and all are called to offer their gifts to ministry.³³ I firmly believe that God finds value in all who strive to seek God and show the light of Christ in their lives.³⁴ As I take part in connectional ministry (such as the conference board of discipleship), I value the attention to diversity that is evident in the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference. I believe we can set an example to the greater connection for what it means to be intentionally diverse. I look forward to continuing to grow and minister with others of differing backgrounds.

5) Will your regard all pastoral conversations of a confessional nature as a trust between the person concerned and God?

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus teaches that “much will be demanded from everyone who has been given much, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be asked.”³⁵ While in pastoral ministry, I will be entrusted by those under my care with some of their deepest confessions and struggles. As part of the demands of this great responsibility, I will treat pastoral conversations of a confessional nature as a sacred trust between the person and

³² Galatians 3: 28, NRSV

³³ Ephesians

³⁴ Acts 10: 34, 43

³⁵ Luke 14:28, Common English Bible

God, as I have throughout my ministry. There are times, however, where a case “of suspected child abuse or neglect or [a case] where mandatory reporting is required by civil law” may arise.³⁶ In these situations, I will inform the District Superintendent of the conversation and notify the proper civil authorities as deemed necessary.

6) Provide evidence of experience in peace and justice ministries.

Since beginning my service at Califon UMC, I have registered as an on call chaplain for the Hunterdon County Prosecutors Office One Voice clergy on-cal program. I have been interacting with the Alcoholics Anonymous chapter at Califon UMC by providing Bible study and pastoral care which has led to a strong relationship. I also volunteer time with Hunterdon County Family Success Center located in Flemington, NJ; an organization dedicated to strengthening family relationships and providing resources to families in need. It is my hope to begin a partnership with the center by organizing co-sponsored programs at the church to serve northern Hunterdon County.

D. Additional

13) Explain the threefold aspects of Wesleyan grace and how you encountered these in your own ministry/life.

Prevenient grace is grace that goes before us and pulls us, even before we are aware, and pulls us into a relationship with God. It is grace that “prompts our first wish to please God” and “our first glimmer of understanding concerning God’s will.”³⁷ This grace is made evident through people and events that push one closer and closer to realizing God’s love. I have witnessed God’s prevenient grace in a powerful way during the Alcoholic Anonymous meetings that take place at Califon UMC. As I engage in conversation in Bible study and listen to stories, I hear how God has been at working to convey grace through the recovering and healing of their lives.

³⁶ *Book of Discipline*, paragraph 341, page 270

³⁷ *Book of Discipline*, paragraph 102, page 50

Once a person responds to grace in a way that leads to confession of sin, a change of heart and mind, and faith in Christ, God's justifying grace goes to work. Justification restores God's favor and wipes away the guilt of sin, resulting in no condemnation.³⁸ After God's justifying grace is poured out upon a person, they experience regeneration; another term for being "born anew." Regeneration is the awareness of God's presence and work in life and in the world. I felt God's justifying grace powerfully during a stay in the hospital for depression while in college. At that time, I had felt that I had failed God and my faith was shaken. During my stay, however, as I received help from doctors, interacted with other patients, and reflected on God's call, I began to see my life with a new set of eyes and realized that I was truly forgiven.

After justification, God's sanctifying grace continues to restore the tarnished image of God in a way that leads to growth in holiness and mature love³⁹ toward God and neighbor. God's sanctifying grace is experienced through works of mercy and piety. Works of mercy are works that involve showing God's love toward neighbors⁴⁰, and works of piety involve spiritual practices that allow us to grow deeper in love with God.⁴¹ Works of piety are works that the believer uses to grow in relationship with God. I have seen the sanctifying power of works of piety and mercy while on Appalachian Service Project with Califon UMC. During this mission trip, I was involved in corporate worship and prayer coupled with the fixing of homes of those in need. I witnessed the youth I was working with grow in their faith, and I gained new perspective and growth from this experience.

14) Share an instance when you found yourself working in ministry with someone whose theology was radically different from your own.

During my second year at Bernardsville and Gladstone UMCs, I was a pastoral leader in

³⁸ Romans 8:1

³⁹ John Wesley called this mature love "Christian perfection."

⁴⁰ Works of mercy include these include visiting the sick, helping the poor, and bringing relief to those in distress in the name of Christ.

⁴¹ Works of piety include prayer, worship, fasting, and the study of Scripture.

the Somerset Hills Regional Ministry; a cooperative parish of churches in Somerset County. As part of this regional ministry, I worked with a team of 6 other pastors planning sermons and Bible studies. As pastors, we expressed varying theological views such as using the traditional names for the Trinity, liturgical practice, and the definition of prophetic preaching. Despite our differences, we were able to come together and plan powerful ministry and preaching for the context we found ourselves in. This experience allowed me to stretch my theological thinking and to learn different perspectives and approaches to proclaiming the gospel.

15) Describe how your image of God has changed over your journey. What has informed this?

When I first heard the call to ministry I had a very legalistic view of God. I saw God as one who loved me depending on my behavior; if I didn't pray enough, know enough Scripture, or didn't "feel" God's presence constantly, I thought God was absent. It was after I read about John Wesley's life that my image of God changed. I saw my own faith journey in Wesley's life. I saw a man who questioned his standing before God and whether God loved for him. I also saw a man who had a profound, heart-warming experience that confirmed he was a child of God who was loved by God. Through this transformation, God used someone who experienced struggles to start a worldwide movement to share the love of God with others. As I engage in ministry both inside and outside of the church, I am beginning to truly grasp what First John 4:8 means. The phrase from that verse, "God is love", becomes the lens through which I see God's work in the world and guides the way I interact with those I encounter in ministry.

V: Polity**1) Explain the role of deacons, elders, and local pastors in the UMC and how they are each uniquely called and function in the church?**

In the United Methodist Church, deacons are called by God, affirmed by the church, and ordained by the bishop to serve in a lifetime ministry of Word, Service, Compassion and Justice. Deacons connect the church to the world through works of justice and compassion with those on society's margins, and offer opportunities for others to join in Christian discipleship. Within the life of a congregation, a deacon teaches and forms Christian disciples, will hold leadership roles in worship, and assists elders in celebrating the sacraments. Elders are called by God, affirmed by the church, and ordained by the bishop to a lifetime ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service. Elders provide preaching and teaching, lead the celebration of sacraments of Holy Communion and baptism, administer the discipline of the church and provide order to the church in its worship, pastoral care, mission and ministry. In covenant with other elders in the annual conference, they agree to serve where appointed by the bishop in itinerant ministry. Local pastors, both full and part time, are approved yearly to perform pastoral duties (including the sacraments, marriage, funerals, confirmation, and membership reception) within the context of the ministry to which they are appointed by the bishop (*Discipline* paragraphs 303, 316, 328-330, and 332-334).

2) What is the process for setting the pastor's salary? Who can change it, and when can it be changed?

The process for setting the pastor's salary originates in the staff-parish relation committee. This committee recommends the salary amount to the church council for review. After being approved by the church council, the recommendation is brought to the regularly scheduled annual meeting of the charge (or church) conference where, in consultation with the district superintendent, those present officially set the pastor's salary. If there is a desire by the

staff-parish relations committee and church council to change the pastor's salary, a special charge (or church) conference must be called. (*Discipline* paragraphs 247, 252, 258).

3) The Education committee wants to update the curriculum being taught in the Christian Education program. What specific guidance does the Book of Discipline give you in dealing with this issue?

When discerning a curriculum for the church educational program, the *Discipline* calls for a learning plan that would build knowledge of the Bible, the Christian faith, United Methodism, and the social context of the church. A curriculum that is chosen or developed shall communicate to people as they are so they can “commit themselves to Christ and membership in his church, provide opportunities for them to grow in faith and to connect that faith with their daily lives, and equip them to live as God’s people in the world.”¹ The General Board of Discipleship is charged with providing resources and suggestions in order to aid in selecting and developing a proper curriculum that fosters growth in the areas of discipleship that include stewardship, evangelism, missions, Bible instruction and Christian social action in a variety of cultural contexts and settings (*Discipline* paragraphs 256, 1108).

4) You have discovered the need for a community soup kitchen, and wish to recommend that this be a priority for the congregation, using the facilities of the church. What parties and processes need to be involved?

The ideal place to begin discussion about the need for a community soup kitchen would be a group within the church that focuses on ministries of outreach and justice. Examples of appropriate groups include United Methodist Women, a small discipleship group that focuses on mission in the community, or a team that focuses on church and society or health-and-welfare ministries. When developing a plan, the board of trustees, who are tasked with oversight, care

¹ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church: 2012*. Neil M. Alexander, ed. (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012). paragraph 1108, pg. 586

and supervision of all real property owned by the local church, must be consulted as to how church property will be used. Once a plan for the soup kitchen is developed, the plan is to be presented to church council, since the church council has the task of planning, implementing, and visioning the mission and ministry of the church, while ensuring that there is adequate provision for the financial needs of such a ministry (*Discipline* paragraphs 252, 256, 2533).

5) A constituent of your church comes to speak with you about their call to ministry. Describe the basic steps that are involved seeking ordination.

A constituent seeking ordination must be a professing member of a local church or a baptized member of a recognized United Methodist campus ministry or other setting for at least one year. After speaking with the pastor and reading materials provided by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, the exploring candidate sends to the district superintendent a written statement of call and request to begin the candidacy process. The candidate then meets with the staff-pastor parish relations committee for an interview based on John Wesley's historic questions. Upon approval of the SPRC, the charge conference of the candidate's local church recommends them to the district committee on ordained ministry. The candidate is interviewed by the district committee to become a certified candidate. If approved, the candidate is required to attend an orientation to ministry. The district committee reviews the candidate's status annually by looking for continued growth in God's grace and satisfactory progress in theological education.

After being a certified candidate for at least one year (and no more than 12) and completing at least 1/2 of the required graduate education, the candidate can be recommended by the district committee to go before the Board of Ordained Ministry to be interviewed for commissioning and election as a provisional clergy member in the annual conference. The provisional member must serve for at least two conference years under full time appointment

while attending a residency program. After at least two years, the provisional member once again goes before the Board of Ordained Ministry for examination. If approved, the provisional member is elected to full membership as clergy in the annual conference and ordained as an elder or deacon by the bishop (*Discipline* paragraphs 310, 313, 324,325, 326, 330, 335).

6) Describe the general structures of the Annual Conference and how each body functions.

The goal of the annual conference, the “basic body”² of the church, is to make disciples of Jesus Christ by equipping local churches for ministry and by creating connection for ministry beyond the local church. The term annual conference refers to a grouping of churches of a particular region that are presided over by an assigned bishop. Additionally, the term refers to the organizational body that meets annually (or as called by the bishop) that consists of an equal number of clergy (ordained elders and deacons, provisional members, local pastors, associate members) and laity representatives from each local church and connectional ministries in the conference boundaries.

At annual conference sessions, representatives are updated on the ongoing work of the connectional ministry and plan for future ministry. Reports are shared from the various connectional ministry leaders, legislation is acted upon, the budget for the conference is reviewed and passed, and new clergy are examined and granted license, commissioning or ordination. Delegates to jurisdictional and General Conference are also elected at the gathering of the annual conference. In between annual conference sessions, various boards, committees, commissions, and councils enact the decisions of the conference. These units include the Board of Ordained Ministry, Lay Speaking ministries, United Methodist Men, United Methodist Women, trustees, finance and administration, and various connectional teams that further a

² *Book of Discipline*, paragraph 33, page 33

specific aspect of the mission and witness of the church within the conference's context (*Discipline* paragraphs 33, 602, 604-605, 610, 635-637, 639-640, 647, 648).³

7) Describe the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of the United Methodist Church.

The legislative branch of the United Methodist Church is the General Conference. General Conference meets every 4 years and consists of between 600-1000 lay and clergy elected delegates from all annual conferences across the worldwide connection. At this gathering, delegates reevaluate and revise the *Book of Discipline*, the book of church polity and organization, and the *Book of Resolutions*, which offers the church's voice on various social topics. It is the only body that can speak for the entire denomination and set official policy for the entire denomination. The Judicial Council serves as the judicial branch of the church. The Judicial Council determines the constitutional legality of actions taken on the General, jurisdictional and central conference levels and their respective boards and bodies. The council also examines decisions of law made by a bishop of an annual conference.

The Council of Bishops represents the executive branch of the church. This council, that meets at least annually, is charged with oversight of the spiritual and temporal interests of the denomination and for carrying out the actions approved at General Conference. Individual bishops are charged with presiding over General, jurisdictional, central and annual conferences. Within the annual conference they are assigned, bishops provide oversight of the spiritual and temporal affairs, including fiscal and program operations. Bishops provide leadership in the church's "mission of witness and service in the world"⁴ in line with the *Discipline*, and in consultation with the district superintendents, appoint clergy to places of ministry with the conference (*Discipline* paragraphs 13-16, 47, 55-57, 414-416, 509-510)

³ Paragraphs 610-657 of the *Discipline* detail the various committees that are included in the annual conference structure.

⁴ *Book of Discipline*, paragraph 414, page 330

8) What is your understanding of the theology behind Shared Ministries giving (apportionments)?

Shared Ministries reflect the connectional sharing of resources found in the New Testament. The book of Acts records that after receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the early believers shared their resources as they lived out the Kingdom of God.⁵ In First Corinthians, Paul speaks of a collection being taken among the churches scattered around the empire to be sent to the Christians in Jerusalem.⁶ I see Shared Ministries as an extension of this New Testament sharing of resources. The giving of the local church contributes to the mission and witness of the greater United Methodist Church. These gifts support the boards and agencies on the conference and denominational level that order the life of the connection and provide ministry to the world in order to make disciples of Jesus Christ. It is important that I, as pastor, work with the district superintendent and the church lay leadership to explain the importance of this first obligation of giving and how these gifts are used by the entire connection (*Discipline* paragraphs 247, 812).

9) You have an idea for a unique form of ministry. How does the Book of Discipline guide us in seeking affirmation for ministries that are beyond the local church? What is the role of extension ministry in the life of the Church?

Extension ministries in the United Methodist Church are seen as a way to extend the church's ministry "in witness and service to Christ's love and justice."⁷ The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry provides standards and consultation to assist the Board of Ordained Ministry in providing validation of the appropriateness of an extension ministry, and advocates for and encourages developing emerging extension ministries. No later than 120 days prior to the proposed start date of the appointment, the clergy person needs to provide a written statement to the Board of Ordained Ministry and the bishop's cabinet that describes in detail the

⁵ Acts 2:42-45; Acts 4:32-35

⁶ The collection is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4. It is also mentioned as a central focus of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians.

⁷ *Book of Discipline*, paragraph 343, page 272

proposed setting of the extension ministry. This written statement shares how they sense God's calling to the extension ministry, their gifts for that setting, and their intention to fulfill their ordination vows while serving. Once confirmed by the cabinet and Board of Ordained Ministry, the appointment is finalized by approval of at least 2/3 of the clergy members of the annual conference. Once in an extension ministry, the clergy person must submit a report to the bishop, district superintendent, and Board of Ordained Ministry of their activities. The bishop, using appropriate resources, must annually arrange to meet with those in extension ministries to discuss the nature of their ministry (*Discipline* paragraphs 337, 344).

10) In what ways does your upbringing, your cultural context, your personal experience shape your understanding of our polity?

During my upbringing, I attended Aldersgate UMC in East Brunswick, NJ; a diverse and growing community in central New Jersey. Growing up, I was not really aware of United Methodist polity outside of seeing a new pastors come into the congregation every few years. It was in my late high school years and college years that I began to see the richness of our polity in action. I became involved in the larger connection as a young adult representative to annual conference and as a member of the conference ministries with young people team. As I discerned my call into ministry, it was a United Methodist pastor near my college in northern New Jersey who acted as my initial guide through the process. Through these experiences, I realized the strength of God's work through our connectional system. I saw how the local church can live and work best when connected with other church of different backgrounds, perspectives and cultures within our diverse annual conference and around the world. It is our "vital web of interactive relationships"⁸ that provide a testament of unity to the world, and it is this unity that makes the realm of God visible in our time and place (*Discipline* paragraphs 125 and 132).

⁸ *Book of Discipline*, paragraph 132, page 96

I was born on August 30th, 1988 at Saint Peter's Hospital in New Brunswick, NJ and was raised in East Brunswick, NJ. I was baptized and raised at Aldersgate United Methodist Church of East Brunswick. During my childhood, my parents instilled values that would mold and shape me to become the disciple and pastor I have been called to be. My parents were very good stewards with what we had, especially with finances. When we did spend a good amount of money, we would spend it on things to do as a family, such as summer vacations and trips that would bring us together. Along with stewardship and contentment, I was taught to serve and respect others wherever I would go, put others before myself, respect others property and time, and always be a gracious host and visitor.

While I was raised in the church, it was not until the 8th grade, at a Christian music festival, that I decided live my life following Jesus. Since that day, my faith has become stronger and stronger. I began to build the foundation of my life on the life and words of Jesus Christ. As my participation in church increased through participation in the youth group and the church worship band during my high school years, I began to discern my call to vocational ministry. Instead of acting upon this calling, I decided to pursue music instead. I entered the music program at Ramapo College of New Jersey with an interest in music production, yet I had uneasiness as the program progressed. The call to ministry remained on my mind.

As I began to become involved in Christian ministries at Ramapo College, I started studying the Bible and theology on a deeper level. It was in this community of believers that I began to hear God's call into vocational ministry becoming louder. The call finally came clearly toward the end of my second year while I was praying in my friend's apartment, and I could not say no. While I was excited to pursue this calling that God placed on my life, I would have to go through some rather dark times as well. Throughout my life I had battled with depression. I remember having severe anxiety, especially in public settings such as gatherings with friends. I became frustrated with myself because I was so afraid to open myself up to others. I didn't feel I was strong enough for anything, and the Christian walk at times became a burden. In September of 2008, my depression became so severe that it was recommended by the college counseling center that I go spend a week at Ramapo Ridge Hospital in Wyckoff, NJ.

Little did I know that God was using this depression and the people around me in the hospital in order to add confirmation to my calling and begin my training for pastoral ministry. As I was put on proper medication and looked at my life, I began to realize how blessed I was. I noticed that God was sending people my way for spiritual guidance while in the hospital. I was able to open up to them and share my faith and was even allowed to organize a small Bible study one day. I saw God's work and grace in that hospital, and I consider that week to be a turning point in my life and my formation as a pastor.

After college, I began the ordination process in the United Methodist Church and my studies at Asbury Theological Seminary as an online student (and would later study on campus). At the same time, I was working as a substitute teacher in the East Brunswick Public Schools and as the pastoral assistant at my home church. I completed my seminary journey in May 2014 upon completing the clinical pastoral education program at Capital Health in Hopewell, NJ. In July 2013, I began a 2 year appointment at Bernardsville and Gladstone United Methodist Churches. On July 1, 2015, I began serving the Califon United Methodist Church in Califon, NJ. Through these first 28 years of my life, I have experienced God in amazing ways through various people and events. I am excited to engage in the next steps of my journey as an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church.

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Kyle Cuperwich

2 CENTER STREET ♦ CALIFON, NEW JERSEY 07830

PHONE: 732-331-5991 ♦ E-MAIL: REV.CUPERWICH@GMAIL.COM

OBJECTIVE

I am a commissioned minister and provisional member in the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference. I am working toward becoming a full member and an ordained elder in the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference.

EDUCATION

- Bachelor of Arts, *Music/Concentration Music Production*, Ramapo College of New Jersey (May 2010)
- Business Essentials Certificate; Ramapo College of New Jersey (Jun 2009)
- Additional Courses; Middlesex County College, NJ (Summer 2007)
- Master of Divinity, Asbury Theological Seminary (Spring 2010-Spring 2014)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Califon United Methodist Churches

July 2015 to Present

Senior Pastor

- Appointed by the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference bishop to serve as pastor of Califon United Methodist Church.

Bernardsville and Gladstone United Methodist Churches

July 2013 to June 2015

Senior Pastor

- Appointed by the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference bishop to serve as pastor of Bernardsville and Gladstone United Methodist Churches.

Aldersgate United Methodist Church (East Brunswick, NJ)

January 2011 to August 2012

Pastoral Assistant

- Assisted in pastoral, worship, and administrative duties as they arose in the parish.
- Pastor In Charge (June 2012-August 2012 due to sabbatical of senior pastor).

East Brunswick Public Schools

January 2009 to June 2013

Substitute Teacher

- Performed teaching duties for absent public school teachers in all grade levels.

East Brunswick Department of Recreation, NJ

June 2007 to August 2010

Camp Counselor

- Supervise and interact with children at a summer day camp.

East Brunswick Department of Parks, NJ

September 2004 to June 2006

SACC (School Age Child Care) Site Aid

- Supervise and interact with children at an after school program

Sparkling Pools, NJ

May 2004 to August 2012

Life Guard

- Supervise and provide first aid care for swimmers at community pools.

ADDITIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS AND SKILLS:

- Awards:
 1. Graduated Cum Laude (3.6 GPA) from Ramapo College of New Jersey
 2. Member of the Asbury Semianry chapter of Theta Phi honors society.

ADDITIONAL TRAINING & AFFILIATIONS:

1. Served as young adult delegate-at-lharge to Greater NJ Annual Conference (2010-2013).
2. Served as member of Greater NJ Conference Board of Discipleship (September 2011-present).
3. Chairperson of the GNJAC Raritan Valley District Ministry with Young People (January 2010-August 2012).
4. Young adult member of GNJ Conference Ministries with Young People team (2010-2013).

ADDITIONAL PERSONAL INFORMATION:

1. Name of spouse: Carolyn Cuperwich
2. Name of home church: Aldersgate United Methodist Church

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DEVOS, DEBRA

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NOTES

Debra A. De Vos
Trusting God's Call – Increase Our Faith
Luke 17:5-10

Dear Members of the Board of Ordained Ministry,

Attached please find my sermon entitled “Trusting God’s Call – Increase Our Faith”. At our church, the Senior Pastor prepares a lectionary based on sermon series. Sunday, October 2nd was World Communion Sunday and it fell in the middle of our Sermon Series called Lessons from a Sheepdog, based on the book of the same name by Phillip Keller. The sermon series theme is discipleship. This particular week the focus is on trusting God as the foundation of our discipleship and it incorporates the 3rd chapter of this book, entitled “Learning to Trust”.

The lectionary passage for October 2, 2016, that I chose to preach on is Luke 17:5-10. The senior pastor gave me the opportunity to preach on anything I wanted or needed in order to meet my requirements. In doing the exegesis for this week, I discovered I could incorporate the sermon series we were doing into my preaching of Luke 17:5-10. I incorporated elements of World Communion Sunday in other components of the worship.

I preached this sermon in our Chapel service. This service is held in a small chapel on our campus at 8:15am Sunday mornings. It is attended by 25 -30 people.

They are a close-knit group. Most of the people attending this worship service are retired, but not all of them. It is a traditional order of worship with an organist. There is no use of technology. The room is small and the microphone is attached to the pulpit. One must preach from the pulpit in order to be heard at the back of the chapel. I led the worship service and another associate pastor, Rev. Jenny Smith Walz, led Communion. I then continued with the Celebrating Good News, closing hymn and the benediction.

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Organ Prelude - Music played as people enter the sacred space. It sets the tone for a worship environment. People should be feeling this as it sets the atmosphere and the setting for worship. Once the music begins, the greetings and chatter subside. I go to the pew in the chancel and pray until it is time to begin.

Words of Welcome – This is a Christian greeting often done in the name of the Lord welcoming all those gathered at worship. This greeting affirms the presence of God in this worship service.

Passing Fellowship Sheets and Community Concerns – This piece can be moved to a variety of places. I generally choose to do it at the beginning to dispense with “business” prior to the more sacred order of worship. I feel it is less interruptive of worship, if it’s done early. The fellowship sheets enable us to track attendance as well as pastoral needs and new members.

Community concerns highlight a few of the items or events in the life of the church over the next coming weeks.

Call to Worship – This is done as a call and response. It engages the congregation in worship as it calls them to begin worship. It can be thematic or based on the scripture or sermon theme. It can also be based on the liturgy itself, for example, if it is a special day such as Peace with Justice Day, Laity Sunday. In this case, as it was World Communion Sunday, I chose to do the Call to Worship in English and in Spanish as those are the languages I speak. It gives a little taste of another culture in a predominantly Anglo church. This particular call highlights that all are welcome within the Body of Christ, even those suffering a variety of hardships such as hunger, homelessness, fear and loneliness. It speaks of welcoming all on a day when Christians all over the world participate in the Lord’s Supper.

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Hymn – Faith, While Trees Are Still in Blossom #508 (Verses 1-2 and 5) in the UM Hymnal

I chose verses 1- 2 and 5 of this hymn. The first two verses speak about things we don't see, but we know are coming such as trees that have yet to blossom, fruit that isn't yet ready for harvesting, or the daylight we know is going to follow the night. Verse 5 instructs that faith involves believing in the character of God, God as faithful. If we have this belief, this faith, then we accept God's call and respond willing to go where we are sent.

Passing of the Peace –During the passing of the peace, we offer each other as brothers and sisters in Christ this same peace. It is a profound peace that transcends all understanding. I inserted this at this point in the worship order, to reinforce the theme of unity for World Communion Sunday early on to build on the sense that we are family, sisters and brothers in Christ. I intentionally say "Peace be with you." rather than the "Good morning." our parishioners have formed a habit of saying.

Hymn – How Firm a Foundation #529 (verses 1-3, 5) in the UM Hymnal

I chose the first three verses of this hymn because the sermon series we are preaching during this time is on discipleship and specifically this week it is focused on trusting God's call because trusting God is the foundation of Christian discipleship. These verses remind us of what we have to know that God can be trusted. They speak of God's faithfulness to us which should make it easy for us to trust God. We in turn should be just as faithful to God.

Prayer of Illumination – This is a blessing that is invoked on behalf of the one who is about to preach on the Word of God that they be used as a vessel for whatever it is God wants shared with those gathered. It is also a prayer that those gathered would have ears to hear and eyes to see that which God has in mind for them with that scripture and that sermon at that particular time.

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Scripture reading – Luke 17:5-10

Sermon - The purpose of my sermon was to focus on trusting God as part of our discipleship.

Why we should trust God and what enables us to do so. I also incorporated our fall congregational reading book from which the theme is derived. I was able to use the lectionary text and cover the sermon series as well.

Pastoral Prayer – This is a prayer offered up on behalf of God's people for God's people. It can incorporate the sermon themes or the theme of worship. I began the prayer with acclamation in which I praised God for specific characteristics God has. Next a section of confession for where we have fallen short in our discipleship. Then thanksgiving for all God provides and does for us. I also thanked God for our freedom to worship and prayed protection for our sisters and brothers who practice their faith in dangerous places where they do not have this freedom. I also lifted up our church's petitions from the bulletin and prayer list.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon – This is a time of prayer for us to acknowledge we have fallen short of the mark and have sinned. It is a time to confess those sins to God seeking forgiveness for them. In this way, we can be right with God prior to participating in the Lord's Supper. For this worship service I used a Prayer of Confession and Pardon that tied into the theme of World Communion Sunday. I located this prayer on the Ministry Matters

site. <http://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/3273/world-communion-sunday-helps>

Presenting of our Tithes and Offerings - At this point we are giving back to God from what we have received by God's provision. God constantly bestows upon us countless blessings. It is only right that we give back from this provision. We pray that our humble offerings will be multiplied by God and used wisely by us as we endeavor to do God's work here on earth.

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Holy Communion – Another associate pastor administered communion and I assisted. Jesus asked us to remember him each time we broke bread and drank from the cup. We do this when we eat at the Lord's table. On this particular Sunday, we joined Christians all over the world in Holy Communion. This sense of unity is but a glimpse of what the Kingdom of God is meant to look like here on earth.

Celebrating Good News - A feature added to worship a couple of years ago where the pastor shares good news in the life of the church as reported by parishioners, staff and others. These news items reflect moments of evangelization, acts of mercy and mission performed by church members.

Hymn – Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus #462 (verses 1 and 4) in the UM Hymnal – I chose this hymn to restate that when we have faith in Jesus, we trust him. Trusting in Jesus is the foundation of our lives as disciples of Jesus. The fourth verse proclaims that trusting in Jesus is the best way to live and that is proven time and time again.

Benediction – This is a blessing prayed for the worshippers as they are sent forth into the world for the upcoming week. It is often said in the name of the trinity. I try to always include a reminder of the challenge I usually make in the sermon closing. If a challenge wasn't issued, then I include the key point of the sermon. I do this as a reminder to them of what was said so it is fresh in their minds as they leave worship.

Postlude – Music played as the worshippers depart from the sacred space. This music maintains the setting of worship as those gathered leave to rejoin the world. I like an upbeat hymn for the postlude so that worshippers rejoin the world feeling uplifted and hopefully empowered as they go forth.

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This week is the second part of a four-part sermon series based on Phillip Keller's book *Lessons from a Sheepdog*, which is our fall congregational reading book. The focus today is trusting God's call because trusting God is the foundation of our Christian discipleship. Because you are all a part of my sermon recording for ordination, you heard a different scripture text this morning than they are hearing in the other services. I'm using the text from the Revised Common Lectionary, The Revised Common Lectionary is a lectionary of readings or stories from the Bible for use in Christian worship, making provision for the liturgical year with its pattern of observances of festivals and seasons. So all churches who use the Revised Common Lectionary are hearing and preaching the same scripture texts on Sunday. However, the lectionary text for today, fits in nicely with our theme from the congregational reading book which is Trusting God's call and Trusting God as a foundation in our discipleship.

In our story the author, Phillip Keller needed a dog to help him tend his sheep. He answers an ad for a dog that read, "Wanted-a good country home for pure-bred border collie. Chases cars and bicycles." When he gets there to see the dog, he's chained by his back leg and a chain around his neck. The dog is a mess. The owner is beside herself and tells Keller the dog is loco. If she can't find a home for her, she'll have to be put down. She was a two-year old named Lassie. Keller looked at her pitiful dirty state and beyond it. She was a beautiful dog. Now at two years old, a dog has learned most of what they'll ever know, however Phillip took her home in the hopes that he could make a sheepdog out of Lass. If he could not do so in six weeks, he would return her and the lady would put her down. On the ride home he spoke to her reassuringly and was met with low growls. Once in a while he'd reach out to pet her and she'd snap at him. Phillip had his work cut out for him.

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Lass had a kennel with fresh, clean bedding. Day after day, Phillip put water and food out for Lass. She refused to eat or drink. Lass rejected his attempts to touch her and if he called her, she responded belligerently. She began to lose weight and he was afraid she might die. Finally, he let her loose. After days of searching, he saw her on a large rock outcrop. He called her, but she ran away. He began to leave food and water there for her. She ate and drank. One day, he noticed she took interest in the sheep who grazed near her perch on the rock so he brought up a few lambs and ewes evening after evening to graze by her. Phillip felt great compassion for the dog. He longed for her to come to him, get to know him, trust him, to work with him, be his friend and learn to love him. It was approaching the timeframe he and Lass's original owner had set. Then one night as the sheep were grazing by the shore and Phillip was standing with his hands behind his back entranced, he suddenly felt soft, warm nose touch his hands. Lass had come!

Do you see yourself in that story? Can you identify with Lass? Phillip realizes through this encounter with Lass just how God must feel with us. God is compassionate. God provides for our needs. God wants us to come to God, to love God and to trust God. Lass had a bad experience with her first owner. She had no reason to believe Phillip would be different. He showed her what life would be like. He showed her love, compassion and care. She realized she could trust him. This trust allowed Lass to have faith in Phillip and know that he wanted the best for her. She knew he would care for her. Her faith in Phillip made her an awesome sheepdog.

In Luke 17:5 the apostles said to Jesus "Increase our faith!" Faith is not something to be quantified. Faith is acting on your trust that God is faithful. Faith is a matter of sincere trust in the promises of God. Faith is a matter of trust in the character of God. How do we know we can

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trust God? A little later we're going to celebrate Holy Communion. One of the first things we do in the Great Thanksgiving is acknowledge God's salvific history. In other words, all of God's acts of salvation. Would you please grab a hymnal and turn to page 9? Let's read together beginning with "It is right, and a good and joyful thing... These are the ways God has been involved with humanity since the dawn of time. Do you believe that? Is that the God you know? The Creator God who is faithful and steadfast. The God who loves you beyond your wildest imaginings. If your response is yes, then do you trust God? Before you answer, think about it. Merriam Webster defines "trust" as assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something. Do you have an assured reliance on the character, ability, strength and truth of God? Hold off on your response for a few more moments.

I would like us to go back to those weird verses, verses 7-10. (read them again) How does that hit you? The first time I read this as part of my work for this week, I thought, "Ugh! What am I going to do with that?" I read that back in June when I got my ordination requirements and knew I would be preaching this week. Then every few weeks I'd read it again to see if it got any better. It didn't. Why did Jesus say that? It's tough! I wish he hadn't said it or at the very least that Luke hadn't written it. Luke is the only one that wrote this parable into his gospel. I thought about it over and over trying to make sense of it and then it hit me. There are two things I would like us to get from this parable. The first is the relationship between trust and obedience. Phillip Keller and Lass demonstrate this relationship in our book. In these verses, Jesus speaks of a master and his slave. Now, I know for us in this country with our history of slavery this parable has an added layer of difficulty. In Jesus' day, some people worked as servants for a period of years and then were freed. They did this to pay off debts. Jesus is not condoning the institution of first century slavery as an acceptable social order. He is

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merely using an existing relationship that his listeners would understand to discuss the relationship between God and a disciple. Like the slave in the parable, the Christian attitude should be one of dutiful service and willing obedience. God owes us nothing. There is a mutual expectation. The master expects the servant to do as he/she is commanded, to perform their duties well and without question. The servant in turn expects the master to provide nourishment, rest and protection. God expects us to serve with a willing heart and for us to do as God asks. In turn we can expect God to provide for us. Last week, we heard John 10:10 "...I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." God promises this.

Now I don't know about the tasks the masters in Jesus' times expected to be done by their servants, but I can speak to the ones God asks of us. Jesus came to tell us what those things are and he modeled them with his life. God wants us to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, comfort the sick and dying. God wants us to be peaceful with one another. God wants us to love our enemies. I bet some of those are other things we wish Jesus hadn't said. These are not easy things. Yet we are called to obedience. The disciplined life of a disciple of Jesus is difficult. We just can't do it on our own.

And here comes the second thing I want us to get from these weird verses. There is a happy ending in this weird parable. I love a happy ending! Don't you? There are two parts to the happy ending. The first is you don't have to do it alone. God knows what is expected of us is difficult, but you have God's gift of grace to help you. You have God's faithful and steadfast character to lean on. Jesus didn't tell the apostles that faith the size of a mustard seed could move mountains in order to quantify faith or to make them feel badly. He wasn't trying to make them feel unworthy. He says that not to scold them for not having enough faith. Jesus said this

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to encourage them. His point is they don't need any more. If their faith is the size of a mustard seed, they already have enough to do what is required. That's good news!!

The other part to this happy ending is this. When you understand faith this way as this deep and abiding trust in God then you also understand that this is a way of life. A way of living where you serve God with a sense of duty, but also with a sense of delight. It is a way of living in obedience to God. By living this way, you will have an amazing joy in doing what God asks. In living your life in a way that makes you fully reliant on God, in a way where you are trusting God completely, you also gain peace. It's an amazing peace because you know God is going to give you what you need to flourish abundantly. It's an amazing peace because you trust that God is in control.

This is not to say that life is all rosy. Jesus said to take up your cross and follow him. He said people would hate you for loving him. That doesn't make for a life that is all rosy. I am married to my dream man, I live in my dream house and drive my dream car, I have my dream job, (well one of them is), but my life isn't perfect. I have a father suffering dementia and a mother whose heart is breaking as she cares for him. I have a brother and nephew who haven't spoken in over 20 years. I work 32 hours a week in a job where I'm miserable. No, my life isn't perfect. Yet, I have joy. I have joy and I have peace. You can too despite what is going on in your life. You have faith at least the size of a mustard seed that allows you to believe in the character of God. That means you have enough faith to do what is required. You know what is required. And by the gift of God's grace and that tiny bit of faith you have, you can do what is required. You can do it and in doing this be joyful and at peace. I want this for you so badly. God wants this for you so badly! Focus on who God is and trusting God becomes a no brainer.

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Now back to my original question. Do you trust God? My prayer for you is that you can respond with a resounding “Yes!” Amen!

Micah: Minor Prophet, Major Message

Setting and Purpose of the Study

This bible study was offered as part of our church's small group offerings for the fall. It was held over 4 Thursday evenings beginning on September 29, 2016. There were 5 participants in the study not including myself. There was one couple who has been in the church for almost two years. They are in their 70s. Another participant has been a member of the church for 50 years and she is in her early 80s. The other two participants are relatively new to the church, joining within the last 3 years, one woman is in her 50s and the other in her 60s. All but one of them have been in a previous study or small group that I've led.

The purpose of the study was to expose people to a book of the bible that is rarely referenced beyond the famous verse Micah 6:8. In addition, while this verse is used often to highlight the need for us to serve others, I think throughout the book we can also see ourselves as Israel as well the oppressors. That is to say, we are also part of the policies and systems that lead to a wealthy nation having people who are poor, hungry and without homes. This is the other perspective I wish to highlight in this study. It is my hope that this study raises awareness and leads to a different type of action. Our Lord's Pantry and other mission work are wonderful acts of mercy. What can we do to create systemic change towards the elimination of these issues? How do we do justice?

Micah: Minor Prophet, Major Message

Bible Study Detailed Outline

Major objective: Micah's message still speaks for the oppressed today. What part do we play in this message?

Key scripture:

"He has told you, human one, what is good and what the LORD requires from you: to do justice, embrace faithful love, and walk humbly with your God."

- Micah 6:8 Common English Bible (CEB)

Prior to first Lesson: Contact participants to welcome them to the bible study and share the following:

- They should read the book of Micah (7) chapters (before 1st session)
- Distribute to them the Word Search puzzles for each chapter
 - Instruct them to read the chapter and then do the corresponding word search puzzle.

Lesson 1: Introduction

Key Concept: Overview of the Book of Micah

1. Place the book of Micah in its historical position in Israel's history.
2. Understand Israel's position within the Assyrian Empire and their relationship with God.
 - Opening prayer – Hymn #454 (UMC Hymnal) Open My Eyes That I May See
 - Icebreaker
 - Name
 - What interested you in a study on the book of Micah?
 - Describe the experience of reading a chapter and then doing a word search puzzle based on the chapter.
 - How did it enhance your reading of the chapter?
 - How did it help you retain what you read?
 - How did it help with your reflection of the chapter at that moment and since?
 - Basic information about Micah and the book of Micah
 1. Micah, the Prophet
 2. Dating and Authorship ¹
 3. Historical background
 - a. Include map of Israel/Judah)/Samaria (7 and 9 in CEB study bible or CEB Bible Map Guide), Assyria (8B4 in CEB study bible or CEB Bible Map Guide)
 - Assignment for Lesson 2: Read 1:1-2:13
 - Closing prayer

¹ (Allen 1976, 241-256)

Lesson 2: Judgment - Read 1:1-2:13

Key concept: How should we process the concept of judgment based on Micah?

1. When is judgment something positive?
2. See yourself in the book of Micah.
 - Opening prayer
 - Break up into two groups and discuss the following:
 - What the does the word “judgment” conjure up in your mind?
 - What types of judgment do you think of?
 - What images come to you when you hear that word?
 - Is judgment something to be feared or embraced?
 - Can judgment be a good thing?
 - If so, what good can come from judgment?
 - Is there any verse in today’s reading that disturbs you and if so, why?
 - Back in the whole group
 - Share the perspective on Judgment held in Judaism
 - Yom Kippur – Getting In Touch With Ourselves | Torah.org
 - Share some highlights of the small group discussions.
 - When you read these first chapters, with whom do you identify and why?
 - Micah?
 - Israel?
 - The oppressor?
 - Perhaps you are able to identify with more than one throughout the different stages of your life?
 - Share a time that really sticks out in your mind.
 - How do you feel about judgment now?
 - Assignment for Lesson 3: Read 3:1-5:15
 - Closing:
 - Hymn #539 (UMC Hymnal) O Spirit of the Living God
 - Closing Prayer –
 - Prayer joys and concerns
 - Prayer/blessing

Lesson 3: Restoration - Read 3:1-5:15

Key concept:

1. Isn’t it our job to know justice? 3:1
 2. The Kingdom of God will come, nothing can stop it. 4:1-5, 5:1-5
- Opening Prayer
 - Entire group: Let’s define “justice”.²

² (Harper Collins Bible Dictionary Revised and Updated 2011, 506)

- The standard by which the benefits and penalties of living in a society are distributed.
- A chief attribute of God
- The depth of the concept is often missed by English readers because it is often translated as judgment or righteousness.
- Justice is a fundamentally relational concept: it exists when things are in their right or proper relationship.
 - Abraham trusted God's promise. When he did his relationship with God was as it should be. When relationships are as they should be, there is justice or righteousness. (Gen. 15:6)
- What is our responsibility in knowing justice?
 - How does justice as a relational concept alter your thinking of justice?
 - How does justice as a relational concept make you think about the way you live your life today? Does it prompt you to change anything?
- Why is knowing justice key to our restoration?
- Define the Kingdom of God
- Discuss how justice and restoration relate to the Kingdom of God.
- Assignment for Lesson 4: Read 6:1-7:2
- Distribute *Making Life Right Reflections on Micah 6:8* (Gift)
- Closing:
 - Hymn #539 (UMC Hymnal) O Spirit of the Living God
 - Closing Prayer –
 - Prayer joys and concerns
 - Prayer/blessing

Lesson 4: Hope - Read 6:1-7:20

Key concept: A restating of the Great Commandment

1. What are we called to do? – Micah 6:8
 2. What gives us the ability to do what we are called to do by God? Micah 7:8-10, 15-20
- Opening prayer – Video [Micah 6:8 song](#) (Youtube)
 - Break up into teams of two and define Justice, Mercy and Walking Humbly with God as they color the Micah 6:8 page.
 - Teams report back and share their art.
 - What are we called to do? Micah 6:8 vs. Matthew 22:37-39
 - There is no mystery here. God has told us in the Law (Deut. 6:4-6, 11;1, Joshua 22:5,
 - Justice – Learned in lesson 3
 - Doing justice means not treating people as those Micah referenced in 2:1-2, 8-9, 3:1-2, 9-11. All of these behaviors reflect injustice.
 - Mercy – Faithful love - What is it?
 - Loving mercy or embracing faithful love go beyond doing justice.

- “John Mackay captures the sense when he says that loving mercy adds to doing justice ‘principally the idea of willingness and delight in acting toward one’s fellows with the fidelity and consideration God requires’.”³
- In other words, it is not done out of a sense of duty or obligation, but from the sheer delight of the action itself.
- It is done from a place of love.
- Walking humbly with God – What is that? This is how we are to live. This refers to living in communion with God. Having a relationship with God. Living as God desires us to live.
- What does this look like? Kingdom of God, living at peace with one another.
- Where does hope factor in? 7:11-20
- Hymn sing – Accompaniment (Google Play and Youtube)
 - FWS #2176 Make Me a Servant
 - FWS #2222 The Servant Song v1,2,4,5
 - FWS #2241 The Spirit Sends Us Forth to Serve
 - FWS #2175 Together We Serve only
- Micah 6:8 Meditation (play video – [Devotional sung by Phoebe Spier](#) Youtube)
- Closing Prayer
 - Unison recitation of Psalm 103
- Distribute Feedback forms

³ (Davis 2013, 128)

Annotated Bibliography

Allen, Leslie C. 1976. *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

This commentary includes insights from theological, historical and literary perspectives. There is significant attention given to scholarly opinion which is not only presented, but also assessed. The consensus appears to be that the period and authorship of Micah are not clear cut. This commentary does a fine job of addressing that. There are sections that also address the text, theology, structure and analysis as well as background and history. It is a thorough commentary for these minor prophets that gain little attention despite their major message of justice.

Davis, Dale Ralph. 2013. *A Study Commentary on Micah*. Darlington: EP books.

The author of this commentary is the son of a Presbyterian minister. The commentary discusses Calvin quite a bit in his application sections. However, the verse by verse expository is well done in fairly plain English making it easy for anyone to understand.

Dearborn, Tim A. 2016. *Making Life Right Reflections on Micah 6:8*. Seattle: Dynamis resources.

This is an excellent source that breaks down the components of the verse, Micah 6:8. Justice, Mercy, and Humility are defined thoroughly and what it required of us is identified in terms of the five greats, the Great Commandment, the New Commandment, the New Great Commandment, the Great Commission and the Great Requirement. It inspires good self-reflection.

Platte, Daniel Gen. Ed. 2004 *Global Bible Commentary*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

This book presents interpretations from all over the globe. It includes 71 scholars. Each scholar begins with their own personal context and then applies the biblical text to people of faith within a specific context which could be cultural, social, economic, political, or religious. It is an excellent source to invite into the conversation cultures and other context very different from our own to broaden the lens through which we filter scripture.

Powell, Mark Allen Gen. Ed. 2011. *Harper Collins Bible Dictionary Revised and Updated*. New York: Harper One.

This is a very good resource as it contains introductions and outlines for each book of the Bible including the deuterocanonical books and has over 4000 detailed entries. This too is written in a way to be easy to read for anyone. It also includes maps, graphs, charts and timelines. Another nice feature of this dictionary is the pronunciation guide. It includes a great deal of resources in one good volume.

Evaluation

I taught the entire study. The very first lesson was an introductory session where I provided historical background for Micah's time frame. I provided handouts with timelines to better place Micah in Israel's history. During this session, we also discussed the objective of the study. The verse Micah 6:8 is fairly well known, but little else from this prophet is usually studied. It was the intent of the course to focus on the meaning of justice and why this is important today as it was in Micah's time. More importantly, what part does justice play in our daily lives and ultimately in the kingdom of God.

I used a variety of teaching methods in a variety of contexts. For example, using music and hymns as prayer. We also used a psalm as our closing prayer. In the last lesson, the one I focused on in my outline, technology was used to both provide our music accompaniment, but also visuals during a time of devotion and meditation. We colored a page with the verse Micah 6:8 as we discussed the components of that verse. It was interesting to see how everyone took to the coloring focusing on it while still digging into the verse discussion as well. We even had a hymn sing with songs focusing on servanthood, justice and service.

The discussion on justice was very challenging for people as they struggled to understand justice as making life right around us rather than a just a system for dealing with the duality of right and wrong. They went from thinking of right as being relative to each individual to understanding God's will as right.

Even though the reading assignment was provided a week in advance, I think it would have been helpful to reread portions of the scripture again in the study. This may have made us go a little longer, but that would have been fine. It is always good to have that review especially in different translations.



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**Micah: Minor Prophet, Major Message
Reaction Form**

1. Did the instructor adequately explain the purpose of the study?

YES AND A HANDOUT WAS PROVIDED THAT GAVE US AN OVERVIEW OF MICAH,
THE 12 MINOR PROPHETS AND TIMELINES

2. Was the instructor prepared?

ALWAYS

3. Did the instructor use a variety of teaching methods? Name some of these. How did you feel about these methods?

WORD SEARCH SHEETS

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

LECTURE

SINGING HYMNS

4. Did the study meet the objectives as described at the onset of the study?

YES

5. What was the most helpful part of the study?

WEEKLY DISCUSSIONS

6. What did you find the least helpful?

WORD SEARCH GAMES - ONLY BECAUSE I DON'T ENJOY WORD PUZZLES, CROSSWORDS, ETC.
HOWEVER - IT DID HELP ANCHOR WORDS TO WHAT I READ IN SCRIPTURE

7. What will you take away from this study?

ALTHOUGH, MICAH IS A SMALL BOOK FROM A LITTLE KNOWN

PROPHET, THERE IS SO MUCH INSTRUCTION ON JUSTICE -

* UNFORTUNATELY - I HAD TO MISS THE LAST SESSION SO
I WASN'T ABLE TO INCLUDE COMMENTS ON ANYTHING
THAT MAY HAVE BEEN DONE AT THAT MEETING.

**Micah: Minor Prophet, Major Message
Reaction Form**

1. Did the instructor adequately explain the purpose of the study?

YES - GIVING AN OVERVIEW WITH TIME LINE FOR MICAH
A MINOR PROPHET. - USING OUR FIRST SESSION

2. Was the instructor prepared?

YES - WE SIGNED SMALL GROUP COVENANT
ONE NICE TOUCH WAS 'WORD SEARCH' FROM EACH CHAPTER - FOR FUN -

3. Did the instructor use a variety of teaching methods? Name some of these. How did you feel about these methods?

YES - READ 7 CHAPTERS OF MICAH - THEN BROKEN DOWN INTO
SECTIONS FOR EACH SESSION.

BROKEN INTO 3 SECTIONS // JUDGEMENT 1-2:13, RESTORATION
3-5; HOPE 6-7. USING HYMNS FOR MEANINGFUL PRAYER -
THE USE OF LAPTOP FOR VISUALS (PLUS HYMN MUSIC FOR SINGING)
COLORING AS WE DISCUSSED VARIOUS CONCEPTS RAISED IN OUR
MINDS IN THE MEDITATION TIME. ALL GOOD - DEEP SUBJECT PRESSED
TO BE ABLE TO DISSECT THIS PROPHECY WORDS -

4. Did the study meet the objectives as described at the onset of the study?

YES - I NOW KNOW MICAH ALSO AWARE
OF ALL OTHER MINOR PROPHETS. WE TEND TO "FORGET" THEM IN OUR LIVES AND TIMES.

5. What was your favorite part of the study?

DISCUSSION INTERACTION WITH OTHER PARTICIPANTS JUST BEING
AT BIBLE STUDY - PSALM 103. CLOSING PRAYER, WHAT A
BEAUTIFUL PRAYER -

6. What did you like the least?

NOT ENOUGH TIME BUT THEN IT IS ALWAYS GOOD TO LEAVE
DESIRING MORE -

7. Based on this study of the book of Micah what changes if any will you implement or consider in your daily life?

BE MORE AWARE OF THOSE CONCEPTS DO JUSTICE - LOVE MERCY
WALK HUMBLY WITH GOD -

Micah: Minor Prophet, Major Message
Reaction Form

1. Did the instructor adequately explain the purpose of the study?

yes,

2. Was the instructor prepared?

She was well prepared & had wonderful lessons

3. Did the instructor use a variety of teaching methods? Name some of these. How did you feel about these methods?

Audito - used computer for hymns, handouts, a small group book, our Bibles, journaling, syllabus, timelines for the book

4. Did the study meet the objectives as described at the onset of the study?

Oh yes

5. What was your favorite part of the study?

I truly learned a lot more about Jesus & God's plan for my salvation.

6. What did you like the least?

Classes were too short only 4 weeks. Would have ^{wanted to} learned more about his (Micah) message.

7. Based on this study of the book of Micah what changes if any will you implement or consider in your daily life?

I need to walk humbly in the Lord's love more.

**Micah: Minor Prophet, Major Message
Reaction Form**

1. Did the instructor adequately explain the purpose of the study?

Yes

2. Was the instructor prepared?

Yes, prepared with creativity & sensitivity

3. Did the instructor use a variety of teaching methods? Name some of these. How did you feel about these methods?

computer

music - singing

Reflection: Making Life Right

Reading + discussion

Coloring

4. Did the study meet the objectives as described at the onset of the study?

Yes

5. What was your favorite part of the study?

discussion

Coloring

6. What did you like the least?

nothing

7. Based on this study of the book of Micah what changes if any will you implement or consider in your daily life?

6:8 will work hard to make this

central to my life

**Micah: Minor Prophet, Major Message
Reaction Form**

1. Did the instructor adequately explain the purpose of the study?

Very definitely

2. Was the instructor prepared?

yes

3. Did the instructor use a variety of teaching methods? Name some of these. How did you feel about these methods?

*yes - music, coloring,
meditation, scriptures*

4. Did the study meet the objectives as described at the onset of the study?

yes

5. What was your favorite part of the study?

*Certainly - covering the mighty message
with so much variety in the teaching*

6. What did you like the least?

7. Based on this study of the book of Micah what changes if any will you implement or consider in your daily life?

*I hope to be
after reminded of what is required
of me*

MICAH CHAPTER ONE

T E H O A D M O H T C Y T N E H	ACHZIB	JOTHAM
U B R A E H D S I S D O A N H A	ADULLUM	JUDAH
M T I N D R H S E S I N M A Y C	APHRAH	KINGS
S A R Z A U B E G C A H R E S I	BEAST	LACHISH
E U R G H E J N H A A H C E T M	BEATEN	MAROTH
B S O O A C I T Z I P L C A V H	BURNED	MICAH
E N G S T K A I H A N E P B L A	CHARIOT	PIECES
S O T A F H O W G N I L I A W T	CLEFT	PLACES
T F O E R E H T S P J A H K E A	COMETH	RETURN
S C M T H T A E Y B N A R D I S	DRAGONS	SAMARIA
G E H O F D I N E E E I C R H M	EAGLE	SAPHIR
I R U A U E R L L F H A A O A H	FORTH	THEREOF
T S A L R U L G L P O M T H B T	GATH	VALLEYS
E G L V T I A C A E A R T E T A	GRAVEN	WAILING
H U T E E E O S V S H O T O N G	HOUSE	WITNESS
M E R V H N F T A E J E R H E H	JACOB	ZANAN

MICAH CHAPTER TWO

H Y A W A N E H G F G E T G A T	AGAINST	MORNING
N E T I E H G G E N R A N R S O	AVERSE	NAMED
S H S K N A I N L T I O T N E B	AWAY	NECKS
A P O R R N A I N I R N I H E O	BOZRAH	OPPRESS
C R I M E M E K D T G A R B E Z	BREAKER	PARABLE
B A E R E V N L S I G H O O T R	BROKEN	PORTION
E N T D I T A A U A W R T E M A	CHANGED	REASON
T E N I W T M W H G U O R H T H	COVET	ROBE
R E L B A R A P N O C S M Y P S	DIVIDED	SPIRIT
A D T N W S C R O B T O M E S H	ENEMY	STRONG
R O I O E H F S I E R E V E N T	FLOCK	SURELY
T E R V A C U A T F N E R E N D	GARMENT	THROUGH
Y D A N I R K P R E L P A E T L	GATHER	WALKING
S O G S E D O S O H P O M K R O	HOLD	WINE
T E H L O S E S P O E A C T E H	LAMENT	WOMEN
D R Y E N N S D I S L T H K F R	LIGHT	WORDS

MICAH CHAPTER THREE

P T R O A Y T L D S D S R E E S	ABHOR	FOREST
O T B E T R A S H E A I S K S T	ANSWER	HEADS
H E S I W S M E B M V D V H U D	ASHAMED	LEAN
C A U E H O S C O R A A T I L H	BECOME	MONEY
W Q B A R E P N H E E U H I N I	BEHAVED	MOUTHS
E N M H N O E I H A O A U E T E	BONES	PERVERT
R E A O O Y F R O M H B K O B T	BREAK	POWER
D T B E E R D P E R A P E R P H	BUILD	PREPARE
F E R A L C E D T I C U Z H S N	CALDRON	PRINCES
N V O U R O S N R R H O S I O A	CHOP	REWARD
A D I A L P T I E L E E V R O E	COVER	SEERS
T N E S I Y S K V R L W D E M N	DECLARE	SKIN
A W S R I I B S R F H L A O R E	DIVINE	SPIRIT
I O I W F O H R E O A T C R N I	EQUITY	TRULY
A T D A E L N A P C D E O U D T	FLAY	VISION
S M E H T R H O S R B H Y A L F	FLESH	ZION

MICAH CHAPTER FOUR

T S I R E T P A H C T N U O M R	ABOVE	PATHS
R U O F R H A V O B A E E O O B	AFRAID	PEOPLE
Y M E E R R H A P A T G R M U I	ALOUD	REBUKE
D C N K A O E L F P D S E R T S	BRASS	REDEEM
U H R R U W Y R I U Y E A L H L	DWELL	REIGN
O E A S E B A R J A D E I G F L	EXALTED	SHEAVES
L L E D N I E T H E V A X N O I	FLOW	SPEARS
A P L R D Y H R R A V A D O R H	FORTH	STRONG
M O A O S R W S S A L E R R T T	HALTED	SWORDS
N E A W E X P A R H T T H T H H	HILLS	TEACH
H P D S A E H T L L E C E S I S	HOUSE	THRESH
A S H W A L N I A K H A F D H W	JUDGE	TOWER
C S A R D G C X H U C O V T Y D	LAW	TRAVAIL
I A S N I R E W O T A H A E A R	LEARN	WALK
M R A E P P F L O W E P C R S O	MOUNT	WOMAN
I B R A I L L E W D T N A M O W	MOUTH	WORD

MICAH CHAPTER FIVE

Y W R D S N Y R U F G D O T A N	ABIDE	IMAGES
I T O C E E N I N R E A H F E H	ASSYRIA	JUDAH
R L S V O U C O H T O G T H O T	BORDERS	JUDGE
D E A E T M I E F A U H T H C S	BROUGHT	LIFTED
H R V A J L E I I O T A M I E K	CHEEK	LION
G A S I T A L T R P E P T O E R	CITIES	MAJESTY
E H D P L I M B H H T I E E I E	COMETH	PEACE
I G C U M E W L E B E R H A G E	DELIVER	PIECES
S E D A J O D I P S O C O E C N	DESTROY	PLUCK
O T G U R A D W A E A R I O K E	EXECUTE	SIEGE
F E V S J E B S A R X S D T P S	FLOCKS	TROOPS
S O H W S P S I E I W E K E K S	FOREST	WASTE
E I R T H Y L S D A T R C C R E	FURY	WAITETH
P L R E R E B U S E O E O U N S	GATHER	WHEN
E O W I S H N T C W S L T S T O	GRAVEN	WORK
Y I A E T T E F E K F S O H W E	HEATHEN	WORSHIP

MICAH CHAPTER SIX

R B T H U L W I N S S O T D E R	AARON	REQUIRE
S E W E A N C E T I O P E N S O	ANOINT	RIVERS
B N V G E O Y R F H E W O E T E	BALAAM	SHEWED
E A L I N W O I R K E R V K G B	BALAK	SMITING
O I L T L N S U N H O L E Y E O	BEOR	SPOKEN
G N E A G E G Q S S A B P H I N	CALVES	STRONG
S N T C K P D E U C W T E R W E	CONTEND	SWEET
D M R I R M O R G N I T I M S U	DELIVER	SWORD
I F O E R E H T Y S M A R T C D	EGYPT	TESTIFY
T W J D U B A E F B Y T D G E X	GILGAL	THEREOF
O K E G S N Q L I D A E V I J S	OIL	TONGUE
M L N I O I N I T P S L R B R D	OLIVES	TREAD
R O I I G O W O S A L A A E N R	OMRI	WEARIED
T S N V R H R D E U E E V A I O	PLEAD	WEIGHTS
Z T W A E B T L T W L I A G M W	PLEASED	WHEREIN
E R A L K S P S R T R E A D C S	RAMS	WISDOM

MICAH CHAPTER SEVEN

D I A R F A T M I H T E K S A E	AFRAID	GUIDE
R C A H T N H E P R E H T A F C	ASKETH	MERCY
R E O P E F R I E N D H E T R I	BASHAN	MOTHER
R E H P S R O O D C A E I E V O	BOSOM	PLEAD
E D R T A R E V E S L H P A C J	BROTHER	PRINCE
T E E M O S O B I O M R S A N E	CARMEL	REJOICE
S F P M E R C Y R S A R R A D R	CLUSTER	REWARD
U O A M R G B O D H E M O E B A	DEPTHS	SERPENT
M M R E E E U V S S E I S W S S	DESIRE	SHAME
M A G M G P H E I L F I M R E H	DOORS	SHARPER
E O A R R H I T M N R T E E C H	ENEMIES	SINNED
R H S I N N E D O E T T O D N P	FATHER	SUBDUE
S E G U I D E L I M S A V E I E	FRIEND	SUMMER
S H A M E H S T I U R F G E R D	FRUITS	UPRIGHT
T R E W A R D P L E A D I E P S	GILEAD	VINTAGE
D A E L I G R C A E E U D B U S	GRAPE	WORMS

Word search puzzles courtesy of John Wright.

Radnor Church of Christ, Nashville, TN

These puzzles may be used freely in church bulletins, etc.

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Psalm 103 - Thanksgiving for God's Goodness

¹ Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name.

² Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and do not forget all his benefits—

³ who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,

⁴ who redeems your life from the Pit,

who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,

⁵ who satisfies you with good as long as you live^[a]
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

⁶ The LORD works vindication
and justice for all who are oppressed.

⁷ He made known his ways to Moses,
his acts to the people of Israel.

⁸ The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

⁹ He will not always accuse,
nor will he keep his anger forever.

¹⁰ He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.

¹¹ For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;

¹² as far as the east is from the west,
so far he removes our transgressions from us.

¹³ As a father has compassion for his children,
so the LORD has compassion for those who fear him.

¹⁴ For he knows how we were made;
he remembers that we are dust.

¹⁵ As for mortals, their days are like grass;
they flourish like a flower of the field;

¹⁶ for the wind passes over it, and it is gone,

and its place knows it no more.

¹⁷ But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting

on those who fear him,

and his righteousness to children's children,

¹⁸ to those who keep his covenant

and remember to do his commandments.

¹⁹ The LORD has established his throne in the heavens,

and his kingdom rules over all.

²⁰ Bless the LORD, O you his angels,

you mighty ones who do his bidding,

obedient to his spoken word.

²¹ Bless the LORD, all his hosts,

his ministers that do his will.

²² Bless the LORD, all his works,

in all places of his dominion.

Bless the LORD, O my soul.

Practice of Ministry:

1. What do you think are the most effective means of doing evangelism in the 21st century? How have you lived this out in your current context of ministry?

I believe one of the most important things to do in order to be effective in 21st century evangelism is to meet people where they are and build relationships. People are not looking to just sit in a pew on Sunday. They crave relationships and purpose.

In my current context, I am very focused on building relationships. Quick conversations on a Sunday morning that may seem trivial actually over time build relationships. I recall names, stories, anything someone tells me that I can refer to in a later conversation. That lets them know they are not just someone in the pew, but that I pay attention to them and care. Eventually the sharing becomes deeper also. I send hand written notes with a message of encouragement, a get well or condolence too.

In one of my appointments, we had a backpack ministry. We worked with local organizations to provide backpacks and school supplies to low income families. At this event I acted as an interpreter for the Latino parents who did not speak English. Some of these families began to come to church. At this same church we took our small groups to the homes. Some of the hosts invited family, friends and neighbors to participate. The homes allowed us to reach people beyond the church.

2. What makes a congregation vital, and how do you measure it? How would you envision working with a congregation to become more vital?

Worship, Discipleship, Small Groups, Missions and Generous Giving are all key aspects of a congregation that contribute greatly to its vitality. In one of my appointments, I had the opportunity to participate in the Team Vital pilot. This process allowed the church to take a good hard look at itself and assess these five areas. Once the church is aware of the areas that need work, action plans can be developed. I would work with them to prioritize this plan first in terms of the areas identified and then at the lower level of actual action items. It is important to

factor in the available resources so they are not spread thin or too much is going on at once. Another key component toward working to become a vital congregation would be to connect people based on their gifts and talents to the respective areas being addressed.

One of the markers I feel it is important to measure is the number of new people who participate in small groups and missions. This shows that we are reaching out to new people, but also that they are connecting within the congregation.

3. What is your personal approach to conflict? Provide an example of where you have been involved in resolving conflict. What did you learn?

My personal approach to conflict is to listen. People need to feel you are hearing and understanding them. Listening is important so you can gain understanding of the person's feelings and perspective. I also remain calm so it is a dialogue where the parties involved can discuss how they feel and together brainstorm a resolution. I have found that many times conflict comes out of misunderstanding because we do not take the time to talk and really listen.

The incident that comes to mind is one that as a small group leader was unavoidable, that day when ends of the theological spectrum meet. I found that it was really important for everyone to feel they were heard. At the start of every study or small group I lead, part of our covenant is to listen to others respectfully knowing that we all have different experiences and perspectives. I model this in these tougher conversations. It is not my job to assert my views, but rather to present the Bible as the inspired Word of God and help people to use their reason and experience along with tradition in their study together. It is also important to create a safe space for people to ask questions, even difficult ones. If they can trust the space is safe, then you have a better environment for discussing the tougher conversations.

In our Revelation study we had a man who believes the Bible is the literal Word of God. I presented the ideas and theories of modern biblical scholarship along with other materials. I

was careful to preface these things as something more to think about or consider, but not the final answer while doing it lovingly. To this day, the man is a faithful member of my studies. He knows we have different ideas about the Bible, but that does not stop us from studying it together and loving one another. Everyone comes at the Bible from different places and this enriches the study so long as you guide the conversation in a loving, respectful way so that learning and appreciation can happen rather than anger or disrespect.

4. What is your theological and practical understanding of itineracy?

Theologically, I think itineracy is tied very closely to our call. I think of the prophets who were called by God to help their people turn back to God or Moses who was called to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Itineracy is part of our total surrender to God which includes going to serve where you are called or needed.

As a deacon, I am not itinerant the same way an elder is in that the Bishop does not call me and move me. However, I am called to serve where I am needed. I trust that the bishop and the District Superintendent know my gifts, talents, and graces. If they see a need I can fill, they can call me. In the meantime, if I find a ministry need that I can fill, I trust the bishop will bless that as an appointment. I am trusting that God who called me to ministry will lead me to where I should be and that my ministry will support my family.

5. How do you engage all age groups in your community?

I provide the baptism orientation to parents of children who are to be baptized which allows me to connect with young families. My work schedule does not allow me to participate in our VBS as much as I would like, but this summer I did get to do a closing prayer for VBS one day. I chose to do a responsive prayer that allowed them to respond with the VBS phrase of the day. I was able to engage them in the prayer and access their energy.

During Lent middle school children through our youth and young adults, very often study what the congregation is studying. We have a high school girls group that I we are coordinating for me to visit and moderate a session for in this coming year.

I have had men and women of all ages in my groups and I have done Bible study in a local nursing home. I mostly preach in our chapel worship which has about 25-30 people regularly. The majority of them are 60 plus with a sprinkling of some younger people as well. I have also led worship in a nearby nursing home and I make visitations as well. Recently, I was invited to speak at one of our small groups in a nursing home to share with them my story.

6. What is your understanding of pastoral authority, and how do you intend to exercise it in your place of ministry?

My understanding of pastoral authority is that it is scripturally based. Verses such as 1 Cor. 16:15-16, 1 Peter 5:1-3, and Hebrews 13:17 speak to pastoral authority. In his sermon entitled “On Obedience to Pastors”¹, John Wesley addresses this using the passage from Hebrews. Our pastoral authority entails watching over those in our care, guiding them by explaining scripture and applying it to their lives. Pastoral authority also includes leading them in holiness equipping them so that they can continue to grow in grace, moving forward toward perfection. Pastoral authority requires that we embody Christ and that we do so not for our own honor, but to honor God. Pastoral authority comes with the surrender of one’s whole self to God and serving God’s purposes.

Because I am in my home church, I had to work at claiming my pastoral authority. This involved some external factors. There were clergy and staff members who were not clear on what my status as a provisional deacon was or what it meant. In a church with multiple clergy part of my pastoral authority was claimed for me by the senior pastor referring to me differently,

¹ (The Works of John Wesley Volume 3 Sermons 71-114)

calling me Reverend when it was appropriate, the PPR welcoming me as an associate pastor, and the staff printing my title along with that of the other clergy persons.

The other part of exercising my pastoral authority comes from within. At first, I was just Deb, but over time as I continued to do more pastoral activities and functions I became more comfortable with my own pastoral identity thus being able to exercise my pastoral authority. I knew it was my role to watch over and love those in my care. Education is a large part of how I do that. Teaching and preaching the Word, having pastoral visits with people and reaching out to those who are suffering or having difficult life issues are all part of how I exercise my pastoral authority. These are the ways that I care for those I have to watch over. These are the ways I guide them scripturally toward holiness. Providing Bible studies and small groups around spiritual disciplines and spiritual formation are ways that I equip them to grow in grace.

7. If you could choose *anyone* to mentor you in leadership skills, who would that be and why?

Other than Jesus, Himself, I would choose Mary Kay Ash who taught us to run our businesses based on the Golden Rule. She taught us that everybody wears an invisible sign that says, "Make me feel important." Mary Kay also taught us to keep our priorities in order, God first, family second and career third. She said if we kept our priorities in this order, everything would fall into place. These are core leadership principles I use in my personal life, and my ministry. They are key concepts in building relationships. Leaders build relationships.

The other thing I admire about Mary Kay is that she would not ask anyone to do anything she was not willing to do or had not done herself. That was an important lesson because leaders lead by example.

8. Describe a situation in which you felt a need to assert a professional boundary in the practice of ministry.

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One situation that comes to mind is one where I had a parishioner who was on fire for the church. If you needed someone, her hand always went up. She was constantly thinking of ideas and would text me. The more you replied the more she thought about things and continued to text. She would text well into the night. My phone is always on because it is the only way my parents, who are in their mid-eighties, can reach me. I never told this woman to stop texting me at night. I just stopped replying after a certain hour. I set a boundary for myself that seemed to work. Eventually, she stopped texting me at late hours.

9. How have you worked through the experience of forgiving someone?

In 1999, I was divorced and became a single mother with a 7-year-old little girl. I was angrier at my ex-husband for ruining my daughter's life than for leaving me. She had nothing to do with her family being torn apart and yet she had to deal with it. Soon after, he remarried and started another family. Over time he and my daughter interacted less and less. She struggled socially in high school, she was diagnosed as bipolar and began cutting herself. Today she is 25 and doing wonderfully. She still has no relationship with her father. I forgave him a long time ago for infidelity, but it took me a lot longer to forgive him for the harm I felt he had done to our daughter. Through a great deal of prayer I realized that I had to forgive him. Scripture was important in my reaching forgiveness of my ex-husband. Matthew 18:21-22 was a verse that got me to that place. ²¹ Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if another member of the church^[a] sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" ²² Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven^[b] times." I reminded myself of this constantly until I reached a place where I was no longer angry and I had forgiven him.

10. What are you doing to help those around you take good care of themselves?

I talk to a lot of people who are overwhelmed with life. They are harried and weary. During these conversations, I look for the opportunity to talk to them about priorities. Are they

in order? What kind of choices are they making? Are they doing the most productive thing at any given moment? Sometimes the most productive thing you can be doing is resting.

Sometimes the most productive thing you can be doing is spending time reading scripture, praying or perhaps exercising. I remind them we get overwhelmed with life when we say “yes” to too many things and we lose focus on what is important. This leads to fatigue and sometimes illnesses. I talk to people about developing good habits that are healthy and helpful, which will alleviate stress making them happier and more productive.

The other thing I talk to people about is worry. I find that people spend a lot of time worrying about things over which they have no control rather than dealing with things they have influence over and can change. “And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?” – Matthew 6:27. Nobody has ever solved a problem with worrying, but it has caused stress and other issues. Sometimes people just need a sounding board, an uninvolved person who can help them see more clearly. Lastly, I lead by example. With my demanding schedule people often ask me if I sleep. Yes, I do, 7-8 hours a night. I am making exercise a priority and changing my diet. I am saying “no” to things I do not have space for that are not currently part of the things I need to focus on.

11. How have you invited someone to faith and seen their faith develop?

The person that comes to mind is not one I invited to faith, but she was at a very early stage in her journey when we met. She participated in the Companions in Christ Spiritual Formation course I co-led. She asked really great, thought provoking questions. She was really thirsty to learn as much as she could. Since then, I have invited her to be a small group leader and she has is one of our Disciple facilitators. She became involved in different areas of the church seeking her place. I invited her to the Walk to Emmaus a few years ago and when she returned from that she said she felt a call to ministry. She has been participating in the Lay

Servant program. She has met with our DS to begin the candidacy process and is now discerning if her call is to ordained ministry or licensed local pastor. In the past 6 years, I have watched her go from curious and questioning to simply on fire and ready to jump in to do whatever God is calling to do.

12. What have you overcome to come to this season in your ministry?

Right after the provisional retreat, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. It was early and I had a partial lumpectomy. After commissioning, I had radiation treatment. I am on medication which is an oral form of chemo. This medication sometimes causes me to be tired, where I really feel I cannot continue what I am doing.

What really challenges me in this season is my secular job. I have been in Information Technology for 29 years. I used to love my job, but it has been several years since I could say that. I have reduced my hours from 45-32, partly because my treatment makes me tired and partly because I am trying to ease myself out of this corporate job. I overcome a day at a time preventing my secular job from sapping my energy and strength. I have discerned that in Fall 2017 I will take early retirement in order to focus on full time ministry and God's call on my life.

13. How would you describe your prayer life in this season, and how has it changed over your journey?

I have been keeping a prayer journal for years. I find that in writing my prayers, I can pour out how I feel and it can be as raw as I need it to be. This also allows me to go back and see where I was at certain points in my life and how prayers were answered. Sometimes the answers were not what I wanted at the time and I can see how things turned out much better than I planned. I still use my prayer journal quite often, but I am also using more contemplative practices such as centering prayer in order to focus more on listening to God. I am in a season where I have a lot to juggle and it is important to clear out the "noise" so I can hear what God has to say to me

14. When you read the Bible, how do you hear God's voice? What example might you give of how you responded?

When I read the Bible, God's voice very often will come to me like a whisper.

Sometimes, a word or a phrase will just come into my head. Other times, I won't hear anything right away, but confirmation will come later in other ways.

Recently I was trying to discern whether I should take early retirement next year so I can be in full time ministry and no longer balance full time ministry with a full time secular job. I went on a one-day silent retreat during which I walked a prayer labyrinth asking God to help in this discernment process. Later as I was reading, Psalm 40:8 was referenced. "I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart." I was not quite sure what it meant, but I knew it was significant. The next day, the pastor delivering the message referenced this verse as well. I could not ignore this verse. I know I need to focus on God's will. I reviewed the financial situation with my husband and was able to show him we can live with my reduced salary. I discussed going from part time paid and part time missional to full time paid with the senior pastor and submitted this request to the PPR. They included the new salary in the 2017 budget. Each step of the way, I got confirmation from God in scripture and in people letting me know I was moving in the right direction.

15. How has your family of origin influenced your call?

My mother was always active in the church. The priests and nuns were friends of hers and came to our house for dinner. My mother was a huge influence because she showed us that going to Church, prayer and God were always important. She made sure we had that Children's Bible and made sacrifices so we could go to catholic school and got our religious education. My call was in place before I was born. My mother prayed at the altar for God to give her a daughter promising to give her back to God. Three years later I was born. ⁴Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, ⁵"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you

were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” - Jeremiah 1:4-5 comes to mind. That is how I explain being a young child who loved reading about Jesus and watching movies about Jesus. God called me while I was in a faith tradition where women could not be part of ordained ministry. God took my mother up on her promise.

16. Interview three people to tell you what they see in your ministry. What did you hear in these conversations?

It was humbling and yet affirming to have these conversations. One person told me the first word that comes to her mind is joy. My faith brings me joy and abundance in living. This allows me, she says, to pull people through bad times. She also described me as genuine which allows me to teach and preach with joy and connects me well with others. This allows me to let people feel it is ok to feel what they are feeling and to be where they are in their journey yet also having a sense that they too can have this joy.

A gentleman I spoke with said the first things that came to his mind were caring, compassion and friendliness. He sees in me an ability to relate to the audience I have regardless of the demographic making me adaptable. He sees tenacity in me as I have held a Spanish Bible study for 1 person for 3 years. He highlighted my sense of humor and described me as a pillar during adversity giving my husband’s recent health issue as an example where he saw that. He sees a quiet confidence in me because I am Christ Centered and I “walk the walk”.

Lastly, I met with another woman who said she sees passion and energy about my faith in Jesus in me as well as authenticity which makes it easy to talk to me and be with me. She says my Bible studies are a good mix of the academic, discussion and social. She enjoys being around me and would love to do Missions with me.

All of this was very affirming. What I heard in these conversations was that I am doing ministry as Deb and God is blessing that. God is using me, my South Bronx accent and my

Debra A. De Vos

sense of humor to teach and to preach the Word. God called me knowing exactly who I am and God is using me. I'm touching lives and having an impact for God just as I am.

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Theology, Call and Doctrine P330 (a), (b), and (c):

(a) Theology

1. Give examples of how the practice of ministry has affected your experience and understanding of

(a) God

I still understand God as omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent. Omnipresence is the one that most impacts me. Scripture is a key way I have come to know God. Verses like Matthew 28:20 "... And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." and Jeremiah 29:11 are verses that have informed my experience of God. These verses have been highlighted even more in my practice of ministry. I have often related to Moses who felt so ill equipped for the job to which he was called. Though I am bilingual, I have always joked saying I was waiting for my Aaron who would come to do the talking for me. What I have learned is that God does truly equip those God calls rather than calling the equipped. My Spanish is better than I think. I can communicate and be understood easily. I used to worry about my first funeral. My first memorial service was very small for a family who just wanted to do something to remember their father. I was more focused on being a source of comfort conveying hope to this family. I wanted to be sure I honored the family and their loved one. I know this is God's work transforming me through ministry for more ministry.

God has been constantly at work changing me, shaping me into the deacon I need to be in order to serve God wherever God sends me. It affirms my call to ministry. It also affirms that in this ministry God and I are working together. My ministry has further deepened what I already believed and understood about God's constant presence with me and God's ability to do anything. I also have a better understanding of God's desire for me. Every step of the way in this journey, God has affirmed what I am doing whether through my prayer life, my coach, my mentor or even the people I serve. At the start of my current appointment, I was concerned about the big shoes I had to fill. The associate pastor before me who coordinated our small group

ministry had years of experience. She has had a lot of the training and experiences I desire to have in terms of spiritual formation and many other things. I adore her and I admire her, which is why I turn to her for spiritual direction and she is my clergy coach. She is strong in a subdued sort of way. She is gracious, articulate and just lovely. I am not like her. God has affirmed through many people and events that I am not called to be anyone but myself. God is using me with my personality, my gifts, talents and experiences. God has shown me amazing love and grace thus far in my ministry. My understanding of God has not changed. It has deepened.

(b) Humanity

I understand humanity to be the creation of God. I also believe God created humanity, all of it, in God's image, (Gen. 1:26). Since we are all created in the image of God, one human does not hold more value than another. No physical, cultural, racial, ethnic, social, economic traits or positions hold greater value over another. We are all the same; created equally. I always say that while the word "all" is small, it encompasses every human being on the planet making it a huge word.

God by nature is good; therefore, humans are all inherently good. In my practice of ministry, I have encountered so many people who do not believe they are loved by God or that they are even worthy of God's love. This feeling has been expressed to me by people of all races, economic status, profession, etc. Not one group has the market on feeling unworthy. It has been really important for me in my practice of ministry to communicate to people that they are indeed loved by God and that we do not have to be worthy because God's grace is abundant. In my sermons I will remind them of this, certainly in one on one conversations also. I also remind them they are made in the image of God and nothing can stop God from loving them. People need affirmation. They need someone who will look at the good in them because they tend to focus on the bad things they see in themselves. It is important in my ministry for me to

affirm people and constantly let them know God does indeed love them. Part of what drives me is the incredible joy I have because I am in love with God and I want everyone to have that same joy. It breaks my heart when people beat themselves up and think they are unlovable by other people or God. They are living with the biggest falsehood imaginable, which is unacceptable to me. My ministry has made it very apparent that people need to feel love and accepted. They need to know they matter and that someone cares for them. My practice of ministry has helped me fall in love with people. I have really come to love and enjoy them. To look in someone's eyes as they tell you their story, having your heart break for them as you listen and then to offer them a hug or words of comfort is powerful. It's important that I love people and let them know that God loves them too.

(c) The need for divine grace

A woman in one of the churches to which I was appointed was openly hostile to the senior pastor. She would whisper to me on the way in or out of church how the pastor was dragging the church down. The open hostility in meetings was awful and made people uncomfortable. When I tried to speak with her, she was not in a place to receive anything that did not agree with her perception or opinion. This woman had been a member for over 40 years. The church had become a reconciling church the year before and the pastor was a woman of color with an accent when she spoke. It just so happens the pastor and I are of the same ethnicity. The difference is I look white. I have white skin, green eyes and no accent. This woman knew I was not an anglo, but I looked and sounded which seemed to make me acceptable. When I left that church she expressed her disappointment because she thought I was going to bring the church back. There is certainly a need for divine grace there as she and a couple of others gathered each week to gossip and talk about the pastor. These are toxic parking lot conversations that are having an effect on the church. Showing her grace is part of what I am

called to do. Not letting her anger and hostility move me or cause me to react badly is also what I am called to do. All of that takes the grace of God. In my own humanity, it is not possible. I have learned that even in the Church, people are hurtful to one another. It is only with divine grace that we can navigate these situations differently than our human nature would have us do.

(d) The Lordship of Jesus Christ

In Acts 2:36 in his sermon, Peter concludes with “Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

To say Jesus Christ is Lord is to recognize his power and authority. The earth and the entire universe is his dominion. He has authority over all of it. (Matthew 28:18) During his ministry, he displayed power over natural laws whether he was healing people or withering a fig tree. Jesus said this power came to him from his Father in heaven, as did his authority to preach and teach as he did. (John 5:19-25) He showed complete control over life and death by raising Lazarus from the dead and conquering his own death when he resurrected on the third day.

That is my understanding of the Lordship of Jesus. Along with that understanding comes a deep and abiding trust that Jesus is with me always. That trust and understanding of the Lordship of Jesus causes me to surrender my life completely to him. This year I had the opportunity to move that understanding further into my daily life. As part of a goal in our strategic plan, I created a pilot Covenant Discipleship Group. I had two brave souls who became a part of it. Through our work in this group, the Lordship of Jesus was made tangible and practical. We have looked at where we spend our time. Are we wasting time on social media, watching television programs or movies that are not edifying or doing other things with our time that do not bring us closer to God? We have looked at what we are doing in terms of justice issues and are now thinking beyond mercy. The Lordship of Jesus means our total allegiance,

faithfulness and obedience is owed only to Jesus. Our lives should reflect that always. Through this Covenant Group we have identified different aspects of our discipleship where we work each week so that our lives bear fruit and witness of the Lordship of Jesus.

(e) The work of the Holy Spirit

At the end of Matthew 28:20, Jesus tells his disciples “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” I believe this happens through the Holy Spirit as God’s presence in us. “I am” is present tense. This is my very favorite Bible verse and I lean heavily on the knowledge that the Holy Spirit is within me guiding me, working and transforming me as I grow in my Christian journey toward perfection.

The Holy Spirit has worked in my ministry is by gifting me with the ministry of presence. The only way to describe it is I have fallen in love with God’s people. I have always awakened on Sunday mornings in a natural state of high. Now it’s over the top. As I go through the church greeting people, talking to people, listening to people, giving and receiving hugs and kisses, I am driven by a deep love that I do not remember feeling in quite the same way before. When I preach, I deeply want them to hear the message and “get it”. I so badly want for them the joy and peace that I have from my relationship with God. It is humbling and yet an incredible blessing to journey with people through the peaks and valleys. Sometimes, they just need someone to listen and felt heard. Other times, they need a shoulder to cry on and a hug. The ministry of presence has been a large way the Holy Spirit has transformed me and worked in my ministry. I believed that through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are empowered to minister to those God puts in our path or to those whom God sends us.

(f) The meaning and significance of the Sacraments

The sacraments are ordained by Jesus. There are two in the UMC, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These are both means of grace meaning they are ways in which God works in us

strengthening and confirming our faith in God. Baptism is a sacrament of initiation. It is the entrance into the Body of Christ, the community of faith. It represents our new birth in Jesus. It is the start of our Christian journey, our discipleship. While as Methodists we do not rebaptize, we do remember our baptismal vows in order to remember whose we are and that God is at work in our lives. In Baptism we celebrate our identity as God's beloved.

The Lord's Supper is a time where we recall the mighty acts of God in our salvation. The Lord's Supper is also a memorial of the life of Jesus. It is a time when we recall his ministry and all that he has done including his suffering and dying for us. During the Lord's Supper we remember the meal he instituted that he asked us to do as often as we eat in remembrance of him. In doing so, we experience the real presence of Christ. That is why Holy Communion is a means of grace because it draws us into the presence of Christ which nourishes us.

(g) The kingdom of God

The kingdom of God is a present reality ushered in by Jesus and a future. As we live a life that is acceptable and pleasing to God there is healing and restoration for our brokenness leading us closer to the kingdom of God on earth. God calls us to live peacefully with one another. God calls us to love one another. God also calls us to serve and care for another without any qualifications. In other words, skin color, language, faith tradition, socioeconomic position and any other way we tend to label people, are all irrelevant. As we live our life according to God's will, we draw closer to bringing the kingdom to completion.

My practice of ministry has affected me deeply with regard to the Kingdom of God. I have witnessed in a sanctuary hate and rancor towards others who are different. I have seen pride because a church does a great deal of mission work without understanding acts of mercy versus those of justice and without understanding the need to preserve a person's dignity. There are two ways I have found to attempt to counter this behavior. First, I talk about it in small

groups, sermons and public prayer. Secondly, when I am involved in mission work, I have the opportunity to speak to people one on one and model with my own behavior. It is a slow and ongoing process, but one that is vital to our call as disciples of Christ. We have help people understand this present reality and provide them with real ways to participate in bringing the kingdom of God to earth.

(h) Resurrection and eternal life

My understanding of the Resurrection is that three days after Jesus was crucified and buried, he rose again in his physical body. The Resurrection means there is no reason to fear death. God has a plan for us to live in peace, love and harmony with God forever. Oden in his systematic theology work called *Classic Christianity* states, “The destiny of the righteous is eternal life in and with God.”¹ Eternal life with God is made possible by the Resurrection of Jesus.

Focusing on this understanding of the Resurrection and eternal life has been instrumental for me. An opportunity presented itself for a memorial service for a non-church member’s ex-husband. During the service, I did not diminish the grief the three boys were suffering at the sudden loss of their father. I acknowledged that, but I also turned their focus to the life they had shared with him. I was able to highlight for them his qualities and his legacy. He was a man of deep faith allowing them to be comforted by the knowledge that he rested with God. His life had been difficult with many demons. It was important to emphasize to his family that he was at peace with Jesus and no longer suffering. The resurrection makes that possible. The resurrection gives us hope for eternal life with God filled with love and peace.

2. How do you understand the following traditional evangelical doctrines: (a) repentance; (b) justification; (c) regeneration; (d) sanctification? What are the marks of the Christian life?

¹ (Oden, 833)

(a) Repentance - I understand repentance as a confession of sin, but more importantly a turning away from sin and turning back to God. Repentance entails a deep sorrow for what one has done that includes a change in character and behavior that is long term. Repentance should lead to a new life or transformation. Repentance carries with it a deep commitment of the heart and soul to turn back to God and live differently than before.

(b) Justification - I understand justification to be an act of grace, God's free gift that absolves us of our sins and guilt. We are made righteous, made right again in our relationship with God by virtue of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. We cannot earn justification. It is a free gift that is part of God's grace. God justifies us by forgiving and forgetting our sins.

(c) Regeneration - I understand regeneration to be that new life which we begin once we have been made right in our relationship with God. It is that transformation making you committed to live your life in a new and different way that no longer includes the sin, bad habits or old ways you turned away from.

(d) Sanctification - I understand sanctification to be that process by which we are made holy and set apart. It is by the gift of sanctifying grace and not our works that we are made holy and more like Jesus. Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit in us, a process that continues as we move toward perfection striving to be more like Jesus.

What are the marks of the Christian life?

The marks of a Christian life are the signs of growth in grace. They are the signs of transformation in a person as they move toward perfection seeking to be more selfless, more focused on God and on others. The mark of a Christian is a transformed will. Wesley calls it the new birth marked by faith, hope and love. It is when we desire to be, do and love as God is, does and loves.

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3. How has the practice of ministry informed your understanding of the nature and mission of the Church? What are its primary challenges today?

I understand the nature of the Church to be the body of Christ. The body has many parts and we each have our role in the mission of the church according to our call, gifts and graces. The mission of the church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”² This comes directly from the great commission, Jesus commanded that we “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:20) According to the Book of Discipline ¶1201, “Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit, the church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers, and the redemption of the world.”³ Believers worship in the local church and work together to do the work Jesus commanded. Runyon aligns the call defined in the Great Commission with the church when he states, “The church exists not only to meet the human need for life in community, but to carry out God’s ordinances on earth.”⁴

We make disciples by living in fellowship nurturing people to live as Christians through worship, the sacraments, spiritual disciplines, and other means of grace. We are then called to send people forth into the world as loving and just servants of Christ to comfort the sick, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, care for the stranger, free the oppressed and to work to develop social structures that align with the gospel.

The main challenges that I have seen in my ministry is that we have become very comfortable behind the walls of our churches. We expect the unchurched to come to us. We expect them to want what we have and just come seeking it. However, there are many other things in society vying for people’s attention. People today, in particular, millennials want to see an effect in their lives and they want to have an impact on the world. They do not want to sit in a

² (The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2012, 91)

³ Ibid, 143

⁴ (Runyon, 106)

Victorian era sanctuary singing 200 year old hymns, listening to a sermon that has no practical application in their lives. The challenge is finding ways to reach this generation and going to where they are instead of expecting them to come to us. This generation wants to serve and make a difference in the world. Along with this challenge there is a balancing act to also maintain the congregation that exists which includes those older generations for whom church is just what you do. There is a practical challenge of money as well. The older generations tend to donate more heavily and even identify the church in their wills. Younger generations do not give money to the church in the same way or for the same reasons. It is a challenge to balance energies pursuing the unchurched or the younger generations while maintaining the current congregation. However, in our connectional system we have the ability to share resources and experiences in order to better reach all segments of the population and meet them where they are.

4. The United Methodist Church holds that Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason are sources and norms for belief and practice, but that the Bible is primary among them. What is your understanding of this theological position of the Church, and how has your practice of ministry been affected by this understanding?

My understanding of this theological position is that first and foremost scripture is the primary source and authority of our faith. It is the core of our faith. There is no authority that can override the authority of God as it is revealed to us in scripture. The Bible is the inspired word of God. The Bible reveals to us what we need to know about the way of salvation. The Bible reveals God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit to us.

When we say the Bible is illumined by tradition we mean the Bible is illumined by those things or traditions in our Christian history that we value, for example, the teachings of Church fathers, such as Thomas Aquinas, Augustine and others, our hymns, or the liturgical year. God as revealed in the Bible continues to act even after the time of the apostles. By using tradition to illumine the Bible, we acknowledge that God did not leave us after the times of the New

Testament and that God has been present throughout the entire history of the Christian community. While we recognize that in Christianity there has been a great deal of corruption of God's plan and a distance from the church described in Acts, Methodists celebrate God's presence in our long Christian history that is part of our tradition. We embrace the ancient creeds such as the Nicene Creed and the Apostles Creed which unifies us with other Christian traditions and the early church.

We use our reason to read and interpret scripture. We use our reason to ask questions of faith and seek to understand God's will. God has gifted us with intellect and it is important for us to use this gift with the help of the Holy Spirit when we read scripture and discern its meaning for our lives.

Each of us has our own unique experience of life that becomes a lens or filter through which we also interpret scripture. It is hard to separate ourselves from our experience. Our experiences form us and informs how we look at scripture and how we relate to our own context, situation, and times.

One of the things that captivated me about the United Methodist Church, was this theological position on Scripture. It made sense to me. I came from a tradition where reading the Bible was not a big focus and questioning it was not encouraged or appreciated. In my ministry as I facilitate various Bible studies, I am able to bring all these aspects of the quadrilateral to the studies. Invariably, there are people around the table from a variety of traditions, perspectives and backgrounds. Our group covenants play an important role in creating a safe space for respectful conversations where we can still disagree, but treat one another with respect. I teach that God made us rational beings with the intellectual capacity to reason. It is important that when we study scripture we use this reason to discern what God is

saying. I introduce church traditions so that we understand of our history. I acknowledge the experience of those gathered, encouraging them to share this as it is a big part of the lens with which we filter our study of scripture.

5. How has the practice of ministry enriched your understanding of the meaning and significance of the sacraments?

I conduct the Baptism orientations for our families with children who are to be baptized.

It is important that they understand the sacrament and the vows they will be asked to take on behalf of their child. I explain prevenient grace and the beauty of God wooing us into a relationship before we even have an awareness of God which is why we can baptize infants and children. I explain that the child is now becoming a part of the Body of Christ. Baptism is an important first step in the Christian journey of the person to be baptized because in baptism they have a new identity, belonging to Christ.

When I assist at the Lord's Supper it is important for me to make eye contact in order to engage the person in the sacrament. I also try to make physical contact with them by just lightly grazing their hand. This affirms that we are part of a community sharing in the Lord's Supper. It also halts the assembly line feel to receiving communion. When I recite portions of The Great Thanksgiving, it is important to recite them in a way that engages the congregation. Intonation is important again to engage the congregation in the prayer and prevent the supper from becoming a spectator event.

The sacraments have always transformed me and taken me to a place where I know I am deeply in the presence of God. My ministry has motivated me to do all I can so that those I serve also know they are deeply in the presence of God during the sacraments.

b) Vocation

1. How has the experience of ministry shaped your understanding of your vocation as an ordained deacon?

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The more time I spend with people in ministry, the more I know I should be among the people. As an ordained deacon, my vocation is to educate others on justice ministries, and provide ways for them to explore these while equipping them to taking action. My vocation involves education in spiritual disciplines and other aspects of spiritual formation including scripture. My vocation also calls me to lead by example so that those I serve witness servant leadership and compassion. As an ordained deacon my whole life is curriculum for those I serve.

c) The Practice of Ministry

1. Do you offer yourself to be appointed by the bishop to service ministry?

Yes, absolutely I do. I believe that I have been called by God to the set apart ministry of the ordained. This belief causes me to surrender my life completely to God and to service within the Church. It is this belief in surrendering my life to God and the Church that motivates me to take early retirement from my secular job. I put my trust in God that I will be used as an instrument for God's work and I trust in God's provision. I also put my trust in the structure of the United Methodist Church. Since the bishop is charged with knowing the big picture of the conference where he or she is in residence, the bishop may see places of ministry for me that I am not necessarily be aware of.

2. Describe and evaluate your personal gifts for ministry and how they have resulted in fruitful ministry. What would be your areas of strength and areas in which you need to be strengthened in order to be more fruitful in ministry.

I have the gifts of teaching, faith and giving. I love to teach people about the Bible, God, spiritual disciplines, and ways to know and serve God. I am a teacher and a learner always seeking to know more and share more. I have a deep and burning desire for people to know how amazing God is and how much God loves them. My gifts of teaching and faith make me strong in this.

I have offered small groups on spiritual formation and co-led Day Aparts helping people to learn spiritual disciplines to enrich their relationship with God. I have sponsored people to

participate in the Walk to Emmaus which is a wonderful way to immerse people in all areas of their faith. One person whom I sponsored has a call to ministry and two others returned to become small group leaders. I am always looking within my small groups for the next small group leaders.

Another gift or area of strength is my ability to be vulnerable. I am not afraid to share my life with others. I think it is important that they know that my being clergy does not exempt me from the challenges or hardships of life. I give them my prayer concerns. I share my stories. By doing this they see my faith in action. This makes me relatable.

I think one area that I would like to strengthen is counseling. While we are not licensed counselors, I think it is helpful to be give people guidance when they come to you to discuss issues. It may come with experience, but I would like to strengthen my counseling skills.

3. For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness to the Christian gospel, and in consideration of your influence as an ordained minister, are you willing to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life; and to this end will you agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to physical health, intentional intellectual development, fidelity in marriage, celibacy in singleness, integrity in all personal relationships, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge of the love of God?

My response is a resounding “YES!” My understanding of this agreement means that I am surrendering my life to God completely. As a person who is committed to God in this way, I am held to a higher standard simply because my life becomes an example to others. This means that every aspect of my life has to be lived in a way that honors God. I have to honor God in the way I interact with my family and friends as well as strangers and all people.

I have to take care of myself mentally and emotionally in order to be able to do the work to which I am called. To this end I meet regularly with my spiritual mentors constantly talking through and discerning God’s will for me. I have to take care of myself physically in order to

have the energy to do God's work. I will continue working to reach a healthy weight and exercise regularly. The way I spend my money is also indicative of my priorities and choices. I am called to be a good steward of my resources. By example and personal testimony, I am able to teach others about generous giving and caring for the resources they have been given by God.

4. Provide evidence of your willingness to relate yourself in ministry to all persons without regard to race, color, ethnicity, national origin, social status, gender, sexual orientation, age, economic condition or disability.

In my small groups, there have been people who are old, young, rich, poor, Black, White, Latino, Asian, Lesbians and Homosexuals. I have gone to nursing homes to visit, do Bible study and offer worship. I have gone to feed and clothe the homeless. I have shared meals with those I served in a soup kitchen. I have worked with immigrants to become naturalized. I am called to serve all of God's children regardless of the categories society puts them in.

5. Will you regard all pastoral conversations of a confessional nature as a trust between the person concerned and God?

Absolutely! It is critical to provide a safe and sacred space to have these conversations. People need to know they can trust you not to betray their confidence. It takes courage for someone to approach a clergy person to unburden their sins or problems. You are God's agent in this scenario. It is important to represent God with integrity, honesty and trust. The people who come to you have this expectation of you and rightly so.

6. Provide evidence of experience in peace and justice ministries.

For three years, I conducted a Spanish Bible study with one person from our church's ESL program. I have been told that is not a good use of my time since all this energy is focused on one person when I could be spending that time with others. I am not sure I agree. In addition to a Bible Study, I have worked with this person for her to become a naturalized citizen, which she now is. We are working now on bringing her mother here from Peru. I have included her in my Annual Bible Study picnic at my home. This past year, this person has been attending

worship faithfully. She sits with me and my husband and I translate for her in big concepts or themes. I do not know how much she grasps or understands, but for some reason she is there every week. She goes to fellowship and has made acquaintances with some of the Anglo parishioners. The Spirit is moving in her. Justice is about making life around us right. What I do for this immigrant population is attempt to make life right for them.

1. Explain the threefold aspects of Wesleyan grace and how you have encountered these in your own ministry/life. Describe the Wesleyan view of grace (prevenient, justifying, sanctifying).

When I think back to the hours I spent on that orange sofa reading our Catholic Children's Bible, I think of prevenient grace. When I think of how as child I was fascinated by anything that had to do with God, I think of prevenient grace. All of these things that I thought were quirks were God wooing me into relationship with God.

For Roman Catholics the sacrament of penance is a big deal. However, I saw a lot of the priests that I knew growing up leave the priesthood, get married and have families. I often wondered what happened to the years of confessions they had held in secret before. Personally, I stopped participating in the sacrament at the age of 12. It didn't make sense to me when I could talk to God directly and be forgiven. When I became a Methodist and began to study Wesley's view of grace confession was only a part of it. It was more important to turn back to God and change my life. I have to remain in a right relationship with God. Justifying grace causes me to reflect on my life in a much deeper way beyond a list of sins. It also has changed my prayer life as I pray for help and guidance to continue to lead a transformed life. It is only through God's grace and the work of the Holy Spirit that I can remain committed heart and soul to this right relationship.

Sanctifying grace goes beyond the awareness of our sins and forgiveness. It is by sanctifying grace that we continue to grow in our knowledge of God. Sanctifying grace is God's

work in us transforming us to live according to God's will in ways that are pleasing to God as we strive toward perfection. Through sanctifying grace, we proceed toward reaching the image of God in which we were created and God's original intention. Sanctifying grace gives us a deeper awareness of God transforming us. I have had a keen sense of this in my ministry as old habits, ideas and feelings have fallen away to make me a new person that is less aligned with the world and more aligned with who God says I am.

2. Share an instance when you found yourself in ministry with someone whose theology was radically different from you own.

Bible study! There is a gentleman in my Bible Study who believes God chose every word in the Bible. He was in my Revelation study. All that imagery to him represented things that were going to happen in the future. I always provide my Bible Study groups with historical, political and socio-economic context. I often will bring in scholarly works to enhance or provide other perspectives and ideas. None of that moves this man from his position, which is fine. However, I love him dearly. He is a good soul. We agree to disagree. He will say "Well, Deb, you and I differ on that." I feel that is my responsibility to present all the views I can, not just those I agree with. I often will tell them "to chew the meat and spit out the bones." That is where our reason comes in. The rest is up to God.

3. Describe how your image of God has changed over your journey. What has informed this?

I was Roman Catholic for 44 years. It is a male dominated and hierarchical denomination. The priests are called "Father", God is called "Father". Jesus, himself, referred to God as "Father". I never gave that a thought until I entered seminary. During orientation, we had a whole session that talked about not calling God, "father" or "him". We were told to never refer to God as male. Only Jesus, an actual historical figure could be referred to as male. This certainly took some getting used to especially in writing. A sentence with God in it three or four

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times seems awkward. I understand now that some people do not have good relationships with their earthly father and calling God, “Father” brings them a bad connotation of God. Now I often refer to God as Creator and use attributes that describe God such as Provider.

This has caused me to expand my image of God. Not thinking of God as father or male has made God bigger. It frees God of human limitations giving deeper meaning to the omnipotence of God. Thinking in this expanded way allows me to think in terms of all of God’s creation increasing my awe of God.

Polity:

1. Explain the role of deacons, elders, and local pastors in the UMC and how they are uniquely called and function in the church.

Deacons are called to Word, Service, Compassion and Justice to the community and a congregation. They act as a bridge between the world and the church. The bishop ordains them. They are called to servant leadership. Deacons provide leadership in the church life as teachers and proclaimers of the Word. They do this through leading Bible studies, small groups and preaching. They contribute to worship and currently assist the elders in administering the Sacraments, however, General Conference of 2016 has authorized bishops to grant sacramental authority to deacons within their context. Deacons are an integral part in the formation and nurture of disciples as they may teach new member classes or spiritual disciplines. They work within the congregations to lead and equip its members in their servant ministry. They conduct marriages and funerals. Deacons are also called to be out in the world where they work to raise awareness of the needs of others. They serve with compassion those who are on the fringes of society, the needy, neglected and the marginalized. In addition to the local church, deacons can work in a variety of settings or roles such as chaplains, nurses, in drug rehabilitation centers, women's shelter and much more. Deacons itinerate in that they go where they are called to ministry seeking out their own appointments and then the bishop approves it as an appointment.

Elders are called to Word, Sacraments, Order, and Service. They are called to preach and teach the Word, provide pastoral care and counsel, to administer the sacraments and order the life of the church in order for it to perform service, mission and ministry all in the charge where they serve. The bishop also ordains them. Elders are appointed by the bishop and are committed to go where they are appointed to serve.

The bishop does not ordain Licensed Local Pastors (LLP). However, they are appointed by the bishop to serve in a particular charge. In this charge, a licensed local pastor will preach,

conduct divine worship and perform all the duties of a pastor. In this charge only, the LLP may administer the sacraments. They must have a license for pastoral ministry. (§315, 332, 328, ¶329)

2. What is the process for setting a pastor's salary? Who can change it, and when can it be changed?

The pastor's salary is recommended by the SPRC or PPR then it is set by the charge conference with the consultation of the district superintendent. There is also in each annual conference a commission on equitable compensation that recommends base compensation for clergy. If it becomes necessary for the pastor's compensation to change, it should be done at the end of the conference appointment year. However, it can be done at other points in the appointment year with a charge conference held for this purpose. (§247.13, ¶624.1, 625)

3. The Education committee wants to update the curriculum being taught in the Christian Education program. What specific guidance does the Book of Discipline give you in dealing with the issue?

The Book of Discipline provides guidance by indicating that the Church School Superintendent or the Coordinator of Children's Ministry should work closely with the clergy and other staff members involved in Children's ministry to determine the educational needs and thus the curriculum ensuring they are based on biblical, theological, and educational foundations that are consistent with the Doctrinal Standards and General Rules of the UMC. (§253-256, 1108, 1109.1, 1109.7)

4. You have discovered a need in the community for a soup kitchen, and wish to recommend that this be a priority for the congregation, using the facilities of the church. What parties and processes need to be involved?

If there is not already a Missions Team, Committee or Coordinator, then one should be elected. This person and or team works with the church council, the pastor, the finance committee and other church leaders such as the Board of Trustees to address the needs that have been identified, as well as the impact of this new ministry on the church, such as any financial

impact and the sustainability of the ministry. This team is responsible for researching opportunities and resources that are available locally as well as within the district and annual conference. They should utilize all that is at their disposal in order to bring the soup kitchen into the church as a new mission. (§253-254)

5. A constituent of your church comes to speak with you about their call to ministry. Describe the basic steps that are involved in seeking ordination.

First I would celebrate the news with this person, let us call her Mary. I would affirm Mary and ask her to tell me about her call. I would tell Mary to talk to the pastor and to make an appointment with the District Superintendent (DS). I would also tell Mary to read *The Christian as Minister*. This gives Mary some concrete first steps to move her forward.

I would then explain at a higher level the rest of the process letting her know that she will need to prepare a statement of her call and in writing ask the DS to admit her to the candidacy process. This will allow for a candidacy mentor to be assigned to her as well as register her with GBHEM. Mary and her mentor will study the Candidacy Guide book, *Answering the Call* together.

Mary will meet with the church's PPR Committee which will interview her in order to determine whether they will give their support to her to move forward. Once this approval is obtained, Mary's request to answer the call to ordained ministry is brought before the charge conference for a vote. There must be a written ballot and approval must be by a 2/3 vote.

Mary's first milestone is to become a certified candidate. She will request a meeting with the District Committee on Ordained Ministry (DCOM) and submit to them written responses to §310.1d in addition to the questions in §310.2a. The DCOM, votes whether to approve Mary for certification. This must be a ¾ majority of those present from the committee. At this point if Mary is not attending a United Methodist Seminary she will be encouraged to do so.

I would let Mary know that she must have a psychological assessment done as well as background and credit checks. She will meet with the DCOM for not less than 12 months and continues meeting with them annually until all the requirements of the certified candidate are met. Mary cannot exceed 12 years as a certified candidate. The DCOM will recommend Mary to the Board of Ordained Ministry (BoOM) for commissioning as a Provisional Member after she has demonstrated her gifts for ministries of service and ministry and completed educational requirements. Mary must also participate in an Orientation to Ministry that is held by the annual conference.

Mary will have to prepare written responses to questions from the Book of Discipline as well as others requested by the BoOM. Subsequent to submission of this documentation, she will participate in oral examinations in four areas, Practice of Ministry, Theology, Polity, and Preaching/Worship. Following these examinations, the Board votes on whether to submit Mary before the clergy session at the next Annual Conference. She must be approved by a 2/3 vote of the BoOM. All those who have been approved by the BoOM are then voted upon at the clergy session. They are the commissioned as Provisional Members in a service of commissioning.

To become Full Members of the Connection and be ordained, Mary will spend two years in full time ministry. Mary will respond to both written and oral examinations before the BoOM as well as prepare a project of fruitfulness. The Board then votes on the candidate and submits those whom they have approved for a vote in the clergy session at the next annual conference. They must be approved by a 2/3 vote of the clergy in full connection. Those who have been approved for full membership and ordination are then ordained by the bishop in a service of ordination. (§ 310-313, 324-330, 333-335)

6. Describe the general structures of the Annual Conference and how each body functions.

The Annual Conference is comprised of clergy membership and lay membership. It consists of clergy members in full connection, provisional members, associate and affiliate members as well as full and part-time local pastors under appointment. The lay membership consists of professing members elected by each charge or local church. There is a lay member for each clergy person in the charge, including deacons in full connection for whom the charge is their primary appointment. The conference president of the UMW and UMM, the conference lay leader and district lay leaders are also included in the membership of the annual conference. The annual conference also has a chancellor. The annual conference is presided over by the bishop in residence.

Each annual conference is responsible to focus and guide the mission and ministry of the United Methodist Church. This is done by Connectional Ministries. Each annual conference also must have a director of communications or other person who is designated to focus and guide the communications ministry within the conference.

Within the annual conference there are several boards and agencies that are required. The majority of them mirror the General Boards and Committees that exist at the denominational level. They function similarly to those at the denominational level, and use the guidelines and policies set by these general boards and committees to do their work. The annual conference has a Council on Finance and Administration, a Board of Church and Society, a Board of Discipleship, a Conference Board of Laity, a Conference of Global Ministries, a Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry, a Board of Ordained Ministry, a Board of Pensions, a Board of Trustees, a Commission on Archives and History, a Commission on Religion and Race, a Commission on the Status and Role of Women, as well as both a United Methodist Women and United Methodist Men organization. The annual conference also has a committee on Native

American Ministry and one for Youth Ministry. The annual conference shall also have a committee on ethnic local church concerns to keep the vision of the conference's ethnic churches in the focus of the conference. The conference must also have an Administrative Review Committee and a Conference Committee on Episcopacy. (§602.1, .4, .6, .8, 608, 609, 612, 629.4, 630.1, 631, 632, 1633, 634, 635.2a, 1, r, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 643, 644, 2103, 647, 648)

7. Describe the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of the United Methodist Church.

The legislative branch of the United Methodist Church is the General Conference. The General Conference meets every four years. This is the only body that has the authority to officially speak for the United Methodist Church. This is the body that is responsible for the Book of Discipline, which contains our rules and laws. It also provides our hymnal and order of worship. The Judicial Council is the highest judicial body of the United Method Church. This is the body that determines the constitutionality of the actions or rulings that come out of the General Conference. It is also the final court of appeal in the church's judicial system. Lastly, our executive branch resides in the Council of Bishops which meets at least annually. It is comprised of all the bishops, both active and retired in the United Methodist Church. This council plans for the general oversight and promotion of the worldly and spiritual interests of the entire Church as well as carrying into effect the rules, regulations and responsibilities set forth by the General Conference. (§502, 509, 2601, 47)

8. What is your understanding of the theology behind Shared Ministries giving (apportionments)?

My basic understanding of the theology of shared giving is simply that our mission as United Methodists is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. This happens on several levels from the local church to the denominational level globally because we

have a connectional system. As Christians we must work to obtain the funding needed to do God's work. It is like tithing. We are called to give generously to our churches so they can do the work and ministry they are called to do which includes the church's "tithing" to the conference in order to fund the agencies of our annual conferences allowing the conference to "tithing" to the other bodies of the whole church for their work and ministry. It is our responsibility to support the Church. We give back to God from what God has provided to us. "Payment in full of these apportionments by local churches is the first benevolent responsibility of the church." (§247.14)

9. You have an idea for a unique form of ministry. How does the Book of Discipline guide us in seeking affirmation for ministries that are beyond the local church? What is the role of extension ministry in the life of the Church?

The Book of Discipline indicates that the person who feels they are called to a specialized ministry beyond the local church and seeks an appointment in this area must submit a written statement to the BoOM and the cabinet. This statement should describe in detail the proposed setting for this ministry including their sense of calling to this specialized ministry. The statement should also describe their gifts and include evidence of God's grace for it. They should also describe how this new ministry fulfills their ordination vows. This should be submitted no later than 120 days before the desired appointment to the setting that has been proposed. Once the cabinet and the BoOM recommend this appointment and new ministry, it must be confirmed by the clergy members of the annual conference. This must be by a 2/3 vote.

In the case of deacons, many of them are in specialized ministries as their primary appointments. Since deacons are called to Compassion and Justice in addition to Word and Service, very often deacons are appointed beyond the local church. They are called to extend the witness and service of the love of Jesus to both the church and the community. Extension ministry does that when an elder is appointed beyond the local church. It extends the witness

and service of Christ's love beyond the local church, to places like hospitals, hospice facilities, nursing homes, the military, police or fire departments and many other organizations that are not the church. (344.4d, 337.3b)

10. In what ways does your upbringing, your cultural context, your personal experience shape your understanding of our polity.

I was raised in home that was neat and orderly. There were rules to follow and structure. This helped things run smoothly and it impacted how we interacted. We knew our roles within the household. Culturally, I come from a context where respect for authority is taught. I was taught to follow rules and respect those in authority including teachers, priests, etc. Catholic education taught me order as well. I understand order to be necessary and our polity provides that. There is a certain amount of comfort in knowing there is a source available as reference when a variety of situations, events, or circumstances arrive. Our Book of Discipline does not cover every single possibility, but it is quite thorough and provides a great amount of detail for many of the things that are experienced in the church. John Wesley was orderly and methodical. I believe he intended to provide as much guidance as possible for people to know how to be in ministry and how to live their lives. Our polity reflects that desire. I understand our polity to be the rules and guidelines we have in order to work in ministry together and to know how to live in community with one another as we strive to bring the Kingdom of God here on earth.

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Biographical Statement

Debra A. De Vos

I was born on September 18, 1962 in New York. My mother, Anna, was 31, a homemaker who would later work with Catholic Charities as a social worker. My father, Raymond, was 32, a garment cutter in the Fashion District. My brother, Jose, was 11 ½ when I was born. I also have a younger brother, Richard. We lived in the South Bronx. We were Roman Catholic.

My first memory of myself is of me sitting on an orange sofa reading our family children's Bible over and over. I attended Catholic school through third grade. When we moved to Jersey City in 1971, I attended public school and catechism classes. I was even the only student in the 8th grade class after being confirmed in 6th grade. I attended an all-girls Catholic High School, by choice. I entered college an Elementary education major and came out an accountant, an odd detour. However, I met my future husband at my internship in the accounting department. We got married on September 13, 1986. On July 14, 1991, our daughter, Rachael, was born.

I was very devoted and active in my church. I longed to be a lector and read scripture in the Mass, but as a divorced woman, I could not. God placed on my heart the desire to study the Bible academically, but as a single mother with a young daughter and a long commute, it was not the right time. I wanted to study the Bible with others but could not during the day. An internet search yielded a Sunday evening Bible study at Trinity United Methodist church in Hackettstown called Disciple.

I took Disciple classes and every other small group study that interested me. I began attending services. I split my time, my offerings and talents. I got involved in ministries, from the coffee and prayer ministries to scripture reader. After two years, I became a member.

I moved on to lead Lenten groups, other small groups and Bible studies. In the fall of 2010, I started studying at Drew Theological School. That same fall, I co-led a 28-week spiritual formation class called *Companions in Christ* as well as participated in a 25-week mentoring program our pastors held. I mentored with Rev Eunice Vega-Perez.

During that year, it became clear that I want to help people discover the Bible. I want to help them to know God and help them become strong disciples. I want to help them form deeper relationships with God by learning to apply spiritual disciplines in their lives. I recognize God has plans for me beyond teaching as I discern further because also on my heart is the desire to help people who leave their countries and families to come here to provide a better life for their loved ones. I want to help them through the documentation process in any way I can.

My call began when I was a little girl with me very unaware. Confirmation came from my devout Roman Catholic mother. I leave you with this story. I called my mother and I told her I was called by God to become an ordained deacon. She only said, "Oh that's very interesting." A few days later, I went to see her. I was at the table when suddenly; she said to me, "I have a secret to tell you. I never told anybody this except a priest." I thought, 'What secret could my 79- year-old mother possibly have? And do I really want to hear it?'

She began, "When I was married for 10 years and your brother was almost 9, I went to the church and I prayed to God. I told Him, if He gave me a daughter that I would give her back to Him." I said, "Ma! That's Hannah and Samuel!" She continued, "Nothing happened until three years later. Then, I had you. But then years later you got married! I went to the priest and asked him 'What do I do now? How can I keep my promise if she's married?'" The priest told me, "God will get her back in His way." I exclaimed, "Ma! Do you realize God has done that? You kept your promise. Not the way you thought it would happen, but God's way. The priest was right!"

Year	Professional	Lay Ministry	Education	Other
2016	<p>*ADP, Inc. (Now ADP, LLC) Lead QA Engineer</p> <p>*Appointed as Associate Pastor to Trinity UMC in Hackettstown,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predominant role is coordination of Small Group ministry • Preaching Rotation • Pastoral Visitation • Working on New Member Development • Co-Led Summer Day Apart • Midnight Run/Breakfast Runs 			<p>*Resource for Small Groups and Discipleship of GNJAC</p> <p>*Attended first Bishop's Convocation.</p> <p>*Skylands Walk to Emmaus – Women's Spring Walk – Served on Clergy Team</p> <p>*New member of GNJAC Board of Discipleship</p>
2015	<p>*ADP, Inc. (Now ADP, LLC) Lead QA Engineer</p> <p>*Commissioned a Provisional Deacon</p> <p>*Appointed as Associate Pastor to Trinity UMC in Hackettstown and UMC of the Rockaways (both appointments are missional)</p> <p>TUMC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predominant role is Small 			<p>*Resource for Small Groups and Discipleship of GNJAC</p> <p>*Participated in the Conference Hispanic Epiphany Worship Service</p>

Year	Professional	Lay Ministry	Education	Other
	<p>Group ministry filling lay chair role until a replacement found</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preaching Rotation • Pastoral Visitation <p>UMCR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small group coordination and leadership. • Hispanic Ministry • Preaching • Participated in the Team Vital pilot as part of the clergy team for the UMC of the Rockaways 			
2014	ADP, Inc. (Now ADP, LLC) Lead QA Engineer	<p>*Certified Candidate</p> <p>*Small Group Leadership Team – Lay Chair</p> <p>*Preaching Rotation</p> <p>*Small Group Leader (Disciple 1, Latino Bible Study, Covenant Bible Study)</p> <p>*Pastoral Visitation</p> <p>*Scripture Reader 9:15 Service</p> <p>*Liturgist</p> <p>*Hispanic Ministry at UMC of the Rockaways</p>	<p>Graduated Drew University with a Masters of Arts in Ministry and a specialization in Biblical studies</p>	<p>Skylands Walk to Emmaus – Women’s Fall Walk – Served on Team</p>

Year	Professional	Lay Ministry	Education	Other
		*Resource for Director of Small Groups and Discipleship of GNJAC		
2013		*Small Group Leadership Team – Lay Chair *Preaching Rotation *Small Group Leader (Disciple 1) *Pastoral Visitation *Scripture Reader 9:15		Moved to Hackettstown, NJ Skylands Walk to Emmaus – Women’s Fall Walk
2012		*Small Group Leadership Team – Lay Chair *Small Group Leader (Lenten small groups, Journey through the Bible) *Scripture Reader 9:15		Married Robert J. De Vos Resigned position with the Crest Board of Property Owners at Panther Valley
2011		*Small Group Leadership Team – Lay Chair * Small Group Leader (Lenten small groups, Companions in Christ) *Scripture Reader 9:15	*Transferred to Master of Arts in Ministry with Biblical Studies concentration *25- week mentoring program with Associate Pastor continued	Bristol Glen Spiritual Life Scholarship recipient
2010		*Declared Candidacy for ministry, approved by Church *Small Group Leadership Team –	*Enrolled at Drew Theological School as MA in Biblical Studies, *25-	Vice President of the Board for the Crest property owners at Panther Valley

Year	Professional	Lay Ministry	Education	Other
		Lay Chair * Small Group Leader (Lenten small groups, Companions in Christ) *Scripture Reader 9:15	week mentoring program with Associate Pastor	
2009		*Many Faces Under One Lord (Diversity/Inclusivity team) *ESL program (English as a Second Language) child care *Small Group Leader – Gospel of John *Lenten group leader *Small Group Ministry team member *Coffee hour ministry *Prayer ministry *Scripture reader 9:15		Treasurer of the Board for the Crest property owners at Panther Valley

[Back to the Candidate Profile](#)

Year	Professional	Lay Ministry	Education	Other
2008		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Many Faces Under One Lord (Diversity/Inclusivity team) *ESL program (English as a Second Language) child care *Small Group Leader –Who does the Bible say Jesus is? *Small Group Ministry team member *Coffee hour ministry *Prayer ministry *Scripture reader 9:15 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Moved to Allamuchy, NJ -1/08 *Ended Mary Kay Beauty Consultant business
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Began working at ADP, Inc. QA Engineer * Robert Half Technology, Tiffany and Company Parsippany, NJ, Quality Assurance Lead (As a Consultant) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Many Faces Under One Lord (Diversity/Inclusivity team) *ESL program (English as a Second Language) child care *Coffee hour ministry *Prayer ministry *Scripture reader 9:15 *Co-led a Women in Faith Book Study *TLC Board member – Per diem child care facility run by the church 		

Year	Professional	Lay Ministry	Education	Other
2006		*Coffee hour ministry *Prayer ministry *Scripture reader 9:15 *TLC Board member – Per diem child care facility run by the church		*Became a member of Trinity UMC in Hackettstown, NJ *Marriage annulled by the RC church *Moved to Mount Arlington, NJ - 7/06
2005	Apprise Software, Inc., Bridgewater, NJ, Software Quality Assurance Tester	*Coffee hour ministry *Prayer ministry *Scripture reader 9:15		Moved to Hackettstown, NJ-3/05
2004		*Coffee hour ministry *Prayer ministry * RC Church - Children’s Ministry – K-2 grade children are taken out of the Mass and the gospel is shared with them at their level		Began attending worship at Trinity UMC bi-monthly and splitting time and offerings with RC church
2003	Barbara A. Tanfara, Esq., Hope, NJ, Legal Secretary	RC Church - Children’s Ministry – K-2 grade children are taken out of the Mass and the gospel is shared with them at their level		*Began attending Disciple 1 at Trinity UMC in Hackettstown, NJ *Became a Sales Director with Mary Kay Cosmetics earning the use of a free car.

Year	Professional	Lay Ministry	Education	Other
2002		Children’s Ministry – K-2 grade children are taken out of the Mass and the gospel is shared with them at their level		
2001		Children’s Ministry – K-2 grade children are taken out of the Mass and the gospel is shared with them at their level		
2000	Party City Corporation Rockaway, NJ, Quality Assurance Control Manager	*CCD (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) teacher for grade six * Substitute teacher for grades seven and eight. * Children’s *Ministry – K-2 grade children are taken out of the Mass and the gospel is shared with them at their level		
1999		Member of the Religious Board of Education which administered the Catechism program		Divorced from Michael G. Dauber
1998		Member of the Religious Board of Education which administered the Catechism program		

Year	Professional	Lay Ministry	Education	Other
1997	*Prudential Insurance Company of America, Livingston, NJ, Quality Assurance Project Manager * Accenture (formerly Andersen Consulting) Client was ISI, Inc. (IT company of M&M Mars...now Master Foods) Florham Park, NJ, Senior Test Team Lead then Test Team Lead	Member of the Religious Board of Education which administered the Catechism program		Became a Mary Kay Beauty Consultant (self employed)
1996	Coopers and Lybrand, LLC, Parsippany, NJ QA Consultant	Member of the Religious Board of Education which administered the Catechism program		
1995				
1994				
1993				
1992				
1991				Daughter, Rachael M. Dauber born
1990				Became a member of St. Therese RC church, Succasunna, NJ
1989				Moved to Succasunna, NJ
1988				
1987	Mutual Benefit Life Insurance, Newark, NJ, Investment Accountant, QA Analyst, QA Manager			

Year	Professional	Lay Ministry	Education	Other
1986	*Aegis, Reinsurance, Investment Accountant *Archdiocese of Newark, Newark, NJ, Internal Auditor			Married to Michael G. Dauber
1985	Archdiocese of Newark, Newark, NJ, Internal Auditor		Graduated BS in Business with an Accounting concentration	Girl Scout Leader
1984	Geo M. Ruddy, Salvors and Appraisers, Linden NJ, Accountant (Internship to FTE)			Girl Scout Leader
1983				Girl Scout Leader
1982				Girl Scout Leader
1981			Entered Jersey City State College, now New Jersey Jersey City University	Girl Scout Leader
1980			Graduated from Academy of St, Aloysius, Jersey City, NJ	Girl Scout Leader

DUBUISSON, KARLINE

- 1) Sermon
- 2) Bible Study
- 3) Practice of Ministry
- 4) Theology, Call, & Doctrine
- 5) Polity
- 6) Biographical Statement
- 7) Chronological Resume



NOTES

Karline Dubuisson

Date: October 09, 2016

Title: “The Letter I”

Scripture: Luke 17: 11-19

Composition of the Congregation

The United Methodist Church of Spring Valley is located in an urban industrial/blue collar community with a diverse immigrant heritage in Spring Valley, NY. While we are a diverse congregation, most our members are of African ancestry from Caribbean backgrounds. We also have African Americans, Africans, and European Americans among our membership.

On the Sunday the sermon was preached, seventy-five people were in attendance including children and four visitors. The ages range from nine months to ninety years old. Most of the members have been lifelong active members and hold key positions in the church.

The congregation is composed of individuals from diverse socio-economics and educational backgrounds. Some members are successful nurses, lawyers, doctors who are solidly in the middle rank of local society. Several others are hard workers from the lower and lower middle class. Many are retired.

Together, we celebrate all of who we are—in worship and in our ministries in which we have been called to serve.

Karline Dubuisson

Sermon: “The Letter I”

Luke 17: 11-19

What is the difference between the words THINK and THANK? It’s the letter I.

I want to tell about the story of the ten lepers. I know many have heard and read it, but oftentimes it is read quickly. No one can deny the story of the ten lepers as a testimony to the healing power of Jesus Christ. But it’s more than that. Today, let us look at this story in a different perspective.

The story begins with ten men who have the most horrible disease of their day: leprosy. The physical consequences of leprosy are atrocious. Leprosy attacks the body, skin sores marred and disfigured the body, damaged limbs and body parts. Leprosy leads to something more terrible— affecting the nerves, which leads to a loss of sensation in the endings. The disease can take 30 years to run its course, and in that span, fingers, toes and entire limbs can simply fall off.

It is an impossible task trying to imagine what it was like 2,000 years ago, when medical treatment as we know it today was not present. Even with medical, social, technological, and religious advances, certain illnesses can still evoke such fear that cause the person suffering to be isolated and shunned by others. Those dying of AIDS suffer from similar type of neglect and isolation.

The emotional pain of a leper, however, must have been even worse than the physical pain. Lepers were outcasts from society. They were removed from their family and their community. There could be no contact with their loved ones. Spouses were not allowed to kiss each other goodbye for fear that the other spouse would too become afflicted.

In addition to being ostracized, lepers were further left to feel humiliation as they had to wear torn clothing, let their hair hang loose, and cry, ‘Unclean, unclean!’ to warn people of their infectious presence. They were not allowed to enter towns or to mix with people. If they came too close, people were allowed to throw stones at them.

It is not strange that Jesus met this group of ten lepers. Since they couldn't mix with other people, they formed their own groups; they traveled together, looking for food, begging for assistance from far away, yelling in loud voices, both from the need to warn others, and to beg for help.

Jesus Welcomes All

Can you imagine what it would have been like to have been removed from friends and family for a lifetime, and to have been forced to publicize that removal on a daily basis? It must have been horrible. For many, being sick, keeping away from loved ones, ostracized by their community, was a death sentence. This is also true for those who feel ostracized from our own community, most notably, the recent movements of 'Black Lives Matter' shining the spotlight on racial injustice where a group of people feel disrespected, undignified, discriminated, and unequal. Some things never change, do they? We still tend to ostracize those we don't understand. We judge other cultures and other customs as strange.

And yet, we shout from the top of our lungs that Jesus welcomes everyone. Yes, Jesus welcomes everyone no matter the race, color, gender, economic and social status, or sexual orientation. There are no dimensions of inequality with Jesus. Jesus accepts all those who have been neglected by society. No matter who you are, where you are in your life's journey, Jesus welcomes you. This means everyone, not just the people we agree with. We may think differently, hope differently, vote differently but here in this community, on Sundays, we can sit next to each other and feel loved, be loved for who we are, who we hope to be and worship God together. That's the gift of welcome we should offer to all. Welcome all as Jesus welcomes all, even the lepers.

Walk In Faith

The lepers called, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!' (17:13). Jesus said to them, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests' (17:14). Priests diagnosed leprosy—that was one of their jobs. When you

were suspected of having leprosy, the Bible required you to go to the priest. If the priest said that you had leprosy, you had to leave town. If you thought that you were healed, you saw the priest again. If he said that you were healed, you could come back into the town. So Jesus said, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.' And then the Bible says, 'As they went, they were cleansed!'

As they headed off in search of a priests, on their way, they were healed. It wouldn't have taken them long to recognize the healing. Their skin that had been covered with deep and ugly sores eating away at the flesh would begin to dry off. Their skin cleared, and the tiny forearm hairs would turn from snow white to brown. As they walked, their missing hands, toes and fingers would reappear. Legs were back, healthy, whole, complete and they began to walk straight again.

They would have recognized the healing immediately. They would look at one another and they would break into cheering madness. They would race off in the distance, not believing that the nightmare was finally over. Finally, they were going home to their loved ones, their children, their community.

What we often miss in the story is, however, for the miracle to happen, these men had to start walking in faith before their circumstances had to change. Jesus told them to go to the priest. Jesus did not heal them before he sent them their way. Jesus did not say; you would be healed once you are on your way.

Is there a lesson for us? Absolutely! There are no conditions attached when it comes to God. We shouldn't wait until our problems are over to start walking in faith. We cannot say, 'Lord, as soon as there's enough money, I will follow.' We cannot pray, 'Lord, if you'll just solve this issue in my family, I'll start to go to church.' We cannot put conditions on God! Instead, God places a demand for faith before anything changes.

I Think, Therefore I Thank

The lepers rejoiced. They were well; they were no longer outcasts. Their death sentence was lifted; they could go home. But first, they must get a priest to pronounce them healed. As they ran to find the priests, one of the lepers stopped. He thought about it and realized what has just happened. He thought I have something more important even than finding a priest. Jesus had healed him; he must thank Jesus. And so, he did.

There's a difference between the one who returned and the nine who did not. The one stopped and thought, he returned and offered thanks. The difference is the letter I. I think; therefore, I thank.

As the one leper throws himself at Jesus' feet, Jesus' response to him seems puzzling. He sounds almost as if he is rebuking the one man who did the right thing: 'Weren't ten cleansed? But where are the nine?' (17:17) But Luke says that Jesus had directed his comments to the healed leper 'and to those around listening.' Jesus was talking to the crowd. Listen to him again: 'Weren't ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there none found who returned to give glory to God, except this stranger?' A Samaritan. (17:17-18).

Jesus made two points: First, only one man bothered to say thanks. Second, the good guy was a Samaritan. He wasn't rebuking the Samaritan. Evidently, Jesus' last words to the man: 'Get up, and go your way. Your faith has healed you' (17:19) made him out to be a hero. In that, the nine receives only physical healing. The healing, the one received is a complete physical and spiritual healing. He is not only healed physically but he is also saved. Why? Because he stopped, he thought and returned to thank Jesus.

But what does this scripture have to do with us? Obviously, if our flesh is rotting off our bones and Jesus heals us, we should give thanks. But that doesn't happen every day, does it? But this story is not just the story of a leper; It is our story as well. This scripture is about thankfulness, and

we need to remember to thank God for God's gifts, great and small. That is no easy lesson, but it is an important one. Vance Havner says:

'Our biggest problem in the church today is this vast majority of Sunday morning Christians who claim to have known the Master's cure, and who return not ... to thank Him by presence, prayer, testimony and support of His church. The whole Christian life is one big 'Thank You,' the living expression of our gratitude to God for His goodness. But we take Him for granted and what we take for granted—we never take seriously.'¹

Conclusion

In 2009, I visited Haiti. I met many poor families, sick individuals, unemployed men and women. None of them had the slightest idea how they would provide their families on a daily basis. Yet, they don't take God's love and grace for granted. They were grateful for what they had and what were given to them, whether it was food, water, money, gift, or a hug. They would smile and say, "Merci or merci beaucoup." [Thank you or thank you so much!] They were very thankful.

The luxurious life I have here in America made me forget what it was to live in Haiti. The trip reminded me that what I have is because of God's grace. Now, even in my busy day, in this busy culture, I learn to stop, think and say thanks. As I turn on the light, drink clean water, warm shelter and food, I stop to thank God.

I realize and perhaps the lesson for us is that, the richer we are, the more difficult it is to remember to be thankful. If that is the case, this morning let us stop, let us think, let us return to thank God for God's many blessings. Let us follow the example of this one leper—and to give thanks for God's gifts in our lives, whether great and small. Amen

¹ Vance Havner in The Vance Havner Quote Book. Christianity Today, Vol. 31, no. 17

Karline Dubuisson

Order of Worship

Detail the theological significance of each act of worship. Describe what is happening and why it occurs where it does in the service.

Prelude Music: A praise hymn or contemporary gospel music—upbeat or slow— is sung by the choir as they process from the back of the sanctuary to the choir loft to set the desired worship atmosphere. The prelude is a reminder to worshippers that we enter a holy space by quieting ourselves and preparing for worship.

Gathering and Praise: The service begins with a call to worship calling our attention and signaling us to focus on God. It reminds us why God is praiseworthy and deserving of our worship. A hymn is immediately followed allowing the congregants to express their love, awe, admiration for, thanks, and worship of God.

Before the opening prayer, individuals from the pew share their gratitude, testimonials, and prayer concerns, followed by the pastoral prayer. Leading the congregants into an awareness of the immediate presence of God, the pastoral prayer is prayed both for and on their behalf—to lift the joys and concerns of the people. While the prayer assumes our absolute dependence on a God who is far beyond us and deep within us, it also expresses the general theme of the celebration to follow. At the end of the prayer, the pastor pronounces God’s assurance of pardon over God’s people—the announcement of God’s great forgiveness. The purpose is to bring joy in the heart of the congregants. Together we recite “The Lord’s Prayer” to affirm and honor God’s sovereignty, righteousness, and majesty.

Announcements and Welcome: Announcements are vitally important, in that they inform, stimulate and encourage congregants and visitors to participate in the happenings of the church. It

is important that everyone at our church be acknowledged each week—especially new guests. The welcome begins with the greeters at the church door, during and after service.

Tithes and Offerings: Tithing and other proportional giving are spiritual disciplines that help us put God first in our lives. Throughout scripture, we are reminded of the importance of giving back a portion of what God has so generously provided. Before the offering, a stewardship moment is shared with the congregation. Afterwards an offertory prayer is offered to thank God for God's blessings and to be used for God's work.

Sermon: A thematic/sermonic hymn, oftentimes, a preview of what to expect in the sermon, is sung followed by the reading of the scriptures. The readings shape the rest of the worship service. Reading of the scriptures reminds us that the Bible is for all of us to read and interpret and provides an opportunity for God to speak, to build up, and to sanctify the hearers in the faith. Through the sermon, the Word of God is delivered to the congregants to faithfully explain what it says, make clear its meaning and application in today's environment. After the sermon, an invitational prayer is followed by extending an invitation to individuals who would like to come forward for prayer. This prayer often takes the form of intercessory prayer that pleads with God for the needs of others.

Commission and Blessings: A closing hymn is sung to uplift and remind congregants of the theme of the service followed by the benediction. The benediction is a pronouncement of God's blessing upon God's people who have gathered together in God's name. With God's presence among them, they may depart with the assurance that God has indeed been amongst their midst.

Why did you choose the hymns used in the context of service?

I carefully and intentionally choose the hymns making sure the words and mood reinforce the overall theme of the service. Our hymns are both our gift and our statement of gratitude to the One we worship. The hymns chosen help to glorify God, edify the church, develop the spirit of unity

and to teach content which would reinforce the teaching of Biblical truth being preached that day, and move hearts toward Christ.

What was the purpose of the sermon?

The purpose of the sermon was to challenge us to have a thankful heart and to learn to live with gratitude. From the story of the ten lepers, we learned that we must intentionally stop, think and thank God for things great and small.

Does the Order of Worship help deliver that theme?

Yes, it does. The hymns, prayers, scripture, and sermon reflect upon the theme. The congregants may not recall everything about that service. Prayerfully, parts of it will surface from either their conscious or sub-conscious mind, in their thoughts, conversations, and daily lives in the coming week.

LiturgistD. Graham
ReaderClass of Thomas
GreetersClass of Hannah
Fellowship HourUMW

MusicianAxel Belohoubek

NEXT WEEK

Scriptures:

Old Testament: Joel 2:23-32
New Testament: 2 Timothy 4: 6-18
Gospel: Luke 18: 9-14

LiturgistP. Osborne
ReaderClass of Hannah
GreetersClass of Thomas
Fellowship HourBread of Life

OUR PURPOSE

“Disciples Transforming the World - Through Presence”

“Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by proclaiming the good news of God's grace and by living out Jesus' command to love God and neighbor”

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TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

October 09, 2016 - 10:30am

“Proclaiming the good news of God's grace by living out Jesus' command to love God and neighbor”

(This is the day that the LORD has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.)

***PROCESSIONAL** “My Life Is In You, Lord” TFWS 2032

***CALL TO WORSHIP** (*Responsively*)

L: By faith, God makes us whole. With thanksgiving, we witness to God's wonderful work in our lives.

P: We believe God touches our lives with innumerable blessings. But our thanksgiving has not been as audible as it ought to be.

L: When Jesus healed ten lepers, only one returned to thank him. Which of the ten lepers is most convincing to you?

P: The thankful one, of course. May the thankfulness of our hearts come to our lips, and convince others of what God has done for us.

L: Let us, then, give thanks to God for God's steadfast love and faithfulness.

P: Let us worship God with thanksgiving!

*HYMN: “How Great Thou Art” UMH 77

A TIME OF SHARING

Testimonials, Praise Notes, Prayer Requests

HYMN “I Love The Lord, He Heard My Cry” Insert
Pastoral Prayer/The Lord's Prayer

ANNOUNCEMENTS & WELCOME

PRESENTATION OF TITHES AND THANK OFFERINGS

“The Lord is Blessing Me Right Now”

A Moment for Mission Announcement



On Sunday, November 06, 2016 we will begin a churchwide study and worship emphasis called Treasure: A Stewardship Program on Faith and Money. The study will be based on Jesus' words, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21).

Over a period of four weeks, we will look at the many ways that our treasure (time, energy, money) affects our hearts. We will consider how financial challenges in our personal lives affect our relationships with people and with God. We will see how giving helps to determine the way we feel and act. If you have stress related to money or feel there may be more that God is calling you to do with your resources, this will be a helpful study.

At the end of the four weeks, we will have the opportunity to make personal commitments of giving to The United Methodist Church of Spring Valley for the coming year. All of us will receive commitment cards in the mail, and the cards will also be available on Sunday mornings. We can fill out these cards and bring them to worship on Sunday, November 27, 2016.

We look forward to an exciting month considering our treasure and God's treasure.

Schedule for the Treasure series

Week 1: Where Is Your Treasure? (Matthew 6:19-21)

Week 2: The Problem with Two Masters (Matthew 6:24)

Week 3: Giving Your Treasure Back to God (Matthew 6:1-6)

Week 4: Don't Worry 'Bout a Thing (Matthew 6:25-34)

Blessings,

Pastor Kay

October 09, 2016

"Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."

Subject:

Scripture:

Points: _____

How can I apply today's message:

Monday..... Jeremiah 31:27-34

Tuesday.....Psalm 121

Wednesday.....Genesis 32:22-31

Thursday.....Psalm 119

FridayLuke 18:1-8

Saturday.....2 Timothy 3:14-4:5

Daily readings are for your growth and daily devotions

Laity Sunday 2016 Celebration

October 16, 2016

Disciples Called to Action: Living Vital Worship



***OFFERTORY RESPONSE**

UMH #95

***OFFERTORY PRAYER**

UNISON

God who heals and restores us: Help us as we share this offering this morning to give with deeply grateful hearts, well aware of how richly we have been blessed. We would like to identify ourselves with the one leper who returned to you in gratitude; but we know too often we have been on the receiving end of your blessing, and we have failed to acknowledge the source in you and given you the thanks. Open our eyes and our minds so we might not miss the blessings you have bestowed and the voice to offer our appreciation – not just in our words, but also in our lives. We pray this in the name that is above all others, Jesus the Christ. Amen. (Luke 17:11-19)

Scripture:

Luke 17: 11-19

L: This is the Word of the LORD.

P: Thanks be to God!

CHOIR

"Can't Nobody Do Me Like Jesus"

SERMON

"The Letter I"

Rev. Kay

*INVITATION

"Count Your Blessings"

Insert

SENDING FORTH

RECESSIONAL

"Leave It There"

UMH 522

***BENEDICTION & THREE-FOLD "AMEN"**

PASSING THE PEACE - Let us show signs of Love and Welcome

** Please stand as you are able*

✦ Please make sure your cell phones are turned off or set to vibrate during worship.

[Back to the Candidate Profile](#)

PRAYER LIST: Sterling Thomas, The Haye, Gallimore and Roberts Families, Briana, Karriem Aston, Andrea Armstrong, Burns Family, William Burton Jr. Chantel Chenault, Jamian Dyer, Niatia Fung, Ann Marie Geathers, Mary Harvey, Gloria Hill, Donald Lambert, Hamadi Martin, Curlyn Murdock, Angeline Okere, Hazel Osborne, Marjorie Robinson, Doris Russell, David S., Dorrance Thompson, Faith Brookins, Harry Barnes, Bishop John Schol, DS Rev. Gina Kim, Liberia Annual Conference, North Katanga Annual Conf, (D R of Congo), Churches in India, Members of military & families; Antonio Figerioa, Rowan Hill, Devin Wilson, President Obama Family & Administration; and unspoken requests

All the Peoples of the World. (Please remember our sick and shut-ins with your prayers, calls, cards & visits)

IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES:

- Sundays**—Choir rehearsal – 9:30 am
Adult Sunday School – 9.30 am
- Tuesdays**—Bible Study
- Fridays & 4th Saturday/month**—Prayer Meeting/ Visitation - 11:00am
- Fridays (Every other)**—Youth Group
- Saturdays (Every 3rd)**—Senior Gala Ministry
- Saturdays** - Community Breakfast: 8 - 10 am
Clothing Ministry: 9 - 10.30 am
Food Pantry: 10: 30am - 12 noon

What does the Lord require of thee? To do Justice, to do Mercy and to walk humbly with him. Micah 6:8

Food Bank Online Donations – we can now make tax deductible online donations for the food bank, where every \$1 donated buys \$15 in the food bank. **To donate:**
<http://www.foodbankofhudsonvalley.org/index.php/pages/donate/33>

Adopt a Program – United Methodist Church of Spring Valley and Food Pantry/ Breakfast Program then put in program number. Program # 2416F (Food Pantry) and 2417S (Saturday Breakfast)

Announcements

OCTOBER	NOVEMBER
FINANCE MEETING When: October 05, 2016 Time: 07:00 pm Where: UMCSV Who: Finance Committee	FINANCE MEETING When: November 02, 2016 Time: 07:00 pm Where: UMCSV Who: Finance Committee
TRUSTEES MEETING When: October 08, 2016 Time: 11:00 am Where: UMCSV Who: Trustees	TRUSTEES FALL CLEANUP When: November 12, 2016 Time: 11:00 am Where: UMCSV Who: Trustees
LAY SERVANTS MEETING When: October 09, 2016 Time: After Service Where: UMCSV Cancelled	SPRC MEETING When: November 13, 2016 Time: After Service Where: UMCSV Who: SPRC members
UMCSV YOUTH GROUP When: October 14 & 28, 2016 Time: 7:00-9:30 PM Where: UMCSV Who: Children and Youth	UMCSV YOUTH GROUP When: November 11 & 25, 2016 Time: 7:00-9:30 PM Where: UMCSV Who: Children and Youth
FOOD DRIVE When: October 15, 2016 Time: 10:00-3:00 pm Where: ShopRite in Tallman VOLUNTEERS NEEDED	SENIOR GALA When: November 19, 2016 Time: 1:00-3:00 pm Where: UMCSV Who: All Seniors
SENIOR GALA When: October 22, 2016 Time: 1:00-3:00 pm Where: UMCSV Who: All Seniors	HARVEST/FIRST FRUITS SUNDAY When: November 20, 2016 Time: 10:30 AM Where: UMCSV Who: All
UMCSV YOUTH SERVICE When: October 30, 2016 Time: 10:30 AM Where: UMCSV Who: All	GREENING SERVICE/1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT When: November 27, 2016 Time: 10:30 AM Where: UMCSV Who: All

BIBLE STUDY: PHILLIPIANS

By Karline Dubuisson

Inside Out: Practicing God's Joy in a World of Suffering

Setting: This study is developed for persons who are immigrants from various Caribbean countries and Africa. The church is located in an industrial blue collar community. The group is composed of individuals from diverse socio-economic and educational backgrounds. They worship God in a predominantly African American urban congregation. The study is designed for a Tuesday Bible study. About thirteen (13) persons attend from ages 35 to 85 attend the study for approximately 90 minutes.

Purpose: The Bible study is based on the movie *Inside Out*, in which a little girl's emotions—joy, disgust, fear, anger, sadness—comes to the forefront due to strenuous circumstantial life changes. Depending on the situations, one of these emotions takes control and determines how she handles each circumstance. However, during the trying times, joy always try to overcompensate. The movie is a reminder that many individuals suppress what is labeled as 'bad emotions', in which, feelings associated with negativity and showing emotion has somehow become a sign of "weakness." It is no wonder the world constantly offers ways to achieve happiness by improving our external circumstances. Unfortunately, such happiness is short-lived. In contrast, the apostle Paul retained his joy continuously in the midst of difficult circumstances, because he understood that true joy comes from Jesus Christ. Paul, too, lived in moments of deep darkness, chained, and in prison. Paul's letter to the Philippians locates the source of his emotions and reveals a tried and tested heart that discovers true joy in a living relationship with Jesus and invites the wearied souls to feast on the unquenchable joy of Jesus.

This Bible study seeks to give a balanced view of suffering and joy according to the Word of God. As such, it is designed for participants to challenge, engage, and appropriate their emotional reality in this new light. The study highlights many of Paul's principles found in the book of Philippians that would help participants to maintain their joy no matter the circumstances.

Outline: This study is divided into five sessions. Each session explores each emotion as portrayed in the movie has focused on scripture passages from Philippians corresponding to said emotion and contains supporting ideas to learn how to manage each emotion and maintain joy.

Session 1: Conquer Fear

“To be afraid is to suffer. Fear constitutes the most intense form of human oppression...Fear is the single most destructive emotion in the heart's armory, the single biggest roadblock that you will encounter in your search for fulfillment and happiness.” (Rabbi Boteach 3)

Key Concept: Paul spends roughly one-quarter of his missionary career in prisons and yet, instead of being discouraged and afraid, he conquers fear through Jesus Christ and believes in God. This lesson addresses fears brought by difficult circumstances in our lives—situations caused by hurts, choices we make, actions of others, and life's unexpected trials. The goal of this lesson is to help participants to define and to recognize their fear and to live life the way Jesus teaches—a life full of faith, and to develop trust in God. (Philippians 1: 12-20)

- **Name The Fear**—Fear affects everyone. Too often, individuals allow fear to dominate and define their lives. Paul, however, is aware of his circumstances and does not allow his imaginations and circumstances to magnify his fear. Paul (1:12-13)
- **Witness Through Fear**— Fear, one of the devil's most popular weapons, is to overwhelm us with a thick shadow of darkness, controlling our every move and decision. Paul, instead of being afraid, sees his circumstances as an opportunity to spread the Gospel. (1:14)

- **Activate Faith Over Fear**—Individuals would do anything not to feel fear. Paul, in a jail cell, with the possibility of execution looming over him, instead of buckling to fear, he activates his faith over his circumstances for God’s glory and his good. (1: 20-22)

Session 2: Disgust—An Un-Christ Like Attitude

“Disgust undoubtedly involves taste, but it also involves—not just by extension but at its core—smell, touch, even at times sight and hearing. Above all, it is a moral and social sentiment. It plays a motivating and confirming role in moral judgement. It ranks people and thing in a kind of cosmic ordering.” (Miller 2)

Key Concept: Seeing things we don’t like or understand oftentimes bring to the surface the feeling of disgust. Feeling an emotion regarding something or someone states we place value on that thing and/or person. Disgust, however, is an emotion that devalues persons or things especially living in an environment that places value on individuality. The devil’s method is to keep us from depending upon the Spirit of God and each other. Paul encourages us to stand together in one spirit and to fight together for the faith. This lesson is to teach participants that Jesus loves everyone—even those others find disgusting and to help see how seeking to understand the mind of Christ can bring unity among God’s people. As Christians, we should follow the example of Christ’s love so that others may experience God’s love. (Philippians 1: 27-2:1-18)

- **The Fruit of Mutual Love**—Paul emphasizes the importance of unity in mutual love by looking out for the interest of others. When selfishness and pride are removed from relationships, we find Christian fellowship is possible. (1: 27-2:1-4)
- **Joy in Humility**—Two words that may not seem to fit together—however, humility does bring joy. Just like Jesus and Paul, a humble person gives of him or herself freely, without

pressure to be perfect or to see him or herself in competition with others. Christ-likeness consists not in selfish grabbing, but of selfless giving which links us with Christ. (2: 5-11)

- **Live A Life of Service**—Paul regards his life as one of sacrifice. He models the underlying principle of Christian living, the self-giving love poured out on behalf of another. (2: 12-18)

Session 3: Anger—Act Rightly

“Anger may be a message that we are being hurt, that our rights are being violated, that our needs or wants are not being adequately met, or simply that something is not right. Anger supplies the energy to set this right.” (Novotni 21)

Key Concept: We all get upset and angry especially when faced with both internal and external obstacles, may it be from self or others. Anger, oftentimes, stops us from hearing and doing. Careful listening therefore facilitates careful doing. Being harshly persecuted by his own people, Paul chooses to focus on Christ rather than on his opponents. This lesson seeks to help participants to carefully explore the source of anger and its purpose by employing good thinking and listening skills and being slow to anger in order to control such emotion while keeping Jesus’ joy as the goal. (Philippians 3: 1-14)

- **Watch Out**—Anger, a natural God-given emotion, can be harmful, but can be used positively to correct thoughts, attitudes, and actions toward self and others. To safeguard the believers, Paul reminds them to pay careful attention the flesh. (3: 1-4)
- **Danger of Stored Anger**— Anger protects temporarily from dealing with and facing the painful reality but rather focuses on getting back at others and keeping score. Storing anger is dangerous and unhealthy for those who harbor it. Paul expresses his strong emotions as a personal confession. (3: 5-6; Acts 8: 1-3; 9: 1-2, 21)

- **Anger Has a Purpose**— The healthy action for anger is to take hold of its strength so that any boundary violations can be addressed honestly and without cruelty. Paul understands all that has happened—past or present—have contributed to his well-being. (3: 7-9)
- **Know Your Purpose**—Letting go of past actions and moving to a new lifestyle would improve our ability to get along with others and live purposefully for Christ. Paul’s focus is to be found in Christ. He does not allow anything to take his eyes off his goal. (3: 12-14)

Session 4: Sadness—Not the Absence of Joy

“Sadness is a natural part of life and is usually connected with certain experiences of pain or loss or even a meaningful moment of connection or joy that makes us value our lives. (Firestone) Sadness, the emotional pain associated with grief, loss, despair, hopelessness, is “an emotion that asks us to depart from the “normal”—to be still like a pool of frozen water in the winter.” (Greespan 95)

Key Concept: Although no one likes to feel sad, sadness is a positive emotion. Since many Christians see sadness as a moral failing, they choose to bury their feelings, put on a fake smile, and pretend that everything is fine. However, keeping emotions bottle up inside is spiritually unhealthy. This session will encourage participants to seek community with God’s people, to cry out to God for hope, and to look to God for an eternal perspective. (Philippians 1: 3-8; 3: 12-21)

- **Seek Authentic Community**—Individualism is a large part in our culture—even in the church. Paul knows that community is a very important element in the Christian’s life. No Christians should live life alone, thus, seeking active human community helps from being isolated. (1: 3-8)
- **Let Go, Let God**—In times of overwhelming situations, people tend to grasp for control as they wallow daily in a lukewarm relationship with God. No matter the circumstances,

Paul reminds to let go of the past and anything that takes our eyes off our goal; to strive toward perfection in our desire to know and serve Christ fully and completely. (3: 12-14)

- **Find Eternal Perspective**—Most people tend to have a temporal perspective of their circumstances rather than an eternal perspective, to live as if our current life is all there is. Our life on earth is but a tiny speck on the timeline of eternity. Paul asks us to join together in imitating his life by focusing on God’s eternal purposes rather than on our shortsighted temporal purposes. (Philippians 3: 17-21)

Detailed Lesson Plans

Session 5: Joy's Strength

Key Verse: “I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:13)

Big idea: Jesus gives us the strength to do everything and the joy to face any circumstance.

Everywhere, there is confusion, suffering and loss. To some, the emotions discussed in the last four sessions arise from past experiences; while others are anxious, fretful and worried about the future such as old age, health or finances; and still others are over-burdened with care about the present. While some of our fears are real, many of our fears are imaginary, in that, the things we worry about never happen. A recent keyword search on Amazon.com turned up 86,036 books having to do with joy. The difficulties and uncertainties of life have always afforded men and women abundant opportunities for worry, but never have the temptations to worry and anxiety been so great as today. However, according to Frederick Buechner, “Joy is a mystery because it can happen anywhere, anytime, even under the most unpromising circumstances, even in the midst of suffering, with tears in its eyes.” (Buechner) This lesson will emphasize that joy, the emotion that makes us feel best, is not dependent upon our external and/or imaginary circumstances, but stems from Jesus who gives us the strength to do everything and the joy to face any present and future circumstances. (Philippians 4: 1-13)

Learning Goals

1. To help participants realize that joy of the Lord is the source of strength
2. To help participants interpret, appropriate, and describe the concept of “do all things through Christ who strengthens”
3. To remind participants how to stand firm in the face of adversity through prayer and thanksgiving
4. To reinforce Paul’s perspective that joy can be found in every circumstance

5. To remind participants that Christ's power is over all and presently available to us

Key Concept

- **Power in Weakness**—We oftentimes become weak when life's trials knock us down on our knees. Weakness has ways to rob us of personal and social productivity. Paul's encouragement is not to succumb to discouragement and disagreement with others. This section is to encourage participants to remain steadfast in the Lord in the face of temptation and persecution; to be gentle and cooperative in dealing with conflicts; and help those who are discouraged to be joyful in the Lord. (4: 1-4)

Movie Clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t4okAfKCwRk>

- **Worry No More**— Like many other commands that we encounter in Scripture, this one seems impossible for us to fulfill. In this day and age and with our many responsibilities and stresses, can we even imagine not being anxious about anything? We are afraid about the future, of what's going in the world, of each other, of failing in school or work, and of being unemployed. Though Paul's command, participants will learn how they can go about accomplishing this challenging task of power over worry by turning their worries into prayers. (4:5-7)

Movie Clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3hbkRIIZ54k>

- **In, But Not of**—One of the greatest hindrances to fully devote our lives to God is the love of the world and desire of the flesh. They oftentimes rob us of genuine fellowship. We either isolate from or become so much like the world. We are summoned to go into the world, therefore, we should relate to the world as Jesus did: to be in it, but distinct from it. Through Paul's continued example, participants will learn how to occupy their mind with wholesome thoughts by carefully examining and eliminating harmful inputs through

television, movies, internet, etc. and putting a higher priority on God's Word and devoting our lives to worthy deeds. (Philippians 4:8-9)

Movie Clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DcficD9FxEs>

- **More Than Enough**—Selfishness robs many people of their blessings. In this section, we read that Paul rejoices in the Philippians' growth, not the fact that they are concerned about him again. He's just pleased that they are becoming other-centered. Paul considers both "plenty" and "want" to be incidental to contentment. Neither one determines his contentment. For Paul has a mind that is content regardless of his circumstances. In order to be content in our present state, participants will understand that God alone supplies every needs and wants through Christ and that our source of joy comes from sharing generously with others. (Phil. 4:10-19)

Video Clip: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZdCRyFMz_Q

Teaching Strategies

Knowing that everyone learns differently, my teaching strategy would engage a diversity of learning styles through varied instruction. The strategy would include active learning in which the participants would, not only engage in passive listening to the lecture, but would also participate in critical thinking (mental activities), experiential learning (hands-on), guided learning (research), cooperative learning (small groups), and discussions.

Teaching Aids

To help reinforce what participants would learn in this Bible study, I would rely on biblical and personal stories. Further, the materials being used to achieve the instructional goals include Bibles, music, pens and papers, notebooks, student handouts, games, pictures, PowerPoint, and movie clips.

[Back to the Candidate Profile](#)

Annotated Bibliography

Bilodeau, Lorraine. *The Anger Workbook: Working Through Your Anger for Positive Results*. New York: MJF Books, 1992.

Bilodeau's workbook contains up-to-date scientific research on anger and its chemical and physiological component to understand the role of anger in one's life and in the formation of one's behavior. The workbook is filled with questions and exercises to help one recognize, understand, and respond to other people's anger in positive, effective, and constructive ways.

Bondi, Roberta C. *To Love as God Loves*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1987. 41-56.

Roberta Bondi, in the third chapter of her book, brings the rich tradition of the behavior and teaching of the early monastics as she ponders on what it means to be humble. Humility is one the three spiritual and practical advices she gives about how to cultivate love for God and others in the midst of contemporary challenges. Being a Christian means learning to love with God's love. That interaction with love, Bondi challenges readers, does not separate itself with humility.

Buechner, Frederick. *The Hungering Dark*. New York: HarperCollins, 1969.

Craddock, Fred B. *Interpretation: Philippians*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985.

Fred Craddock's commentary focuses on the theological rather than on academic or historical aspect of the book of Philippians. This commentary effectively gives theological insight into the forces, emotions, dynamics, and external variables at play when Paul wrote this letter to the first-century church. Through such understanding, Craddock helps the readers to understand the meaning of each passage and its pastoral significance for the original readers and addresses contemporary application for today's readers.

Firestone, Lisa. "The Value of Sadness." 30 July 2015. *Psychology Today*. Document. 15 August 2016. <<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/compassion-matters/201507/the-value-sadness>>.

Greenspan, Miriam. *Healing Through The Dark Emotions: The Wisdom of Grief, Fear, and Despair*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc, 2003.

Greenspan, a holocaust survivor, uses her experience to shed a light on the dark emotions that society views as negative: fear, grief, despair, as well as their companion emotions like anger. All experience these feelings, but are trained to ignore them, bury them, but certainly not listen to and experience them fully. Greenspan offers many numerous emotional exercises to help readers engage and expand the possibility to confront and honor the wisdom of all emotions.

Hanh, Thich Nhat. *Meditations on Transforming Difficult Emotions*. Riverhead, 2005.

Hanh focuses and offers profound spiritual wisdom on the basic human emotions everyone struggles with on a daily basis. Through this handbook of meditations, analogies, and reflections, Hanh offers pragmatic techniques for diffusing anger, converting fear, and cultivating love in every arena of life—a wise and exquisite guide for bringing harmony and healing to one's life and relationships.

—. *Anger: Wisdom for Cooling the Flames*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2001.

With simplicity, Buddhist monk and Vietnam refugee Hanh reminds readers that anger, the most powerful emotions, begins and ends with ourselves. Hanh doesn't limit his task to discussing anger between families and friends; he also deals with anger among countries and between citizens and governments. He insists that popular therapeutic wisdom to “express anger” are merely ways of “rehearsing” our anger, but not necessarily “reducing” it. Hanh gives tools and extraordinary wisdom for transforming self, relationships, focusing energy, and rejuvenating those parts of ourselves that have been laid waste by anger.

Hawthorne, Gerald F. *Word Biblical Commentary: Philippians*. Vol. 43. Dallas: Word Books, 1983.

Focusing on textual, linguistic, structural, and theological evidence, Hawthorne's commentary reassesses the issues of provenance and identity of Paul's opponents. He places special emphasis on the themes of joy in suffering while detailing further the life in Christ.

Inside Out. Dir. Pete Docter and Ronnie Del Carmen. Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment, 2015. DVD.

In this movie, the directors enter the mind of Riley, an eleven-year-old girl, who is uprooted from her Midwest life when her father starts a new job in San Francisco. The movie personifies Riley's five dominant emotions - Joy, Fear, Anger, Disgust and Sadness. The emotions live in Headquarters, the control center inside Riley's mind, where they help advise her through everyday life. The directors show Riley's emotional struggle to adjust to a new life in San Francisco. Although Joy, Riley's main and most important emotion, tries to keep things positive, the emotions conflict on how best to navigate a new city, house and school.

Keener, Craig. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. 2nd. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000.

MacArthur, John Jr. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Philippians*. Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 2001.

Through additional scriptures and other references (including opposing views) that keeps/supports the context of the text, MacArthur gives a thorough explanation of each verse that is both doctrinal and practical. This commentary helps readers to have a better

understanding of God's word through entering into Paul's emotional heart, and yet, transformational.

Martin, Ralph P. *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Philippians*,. Vol. 11. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1987.

Martin's commentary provides a thorough examination on Paul's contentment in the face of suffering. Martin shows how the theme flow from and emulate Christ's humility, lead to spiritual fellowship among believers, and contribute to spreading the gospel. Throughout the study of the book of Philippians, Martin aims to arrive at the true meaning and to make its message plain to readers today.

Miller, William I. *The Anatomy of Disgust*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Miller offers an unflinchingly and unprejudicial examination of this unfamiliar human emotion: disgust. He draws from and criticizes the ideas of Darwin, Freud, Orwell, and others, and uses shocking illustrations from such sources as Homer, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Swift, and Dickens to demonstrate the many ways we have found revulsion in matters of everyday life throughout history. Miller argues that disgust is deeply grounded in our ambivalence to life, in that, disgust helps us to set boundaries and to keep chaos at bay.

Nouwen, Henri & Christensen, Michael J. & Laird, Rebecca J. *Spiritual Direction: Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith*. New York: HarperOne, 2006.

Written in the form of a spiritual direction relationship, two of Nouwen's longtime disciples, Christensen and Laird, have recorded his course in spiritual direction and supplemented it with his unpublished writings to create this comprehensive work on Nouwen's thoughts on the transformative Christian life. In this book, Nouwen understands the spiritual life as a long journey in the same direction. He embraces accountability and community (including the discipline of spiritual direction) as means of greater and more joyful transformation. Part three: "Look to Others in Community" drives the discussion of authentic community under the sadness heading.

—. *Spiritual Formation: Following the Movements of The Spirit*. New York: HarperOne, 2010.

Accountability, community, and authentic relationships can deepen and strengthen one's faith in God. Michael Christensen and Rebecca Laird, students of Henri Nouwen, present a compilation of stories, readings, and guided reflections on spiritual direction in the Christian life from their experiences with Nouwen as their mentor. Nouwen, in this book, hopes to help readers along a successful journey of spiritual direction. Three interconnected movements in the second part of the book called "Midlife Movements": From Sorrow to Joy; From Resentment to Gratitude; and From Fear to Love remind readers that community can be lived well only if it comes out of communion with God and with others.

Novotni, Michele & Petersen Randy. *Angry with God*. Colorado Springs: Piñon Press, 2001.

This book provides an honest look at stored up and neglected anger with God, self, and others. Through her work with many clients, Psychologist Novotni noticed that anger with

people had a parallel need to work through their anger with God. Beneath the psychological issues, many people also silently struggle with their faith. Instead of talking readers out of their anger, Notovni talks them through it while presenting them with an image of a compassionate God who continues to love them.

Rabbi Boteach, Shmuley. *Face Your Fear: Living with Courage in an Age of Caution*. New York: St. Martin Press, 2004.

Rabbi Boteach tackles fear as one of the emotional ingredient in people's lives. He explains the only way to escape this climate is to learn what fear is and how to overcome it. Rabbi Boteach confronts the root causes of fear and provides action plans to conquer it while connecting to what is rock solid and eternal.

Robertson, A. T. (1917. *Paul's joy in Christ: Studies in Philippians*. New York: Fleming H. Revel Company, n.d. 21 August 2016.
<<https://archive.org/details/paulsjoyinchrist00robe>>.

Robertson asserts that this commentary is not technical, in that, it covers modern interpretation for all readers to understand. He opens a window whereas his readers would clearly understand the relationship between Paul and Jesus. Robertson shows a tender side of Paul even in the midst of the high cultural violence he has endured. Robertson helps readers to see a clear outline, not only, Paul's joy in life, but also, his joy in death.

Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be Joyful: Even When Things Go Wrong, You Can Have Joy. NT Commentary*. Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 1960, 1995.

Wiersbe's NT commentary serves as a tremendous guide through the Book of Philippians with insight into the life of the Apostle Paul and his secrets for maintaining joy in the midst of whatever happens in life. He reveals the four thieves of joy (one for each chapter of Philippians), and then counters them with the four practical and balanced "minds" that one ought to develop in order to allow God to transform lives abundantly.

Bible Study Evaluation

Strengths: The lesson was clear and simple. Each topic was supported by movie clips and stories in ways that honored the scripture. The group was prepared by watching the movie before the sessions which allowed for an in-depth discussion. Members were honored and respected by allowing them the full opportunity to share, express their point of view on the subject matter. Members had diversified viewpoints and raised spontaneous questions that I was prepared to answer. As an afterthought, after having written the lesson plans, I included the definition of the emotions being taught on that day. One of my core strengths is the ability to immediately connect with the group. I communicated the key concepts of the text since I had ample time to study and understood the historical and cultural settings.

Weaknesses: During the first part of the lesson I felt insecure. I temporarily lost focus because of many of the attendees arrived late. As a result, the first lesson did not start well. It was choppy and disjointed. At the end, all fell into place including the last four sessions.

What could you have done to make this lesson clearer?

Although I did extensive research and was comfortable with the subject matter, there were some books I wished I had delved a bit deeper into. I was able to however handle the subject in a creative manner—through shared stories and experiences. This proved to be a great way to engage members, they participated in answering questions, exploring their own views about the subjects, and sharing their own life experiences.

How did you do your evaluation?

I created a summative evaluation. The evaluation was given at the end of the sessions to find out if individuals mastered the intended learning outcomes. Further, through self-evaluation before the actual teaching, I identified the needs for having simple definitions for each of the emotions taught on that day.

Bible Study Evaluation Form

1. List 3 (Three) things you liked about this study

2. List 3 (Three) things you did not like about this study

10. Did you do all of the homework/required reading? (Circle One) YES NO
Why or Why not?

3. Circle the sessions you attended?

Anger Disgust Fear Sadness Joy

4. Which session was the best at generating conversation? (Circle One)

Anger Disgust Fear Sadness Joy

5. Which session was your favorite? (Circle One)

Anger Disgust Fear Sadness Joy

6. What statements, Scriptures, ideas or illustrations have been meaningful to you?

7. How has God worked in your life through the message of this study?

8. Rate the leader's questions and ability to generate good conversation? (Circle One)

Weak Okay Good Very Good Excellent

9. How was this bible study different from others you've been a part of?

11. What would you change about this study?

12. Do you think the materials covered was handled in a way that honored Scripture?

13. List any topics would you have liked to be included in this Bible study?

14. Please rate the points below according to the following scale:

a) Excellent b) Good c) Fair d) Poor

- _____ **Length of study (# of weeks)**
- _____ **Leader's skill at guiding discussion**
- _____ **Leader's ability to stay on topic**
- _____ **Leader's preparedness/organization**
- _____ **Materials and content of the study**
- _____ **Use of PowerPoint**
- _____ **Use of Movie Clips**

15. Give any additional feedback about this study

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey! Your input is greatly appreciated.

REED

A tool called REED teaches us three things about our emotions (emotions are messengers, they are messy, but they are manageable), then they show us how to examine our thoughts and emotions to recognize any lies we may be telling ourselves.

We have to start with recognizing our thoughts and the emotions behind them. When you are not feeling gentle, stop and REED:

1. **Recognize** your emotions. What emotions am I feeling right now? (anger, frustration, anxiety, jealousy, fear, resentment . . .). Ask God to help you recognize them.
2. **Express** your emotions (feelings) to God. God already knows them.
3. **Evaluate** your emotions in light of God's Word.
4. Are my emotions (feelings) in charge right now? What are they reflecting about my beliefs? **Decide**. What is going to control you right now - your emotions or the truth?

Recognize What emotions am I feeling?	Express Your emotions to God	Evaluate What does God's Word say?	Decide How am I going to respond?
Anxiety	Lord, I'm feeling really anxious. I don't know how I'm going to pay the bills this month.	<p>Philip. 4:6 <i>Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.</i></p> <p>Matthew 6:26 <i>Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?</i></p> <p>Proverbs 4:11 <i>I guide you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths.</i></p> <p>Isaiah 30:21 <i>Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."</i></p>	<p>I can choose to worry or I can choose to pray, I'll pray.</p> <p>"Lord, I confess that I am anxious about how to make ends meet this month. Your Word says that You are my Provider, that You give wisdom to all who ask. Please show me if there's something I need to do differently to stretch things further. I trust You to show me the way and to provide for me and my children. Thank You for hearing my prayers. Thank You that You are faithful."</p>
Anger	Lord, I'm really mad at my X. He promised the kids he'd take them to the zoo today and he didn't show up or even call. They're hurt. They don't understand. I'm the one left to pick up the pieces - again.	<p>Philip. 4:5 <i>Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.</i></p> <p>Isaiah 40:11 <i>He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.</i></p>	<p>I can choose to tell the kids what a rotten dad they have, or I can choose to tell them how sorry I am that they are disappointed and tell them what a wonderful heavenly Father they have.</p> <p>I can choose to encourage them to be resentful or forgive. I can choose to set the example.</p> <p>I can choose to make excuses for their dad, or I can choose to pray with them and help them express their emotions and feelings to God and choose to respond in a way that pleases God.</p>

Project Impact. n.d. 10 October 2016. <http://www.goprojectimpact.com/resources/documents/REED--Learning%20to%20Deal%20with%20Emotions%20Biblically.pdf>

 <p>JOY</p> <p>JOYFUL INTERESTED PLAYFUL CONFIDENT LOVING SENSITIVE COURAGEOUS HOPEFUL</p>	<p>SADNESS</p> <p>SAD BORED SLEEPY UNHAPPY IGNORED GUILTY LONELY ALONE</p> 
<p>SURPRISED</p>  <p>STARTLED CONFUSED AMAZED EXCITED SHOCKED ASTONISHED EAGER DISMAYED</p>	<p>MAD JEALOUS EMBARRASSED FURIOUS IRRITATED WITHDRAWN FRUSTRATED SKEPTICAL</p>  <p>ANGER</p>
 <p>DISGUST</p> <p>AWFUL DISAPPOINTED HESITANT REVOLTED LOATHING JUDGEMENTAL</p>	<p>FEAR</p>  <p>HUMILIATED REJECTED WORTHLESS INSECURE ANXIOUS SCARED</p>

HOW ARE YOU FEELING TODAY?



JOY

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PURPOSE

To emphasize that joy, the emotion that makes us feel best, is not dependent upon our external and/or imaginary circumstances, but stems from Jesus who gives us the strength to do everything and the joy to face any present and future circumstances.

JOY, JOY, JOY!



JOY, JOY, JOY!

Guestimate Game!

A recent keyword search on Amazon.com turned up 861,036 books having to do with joy.

JOY PURPOSE

Remain...

- Joyful
- Optimistic
- Determined
- Sees challenges as opportunities

JOY

“The emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune or by the prospect of possessing what one desires.” (Miriam Webster)

“Joy is a mystery because it can happen anywhere, anytime, even under the most unpromising circumstances, even in the midst of suffering, with tears in its eyes.” (Frederick Buechner)

Philippians 4: 1-19

Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved. I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 And[a] I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life. Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

Philippians 4: 1-19

Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4: 1-19

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 4: 1-19

But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Philippians 4: 1-19

Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.

Philippians 4: 1-19

Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Power in Weakness (4: 1-4)



WEAKNESS ROBS US OF PRODUCTIVITY

- Be steadfast in the Lord (4:1)
- Be cooperative with the difficult (4:2)
- Be helpful to the discouraged (4:3)
- Be joyful in the Lord (4:4)

Worry No More(4: 5-7)

For Christians, worry is...

- Useless
- Unnecessary
- Unseemly



Worry No More(4: 5-7)

WORRY ROBS US PEACE OF MIND

- Be moderate: Christ is at hand (4:5)
- Don't be anxious
 - Let God know your requests (4:6)
 - By prayer
 - By supplications
 - With thanksgiving
- Result: The peace of God keeps our mind (4:7)



In, But Not Of (4: 8-9)

WORRIES OF THE WORLD ROBBS US OF FELLOWSHIP

- Occupy our mind with good thoughts (4:8)
- Occupy hands with worthy deeds (4:9)
- Result: The God of peace is with you. (4:9)



MORE THAN ENOUGH



More Than Enough (4: 10-19)

SELFISHNESS ROBS OF BLESSINGS



- Share with others (4:10, 14-18)
- Be content in your present state (4:11-13)
- Result: God supplies our needs by Christ.

CHRISTIAN JOY

Helps us to....

- Grow
- Forgive
- Awaken our dreams
- To help each other
- See the world differently
- Be content in every circumstances
- Live a life of victory

Apply Now



Story of Evander Holyfield

“When I have nothing left, I still have Christ.”

- God is more than enough
- We are more than enough
- In unity, we find strength to reach the unreachable: joy

IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL



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Karline Dubuisson

Practice of Ministry

1) What do you think are the most effective means of doing evangelism in the 21st century? How have you lived this out in your current context of ministry?

All ministry settings are unique and have varying degrees of methods of doing evangelism. In my ministry context, the intentionality is to model evangelism after Jesus. Relationships, not programs, were central in Jesus' method. As a practical demonstration of the gospel, Jesus chose to spend his time with people—caring, healing, listening, forgiving, encouraging, teaching, and preaching. In that, Jesus addressed felt needs and spoke to each person's character in order to lead them to a relationship with God. I seek to live it out by engaging laities to maintain close relationships; promote unity and care among the members; meet physical, spiritual and emotional needs—furnish a setting for lifestyle evangelism, and in short, demonstrate the Body of Christ in action. Encouraging laities to meet people where they are, individually, and uniquely, allowing people to find who they are while helping to bring the gospel to others in order to transform individual lives and their surrounding communities.

2) What makes a congregation vital, and how do you measure it? How would you envision working with a congregation to become more vital?

The United Methodist Church focuses on five areas of growths to measure vital congregation: 1) disciples in worship (worship attendance), 2) disciples making new disciples (number of professions of faith), 3) disciples growing in their faith (number of small groups), 4) disciples engaged in mission (number of disciples doing outreach in the community and the world), and 5) disciples sharing their resources for mission (amount of money given to mission). Focusing on the areas above, a vital congregation develops plans and ministries to achieve God's purposes for the congregation. As a congregation, we set reasonable, measurable, and attainable goals through our

church conference and find ways to equip and resource laities to meet those goals. Measuring each area can be tricky. While measuring attendance can be easy, measuring someone's spiritual growth is not an easy task. Therefore, working with a vital congregation, I would envision a more welcoming church by setting up greeters' team; preparing welcome packets and a hospitality team; keeping a good attendance record; engage members to improve our mission and outreach by providing help for new parents and creating after school activities for youths; work alongside with the Committee of Finance to turn the economic downward spiral trend through a stewardship campaign and also ensure that steward dollars are being used accordingly; and lastly, I would train laity to lead small groups that will engage more people in study, prayer and mission.

3) What is your personal approach to conflict? Provide an example of where you have been involved in resolving conflict. What did you learn?

From my prior profession as a case manager, I learned the art of good listening. This became invaluable when I was part of a ministerial of breakfast ministry where member conflict was arising. Members were feeling devalued; they were being belittled and harassed. The environment became a hostile and toxic one. Using my listening skills, I was able to create a sacred space and invited members to the table. Members of the ministry honored the process and continued the conversation in which they engaged each other, members felt respected and valued. The newly enhanced relationships were an important factor which allowed for the work of the Breakfast ministry to continue seamlessly.

4) What is your theological and practical understanding of itineracy?

"I am no longer my own, but thine. Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt." These words of John Wesley describe my understanding of the expectations and obligations of the itinerant system in my practice of Ordained Ministry. Scripture such as Genesis 12 when Abraham is called by God to "go from your country," (v.1) and promised he would "be a blessing to others."

(v.3b) serve as examples of itinerant call to missions. Abraham (and his descendants) became travelers who carried the blessing with them wherever they went. Many of the prophets were examples of an itinerant kind of mission. Often the call is to a new place or person(s). My itinerant call began with God calling my family to emigrate to the United States in 1985. Therefore, I am keenly aware that I am called to serve God and God's people in the United Methodist Church. The itinerant system is part of the blessing in serving God and the world in the United Methodist Church. Truly, "I am no longer my own but God's." I knew this when I was called and my answer was, and still is, yes, "Here I am, Lord."

5) How do you engage all age group in your community?

After several council meetings, the topic of intergenerational ministry has been discussed and we began to think outside the box. In conversation with youth and parents we found children and youth ministry was lacking in the life of our church. Through prayer, discernment, and conversation with community leaders, our church intentionally began to focus on a "family oriented" children and youth ministry by partnering with parents, and even equipping them to discuss spiritual matters with their children in order to reinforced lessons being taught. We encourage parents to participate in corporate worship when the youth lead worship. The youth have engaged in intergenerational social events. The 2015 Valentine's Day concert led by the newly formed youth group is one of the many examples of our concerted effort to bring all age groups together. We have partnered with the community to help our youth engage in community service. Most importantly, relationship between adult members and youth are encouraged through mentoring to equip youths for service and leadership roles in the wider life of the church.

6) What is your understanding of pastoral authority, and how do you intend to exercise it in your place of ministry?

My understanding of pastoral authority derives from the ordination and appointment where I have been placed in positions of authority in the Church. In these positions (Word, Sacrament, Order, Service) I intend to exercise pastoral authority by being faithful in spreading the gospel, create accountability, provide support, and order the life of the church. I had to exercise this authority several months into my full-time appointment. I performed an infant baptism in which the parents, members of the local church, refused to have the baptism in the local church but in a rented venue. Rev. Taylor Burton-Edwards, Director of worship resources, clarifies that, “Baptism is an act that brings you into a spiritual relationship with the whole body of Christ—In which you are becoming one with them and they are becoming one with you.” After several attempts at explaining and teaching the new parents the importance and the role the church community plays in baptism through the baptismal liturgy and the above quote, I had to decline to perform the baptism outside the church. Unfortunately, exerting pastoral authority was the only way to clarify the message.

7) If you could choose anyone to mentor you in leadership skills, who would that be and why?

If I could choose anyone to mentor me in leadership skills, it would undoubtedly be Oprah Winfrey. Although she epitomizes many qualities, I choose to focus on her forgiveness, perseverance and her compassion. Oprah has a forgiving spirit. In her own words, she says: “Forgiveness is giving up the hope that the past could have been any different.” Oprah does not dwell on holding grudges of her past abuses and hurts, holds no bitterness, or seek revenge, rather she chooses to move forward in hope to fulfill her dreams. Leaving her poverty and past behind she perseveres by working hard to become one of the most influential people in the world. Oprah understands that, “The key to realizing a dream is to focus not on success but on significance—

and then even the small steps and little victories along your path will take on greater meaning.” Although she’s had a tough childhood, she overcome it and made the best of her life; she has shown strength and perseverance. As a public servant, Oprah demonstrates compassion. She maintains that, “Leadership is about empathy. It is about having the ability to relate to and connect with people for the purpose of inspiring and empowering their lives.” Oprah demonstrates this quality through her organizations, in which, she supports inspiration, empowerment, education and well-being of women, children and families around the world. Oprah uses her past story to encourage every other child who have been abused to be empowered in telling their own stories in other to eradicate child abuse.

8) Describe a situation in which you felt a need to assert your professional boundary in the practice of ministry.

Several months into my appointment, I realized using my cell phone was a blessed convenience and also a detriment to my life, family, and ministry. Being on call 24/7 brought on a whole new meaning. I felt that I did not have an “off” switch. Several members were texting, emailing, and calling at all hours. The urgency to immediately respond to every phone call or text created an unforced but unhealthy expectation for myself and members. The added expectation became overwhelming, and caused additional frustration, stress, and imbalance to my personal life and ministry. The habit was difficult to break until my vacation was interrupted for a non-emergency situation. After discussing and getting advice from my mentor and coach, I held a meeting with Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) to address the problem. We came to an agreement. Members should refrain to call, text, email after 9:00 p.m. and should not expect a response on my days off and/or vacation. During my time off or vacation, all emergencies would be forwarded to and assessed by SPRC chair to determine the level of urgency before reaching out to me.

9) How have you worked through the experience of forgiving someone?

Every day we pray, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” It’s a simple statement but the process of forgiveness is not that simple. Sometimes it is a lengthy process comprised of small steps, such as asking God the desire to forgive, thinking about and working through it. For a very long time, I held on to hate and anger in my heart for a family member who violated my trust when I was sixteen years old. At first, I pretended that nothing happened. Working through the process of forgiveness, I had to acknowledge and accept those feelings associated with the hurt. Truthfully, I did not understand true forgiveness until I began to understand God’s grace. Also, I learned that forgiving others is not something accomplished simply through my own power or virtue but I needed God’s grace. Grace alone enables me to forgive the one who seems to be unforgivable. God’s grace empowers me to forgive. I lean on ‘grace’ to forgive even when forgiveness doesn’t lead to reconciliation. Nevertheless, I allow the love and grace of God to pervade my life, so that I might live more fully as a forgiving whole person.

10) What are you doing to help those around you to take good care of themselves?

I model a healthy living balance lifestyle that includes taking care of the physical, social, spiritual and emotional centers. I offer encouragement to others to build a strong base provided by good relationships; building deep friendships with individuals who understand their struggles; while holding them accountable by telling one another the truth. I pray and encourage others to nurture their spiritual life through prayer, study, fasting and retreat, as well as nurture their physical life through exercise and adequate rest. Finding moments for silence, prayer, laughter, exercise, and prioritizing friendships is the balance lifestyle we need to remind us of the God who cares for us all.

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11) How have you invited someone to faith and seen their faith develop?

For the past eighteen months, I began a journey with a volunteer of the Breakfast Ministry who was on the cusp of becoming a homeless. After breakfast, we often spent time in prayer and reading scriptures. As we continued our journey, I became aware that due to several tragedies in life with no family and friends, this person was unable to have a better way of life. Through the assistance of members and non-members, we were able to provide aid to this person in finding stable housing near the church. Living near the church, this person was able to regularly attend Sunday Service, Bible Study and other various church activities. Developing genuine relationships with other members, this person felt God's love and grace. This person is now a member who faithfully participates in the church ministries. I certainly witness spiritual growth as this person begins to turn from problematic behaviors and encourages others to lead a life for Christ.

12) What have you to overcome to come to this season in your ministry?

I learned early in the process of candidacy for pastoral ministry, or even before, that United Methodist pastors itinerate. So, coming to this season of my ministry, I had to overcome the process of others following with me and the financial impact moving would have on my family. My husband losing his employment, my children changing schools—moreover, leaving our family, friends and belongings were an unfathomable depth of thought. The calling as well as the process of moving afforded me the unique opportunity to journey with my family as I mentally prepared them to move. The process, also, helped me to further discern my ministerial calling through the eyes of Paul in his letter to the Ephesians that, “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.” (Ephesians 4: 1-2) Paul explains that the calling is, most of all, a summons to belong to God and to participate in God's work in the world and if I am to

live out my divine calling in my daily life, I must do so with all humility and gentleness—with patience. Together, bearing one another in love we have reflected on the meaning of this transition for us, for our community, and the people we have been called to serve. We move forward putting our faith and trust in God alone.

13) How would you describe your prayer life in this season and how has it changed over your journey?

As I have grown in my spiritual and prayer life, I see a greater depth and appreciation of God's love. My understanding of God's love has translated into a deeper love for God and love for others. 1 John 4:7-8 states, "Let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." So, God is love, and all true love comes from God. Realizing if I need to draw closer to God, I can't be passive or stagnant or predictable in my relationship with God. Finding new ways to pursue God has helped me to mature in my relationship with God. Instead of praying at a specific time or day, my prayer is a continuous dialogue with God, in which each conversation with God is a time to be nourished and recharged. The most sacred prayer time is my walk through the woods where my heart is an open channel of conversation, questions, expressions of affections, jokes, tears and laughter between me and God. Spending time with my prayer partners help to cultivate honesty and accountability about my motives and actions. Praying with scripture (Lectio Divina) nourishes my mind and soul, inspires my imagination and shuts out distracting and external noises. The newfound love for God reaffirms my calling to a ministry of reconciliation—that is, to reconcile others to God and to each other. The example of God's love is clear as it flows through Jesus to us. Loving others is the only way to keep the God-kind of life flowing in the world.

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14) When you read the Bible, how do you hear God’s voice? What example might you give of how you responded?

The longer I live, the more I realize that discerning God’s voice is essential in my relationship with God and knowing God’s plan for my life and the life of others. Hearing God’s voice is a process and part of a growing conversational relationship with God. That is, I can’t sit back and just expect to hear from God. Meditating on Scripture, spending extended time in solitude, or seeking godly counsel are the many ways to have an interactive relationship with God which helps me to follow the leading of God’s Spirit. Another profound way I hear God’s voice is to talk with a friend or journal some prayers to process my emotions. Journaling and talking to a friend has helped me through a difficult situation with my nineteen-year-old daughter. My daughter underwent several medical testing and surgery in a matter of six months. As I went through this ordeal, fear and anxiety took over and knocked me off my spiritual horse. I heard God’s voice, however, saying in Isaiah 41: 10: “Fear not, I am with you. Fear not, I am your God. Fear not, I will strengthen you. Fear not, I will help you. Fear not, I will uphold you.” This scripture simply translates into, “God is in control.” God used other means—through music, others, and reading. The message became more concrete after I received a large painting on my birthday with the writing in bold letters: “Relax, God is in control” and the scripture Isaiah 41: 10 was on the bottom. From that day on, a peace came over and joy entered my heart.

15) How has your family of origin influenced your call?

I came to know Christ from an early age, earlier even than seems possible to me now. My mother put her faith in God to guide my life through the water baptism that I went through as an infant. As a person of faith, my mother played an important role in my early Christian faith development. While she did not attend services, my mother would dress me in the most beautiful outfits to attend Sunday services. Although I had not imagined of becoming a pastor, Sunday School and worship,

and church activities is the main community through which God began to work in my life. Through youth formation programs, I learned about the Bible, the Apostle's Creed, the Lord's Prayer and had my first communion. My mother's continued guidance and prayer and the church teachings led to what I refer as "my first encounter with God." On an Easter night, watching the Passion of Christ, I knelt by my bed and cried, asking Jesus to forgive me. On that memorable night, I felt both gratitude for God's love and remorse at being a sinner. In hindsight, I understand how remarkable it was that God reached out and showed me love as a small child and that I embraced that love even when I could barely understand it. Four years later, my family emigrated to America. The culture shock left me breathless; I was lost and eventually went astray. After many years of prayer and encouragement, my mother led my family (husband and 4 children) to a United Methodist Church. Through the teachings of the pastors, the love of the members and newfound Christian friends, I was renewed in my faith and love for God. Claimed by God, I accepted God's call to ordained ministry—after having tried to no avail to ignore God's call in order to pursue other studies and careers. After a season of prayer and discernment, I entered seminary. The years spent in seminary was a blessing. God used the diversity of learning to help me discover my call—which is to know the love of God— and to let that love known through mission and ministry in the name of Christ for the transformation of lives and the redemption of the community so that those hurting may be healed, the hungry be fed, the lost be found, and the peace of God may come upon the earth.

16) Interview three people to tell you what they see in your ministry. What did you hear in these conversations?

After interviewing three people to tell me what they see in my ministry, I heard that I am a spiritual leader, an administrator and a coach. As a spiritual leader, I have rekindled, re-energized and re-awakened the congregation through inspiring and motivating sermons and teachings. As an

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administrator, I carefully and efficiently plan, cast a vision, and ensure that everyone works together. An example is in my organizational ability with sermon series. All aspects of the service helped to paint a picture for the congregation to make sense of what is being learned and how to apply it to their daily lives. Lastly, as a coach, my ministry is one that is warm, welcoming, caring and relationship building. I am an encourager and a compassionate servant who develops genuine relationships; helps people to become comfortable engaging one another openly and honestly and leads others to do the same. Being a “hands on” pastor, I heard I need improvement in the area of over-commitment. The take away from these conversations affirms that I matter to God and in their lives.

Karline Dubuisson

Theology, Call, Doctrine

1) Give examples of how the practice of ministry has affected your experience and understanding of: (a) God; (b) humanity; (c) the need for divine grace

As I encounter and journey with individuals in diverse situations in the practice of ministry, my experience and understanding of God has been characterized by an undeniable conviction that, “God is always present.” God comes to us in creation, in the law, in the prophets, and ultimately in the person of Jesus Christ which continues to sustain us with God’s ongoing presence through the Holy Spirit. A call to ministry, therefore is a call to participate in the lives of others through presence. I experienced the ministry of presence when a call came at four o’clock in the morning from a family member that a loved one was in the emergency room with a pulmonary embolism. Unprepared for this call, all I did was prayed and sat with the family without offering any words. Being present and knowing someone cares is just as transformative. This presence in each of us reflects God’s presence as well as God’s loving concerns for others.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3: 16) As sinners, we cannot reconcile ourselves to God. Our disobedience and sin separates us from God’s love and presence. The more we try to foster an independent destiny from God, it becomes clearer that human nature is not only opposed to God, but opposed to itself. This is true of the many people I worked with and helped with drugs and alcohol addiction. They were unable to foster a meaningful relationship with God and others. Witnessing their struggles and how their lives changed eventually, I know that God has not given up on humanity.

God has uniquely acted through Christ to build a bridge of reconciliation—God’s divine grace. God’s grace has been and is there for all. It is by this grace whereby humanity is born again by the

spirit, is justified by faith through Christ, and is also reconciled to God and to others. (John 3:3, 7) I have learned that no one is beyond God's grace, because grace is not only something that God does for us, but something that God does in us. Upon experiencing God's grace, we are called to respond in gratitude, which in turn compels us to share the love of Christ in the community.

d) The Lordship of Jesus Christ e) The work of the Holy Spirit

The Bible says Jesus is Lord, I believe it, and I live it. Philippians 2:11 affirms in no uncertain terms that Jesus Christ is Lord. As God incarnate, Jesus Christ is Lord. Jesus is Lord of the universe because he created it. The practice of ministry, therefore, has afforded me the opportunity to join all others who have affirmed the Lordship of Jesus Christ. As I witness Jesus changing the heart of the most stubborn people; as I see individuals submit every area of their lives to his authority including time, finances, family, relationships, as well as obedience to the Great Commission; as I see God in Jesus Christ working miracles in the lives of everyday people and every circumstance and see personal, social, emotional, spiritual, and financial lives restored, my profession of Jesus Christ as Lord is reinforced. It is undeniable that Jesus is Lord and has authority over all. S.M. Zwemer says this about the lordship of Jesus Christ: "Unless Jesus is Lord of all, He is not Lord at all."ⁱ Therefore, to affirm Jesus is Lord, one must place every aspect of life under the lordship of Christ and become a servant of the Lord.

Jesus, knowing he would be leaving earth, promises to send the Holy Spirit. (John 14: 26) The Holy Spirit is the active and continuing presence of God with us. The Holy Spirit continues the work of God within and through us. The Holy Spirit testifies of Jesus, brings conviction, and then quickens us when we accept Jesus as our savior. The Holy Spirit empowers, renews, sanctifies—that is, cleanses and transforms our minds to the mind of Christ. I witnessed the Holy Spirit at work when an alcoholic man gave his life to Christ. He continuously strives to lead a better life

through God's sanctifying grace by attending Alcohol Anonymous, leading a life of prayer, service, and bringing others to the faith. This example further reinforces my belief that Jesus meets people where they are and offers them opportunity to explore the God within. Thus, the Holy Spirit is very involved in the salvific works of Jesus Christ in the world. Through the Holy Spirit we will do the mission and ministry according to the will of God and are able to get a glimpse of what the fullness of the Kingdom of God on earth.

f) The meaning and significance of the Sacraments

The United Methodist Church recognizes two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Sacraments are the instruments and channels for conveying God's grace to humanity and lead humanity to grace. They are outward and visible signs of an inward and invisible grace instituted by and rooted in the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism is the rite of initiation in the family of God established through Christ. Baptism conveys an empowering presence of God and signifies a pardoning relationship by the renouncing of sin and the evil powers of the world, and pledging our loyalty to Christ. Persons of all ages (infants, children, adults) who are baptized become, not only children of God, but also members of the Church universal and of the denomination and the local church. This new identity through baptism connects the baptized individuals with God and the community of faith. This initiation invites us to a life of holiness and the responsibilities to treat others with love, justice, compassion and mercy.

In the Sacrament of Holy Communion, Christ's once-for-all sacrifice is displayed in God's past interventions in human history through his sacrificial and redemptive death for the whole world. The Lord's Supper focuses church communities on their mission and infuses them with passion for ministry and service. That is evident when we proclaim, "By your spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world..." (A Service of Word and Table

II, 14). Further, the Lord's Supper invokes the tangible and real presence of the Holy Spirit into the midst of the community thus infusing it with energy and common purpose: "...Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood" (A Service of Word and Table II, 14). Lastly, in Holy Communion, we anticipate the eternal future—Jesus messianic banquet in the Kingdom of God where peace, love, joy, justice and righteousness reign. In the Lord's Supper, we accept God's gracious forgiveness, we renew our allegiance to Christ as King, and offer ourselves as instruments for the work of the Kingdom.

g) The kingdom of God h) Resurrection and eternal life

The Kingdom of God is unquestionably the central theme of Jesus' message and involves the whole understanding of his person and his works on earth. Jesus' entrance in the world signifies that, in a very real way, God's kingdom has already appeared on earth. The practice of ministry has broadened my understanding in that God's Kingdom is "here" in the local church when we come together in worship and to serve. In my ministry context, the kingdom of God is clearly tied to the socially marginalized being restored and honored at the center of the community. While being cognizant that the Kingdom of God is here, it is also "not yet here"—a sentiment N.T. Wright voices well when he writes: "an 'arrival' with Jesus and a still-awaited 'arrival' which would complete the implementation of what he had already accomplished."ⁱⁱ The kingdom is, not only the substance of the hope that sustains us in the present life of trial and suffering; but also we wait in active expectancy, faithful in service to God and our neighbor for the full appearance of God's universal love, justice and peace.

The resurrection refers to the rising of Jesus Christ from the dead. The primacy of the resurrection in Christian faith is laid out in the words of the Apostle Paul: "If Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith in vain." (I Cor. 15: 14) In my ministry context,

I have come to realize that resurrection is a witness to God's presence with us in our earthly life. My journey with individuals who are saved miraculously from addiction and poverty have been resurrected from death to eternal life on earth and in the afterlife. In that, eternal life is life in the presence of Christ and begins with a relationship with God. "Eternal happiness," as Wesley calls it in his sermon: *The Scripture Way of Salvation*, "is a present thing, a blessing which, through the free mercy of God, ye are now in possession of."ⁱⁱⁱ Although eternal life is of a future hope, it is also a present reality, in that, Christ gives us hope in our own resurrection. This rings true as I journeyed with someone dying with cancer. It was most astounding to hear this person talking about the experience throughout this tragedy in life, and yet, even though the acceptance of the inevitability of death, this person has more than ever experienced God's grace and healing. Yet, the person has come to understand that life here is just a fleeing moment in the time frame of God's sovereignty. Similarly, with this person who is dealing with death, I know that there is and must be a time of resurrection, but in the interim, we exist in a world within a world: A New World in which we can find peace and love in the presence of God while he lives within our lives.

2) How do you understand the following traditional evangelical doctrines: (a) repentance; (b) justification; (c) regeneration; (d) sanctification (e) What are the marks of life?

Repentance is the acknowledging of one's sin and having genuine sorrow over it. As sinners, we are alienated and separated from God. On our own volition, we are unable to acknowledge and repent of our sins. God, in gracious love and unfailing mercy, quickens the spiritual body while we were yet God's enemies. "But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8 NRSV) This is grace—God's undeserved favor. The grace by which God leads sinful humanity to salvation is what Wesley calls "prevenient grace." Prevenient grace prepares us to recognize God's ever presence in our lives; reveals our sins; helps us to

recognize that we are all sinners and that Jesus paid for our sins and transgressions; guides us to our turning to God; and helps us to respond to God's outpouring of love and to be in relationship with God. **Justification** is God's act of grace whereas God forgives and restores us to a right relationship with God. Justification, another word for pardon, comes by God's grace, and not by one's own efforts. Scripture testifies that one is justified by faith in Christ Jesus and through "Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them" (2 Cor. 5:19). The verse points to God's forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration. Thus justifying grace says that one is guilty but forgiven and made right with God through the redemptive work of Christ. If prevenient grace convicts the sinner to repentance, justifying grace forgives the sinners' sin. **Regeneration** is the gracious act of God by which we are born again to life in Christ. Through regeneration, the Holy Spirit continuously works in us to rejuvenate and to affect inward change—by renewing and indwelling for conforming our sinful mind to the mind of Christ. By regeneration we are born again and have a new life as God's children. As God's children, the Holy Spirit empowers us to love and serve God.

Sanctification is an act of God's grace whereby we are not only cleansed from sin but grow in holiness by the power of the Holy Spirit. As forgiven and justified persons, we are not finished products. We still stumble and struggle as we long to live more fully into God's purposes for us. Hence, we rely on God's sanctifying grace to move us toward holiness and the gift of Christian perfection. By perfection, Wesley did not mean that we would not make mistakes or have weaknesses. Rather, he understood it to be a continual process of being made perfect in our love of God and each other and of removing our desire to sin. Through sanctification, God transforms our will and affection "to love as God loves, and to desire that which God loves."^{iv}

3) What are the marks of the Christian life?

The marks of the Christian life are the outward signs of our growth in grace and must be expressed in commitment to God to the extension of perfect love, in personal life, and in one's engagement with society. Paul says, "For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace." (Romans 6: 14) God's grace, therefore, moves us toward Christian perfection. Wesley defines Christian perfection most clearly in, *A Plain Account* as "that love of God and our neighbor, which implies deliverance from all sin." While the gift of God's grace frees us from sin and while we make a free-will response to God's gift, it is not a "one time deal," but a continual journey of moving through repentance, justification and regeneration, into sanctification. Each person's journey is different as we all grow uniquely and differently, evident how we handle situations. Turning away from our old ways to a new life in Christ and allowing God's continued work of grace in our lives, we can be filled with the love of God and neighbor, and work toward the Christian perfection—the perfect love, which is our goal. As we are shaped and formed more clearly into God's image, by God's sanctifying grace, we grow to be more Christ-like. Becoming like Christ requires us to be carried on by the Holy Spirit from justification to a progression toward entire sanctification.

4) How has the practice of ministry informed your understanding of the nature and mission of the Church? What are its primary challenges today?

The practice of ministry has informed my understanding that the church is a community of believers that constitutes the visible representation of Christ in the world. Coming together as the people of God, one in the body of Christ, and a fellowship in the Spirit, the Word is preached, sacraments administered, and discipline exercised; we are edified. Through our coming together, we participate in the mission of God in the world through the church, and we live the commission "to make disciples for Christ." Living out this commission as defined and explained in Matthew

9:35-38, our mission must be clearly outwardly focused: teach the lost and the found, reach out to the needy, provide support and comfort to members and non-members, and preach the good news to all.

Although I believe the church's engagement in ministry should have an unconditional commitment to Christ, passion for evangelism, and concern for the community—the church, however, faces many challenges. In my ministry context, I observe these three challenges: apathy toward mission; difficulty engaging the new culture; and family stress. For example, people are overextended with work, parents put higher focus on kids' activities, etc. Regardless of these challenges, we are called to the church mission and we must consciously address the needs by creating and choosing resources to bridge the cultural gap that is constantly shifting in a forever changing world.

5) The United Methodist Church holds that Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason are sources and norms for belief and practice, but that the Bible is primary among them. What is your understanding of this theological position of the Church, and how has your practice of ministry been affected by this understanding?

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral—Scripture, Tradition, Experience, Reason is a method of spiritual discernment and discipline that allows us to hear God's heart and will and lets the Holy Spirit guide us in making choices and decisions. My understanding of this theological position is this: By scrutinizing scripture in light of church tradition, personal experience and logical reasoning, the four sources bring individual Christian to a mature and fulfilling understanding of the Christian faith and the required response of worship and service. In my ministry context, we recently engaged the Wesleyan Quadrilateral to discern and decide on starting a youth program in the church. The church had not engaged the youth for years. Regarding youths in scripture, Proverbs 22: 6 beautifully speaks about teaching "...a youth about the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." Traditionally, our local church, while they desired and expressed the needs for a youth program, had not put forth efforts or actions. Although our church tradition

says, “this is the way we always do things,” scripture, early Christians and reformers of our modern-day, however, asserted and defended the need for nurturing youth in the local church. An example is Jeremiah’s call (as a young lad) came while he was being groomed for his priestly role. (Jeremiah 1) Further, Sunday School movement, born in the 18th century which expanded to include children of all ages, was as an opportunity for the church to teach the gospel and doctrine to children. Experience, in Wesley’s understanding, refers to a vital experience of God’s grace, one that is affirmed within the broader Christian community both past and present—that holds us accountable to the gospel. There was a disconnection in this area in our church. Guiding members to recall their Christian experience and how that experience transformed their relationship with God and others was an eye opening. They realized the church can be a place of connections and belonging where youth can experience the love of God. While we can liken the scripture, tradition and reason to the base ingredients to baking a cake, reason acts as the icing. Reason can help us to use our God-given rationale, however, we can’t rely on reason alone. The gift of logic allows us to look at the whole picture together. It is through reason that we can uncover God’s truths, interpret scripture, and effectively witness. It was reasonable to believe that when Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” (Mark 10:14), Jesus intended for his followers to take him seriously in every facet of faith life. As we reasoned and understood the vital importance of the youth in our church, we moved to action. In that, reason allowed us to study and grow in knowledge and make judgments about youth discipleship.

6) How has the practice of ministry enriched your understanding of the meaning and significance of the sacraments?

The practice of ministry has enriched my understanding that God is present in the sacraments and that presence must be accepted by human faith. When God’s presence in the sacraments is accepted

by faith, it transforms the lives of individuals and communities. The sacrament of baptism leaves me with a sense of gratitude every time I participate in such a monumental moment in a person's life. I rejoice each time I become an instrument of which infants or adults are adopted and admitted to the household of faith. The one who is adopted and admitted into God's new family is not only entering a pardoning relationship in the empowering presence of God and others and the life of holiness, but is given a new identity: child of God.

Equally, offering and partaking in communion, I am cognizant that God's grace is being tangibly offered in a way too deep for words. While baptism is a non-repeatable rite of initiation into the body of Christ; Holy Communion is a regularly repeated celebration in the life of the Church and the communities. In the sacrament of communion, I am reminded of Christ's once-for-all sacrificial and redemptive work for the whole world. In Holy Communion, we encounter the pardoning and empowering presence of Jesus and renew our allegiance to Christ as Lord. It is a privilege when I placed the bread in the recipient's hands, I would say, "Brother, (or Sister), receive the Bread of Life. Saying, "brother" or "sister" emphasizes both the theological belief of our adoption by God, and the ecclesiological belief of a familial body of Christ—anticipating the messianic banquet in the Kingdom of God where peace, love, joy, justice and righteousness reign.

Vocation

1) How has the experience of ministry shaped your understanding of your vocation as an ordained elder?

I understand the ministry of ordained elder to be a commitment to a lifetime ministry; of preaching the Word; Ordering the administrative life of the church; Serving the community through acts of mercy and justice, and making the Sacraments readily available to the community of faith. My experiences, however, with the fourfold ministry has further reaffirmed my vocation as a calling to servant ministry to God and all of God's children. It is a calling, whereby I am made a partner

together with Christ in the ministry of reconciliation and outreaching love. As a partner with Christ, doing servant ministry requires of me to fulfill the role of a faithful steward of the ministry of reconciliation entrusted to me. In this regard, ministry is not just a job of employment to be maintained, but a calling (way of life) to be fulfilled per the will of the One who has called me.

The Practice of Ministry

- 1) How has the practice of ministry affected your understanding of the expectations and obligations of the itinerant system? Do you offer yourself without reserve to be appointed and to serve as the appointive authority may determine?**

I completely offer myself without reserve to be appointed and to serve as the appointive authority may determine. I completely offer myself in this way because I have been called by God and the call requires my complete following of Jesus Christ who is the example of selfless love and service. I have witnessed from prior experience in my own life in seeing other churches where church members felt like the church was a revolving door, and they lamented this facet of our system of ministry. These churches, however, benefited from the unique perspectives and differing gifts and graces of each pastor. Through their both lamentations and resilience, I have come to understand that itinerancy is ultimately the way to build and participate in God's mission and care for both clergy and the local churches. My expectations and obligations of the itinerant system lies in John Wesley's words, "I am no longer my own but God's." I am called to serve God and God's people in the United Methodist Church through the itinerant system. I, therefore, join other clergy in our system to develop and encourage strong lay leadership in mission to the world; create ever changing opportunities for churches; to re-examine their practices in mission; promote the conversation of diverse visions between pastors and congregations; and ultimately allows for a relationship through which the gospel of God's love, as seen and lived in Christ, can be shared.

- 2) Describe and evaluate your personal gifts for ministry and how they have resulted in fruitful ministry. What would be your areas of strength and areas in which you need to be strengthened in order to be more fruitful in ministry?**

I believe every experience I've had and every person I've met is the perfect preparation for the future in my call-in ministry God has ordained me to. "When God calls, God equips, empowers, provides and qualifies those who are called." Having called and equipped with gifts and graces for the work of ministry, the most pronounced gift in my life is to pastor and teach. Teaching shares the good news that changes lives; teaching becomes iron sharpening iron; teaching nurtures growth. Corrie ten Boom states, "Every experience God gives us, every person He puts in our lives is the perfect preparation for the future that only He can see." So, being the eldest of four siblings, holding a Bachelor's degree in Adult Education and working as a nurse and case manager were preparations for greater things. Complementing these gifts is my ability to build and maintain relationship and be creative in the areas of worship planning, preaching, organization, and audio/visual technology. Among the areas I need improvement—growth, and strength, managing disappointments and frustrations, as well as overcoming being over-committed.

- 3) For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness to the Christian gospel, and in consideration of your influence as an ordained minister, are you willing to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life; and to this end will you agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to physical health, intentional intellectual development, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, integrity in all personal relationships, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge of the love of God?**

For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world, I accept God's call through holiness. Through the empowering of the Holy Spirit, I will live a life that is exemplary, spiritually, emotionally, relationally, and morally with the light of Christ shines in me. I will agree to exercise responsible self-control over personal habits and conduct relative to my physical, emotional, and mental health. As one who has been given authority in the church, I will conduct myself in a way

that brings glory to God and gives a positive and effective witness to Jesus Christ. I pray I will do such by dedicating myself “to the highest ideals of the Christian life.”

- 4) Provide evidence of your willingness to relate yourself in ministry to all persons without regard to race, color, ethnicity, national origin, social status, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, economic condition, or disability.**

Paul expressed the Christian ideal best when he said these words to the Galatians: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28) Having brought up, lived, worked, interacted, and served in various neighborhoods and States with people from diverse origins, relating to persons without regard to race, color, national origin, or social status is part and parcel of my life—it comes quite naturally for me. I have served in cross-racial/cross-cultural appointments. At the Breakfast Ministry in my ministry setting, we serve people of different ages, from different social, economic, and racial backgrounds.

We have been called to be an inclusive Church, one, per the Book of Discipline, means “openness, acceptance, and support that enables all individuals to participate in the life of the church, community, and the world; and...denies every semblance of discrimination.” (BOD, ¶ 139) A church that turns to all people for leadership and ministry on the grounds of their Christian character, faith, and devotion regardless of their gender, ethnic, racial, or social background. As a Christian and pastor, my responsibility is to intentionally create awareness, promote diversity as a gift and encourage positive interactions among people of all color, national origin, and social status.

- 5) Will you regard all pastoral conversations of a confessional nature as a trust between the person concerned and God?**

The United Methodist charges its clergy to maintain all confidences inviolate, including confessional confidences. (BOD, ¶ 341.5) Ministry is a sacred trust entrusted to us by God. It is

required of us to be good stewards of this trust. Due to the nature of this trust, I will regard all pastoral conversations of a confessional nature as a trust between the person concerned and God and myself. Matters of criminal nature such as suspected child or elder abuse, intentions to harm oneself or others, treason, or murder may arise in pastoral conversations. If or when they do, they must be treated in a professionally responsible manner.

6) Provide evidence of experience in peace and justice ministries.

For years, I have been actively involved in several peace and social justice ministries. In the 90s, I served as an administrative assistant in a small Haitian immigration and tax firm. There, I educated and assisted the Haitian community about immigration and tax laws. In 1995, I volunteered and became an advocate for the Alzheimer's patient and their family in a New Mexico Nursing Home. Among my responsibilities, I made sure the quality of care and quality of life, as well as services for those affected with Alzheimer's and their families were improved. I worked for peace and justice as a worker for the state of New Jersey. Most times, children were being separated from families due to lack of food. Seeing the need and even against opposition from management, I opened a clothing and food pantry for families. The pantry, I believe, continues to operate today. For years, I partnered with and supported a church organization in Haiti. Education for everyone was and still is a justice issue for me. Sending financial support and supplies to the church was to make sure children are enrolled and are attending school. Lastly, on a local level, our church Food Pantry has supplied emergency food to over 5500 families and our Community breakfast has provided hot breakfast to over 1500 families on a yearly basis. While this is primarily an act of mercy, overtones of justice such as discrimination, poor health, lack of opportunities for personal and professional development are often what we encounter and thus afford us the opportunities to assist people with issues they may be facing.

In addition to the questions of the Book of Discipline, answer the following:

- 1) Explain the threefold aspects of Wesleyan grace and how have you encountered these in your own ministry/life.**

The threefold aspects (prevenient, justifying, sanctifying) of Wesleyan grace are the process by which we live out our personal relationship with God and help others grow in their relationship with God by addressing spiritual and physical needs. Grace, the undeserved favor and love of God which we all experience whether we realize it or not, is essential to our “way of salvation.” I have encountered these in the life of my congregants. God’s prevenient grace constantly reaches out and meets people where they are and nudges them toward a deeper relationship. I believe that in small covenant communities, we hold each in love and grace and to Christian disciplines, which are certainly a Wesleyan practice. I witnessed God’s love and grace in the life of the church as members walked with individuals who seek to deal, heal, and learn from their circumstances and become the persons that God wanted them to be. This aspect of grace led this person to repentance of sin and realization of the need of God. He began to manifest a sense of life as a gift. It was a sign of God’s “preparatory” grace at work. As this person was preparing for membership he stated: “Every loving act from members and every encounter of the divine character in the created order was a tool God used to bring me closer to God. I just couldn’t do it on my own.” By accepting and returning to God’s way, justifying grace caused a relational change between this person and God. He’d come to know that he was forgiven and a child of God. Through the support and love of others, he realized and had faith that he was restored to relationship with God and became a new creature in Christ. Although forgiven and justified, we are not finished products. Through sanctification, God transforms our will and affection to love God, “to love as God loves, and to desire that which God loves.”^v Continuing to work with this individual, I am aware that God loves us just the way we are—but God also loves us too much to let us stay the same. I, therefore,

assigned a spiritual mentor to encourage, support and guide this person toward holiness and the gift of Christian perfection.

2) Share an instance when you found yourself in ministry with someone whose theology was radically different from your own.

I was appointed to a cross-racial church that absolutely did not like the fact I was a Haitian female pastor. Several members left the congregation. Some gave me the silent treatment. Others would not shake hands with me. Knowing that God created us all equal no matter our gender and race, I was heartbroken. I wrestled with the thoughts of whether I continued to serve or not. I stayed to honor my call and allow the spirit of God to work and be faithful to the task. I stayed the course and found that every moment in the life of the church that highlights an intersection between faith and culture becomes a teaching moment. In that appointment, I intentionally engage members in small group study. I helped them to grow in the understanding that churches embodying the mission of Christ find themselves compelled to embrace the racial and cultural diversity in their midst.

3) Describe how your image of God has changed over your journey. What has informed you of this?

Growing up in an autocratic country and a strict home, I used to think of God as a strict Father. This image of God led me to live out my faith out of fear by obeying every rule and doing good. As I encounter and journey with individuals in diverse situations, my view of God has changed by an unshakable confidence in God's love, goodness and faithfulness. As I witness the forces of wickedness in this world and human agencies of evil in the world, there is an overwhelming feeling of hopelessness and condemnation. Despite it all, ministry has allowed me to experience God as a good, caring and loving God who still acts with authority, love, mercy, compassion and justice on behalf of people like the father in the story of the Prodigal Son. I now understand God's love cannot be earned by following certain rules. God is God. God acts as God sees fit. Whatever God does and/or allows, it is such for the good of those who love Him. (Romans 8: 28)

ⁱ Zwemer, S. M., *The Solitary Throne* (London: Pickering and Inglis, c. 1937),1.

ⁱⁱ Wright, N.T. *For All God's Worth: True Worship and the Calling of the Church*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997.

ⁱⁱⁱ *The Scripture Way of Salvation: The Heart of John Wesley 's Theology* [review] / Kenneth J. Collins.

^{iv} Bondi, Roberta C. *To Love as God Loves*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.

^v Ibid

Karline Dubuisson

Polity

1) Explain the role of deacons, elders, and local pastors in the United Methodist Church and how they are uniquely called and function in the church.

Deacons and elders are ordained in the life of orders in the United Methodist Church. The candidacy process is the same for both Orders. Deacons and Ordained Elders are members in full connection of the annual conference. Deacons are ordained to a ministry of Word, Service, Compassion, and Justice. Deacons serve beyond the local church in their primary field of service. Deacons seek their own placement and then request the Bishop's approval. If Deacons are appointed in a local church, they can administer the sacraments unless given permission by the Bishop at the request of the District Superintendent. (Par. 328-331)

Elders are ordained to a lifetime ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service. Elders are itinerant. Elders administer sacraments in all circumstances. Elders are the administrative officers of the local churches. They provide administrative leadership for the mission and ministry of the church, pastoral care and counseling. Elders, sometimes serve in extension ministries. Some Elders are elected to the office of Bishop and others are appointed district superintendents. (Par. 332-333)

Local pastors are licensed and approved annually by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry. When approved, local pastors perform all duties of a pastor including preaching and teaching; leading in worship and liturgy; receiving new members; performing the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion; the services of confirmation, marriage and burial, within the appointment setting they are appointed to serve—which, depending on how the Conference interprets it, means the church building and the community being served—not beyond it. (Par. 315)

2) What is the process for setting a pastor's salary? Who can change it, and when can it be changed?

The process set by the United Methodist begins with the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) in consultation with the finance committee and the pastor regarding the compensation package. SPRC prepares and presents the salary recommendation to the Administrative Council Board for approval. The charge conference has the ultimate authority to set pastoral salaries and other pastoral provisions. It can be added and changed at any time with special charge conference. (Par. 258.16)

3) The Education committee wants to update the curriculum being taught in the Christian Education program. What specific guidance does the Book of Discipline give you in dealing with this issue?

The *Book of Discipline* gives guidance and backs it up with various tools, resources and ideas through the General Board of Discipleship (GBOD). Curriculums for Christian Education for all ages are developed, reviewed and approved by GBOD. The pastor has the final authority over educational matters within the church. At my current appointment, we currently use sermonsforkids.com resources to teach Sunday School. The children's age ranges from two to thirteen years old. I feel the curriculum was not appropriate for the older children. The Sunday school coordinator, the youth group director, all the teachers and I meet to determine the right program according to the children's developmental age and educational needs. Due to budgetary needs and shortage of teachers, we are reviewing *Deep Blue One Room Sunday School*. (Par. 1123)

4) You have discovered a need in the community for a soup kitchen, and wish to recommend that this be a priority for the congregation, using the facilities of the church. What parties and processes need to be involved?

I began to search for individuals who might be interested in assessing, planning, implementing the ministry when I discovered the need for a youth group ministry in my ministry setting. I

consulted the Board of Trustees to ensure the facility is adequate for the program. In this instance, the church did not have Safe Sanctuary Policies and was not certified. The Board of Trustees ensured all local and state laws concerning the use of the facilities are updated and the physical facilities are adequately prepared for the program. (Par. 2533.3) I, then, submitted the recommendation to the Administrative Council which is responsible for planning and implementing the programs of the local church. The Council adopted the proposed program at its meeting. The Council ensured proper training and planning are done and program implementation. (Par. 256.c)

5) A constituent of your church comes to speak with you about their call to ministry. Describe the basic steps that are involved in seeking ordination.

The basic step in seeking ordination is to talk to the pastor and to also be a member in good standing in the United Methodist Church. The member applies for candidacy for ministry by writing to the District Superintendent. If approved, the member is assigned a mentor and registers in the candidacy program. After a period of study, meetings with the mentor and all necessary paperwork are cleared (criminal background and credit checks, psychological test and written and oral examinations) the member will be approved by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry. After a year of being certified, the candidate applies for provisional membership during which the candidate performs pastoral duties as assigned by the Bishop; prepares assigned projects, and completes a residency. At the end of the provisional period, the candidate submits required written paperwork and interviews with the Board of Ordained Ministry. If approved, the candidate will be ordained at the annual conference ordination service. (Par. 309-313)

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6) Describe the general structure of the Annual Conference and how each body functions.

The Annual Conference is the yearly meeting of all local churches for legislative purposes. Referred to as regional body, the Annual Conference is described by the church's Book of Discipline as the "basic unit" of the church. It is the primary link in the church's connectional structure. The annual conference is composed of clergy and lay members elected by each charge, diaconal ministers, conference presidents of United Methodist Women and United Methodist Men, conference and district lay leaders, and presidents of young adult and youth organizations. At the annual conference, programs and budget, election of delegates to General and Jurisdictional conferences, and examination and recommendation of candidates for ministry are approved. Regional churches make up their own legislation to send into the general conference. As an organizational body, the annual conference has a central office and professional staff that coordinate and conduct ministry and the business of the conference. Clergy and laypersons serve on conference boards, commissions and committees. Annual Conferences are divided by districts. Districts are served by District Superintendents. Pastors itinerate and serve churches within the annual conference. Through shared ministries local churches contribute financial resources and support the administrative work and ministries of the United Methodist Church worldwide. (Par. 32-34)

7) Describe the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of the United Methodist Church.

The legislative branch of the United Methodist Church is the only body that officially speaks and sets policies for the church—it is also known as the General Conference. It meets every four years to determine legislations affecting connectional matters, unless a special general conference is called. The delegates, half clergy and half laity, that represent and attend General

Conference from around the world, are elected by annual conference. (Par. 13-14)

The judicial branch, also known as Judicial Council, is the highest judicial body or “court” of The United Methodist Church. It is composed of nine diverse clergy and laity members who are elected for eight-year terms by the General Conference. The members normally meet twice a year. The judicial branch interprets church law and determines constitutionality of all proceedings at all level of the church. (Par. 56)

The executive branch, composed of retired and active bishops, makes up the Council of Bishops. The Council provides general oversight of the ministry, mission, and spiritual leadership of the church. The council meets at least once a year. Bishops that serve in the council are not ordained. They are clergy elected and consecrated to the office of Bishop. (Par. 422)

8) What is your understanding of the theology behind Shared Ministries giving?

In 1 Corinthians, Paul speaks of a collection be taken among the church scattered around the empire to be sent to the Christians in Jerusalem. Shared Ministries giving also reflect the connectional sharing of resources found in the book of Acts. “...that after receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the early believers shared their resources as they lived out the Kingdom of God.” Shared ministry sees the church as the Body of Christ in the world—a body of laity and clergy—who seek to bring all people and all creation into unity with God through Christ. Shared ministry embodies mutuality in relationships as well as sharing of power, leadership, and decision-making by involving all the people of God in ministry—calling them to work together and using all the aspects of their lives to accomplish the work of God by virtue of their baptism and Jesus’ mandate to “love God and to love our neighbor.” As a connectional church, we come together to support ministries of the church through the first mile giving, namely shared ministries. As a pastor, I ensure the congregation understands the importance of first mile giving.

Keeping my congregation committed to pay one hundred percent of its shared ministries, we agree to discontinue payments to a Liberia ministry. As a teaching moment and a way to continue in this understanding, we were able to obtain a grant to support the Breakfast and Food Pantry ministry for the year without dipping into the church budget.

9) You have an idea for a unique form of ministry. How does the Book of Discipline guide us in seeking affirmation for ministries that are beyond the local church? What is the role of extension ministry in the life of the church?

The role of extension ministry is to extend the witness and service of Christ's love and justice in the world. In seeking affirmation for extension of ministry, a great starting point is to have a dialogue with the District Superintendent. Clergy in extension ministry is directly related to a conference and may fulfill ministerial roles in that context. The clergy sets up the ministry with the institution and agency relative to such an appointment. The clergy prepares and submits required materials to the Bishop and is interviewed with the Extension Ministries Committee of Board of Ordained Ministry. The clergy is required to submit an annual written report on the official appointment to an Extension Ministry as the basis of evaluation to the conference. ((Par. 343)

10) In what ways does your upbringing, your cultural context, your personal experience shape your understanding of our polity?

I grew up on a Caribbean Island led by autocrats and dictators. The matriarchal side of the family largely defined and influenced my understanding of our polity. My mother, the matriarch of the family, taught me and exemplified the value of connectionalism. Her famous line was, "It takes a village to raise a child." In that, the village's resources, wisdom, gifts, authority, history, strengths and challenges were shared equally among the village.

As a United Methodist, I observe and experience similar characteristic. Through the general agencies, human talent is shared in the itinerant system. Ordained elders are devoted to an

itinerant ministry which brings a fresh exchange of ideas, energy and different gifts between local churches, clergy, and Cabinet members. Funds are shared through the apportionment system and through committees such as UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief)—assuring that the collective ministry of the global United Methodist Church is one of the most effective organizations for justice and service in the world. We are connected globally, through our history, and the way in which we share authority. This reminds me of a phrase printed in my country's flag: "Unity is Power." Throughout my upbringing, my mom demonstrated this idea. She has rarely done any tasks alone. Such experience has led me to think about both Annual and General Conference. Laity and pastors come together at either Conferences, officiated by Bishops, to, not only determine the content of the Book of Discipline—the governing document of the United Methodist Church, but also, to commune together as one and to reflect the traditions of the church and the changing diversity of the body.

Where there is any diverse community, challenges of conflict and anxiety always exist. As the matriarchal head of our family, my mom faced these challenges and navigated through each to keep the community united. Similarly, as United Methodists, we can be challenged by our diversity, however it's our connectionalism, infused with life by the Holy Spirit which offers the best hope for accomplishing the mission of the churches and pastors who are within the connection. Together, we can accomplish so much more than we could ever dream of accomplishing alone.

Bibliography

The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church. Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012.

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Karline Dubuisson

Biographical Statement

The eldest of four, I was born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, to a crochet beader and an orderly. Following the decline of my father's health due to mental illness, my mother practically raised us alone. Those were turbulent years in our household. At the age of four, my mother finally escaped my father's violent outbursts.

We endured several hardships in those formative years. However, it is without a doubt that God protected, and blessed our family immeasurably. One of many blessings occurred in August, 1985; my family emigrated to the United States from Haiti. Our family escaped the brutal existence of political turmoil in the hopes of getting a better life and education. In the United States, home life was still very much traditional. We lived under the strict rules and discipline of my mother. As the eldest, I witnessed the long hours and hard work my mother had to endure at a factory to make a life for our family. To help our family, I learned to crochet bead at a very young age. This helped to improve and bolster household finances.

Although we did not speak English and had not had much hope of success, my mother had high expectations of me. I worked hard during my high school years, but college was a foreign matter to us. We didn't have any knowledge about college or how to begin to navigate the process. Hence, attending an institute of higher education was not yet an option. I would eventually go on to earn a Bachelors, as well as a Masters degree. My education now allows me to speak and write fluently in three languages: French, Creole, and English.

Three years following high school, I married and had two beautiful daughters, I however divorced in 2000. In 2002, I married my childhood friend. Together we have a blended family of four children. Landing in many unfulfilling jobs in New York at the time, I made the move to New Jersey where I struggled to find a career and purpose. I enrolled in a 12-month program to obtaining a certificate as a Licensed Practical Nurse in 2000, finding that work to be unfulfilling as well, I earned another certificate, and eventually went on to work as an Operating Room Nurse. After a major layoff, I made the decision to attend Burlington County College in 2004. There, I obtained an AS in Human Services. The following year, I received a BA in Adult Education—with this degree, I was able to find work in the Social Work field with the State of New Jersey.

In 2007, I felt a pull toward a higher and more fulfilling purpose, I responded to this purpose by attending Palmer Theological Seminary. The call that I came to recognize much later was neither dramatic nor spectacular. Rather, it was a response to an inner urge that gradually came upon me. This pull expressed itself in a desire to serve God and humanity, and the feeling that my talent and commitment could best be expressed through ministry.

However, growing up, our family's spirituality had been minimal. I was raised Catholic, baptized as a baby, and had my first communion. As a family, we did not pray nor read the Bible together. But we trusted God. Although my mother did not attend church, she made sure my brothers and I attended service every Sunday. In 1980, I was introduced to and enjoyed worshipping at a Pentecostal church not far from where we lived. There, I found a newfound love for God. In the US, however, I ventured away for years before God gently tugged me back to God's everlasting love.

God led me into a local church where I grew spiritually and served wholeheartedly in leading worship, preaching, teaching, working with youth, and sharing the Gospel. It was at that local church I received God's summons to actively pursue ministry to which I hesitantly responded "Here am I, send me."

The decision to engage in ministry was not an easy one. During those years in Seminary, however, God gently brought me around to acknowledging a call to ministry of Word and Sacrament. I am now seeking to be an ordained Elder in the United Methodist Church. Needless to say, I come into ministry with open mind and the bountiful love of God in my heart to serve.

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49 Maplewood Blvd
Suffern, NY 10901

kaay718@gmail.com
Cell 609-456-3721

Karline Dubuisson

Family

Spouse: Claude-Edvard Dubuisson

Children: Carl-Erick Dubuisson (24); Kaybienne Rosado (22); Khaila Rosado (20);
Nijel Kvard Dubuisson (12)

Home Church: Saint Mary Street United Methodist Church
483 Saint Mary Street, Burlington, NJ 08016

Experience

2015-Present The United Methodist Church of Spring Valley Spring Valley, NY
Pastor

Administrative Leader: attend to the day-to-day business of the church
Plan worship services and events; equip staff and leaders to coordinate services and events
Plan and deliver weekly sermons and prepare long-term preaching plans/sermon series
Lead Bible study classes and prayer ministry
Provide pastoral care, including hospital, shut-in, bereavement, and funeral visitation; guide and counsel congregation.
Create and implement church vision and execute strategies to achieve short and long term spiritual and organizational goals and objectives
Collaborate with Finance and Stewardship Ministry Group to manage Church's finances and plan strategies to grow stewardship.
Devise, create, and run a thriving youth ministry
Work with Outreach Committee to implement ministries reaching out to unchurched, inactive, and new residents of the community; direct assimilation of new members into congregation
Oversee staff and laities and ensure they have resources to fulfill duties and responsibilities.
Care for the spiritual and temporal needs of the congregation and community
Act as a counselor and advisor to children, youth, young adults and seniors
Attend all meetings

2013-2015 First United Methodist Church of Riverside Riverside, NJ
Licensed Local Pastor

Attended to the day-to-day business of the church
Cared for the spiritual and temporal needs of the congregation and community
Sought to equip lay persons
Acted as a counselor and advisor to youth and adults
Provided lifetime guidance

2012-2013 Chambers United Methodist Church Hamilton, NJ
Supply Pastor

Attended to the day-to-day business of the church
Cared for the spiritual and temporal needs of the congregation and community
Sought to equip lay persons
Acted as a counselor and advisor to youth and adults
Provided lifetime guidance

2007-2015	D CPP	Willingboro, NJ
Family Service Specialist II		
Provide direct treatment/counseling services, Family Team Meetings, and referrals for family services to a high risk caseload requiring intensive intervention		
Prepare for and facilitates Family Team Meetings		
Prepare for and facilitate parent child visitation and sibling visitation		
Process children for adoption placement		
Prepares computation for adoption subsidy		
Handle a caseload of clients who struggle with issues including anger management, sexual abuse and/or behavioral health concerns to enable individuals to more effectively strengthen family connections and plan for successful outcomes.		
Provide documentation for the preparation of detailed affidavits and legal complaints		
Act as a witness in court and provides testimony under oath		
Visit homes of client and families to plan and implement corrective measures and approaches to problems of parent/child relationships		
Prepare forms and reports and other required paperwork		
Locate and secure resource homes for children		
2004-2007	DYFS	Mount Laurel, NJ
Assistant Family Service Worker		
Gathered social information about clients		
Made assessments of cases		
Maintained records and files		
Kept accurate and informative record on the Web-Based System for each client		
Implemented preventive, rehabilitative, and/or supportive treatment		
Supervised visitation in and out of the office		
Field visitation to assist client to utilize community resources		
Delivery of discoveries to lawyers and legal documents to courts		
Assisted in coordinating the office's car fleet		
Coordinated the Office Food Pantry		
2000-2003	Lady of Lourdes of Burlington	Willingboro, NJ
Operating Room Nurse		
Provided emotional support to patients		
Assisted surgeons with various surgery		
Maintained a sterile field		
Assisted with picking instruments and preparing the rooms for surgeries		
Provided support to doctors and nurses during surgeries		
Knowledge of instrumentations for surgery		
Data entry as well as ordering supplies		
1997-2000	Virtua Health and Rehab Center	Mt Holly, NJ
Certified Nursing Assistant		
Worked with and interacted with elderly residents suffering from mental illness and Alzheimer's in an assisted living environment		
Provided support to doctors and nurses during medical procedures		
Assisted patients with daily living activities		
Accurately took and recorded patient vital signs		
1995-1996	Retirement Ranches	Clovis, NM
Certified Nursing Assistant		
Worked with and interacted with elderly residents suffering from mental illness and Alzheimer's in an assisted living environment		
Provided support to doctors and nurses during medical procedures.		

Assisted patients with daily living activities
 Accurately took and recorded patient vital signs
 Transported patients to meals and various therapies.

1990-1992 Carsetrain Brooklyn, NY
 Administrative Clerk
 Answered telephone
 Sold money orders
 Sent and received faxes
 Sent out and received mails and packages
 Managed files
 Scheduled and coordinated meetings
 Managed inventory of assets and supplies, monitoring critical level of stocks, sourcing for suppliers and submitting invoice(s)
 Prepared Income Taxes for customers yearly
 Provided support in all areas and all day to day operations of the office

1990-1992 Self-Employed Brooklyn, NY
 Modeling/Broadcasting
 Modeled clothes and shoes for various companies
 Co-hosted a television show for the Haitian community
 Interviewed guests
 Made station announcements
 Researched information, prepared, read scripts, and conducted interviews
 Reported news from the Haitian community

1986-1994 Self-Employed Brooklyn, NY
 Crochet Beading
 Sew and crochet beads, sequins, and similar materials on appliqués, wedding dresses, prom dresses, pageant dresses, etc.

Education	<p>2007-2012 Palmer Theological Seminary Wynnewood, PA Master of Divinity</p> <p>2006-2007 Southern Illinois University Carbondale, IL Bachelor of Science: Adult Education and Workforce Development Graduated with honor</p> <p>2004-2006 Burlington County College Pemberton, NJ Associates of Applied Science: Human Services Graduated with honor</p> <p>2000-2001 Harrison Career Institute Delran, NJ Operating Room Technician Completed 500 hours of classroom time. Completed 350 hours of intern in which 100 hours at Cooper Hospital at the central supply department, and 250 hours at Vineland Ambulatory Care center</p>
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1995-1996 Clovis Community College Clovis, NM
Nursing Program
Enrolled in Nursing Program
Did not complete the program

1994-1995 Brooklyn School Brooklyn, NY
Nursing Assistant
Completed nursing assistant course.
Obtained a certificate
Certified by the state of NY, NM, and NJ

1987-1990 George W. Wingate HS Brooklyn, NY
High School
Graduated with honor

Special Skills Proficient/advanced use of Microsoft Access, Word, Outlook, PowerPoint, Adobe Excel

Interest/Hobbies Reading, Gardening, Crochet Beading, Music

Languages Speak and write in English, French, Haitian Creole

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ILIFF, SUSAN

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- 2) Bible Study
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- 4) Theology, Call, & Doctrine
- 5) Polity
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NOTES

Dear Members of the GNJAC Board of Ordained Ministry,

The title of the sermon I preached on September 18, 2016 was “Mammon, Manager, and Master.” The scripture passage from the lectionary selected as the focus for the sermon was Luke 16:1-13. Another scripture passage included as part of the service was 1 Timothy 2:1-7; both used the NRSV translation.

The sermon was shared with those present in worship at the First United Methodist Church of Westfield, NJ. The 99 persons in attendance during worship included six visitors. The composition of FUMC’s congregation is predominantly Caucasian/Euro-American with some congregants of African-American, Caribbean, South and Central American, Cuban, and Asian heritage.

The September 18th service occurred one week following our annual “Rally Day” kick-off and it included a dedicated time with our children and a special “Testimonial to Prayer” moment of witnessing shared by a leader of the Women’s Prayer group.

Thank you,

Susan A. Iliff

1 Timothy 2:1-7 (NRSV)

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, ²for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. ³This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, ⁶who gave himself a ransom for all—this was attested at the right time. ⁷For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

Luke 16:1-13 (NRSV)

Then Jesus said to the disciples, “There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. ²So he summoned him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.’ ³Then the manager said to himself, ‘What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. ⁴I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.’ ⁵So, summoning his master’s debtors one by one, he asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ ⁶He answered, ‘A hundred jugs of olive oil.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.’ ⁷Then he asked another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ He replied, ‘A hundred containers of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill and make it eighty.’ ⁸And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. ⁹And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes. ¹⁰“Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. ¹¹If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? ¹²And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? ¹³No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”

Jesus has gone and done it again! Turned things upside down and inside out! This parable may be one of Jesus' most challenging to make sense of. We start with the manager, or steward, who we may assume is being dishonest in managing his master's property. What Luke's gospel actually says is that someone accused the manager of squandering, or wasting the master's property. We don't know who that someone was. If we understand the role of a steward in ancient Palestine, we realize he was likely simply doing his job. The steward, or manager, was the middleman between the wealthy master, who owned property. The steward was responsible to make a profit through negotiating with the merchants and those working the master's land. The manager bought and sold grain, oil, and crops and was able to pad the prices skim from the profits to make a living for himself. This was acceptable as long as it was within limits and didn't get excessive.¹

So our manager finds himself on the defense for doing his job, has to think quickly about how he will survive after he loses his job, and comes up with the plan to decrease the amounts some folks owe the master. Perhaps these were the ones who had brought charges against the manager. Lowering their debt would make them happier and perhaps they'd then be more hospitable or charitable toward the manager after he'd lost his job. Maybe they'd invite him into their homes for a meal.

This approach stands the manager in good stead with the master, who is impressed with his shrewd thinking. Everyone wins! The debtors owe less, the master still gets his profit, just minus the markup or surcharge that was the manager's cut. The master is pleased with the manager's shrewd actions and perhaps even retains the manager in his position. We don't know as Luke's passage doesn't tell us.

That was back then, but how about some modern day workplace examples?

A company has made announcements of future layoffs, telling people their positions are being eliminated. What do the workers do? They use their time to get their resumes updated, take classes that will prepare them with new knowledge and skills, network both with colleagues and strangers, and practice in mock interviews. Are they dishonest ...by not spending all their time doing the work they typically did for the company? Or are they shrewd...by looking out for themselves and their future?

Another – In 2007 Mylan Pharmaceuticals acquired the product EpiPen, an epinephrine autoinjector that provides quick-acting treatment for people with allergies. Mylan marketed the product effectively and the price has continued to raise, in the US exorbitantly so, with over 500% increase since 2009. They have had minimal competition but may face a challenge from a competitor's generic product that is under review by the Food and Drug Administration. Mylan announced it would offer a generic version of the EpiPen at about half of the cost of the original. Mylan is also investigating having the EpiPen listed as a preventive medical service, which would eliminate out-of-pocket costs for the product for many purchasers. Is Mylan being dishonest, or unethical, or simply being shrewd? Mylan is looking out for itself; but how are they looking out for those who need EpiPens and other of their medications?

The soon-to-be unemployed workers, Mylan Pharmaceuticals, the steward of the master's property in Jesus' parable...dishonest...or shrewd?

Let's return to Luke's gospel and explore what we understand Jesus to be saying after he shifts to "And I tell you..." and continues to share with his disciples some confusing advice.

"And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes." (Luke 16:9)

This is where we say “Wait!...What!?” Is Jesus really telling his disciples, and us, to do what the manager steward seemed to do...to take from his master by forgiving some debts? Are we to view the manager as a Palestinian Robin Hood who took from the rich and gave to the poor?

Jesus is really pointing his disciples, and us, elsewhere. Jesus’ focus is concern for the poor, and the coming reality of the kingdom of God that will usher in a great reversal – the raising up of the poor and oppressed and the bringing down of the wealthy and powerful. Luke focuses on fellowship and community as part of the kingdom of God. Jesus shared another parable in Luke 14 about throwing a banquet and inviting not your friends and relatives, but “the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.” (Luke 14:13) And the reason he gives? “You will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” (Luke 14:14) In the kingdom, all will live and dine together in community. Jesus was pointing out while the manager’s actions of forgiving debt was done with the purpose of receiving a meal when he was unemployed, there was a better way to be.

Jesus was telling his disciples that they need to look out for themselves not just for the immediate need and gain, but for the future in the coming kingdom. Jesus would have them, and us, focus not on the materialistic and only for ourselves, but look out for those in need, the poor, the stranger, the marginalized, the oppressed. Jesus would have us give with no expectation of receiving back. Taking care of ourselves is part of God’s loving plan for us, but in focusing outward beyond ourselves, we are expressing our devotion to God. We are living out the loving of our neighbor as ourselves. In doing this

we are living out creating the kingdom of God on earth, and we will reap the true riches of eternal life and the gift of our salvation through Jesus Christ.

Jesus' statements "No slave can serve two masters..." and "You cannot serve God and wealth" seem to position God and wealth in opposition. Jesus would have us worship and serve God, and to have our wealth put to use through our service to God and caring for God's people including the least of them. Preacher Fred Craddock emphasized that what is important is what we use our wealth for, and that we are to handle our possessions so as to gain, not lose, eternal life.²

God is calling each of us to address that issue for ourselves, and God is calling this church family to determine how we are to use our spiritual gifts, our wealth, and our building and facility, to serve God and God's people.

We are in a process of discernment as we reevaluate who we are as people of God, as a church family and congregation located in this town of Westfield. Our church council and other interested folks met with our District Superintendent Drew Dyson in August and discussed three questions: Who are we? Who are our neighbors? And Who is God calling us to be in this time and place?

There were many thoughts and comments shared that night, and our conversation needs to and will continue, and be expanded, to include your ideas and responses to these and other questions. Yet at the core will be our identity as a people of God, as Christians and United Methodists, to live out the greatest commandment: to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." Jesus' parable from Luke's gospel reminds us to follow the second commandment: to "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Let us follow Jesus' words, choosing to serve God as master and to use our wealth, our possessions in ways that further the kingdom of God and lead to eternal life.

Amen.

¹ <http://www.patheos.com/Progressive-Christian/Dishonest-Steward-Alyce-McKenzie-09-16-2013?offset=2&max=1>

² <http://johnfairless.podbean.com/>

1. Theological Significance of Acts of Worship

- a. Prelude – The musical prelude provided a time to focus, prepare our hearts and minds, and be fully present as we enter into worship.
- b. Welcome and Announcements – We welcome all present as God welcomes us. This includes communicating upcoming events, mission opportunities, and other information important in the life of the church family. This occurs early to avoid interrupting the flow of the service.
- c. Call to Worship – This responsive exchange, led by the lay reader, focused the congregants on the theme of worship and draws the people into the liturgical conversation.
- d. Opening Hymn – The movement of drawing the people together continued as this hymn provided an opportunity for all to join and share in praising God through song with *one voice*. “This is My Song” was selected as it has inspiring lyrics that emphasize the themes of peace, God as God of all nations, and the uniting of all in Christ. It connected with the Scripture passage from 1 Timothy.
- e. Opening Prayer – This prayer served to continue the connection of the people through the communal act of praying in *one voice*.
- f. Anthem – The anthem provided an opportunity for the congregation to experience, as one body, the Sanctuary Choir’s musical offering to God’s glory. In this instance Martin Shaw’s “With a Voice of Singing,” provided a spirited reminder of God’s faithfulness to us and supported the theme of praising God through singing and song.
- g. A Time with the Children – This special time with the children, prior to the children leaving worship for their Young Disciples Time, represents Jesus saying “...Let the little children come to me...” (Matthew 19:14) They listen and participate in the sharing of a Bible story or other lesson.

- h. Testimonial to Prayer – This time of personal witness enabled one of the leaders of the Women’s Prayer Group to share about the importance of prayer in her life, in the life of the church, and to increase awareness of the Women’s Prayer Group and their willingness to accept prayer requests.
- i. Scripture (Epistle Lesson, Gospel Lesson) – The time of proclamation, when the scripture passages are read aloud, by the lay reader and the preacher respectively, enabled persons to embrace, through their hearing, the word of God.
- j. Sermon – The sermon provided a means for the preacher to continue the proclamation with a message that delves into the selected scripture passage(s) and addresses practical applications pertaining to the life of the people. The sermon provided a perspective on Luke’s description of Jesus’ parable about the shrewd manager. It focused on Jesus’ concern for his disciples, and for us, to care not just for ourselves but for others in need, which expresses our devotion to God.
- k. Hymn – This hymn shifted the people from listening into participating through singing. “I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light” and bridged the proclamation to the response. It provided a musical means for people to absorb and assimilate the theme of following Jesus Christ and thus complemented the sermon.
- l. Joys and Concerns – This intercessory sharing of the people’s submitted prayer requests, whether joyful news or concerns, provides a means to include current prayer needs. It marks a shift in the service to the “Response” following the “Proclamation” portion of the service. It was followed by a congregational choral response “Let it Breathe on Me.”

- m. Morning Prayer and Lord's Prayer – The morning prayer is a reflective response to the proclamation, supporting the themes of the service and sharing intercessory prayer and was followed by the Lords' Prayer corporate prayer, reconnecting the people in *one voice*.
 - n. Offering/Offertory –The opportunity to honor and worship God through the giving of tithes and financial offerings is accompanied by the offertory which can support the service focus as it is an offering to God's glory.
 - o. Presentation of the Offering – As the offering is brought forward and presented to God, the *Old 100th*, a choral expression of praise, is sung collectively; it serves to reconnect the people, in *one voice*, in preparation for prayer.
 - p. Prayer of Thanksgiving – This prayer verbally expresses gratitude to God for all that we have received and acknowledges the gifts given by the people in God's honor.
 - q. Hymn – The hymn, "Make Me a Channel of Your Peace," continued the theme of peace and emphasized that we are called to serve God through bringing Christ to others in many ways.
 - r. Benediction – This sends the people forth with the joy and assurance of God's love.
 - s. Postlude – This provides a time for people to transition from worship as they prepare to go forth to their homes or into the community.
2. a) The selection of hymns is addressed in in 1.d, 1.k, and 1.q above.
- b) The purpose of the sermon is addressed in 1.j above.
- c) The Order of Worship connected different components of worship, music, individual voices (reading, witnessing, and preaching) with corporate acts of worship (responsive liturgy, singing, praying, offering) as it supports the themes of peace, following Jesus Christ and loving others.

18th Sunday after Pentecost

10 AM Worship

Prelude— “Siciliene”. Von Paradis
Jonathan Evers, organist

Welcome and Announcements

Gathering

***Call to Worship—**

L: What do we know about God?

P: That God desires all to have the knowledge of truth.

L: There is one God,

P There is one Christ Jesus,

L: Both human and divine,

P: Who came for us all.

L: There is one Holy Spirit, our advocate,

P: Who inspires us into living out our faith.

L: We know this, and we believe!

All: We walk with faith, and with hope, and the truth that Christ has set us free. We enter into this time of worship, as we journey towards the truth and light of Christ.

***Hymn**— “This is My Song”.UMH 437

Opening Prayer— *(in unison)*

Holy God, we praise you that in Jesus Christ you have blessed us with your glory and your amazing grace. Make us faithful stewards of the gifts which you have entrusted to each of us, that we may share your love with all your people. Let us walk in your way, worshipping and serving you forever. Amen

Anthem— “With a Voice of Singing”. Martin Shaw

Time for Children Kevin Dresely
(Children may leave for Young Disciples in room 218; they will return after the sermon.)

Testimonial to Prayer— Diane Silvester

Proclamation

Epistle Lesson— 1 Timothy 2: 1-7

Gospel Lesson— Luke 16: 1-13

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God

Sermon— “Mammon, Manager, and Master” Rev. Susan Iliff

Response

***Hymn**— “I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light”. UMH 206

Joys and Concerns

Choral Response— “Let It Breath on Me”. UMH 503

Morning Prayer and The Lord’s Prayer

Offertory— “Ist Gott für mich, so trete”. Helmut Walcha

***Presentation of the Offering** *Old 100th* UMH 95

***Prayer of Thanksgiving**

Sending Forth

***Hymn**— “Make Me a Channel of Your Peace”. TFWS 2171

***Benediction**

Postlude— “Prelude in C”. J.S. Bach

**Please stand as you are able.*

TFWS = The Faith We Sing and UMH—United Methodist Hymnal

Nursery care is available in Room 104 during the service. The Fellowship Room is available for those who need to leave the Sanctuary but still want to watch the service. FM receivers for enhanced listening and large print bulletins and hymnals are available from the ushers.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome to our community of faith! We are grateful you are here. Know that the pastoral staff is available for conversation, counsel and prayer. Please fill out the green connection card in the pew so that we can follow up with you! Thanks!
Greeters are Jill and Kevin Spellman. **Ushers** are Thomas White, Robert Broadwell, Charlotte Broadwell, Maria Vitale, Vanessa Zimmerman. **Acolyte** is Lucy Burke.
On our Prayer List: Juanita Olson; Ollie Tice; Shirley Payne; Lee Mumford; Milton Wick; David Norwine; Peggy Norwine; Barbara Hooper; Dale Hooper; Christopher Relton; Marianne Salanik, Lou Kraft; Lisa Merkle Foley; Craig Toenes; Joe Guar-

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Calendar of This Week's Events

Today

11:00 a.m. Fellowship Time, FR
 3:00 p.m. Family Caregiver Group, FR
 5:00 p.m. UECF, Sanctuary, FR, SH, 218
 5:30 p.m. Youth Group, 3rd floor loft

Monday, September 19

5:30 p.m. Imagine, SH, FR, 102, 103, 105,
 107, 3rd fl. Loft
 7:30 p.m. WH Board meeting, rm. 218

Tuesday, September 20

5:30 p.m. Imagine, SH, 102, 103, 105, 107,
 218, 3rd fl. Loft

Wednesday, September 21

12:00 p.m. Prayer Shawl, FR
 3:30 p.m. *Jesus and Joe*, Starbucks Central
 Avenue

Thursday, September 22

6:30 p.m. Elementary Choir, choir room

7:00 p.m. WH Back to School Night, classrooms, FR
 Youth Choir, choir room

7:30 p.m. Sanctuary Choir, choir room
 Trustees, room 218

Friday, September 23

7:30 p.m. UECF Bible Study & Prayer, FR & rm. 218

Saturday, September 24

8:45 a.m. Covenant Discipleship Group, room 105

Sunday, September 25

9:00 a.m. Church School for all ages
 Adult Education Classes, FR & 105
 10:00 a.m. Morning Worship, Special Music Sunday,
 Rev. Dr. David C. Mertz
 11:00 a.m. Fellowship Time, FR
 5:00 p.m. UECF, Sanctuary, FR, SH, 218
 5:30 p.m. Youth Group, 3rd floor loft

raci; Richard Sussman; Ken Smith in the death of his wife Marianne; Henry Fitschen; William Teltser; Joe and Annie Qutub; Kristen Smith; Brigid Barber; Arlene Cutler; Jill Damasek; Tony Granato and family; Tristan Jones in the death of his grandmother, Eveline McCluskey; The Dickerson Family; Nico West; Jacob Qua and his family; The family of Carrie Ann McGuire; Monika Guzman; Wolfgang Weigman

The altar flowers are given in memory of Maxine, Vernon and Doug Woodfield by the Woodfield Family.

Non-perishable food donations are needed for the Westfield Food Pantry. Place your items in the bin in the Lobby.

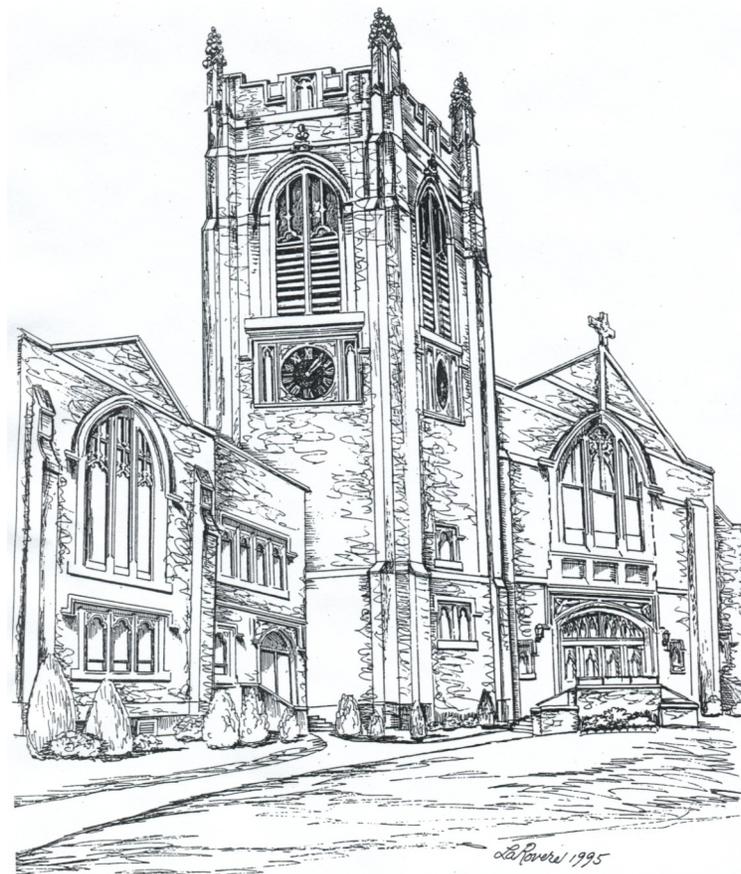
Youth News. Jesus & Joe: Join us *each Wednesday* for youth Bible study/small group, Jesus & Joe from 3:30-5 PM at the Starbucks on Central Ave. Youth Group (MYE): To kick off the year, we will be having a meeting TONIGHT (Sep. 18) from 5:30-7:30 PM in the Loft. All youth (grades 6-12) and their parents are welcome to come for dinner, fun group games and a big brainstorming session for the fall! Contact Kylie Haskins for more information kyliewhaskins@gmail.com.

Pick up your 2016 Membership Directory! New Membership Directories—a compilation of member address, phone numbers and email addresses is available outside the church office. One per family please.

Music News. Sanctuary Choir rehearses Thursday nights from 7:30 – 9 PM in the Choir Room and sings on Sundays at 10 AM. All are invited to join us! Elementary and Youth Choirs rehearse on Thursdays in the choir room (Elementary Choir at 6:30 PM; Youth Choir at 7:00 PM). For more information contact Jonathan Evers at music@fumcwestfield.org.

UMW Mum Sale! The United Methodist Women are having their annual Chrysanthemum Sale! Cost is \$8.00 each for an 8" potted mum. The choice of colors are white, lavender, yellow, bronze or red. (No pre-order required). Pick up your mums TODAY or Sunday, September 25th!

(Announcements continue on inserted sheet.)



First United Methodist Church

One East Broad Street, Westfield, NJ 07090

Telephone: 908-233-4211 Office email: office@fumcwestfield.org
www.fumcwestfield.org

September 18, 2016

STAFF

Rev. Dr. David C. Mertz	Senior Pastor
Rev. Susan Iliff	Associate Pastor
Jonathan Evers	Music Director
Marcee Rogers	Children's Program Coordinator
Kylie Haskins	Youth Coordinator
Melissa Romelli	Director of Wesley Hall
Susan Granski	Administrative Secretary
Linda Newingham	Christian Education Secretary
Joseph Guarraci	Maintenance Supervisor

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2. Bible Study

1. Setting and purpose of the study

The Bible study, simply entitled “1 Timothy,” was designed as a three week adult education/adult faith development opportunity. It was scheduled for Sunday mornings from 9:00 – 9:50 a.m., the typical education “hour,” which preceded 10:00 a.m. morning worship. The study was held in the Fellowship Room, a large comfortable space, carpeted and easily accessible to individuals with limited mobility. Cushioned folding chairs were arranged in a semi-circle with two rows in front of a wall-mounted screen onto which the PowerPoint presentation was projected. I sat at one end of the front row so as to be connected with the group. The purpose of the study was to learn about the pastoral epistle, 1 Timothy, the author’s message, its meaning, and explore current application to the attendees’ lives. We began and ended each session with prayer.

Attendees included individuals who attend or are members of FUMC, Westfield and who live in Westfield or a nearby community. Westfield, a well-educated and moderately wealthy community with excellent schools, has a population of over 30,000. The congregation is predominantly Euro-American with an African-American, Asian, and Latino presence. The study attendees included fifteen Euro-Americans ranging in age from late 20’s to 80’s; six were male and nine were female. The attendees were middle class and most were highly educated (college and/or post-graduate education).

2. Outline

- I. Study Overview
- II. Introduction to 1 Timothy
 - A. The pastoral epistles/letters
 - B. Who was Timothy?
 - C. The author of 1 Timothy
 - D. Historical setting

- III. 1 Timothy Chapter 1
- IV. 1 Timothy Chapter 2
- V. 1 Timothy Chapter 3
- VI. 1 Timothy Chapter 4
- VII. 1 Timothy Chapter 5
- VIII. 1 Timothy Chapter 6

3. Detailed Lesson Plan for Lesson 1 (week 1)

- I. Study Overview
 - A. Sessions and scheduling
 - B. Reading preparation
 - C. Focus and objective
- II. Introduction to 1 Timothy
 - A. Setting the scene
 - 1. Pastoral epistles
 - 2. Recipient(s) of the epistle
 - 3. Purpose of the epistle
 - B. Who is the author?
 - 1. Paul of Tarsus
 - 2. Pauline disciple
 - C. Who was Timothy?
 - D. The historical setting
 - 1. Where – Ephesus
 - 2. The culture
 - 3. The church
 - E. Major concerns of 1 Timothy
- III. Chapter 1
 - 1. The author's relationship with Timothy
 - 2. The author's concerns about the people of Ephesus
 - 3. The author's testimony
- IV. Chapter 2
 - 1. The importance of prayer
 - 2. Barriers to prayer
 - 3. Proper attire and behavior for women
 - 3. Current application to our lives

Key thought / idea (Scripture covered)

As the content of 1 Timothy includes material that may be deemed controversial to readers today, it is critical to frame the setting in which the author wrote this epistle to Timothy regarding the church at Ephesus. Selected verses provided a focus for discussion about the

culture surrounding the early Christians in Ephesus and their concern about fitting in, different and unacceptable teachings, power wielded through wealth, particular wealthy women, and the disturbing participation of women. We focused on the qualifications for church leaders, the importance of hierarchy and the early development of the church as an institution. We discussed the author's extensive guidance on caring for widows, rebuking an elder, obedience of slaves, and the caution against materialism and money.

Learning Goals

The primary goal was to facilitate a setting that would encourage group discussion. The session began with prayer which was followed by a brief didactic component providing some background on the authorship and recipient of the epistle, and the culture and setting in Ephesus. The teaching strategy was to focus the attention of the group, using PowerPoint slides (a teaching aid) projected on a large wall-mounted screen, on key points, scripture verses, or questions for discussion. The strategy supported the goal of group sharing and discussion. The lesson assisted attendees in understanding more about the author, Timothy and his role in the church at Ephesus, the culture of Ephesus, the author's key concerns, and what he was communicating to Timothy. The attendees discussed their understanding of the first two chapters and shared their perspectives on how this letter to Timothy relates to us today.

4. Annotated Bibliography

Barclay, William. *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon Revised Edition*. Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1975, 1-141

Barclay, a Scottish New Testament scholar, authored this text as part of the Daily Study Bible Series. It includes a general introduction to the letters of Paul and a separate introduction to the letters to Timothy and Titus. He discusses the authorship of these Pastoral Epistles, the author's intent, the state of the early church, the threat of heresy, and follows with a thorough commentary on the epistles.

Corry, Trey, Anderson, Buck, Jennings, Blake, and Jones, Carolyn. *1 Timothy Prescription for a Healthy Church*. Grace Bible Church. 2012, 1-94. www.grace-bible.org/uploads/publications/1timothy_webPDF_13.pdf

The authors of this 1 Timothy study include a section on Bible study methods that addresses observation, interpretation, and application. The survey, or introduction, includes background information on Ephesus, Paul, and Timothy. The nine lessons, organized by observation, interpretation, and application, include questions designed to engage the reader. The study ends with a section on synthesis, which serves to assist the reader in summarizing and drawing conclusions about 1 Timothy.

deSilva, David A. *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods & Ministry Formation*. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004. p 770-775. deSilva, Trustees' Distinguished Professor of New Testament and Greek at Ashland Theological Seminary, Ashland, OH, and an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church, has authored a resource that provides a historical context and perspective on the New Testament as a pastoral response, the cultural and social world of the early church, the environment including Jewish and Greco-Roman influences on the early Christians. Included are thorough discussions of the gospels, epistles, which include a focus on the implications for ministry formation.

Dewey, Joanna. "1 Timothy" in *Women's Bible Commentary Expanded Edition*, Edited by Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe. Louisville: John Knox Press, 1998. p 444-449.

Dewey, Associate Professor of New Testament Studies at Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, MA, provides a solid introduction and commentary on the epistle, with a focus on the author's need to provide direction and structure for the early church.

Harris, Stephen L. *The New Testament A Student's Introduction*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006, 384-387.

Harris, Professor Emeritus at California State University, Sacramento, has written an introductory textbook which provides a concise perspective on the New Testament (NT). Appropriate for use by students and others it provides basic information about the authors, background, and content of the NT, in an easily-read format which includes illustrations, maps, timelines, and glossary. Harris provides a concise overview and highlights key areas of importance in the Pastoral Epistles.

InterVarsity Press Quiet Time Daily Bible Study. <http://www.ivpress.com/bible/1tim/>

This on-line study of 1 Timothy is part of a series provided by InterVarsity Press. The study begins with an introduction focusing on Ephesus and Paul and Timothy's approach to ministry in that city. It addresses the epistle in six sessions which include four sections: Warming up to God, Discovering the Word, Applying the Word and Responding in Prayer.

Matera, Frank J. *New Testament Christology*. Louisville, KY, Westminster John Knox Press, 1999, 158-165.

Matera, Professor of New Testament, Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., includes comments from other scholars as well as his perspective on the epiphany Christology presented in the Pastorals, in particular in 1 Timothy.

Oden, Thomas C. *First and Second Timothy and Titus*. Louisville, KY, Westminster John Knox Press, 1989, 1-185.

Oden, Professor of Theology at the Theological School and Graduate School of Drew University, Madison, NJ, provides a commentary and interpretation grounded in historical scholarship that is organized in a systematic manner to be a useful resource for sermon preparation.

Tamez, Elsa. *Global Bible Commentary*, Edited by Daniel Patte. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004, 508-515.

Tamez, affiliated with the Universidad Biblica Latinoamericana, Costa Rica provides a thoughtful perspective focusing on the challenges that studying 1 Timothy presents to women in settings such as the *barrios* of Costa Rica. Tamez focuses on gender and social class in her comments focusing on the misogynistic features of 1 Timothy.

Commentaries on 1 Timothy

<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/?action=getBookSections&cid=10&source=1>

http://www.ccel.org/contrib/exec_outlines/1ti/1ti_01.htm

http://www.ccel.org/contrib/exec_outlines/1ti.htm

5. Evaluation

Fifteen individuals participated in the study with average attendance of 9.7; eight participants attended multiple sessions. Strengths included the timing of the study paralleling the inclusion of selected 1 Timothy passages during August and September worship services. The material was accessible, the volume of reading was manageable, attendees were engaged, and discussions lively. Attendees were interested in learning about 1 Timothy, an epistle that many had not read or studied. The balance between historical/critical perspective and practical life-application addressed the attendees' varied needs and preferences. Weaknesses included the time constraint of fifty minutes which limited what could be presented and discussed. All attendees were not present as sessions began or ended and missed the opening or closing prayers and review. Attendees with sporadic attendance were unable to benefit from the group's cumulative and collective learning.

The study was evaluated using a series of questions. Feedback received from seven attendees indicated that the information was presented clearly and the PowerPoint slides were helpful, including the historical and cultural scene-setting. Two attendees noted the review and summary from previous sessions was helpful. One attendee noted “Su’s ability to facilitate discussion was strength. Just about everyone participated and shared reactions, thoughts and feelings.” Individuals’ learning included the challenge of translation of words from the original language, the danger of biblical literalism, understanding why this epistle was included in the New Testament. One female attendee “appreciated the challenging and thoughtful discussion of ... prohibitions on women in leadership.” “The study helped me consider how we have many of the same church challenges that the early church did...factions, imbalances of wealth etc. We are to work at talking about those issues, but not to be shocked that they exist.” A twice-widowed octogenarian was particularly interested in discussing the implications of 1 Timothy for herself and her widowed friends.

General comments included the following. “There was not a lot of ‘pure’ lecture—it was more of a question and answer format...the instructor did make clear what the issues were...and it was quite helpful.” One attendee thought the seating in a semi-circle detracted from participation. Another “would have liked slightly large bits of the book to be considered at a time” to grasp the bigger picture more efficiently. “It is always a graceful pleasure to consider scripture with other church members. The ‘cross-fertilization’ adds meaningful depth and encourages alternate forms of thinking. We should have more class[es] like this one.” In summary, study of “the Word together is vital to growing together in faith.”

1 Timothy

Westfield FUMC

September 2016

Rev. Su Iliff

Overview

- Week 1 - Introduction to 1 Timothy, Chapter 1 & 2
- Week 2 - 1 Timothy Chapter 3 & 4
- Week 3 - 1 Timothy Chapter 5 & 6

Setting the Scene

- o 1 Timothy – one of three letters referenced as pastoral epistles
- o Other pastoral epistles – 2 Timothy, Titus
- o Written to individuals (church pastors) rather than to a particular city/community (e.g. Corinth, Ephesus, Galatia)
- o Focused on “care and organization of the flock of God”

Who is the Author?



Who is the Author?

- o Paul of Tarsus
 - o NOT!
- o “the Pastor”
- o Pseudonymity common and accepted in 2nd century
- o A Pauline disciple
- o Views Paul’s teaching as standard for Christians
- o Focus on doctrines rather than personal experience of Christ

Who was Timothy?

- o Jewish mother, Greek father (Acts 16:1)
- o Lois – grandmother and Eunice – mother (2 Timothy 1:5)
- o Trusted and beloved colleague of Paul
 - o Paul circumcised Timothy
- o Contributor to expansion of Christianity, co-founder of churches

Historical Setting

- When – written around 125 C.E.
- Paul and Timothy lived in 1st century
 - Paul's conversion ~36 CE
 - Paul in Ephesus ~54 CE



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Historical Setting

- o Where – Ephesus
 - o Seaport in Asia Minor
 - o Population 350,000
 - o Temple of Artemis (goddess of the Ephesians)
 - o Mixed culture
 - o Greek heritage
 - o Roman influence
 - o Jewish community present
 - o Other ethnic communities

Historical Setting

- o Where – Ephesus
 - o Sports – major entertainment (Gr. athletic contests, Roman gladiator combat)
 - o Sex – art, bestiality, homosexuality, Roman baths – upper class, nude bathing
 - o Religion – mixture, small ethnic groups, Romans (Artemis to Diana), Jewish coexistence
 - o Magic – invaded religions, influenced people (Acts 19: 13-17)

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Historical Setting

- o Where – Ephesus
 - o Paul – preached (Jews) on 2nd missionary journey, spent 2 years developing leaders on 3rd journey
 - o Paul turned over leadership of church to Timothy
 - o Churches were likely a network of house churches
 - o Women and men may have been separated during worship

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Major Concerns of 1 Timothy

- o The church as hierarchical household
- o The church as guardian of doctrine
- o Prescription for behavior of Christians

Major Concerns of 1 Timothy - A Challenge for Women

- o The powerful presence of wealthy people, especially women (1:3; 3:14-15)
- o The disturbing participation of women (2:9-15; 5:3-16)
- o Teachings that differ from the regular or accepted tradition (1:3-4; 4:1-10; 6:3-5, 20-21)
- o Opinions that the Greco-Roman society might have about the Ephesian Christians (2:2; 3:4, 7, 12; 5:15, 6:1)

Chapter 1

- o What do we understand as the concerns of Paul/“the Pastor” (TP)?
- o What do we learn about the people of Ephesus?
- o What do we understand about Paul/the Pastor’s relationship with Timothy?
- o How does Paul/TP compare himself to the false teachers?

Chapter 1

- o How do we understand what Paul/TP is saying in v5 and v19 about conscience?
- o How do we distinguish between true and false teaching, or true and false spirituality?

Chapter 2

- o Christians are to pray for everyone including rulers
- o Barriers to prayer
 - o Anger
 - o Argument
 - o Personal appearance
 - o Who is teaching (M vs F)

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Chapter 2

- o Proper attire for women
 - o Suitable clothing, modest, not expensive
 - o Hair not braided
 - o No gold, pearls
- o Women learn in silence, in submission
- o Women not permitted to teach or have authority over a man

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Chapter 2

- o What do we understand about worship in Ephesus?
- o Were there challenges? If so, what were they?
- o When do you find prayer or worship difficult?

Closing Prayer

- o The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save me.
- o But for that very reason I received mercy, so that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display the utmost patience, making me an example to those who would come to believe in him for eternal life.
- o To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

3. PRACTICE OF MINISTRY

1. What do you think are the most effective means of doing evangelism in the 21st century? How have you lived this out in your current context of ministry?

Evangelism is sharing the good news of God through Jesus Christ. We are called to fulfill the Great Commission, reaching out to share the gospel not just with those in our church family but with others beyond the doors of our churches; this includes others whom we may view as different, helping them become disciples through entering into and developing a relationship with Jesus. As modeled by John Wesley, combining faith and good works is done through sharing Jesus' love through our words and our actions; it may involve providing for person's physical needs, being in authentic relationship, and accompanying them on their faith journeys. The United Methodist Church uses tools and technology to communicate information and support the engaging disciples in mission and ministries beyond the walls of our churches. The Holy Spirit works through us as individuals and the church as the body of Christ to touch others' lives and transform the world.

I share God's love through embodying Jesus' servanthood, serving others through caring, sharing, preaching, teaching, and working toward justice, and witnessing through the way I live my life. I have initiated and facilitated, through empowering laity to lead, small group ministries that have powerfully affected individual's lives. A Covenant Discipleship group, women's book-discussion and prayer groups, and a care-giver's support group provide opportunity for individuals' sharing their joys and struggles and growing together in our faith journeys. As a chaplain and CPE educator serving at Overlook Medical Center I share about Christianity and Jesus' love, and serve as a conduit to connect people of all faith traditions with God, the Divine, or their higher power. I recall talking with an atheist struggling to make meaning out of his

spinal cord injury and the adverse impact on his life; he shared he felt people who believed in God were better off than him. He was eventually discharged but I still think of and pray for him.

2. What makes a congregation vital, and how do you measure it? How would you envision working with a congregation to become more vital?

Vitality in a congregation stems from the presence of the Holy Spirit filling and inspiring the people to live out their faith through active ministry and mission within the church and outside the church doors in the community and world. Vital congregations are welcoming, practice radical hospitality, make and grow disciples of Jesus Christ, and are able to adapt and change over time. Five markers, or parameters, that our GNJ conference uses as measures of vitality include disciples attending worship, disciples participating in small groups, disciples engaged in mission work, making new disciples of Jesus Christ, and disciples committed to stewardship including generous giving supporting ministry and mission. With others, I facilitate our congregation's vitality through praying together, growing small group ministries (see examples in Q1), planning and leading inspiring and meaningful worship, and engaging people in faith development opportunities through education, mission, and sharing their gifts (time, talent, and treasure). Matching particular needs and opportunities within the community with the gifts, graces, and interests of the congregation leads to persons who are engaged and committed to serving in mission and ministry.

3. What is your personal approach to conflict? Provide an example of where you have been involved in resolving conflict. What did you learn?

Conflict is an inevitable part of life that I strive to view as an opportunity for positive change, development, and growth. This often involves correcting miscommunications or misperceptions. Like many individuals, I do not enjoy and prefer to avoid being engaged in

conflict. When I become involved in conflict I strive to be aware of my feelings, and as needed, manage my behavior in response to my feelings. I have developed this skill from my training as a chaplain. When engaged in discussion with others I focus on the problem or issue, rather than the other person(s). My focus and collaborative style is to facilitate compromise. A key component of this process is actively listening to what the other person(s) are saying, through their words as well as what is unspoken. This is basic/fundamental in CPE training and has proven invaluable in ministry as well as everyday life.

As the staff person responsible for oversight of the Adult Faith Development programming, I work with a team of four persons to coordinate learning opportunities. There had been a long-term (>10 years) Bible study consisting of a core group that met and selected their own curriculum/study material. They did not always announce their studies and invite others to attend. I was asked to incorporate their plans along with other studies/classes being offered, and advertise them in the church bulletin, newsletter, and other communications. This resulted in conflict as the group leader(s) wanted to maintain their autonomy, not have to plan ahead, and perhaps not include outsiders (individuals not involved in the group). I arranged a series of meetings with the leader(s) and core group members. We discussed the issue and concerns and ultimately arrived at a resolution that addressed everyone's needs. I learned my reaction to others can interfere with my ability to stay focused on the issue and was reminded how compromise from all involved can lead to conflict resolution.

4. What is your theological and practical understanding of itineracy?

My theological understanding of itineracy is based on Jesus' sending the disciples out to the people (Matthew 10:5, Luke 10.1). As clergy we respond to God's call on our lives and as

clergy we are sent by the bishop to a place to serve. It is through this itinerant system that God uses us in ministry. This praxis stems from Methodism's roots in England when circuit preachers traveled to preach and celebrate the Lord's Supper with people on their circuits. John Wesley and Francis Asbury continued this practice of itinerant preachers traveling full-time to preach the gospel in the United States. Itineracy is the standard method by which ordained and provisional elders and associate members are appointed to serve in particular settings by the bishop. From a practical perspective, the collective wisdom of the bishop and cabinet in knowing the needs of the churches and the clergy enables the bishop to make appointments where the gifts and graces of clergy will be used to meet the needs of the people in a particular setting.

5. How do you engage all age groups in your community?

God loves and cares for all God's children. Each and every one is important and I love our church family. I and others empower our team of staff and church leaders to involve persons of all ages in the activities of our church community. While we often plan intergenerational events, or provide alternate children/youth program concurrent with adult programming, certain events are age-specific (e.g. youth activities, children's choir, senior's luncheon). Mission activities are often structured to involve persons of various ages and ministry is often focused on meeting particular needs (e.g. caregiver support group) or a designed for a certain age-group (e.g. youth, young adult ministry for 18-30 year olds, families with young children). On Sundays we offer education (and nursery care for infants and toddlers) for children through adults. We encourage our children and youth, as well as adults, to participate in leading worship; this involves their serving as acolytes and ushers, lay reading, singing or sharing musical gifts, and assisting in other aspects of liturgy including celebrating the Lord's Supper. I connect with the

children and youth as we share a high-five; they look forward to this each week. I have a soft spot in my heart for the elderly and treasure going out to lunch with a group of women after Sunday worship, visiting shut-ins and sharing communion with them. These personal interactions serve as a basis for connection and to build deeper relationships and create opportunities for faith-sharing.

6. What is your understanding of pastoral authority, and how do you intend to exercise it in your place of ministry?

Pastoral authority is authority given by God, acknowledged through commissioning and affirmed through ordination, which through the power of the Holy Spirit is claimed by the individual called to pastoral ministry. Authority is reflected through servant leadership of the people in ministries of Service, Word, Sacrament, Order, Compassion, and Justice. Authority arises through earning others' respect in relationship. As a female pastor I appreciate the need for and importance of claiming my authority in settings which are patriarchal. Authority wields, by virtue of position, power that can be misused and abused. I thoughtfully exercise my pastoral authority through sharing Jesus' love through my preaching, teaching, assisting with administration of the sacraments, pastoral care of the people, and leading and empowering them to use their spiritual gifts in their ministry and mission. My pastoral authority is proclaimed through my prophetic voice as a chaplain and pastor proclaiming just treatment of patients, family, and those who are marginalized, and as an educator in the chaplaincy and local church setting.

7. If you could choose *anyone* to mentor you in leadership skills, who would that be and why?

I would select Pope Francis as I admire his humility, his love for those who are marginalized because they have disabilities, are poor, uneducated, imprisoned, or otherwise oppressed, and his ability to connect with and share his passion with people. As did Jesus, Pope Francis has turned things upside down. He has broken the mold of papal aristocracy through the manner in which he walks the walk. His mentoring in how to boldly introduce perspectives on societal issues that encroach on the church's tradition and doctrine and reach beyond the doors of the Catholic Church would be invaluable. His perspective complements Wesley's emphasis on social holiness. At this time when our United Methodist Church is facing challenges that threaten our churches and perhaps our denomination's survivability, Pope Francis' ability to inspire non-Catholics and even non-Christians could benefit our forward-thinking and acting. His power is wielded in the manner in which he builds connections, between the past and the present, bringing world leaders together, bridging theology and science, helping the Church see the faces of the marginalized and oppressed. As a woman and mother, I would welcome Pope Francis' wading deeper into the waters of change that would lessen the impact of poverty and patriarchy on women and children world-wide, and to increase women's involvement in upper administration within the Catholic Church, ultimately leading to ordination of women.

8. Describe a situation in which you felt a need to assert a professional boundary in the practice of ministry.

A situation in which I needed to exert a professional boundary in the practice of ministry involved a married male congregant with whom I work on projects and programs, and to whom I occasionally serve as a pastoral sounding-board. At times I had felt uncomfortable hugging this man during our post-worship time of greeting and socializing. During an informal conversation in a coffee shop, this congregant voiced his admiration for and attraction to me, as well as his

non-intent to act on his attraction. While I felt uncomfortable about this situation, we spoke about it, as I recognized the importance of our continuing to be able to work together. The ongoing boundary I have implemented is to avoid and/or minimize instances where I am alone with this congregant. We meet to talk in a public place. If before or after a church meeting or gathering we are alone in the meeting room, I strive to move us into a hallway or other more public area if our conversation needs to continue.

My authority as a hospital chaplain and a member of the interdisciplinary medical team has been challenged through interruptions while visiting with patients. With the best interest of our patient in mind and if acceptable to the patient, I have at times respectfully asked the individual interrupting to wait so the patient and I could finish our conversation and/or prayer. Spiritual care and healing is important and part of a holistic approach to health.

9. How have you worked through the experience of forgiving someone?

The experience of forgiving someone is one in which I am currently involved. My husband OJ and I are in the process of divorcing. I have struggled to forgive my husband for his lack of willingness to work on our relationship and marriage with a therapist. This painful work of forgiveness has required me to examine my role in our relationship problems as it takes two individuals to make or break a marriage. Talking with God through prayer has been a powerful part of this process and has, by opening my heart, moved me further along toward forgiveness. Claiming my sadness, hurt, and anger, and talking to trusted friends and colleagues has provided me with the reflective gift of their sharing what they have heard in my struggle and receiving their compassion and support.

10. What are you doing to help those around you to take good care of themselves?

I serve as an active listener, providing a sounding board and at times a compassionate shoulder to cry on; I may help others unburden their concerns and claim their feelings. I may remind them of their need for self-care, whether spiritual disciplines, exercise, sleep, healthy eating, or particular other activities important to them as an individual. I may pray for and with them, stay connected, send a note or devotion, and most importantly, let them know they are loved by God, me, and others. As needed, I may be moved to share a prophetic message that could be challenging or difficult for them to hear. One of the most important things I do to help others take good care of themselves is engaging in self-care. If I am overly tired, empty, and spiritually drained, I am unable to be fully present with others in my ministry. In addition to the self-care practices listed above, I find time for quiet and solitude, journal, talk with my spiritual director, participate in a drumming circle, and spend time with friends and family.

11. How have you invited someone to faith and seen their faith develop?

Wherever I am in the world I am the hands and feet and heart and voice of Jesus and I realize that I serve to love them and offer them Christ through my words and actions. This may be through my compassionate listening to a Chinese woman, P, who knew Jesus but was struggling with an abusive husband, loneliness and lack of friends, and a health crisis. Sitting by her hospital bed, I held her hand as she voiced her commitment to follow Jesus Christ. We prayed and while I do not know how her journey has progressed, when she comes to mind I pray for her. I recall J, who entered our church building one morning and, in tears, shared his story, his grief, and his fears. I listened, asked if I could pray with him, and prayed for him to find what he was seeking in and through Jesus Christ. I invited J to join our Bible study and attend worship; he has done both as well as becoming involved in volunteer work. While I have not

had a chance to speak in depth with him, I observe J to be in a much better place spiritually than when we first met. I have co-led confirmation classes for many youth and have observed their growth over time. I recall one young man, N, who was initially vehemently against participating, turned out to be a deep thinker and a wonderful lay-reader during worship, and who, while not present in worship following his confirmation, greeted me with a hug, big smile, and warm words when he saw me in the community over a year later. I have observed in P, J, and N the fruit of Christian love, compassion, and intentional faith development practices.¹

12. What have you overcome to come to this season in your ministry?

My journey in ministry has been filled with much joy but also much pain. The most difficult aspect to overcome has been the sense of journeying alone. I have *not* been alone, God is always present. I have had the support of my home church family in Scotch Plains and my current church family in Westfield, clergy mentors, colleagues, family, and friends. However, the family I have desired but not felt much support from include my husband OJ and our two children. While painful, I have learned to live and thrive in my ministry without much interest or listening from my husband. This has shaped me to keep much to myself, reflect internally, and to look elsewhere, to trusted friends and colleagues for the support I crave. Despite not receiving the support I desired has been a struggle, following my call brings me great joy. Serving others, journeying with, and helping others grow in their faith are both profound and fulfilling.

13. How would you describe your prayer life in this season, and how has it changed over your journey?

My prayer life has been a series of peaks and valleys, ranging from powerful highs when I felt incredibly connected to God, to depths and a sense of a dry desert time when, despite

knowing God's grace surrounded me, I felt distant from God. I realize it is in those desert times, when prayer is difficult and challenging, that deep spiritual growth often occurs. My experience of praying has expanded to encompass a sense of praying without ceasing; I pray my way throughout the day and live my life as a prayer, rather than engage in prayer as discrete times, for me traditionally at the start and end of my day. John Wesley's words resonate: "Whether we think of; or speak to, God, whether we act or suffer for him, all is prayer, when we have no other object than his love, and the desire of pleasing him."

14. When you read the Bible, how do you hear God's voice? What example might you give of how you responded?

Reading the Bible reveals God's voice to me in different ways depending on my manner of reading. Devotional reading, typically silent reading and reflection in the manner of *lectio divina*, may lead to God's voice leaping out at me through the words on the page, or emerging gradually as I reflect on the Word. Studying or reflecting on a passage in preparation for a sermon, which includes use of commentaries (e.g. *Women's Bible Commentary*, *Global Bible Commentary* *Matthew Henry's Commentary*), or Bible study involves reading it aloud as well as silently. Through this process I trust the Holy Spirit will direct my attention to what needs to be lifted up during my preaching or in a study. Even if reading a familiar passage, a particular word or phrase may resonate differently than it ever has before. At other times I may read and simply hear God's voice directing me to pray for someone or do something. Recently I was reading one of the epistles and the image of my staff parish relations committee chairperson came to mind along with her grief and pain about her dying father. I prayed for them and their family and simply reached out to let her know she was in my thoughts and prayers that morning. Little did I know he had been transferred to hospice care that very morning. God's timing is amazing!

15. How has your family of origin influenced your call?

My paternal family history in the Methodist tradition stretches over many generations. My childhood exposure to music at home and in church (e.g. listening to my mother play piano, piano lessons, and church choir) has led to a great love of music that is woven into my ministry in the local church and chaplaincy setting. Music can be particularly effective in connecting with patients with dementia and elderly persons. Upon my seminary graduation, I was touched deeply by my aunt's gift of my grandmother's United Methodist Hymnal; it is a reminder of how she, and my grandfather, as well as beloved hymns and songs, have shaped my faith. My parents and grandparents lived their faith through vocations of caring service, assisting people during times of need as nurses, morticians, and in a family-run furniture store. My family served as role models through being active in civic leadership and as volunteers in the church and community.

16. Interview three people to tell you what they see in your ministry. What did you hear in these conversations?

One interviewee shared words/phrases that came to mind: compassion, adventurous, available to listen, sharing a smile and hug. She described me as teaching and helping, and while leading a team/committee, as "shepherding, not dictating," and making it easy and efficient for the team to do their work due to my preparation prior to the meetings. She viewed me as being "your own person," authentic, and "not putting on airs."

Another shared her appreciation for my managing the adult faith development program providing diverse opportunities that meet the needs of many. Her perception was despite my being well prepared that I did not seem totally comfortable teaching Adult Education classes. As we talked, I heard her desire for what was to her a more comfortable setting for discussion and open sharing. She appreciated my preaching as "overall is very effective," and noted I engage

and make a personal connection with the congregation, relate the message to the selected Scripture, and share the good news. She “feel[s] heard” when I listen to her. She noted my prompt response to emails/communications, my hard work doing behind-the-scene things that are often not noticed, and identifying things that need doing and taking care of them. She viewed this as a “testament to your character.”

My third interviewee shared her appreciation of my growth and refinement “of who I am as a minister,” with particular regard to how I can present things simply and clearly. In meetings or groups I can bring the focus back to the point-at-hand, at times through summarizing what has been said and returning to a key point or question. She appreciated my role in facilitating “aspects of worship that wouldn’t [otherwise] happen,” and keeping others connected through caring for the greater community. She views me as a good listener able to “hold people’s pain and suffering” and sharing vulnerably in our covenant group while I “walked a balancing act” as clergy vs. laity/group member.

¹Schnase, Robert. *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007.

4. THEOLOGY, CALL AND DOCTRINE

You shall submit written responses to ¶ 330 in The Book of Discipline 2012. These are listed under (a) Theology, (b) Vocation and (c) The Practice of Ministry.

Show how your understanding has developed during your provisional period.

In addition to the questions from the book of Discipline, explain the threefold aspects of Wesleyan grace and how have you encountered these in your own ministry/life.

Theology

(1) Give examples of how the practice of ministry has affected your experience and understanding of (a) God, (b) Humanity, (c) The need for divine grace, (d) The Lordship of Jesus Christ, (e) The work of the Holy Spirit, (f) The meaning and significance of the Sacraments (g) The kingdom of God, (h) Resurrection and eternal life

(a) As an interfaith chaplain in hospital, rehab, and hospice settings, I have experienced God's presence and grace in the midst of pain and suffering, and while ministering to persons in crisis and/or experiencing illness or injury. God has graced my pastoral care through having an "angel" nurse arrive precisely when needed to help me understand the words of a developmentally disabled man whose primary desire was to be able to walk, blessing a newborn baby about to be taken from its young mother into protective care, and being bathed in God's Spirit-light while praying with a female parishioner dying from cancer. Through ministering with others, my understanding of God has expanded to incorporate others' reality of a higher power, divine being, or spiritual sense of something greater than oneself; however, I am unable to embrace others' reality of a punitive and vindictive God.

(b) While we are made *imago Dei* (in the image of God) we are prone to sin against our neighbors and against God, thus separating ourselves from God. Aside from my own sinful behavior, I have become aware, both through my chaplaincy and pastoral relationships, of the painful burdens carried both by sinners and those sinned against. I have heard and responded to the regrets of a dying man lamenting how he treated his mother and the anger in a HIV patient's voice as she spoke about the HIV-infected man who raped her. I strive to listen nonjudgmentally

to their complaints, unburdening, and confessing, and respond in a healing manner while recognizing that I may represent God to them.

(c) We need divine grace because we are broken and sinful and separate ourselves from God and each other. It is God's unmerited and undeserved action of love that permeates creation and surrounds us, and through God's self-revelation, Jesus Christ, we recognize our true humanity.¹

The prompting action of the Holy Spirit results in our movement toward repentance and faith, brings us into right relationship with God, and helps us grow in holiness, toward Christian perfection. I experience grace through forgiveness when I have hurt and harmed others. I recall a church council meeting when my anger resulted in my harsh directive to a council member to drop the issue he was raising as it was not appropriate for the council to discuss. While my request was valid, communicating it the way I did was hurtful; after the meeting I apologized to him. Subsequently we met and talked about the incident more fully. God's grace was woven throughout the experience. God's grace has been present through the healing in a hug from persons who have hurt me with the blunt reality of their words or through their compassionate listening to my recounting of painful experiences.

(d) The Lordship of Jesus Christ means that, as a disciple of Jesus Christ, my focus is to be on God and putting Christ first in my life, not on myself. Discipleship and putting Christ first, is an ongoing journey. Basing my life on my relationship with Christ means striving to live my life following Jesus' teachings and Biblical examples of how he lived from a place of love, compassion, and hospitality. At times I experience this as a powerful *knowing* deep within. While striving to follow Jesus' teaching and example to love God with heart, soul, and mind, and love my neighbor as myself,² I have experienced grace and instances when I was convicted of focusing primarily on myself. The Holy Spirit has, working through chaplain and clergy

colleagues, close friends, and a congregant with developmental disabilities, helped me realize when I have not kept Christ first in my life.

(e) My experience and understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit has deepened through having powerful and mystical experiences in times of prayer and when ministering with patients and congregants. I recall visiting with a man who had suffered a stroke, praying with him, and celebrating with him in the moment when he was first able to move his foot; we praised God that day. I have felt the Holy Spirit move within me, influencing my thoughts, words, and actions while preparing sermons and Bible studies, in covenant groups with congregants, and with CPE students and colleagues. I have seen individuals involved in covenant groups transformed through the work of the Holy Spirit; a woman who could not cry has shed tears and a man carrying vehement anger has reconciled with God and the target of his anger.

(f) As outward signs of inward grace, the sacraments ordained of Christ are communion and baptism, and are opportunities when God's love is both visible and real. The tangible nature of the sacraments, as a means of God's grace combined with action, word, and object, can engender "acts in which God is disclosed to us."³ Baptism, an initiation into the body of Christ, is a "sign of profession" and regeneration distinguishing Christians from those who are not baptized.⁴ The Lord's Supper, a sign of God's love, enables us to partake of the body and blood of Christ, which through faith, is a "sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death."⁵

(g) Because my understanding of God goes beyond limiting God to the male gender, I prefer to avoid the words king and kingdom when referencing the reign of God and may use the word *kindom*. However, as it is traditionally understood, the kingdom of God is a state of being in which God reigns, justice prevails, oppression and suffering are ended, and we are in community and are made right with God and with one another. The Church's mission is transformation of

people in the world so that God's reign on earth prevails. While God's reign may be envisioned as the future reign in heaven, I have experienced the *kingdom* of God created within a group of teen-aged confirmands and their mentors as they shared how they experienced the Holy Spirit at work during the previous week. I have experienced creating the *kingdom* of God deep in the jungles of Honduras with a UVMIM medical mission team providing life-saving and preventive medicine, treatments, and spreading God's love despite language barriers. Jesus' words "The Kingdom of God is among you." (Luke 17:21) express the promise that God's reign is possible in our present reality.

(h) The mystery of the Resurrection and its powerful effect on Jesus' disciples signifies life overcoming death, and goodness arising out of suffering and pain. My experience and understanding of Resurrection and eternal life has deepened through conversations with hospice and hospital patients and their families and being present with persons during their dying process. Assisting individuals fearful of dying to voice their belief in the life that lies beyond this earthly life, and lifting up the hope that springs eternal, have provided me with practical learning about the role and power of hope in the human condition. Living surrounded by God's grace while journeying with and joining others in their pain and suffering embodies the promise of resurrection and eternal life, and living in the presence of God.

(2) How do you understand the following traditional evangelical doctrines: (a) repentance, (b) justification, (c) regeneration, (d) sanctification? What are the marks of the Christian life?

(a) Repentance is a person's heartfelt remorse and sorrow for their sinful behavior which is followed by a turning toward God and away from self-focused behavior.⁶ We are led to repentance through prevenient grace. (b) Justification is God's response to our repentance and is through faith in Jesus Christ, not by our good works, which are the fruits of faith.⁷ Through justification we are made righteous, are forgiven, and are restored into right relationship with

God through our faith in Jesus Christ. (c) Regeneration is the change which transpires in us when we are justified and experience new birth in Christ. We are changed as we are born into a new person in Christ. (d) Sanctification is the process of growing ever closer to God, toward Christian perfection through knowledge and love of God, and love of neighbor and self. As Wesley noted, having a heart “habitually filled with the love of God and neighbor” and “having the mind of Christ and walking as he walked.”⁸ The marks of the Christian life are faith in God/Christ, love of God/Christ, and love of neighbor. This love is expressed through serving our neighbors through words and acts of love (works of piety and mercy).

(3) How has the practice of ministry informed your understanding of the nature and mission of the Church? What are its primary challenges today?

The nature of the United Methodist Church is doctrinal, sacramental, missional, disciplined, and as benefitting from shared leadership of clergy and laity. It is also communal, catholic, and ecumenical. The Church, as the body of Christ, is comprised of people who are made *Imago dei*, yet in our humanity sin against God, self, humankind, and the created world. The mission of the Church, “to make [and grow] disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world,”⁹ necessitates we respond to the needs of people in the community and world, sharing the love of Jesus and per John Wesley, to reflect a social religion and social holiness. We need to change in response to our changing world impacted by factors such as globalization, technology, increasing cultural and religious diversity, ongoing violence, and environmental crisis.

I work with, equip, and empower laity; together we make and grow disciples who love Jesus and who serve, through care and nurture of the gathered body of Christ. We also serve through mission and ministry, moving beyond the doors of the church building and engaging with our brothers and sisters who are marginalized, oppressed, and in need. Our confirmands and mentors actively participated in service and mission through food pantry and feeding

ministries, gardening and vegetable production, tutoring, visiting veterans in a veteran's home, working with children with disabilities at a camp, teaching Sunday School, and assisting in leading worship. We pray, worship, study, engage in spiritual disciplines, and share in fellowship and small groups. This provides a basis for deepening faith development and responding to the Holy Spirit through service and social action in a variety of ways including food pantry and feeding ministries, grief support, and home construction and repair missions. Mission volunteers' powerful stories invariably describe meaningful interactions with God's children, rather than simple satisfaction with the hands-on work. My volunteerism for *Imagine A Center for Coping with Loss* helps me appreciate the role of the local church in housing and sharing in a ministry that brings individuals from the community into the church building where their needs are met. This potential to draw people into ongoing involvement in the church and a relationship with Jesus Christ is a benefit of utilizing our church buildings in support of non-congregational programs and activities.

(4) The United Methodist Church holds that Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason are sources and norms for belief and practice, but that the Bible is primary among them. What is your understanding of this theological position of the Church, and how has your practice of ministry been affected by this understanding?

This balanced perspective, which Albert Outler summarized as the Wesleyan quadrilateral, serves as a valuable methodology to reflect theologically and approach life, and as being central to our UMC approach to understanding our faith in Jesus Christ. Scripture is foundational; as a primary source of knowledge about God, the Bible provides us with a historical understanding of the relationship between God and humankind, our tradition's heritage, Jesus' ministry, and the early Christian church.

Scripture can be studied and interpreted through the lens of tradition, which incorporates the Church's historical writings, teachings, and creeds, as well as doctrine, ritual, music,

sacrament, and liturgy. Current resources which are part of the UMC's tradition include the Book of Discipline, the Book of Worship, the UM Hymnal and the Book of Resolutions.

Our understanding of the Bible and our tradition can be influenced by our personal experience of God and our "new life in Christ."¹⁰ John Wesley recognized that each person had unique experiences of God and saw the value and significance to the individual. Regardless of whether our heart has been strangely warmed as was John Wesley's, our unique experience of God is critical to and shapes how we approach our ministry.

As products of the Age of Reason in 18th century England, John and Charles Wesley responded to rationalism with pietism and the Methodist movement. They balanced the value of personal experience of God's grace with the need to discern and understand Scripture, our faith, and its practical application to daily life in community. Our individual as well as our collective capacity to reason and reflect is critical to guiding and deepening our understanding of Scripture and our Christian faith and living out the gospel.

This theological approach is powerfully useful to me as I begin with Scripture, interpret it through my filters of the Church's tradition, my life experiences including the Holy Spirit's working in and through people in my life, and what I understand about others' experiences, and process this all through our God-given ability to think and reason. I have engaged others in the congregational setting in Bible study and small groups to approach questions from this four-legged approach. As a chaplain and educator, applying this quadrilateral in an all-faiths setting enables me, through my Christian lens, to broaden my perspective and encompass the importance of others' faith tradition and sacred texts as meaningful and helpful for their healing.

(5) How has the practice of ministry enriched your understanding of the meaning and significance of the sacraments?

As a deacon I support and assist the presiding elder as the sacraments of communion and baptism are celebrated. While I may not understand the mystery of *how* the Holy Spirit moves in someone's life through the sacraments, I understand and embrace that potential and powerful reality. The importance of the gathered community and their participation in the liturgy is integral to the celebration of the sacraments of baptism and communion. I approach serving the elements, not only to those present during worship but to shut-ins and hospitalized members, as a privilege and honor and have experienced the healing power of the Holy Spirit's presence while extending the table to those unable to attend worship.

Baptism is the covenantal initiation welcoming of a person, whether infant, child, or adult, into God's community of faith, the Church. The symbolic cleansing nature of the water, stemming from Christianity's Jewish roots, represents God's cleansing and forgiving power. It is within the community that the baptismal covenant occurs through water and the Holy Spirit.¹¹ I assist the community in understanding their role and remembering their baptism and that all baptized Christians are called to the ministry of servanthood¹²; this supports them in their responsibility to provide care to new members and to respond to their personal call to ministry. I have sensed God's prevenient grace at work as I lock eyes with an infant as the community celebrates their baptism. As a chaplain I have arranged and led Christian worship services for patients, family, and staff including celebrating the sacrament of communion; these services have been powerful and meaningful to persons unable to be present with their worship community. As with home-bound individuals, I realize the importance of re-presenting Christ to persons in the hospital through the serving of the elements during communion.

Vocation

(1) How has the experience of ministry shaped your understanding of your vocation as an ordained deacon?

As a provisional deacon, my pastoral identity has been shaped through my roles as associate pastor in the local church and as an interfaith chaplain in hospital and hospice settings. My understanding of my vocation as an ordained deacon has sharpened through my serving and loving the people in both settings – in the local church and beyond the local church. I share with clergy and laity in leading worship, including involving persons to witness through sharing their faith. During Ordinary Time, I and a lay servant coordinated a “Then Sings My Soul” time of witness during worship; individuals shared about a favorite hymn, and why it was meaningful to them. I lead, equip, and empower laity to lead faith development activities that teach, form, and grow disciples. I have been affirmed for my leadership and teaching adults including Bible studies and introductory series (e.g. Bible 101, Methodism 101) focused on new members and persons with minimal prior religious background. My gifts of compassion and heart for pastoral care are employed through caring for and journeying with my congregants as well as my sisters and brothers of diverse faith traditions in the hospital setting. My role as chaplain has expanded to include serving as Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) educator, assisting CPE students in learning the art and skills of pastoral care. This work spreads God’s love through training, equipping, and empowering others to effectively provide pastoral care to persons of all faiths. My chaplaincy, teaching, and mission work bridges service with the congregation to the wider community. The presence of dysfunctional systems, social constructs and prejudice in the church as well as the world impacts relationships and creating community and necessitates countering injustice while serving the marginalized in our congregations as well as the world.

The Practice of Ministry

(1) Do you offer yourself to be appointed by the bishop to a service ministry?

I have and do offer myself to be appointed by the bishop to a service ministry.

(2) Describe and evaluate your personal gifts for ministry and how they have resulted in fruitful ministry. What would be your areas of strength and areas in which you need to be strengthened in order to be more fruitful in ministry?

My gifts of compassion and caring, in conjunction with my active listening skills, enable me to provide meaningful pastoral care as I journey with congregants and patients and family in the hospital, hospice, or other care setting. I have a non-anxious calming presence and voice, and even energy. My keen observation skills are useful in providing additional awareness of what is being communicated in addition to the spoken words. This can be useful when interacting as a team member with clergy and laity or during pastoral care visits. My love of diversity and my curiosity about people and culture, combined with my gifts in teaching, enable me to journey with others in exploring theological, spiritual, personal, and other areas of faith development. I have high standards and expectations for myself and have learned to temper these for myself as well as for others with whom I may be serving.

My ministry will become more fruitful by my being more bold, taking risks, challenging others, and in further claiming my unique pastoral identity and authority. I anticipate that my ministry, particularly in the CPE Supervisory process, will continue to provide me growth in these areas.

(3) For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness to the Christian gospel, and in consideration of your influence as an ordained minister, are you willing to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life; and to this end will you agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to physical health, intentional intellectual development, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, integrity in all personal relationships, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge of the love of God?

I am willing and pledge to live my life in a way that shares the good news of God's love through following the teachings and example of Jesus. My words and actions must exemplify the highest ideals of the Christian life. I agree to responsibly care for myself, physically, mentally,

and emotionally through exercise, diet, self-care, and spiritual disciplines. I will employ integrity in building and maintaining relationships with others and employing praxis of social responsibility. I will exercise fidelity in marriage, and if single, celibacy. I recognize the importance, in the role of an ordained minister, of setting an example by my words and actions, that will reflect Christ, moving ever closer to perfection through growing in grace and knowledge of God's love.

(4) Provide evidence of your willingness to relate yourself in ministry to all persons without regard to race, color, ethnicity, national origin, social status, gender, sexual orientation, age, economic condition, or disability.

I understand God's *kingdom* to be comprised of all God's beloved children and understand God's church as an inclusive church; this informs my ministry and service as following Jesus' example of radical hospitality. I embrace the richness of diversity that exists among the children of God, and celebrate the differences expressed through race, color, age, ethnicity, language, ability, gender, sexual preference, economic status, education, theology and spirituality. In our team's planning and leading worship, I focus on involving persons of different ages, voices, languages, and cultural perspectives into our liturgy. While differences may present challenges in communicating and understanding persons who I view as other to me, encountering and seeing them face to face enables me to see and connect with them as children of God. I serve as pastor and chaplain, providing pastoral care to congregants, patients, family and staff regardless of who they are, the nature of their illness/injury, or their faith tradition. I engage with, educate and learn from students and CPE colleagues, including some with whom I struggle to relate. Jesus greatest commandments, to love God and our neighbor, are both complemented and challenged by the inclusion to love our enemies as well.¹³

(5) Will your regard all pastoral conversations of a confessional nature as a trust between the person concerned and God?

I am honored to be in relationship with persons who share deeply and often vulnerably with me and I treat our pastoral conversations confidentially. Content of a confessional nature is and would be treated as confidential except in instances of possible child abuse or neglect, if an individual expressed intent to hurt themselves or another person, or other instances where reporting is legally required.¹⁴

(6) Provide evidence of experience in peace and justice ministries.

As a chaplain I engage in peace and justice ministries because society's prejudices and issues are present in the hospital setting. Instances when racism, ageism, and disabilities injustice arose resulted in my advocating for patient, family, or staff unable or unwilling to do so for themselves. I initiate and facilitate faith development opportunities in the local church which help educate and engage individual in discussions about racism, injustice of the prison system, human rights, Christianity in a non-Christian world, Bonhoeffer's *Life Together*, and issues such as abortion, death penalty, poverty's inequities to women and children, and human sexuality. I facilitate conversations with CPE students that explore issues of injustice and lead, support and empower others to serve in ministries which help those in need. My participation in a UMVIM medical mission trip to Honduras literally helped save lives, improved health conditions for many men, women, and children, and enabled us to share Christ's love with indigenous Hondurans. I gained a perspective on the rich diversity of cultures, the growth of the Honduran Evangelical Protestant church, and the injustice that contributes to the abuse and violence so prevalent in Honduras.

1. Explain the threefold aspects of Wesleyan grace and how have you encountered these in your own ministry/life.

Wesley's threefold aspects of grace include prevenient grace as God's love that permeates creation and surrounds humanity before we are aware of and/or are able to respond to God. I have sensed prevenient grace in a hospital room gazing into the face of a newborn baby, during infant baptisms in worship, and while serving in mission providing medical care to native Hondurans alongside a self-proclaimed agnostic.

Justifying grace is God's accepting and pardoning love that is extended to repentant persons; through it our sins are forgiven and we are made right in relationship with God through Christ. I recall the powerful experience of God's justifying grace as a teenager when I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior. I recall the beatific expression on a teenaged congregant's face as she, kneeling at the prayer rail, was confirmed after having stated her confirmation vows. I recall the enveloping feeling of peace, through God's grace, as I sat with a hospital patient as she recommitted her life to Christ.

God's love is present as sanctifying grace for persons who strive to grow in relationship with God. This moving toward perfection in love is an ongoing process of growing in holiness that begins with our new birth in Christ. I experience the power of the Holy Spirit in God's sanctifying grace as I stumble and sin against my brothers and sisters and against God and am forgiven by them and by God. I encounter sanctifying grace in my pastoral ministry with congregants and patients as they, often during life review, are repentant for their actions against others in their life and we pray for forgiveness. God's sanctifying grace is palpably present for me in moments of deep and vulnerable sharing with a good friend, Bible study attendees, covenant group members, and CPE colleagues as we engage in spiritual disciplines and grow together in community.

2. Share an instance when you found yourself in ministry with someone whose theology was radically different from your own.

I recall a collective image and visits with several patients and congregants whose theology included a God who was vindictive and punishing. Our discussions revolved around their belief that God was punishing them for their sins through their current health, financial, spiritual, or relationship situation. As my God is a God of grace who does not punish, I struggled to “join” them in their theology. Instead, I explored how they came to believe in their God and when feasible, shared an image of an alternate God who loves us throughout and despite the difficult challenges that life presents to us.

3. Describe how your image of God has changed over your journey. What has informed this?

My image of God has become more grace-giving, more immanent, more embodied, and more encompassing. My image of God has shifted from a paternalistic male to incorporate female imagery as well as moving beyond sex or gender. This has transpired through my relationships and discussions with particular individuals, my experiences of God, my prayer life, and my seminary education.

¹ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012) ¶102.

² Matthew 22:37, 39

³ James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 181.

⁴ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012) ¶104, Article XVII.

⁵ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012) ¶104, Article XVI, XVII, and XVIII.

⁶ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012) ¶102.

⁷ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012) ¶104, Article IX and X.

⁸ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012) ¶102.

⁹ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012) ¶120, 91.

¹⁰ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012) ¶105.

¹¹ Felton, Gayle Carlton. *By Water and the Spirit Making Connections for Identity and Ministry*. 1997. Discipleship Resources.

¹² *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012) ¶125.

¹³ Matthew 5:43-44

¹⁴ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012) ¶341.5

5. Polity

Please answer all questions precisely and specifically as possible. The 2012 *Book of Discipline* is to be used in answering these questions. Following your answers, please indicate the relevant paragraph numbers. Include each question followed by your answer in accordance with the Style Requirements.

1. Explain the role of deacons, elders, and local pastors in the UMC and how they are each uniquely called and function in the church.

Individuals are called by God to serve in different servant leadership roles in the church and in the world. Deacons are called to ministry of Word, Service, Compassion, and Justice; they provide leadership in the life of the Church, which takes many forms (e.g. teaching, assisting in worship, pastoral care, mission, etc.) and connect people of the congregation with those in the greater community and world, addressing their needs. Based on their call to particular ministries, deacons may be appointed to positions in the local church or settings beyond the local church that connect the church with the community. Deacons who are appointed to settings beyond the local church must designate a charge conference in which they hold membership or have an affiliate relationship. Elders are called to ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service. They preach, teach, lead worship and prayer, administer the sacraments, provide pastoral care and counsel, order the life of the Church, and lead people to faith in Jesus Christ. They may be appointed as pastor in charge to local churches or to extension ministries. Local pastors, while not ordained, are licensed to serve and are appointed to a pastoral charge by the bishop; they are called to share with elders the ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service through serving in a local church. (§§311,315,316,318,328,329,331, 332, 334, 337,339,340,343)

2. What is the process for setting a pastor's salary? Who can change it, and when can it be changed?

The process for setting a pastor's salary begins with the committee on pastor-parish relations providing recommendations to the church council. (§252.4, 258.16) The Finance Committee is involved in stewardship of the church's financial resources, including plans to raise income to meet the adopted budget, and may have input, via the proposed budget, but do not determine the pastor's salary. The church council recommends the salary to the charge conference that then, in consultation with the district superintendent, sets the pastor's salary. (§247.13) The pastor's salary typically is set, and thus could be changed, at the annual charge (or church) conference. (§248) If there were a need to change the pastor's salary during the year, a special charge/church conference could be called by the District Superintendent to act on the change. (§246.7) It is notable that the annual conference may adopt a plan to set and fund pastor's salaries. (§604.13)

3. The Education committee wants to update the curriculum being taught in the Christian Education program. What specific guidance does the Book of Discipline give you in dealing with this issue?

The local church shall have "a church school for the purpose of accomplishing the church's educational ministry" for people of all ages. (§256.1.a) Elders and licensed pastors have responsibility for oversight of the educational program of the church and to encourage the use of United Methodist materials. (§340.2.c)(1)(b) The GBOD is organized to provide support and resources for educational ministry including development of inclusive educational approaches and review and recommendation of curriculum plan. (§1109) This training shall include mission education. (§1110) The annual conference will organize a board or other structure that will connect the GBOD with the conference, district, and local church for the purposes, among other things, of developing Christian disciples through Christian education. (§630.1.(b) The board has responsibility to "develop and promote a conference program of Christian education for the

whole life span” and to help local churches. (§630.2) This may include guiding and training district leaders to share with leaders of the local church in a variety of areas.

4. You have discovered a need in the community for a soup kitchen, and wish to recommend that this be a priority for the congregation, using the facilities of the church. What parties and processes need to be involved?

Gaining approval and support for a proposal for a soup kitchen in the church to serve the community’s needs require the involvement of several committees of the church. The church council, particularly through the outreach ministries, provides for planning and implementation of programs such as a community soup kitchen. (§252) The Trustees are involved regarding the suitability and adequacy of facility and personnel liability protection for the proposed soup kitchen use, as well as the acceptability of the proposed use in accordance with our Social Principles and ecumenical objectives. (§253) The general support of the congregation is critical and may be mobilized through informal communication as well as through recommendations from the Church Council, Trustees, the lay leader, lay servants, and the congregation at large.

5. A constituent of your church comes to speak with you about their call to ministry. Describe the basic steps that are involved in seeking ordination.

Speaking with a constituent about their call to ministry is part of journeying with them and assisting them in their process of discernment regarding whether their call to ministry is through servant leadership as a lay-person, licensed pastor, or ordained elder or deacon. Helpful resources include *The Christian as Minister* and the *Ministry Inquiry Process*. (§310) Membership in the UMC, with particular commitments following baptism, would be the first step for a constituent seeking to follow their call to ordained ministry. (§217-220) Steps toward ordination involve UMC membership for at least one year, contacting a district superintendent about the candidacy process, meeting with a mentor after admission, meeting with a

PPRC/equivalent followed by a charge/church conference for approval as a candidate.

Subsequent steps involve meeting with a district committee on ordained ministry (DCOM) and completing requirements to become a certified candidate; after a minimum of one year and completion of certain requirements, a candidate will appear before BOOM to be recommended to the clergy session for election to provisional membership. After a minimum of two years as provisional member and completion of educational and other requirements, and upon BOOM's recommendation, they may be approved and received as full members and ordained. (§230, 310-313, 324-326)

6. Describe the general structures of the Annual Conference and how each body functions.

The Annual Conference, as the basic body of The United Methodist Church includes clergy and lay membership, each with particular requirements. (§32, 602) Clergy members include deacons and elders in full connection, provisional members, associate and affiliate members and appointed local pastors. Lay members are elected by their respective charge conferences and have voting power as members. Individuals filling roles of chancellor, conference lay leader, secretary, statistician, and treasurer are key to the structure and function. The bishop appoints the time for holding and presides over Annual Conference sessions. (§32-33,370, 602-604) The membership votes on constitutional amendments and certain other matters of business. Clergy members and lay members respectively elect clergy and lay delegates to General Conference and jurisdictional or central conference. (§33-36)

Other leadership positions include the Conference Lay Leader who has a variety of responsibilities representing laity and serving in various capacities and at annual conference; Director of Connectional Ministries who provides focus and guidance for the mission and ministry in the conference; and Director of Communications who provides focus and guidance

for the conference's communication ministry at the local church, district and conference level as well as promoting awareness of the UMC and liaising with UM Communications. (§607-609)

Our GNJAC emphasizes the importance, in making and maturing disciples, of small group ministry, mission, worship, and stewardship, and is staffed appropriately to provide support to districts and local churches. Other required bodies/components of Annual Conference, with responsibilities as described in the BOD, include a conference council on finance and administration (§611), a Board of Ordained Ministry (§635), a Conference Administrative Review Committee (§636) and a Conference Committee on Episcopacy (§637). In addition, a Conference Board of Pensions (§639), a board of trustees (§640, 2512), and United Methodist Women and United Methodist Men (§647) are important components of the Annual Conference.

7. Describe the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of the United Methodist Church.

The legislative branch of the UMC is the General Conference which meets every four years and has power over connectional matters including but not limited to Church membership, powers and duties of clergy and selected other servant leaders, annual and other conferences, the episcopacy, judicial system and procedure, setting boundaries of jurisdictional conferences, and other legislative responsibilities. (§16)

The Judicial Council (JC) is the judicial branch of the UMC and has authority to hear and make decisions regarding the constitutionality and legality of actions by GC upon appeal by appropriate bodies. The Council has responsibility to approve decisions of law made at the annual conference level. They must hear and determine on particular appeal, jurisdictional or central conference, determine appeal from or pass on bishops' decision of law. The JC's decisions are final. (§55)

The executive branch of the UMC is the Council of Bishops, comprised of all UMC bishops. They provide oversight of the Church, and effect rules, regulations, and responsibilities per General Conference. Bishops preside over annual, central, or jurisdictional conferences and decide questions of law. (§45-54)

8. What is your understanding of the theology behind Shared Ministries giving (apportionments)?

The theology underlying our UMC's Shared Ministries begins with the premise that all we have received comes through God's generosity. The theology is based upon and shaped by our denomination's connectional roots as a result of which we are able to accomplish more mission and ministry together than we can accomplish as separate local churches. We are God's people and God intends for us to be connected and in community rather than apart. God calls us to serve, and one of the ways we serve is through our leadership and working together with our brothers and sisters. This involves our Annual Conferences sharing certain expenses for our denomination's ministry; in turn, charges are responsible for certain percentage of these expenses. We are called to share God's generosity with those in need and this is done through mission and ministry supported by our general funds; several being apportioned funds supported by our connectional Shared Ministries giving. (§247,614,810,812)

9. You have an idea for a unique form of ministry. How does the Book of Discipline guide us in seeking affirmation for ministries that are beyond the local church? What is the role of extension ministry in the life of the Church?

Extension ministry is a means of ministry through which elders, associate members, or licensed clergy share Christ's love and justice in roles and settings other than the local United Methodist church, including but not limited to General Boards and Agencies, UM institutions, ecumenical agencies, and pastoral ministry in other denominations. As a provisional deacon, I

am blessed to have first-hand experience serving beyond the local church as a chaplain and CPE educator at Overlook Medical Center in Summit, NJ. Ministry opportunities that serve to extend clergy's commitment to servant ministry may be initiated following consideration by the bishop and annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry. The GBHEM provides support, including provision of standards and consultation, to boards of ordained ministry in evaluating and validating special ministry settings. GBHEM's support, in the form of advocacy to those in extension ministry, also encompasses encouragement for development of emerging ministries. A written statement from the person seeking affirmation and appointment, describing the unique ministry and setting, as well as the individuals' calling to that ministry, shall be provided to the cabinet and BOOM. (§343, 344)

10. In what ways does your upbringing, your cultural context, your personal experience shape your understanding of our polity?

Raised as a "cradle Methodist" of Euro-American heritage, I have a familial history, identity, and comfort level with the UMC. As a child raised in a household with structure and clear boundaries, I have an appreciation for our UMC's organization and structure. My early experience, gained in a predominantly white Methodist church in northwestern New Jersey, includes peripheral familiarity as a child through my parents and grandparents' conversations and serving as a youth member of church council while a teenager. As an adult member of several predominantly white churches I served as council member (in a variety of positions) and lay member of annual conference. These experiences provided me with insight and understanding of how our denomination functions in a connectional manner, and the responsibility and power shared by laity and clergy at the local church level and world-wide.

As a seminary student and provisional member I was exposed to, embraced, and learned from the diversity I experienced through my classmates, faculty, and colleagues. The diversity

of beliefs and perspectives arose from and encompassed the intersections of race, faith tradition, denomination, sexuality, politics, age, and other social constructs. I became more aware of the manner in which our denomination functions world-wide and how our denomination's decision-making process can be impacted based not only on a US geographical but also a global perspective. Conversations with classmates and colleagues from non-US countries have helped me understand more about the UMC and how our polity functions in areas around the world. I have gained a deeper understanding of the shared impact of our church's connectional structure through leadership including General Conference, the Council of Bishops, and the General Council, Boards, and Commissions.

My life journey is grounded in God through my being a “cradle Methodist” with familial roots in Methodism over many generations. Memories of my childhood and teen years in Newton, NJ are peppered with church activities including music, Sunday School, UMYF, and worship; my extended family and my paternal grandparents are deeply entwined in these memories. As I grew into adulthood I worshipped in other traditions but retained my connection to my Methodist roots; later I transferred my UMC membership to different churches as I moved around the US. Being part of a church family nurtures me theologically, spiritually, and through serving and being in relationship with others.

Vocationally, I have ministered to God’s creatures throughout my veterinary career. I have spent several decades caring for animals while employed in the field of biomedical research. It is a field that for me combines the art and science of veterinary medicine and the intrigue of research with the goal of benefitting both humans and animals. In recent years, my ministry had grown to include serving and caring for my sisters and brothers as pastor and chaplain.

My call to ordained ministry was an external call where people in my home church, recognizing my gifts and graces, empowered me to utilize them through serving as a leader. A huge turning point involved my completion of a lay-speaking course and preaching to my church family. My journey continued as I attended seminary at Drew University and explored chaplaincy through Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). I share God’s love through using my gift of compassion as I serve as pastor, chaplain, friend, and mentor. I have learned to apply my listening and teaching skills as I minister with congregants as well as patients, family, and staff in hospital, rehabilitation center, and hospice settings. My chaplaincy ministry has expanded to include pursuing supervisory CPE training and I am currently a Supervisory Candidate in the process of becoming a fully certified CPE supervisor. While challenging, I have a deep love for this sacred and fulfilling work of journeying with and helping students grow as they learn the art and skills of pastoral care.

My husband OJ and I have two adult children: MacKenzie (24 yrs.) who works in the food science field and Tristan (21 yrs.) who graduated from college this past June. Our household typically includes a pet dog or two; currently Mango, an American Bulldog mix, entertains us with her antics. I enjoy singing, gardening, baking, playing tennis, traveling and experiencing different cultures, and being outdoors immersed in the beauty of God’s created world.

CHRONOLOGICAL RESUME OF ACTIVITIES

Susan Arlene Iliff

Personal: Married to OJ Sizemore
MacKenzie I. Sizemore, 24 years; Tristan I. Sizemore, 21 years

Church: Home church - First United Methodist Church of Scotch Plains, NJ
Associate Pastor - First United Methodist Church of Westfield, NJ

Education: MDiv *Summa cum laude* May 2010
Drew University Theological School, Madison, NJ

Postdoctoral fellowship/Residency in Laboratory Animal Medicine, Medical School and graduate coursework, PhD in Cellular and Molecular Biology, Rackham Graduate School University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI July 1985 - July 1988

DVM May 1984
Purdue University School of Veterinary Medicine, West Lafayette, IN

BS with Distinction, General Agriculture December 1979
Completed second major, Animal Science May 1980
Purdue University School of Agriculture, West Lafayette, IN

Diploma June 1976
Newton High School, Newton, NJ

Pastoral Appointments / Clinical Education 2005 – 2016

Supervisory Clinical Pastoral Education training, EPICS and Atlantic Health System / Overlook Medical Center, Summit NJ Sept 2016 – current

Supervisory Clinical Pastoral Education training, EPICS and Atlantic Health System / Overlook Medical Center, Summit NJ Sept 2015 – Jul 2016 (2 units)

Supervisory Clinical Pastoral Education training, EPICS and Atlantic Health System / Overlook Medical Center, Summit NJ Sept 2014 – July 2015 (2 units)

Chaplain, Pastoral Care Department, Overlook Medical Center, Summit NJ, July 2014 – current

Chaplain, Center for Hope Hospice & Palliative Care, Scotch Plains, NJ, Sept 2013 – June 2014

Clinical Pastoral Education, Center for Hope Hospice & Palliative Care, Scotch Plains, NJ, Sept 2013 – May 2014 (1 unit)

Associate Pastor, Westfield First United Methodist Church, Westfield, NJ, July 2012 – current

Chaplain, Pastoral Care Department, Overlook Medical Center, Summit NJ, July 2012 – June 2013

Clinical Pastoral Education Level II, Overlook Medical Center, Summit, NJ, Sept 2012 – May 2013

Clinical Pastoral Education Level II, Morristown Medical Center, Morristown NJ Sept 2011 – May 2012
Supervisor – Chaplain Eileen Cox (1 unit)

Pastoral Care On-call Chaplain, Overlook Hospital, Summit NJ, August 2011 – Sept 2011

Spiritual Care Department Volunteer, Center for Hope Hospice, Scotch Plains, NJ, May 2011 – Sept 2011, Supervisor - Rev. Bonnie Fee

Clinical Pastoral Education Level II, Overlook Hospital, Summit NJ Sept 2010 – May 2011, Supervisor - Rev. Dr. Frances Catherine Bickerton (1 unit)

Coordinator of Pastoral Care and Family Ministries, First United Methodist Church of Westfield, NJ,
Oct 2011 – June 2012
Coordinator of Family and Children’s Ministry, First United Methodist Church of Westfield, NJ, Sept
2009 – Sept 2011
Supervised Ministry Internship, First United Methodist Church of Westfield, NJ, Sept 2008 – May 2009,
Field Supervisor – Rev. Ed Carll
Clinical Pastoral Education Level I, The Elizabeth M. Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities,
Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, New Brunswick NJ Sept 2007 – May 2008, Supervisor -
Rev. William Gaventa, Field Placement - Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation, West Orange, NJ
Field Supervisor – Mr. Ryan Chesterman (1 unit)
Pastoral Care On-call Chaplain, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, New Brunswick NJ, August
2007 – August 2010
Clinical Pastoral Education Level I, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, New Brunswick NJ Sept
2006 – May 2007, Supervisor - Rev. Dr. John deVelder (1 unit)

Veterinary Employment July 1988 – November 2016

Senior Research Veterinarian/Principal Scientist, Merck Research Laboratories, Merck & Co, Inc.,
Laboratory Animal Resources, Kenilworth, NJ. Nov 2009 - current
Senior Research Veterinarian, Schering Plough Research Institute, Laboratory Animal Resources,
Kenilworth, NJ. November 2005 - November 2009
Consultant, September - November 2005
Director, Comparative Medicine, Merck Research Laboratories, Merck & Co, Inc., Comparative
Medicine/Laboratory Animal Resources, Rahway, NJ. April 2003 - September 2005
Senior Research Veterinarian, Merck Research Laboratories, Merck & Co, Inc., Comparative Medicine
Rahway, NJ. May 1997 - April 2003
Associate Veterinarian and Chief, Clinical Services, Oregon Regional Primate Research Center,
Division of Laboratory Animal Medicine, Beaverton, OR. April 1995 - May 1997
Assistant Professor, Oregon Health Sciences University, Department of Animal Care, Portland, OR.
May 1991 - May 1997
Assistant Scientist/Veterinarian, Oregon Regional Primate Research Center, Division of Primate
Medicine, Laboratory Animal Medicine Section, Beaverton, OR. August 1988 - April 1995

Employment/Education/Service July 1985 - July 1988

Postdoctoral fellowship/Residency in Laboratory Animal Medicine, Medical School, University of
Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI
Enrolled in PhD program in Cellular and Molecular Biology, Rackham Graduate School, University of
Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI
UMYF Coordinator/Youth Counselor, Westside United Methodist Church, Ann Arbor, MI 1986-1988

Employment 1984-1985

Instructor, Cornell University, Department of Microbiology. Stationed at Plum Island Animal Disease
Center, USDA, ARS, Greenport, NY. June 1984 - June 1985
Showroom assistant and cashier, Wm. J. Mills & Co. Sailmakers, Greenport, NY
Oyster shucker, North Fork Oyster Company, Greenport, NY
Cashier, 7-Eleven convenience store, Greenport, NY

Employment/Education 1980 - 1984

Purdue University School of Veterinary Medicine, West Lafayette, IN

Research assistant, Purdue University School of Veterinary Medicine, Dr. Donald Gustafson, supervisor

Weekend animal caretaker, Purdue University School of Veterinary Medicine, Large Animal Clinic

Employment/Education 1976 - 1980

Purdue University School of Agriculture, West Lafayette, IN

Research assistant, Purdue University School of Veterinary Medicine, Dr. Donald Gustafson, supervisor

Cashier, Shop-Rite Supermarket, Newton, NJ

Veterinary Assistant, Tranquility Veterinary Clinic, Tranquility, NJ

Ranch Hand, Space Farms Mink Ranch, Sussex, NJ

Towel Launderer, Jefferson Lakes Day Camp, Stanhope, NJ

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INVERSO, JOHN

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NOTES

1. Preaching and Worship

“The Cost of Following Jesus”

A sermon on Luke 14:25-33

This sermon was preached on Sunday, September 4, 2016 at the 11:00am service of Wenonah United Methodist Church. Wenonah UMC is a small suburban church in a community of 2300 predominately white, middle class people. In attendance that morning were 22 people. Those present represented a mixed economic makeup from people living paycheck to paycheck to those living a comfortable retirement. There was a two-to-one ratio of female to male attendees. Four were in their 50s and are members. The remaining attendees, excluding my wife and myself, ranged in age from mid-60s to early-80s. All but two of those people are members. All in attendance were white and professing Christians.

The Sermon

Let me tell you about our dog. Four years ago we got our dog, Kaylee, from the Gloucester County Animal Shelter. We'd been to a few other shelters but never saw a dog that clicked with us. Some were too hyper, others too aggressive; a couple had some "issues." We went in to meet Kaylee and found her lying on the floor at the feet of the shelter volunteer. Just lying there. No jumping. No licking. Just looked up at us with a "Hey, how's it goin'?" look on her face. That's our dog!

The first day we had her, we were out in the backyard watching her sniff her way around and something dawned on us. Christy and I looked at each other and said "We are responsible for another life." That was the first of many realizations we had over the next few weeks and months. We never realized how much having the dog would cost. Food is expensive. Vet visits cost time and money. She had some "issues" that we have to work with, including an all-too-sensitive-yet-unpredictable stomach. Every summer Kaylee gets an ear infection. She sheds whole dogs all over the house. Before the dog, we would just up and go wherever whenever we wanted. No more. Every time we want to go out, we have to watch the clock, get a dog walker, or put her in a kennel. She needs regular walks, care, and attention that interfere with what we want to do and when. We never realized how much our lives would change as they now revolve around this dog!

Ask me if she's worth it.

YES! She is. We love that dog. She has brought so much joy to us that we can't imagine our life without her. Yes, she requires a lot of sacrifices but she's worth it.

In our Gospel lesson, Jesus is telling the crowd to consider the cost of something far greater than a dog! Wherever he went, Jesus drew a crowd. They weren't disciples necessarily, but everyone from the mildly curious to those on the verge of faith. Rather than make grand promises to boost his numbers, Jesus lays out some sobering parameters for them to consider. The last thing he wants is for someone to make a snap decision to follow him based on the emotion of the moment, how impressed they are by his miracles, or by how touched they are by his teaching. He wants them and us to understand what it will cost to be his follower. It's easy to believe in a Jesus who will give you what you want. Not so much with a Jesus who demands your life. Like a builder considering how much it would take to build a tower or a king considering if his army is strong enough to wage a war, Jesus is telling them don't make a commitment you're not ready to make until consider just how big a change following him is going to make in your life. Jesus doesn't want a part-time follower; he wants a full time disciple. The cost of following him is this:

If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple...In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples. —Luke 14:25-27

Hate your dearest relations, carry a cross, and give up everything. Of all the hard things Jesus says, this passage is one of the hardest to understand and to follow.

Let's start with that first and hardest cost: hate. Hating flies in the face of all Jesus taught us about love. Love your neighbor. Love your enemy. It's hard to

imagine Jesus saying love *them* but have hatred for those closest to you. Doesn't seem right, does it?

Let's look at the original Greek. The word translated as "hate" is "misei" (μισέει), which means, "to detest, pursue with hatred, hate." Little help there. However, the extreme nature of this statement may just be the clue we need. Jesus often uses hyperbole to drive a point home. Hate your father, mother, kids, your own life would grab their attention. It shows how serious one's commitment to Jesus Christ must be to be a faithful disciple. Not that Jesus is commanding us to hold anger or hostility toward our families or ourselves. Rather, he calls us to a radical change in how we handle our relationships. To hate, in this context, is to favor Christ over anyone else, to love him most. No longer should we allow our allegiances to family, friends dictate what we value, what we prioritize, or how we live. No longer would those relationships define who we are. Jesus takes priority. He becomes the lens through which we see all of our relationships and the filter through which flow all of our thoughts, words, and actions.

Then, there is the call to hate your own life. This too is a radical change in our relationship to ourselves. Will we make Jesus our priority even if it would cost us our lives? This is necessary to afford the second cost to consider: "carry your cross."

Carrying your cross is not about struggling with an illness, sticking it out in a bad job, or dealing with a difficult relationship. It's about following Jesus to where his journey leads: the cross. Luke's Gospel emphasizes Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. From chapters nine to nineteen, we are on the road with Jesus and death looms on the horizon. If we follow Jesus, we must be willing to go with him all the way to the

cross, to die for his sake. We can only do that if we count Jesus Christ more valuable than our life.

If that weren't a high enough cost to consider, Jesus hits the crowd where we live: our possessions. "Give up everything or you cannot be my disciple."

"Yes, of course I'll die for Jesus but I'm not giving up my Xbox...my shore house...my nest egg. That's just too far!"

At the core of what Jesus is asking the crowd and us to consider is how willing we are to let him be the defining element of every relationship we have: with those we love most, with ourselves, with our worldly possessions. If we don't prioritize Jesus over all of them, each of these relationships could be a point of compromise. So he calls us to hate them.

That may mean speaking up for Jesus when your loved ones mock you for your faith. It may mean putting yourself at risk by becoming a missionary or going to Camden to volunteer at the Neighborhood Center, because that is where you feel the Spirit leading you. It may mean living simply and you and your family going without some of the comforts we take for granted in order to give your excess to those in need.

It means making decisions not based on "what's best for me and my family" but "what will honor Jesus Christ and build God's Kingdom best". It means dying to ourselves, that is, putting to death our old way of living—all those habits, attitudes, values, and practices that do not draw us and others closer to him. That is what it costs to follow Jesus. It is a sacrifice!

Ask me if he's worth it?

YES! He is. The cost cannot compare to the benefit. The benefit of following Jesus is eternal life. It is a life that goes far beyond this mortal one. It's living forever in God's presence.

The benefit is forgiveness. It is never again being weighted down by guilt or shame but living that eternal life rejoicing in God's grace.

The benefit is power. It is knowing the power of the Holy Spirit who gives us the strength and ability to put all these things second to Christ, the power to resist the temptations that would lure us away from the fullness of life in him.

The benefit is joy. It is the joy that comes from knowing and being known by God. It is the joy of seeing God work in us and through us, transforming our relationships and our lives, and using us to build God's kingdom and reveal God's love.

The benefit is love. It is knowing we are loved by God and seeing that love play out more and more as we keep Jesus first over all. It is being able to love God back more deeply and fully than we ever thought possible because we are free from all that would hold us back. It is even being able to love one another better as God's love grows in us.

No matter what it costs us, Jesus Christ is worth it!

He was for Paul. Paul said I count everything that I have, everything that I thought was important in my life; I count it as a loss for the sake of following Jesus. I want to know him. I want to know him in the power of his resurrection and know him in the depth of his suffering.

To Paul, knowing Jesus Christ was paramount! That was what he desired most. That is what we must desire most if we want to call ourselves his followers. But it's a process.

Paul said I haven't attained it yet but "I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." I keep trying, he says. Therein lies our hope. We can keep trying. The Spirit of God is there to help us keep trying. The choice is ours to make again and again to reorient all of our relationships with our stuff, with others, and with ourselves until Christ is our highest priority and our greatest love. In the process, we will reap more and more of the benefits.

What costs have you yet to spend for the One who paid the greatest price for us? Don't be stingy. Be generous to God because Jesus Christ is worth it, whatever the cost. Amen.

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The Order of Worship Explained

1. Detail the theological significance of each act of worship. Describe what is happening and why it occurs where it does in the service.

Prelude/Postlude: This music is meant to create a sense of sacredness in the worship space, helping people move from the noise of the outside world into a state of worship and then out of this sacred space renewed in our commitment to be Christ for the world.

Announcements and Greeting: As a few brief announcements about the life of the church are made, I encourage everyone to greet their neighbors in Christ's love. These acts show people that, in this faith community, we are not here alone, but together as one.

Call to worship: This responsive reading is the first opportunity for the congregation to join their voices together as one. I wrote this to center us on the theme of our intimate relationship with Christ and how that should affect our life beyond the Sunday service.

Hymn, "And Are We Yet Alive": Singing is an important part of our Methodist identity. Hymns are our words of praise, confession, and hope and our lessons about our faith. They connect us to God, one another, and the long history of believers whose voices we join in singing. This hymn centers us in praise and sets the tone for the service.

Prayer of Confession: This unison prayer articulates our failing to prioritize Christ and our need for divine help to live in obedience and joy. It addresses key elements of today's theme and prepares us for receiving the Lord's Supper later in the service.

Scripture reading: This is the first reading for the day and affirms the tone of the service. Another will be read just prior to the message. This one informs the children's message and ensures that the children hear Scripture before they are dismissed.

Message for the children: I give a brief message highlighting one aspect of today's theme. This time is essential for planting and watering seeds of faith.

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Offertory/Offering/Doxology/Dedication: In giving, the people express the gratitude in material ways that will serve to glorify God and minister to others. We sing to affirm our giving is an act of worship to God and I pray our gifts would be used for God's glory.

Affirmation of Faith/Praise Response: We proclaim the basic truths of the Christian faith and celebrate the triune God to whom we have just affirmed our faith.

Pastoral Prayer: We make prayer cards available for people to submit their requests. My pastoral prayer echoes their concerns and reflects the theme of discipleship for the day. I also pray for our community, nation, world, leaders, and mission.

Hymn, "The Old Rugged Cross": This hymn closes our time of prayer by acting itself as a final corporate prayer before the time of learning.

Gospel Reading: This is the primary text of the message and introduces the sermon.

Message: Here, the Good News is celebrated, explained, and its application is taught. Leading into the Lord's Supper, this message is meant to inspire people to commit themselves to the One who sees us as worth what it cost God.

Sharing the Lord's Supper: I proclaim and we experience the grace of God through the represented body and blood of Jesus Christ. In taking the bread and cup we remember that Jesus gave his all for us out of love. If the sermon challenged people to put Christ first, this means of grace assures us that God forgives our failure to do so and invites us to a deeper communion with God. It is also our response to the message as we embrace what Christ has done for us and recommit to making Jesus our highest priority.

Hymn, "I Surrender All": This final hymn is our response to the message.

Benediction: This is a blessing and a challenge to go into the world and live the faith we celebrated, practiced, and learned, all in the name of our triune God.

2. Explain the following:

a. Why did you choose the hymns used in the context of this service?

“And Are We Yet Alive” is a great opening hymn that is honest about the trials we have faced and God’s faithfulness to see us through since we last met. It celebrates Christ’s redeeming power and touches on today’s theme: putting all aside to gain Christ.

“The Old, Rugged Cross” is a powerful hymn of confession and commitment. Since today we share the Lord’s Supper, its emphasis on Jesus’ suffering and death brings into sharp focus what our salvation cost God. My hope was that it would move the congregation into a deeper emotional experience of the gravity of the crucifixion. This would prepare them for the message and their sincere response.

“I Surrender All” serves as our final act of commitment in this service. The words of this hymn become our declaration that we will forsake all that would keep us from loving and trusting Jesus Christ and experiencing “the joy of full salvation.”

b. What was the purpose of the sermon?

Consider the cost that following Jesus demands and how he is worth it, whatever the cost. I took the passage from Luke 14:25-33 to show how Jesus laid out what those costs actually are and how they apply to us. It can be a hard passage to understand as Jesus calls us to hate our closest relations, embrace the cruciform life, and give up our possessions. I explained it by focusing on what it will mean to put our relationship with Christ first above all other personal and material relationships and the benefits of it.

c. Does the Order of Worship help deliver that theme? Explain.

Yes, the congregation was introduced to, celebrated, prayed about, engaged in, and committed to being disciples of Jesus Christ no matter what the cost. Whether they took it to heart or left wrestling with it, aspects of the theme were present throughout.

16th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

September 4, 2016

Those Assisting in Worship

Head Usher – Michael Herbst

Music Director – Glenda Steffee

Nursery Attendant – Janet Tomlinson

September Liturgist—Judie and Joe Smith

*“And anyone who does
not carry his cross and
follow me cannot be my
disciple.”* Luke 14:27



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www.facebook.com/WenonahUMC

Wenonah United Methodist Church

A part of Open Door Ministries

welcomes you in the love of Jesus Christ!

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Wenonah United Methodist Church

A Part of Open Door Ministries*

16th Sunday after Pentecost **September 4, 2016**

If you have a prayer request or celebration, please fill out a prayer card located in the pew and drop it in the offering plate. The ushers will hand them to the pastor who will lift them up and then give them to the Thursday night prayer team.

Prelude

Announcements and Greeting

If you are visiting with us, please fill out a visitor's card.

+Call to Worship

L: We come to worship because for us to live is Christ.

P: We live for Christ, we live by Christ,

L: We live with Christ,

P: We live through Christ, we live in Christ.

L: God of grace,

P: Let Christ be praised in all we say and do, in all we think and speak, in this hour of worship and in every moment of our lives. Amen.

+Hymn #553 "And Are We Yet Alive"

+Prayer of Confession

Gracious God,

As Christ bore our sins upon the cross, you have called us to bear our own cross and embrace the way that leads to you. We confess we find it hard to carry our cross when everything around us is designed to make our lives more comfortable. When doing so required us to speak up, we found it easier to remain silent. When it required us to stand up for something, we found it safer to sit down. When it required us to reach out to others, we chose to keep our hands to ourselves. Forgive us, we pray. Teach us the blessedness of what often seems like a burden and fit us for the life of discipleship that we may know the joy of true fellowship with you through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

New Testament Reading: Philippians 3:7-14

Children's Message (all children under 5 are invited to our nursery at this time)

Offertory

+Giving Of Our Tithes and Offerings

+Doxology # 2044 "My Gratitude Now Accept, O God"

*My gratitude now accept, O God, for tender care that you provide;
For your abundant faithfulness. Endless is your supply.*

*From all your bounty I give to you; for all the blessings you impart.
Receive this offering I bring. Receive my joyful heart.*

+Dedication of the Offering

+Affirmation of Faith A Modern Affirmation (p 885)

+Praise Response #70 "Glory Be to the Father"

Pastoral Prayer

+Hymn #504 "The Old Rugged Cross"

Gospel Reading: Luke 14:25-33

Message: "The Cost of Following Jesus"

+Sharing the Lord's Supper

+Hymn #354 "I Surrender All"

+Benediction

Postlude

+Standing/ Sitting in Praise of God

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PRAYER LIST

- Our church to grow as disciples and disciple-makers
- Nora Goodman and Cindy Baum
- Jeanne Stowe(Ken's wife)—health issues
- Kenslee—(Smith's granddaughter) living with a liver disorder
- Ed and Nancy Frederick—in Collingswood Manor
- Rachael Knisell—in Pitman Manor
- Noah and Family—continued prayers and protection
- Tom Myers—cancer
- Our soldiers and all those who serve and protect us.
- Our Pastors and their families
- Lorraine Clark—continued prayers

MISSION AND MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

Do you know someone who needs a break for dinner?

Want to provide meals for someone who could use the help? Call Debby Dominy at 856-371-5939.

Out of sight but not out of mind!

Those listed on the notice on the bulletin board, could certainly use some encouraging words from our church family. If you know of others, let someone know.

The Wenonah Prayer Team – Be a part of it!

Our Wenonah Prayer Team prays for our neighbors' needs, our community, our church and one another. Thursday nights from 7-7:30 pm Talk to Christy if would like to be prayer partner.

Open Door Ministries:

Open Door Ministries is five churches working together to reveal Jesus Christ in Gloucester County through serving, celebrating, and loving God and the people God loves (that's all of us!). We are Barnsboro, Mantua, Mt. Zion, New Sharon, and Wenonah United Methodist Churches. Throughout our five sites we offer an open environment to celebrate, discuss, and live out the Christian faith. Find out more at www.facebook.com/OpenDoorMinistriesNJ

New Testament Reading: Philippians 3:7-14

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Gospel Reading: Luke 14:25-33

Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ²⁶ “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

²⁸ “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? ²⁹ For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, ³⁰ saying, ‘This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.’

³¹ “Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³² If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long

way off and will ask for terms of peace. ³³ In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

L: This is the Word of God for the people of God.

P: Thanks be to God.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Prayer Walk – The next prayer walk will be today, **Sunday Sept. 4 at 1pm** (and will happen the 1st and 3rd Sunday of each month, at 1pm) – Meeting at Mantua UMC. If you have a passion for prayer and for connecting with people in our community, please become part of the Open Door Ministries Prayer Walk Team! We will walk our New Sharon, Wenonah, Barnsboro and Mantua communities and pray as we go, reaching out to people we meet along the way. Even if you can't physically walk with us, the walk path / area, you can participate from home. Contact Christy Inverso (468-5330) for more information.

Open Door Saturday Ministry Service is on hiatus.

Monday Morning Bible Study at 10 am.

A laity-led Bible study will meet Mondays at Barnsboro UMC. All are welcome! Bring a friend.

Choir rehearsals will restart beginning Thursday, September 8 at 7:30pm

Adult Sunday School will resume on Sept. 18th at 9:45 am in the Hawthorne Room.

Thank you to everyone that provided School Supplies!!

“Four Weeks with the Philippians” Home Study starts on Wednesday, September 21st at 1:30 pm. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” “Rejoice in the Lord always!” “It is God who works in you to will and do according to his good purpose.” Do

these sound familiar? These are just some of the often-quoted verses from Paul's Letter to the Philippians. What do they mean for us today? Join us at the home of Kitty Cartwright as we take a deeper look at this beloved book of the Bible. Her address is 412 Clems Run in Mullica Hill.

There will be a joint Open Door service on Sunday, September 11th

To observe the 15th anniversary of 9/11 all of our Open Door congregations will join together at 9:45am in Mantua UMC as we remember and reflect on the events of that day, how it has affected us, and how God still offers us healing and hope. Please plan to join us and invite anyone you know who would like to reflect and find hope. This will replace all our regularly scheduled Sunday services.

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2. Bible Study on Philippians

Setting and Purpose:

This study was held at the home of a long-time member of my Barnsboro UMC congregation. It was held every Wednesday afternoon from September 21st to October 12th at 1:30pm. The make-up of the group included seven retired members of my congregations, all white middle to upper class. Each of them has had their share of health and lifestyle problems. They also reflect a prevailing attitude of discouragement that has been running through my congregations. This comes from fears about the future of their church given its ageing membership and its tenuous long-term financial viability.

The purpose of this study is to encourage people to claim the joy we have in Jesus Christ in the midst of every circumstance. This study will cover the book of Philippians by breaking it down into four themes: joy, the Day of Christ, humility, and the need to stand firm. Each of these serves Paul's goal to encourage the church in their issues so that they could more effectively spread the Gospel. The location of the study also served a purpose. I chose a shut-in's home to model an off-site, in-home study, which is new to this congregation. It was also a type of pastoral care as the host has recently become a shut-in and has been unable to participate in the life of the church as she used to.

Outline:

- 1. Joy comes from being in Jesus Christ, not from our circumstances.**
 - a. Introducing Philippians: the context of the church (Acts 16:11-40)
 - b. Joy comes from relationships forged in Christ (1:1-11; 2:19-30; 4:1,14-20)
 - c. Joy comes from seeing Christ glorified (1:12-26)
 - d. Joy comes from knowing Jesus Christ in every circumstance (1:21; 2:17-18; 4:10-13)

e. Discussion questions:

- i. For Paul and Nick Vujcic, their contentment came from hearts and minds set on Jesus Christ and fulfilling God's desires. Consider what your heart and mind are set on. Does it give you a joy that even the fear of death cannot quash?
- ii. Often we find ourselves discouraged because of our circumstances. How might Nick inspire us to deal with them? How does Paul teach us to find joy in every circumstance?
- iii. How can loving and serving Jesus Christ help us find joy?
- iv. Paul says "to live is Christ and to die is gain." What does living for Christ look like to you?
- v. How can we help each other cultivate the joy of being in Christ?

2. Our guaranteed future gives us hope to live faithfully in Christ today.

- a. The Day of Christ marks the completion of our salvation (1:6; 2:13)
- b. The Day of Christ brings vindication of the faithful (1:19-21; 2:5-11)
- c. The Day of Christ is our goal to pursue (3:10-14)
- d. Discussion questions:
 - i. In what ways does the Day of Christ give you hope?
 - ii. Paul said "to live is Christ and to die is gain." What gains from dying in Christ do you most desire?
 - iii. Paul is able to endure all things by keeping his eye on the goal. What makes it hard to stay focused on the hope God promises us?

- iv. How can we work with the Holy Spirit and one another to live in that promised hope?

3. Humility frees us to experience the joy of being in Christ together.

- a. Humility enables us to live together in Christ (2:1-4)
- b. To live humbly in Christ we must adopt the mindset of Christ (2:5-11)
- c. Practice helps us cultivate the mind of Christ in us
- d. Discussion questions:
 - i. What aspects of Christ's humility trouble you the most? Why?
 - ii. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said "If my sinfulness appears to me to be in any way smaller or less detestable in comparison with the sins of others, I am still not recognizing my sinfulness at all. ... How can I possibly serve another person in unfeigned humility if I seriously regard his sinfulness as worse than my own?" How can we be honest about our sin without falling into the trap of self-loathing?
 - iii. Humility begins in the mind. Think of how we try to make ourselves feel important. What do we do or think to indulge that? What steps can we take to cultivate the mind of Christ in us to combat pride and embrace humility?
 - iv. Who has been an example of humble service to you?
 - v. Who and how can you serve someone this week?

4. Standing firm together is the only way to remain in Christ.

- a. External and internal opposition distract us from joy. (3:1-3; 4:1-3)
- b. Standing firm affects our witness in the world (1:27-30)

- c. Standing firm requires work on our part (2:12-18)
- d. Standing firm requires help from God and one another (3:17-21; 4:4-9)
- e. Discussion Questions:
 - i. Do you think that persecution could ever be good for the church?
How might the lack of it affect the church?
 - ii. What things cause you to grumble and complain? How does that affect you and those around you? How can we avoid it in ways that honor God and demonstrate Christ-like humility to one another?
 - iii. Paul tells the church to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, meaning with a profound sense of awe at the majesty and presence of God. How might awe help us take obedience to God more seriously? What can we do to cultivate a sense of awe?
 - iv. Who has been a good role model of walking worthy of the Gospel to you? What in them would you like to emulate?
 - v. We stand firm best when we work out our salvation together. What ways discussed today would you like to see implemented in our faith community?

Detailed Lesson Plan for Lesson 1

Key Thought: Joy comes from being in Jesus Christ, not from your circumstances.

Learning Goals:

- To learn the background of the Letter to the Philippians.
 - Its founding as a Roman military colony and role as a political center
 - The dawn of the church from Acts 16
 - The challenges of worshipping Christ in a loyal Roman city
 - Paul writes to encourage the church to embrace Christ-centered joy so they may effectively spread the Gospel
- To understand the three sources of Paul's abiding joy.
 - Joy comes from the relationships forged in Christ
 - Paul's and their relationship of mutual compassion and support is a model for all Christian relationships
 - Joy comes from seeing God glorified through our victories and suffering
 - Paul saw God at work through his faithfulness converting Roman guards and inspiring Roman Christians to boldly proclaim Christ
 - Joy comes from knowing Jesus Christ in every circumstance
 - Paul's strength comes from his intimate relationship with Christ and the proof God has shown him of God's presence and love
- To identify ways to help fellow Christians cultivate the joy of being in Christ
 - Pray for and with one another according to Paul's prayer for the church
 - Sacrificially support one another as the Philippians did for Paul
 - Develop intentional caring relationships with one another

- Celebrate what God is doing in you and through you with one another
- Encourage one another to work together in glorifying God in the world

Teaching Strategies:

Part of the study consists of a lecture on the background and context of Philippians. This will give the students a better understanding of the cultural environment in which the church ministered and the specific challenges they faced. I also include periods of discussion on the points covered to let the students process them and come up with ways to apply them. Each student will go home with a challenge to write a letter to someone, living or dead, who has brought them great joy along their faith journey. They will also be asked to read the entire letter of Philippians, note every reference to joy, and pray for each student according to Paul's prayer in 1:9-11.

Teaching Aids:

My primary teaching aid is a list of discussion questions meant to help people identify with and apply the key thought. I am using a YouTube video of motivational speaker Nick Vujicic, a man born without limbs; to illustrate how knowing Jesus Christ can give us joy no matter what our circumstances. The video can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s5WID0PMYt0>. I am also providing a handout of a map of the New Testament World (<http://www.bible-history.com/new-testament/new-testament-world.html>), and one detailing the theme, goals, points, questions, and homework assigned.

Annotated Bibliography:

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*. New York: MacMillan Company, 1963.

Fee, Gordon D. *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament, edited by Gordon D. Fee. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1995.

Hooker, Morna D. "The Letter to the Philippians" in *The New Interpreter's Bible, Vol. XI*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, Inc., 2000.

_____. *Paul: A Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oneworld, 2003.

Mamiazy. "Nick Vujcic in China..What kind of joy do you have?" Online video clip. YouTube. YouTube, 19 July 2009. Web. 20 September 2016.

Evaluation:

I created an evaluation form for the group that asked the following questions:

- What is one positive thing you will take away from today's lesson?
- What were the strengths of this lesson?
- What could have been better?
- Were the main points and key concept clear?
- Was there anything you would have liked covered more in-depth?
- Other comments?

All of the respondents said that they enjoyed the study; highlighting that the main points and key concepts were clear and easy to understand and apply. Some expressed appreciation for the background information on Philippi while others were encouraged by the emphasis on joy, God's faithfulness, and how we can encourage one another to stand firm. All liked the video of Nick Vujicic and how it helped illustrate the major theme of the study. Likewise, they valued the discussion about how to apply the text to our own situation and the challenge to do it.

While most stated that there was nothing that could have been done better, one respondent said she wanted more time during the discussion period to share. I agree with that comment. While they and I were largely satisfied with how people were eager and encouraged to engage in meaningful discussion, I would budget a few more minutes for it in the future. This might mean cutting some ancillary information and reining in the tangents of which both they and I were guilty. Two others wanted more about how God had sustained Paul throughout his ministry to get him to the point where he could rejoice in all circumstances.

Handout #1

Four Weeks with the Philippians: A Study in Joy

Lesson the First

Key concept:

- True joy comes from being in Christ, not from our circumstances.

Goals:

- To learn the background information of the Letter to the Philippians;
- To understand the three sources of Paul's abiding joy;
- To identify ways to help one another cultivate the joy of being in Christ.

Key Points:

- Joy comes from relationship forged in Christ;
- Joy comes from seeing God glorified;
- Joy comes from knowing Jesus Christ in every circumstance.

Reflection Questions:

- For Paul and for Nick Vujicic, their contentment came from hearts and minds set on Jesus Christ and fulfilling God's desires. Consider what your heart and mind are set on. Does it give you a joy that even the fear of death cannot quash?
- Often we find ourselves discouraged because of our circumstances. How might Nick inspire us to deal with them? How does Paul teach us to find joy in every circumstance?
- How can loving and serving Jesus Christ help us find joy?
- Paul says "to live is Christ and to die is gain." What does living for Christ look like to you?
- How can we help each other cultivate the joy of being in Christ?

Homework!

- Read through all of Philippians for next week (it's only four chapters!) and note each time Paul mentions joy or rejoicing;
- Find something to rejoice in each time;
- Pray the prayer that Paul prays in 1:9-11 for each person here;
- Write a letter to someone who has been a joy to you along your faith journey. Thank and encourage them. If they are alive, send it. If not, make it a thank you letter to God for that person.

3. Practice of Ministry Questions

1. What do you think are the most effective means of doing evangelism in the 21st century? How have you lived this out in your current context of ministry?

Inviting people into mission. It seems backwards to invite someone to a mission before leading them to faith, but it has proven to be a good way to evangelize. A youth with no desire to set foot in a church participated in a service project we did at the Neighborhood Center in Camden because a friend invited her. She said she was happy to do some good. Several service projects later she started coming to youth group and church. This opened up an avenue for me to talk to her about the Gospel. Giving her the chance to be a part of something bigger than herself met a need in her that is in many people today. Seeing our faith in action encouraged her to explore faith more. I stress this in my preaching, teaching, and planning: always invite people to take part in the work we are doing, whether they are believers or not.

Building relationships. Another effective means is to develop sincere relationships with people outside the church. Our genuine concern and honest interactions can help us earn the privilege to share the Gospel with others. It requires vulnerability as our less-than-perfect selves are on display but by getting to know someone, we can see how to point them to Christ in ways that matter most. In turn, they can see the difference Jesus makes in our imperfect selves. One couple in my Wenonah congregation recommitted their lives to Christ and the church after a few members built such a relationship with them.

Speaking the Gospel in love. It would not be evangelism if we did not share the Gospel. Whether with someone you know or a stranger, when the Spirit shows us an opening, we must take that opportunity to tell people about God's love, Jesus' gift, and the Spirit-led life. Each time I teach people how to articulate the Gospel, I emphasize that we must

always do it in love. Too often people hear voices of shame, condemnation, and hate from those claiming the Christian faith. But the Gospel is good news! We must share it in ways that humbly acknowledge our human sin and point people to God's amazing grace.

2. What makes a congregation vital and how do you measure it? How would you envision working with a congregation to become more vital?

My four congregations along with Mantua UMC are part of a cooperative parish called Open Door Ministries. We are part of the Team Vital program and it has equipped us to better address the five areas of vitality that will help us be more effective in ministry. Those areas include: worship, making new disciples, small groups, mission, and giving. Our Team Vital action plan is our blueprint for working together and our benchmark for measuring our success in each area. We have made strides in creating more engaging worship, creating and maintaining more small group ministries, and expanding our involvement in mission to Gloucester county. As I write this, we have just finished a stewardship campaign to promote more worshipful giving. As we evaluate these efforts, our primary question is how well does this bring people closer to Jesus Christ.

3. What is your personal approach to conflict? Provide an example of where you have been involved in resolving conflict. What did you learn?

I am a listener. I try to hear the concern at the core of whatever the conflict is and work outward. I tend to ignore the delivery to address the issue. This often helps diffuse a person's anger and let them know I am willing to work with them rather than against them. One time, a man in a council meeting was angry about our lack of young families. He blamed the older people for not inviting their children, the youth for not participating enough, and me for not being "more visible" in the community. As others responded defensively, I ignored his gruffness and repeated back what I thought his concerns were.

We worked from there to discuss new outreach ideas. The meeting ended well, however he was still upset. I knew part of it stemmed from disappointment with his own children who had rejected church and whose lives were in turmoil. This instance reaffirmed for me that there are often personal pains that drive conflict and to ignore them is to miss addressing part of the root of the problem.

4. What is your theological and practical understanding of itineracy?

By committing to itinerate, Methodist clergy join the likes of Abraham, Paul, the Gospel disciples, and Jesus himself. Each was called to leave the familiar and go into the world to do God's will. Though we are not sent by a direct command from God, the Holy Spirit does lead the bishop and the cabinet in deciding whom to send into which "field of labor."¹ This system serves the church by working against a clergy-centric mentality. It allows for a diverse range of voices to be heard over a congregation's life thereby challenging and enriching the ways they live out their faith in the world. It respects that the clergyperson's, and congregation's needs, gifts, and missional emphases may change over time, requiring a change in appointment for them to grow. It also serves to remind the laity of their responsibilities in the life of the church, by seeing the appointed clergy as only a part—albeit an important one—of their identity as the local body of Christ.

This system is not without its issues. Itineracy can be a burden to the church and the pastoral family. Changes of appointment can disrupt healthy relationships between the clergy and the laity as well as the surrounding community. It can adversely affect ministries in which the pastor is an integral part, and, if the transition is handled poorly, it can cause great pain to the outgoing pastor, incoming pastor, and congregation alike. It

¹ *Book of Discipline*, ¶338 It should be noted that part-time appointments of an elder or associate member are possible according to ¶338.2 but this is not the norm.

may also mean difficult transitions for clergy spouses and children regarding jobs, schools, and social lives. However, it embodies God's calling of the faithful to go wherever God calls to make disciples, fulfill his will, and be a blessing in the world.

5. How do you engage all age groups in your community?

I reach out to all ages by initiating conversations, building relationships, and ensuring our ministries attract and address the needs of every generation. One of my congregations has a preschool that serves forty families a year. I read to the children regularly and attend the various meetings and programs the preschool holds. Over the years this has helped me build relationships with some of our preschool families long after their children graduated. Through our youth group and summer college Bible studies I have reached out to the teens and young adults and talk with and listen to them about the faith with an open and nonjudgmental ear. I love having conversations and building relationships with our residents, business owners, and community leaders. It helps me understand what issues and needs exist that my congregations can address. I encourage my members to engage with those not of their generation and ensure we are active in social media as well as in one-on-one communication. I also include young and old alike in church leadership.

6. What is your understanding of pastoral authority and how do you intend to exercise it in your place of ministry?

My authority comes by the nature of my calling by God to be a pastor of the people and by the affirmation of the United Methodist Church that I am a person fit to bear such authority. The Book of Discipline serves to define the proper exercise of it and, provided I stay committed to upholding it and leading my congregations in the life it details, I remain within the bounds of that authority. As the pastor, I am responsible for teaching about and administering the sacraments, preaching and teaching the Scriptures and

traditions of the church, ordering the life of the church such that it remains faithful to being and making disciples of Christ through a Methodist lens, and overseeing the creation and administration of the congregation's work in service to God, the community, and the world. A good use of pastoral authority shows in how one strengthens disciples.

Not everyone recognizes this authority. There are times my authority is challenged, in setting the worship time of a service, for example. Often it is because people are unfamiliar with our polity, but there have been a few occasions when power issues were at play. I have learned how to assert my authority in gentle, affirming, and creative ways. I find that my authority works best as I share it with others. By empowering my laity to make decisions and to create new ways of ministering, I have seen people who would normally stay in the background take the lead and flourish. I work closely with the SPRC, my lay leader, and the other church leaders to ensure that I am not the one ruling over all but lifting others up to better the life and ministry of the church.

7. If you could choose anyone to mentor you in leadership skills, who would that be and why?

Brother Lawrence, a 17th century Carmelite monk, who practiced a deep awareness of God's presence in his everyday life, is someone I believe will help me be a better leader. I can get preoccupied with the daily responsibilities of my vocation and lose sight of the One in whose name I do them. In his book, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, Brother Lawrence describes a level of intimacy with the Spirit that makes every task, even the most mundane ones, an opportunity to express his love to God. I would love for Brother Lawrence to teach me how to raise my awareness so that there would be no division between my work and my devotional life, that love for God would undergird my approach to all I do to uphold my ordination vows. I believe the best thing I can do to be

a good leader is to develop such sensitivity to the Spirit's presence that all I do would be a deliberate act of love to God.

8. Describe a situation in which you felt a need to assert a professional boundary in the practice of ministry.

Recently, I had to define my role as pastor to one church member who has had a difficult time adjusting to the changes relating to my appointment. Since becoming part of Open Door Ministries, she has felt she no longer had a church or a pastor of her own. While visiting her in the hospital, she said to me "you're not my pastor; you're my friend." I gently explained to her how I, along with two other pastors in our parish, am indeed her pastor. Though the arrangement is different, we take the responsibilities of our appointment seriously. I reminded her that she has plenty of friends in the congregation but it is my place to be responsible for helping her grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ. I am pleased to say that she has begun to accept my role as one of her pastors.

9. How have you worked through the experience of forgiving someone?

A long-time friend had taken advantage of our compassion and generosity for years, which caused my wife and me tremendous anxiety, pain, and financial woes. Our friend was physically and emotionally sick. We knew this when we let her live in the house we owned at a reduced rate and gave her additional support. Our relationship soured quickly. She treated us with a mistrust and contempt that was hard to understand. Eventually, she only dealt with us through a social worker. After six years, we ended the arrangement.

The temptation was to be resentful ourselves for how she treated us. However, as we went through the legal process of ending our arrangement, with much prayer and discernment, my wife and I recognized that the best way we could show her the love of Jesus Christ was to forgive her outstanding debt to us as well as the damage she caused to

our friendship. To get there, God helped us see her treatment of us was a symptom of the deeper emotional and spiritual damage she has dealt with most of her life. We recognized our own role in potentially enflaming that by not better understanding her condition. We chose to release our anger—clearly a work of the Holy Spirit—and free her and us from the debt that bound us together. We sent a final notice forgiving her financial debt and wishing her healing and peace. Since then, my wife and I have felt nothing but peace.

10. What are you doing to help those around you to take good care of themselves?

I try to model a healthy lifestyle to my congregations. Ever since I was diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes, I have significantly changed my eating and activity habits to gain control of my condition. Since several members of my congregations are also diabetics, I have been intentional in sharing with them the struggles and victories we face. I openly speak about my progress and have spoken about the changes that have helped me. I try to encourage healthy behavior in our social gatherings even by something as simple as bringing a salad or vegetable dish. In one of my congregations, we are working on a “health fair” that would be open to the community.

Beyond the physical, I try to help my leaders from getting overwhelmed. For those leaders who overcommit themselves, I have helped them embrace delegation. It gives them some relief and ensures others are given an active role in the church’s life.

I encourage my congregations’ spiritual well being through teaching and modeling times of spiritual renewal. Some had asked about what to do when you lose your drive to study the Bible or pray. I taught alternate ways of meditating on Scripture and praying, ways to keep a Sabbath, and other spiritual disciplines. Physical, spiritual, and emotional balance is necessary for a healthy life.

11. How have you invited someone to faith and seen their faith develop?

When the Jones couple first came to Wenonah, they made it clear to me that they were not interested in joining the church or volunteering. They had been hurt badly by congregations before and had a poor opinion of church. Yet, after years of staying away, they could not resist God's call to find Christian community. Several couples in the congregation befriended them and I made myself available to counsel them as they worked through their distrust. I never pressured them to join but made sure to include them in our church life. After a year of faithful attendance, Mr. Jones expressed some frustration that I had not asked them to become members. I smiled and responded, "You told me to leave you alone!" I have watched them grow from suspicious souls wounded by betrayal to faithful members who are active and integral parts of our ministry.

Dara was a 14 year-old atheist who did not trust Christians. She was a close friend of a girl in our youth group, Sam, and would come to some of our outings and meetings. She asked great questions and we would talk about some tough issues. After she became a regular, Sam took me aside, told me about Dara's beliefs, and thanked me because her friend was now open to the possibility that God is real and there might be something to Jesus after all. Sam said I was instrumental in this change because I welcomed and accepted Dara, took her questions seriously, made her think, and made her feel loved. Dara is in college now. We still talk and she is getting closer to trusting in Jesus Christ.

12. What have you overcome to come to this season in your ministry?

I have overcome my reservations about itineracy. I did not feel comfortable submitting myself fully to the bishop and the church. I had a hard time believing that such a human system could accurately discern God's will for my ministry. Before, it had always been

God and me. I knew God had told me to wait to become a pastor. I knew God had opened the door when it was time to go to seminary. All my life, though I had many counselors, I knew God had been steering me down the path I needed to go. Even as a licensed local pastor, I felt I still had some control. After years of prayer and counsel, God convicted me of my fear and need for control. I am in this season of my ministry because I have overcome this obstacle. I do believe God can and does use this human system of bishops and cabinets to put us where we need to be. I see myself as one part of the bigger picture that is the GNJAC and the UMC and I am willing to do my part fully as God leads us.

13. How would you describe your prayer life in this season and how has it changed over your journey?

Since becoming a pastor, I find I pray continually. I used to pray a scheduled three times a day and then live my life in-between. However, my prayers have evolved into a daily conversation with God thanks to the responsibilities I have to my congregations, to my family, and to grow as a disciple. Whether I am about to enter a meeting or a hospital room, I ask God for help to be a good representative of Jesus Christ. When I sit down to read the Scriptures, research, or write a sermon, I see it as a conversation with God. I am learning to be attentive to God's presence with me and in the people I encounter even if they just cut me off in traffic. I also value silence more as a part of my prayer life. In the silence I feel truly intimate with God. I can see the difference in how I feel and how I think when I neglect our daily conversation.

14. When you read the Bible, how do you hear God's voice? What example might you give of how you responded?

When I read the Bible in preparation for a sermon or study, searching the chapters for common themes or teachings, God speaks to me in the "a-ha!" moments as I realize the

connections that drive home the points of the passage. I use those moments not only to inform my own understanding of God's word but my preaching and teaching as well. I have often used what I believe God revealed to me as a point of discussion for our weekly Bible studies. Sometimes in these discussions God has spoken to me through the other participants, either confirming, expanding, or fine-tuning what God revealed to me.

When I read for my own edification, whether a few verses or whole chapters, God helps me personally connect with the passage. This happens especially as I read the Psalms and identify with the praises, laments, and struggles of the writers. I have responded with praise, with tears of repentance, and with renewed hope. Once, recently, so inspired by how God spoke to my heart, I was moved to write my own psalm.

15. How has your family of origin influenced your call?

I was initially called to be a pastor as a freshman in college and, although my parents would not live to see me enter the ministry, they supported my calling as well as the lengthy time of discernment that eventually led me to the pulpit. Both my parents were Christian and were glad that their son might be a pastor. My mother was active in the Lutheran church all her life and taught Sunday school for decades. My father was raised Catholic but joined the Lutheran Church after he married my mom. They both had a deep respect for the ministry and saw it as a sacred calling. They encouraged me to speak with our pastor and other leaders in the church to discern if my calling was genuine. They also understood when I told them I believed God would have me wait to enter the ministry. My extended family was also supportive, even those who were not religious. I had Protestants and Catholics praying for me as I explored my call. I am a pastor today in part because of the encouragement my parents and family gave me.

16. Interview three people to tell you what they see in your ministry. What did you hear in these conversations?

The three people I interviewed included a lay leader, an SPRC chairperson, and an active member of one of my congregations. Their feedback focused on my preaching and teaching, my pastoral care, and my “relational leadership” as one person put it. The majority of what I heard was encouraging with one suggestion on how I might improve.

Regarding my preaching and teaching, all stated how much they appreciated the content and style. My lay leader said that my Bible studies were “engaging, fun, and thought-provoking” and that my messages are “clear and memorable.” My active member noted that I demonstrate a competence and knowledge of Scripture and appreciated that I “bring the message to our level without talking down to us.” All said that my sermons and lessons help them see how to “live out the faith every day.”

Regarding my pastoral care, each person considered me a good listener who makes people feel “heard and appreciated.” They saw me as one who is willing to go out of my way if necessary to care for someone. Another said “I like that you don’t offer solutions but how to find them by pointing us to God.”

Regarding my leadership, all remarked that I lead well and have done a good job in guiding our congregations through the transition into Open Door Ministries. They said I am approachable and relatable and honest about who I am. “You allow us to see you are a human being, not just a pastor.” This helps them when I challenge them to step out in faith. It also helps visitors feel welcome.

One suggestion I need to consider is about showing people how human I am. One person said that my honesty and my humor, while “certainly not inappropriate” might put off someone who does not expect it from a pastor.

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4. Theology, Call, and Doctrine Questions

¶335.a) Theology

1. Give examples of how the practice of ministry has affected your experience and understanding of:

(a) God. Ministry has deepened my understanding and experience of God's love. When I comfort the grieving or care for the hurting, when I teach our youth and adults alike, when I work with those whom I pastor, I feel a love for them that is more than affection, it is from God. It is a sense that God is growing in me the capacity to love people in ways I wouldn't be capable of on my own, especially with those who may not be easy to love. God speaks above the unloving thoughts that can arise in me and challenges me to love them. Whether it's the guy yelling at me in a meeting, the recovering addict showing up sky high to Bible study, or the ranting bigot sowing resentment against my African-American colleague, God reminds me that their behavior and mine does not change the fact that God loves us, that Christ lived, died, and rose again for us. I am not perfect at loving people as God does but I am getting better. I am called to a ministry of love and I see the value of choosing to think and act in ways that reveal God's redeeming love to all people, especially when they act unlovely.

(b) Humanity. Although we are created in God's image, we are all deeply, desperately flawed sinners that God, in ways that I cannot at times fathom, loves. I have counseled people who struggle with the darkest of temptations, ask if God could forgive them for the terrible things they've done, and who have been victims of betrayal, hatred, and violence. My involvement with our communities has opened my eyes to the brokenness around us, including domestic violence, human trafficking, and a rampant heroin epidemic. Ministry has made me keenly aware of how we all need to be transformed by

grace if we are to enjoy life with God and each other as God intended.

(c) The need for divine grace. I see our need for it more than ever. I was counseling a woman who wrestled with guilt for 18 years because she had an abortion as a teenager. She was convinced that her family's current trouble was God punishing her for it. After much conversation and prayer together, I watched genuine relief come over her as she began to trust in the power of God's grace. I have seen grace heal strained relationships and convince those seeing it happen of its power. I have seen how withholding grace kept one family bitterly divided and how it poisoned other relationships in the church. That and many other experiences remind me that grace is central to my ministry and our life together. We need God's grace and need to demonstrate it if we want to grow in it. If not, it harms us individually, our faith community, and our witness to the world.

(d) The Lordship of Jesus Christ. When I say that Jesus is Lord, I am convinced that Jesus is the divine authority over all creation and will be worshipped as such for all eternity. I have learned that Jesus needs to be Lord over every aspect of my ministry: preaching, counseling, teaching, planning, visiting—all of it. At times, I tried to do something ministry-related according to how I was feeling in the moment rather than submitting to how Jesus would have me do it. They ended in frustration and fruitlessness. There was a counseling session in which I prejudged a teen and failed to really listen to him. I could tell it bothered him. I apologized later and salvaged the relationship. Ministry has helped me see that I still have areas where I need to acknowledge Jesus is Lord. I know it is true for others as well so I try to teach and model what it means for Jesus to be lord over our lives and how to move on to perfection.

(e) The work of the Holy Spirit. Ministry has revealed the Holy Spirit as never before.

The Spirit inspires me as I study God's word and helps me apply to my congregations what God has revealed. The Spirit gives me insight when I am counseling someone. I cannot count how often I have had one thing in mind to say but have been prompted to ask or say something else that helped move that person forward. The Spirit continues to convict me of sinful thoughts and attitudes that crop up on particularly trying days and moves me to make amends when necessary. The Spirit helps me recognize the gifts of my laity and empower them to put their gifts to use.

I have seen the Holy Spirit work powerfully in my congregations in our studies and discussions as well as in our times of fellowship and ministry. One man shared how the Spirit helped him come to terms with accepting different interpretations of Scripture. This has helped him make sense of verses and concepts with which he had struggled for years. Others have told me how the Spirit has convicted them to repent of their sins. I see the Spirit leading people to try new things and take a bigger role in our church life. People who I never thought would get involved in such a thing as our prayer walk ministry have stepped up and are now a vital part of it. The prayer walk ministry itself is the Spirit's doing as one person with a passion for prayer heard my call in a sermon to engage the community and ran with it. We now have people from each of my congregations involved in walking our streets and engaging people in prayer. The Spirit is at work in many ways and, though we do not always listen to God, the Spirit has not stopped equipping us to be the body of Christ for the world.

(f) The meaning and significance of the sacraments. Knowing those to whom I give the sacraments has deepened their meaning and significance for me. Most who come to me to baptize their children do not fully understand what it is they are committing to do. I

see this as an opportunity to introduce people to God's grace or help them better understand it. It is a joy to help parents see baptism as more than "giving my kid religion" but a tangible way we begin a life defined by grace and how they and the congregation are committing to live out that grace so their child would know it is real. I encourage them to think beyond the baptism to the life as part of the body of Christ into which their child has been initiated and how they might take part in it.

Sharing the Lord's Supper has been a great joy of mine as well. I know most of my congregation members well enough to know their struggles past and present. They have told me of their fears, doubts, and temptations. When I offer the bread and the cup, I am not just performing a ritual but am speaking God's mercy, love, and assurance to each by name in ways that they can touch and taste. Even to the visitor, whose story I do not know yet, I know that God can affect them in profound ways through this sacrament.

(g) The kingdom of God. I emphasize more our responsibility to build God's kingdom in the here and now in anticipation of its coming. This means living in such a way that reveals the self-giving love of God to all people. That is what I have seen bring people back to faith and led others to Christ, not my preaching or our polity, but people experiencing genuine Kingdom-like fellowship through my congregations. When a new couple see two of our families taking turns giving a shut-in couple rides throughout the week, they get a taste of God's Kingdom. When a troubled man came to Bible study and found people welcoming and supporting him through his issues with drugs and the law, he got a taste of God's Kingdom. Every effort we put forth to let God reign in our hearts helps us all experience what life will be like in God's Kingdom to come.

(h) Resurrection and eternal life. Resurrection is not just something that happened to

Jesus or something God promises us upon our death. It is something that God does to every believer throughout our lives. I have seen God resurrect a hopeless man's hope and give him new purpose. I have seen God resurrect a woman's joy after crippling grief. I have rejoiced as God raised an addict out of addiction and into a new life as a wife and mother. When I preach and teach about resurrection now, I don't just celebrate Christ's resurrection but also the ways God can and has raised us to new life now.

Regarding eternal life, I have seen the hope of it bring joy to a dying man in his final hours. In fact, many of those I have pastored in their final days have found hope and peace in God's promise. I see how the hope of eternal life is not just something for the dying but something we can live now as people raised from death to new life. We do not need to wait to enjoy our eternal communion with God but, as we grow in love and fellowship with God and each other, we can experience it to some extent now.

2. How do you understand the following traditional evangelical doctrines:

(a) Repentance. Repentance is essential to our beginning and growing in our faith in Jesus Christ. From that first conviction of sin that leads one to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior to every conviction after, repentance is a choice we make to reject our sin, deny a temptation, and submit to the will of God. It is a lifelong discipline. It is not just a thing we do but also a mindset we adopt that increasingly values the way of Jesus Christ over the ways of the world. If I am not calling people to repent and encouraging them in the way of Christ, then I am not remaining faithful to my calling.

(b) Justification. Sin has broken our relationship with God, marring the image of God in us beyond recognition. We cannot fix it. We cannot earn forgiveness or restore our relationship with God on our own merit. Jesus Christ intervenes for us and justifies us in

the eyes of God. Through his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus forgives our sins and restores our relationship to God. Because of this, God no longer regards us as guilty for our sin but sees us through the lens of Christ as blameless. This is God's gift to us, and cause for celebration in the church. It is also the primary message we are called to live out in the world so that all might believe.

(c) Regeneration. Regeneration is a process by which we come to accept the truth of Jesus Christ and our need for God's divine grace. This convincing work of God can happen in an instant, such as the many conversions I have witnessed at youth retreats as teens gave their lives to Christ, or gradually over time, such as my own conversion story.

(d) Sanctification. This is the Holy Spirit working in us to perfect us in love. It is a lifelong process that begins at our regeneration and requires our willing participation. It includes growing in faith, the transformation of our wills to reflect God's will, the conviction of sins, the willingness to repent, the strength to resist temptation, and the ability to live in the joy, hope, and peace of Christ. It is God's gift that we cannot earn.

What are the marks of the Christian life?

Faith, hope, and love are the marks of the Christian life according to John Wesley.¹

Faith is the heartfelt belief that Jesus Christ is God and we depend on him for God's saving grace. Whether this is the mature faith of a lifelong disciple or the undeveloped faith of a brand new Christian, it is a gift of God that we express through our repentance of sin and our good works. The second mark, hope, informs all that we do and how we handle every adversity. It is rooted in the truth that we are God's children and all that God has promised us in Jesus is ours now and forever. I have seen hope carry people

¹ John Wesley. *The Sermons of John Wesley*. Ed. Thomas Jackson. Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church. Accessed October 17, 2016. <http://www.umcmission.org/Find-Resources/John-Wesley-Sermons/Sermon-18-The-Marks-of-the-New-Birth>

through the most trying troubles and give them peace. The third mark is love. Our obedience to God, our work with the Holy Spirit to conform our will to Christ's, our response to all God is and does manifests in the love we show to God and one another.

3. How has the practice of ministry informed your understanding of the nature and mission of the church? What are its primary challenges today?

God desires that all people not merely assent to God's existence but live in eternal, loving communion with God, one another, and all creation. Therefore, the church is truly being the church when it continues God's mission of restoring humanity to that communion by being and making disciples of Jesus Christ. This does not just happen through our personal witness or corporate evangelism but through every form of our ministry with people. When we feed the hungry through our food pantry or make meals for those in need, when I comfort the grieving or counsel a troubled person, when we invite people to take part in our fellowship or our work in the community, we demonstrate that communion and act as living invitations into it. When my leaders and I plan activities or ministries, I make sure we plan to the question "how does this bring people closer to Jesus Christ?" That is God's desire and our mission.

The primary challenges to this are largely from within. There is the temptation for the church to turn inward. Two of my congregations have been wrestling with this as financial concerns mount and members leave or die. Discouragement and apathy creep in and the prospect of reaching out to the community becomes as intimidating as it does misguided. Their view of the mission becomes tainted as the conversation turns to "attracting more people so they can give us more money" than to helping people come to faith in Christ. Another challenge is arrogance. This could be seen in a rigid narrow-mindedness about one's own interpretation that rejects, even insults, another for their

differing approach. It could be the superior attitude one man takes over those he sees as “sinners.” Another challenge is selfish ambition. I have seen many people give in to the temptation to seek glory at the expense of our common good and mission. If unchecked, these affect how passionately and effectively we live and expand our divine communion.

4. The UMC holds that Scripture, tradition, experience and reason are sources and norms for belief and practice, but that the Bible is primary among them. What is your understanding of this theological position on the Church, and how has your practice of ministry been affected by this understanding?

Scripture is the divinely inspired written witness of God’s revelation to humankind. The Bible does not simply reflect the experience of God’s people with God in the past, but is a living vehicle the Holy Spirit uses to reveal God’s will and character to us. It is also the authority of the church and each believer. It is the benchmark by which our life must be measured. The Scriptures have been my source of inspiration and conviction in my life and ministry. My passion is to help people develop a deeper understanding and greater love for what God reveals through the written Word, to help them apply it, and to inform us on what we understand it saying is acceptable to God.

Scripture cannot be read in a vacuum. I have also made a point of teaching the faith traditions handed down from the days of the early church. These provide the lens through which we view Scripture. The original writers lived in different cultures from today and their words offer no self-evident perspective on modern issues such as stem cell research or abortion. Certainly, the Bible is not irrelevant in these issues. It is, in fact, the first and final word on them. As the faithful learned to apply the Word in their contexts, battled heresies, adapted to new cultural norms, and fleshed out doctrines and creeds, they were adding layers to the foundation of faith upon which the Church subsequently built. As I preach and teach, I have seen how some of our defining traditions, particularly Methodist,

have helped my people make sense of the issues facing our faith. These traditions help my congregations consider how to live under the authority of Scripture.

While tradition gives us the perspective of the faithful throughout the centuries, personal experience also helps us understand and apply Scripture. This is where God uses what we have seen, felt, and accomplished in the living out of our faith to sharpen our focus. I have learned much about my faith from hearing about my congregations' experiences as well as living out my own. I encourage my churches to share their experiences and process them together. Our experiences validate our faith.

God also gave us brains to help us make sense of it all. Our reason is the God-given faculty that helps us critically process all of the above to discern what God's will is for us in our context. Reason can be subjective which is why I encourage people to process what they read, learn, and experience together. Whether in Sunday school, Bible studies, or other small group meetings, I have found that the Holy Spirit helps us reason together and discern how to best live what Scripture, tradition, and personal experiences reveal.

5. How has the practice of ministry enriched your understanding of the meaning and significance of the sacraments?

I have come to see baptism as the start of a new life that is rooted in Christ's redeeming work and includes the whole congregation. When I baptize someone, I tell the people gathered that there are no spectators in the service. We are all taking vows—the parents on behalf of their children, those who can answer for themselves, and each person in the sanctuary. We are committing to live out our baptismal vows together. I stress to the parents and people involved during our pre-baptism counseling that they become active in our church's life. It lets the congregation fulfill their vows to the newly baptized and encourages them to grow as fellow disciples. While I would not refuse to baptize anyone

who does not commit to joining our church—it is a means of God’s freely given grace—I am compelled to share with them that it is the beginning of a life-long process of growing in God’s grace for the individual and the community.

The Lord’s Supper is, to me, a profound experience of God’s grace. As I lead the congregation in preparing to receive it the words of the Great Thanksgiving resonate deeply with me. Whether I use the traditional Service of Word and Table, a more contemporary version, or one that I write myself, I do not just lead the congregation but participate with them in the confession of our sin and the profession of our faith. As my communion steward hands me the bread and the cup, I am reminded that I am just as much in need of the grace being offered as those to whom I offer it. I find this to be the most sacred thing I do as a pastor and it humbles me to do it.

¶335.b) Vocation

1. How has the experience of ministry shaped your understanding of your vocation as an ordained elder?

Serving seven years as a licensed local pastor has shaped my understanding of and desire to become an ordained elder. For the ordained elder, the world is their parish. Ordained elders are free to practice ministry, share the sacraments, and participate fully in the life of the United Methodist Church in ways that licensed local pastors are not. My pastoral authority as a licensed local pastor is limited to my appointment. This has been problematic in sharing the sacraments outside my congregational context, including not being able to give communion at places like The Neighborhood Center of Camden or at events not directly sponsored by my church. This has also limited me performing weddings. I have turned down weddings in non-church settings or added the burden of finding an ordained elder to pronounce the couple as husband and wife because those

people were not connected to my particular congregation. Denominationally, local pastors have a voice and a vote on all matters of the Annual Conference except constitutional amendments and issues involving clergy ordination, character, or relations to the conference.² These have become important to me as I consider the issues facing our denomination and our clergy. To a larger degree, being an ordained elder confirms that both the conference and I have chosen to commit myself fully to the ministry of the UMC with no other jobs to distract me from serving Christ and the church wherever I am sent.

¶335.c) The Practice of Ministry

1. How has the practice of ministry affected your understanding of the expectations and obligations of the itinerant system? Do you offer yourself without reserve to be appointed and to serve as the appointive authority may determine?

I know I am appointed for a season and all seasons end. As I enter my eighth year at my original appointment, I believe I have done all I can in service to my congregations and it is time to move on. I appreciate how this system facilitates that. It serves the church by working against a clergy-centric mentality. It allows for a diverse range of voices to be heard over the course of a congregation's life thereby challenging and enriching their life and mission. It also respects the fact that a clergyperson's, and congregation's needs, gifts, and missional emphases may change over time, requiring a change in appointment for both to grow in vitality. Knowing that I won't be there forever, reminds the laity of their responsibility by seeing each pastor as only a part—albeit an important one—of their identity as the local body of Christ.

The system is not without its problems. I do not look forward to cutting ties with the people I have grown to love in our ministry together. Many of my laity echo that

² *Book of Discipline*, ¶316.6. This paragraph also notes a restriction regarding electing delegates to General, jurisdictional, and a central conference, which is countermanded in section VI, article IV (¶35) of The Constitution.

sentiment. Certainly some churches welcome a change, particularly when there are irreconcilable differences between a pastor and a congregation. However, a change of appointment can disrupt healthy relationships between the clergy and the laity as well as the surrounding community. It can adversely affect ministries in which the pastor is an integral part, and, if the transition is handled poorly, it can cause great pain to the outgoing pastor, incoming pastor, and congregation alike. Still, it is far more a boon than a burden to the church. Therefore, I am willing to offer myself without reserve to the appointive authority and itinerate to whatever fields of labor as he or she determines.

2. Describe and evaluate your personal gifts for ministry and how they have resulted in fruitful ministry. What would be your areas of strength and areas in which you need to be strengthened in order to be more fruitful in ministry?

The gifts that have been affirmed in my ministry are my preaching and teaching. Based on the feedback of my congregations, the content and communication of my sermons, Bible studies, and discussions have helped people understand the faith better or consider new approaches. From youth through senior citizens, I teach how to approach the Bible critically from a position of faith. The best compliment I received was “you don’t teach us what to think but how to think about the faith.” These gifts have also bore fruit as people have gotten more involved in our ministries or started new ones as a result of something I preached or a lesson I taught.

I am good at mentoring people, especially youth, and helping them become more mature disciples due, in part, to my ability to listen and discern what is at the core of their questions. I have seen some of my former youth group grow up to be Christian leaders in their own right. Others said I was instrumental in their taking the faith more seriously.

I am able to relate to people of all ages well. I try to be open and honest with everyone, whether reading to the kids in our preschool, talking to teenagers, or counseling adults and seniors, which helps to build trust. As a result, people regard me as a spiritual leader and come to me for guidance, help, or just to talk.

I need to get better at administration and not overthink things so much. After taking on four churches and working with a fifth, I realized how overwhelmed I could get with scheduling and organizing. I definitely need a secretary. I also tend to overthink things and second-guess myself. Sometimes this can be good when I am trying to discern the right course of action but other times it can be an excuse for delaying making a decision. This has caused some frustration with a couple of my leaders and in me. I am strengthening these areas by proactively organizing my schedule, purposefully thinking long-term, and learning to trust God's leading and be more decisive.

3. For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness of the Christian gospel and in consideration of your influence as an ordained minister, are you willing to make a complete dedication of your self to the highest ideals of the Christian life; and to this end will you agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to physical health, intentional intellectual development, fidelity in marriage, and celibacy in singleness, integrity in all personal relationships, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge and love of God?

I see in this the historical question "are you moving on to perfection?" to which I answer emphatically, yes. However, it is a process in which I struggle so I say "yes" confessing that I rely on God to help me all along the way.

4. Provide evidence of your willingness to relate yourself in ministry to all persons without regard to race, color, ethnicity, national origin, social status, gender, sexual orientation, age, economic condition, or disability.

I have a long history of working with people of all ages, races, gender identities, socio-economic statuses, and abilities. I have been a friend of the LGBT community for

decades, ministering to its members through youth group, my pastorate, and community involvement. I have worked fruitfully alongside all kinds of people in ministry since my early twenties when I co-led a Christian singles Bible study group whose leadership included a lesbian, two Koreans, several women, a few men, and one developmentally disabled person. I continue to maintain and seek out relationships with LGBT people. I am currently in the process of connecting with a local PFLAG chapter to begin a dialogue on how some of my congregations can build a relationship with them.

Regarding race, I have always surrounded myself with a diversity of friends. At Palmer Theological Seminary, I developed meaningful relationships with many African-American, Latino/Latina students and faculty. Several of these relationships are still going strong today. I also consider it a blessing to be in ministry with female and male clergy from all different ethnicities. One of the pastors I work with in Open Door Ministries is an African-American woman. I was part of the interview team that decided to hire her as a part-time pastor based on her experience, personality, and the belief that we would work well together. I am also an active participant in a local ministerium that is ethnically, generationally, and socio-economically diverse.

I believe all people have sacred worth as God's beloved children and so I try to make all people feel welcome and included in the life of my congregations and my personal life. Whether it is the grade school aged ushers collecting the offering in my New Sharon congregation or the head usher with Downs Syndrome in my Wenonah church, or the little old ladies whose faithful service and immense skill serve as the backbone of my churches, God has given me a heart for all people and for that I am grateful.

5. Will you regard all pastoral conversations of a confessional nature as a trust between the person concerned and God?

Yes. I believe trust is paramount to my relationship with my parishioners. Any breach of trust risks doing lasting damage to them, to me, and to our faith community.

6. Provide evidence of experience in peace and justice ministries.

One of the challenges of pastoring four elderly, white suburban churches is the common perception that injustice issues exist well beyond their familiar world. Those issues are seen mainly as problems for inner cities and foreign countries. Over the years I have taken steps to remove the blinders that distance and detachment have put on my congregations. I try to help them to see the issues of violence, prejudice, privilege, and poverty and embrace our common responsibility to work for peace with justice. One example involves the Syrian refugee crisis. When preaching about ways other churches in our state were helping refugees, I challenged them to write letters to our senators and congressperson imploring them to condemn the hateful rhetoric coming from some of our elected officials and promote constructive, respectful discussion among their colleagues and constituents. We called on them to bring about immigration reforms that “affirm the worth, dignity, and inherent value and rights of migrants, immigrants, and refugees.”

Injustice is not limited to inner cities and war torn countries. There is injustice behind the well-manicured lawns and two-car garages of the suburbs. Nearby are massage parlors that are hubs for human trafficking. Just down the road is a drug house that is a major contributor to the heroin epidemic plaguing our community. Our prayer walk ministry has helped my congregations see justice issues where they live. We consider this a “ministry of noticing” whereby our team walks the streets twice a month wearing bright yellow t-shirts emblazoned with “How can we pray for you?” We talk to the people we meet along the route and learn about their needs and the problems they see around them.

One day we spoke with a man whose cousin was just murdered. Another day we spoke with Wenonah's mayor about the drug epidemic crippling our county. Our long-term goal is to expand this ministry to cover more areas and develop ways to answer these prayers.

Additional questions

1. Explain the threefold aspects of Wesleyan grace and how you have encountered these in your own ministry/life.

The three aspects of grace according to our Wesleyan tradition are prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace. Prevenient grace is work of God in us that calls out to the yearning in our hearts before we claim faith in Jesus Christ. I have seen God's prevenient grace lead addict and atheist to faith and continue to work on others who have not yet believed but keep looking into Jesus Christ. It was this grace that led me to realize I was created to know God's love and to live in it. It led me to recognize that I am a sinner and am loved and it inspired me to repent and receive Christ as my Lord and Savior.

Justifying grace is what God shows us through Jesus Christ as God accepts and pardons us, restoring our relationship with God that was broken by sin. This grace enables us to trust in Jesus Christ for our salvation. This is the gift of God that convinced me of God's love and compelled me to dedicate my life to proclaiming it to all people. One elderly man in particular, Tom, still rejoices 45 years after he first believed in God's justifying grace with the passion of a new Christian. He is just one of so many I serve who celebrate how Christ has freed them from guilt and shame and given them new life.

Sanctifying grace is the work of the Holy Spirit in every believer to help us become more like Jesus in our love for God and one another. This is a lifelong process whereby the Holy Spirit works to conform our wills to God's until we are perfected in love. I see it

at work in my people as they work out their faith, repent of sins, and strive to grow closer to God. I see it at work in me as I rely on it daily to give me the power and desire to choose God and trust in the sufficiency of God's grace in whatever forms it takes.

2. Share an instance when you found yourself in ministry with someone whose theology was radically different from your own.

I am currently pastoring four congregations whose members represent a wide range of theological interpretation. I am a moderate to progressive Christian and I minister to several hardline fundamentalists. This has made for spirited discussions in Bible studies and some challenges in our approach to outreach and evangelism. Through it all, I try to encourage a spirit of mutual respect in which all people, regardless of their stance, feel welcome and valued. I make a point of understanding their point of view and, rather than trying to convert them to my way of thinking, look for the common ground that unites us. It is a challenge to maintain a unity within our diversity but I have found that by showing respect the participants are more willing to consider differing viewpoints.

3. Describe how your image of God has changed over your journey. What has informed this?

I have developed a greater appreciation for God's immanence. As much as God is divine, above, and other from us, ministry has brought into sharper focus the intimate nearness of God. Sitting in my office with a father weeping over the lostness of his grown son, standing by the bedside of a dear old saint rejoicing in the face of death, sharing a meal and a conversation with one of the countless working poor in Camden about his hope for his daughter, the Spirit's undeniable presence made these and so many moments like them holy encounters. I felt it. They felt it. We were both in awe and rejoiced in it. I had

thought I would be ministering to others on behalf of the transcendent God but I have found that Emmanuel—God with us—ministers to me and through me so that I as much as anyone else am profoundly affected by the experience.

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5. Polity Questions

1. Explain the role of deacons, elders, and local pastors in the UMC and how they are each uniquely called and function in the church.

Deacons are called, affirmed, and ordained to the ministry of Word, Service, Compassion, and Justice. Their primary role is to connect the Church with those who are broken and in need. Deacons are responsible for preaching and teaching, assisting elders in administering the sacraments, conducting marriages and burials, making disciples, and leading the congregation in servant ministry.¹

Elders are called, affirmed, and ordained to the ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service. They commit to itinerate wherever and whenever the appointing authority deems necessary. While they share many of the responsibilities of deacons, elders also administer the sacraments, offer pastoral care and counseling, supervise the running of the church and lead the congregation in fulfilling its mission in the world.²

Both elders and deacons have a vote on all matters of the Annual Conference (save electing lay delegates) and may serve on boards, committees, and councils and can be elected as delegates to General, Central, or Jurisdictional Conferences.

Local pastors are called, affirmed, and appointed to serve the local church; however, their pastoral authority is only in their appointment³ and a clergy mentor and a DS must supervise them.⁴ They can vote on everything in Annual Conference except constitutional amendments and issues of clergy ordination, character, or relations to the conference.⁵

2. What is the process for setting a pastor's salary? Who can change it and when can it be changed?

¹ Ibid., ¶328-329. As of 2016's General Conference, deacons may administer sacraments with the bishop's permission.

² Ibid., ¶332ff

³ Ibid., ¶340

⁴ Ibid., ¶316.4

⁵ Ibid., ¶316.6. This paragraph also notes a restriction regarding electing delegates to General, jurisdictional, and a central conference, which is countermanded in section VI, article IV (¶35) of The Constitution.

The Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) annually evaluates the pastor’s salary and other compensations (housing allowances, travel expenses, vacation, etc.) based on the compensation requirements set by the Annual Conference.⁶ The SPRC then submits its recommendation to the church council and any budgetary items to the finance committee for recommendation to the charge conference.⁷ The finance committee must then include that recommendation in the budget it is developing and present it to the charge conference for approval.⁸ The charge conference makes the final decision to set the pastor’s total compensation package in consultation with the district superintendent.⁹

3. The Education committee wants to update the curriculum being taught in the Christian Education program. What specific guidance does the Book of Discipline give you in dealing with this issue?

I would point the Education committee to the resources provided by the General Board of Discipleship (GBOD). The *Book of Discipline* explains how the GBOD oversees the Christian education interests of the United Methodist Church. The research, methods, and resources the GBOD make available can be counted on to be in line with our United Methodist doctrines, including “evangelism, stewardship, missions, Christian social action, and Bible instruction.”¹⁰ The resources, training, and support services they offer can help the committee find curricula for every age race, ethnicity, ability, and cultural group in the congregation. This would ensure that whatever curriculum they choose would be appropriate for developing our faith and our United Methodist identity.

4. You have discovered a need in the community for a soup kitchen and wish to recommend that this be a priority for the congregation using the facilities of the church. What parties and processes need to be involved?

⁶ Ibid., ¶331.14

⁷ Ibid., ¶258.2.g.16

⁸ Ibid., ¶258.4

⁹ Ibid., ¶247.13

¹⁰ Ibid., ¶1108.2

This came up in my Wenonah congregation a few years ago. Though we ultimately agreed to support the existing food pantry in my New Sharon congregation and, later, the ones in Mantua UMC, we saw the process through almost to the end. My lay leader brought the idea to me and we introduced it to the church council. With a tentative agreement to explore it further, we consulted the Board of Trustees to work out the logistics of location and access. We also consulted the finance committee to determine the costs, whether we could afford it, and what we could do to raise the funds. This is where our process ended, as several people believed our limited resources, both financial and personal, would be used more effectively in supporting New Sharon's pantry. Had we continued, we would have worked with a mission and outreach committee to identify potential leaders to run the pantry and, later, promote it in the community. We would have asked the district superintendent what conference resources were available to us. We would also check with the town hall about any ordinances that could affect us. Once a plan was in place, the church council would vote and we would get it up and running.

5. A constituent of your church comes to speak with you about their call to ministry. Describe the basic steps that are involved in seeking ordination.

The constituent has already taken the first step by talking to me. I would speak and pray with them about their call and give them *The Christian as Minister* to help them discern it. Since licensed and ordained ministry requires one be a professing member of a UMC for at least one year¹¹, I would start this constituent on the path to membership. Next, this person would request of the district superintendent that he or she be admitted into the candidacy process and be assigned a candidacy mentor. The member would submit a

¹¹ Ibid., ¶310.1.a

statement of call to the DS and to me and request a meeting with the SPRC.¹² The SPRC would then interview the potential candidate, and upon two-thirds approval, present them to the charge conference for its recommendation to the district committee on ministry.

Now in the hands of DCOM, the candidate must provide the written requirements as detailed in ¶310.2 and undergo psychological testing and background checks. Once approved by a three-fourths majority, the candidate becomes a certified candidate and may be appointed as a local pastor. Upon completion of the educational requirements for ordination and at least one year in ministry, the certified candidate works with the Board of Ordained Ministry to be commissioned and then ordained.

Commissioning requires more written work as well as sermons, Bible studies, and an interview process as specified by the Board before earning its approval.¹³ Once approved, the candidate is presented to the Annual Conference for approval as a provisional elder or deacon. There is a two-year provisional period in which the provisional elder or deacon works with the Board and an assigned clergy mentor, and participates in a Residence in Ministry program. Upon successful completion, the Board presents him or her to the Annual Conference for approval to be ordained.

6. Describe the general structures of the Annual Conference and how each body functions.

The Annual Conference (AC) is “the basic body in the Church”¹⁴ that exists to equip local churches for our connectional ministry. The AC is led by a bishop and consists of the local churches within its designated geographical area. Those churches are grouped into districts, the superintendents of which make up the bishop’s cabinet. Members of the

¹² Ibid., ¶310.b. If in an alternate ministry setting DCOM specifies an equivalent SPRC and Charge Conference.

¹³ Ibid., ¶635.2

¹⁴ Ibid., ¶33

AC include the clergy and laity of those churches. The Annual Conference has the power to enact rules and regulations specific to its needs, to admit people into clergy membership (e.g. elders, deacons, local pastors), appoint them, and hold them accountable to their vows, to create and promote new faith communities and ministries, oversee the vitality of local churches and ministries, to elect delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conferences, and ensure that all members are working together to make disciples of Jesus Christ. It must adhere to the policies of the UMC. The AC meets once per year to discuss legislation, approve and ordain candidates for ministry, decide on the business of the AC, and celebrate our ministry together.

If Annual Conferences are the states then districts are the counties. A superintendent who reports to the bishop oversees each district. The superintendent serves as the “missional strategist”¹⁵ for her district overseeing the clergy, churches, and communities in their ministry ensuring that they embody the common mission of the UMC. DSs help clergy and churches develop and maintain effective ministries, serve as spiritual leaders, provide care and counsel for clergy, and help the bishop to strategically appoint clergy.

The local church is the town to the district’s county. It is “the strategic base from which Christians move out to the structures of society”¹⁶ to fulfill our common mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Whether individually, as part of a charge, or through our connectional nature, the local church is responsible for caring for its members, leading others to faith in Christ, and helping all believers live out their faith as the Spirit leads.

7. Describe the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of the UMC.

The General Conference is the legislative branch of the UMC. In General Conference, all

¹⁵ Ibid., ¶419

¹⁶ Ibid., ¶201

matters regarding the UMC's connectional life are discussed and decided.¹⁷ Such decisions include setting the parameters for church membership, determining the duties and powers of clergy, conferences, and the episcopacy, fund and facilitate the church's work, establish a judicial system, oversee all matters related to worship, bishops, and the connection itself. It must abide by the Constitution and the General Rules of the Church.

The Judicial Council serves as our judicial branch. They are tasked with ensuring all actions by the General Conference, jurisdictional, central, or annual conference, bishops and clergy abide by the Constitution and the law. This includes providing a right to trial by committee for clergy and by the Church for all members.¹⁸

The Council of Bishops serves as our executive branch. They are the leaders of the denomination and the ones to whom our congregations and members look to steer our mission in the world. They oversee the "temporal and spiritual interests"¹⁹ of the Church. They also ensure that the rules and policies of the General Conference and Constitution are carried out. Bishops are elected by a Jurisdictional Conference and assigned to an Annual Conference where they direct its appointments, ministries, and mission.

8. What is your understanding of the theology behind Shared Ministries giving?

One of the earliest acts of the church was to pool their resources so that all those in need would have enough, and thus promote the spirit of praise and unity that strengthened that first community of faith. The people of the United Methodist Church continue to embody this shared provision through our Shared Ministries giving. Since no one church has the reach or resources for an extensive global ministry, we pool our resources and assist one another in accomplishing greater things for the sake of Christ. Our connectional nature

¹⁷ Ibid., ¶16, ¶501ff

¹⁸ Ibid., ¶55-58

¹⁹ Ibid., ¶47

enables each local church and member to participate in the larger mission of the UMC.²⁰

We do this in part through the monies, collected regularly as a part of our weekly offering and at specific times throughout the year. This funds our ministry efforts around the world. It is tempting to see it as a financial burden every congregation must bear, but the reality is by budgeting for, promoting, and contributing to our shared ministry, we embody the principles of the early church, sharing with one another, as there is need.²¹

9. You have an idea for a unique form of ministry. How does the Book of Discipline guide us in seeking affirmation for ministries that are beyond the local church? What is the role of extension ministry in the life of the Church?

Extension ministries exist to extend the work of the UMC in sharing Christ's love and striving for justice beyond the local congregation into the world.²² To create such a ministry, I would consult with the bishop and district superintendent to see if it has merit. If so, I would submit a written proposal to the cabinet and the Board of Ordained Ministry articulating my sense of call for it's existence in its particular setting, how it uniquely serves the mission of the UMC, and how it would enable me or any appointed clergy to maintain our commitment to our ordination vows to Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service. From there, the BOM could consult with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry to determine if it meets certain standards of appropriateness.²³

10. In what ways does your upbringing, your cultural context, and your personal experience shape your understanding of our polity?

I came into the UMC by the invitation of a friend but I stayed with it because I agree with its policies, structure, and its connectional nature. I grew up in a white, suburban Lutheran Church where I learned all about the Christian faith and being a good person.

²⁰ Ibid., ¶247.14

²¹ Acts 2:42-47

²² *Book of Discipline*. ¶343.1

²³ Ibid., ¶344.1.d

As I grew I saw more the inequality around me, the reality of racism and my own privilege, and the people in need of food, jobs, and love. I never felt my church was active in applying our faith to those issues and grew frustrated. Likewise, my college Christian experience was all about getting people saved but not doing anything with that faith except abstaining from sex. In the Methodist church I saw people living out the faith through service projects, food drives, and mission trips. In the Social Principles I found stances on human rights, the environment, the arms race, and more that matched my own.

My experience in the corporate world has helped me see the benefit of our denominational structure. Every good company needs a defined organizational structure with each person fulfilling their roles and responsibilities toward a common aim. Our bishops, district superintendents, judicial councils, SPRCs, and our *Book of Discipline* all serve as part of a checks and balances system that keeps the Church centered on our mission. I have seen a church crumble under an autocratic pastor who abused his authority as well as a church board threaten to fire a pastor for preaching what they did not want to hear. I take comfort in knowing that there are people and systems in place to keep congregations and clergy in check and in focus.

The years I spent as part of the leadership team for a young adult Bible study taught me the value of collaboration and mutual support. The connectional nature of the UMC has taken that collaboration to a new level for me. My relationships with my fellow UMC clergy, especially those with whom I work in Open Door Ministries, have been a constant source of joy. The insights we glean from one another, our fellowship, and the help we give one another has made me a better pastor and Christian. I value our connectional nature even more when I hear non-UMC pastors lament their isolation and lack of

support. I love our connectional nature not just because it benefits me but how it benefits all of us as we work together to make disciples for the transformation of the world.

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6. Biographical Statement of John Inverso

God called me to be a pastor in 1990 when I was a sophomore in college but did not confirm my call until fifteen years later. I remember sitting in my car listening to a song by Petra about a man praying for his family as he goes off to serve the Lord. I felt that God was saying to me “I want *you* to serve me like that.” At that moment, I knew I was going to become a pastor; I just didn’t know when.

As the son of a lifelong Sunday school teacher, I was raised in the church but I had an immature view of God’s love, sacrifice, and call to holy living. My immature faith waned in my college years. My father’s death in 1993 was the catalyst for my taking the Christian faith and God’s call seriously. It was through the love and counsel of the people and pastors of Audubon United Methodist Church that I grew deeper in love with Jesus Christ and started pursuing my call to pastoral ministry.

Wise counselors helped me along my journey advising me, encouraging me, and giving me opportunities to develop my gifts, all the while helping me discern whether now was the time or not. Before becoming a licensed local pastor in 2009, I was a Certified Lay Speaker, a Sunday school teacher, a youth group leader, a college-age and adult Bible study teacher, the church council chairperson, and a host of other things, all of which helped me develop the faith, skills, and mindset I would need as a pastor.

For years I worked in the corporate world and earned a Master of English degree while waiting for God to say “Go!” I grew restless a year before I would hear God’s confirmation but in 2005, God had finally opened the door to pursue my calling full time. I enrolled in Palmer Theological Seminary, graduating in 2009 with a Master of Divinity degree, and never looked back.

I was appointed to Wenonah and New Sharon United Methodist Churches as a licensed local pastor in 2009. Their faithfulness, patience, and grace have helped me become a better pastor and develop a deeper understanding of our life together as the body of Christ. They have also helped confirm for me God’s calling to ordained ministry.

I was commissioned in 2014 as a provisional elder and appointed to a two-point charge, Barnsboro/Mt. Zion UMCs along with my original appointment. This was the beginning of Open Door Ministries. ODM is a five-church cooperative parish, which includes my four churches and Mantua UMC. Together our five churches are working together to reveal Jesus Christ in Gloucester County and beyond. This has been an exciting experience as my colleagues, our congregations, and I are charting new ways to be in ministry and make disciples.

I met my wife, Christy, in a Bible study for college-age singles in 1996 and we were married in 1999. We do not have children but we do own an awesome dog. I am an avid photographer which comes in handy as my wife and I love to hike and travel. I have learned, however, to stop looking at everything through the camera lens and enjoy the view. When we cannot travel, I like to get lost in a good book.

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7. Chronological Resume of Activities of John Inverso

Personal Information

Spouse: Christeen Inverso
Children: None
Home Church: Audubon United Methodist, Audubon, NJ
Currently Serving: Barnsboro and Mt. Zion UMCs, Sewell, NJ
New Sharon UMC, Deptford, NJ
Wenonah UMC, Wenonah, NJ

Employment

2014 – Present Open Door Ministries (Barnsboro, Mt. Zion, New Sharon, and Wenonah United Methodist Churches), NJ
Pastor

2009 – 2014 Wenonah and New Sharon United Methodist Churches, NJ
Pastor

2005 – 2006 Cubit Real Estate, Deptford, NJ
Project Manager

1997 – 2005 Gartner, Inc., Delran, NJ
Research Analyst

1996 – 1997 Faulkner Information Services, Pennsauken, NJ
Editor

1992 – 1993 United Parcel Service, Secaucus, NJ
Communications Assistant

Education

2006 – 2009 Palmer Theological Seminary, Wynnwood, PA
Master of Divinity

1993 – 1996 Rutgers University, Camden, NJ
Master of Arts in English. Concentration in Creative Writing.

1989 – 1993 Montclair State College, Upper Montclair, NJ
Bachelor of Arts in English. Minor Film.

1983 – 1989 Haddon Township High School, Haddon Township, NJ

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JAMES, PAMELA

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NOTES

Title: What's in a Dream?

Scripture: Daniel 2:24-35

Composition of the congregation:

This sermon was preached to a congregation located in the Eastside section of the city of Paterson, New Jersey. The members of the congregation consist of approximately seventy percent of individuals who grew up in this church. The rest are mostly people who have joined as adults. Most members and visitors reside within a three mile radius of the church.

Their ages range from ninety four to one year of age and seventy percent are women. Twelve children and youth are a part of the worship service. Twenty five percent are senior citizens. The members are predominately people of color. Fifty percent of the congregation is from the United States with approximately forty percent from the Caribbean and ten percent from South America and Africa. Most members have at least a high school diploma and some with college degrees. The economic status ranges from poor to middle class.

The congregation is comprised of fifty people whom are mostly members, some long time attendees, as well a few visitors. All are English speaking and two are bilingual. Their theological perspectives range from conservative to liberal, with most somewhere in between. This is the composition of the congregation in which the sermon was preached.

What's in a Dream? **(Daniel 2:24-35)**

Let us go to God in prayer:

O Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, you are the master of all life, light and love. You effortlessly created the heaven and the earth in a blink of an eye. You are an all knowing God who is able to reveal all dreams and mysteries. Enable your children to be transformed by the message today. All this we pray in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen!

What's in a dream?

How many people here have had dreams? Please raise your hand. Well if you did not raise your hand, I'm sure if you are here you had dreams. All of us have dream. And I think we are all alive today. Amen! Sometimes you might remember them sometimes you don't! Sometimes we have nightmares which we do not want to remember or interpret? Right! Because they can be pretty scary!

According to the Web MD, "Dreams are defined as a series of thoughts, images, and sensations occurring in a person's mind during sleep." Sure there are other definitions but this is the type of dream we will be discussing today.

Let's talk about sleep because we dream while we are sleeping?

There are two types of sleep. Do you know what they are? Yes! REM and Non-REM Sleep! "A lot happens in your body while you sleep. When you get your ZZZs, you cycle between REM and non-REM sleep. (REM stands for anybody?) That's right, rapid eye movement. (REM let's say that together: Rapid Eye Movement) During REM sleep, your eyes move quickly in different directions. That doesn't happen during non-REM sleep. So when you first fall asleep, first come non-REM sleep, followed by a shorter period of REM sleep

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and then the cycle starts over again. Dreams typically happen during REM-sleep.”¹

What Happens During Non-REM Sleep?

“There are three phases of non-REM sleep. Each stage can last from 5 to 15 minutes. You go through all three phases before reaching REM sleep.

Stage 1: Your eyes are closed, but it's easy to wake you up. This phase may last for 5 to 10 minutes. For example, someone may walk into the room and it easily wakes you up.

Stage 2: You are in light sleep. Your heart rate slows and your body temperature drops. Your body is getting ready for deep sleep. Perhaps during this time someone comes into the room and unless they make lots of noise you remain sleeping.

Stage 3: This is the deep sleep stage. It's harder to rouse you during this stage, and if someone woke you up, you would feel disoriented for a few minutes.”²

(Perhaps this might occur when someone is shaking you or screaming in your ear to wake up because you are supposed to be up for school, work or Sunday service.)

I have some good news! Since it takes about 90 mins to enter into the first REM so you can dream, no one will be able to dream during my message today! Why, because my message will be only 89 mins. And as told you it takes 90 mins of Non REM before REM sleep. It is in REM sleep that we dream. No, I am just kidding. I will be only a short while! Prayerfully you will not enter the Non- REM sleep either. Amen!

Do you know what happens during the deep stages of Non-REM sleep? The body repairs and regrows tissues, builds bone and muscle, and strengthens the immune system. So rest is very important for all of us. Daily we should try to get an average of 8 hours of sleep. We can't just

¹ Robinson, Jennifer MD, Web MD Medical Reference on October 22, 2014. “*What are REM and Non-REM Sleep*” <http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/guide/sleep-101#1-2> (assessed July 3, 2016).

² Ibid.

wait to rest every six days but we have to rest every day!

Do we need more or less sleep when we get older? Actually the same amount of sleep is needed according to research. However as you get older, you sleep more lightly and get less deep sleep.

The REM stages of sleep gets longer each time and the final one may last up to an hour. Your heart rate and breathing quickens, since your brain is more active, you can have intense dreams during REM sleep,

Did you know that babies can spend up to 50% of their sleep in the REM stage? That's half the night spent in lullaby land. I love to watch babies sleep. They laugh, smile and look so angelic. How much do you think grown folks like us dream? We dream only about 20%. And yet, more often than not, we don't remember our dreams. (Ha! Ha!)

Well we opened in chapter two of Daniel with King Nebuchadnezzar recalling his REM sleep. That is his dream state. Why, because during REM we dream. King Nebuchadnezzar has a dream that he is troubled by because he does not understand it. And so, he asked the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and the Chaldeans to interpret the dreams for him. (Dan. 2:1-5) Guess what? They can't! Unlike King Nebuchadnezzar often times we do not have someone to ask to interpret the dreams which bothers us, right. Do we have anyone here with their own dream interpreter? I am just checking. Well most of us do not!

This king is something else, because he wants them not only to tell him what he dreamed but interpret it as well. Nebuchadnezzar is demanding them to tell him what he dreamed last night and to figure out its meaning. This is a tall order! "The astrologers' answer the king, There is no one on earth who can reveal what the king demands! ... The thing that the king asks is too difficult, and no one can reveal it ...except the gods who dwelling is not with mortals."(Dan 2:10-

11NRSV) Following the king orders to execute all these Babylonian wise man, Daniel inquiries from the chief executioner regarding the situation. Later Daniel is granted the opportunity to interpret the king's dream.

What's in a Dream?

Dan 2:12-16 Whew! That was a close one! Daniel asks his companions to pray with him for the God of heaven to reveal the king's dream. They prayed for themselves as well as for their enemies not to perish and die. Perhaps Daniel's companions Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were like your BFF's (best friends forever) or home boys. Imagine they offer to help their neighbor's as well as themselves. This reminds me of the scripture "love your neighbor as yourself"!

Daniel 2:20-23 Daniel's Doxology

Daniel gives a doxology which means he offers praise to God for enlightening him regarding the dream. And praise to God for the salvation of himself, friends and others. We also follow our brother Daniel when we offer our doxology, "Praise God to whom all blessings flow..." In Daniel 2:22 it says, "He (that is God) reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness and the light dwells with him." Who do we know as the light? Jesus! Yes! That's right and we too are called to bring the light of Christ in this increasingly dark world. These marginalized, exiled, foreigners saved the enchanters, astrologers and magicians who were going to be killed as well as themselves. That is Daniel and his friends the Hebrew boys taken from Jerusalem and brought to Babylon.

Daniel was given the meaning of the king's dream. I believe this was a result of his prayers to Holy and those from his friends which moved the hand of God. (There is a term when we fear the stranger? Anyone know what that is? It is called xenophobia.) It was a good thing

that the king gave Daniel a chance to interpret the dream when those he knew were unable to do it. How many people know that God will use whomever God chooses to bring forth justice and lavish mercy? And in this case, he uses Daniel and his associates who are foreigners among the Babylonians.

In Daniel 2:27-30, we see the manifestation of Daniel's humility. "Daniel answered the king, " No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or diviners can show the king the mystery that the king is asking, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has disclosed to King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen at the end days..." Daniel informs the king that the dream interpreter is God. God is the true revealer of mysteries. Daniel knows where his power comes from and shares it with the king.

In vv. 31-36 Daniel's interprets King Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Daniel shares that the king dreamed about a statue with the head of gold, chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, and its leg of iron, its feet partly iron and partly clay. Daniel is telling King Nebuchadnezzar in verse 34, "As you looked on, a stone was cut out, not by human hands, and it struck the statue on his feet of iron and clay and broke them in pieces." God is more powerful than any man made kingdom. Amen! According to the Oxford Annotated Bible, "clay is unexpected and potentially humorous, for this weakest substance to support the weightier metals."³

Perhaps this illustrates how foolish we appear when we try to take on the insurmountable burdens of the world, with our bodies that are just made out of dirt (clay), instead of giving it to Jesus. The One who is able to do immeasurably more than we can ever think or imagine! We

³ *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with Apocrypha, an Ecumenical Study Bible*, 3rd Ed. Coogan, Michael D. Editor, (New York: Oxford University Press), 1257.

need to be ever mindful of where the power comes from and whose we are in Jesus Christ.

What's in a dream?

The statue represents the four kingdoms with King Nebuchadnezzar possessing the top kingdom of Gold, however all these kingdoms pale to the kingdom which God establishes. The stone (Rock of Ages) crushes all the other kingdoms. These different metals represent the Kingdoms of Babylon, Media and Persia, and Greece. And yet, in vs 35 it says, “The stone was cut from the mountain not by hands... “... Some interpret the rock as a symbol of the awaited Messiah.”⁴ I agree that this rock represents our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. God’s kingdom is divine. We do not make it but we need to follow the blue print.

What's in a dream?

There is power in the Word. Amen! The Gospel of Luke 20:17b-18 which was read earlier, states: “The stone that builders rejected has become the cornerstone. Everyone who falls in that stone will be broken into pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.” Jesus Christ is this rock not cut out by human hands which the people rejected. Even today some people still reject that Jesus is an everlasting kingdom. And yet, we know that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Amen!

Sometimes it takes a minute for people to recognize that God’s kingdom is the only one that will stand the test of time. This is an eternal kingdom with an assured destiny! In vs 47, “The king said to Daniel, “Truly your God is God of gods and Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery!” Not only does Daniel give God the glory because God is worthy and he recognizes all credit goes to God; however, even king

⁴ Newsome, Carol A. and Brennan W. Breed, *Daniel: A Commentary*, (Louisville Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press), 83.

Nebuchadnezzar who did not worship Yahweh, the God of heaven, comes to his senses about God's sovereignty.

Daniel was also strategic while he had the favor of the king. He asked that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah) are appointed to manage the affairs of the province of Babylon. Daniel looked out for his peeps. Yeah! It was not all about him! He definitely loved his neighbors as his self! We could use a lot more of this today! Amen!

Although Daniel interprets the dream, the king does not convert. The king respects Daniel's God but his heart is not fully open or completely soft.

-Is your heart open to the fact that Jesus is Lord of lords and King of kings?

-Have you recognized what God has done for you in your life?

-Have you committed wholeheartedly to serving God?

You have today which is the right now. Yesterday is history and tomorrow is a mystery!
Only the God of heaven can interpret our dreams as we learned with the prophet Daniel.

What's in a dream?

God knows! "The message of Daniel is that though the nations rage and their rulers descend to the bestial, all remains within the hand of God."⁵

-Won't you come start a relationship with Jesus?

-And if you have one and it is weak then please come and commit to strengthening it today!

God, the revealer of all mysteries informs us of what's in a dream?

⁵ Wells, Samuel and George Sumner, *Esther & Daniel*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press), 107.

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[Back to the Candidate Profile](#)

1. Detail the theological significance of each act of worship. Describe what is happening and why it occurs where it does in the service.

According to *The United Methodist Book of Worship* “The Entrance and the Proclamation and Response - often called the Word or the Preaching Service - are adaptations of the ancient synagogue services.” A risen Christ joined the two disciples in the walk to Emmaus and God also joins us through the Holy Spirit. We enter into the life of God through our reading and the interpretation of the preached Word. Through the act of Thanksgiving we offer in response to our loving God, our prayers, tithes and offerings. In this act we are expressing our gratitude to God for what God has done, is doing and will do. We participate in the Sending Forth which is the final portion of the act of worship by fellowshiping and going out into the world to serve God. We are fortified to do so with the grace we have received through the Entrance, Proclamation of the Word and Thanksgiving. We witness this love to others. We participate in the worship service in order that the Word is proclaimed, through the power of the Holy Spirit which enables people to know Christ and make him known.

2. Explain the following:

(a) Why did you choose the hymns used in the context of the service?

“*Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee*” was chosen based on the theme of Daniel 2 that God is the King of kings. This opening hymn offers thanksgiving and praise to our sovereign God.

“*Majesty Worship His Majesty*” reinforced God's magnificence and Kingdom authority. These hymns weaved God's omnipotence throughout the entire Order of Worship.

(b) What was the purpose of the sermon?

Paterson is the third largest city in New Jersey with many economic and social issues such as poverty, violence, drug addiction, and unemployment, an overcrowded and understaff school system. So to offer hope in the midst of trials was essential, inclusive and relatable to all.

Along with difficulties in our lives, sleep is a concept that all of us in attendance can identify with. Therefore this sermon was broad enough to capture the diversity of those in attendance regardless of age, economics, etc., because all of us dream and are in need of God's power. Preaching on Daniel chapter two offered God's sovereignty against all odds. It provided a concrete vision of what God was able to do in the seemingly impossible situation of Daniel and his friends. Prayer was a spiritual tool used by Daniel and his friends for the revelation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream. We also have access to this spiritual tool to communicate with God. Daniel was a person who loved God and if God performed this miracle for him and his friends to save their lives, he can do it for each and every one of us. The purpose of this sermon was to give the congregation hope in our omnipotent God. "The rock not cut out by human hands" which smashed all the other kingdoms, is the everlasting Kingdom of Jesus Christ the King of kings.

(c) Does the Order of Worship help deliver the theme? Explain.

Yes the Order of Worship helped to deliver the theme that we serve an awesome God. The Entrance, Call to Worship and Invocation was created to reflect God's sovereignty. The Psalter, Affirmation of Faith and Prayer of Confession were chosen to continue the theme. In the Thanksgiving we offer "*All things Come of Thee*" and the prayer for our gifts expressed our gratitude to God and that they will be used for God's Kingdom. The Proclamation of the Word shared scriptures on the Gospel of Luke and Daniel. The memory verse highlights and reinforces God's power. The Invitation to Christian Discipleship echoes the hymn "*Joyful Joyful We Adore Thee*". Our prayer of joys and concerns are lifted up to Jesus. In the Sending Forth a blessing is given to the congregation and we are invited to serve the Almighty God in our witness to others. We close with a doxology praising God... As a result of the Order of Worship the theme of hope in our Sovereign God is made known.

The Community Gathers

Worship Leader: Vinette Bishop & Ignace Conic
Praise and Worship
Prelude (Time for silent prayer and meditation)

**Stand as you are able*
Bringing in the Light
*Processional
*Greeting

***Opening Hymn:** “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee”

UMH 89

*Call to Worship

Leader: God you are Lord of heaven and earth.

People: We lift our voices with praises to You!

Leader: Who is the King of kings?

People: Jesus Christ the Son of God!

Leader: Dreams are revealed through your Divine Wisdom.

People: You are an all knowing God!

Invocation

O Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, you are the master of all life, light and love. You effortlessly created the heaven and the earth with a blink of an eye. You are an all knowing God who is able to reveal all dreams and mysteries. Enable your children to humbly come before you in prayer and supplication, with the certainty that you provide what we need. And may these gifts that you give us be used for your Kingdom, in order that all may have an opportunity to witness your grace. All this we ask in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen!

Psalter: Psalm 82
Affirmation of Faith
*Gloria Patri

UMH 804
UMH 886

Ministry of Music

CCUM Choir

Moments with Young Disciples

Welcome / Announcements and Parish Notices

*Prayer of Confession
*Passing of the Peace

UMH 893

Stewardship Moment

We are personal witnesses to the fact that Jesus Christ was not abandoned at Calvary and that his resurrection means new hope and new life in us. Let us share so that the Word of Truth may be spread throughout the world.

Offering our Gifts, Tithes and Thanksgiving

(1st Offering – Tithes & Offerings 2nd Offering – Shared Ministry)

Offertory “All Things Come of Thee” 588 UMH

*Prayer of Dedication

The Word of God Proclaimed

Prayer of Illumination

Prepare our hearts, O God, to accept your Word. Silence in us any voices but your own, so that we may hear your Word and also do it; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scriptures for the Week

Daniel 2:24-35

Colossians 1:9-14

*Luke 20:9-18

Leader: This is the word of our Lord, our God.

People: Thanks be to God.

Memory Verse: “**But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries.**” (Daniel 2:28a NRSV)

Ministry of Music: “Majesty, Worship His Majesty”

UMH 176

Sermon: “**What’s In a Dream?**”

Rev. Pamela James

Invitation to Christian Discipleship: “ Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee”

UMH 89

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

Altar Prayer: “Blessed Assurance”

UMH 369

- * Benediction
- * Extinguishing of Altar Candles
- * **Recessional Hymn:** “The Doxology”

We Depart to Serve

Welcome to all visitors in our midst!
 The Christ Church family invites you to feel at home in this service.
 We pray that you have enjoyed being with us as we enjoyed having you.
 Please join us for refreshments in the Ronald McNair Fellowship Hall
 following the worship service.

Our Vision

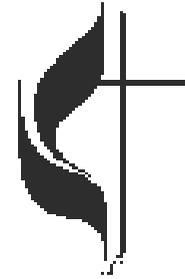
With the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit, our vision is a world of peace and unity, transformed through the love and power of Jesus Christ.

Our Mission

The mission of Christ Church United Methodist is to welcome, nurture, equip, and empower disciples of Jesus Christ

Our Values

- Loving God, Neighbor, and Self
- Building Strong Families and Communities
- Fostering Education and Creative Expression
- Striving for Excellence in all Endeavors



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SUNDAY, JULY 10, 2016
8TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST



**THE MISSION OF CHRIST CHURCH UNITED METHODIST IS TO
 WELCOME, NURTURE, EQUIP, AND EMPOWER DISCIPLES OF
 JESUS CHRIST.**

Bishop John R. Schol, Resident Bishop GNJAC
Rev. Gina Kim, Palisades District Superintendent
Rev. Pamela James, Pastor

Sis. Mary Bland, Lay Leader
Marcus Gayle, Drummer
Frances Edwards & Lorena Fermin, Media Specialists

Annotated Bibliography

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*, New York: Macmillan Co.1973.

“When Christ calls a man he bids come and die. There are different kinds of dying but the essence of discipleship is contained in these words.” This book is written by a German Lutheran pastor who struggled with the issues of oppression which preceded WW11. This book will enlighten us to the identity of a disciple. Unlike Daniel and the Hebrew boys who were saved from death; many will also experience death as we follow God. This book deals with the cost of grace in the life of a follower of Jesus Christ.

Coogan, Michael David. *The Old Testament: A Very Short Introduction*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

This very short introduction of the Old Testament is helpful as an overview of the Hebrew Bible. It provides information regarding the context of the books of the Old Testament. This is supportive to the study of a particular book in view of the entire Old Testament. Although Coogan classifies Daniel as one of the writings in the Bible along with other scholars, I agree with the scholars that classify Daniel as a Major Prophet.

Gonzalez, Jorge A, *Daniel: A Tract for Troubled Times*, New York: Mission Education and Cultivation Program Department for GBOGM of The United Methodist Church

I admire the way Jorge Gonzalez encourages us to think outside of the box when interpreting Daniel. He shows the relationship of the Old Testament and the New Testaments and how it relates to Christians today. The fact that we too like our Hebrew brothers are living in troubled times and Daniel serves as a tool to strengthen us to go through with God. He shares with us that throughout the Bible we have a desire to know when the end will take place. I am intrigued by his correlation with Daniel and Acts 1:6-8; where Jesus shares that “it is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority.” Knowledge of the

end of time belongs to God. The “business of the Church today: is in ministry, in service, in witness, from our community to the far- a flange corner of the world.” (p.127) These points and issues that the author invites us to consider is very beneficial for the Bible study of Daniel.

Newsome, Carol A. and Brennan W. Breed, *Daniel: A Commentary*, Louisville Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014.

This book provides an in depth study of the Book of Daniel. It breaks down each chapter and relates it to books in the Jewish and Protestant canons. The text provides detail explanations of the history in terms of time and the genre of literature throughout the Book of Daniel. It is a very useful tool for deciphering the complexity of events surrounding the prophet Daniel. This reading illuminates the main themes of the Daniel and his friend's faith in the Divine and Sovereign God. The references to The Hebrew Bible and the New Testament are explored. For example “The rock that becomes a great mountain evokes imagery of Zion as the high mountain...” (p.77) Also “...some interpret the rock as a symbol of the awaited Messiah.” (p.83) References of the themes of Daniel such as faith, God's sovereignty, and apocalyptic literature are reflective throughout the New Testament. This would make sense because Jesus was a Jew and there are many references of the Hebrew Bible throughout the New Testament. This book is also informative regarding the influence of the Book of Daniel on various paintings today.

Porteous, Norman W, *Daniel: A Commentary*, Philadelphia PA: Westminster Press, 1965.

The Book of Daniel is referenced in “...Matthew 24:15 where Daniel is referred to as a prophet who foretells something that is still future in time of Christ.” (p.13) The reference of Daniel in the New Testament gives congruency to the Old Testament and the New Testament as a single unit. It also gives credence to the importance of this prophetic and apocalyptic book in the lives of Christians. The Kingdom of God was foretold in antiquity as the One and only everlasting kingdom and remains true today. “The realized eschatology of Christianity leaves

room for a final end which, near or far, will be the ultimate justification of the faith which produced the Book of Daniel.” (p.21) The grand finale of God's power will manifest its completeness in the end time.

Stewart, Carlyle Fielding, *Immersion Bible Studies: Ezekiel and Daniel*, Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2013.

This book gives a brief outline on how to Study the Book of Ezekiel and Daniel.

However my focus was on Daniel. It shares the dominant theme of faith with Daniel and his associates. “Faith is always lived out under specific social and environmental conditions. It does not thrive in a vacuum nor can it be dispensed like salt from a shaker. Its value lies in its internal strength and capacity to help persons adapt to external circumstances while adopting firm resolution to press on toward the prize.” (p.59) Indeed we witness this living faith of Daniel and his friends that surpasses our understanding. Stewart provides some practical applications for exploration of the book of Daniel in our lives today. It helps one to understand the fact that human power is no match for Godly power. This book is useful for a beginning Bible Study of the Book of Daniel and focuses primarily on application for Christians in light of Daniel and his friends. “In the end, no earthly power fashioned by human hands can determine the outcome of the people”. (p.73). “The challenge was to serve his rulers but also to keep one's faith and live out the demands of compliance amid the imperatives of religious sovereignty and belief. Daniel's experience dramatized the reality of the tensions of living two realities” (p.79) Matt 24:15 “Even Christ himself refers to the prophecies of Daniel.” (p.80)

Smith, Gary V and David M. Howard Jr. *Interpreting the Prophetic Books: An Exegetical Handbook*, Grand Rapids MI: Kregel Academic, 2014.

This author analyzes Daniel as one of the exilic prophets; and unlike some who consider it one of the Writings of Jewish scriptures. According to Smith, it is interesting that Daniel who was set free chose to stay in Babylon. “King Cyrus gave a decree that any exiled people could go

back to their homeland (Ezra 1:1-5), but Daniel stayed in Babylon, because he was appointed to be one of the three officials who supervised the 120 provinces of Persia. (Dan. 6:1-3). This information regarding his freedom and yet, his choosing to stay is interesting to note. Christians are given the ability along with non-Christians to make choices. This valuable piece of information offers the opportunity for stimulating dialogue with antiquity in comparison to how we live today.

The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with Apocrypha, an Ecumenical Study Bible, 3rd Ed. Coogan, Michael D. Editor. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

This annotated Bible is an extremely useful resource because it defines words, offers historical data, and diverse scholarly perspectives within an ecumenical context. The NRSV version of the Bible makes it easy to understand within a common vernacular. The interpretation provides an insightful resource to the understanding of the Book of Daniel and its relationship with other books in the Bible. Information is given on the parallel themes and the similar verses throughout the Bible. This study Bible gives just enough of an explanation to inspire you to look further into other resources such as commentaries or other scholarly books. Therefore *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* is very helpful in its brief discernment of aspects in the Book of Daniel and its connection to other books of the Bible.

Valeta, David M. *Lions and Ovens and Visions: A Satirical Reading of Daniel 1-6*, UK: Sheffield Phoenix, Press, 2008.

Daniel's interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream in chapter two strikes me as more divine than comical. According to Valeta, "Many aspects of this dream interpretation story contribute to the sense that the narrative is funny and subverts the king's authority." (p.73) Although there are some nuances in how we behave as humans, the humor of Daniel as Valeta suggests is not very evident upon my reading of Daniel. Yes King Nebuchadnezzar does some

strange things. However I think the peculiarities relate to reliance on us rather than God. Even if our submission or lack thereof to God is laughable at times, the fact that God is the ultimate authority reigns true throughout the book of Daniel.

Wells, Samuel and George Sumner, *Esther & Daniel*, Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2013.

Wells points out that Daniel can be read in a Christological sense as well as an orthodox sense. Through orthodox lens the God of Daniel is referencing God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. I affirm with Wells that, “Christian witness to God and his reign among nations, what we call "mission," and resulting conversion have produced this unique perspective on the believing Gentiles. A precondition for this mission was dispersion of Israel among the nations, on whose perils and opportunities Daniel reflects. Since witness, kingship, and dispersion among the Gentiles are abiding concerns of the book, Daniel has a particular relevance to the subject of Christian mission.” (p.103) Just like these faithful Hebrew men had to withstand trials and tribulations as God worshipers, we must also. It is in our victorious witness of the true King that others will know the Sovereignty of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. I agree that there are “moments in the history of the Christian witness among the nations that illustrate points made in Daniel or that can be better understood when Daniel's light is brought to bear.”(p.104) Many Christians in exile in the New Testament remained faithful to God just like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. “The message of Daniel is that, though the nations rage and their rulers descend to the bestial, all remains within the hand of God.”(p.107)

A detailed outline on a month long sermon series of Daniel chapters 1-4

Title: Please Test Your Servants

Scripture: Daniel 1:1-21

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon conquers Jerusalem. (Dan.1:2) Babylon was the same city in Gen. 11:2 where they tried to build a tower to God and God confused their language.

Four exemplary Hebrew slaves were brought to the King's royal courts. "Nobility from conquered kingdoms was typically brought into exile; and educating the youth was thought to increase acceptance to foreign rule and minimize attempts at revolt."¹

Their Hebrew names were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. They were renamed with the Babylonian names of Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. This was done in an attempt to increase their acceptance to foreign rule and transition them into their culture. The meaning of their Hebrew names: (Shadrach) Heb. Hananiah: Yahweh is gracious. (Meshach) Mishael: Heb. Who is like God? (Abednego) Heb. Azariah: Yahweh has helped. (Belteshazzar) Daniel: Heb. God is my judge. Jesus was a Hebrew and his Hebrew name Yeshua means Jesus saves.

They were called to compromise their faith by eating the royal food and wine instead of their diet of vegetables and water. "Faith is always lived out under specific social and environmental conditions. It does not thrive in a vacuum nor can it be dispensed like salt from a shaker. Its value lies in its internal strength and capacity to help persons adapt to external circumstances while adopting firm resolution to press on toward the prize."² This is what Daniel

¹ *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with Apocrypha, an Ecumenical Study Bible*, 3rd Ed. Coogan, Michael D. Editor. (Oxford University Press: USA, 2007), 1254.

² Carlyle Fielding Stewart, *Immersion Bible Studies: Ezekiel, Daniel*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2013), 59.

and his friends did by trusting God, resisting the king, and adhering to their beliefs and dietary habits.

-Discuss different diets and benefits of nutrition: Vegetarian, etc.

Adherence to God in this case yielded blessings for these Hebrew young men who never forgot God and their spiritual practices. Daniel asks, "Please test your servants for ten days. Let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink." (Dan 1:12) God blesses them in knowledge and understanding and gives Daniel a special blessing to discern dreams and visions Dan.1:17-21.

What's in a Dream?

Daniel 2:24-35

No one is able to tell the king his dream. Not the magicians, enchanters or astrologers. The king threatened to kill them all. Daniel learns that all will be killed including him and his friends. So he relies on the tried and true God. He asked the king to allow him to interpret the dream. Then Daniel and his companions prayed for mercy. Prayer is also important in our lives as Christians.

Sleep: 2 Types of Sleep REM and Non REM

(Elaborate on the different types of sleep. Compare children vs adults, etc.) "*What are REM and Non-REM Sleep?*"³ We dream during REM sleep.

The king's dream is allegoric. The statue of gold, silver, bronze, iron, and clay represent earthly kingdoms. These kingdoms are Babylon (Gold: head) Media (Silver: chest and arms) Persia (Bronze: middle and thighs) Greece (Iron: legs and feet: iron and clay). King Nebuchadnezzar is so grateful for the interpretation of the dream and gives Kudos to Daniel and promotes him the royal court. Daniel shares with the king that it is not him nor can any man do

³ "*What are REM and Non-REM Sleep?*" <http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/guide/sleep-101#1-2>

what the king asked, "... But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries." (Dan. 2:28)

In Dan. 2:36-46, Daniel tells the king that his power comes from the everlasting kingdom of the God in heaven; who has also given power to Nebuchadnezzar. "And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor shall this kingdom be left to another people. It shall crush all these kingdoms and bring them to an end; and it shall stand forever; and just as you saw that a stone was cut from the mountain..." (Daniel 2:44-45) According to Carol Newsome "...Some interpret the rock as a symbol of the awaited Messiah."⁴ Jesus is the rock. "Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken into pieces: and it will crush anyone on whom it falls." (Lk 20:18)

God gives Daniel the interpretation of the king's dream. God comes through for Daniel and saves him and his friends. King Nebuchadnezzar bows down to Daniel's God. (Daniel 2:46) God is the King of kings and Lord of lords because God is omnipotent!

What's in a Dream? "... But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries."

God Delivers Us

Dan. 3:12-28

King Nebuchadnezzar wanted everyone to bow down to his golden statue. When Daniel told him in Chapter 2 that the head of the statue was gold and it represented the Babylon kingdom, he decided to build one. King Nebuchadnezzar made a golden statue whose height was sixty cubits and whose width was six cubits. Do you know how many feet this is? It was 90x 9 feet. It is high as the statue in Veracruz Mexico known as the Cristo Redentor (Christ Redeemer).

⁴ Carol A. Newsome and Brennan W. Breed, *Daniel: A Commentary*, (Louisville Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 83.

Perhaps the king did not pay attention to Daniel's interpretation that all the kingdoms would be smashed to pieces by a rock. The rock is representative of God, the alpha and the omega, who is not crafted by mortal hands. King Nebuchadnezzar wanted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to worship this idol. However, they did not, and honored our sovereign God.

King Nebuchadnezzar was an inferior god. What are some inferior gods which we follow today?

Money, status careers...

Who are some inferior gods?

Parents, friends, neighbors...

Jesus is the omnipotent God. These Hebrew boys knew this and refused to submit. "There are certain Jews ... They don't serve your gods and they don't worship the golden statue you set up." (Dan.3:12)

This reminds me of the game Simon says... You know Simon says do this. Well I want us to learn another game Jesus says. Let us do this together. Jesus says give yourself a hug, Jesus says turn to your neighbor and smile. Please stand up. No! Only do what Jesus says. (Ha! Ha!) We follow Jesus as Christians and no other gods.

It's amazing how we dance at a party and yet we have difficulty following Jesus.

To whose beat do you dance?

Daniel friends risked being thrown in the fiery furnace. Did you know that, Furnace in Hebrew means "aysh" (that is) supernatural fire. There was a theophany which was the fire like an angel. Perhaps it was Jesus. We may think that Jesus was only in the New Testament; however he was always with God. For example, the book John says, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning."

(Jn.1:1-2 NRSV)

These Hebrew captives would only bow down to God. They trusted God for the outcome. Wow! This was incredible. King Nebuchadnezzar was so impressed he said, "... for there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way." (Dan. 3:30)

Do you know what happened when these Hebrew youth were thrown into the furnace? Nothing happened to them, because God delivered them from the flames and death. However, the men who heated up the furnace died.

In the prayer "Our Father ...but deliver us from evil." God indeed delivered these Hebrew young men from the evil of being thrown in the fiery furnace.

The Root of the Matter

Dan. 4:19-27

King Nebuchadnezzar has a dream about a tree in the middle of the earth. He thinks he is the tree and the focus is on him. The king is given favor by God and he lets it go to his head. I know none of us can relate. (Ha! Ha!)

Daniel is the only one to interpret the dream but it is bad news. Who likes to deliver bad news? Most of us don't right! However bad news travels fast. It will probably reach most of us before we get home today. How many people know that the mouth is still very effective in delivering bad news; in spite of the social media of Facebook, Twitter, TV, etc. ?

People of God, Christians need to be about sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. Amen. King Nebuchadnezzar has to repent of his sin of pride and arrogance.

What is the root of the matter? It is for us to "... lean not on our own understanding, in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." (Prov. 3:5-6) We need Jesus to help us get to the root of the matter. He wants all of us to repent and come to the

knowledge of God.

What are some ways that pride shows up in our lives?

How can we be more humble?

Dan.4:26, “As it was commanded to leave the stump and roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be re-established for you from the time you learn heaven is sovereign.” We serve a God of second chances!

How many people know we serve a God of grace? Even though King Nebuchadnezzar thought he was all that and a bag of chips, God loved him in spite of his pride and offered him another chance. And the king humbled himself. When we think we know better than God, we really don’t know who God is, nor respect God’s power.

At the root, the king was not a bad person. Perhaps this could be the reason that even Daniel cared about his earthly master.

I invite us to look deeper into the situations within our community as well as abroad; and not just on the surface. Roots of a tree extend very deep into the ground and they are nourished by this root system.

Discuss the anatomy of a tree: leaves, branches, trunk and the root and also the factors that alter a trees structure.

Therefore if we are going to feed the good trees so to speak, and rid ourselves of bad ones, we must get to the root of the matter. Jesus, the Son of God helps us to look at the root of the matter with the issues that plague us today.

The Bible study of the Book of Daniel took place in one of the parishioner's home in the city of Paterson, NJ. This setting allowed for a more relaxed atmosphere amongst the participants. It was held on Thursdays evenings during the summer time. The group consisted of three females and one male. Their ages ranged from thirty two to seventy eight years of age. One of the participants was unemployed, one was retired, and one had a white-collar job and one a blue-collar job. One of the members was a widow; one divorced, one married and one single. All of the members had children except one. Two of the members were born in the United States, one in the Ivory Coast and the other in London. Three of the participants were members of Christ Church. One held a college degree, two a high school diploma and one finished some high school education. Their economic status ranged from poor to middle class.

The purpose of the Bible study was to share how Daniel and his friends trusted and persevered through many trials and tribulations with our sovereign God. We also can experience victory in our lives with God's power. We all have the ability to offer up prayers to God because we are God's children. The participants needed to know that there is hope even in midst of seemingly impossible situations because of the awesome God we serve.

Daniel: Bible Study Outline

Lesson 1. Jerusalem is conquered by King Nebuchadnezzar, youth are enslaved and yet they remain faithful to their Jewish tradition. (Daniel. 1:1-21)

A. Jerusalem is conquered by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Dan.1:1-2)

B. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah are educated and renamed Babylonian names:

Beltshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. (Dan.1:3-7) Give the definition of their Hebrew names. Do you know what your name means? Do you like being called by your name? Do you have a nick name?

C. These Hebrew youth remain faithful to their way of life in honoring God and refusing royal food and wine. They drank water and ate vegetables. They did not conform to the environment, but remained obedient to their dietary restrictions and habits.

(Dan.1:8-15)

D. Daniel and his friends are blessed by God and win favor with King Nebuchadnezzar while honoring God.

Lesson 2. No one in Babylon could decipher the king's dream except Daniel. (Dan. 2:1-49)

A. The king demands that the magicians, astrologers, enchanters and sorcerers tell him the dream; however, no one can do it. "The astrologers answered the king, 'There is no one on earth who can do what the king asks! No king, however great and mighty, has asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or astrologer.'"(Dan.2:10-11)

What are the types of sleep? Did you know we sleep during REM sleep?

B. All of these wise men would be killed if there is no interpretation. (Dan.2:12 "So the decree was issued to put the wise men to death, and the men were sent to look for Daniel and his friends." (Dan.2:12)

- C.** However, Daniel convinces Arioch the king's guard to wait and let him talk to the king. So the king allows Daniel the time to figure out the interpretation of the dream. (Dan.2:17)
- D.** Daniel and his friends commit to praying to God for mercy. Daniel is given the revelation of the king's dream. (Dan. 2:18-23) Daniel saves himself, his friends and his enemies. For what circumstances in your life have you prayed? What things can we pray for now in our community, family, church and lives?
- E.** Daniel interprets the King Nebuchadnezzar's dream and credits God.(Dan.2-27-44)
"Daniel replied..., "but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries..." (Dan.2:28)
"Your Majesty looked, and there before you stood a large statue - an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thigh of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay." (Dan. 2:31-33) These kingdoms represent Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece. No matter what nation claims to have power in this world, God is sovereign over them all. What are some people or things you put before God?
- F.** The rock represents the eternal kingdom of God. This rock can be interpreted as Jesus because it is not made of human hands. "... a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them." In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever."(Dan.2:34,44) According to Carol Newsome, "...some interpret the rock as the awaited Messiah." Is Jesus Christ the rock in your

life? Do you put Jesus Christ before anything or anyone?

- G.** Daniel and his friends are made leaders in Babylon however Daniel request to remain in the royal court. These slaves were placed in influential positions which afforded them the ability to be an ever greater witness for God. (Dan.2:48-49)

Lesson 3. Daniel’s companions refuse to submit to the Golden Statue. (Daniel 3:1-30)

- A.** “King Nebuchadnezzar made a golden statue whose height was sixty cubits and whose width was six cubits...” (Daniel 3:1) This would have taken a long time to make this statue. In chapter two he dreamed of this head of gold on a statue and takes it literally. Have you ever built something that you were so proud of that you “worshipped” it?
- B.** The Hebrew boys refuse to serve a golden image in place of God. (Dan.3:12) Beloved let us ask ourselves to whose beat do you dance: money, job, people, government, relationships, status, position or power.
- C.** Shadrach Meshach and Abednego are thrown in the furnace. And God delivers them without a scratch. (Dan. 19-27) Would you risk your life to serve God?
- D.** Nebuchadnezzar praises the Hebrew men’s obedience to their God of power. ... “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego... who delivered his servants who trusted in him...” (Dan. 3:28-30) The obedience of these Hebrew youths witnessed to the king.

Lesson 4. King Nebuchadnezzar has a bad dream which Daniel interprets. (Dan.4:19-27)

- A.** Daniel interprets the dream of the king’s demise. “Then Daniel, who is called Belteshazzar, was severely distressed for a while. His thoughts terrified him.” (Dan.4:19) Daniel did not want to deliver bad news. Have you ever been afraid to tell

- someone the truth because it was scary? Daniel was scared. He was human.
- B.** Daniel gave honor to God for his ability to interpret the dream. Do you give God the glory? God is large and in charge, not us. (Dan.4:25)
 - C.** “The tree grew strong, reached to heaven...” This idea that it reached heaven suggests the tower of Babel.¹ We must be careful not to get the “God complex.” This idea drove the king insane. Have you ever tried to play God by taking on things yourself?
 - D.** God offers us redemption even when we mess up. “As it is commanded to leave the stump and roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be reestablished for you from the time that you learn Heaven is Sovereign.” (Dan.4:26) God offered us the ultimate sacrifice by allowing his Son Jesus to die on the cross. So we can have a relationship with God.
 - E.** Pride comes before the fall. King Nebuchadnezzar was forewarned. (Dan. 4:28-33)
 - F.** However the king came back to his senses. “At that time my reason returned to me...” (Dan. 4:36) Have you ever lost your sensibilities? How does the saying go, “a hard head makes a soft behind.”

Lesson 5. The fruit does not fall far from the tree. (Dan. 5:1-23)

- A.** King Nebuchadnezzar’s son worshipped the gods of gold, silver... (Dan.5.3) He must have known about his father time in the wilderness. And yet, history repeated itself.
- B.** Read the “handwriting on the wall.” “Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and began writing plaster on the wall of the royal palace...and the king was watching the hand as it wrote.” Talk about a horror movie! Unlike his father who was dreaming, Belshazzar was awake, alert and oriented. Sometimes we miss it with eyes wide open. Have you heard of something that was not good and you do the same thing? (Dan. 5:17-20)

¹ The Oxford Annotated Bible, 1261.

C. "...And you have not humbled your heart..." We have to take the opportunity when we can to repent. The thief comes and we do not know the hour. "You have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven... God in whose power is your very breath, and to whom belong all your ways, you have not honored." (Dan.5:23)

Lesson 6. Daniel's coworkers are jealous and try to set him up but God rescues them from the lion's den. (Dan.6:1-27)

A. What made Daniel's coworkers Jealous? He was exemplary in his work. "Soon Daniel distinguished himself above all the presidents and satraps because an excellent spirit was found in him." (Dan 6:3) He stood out above the rest. What are some things you do very well? Have you ever been jealous of someone? God gives us all gifts.

B. "Although Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he continued to go to his house, which had windows in its upper room toward Jerusalem, and get down on his knees three times a day to pray to his God and praise him, just as he had done previously." (Dan.6:10) Prayer was very important to Daniel and his friends because of its power. They prayed three times a day. (Dan.6:13) How is your prayer life?

C. King Darius had to follow the law he put into place in spite of the fact he was fond of Daniel. "The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you faithfully serve, deliver you!" Could you imagine that your faith causes you to take people captive and then cause the king to admire our God in heaven? Faith in God witnesses. Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.(Heb.11.1)

D. Daniel is rescued from the lion's death and his accusers are killed instead. They experienced the boomerang effect. They threw evil at Daniel but it was returned to them. "My God sent as angel and shut the lion's mouths so they would not hurt me..."

So Daniel was taken out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted God.” Has God rescued you from danger? How did it feel? Do you need God to rescue you now? If so let us prayer. “He is a rescuer and savior: God performs signs and miracles in heaven and on earth. Here’s the proof: He rescued Daniel from the lions’ power.” (Dan.6:27)

Lesson 7. Daniel has his own dream. (Daniel 7:1-28)

- A. Daniel has a dream of his own, which frightens him. Even though Daniel was very courageous he also gets frightened. Daniel is flesh and blood like us. There are four beasts in his dream. (Dan.7:2-8) They are having court. (Dan.7:9-12) One like a human being appears and all nations worship him. (Dan.7:13-14) Could this be the Son of God that he is referring too? “Every knee will bow and tongue confess” means this will include all nations.
- B. Daniel is in need of an interpreter and God sends an angel. The four beasts represent kingdoms. The fourth kingdom is the worst because it is completely destroyed by fire. (Dan.7:15-26) Who do you think this kingdom represents?
- C. God’s kingdom is everlasting. (Dan.7:28)

Lesson 8. Daniel has a second dream. (Dan. 8:1-14)

- A. Daniel dreams about a ram and a goat. (Dan. 8:3) Daniel is not given the interpretation of the dream but needs an interpreter. The angel Gabriel comes to help him understand the dream. Where do we witness angels in the New Testament? What is an angel? Have you encountered angels in your life?
- B. “Understand O mortal that the vision is for the time of the end.” (Dan. 8:16) This is Apocalyptic. What does that mean? The end of time. It is not just referenced in the book

of Revelation but also here in Daniel. People have been waiting for the end of time since the beginning of time.

- C. God's sovereignty continues. (Dan.8:23-25) "But he shall be broken, and not by human hands." God will break down every man made kingdom and his Kingdom will be an everlasting one. Daniel remains troubled by the dreams even with the interpretation. (Dan.8:27) Daniel worries just like us. In Daniel's fears we witness his humanity.

In what ways can you relate to Daniel?

Lesson 9. Daniel offers prayer to the sovereign God for the people. (Daniel 9:1-27)

- A. The prayer of Daniel. "I prayed to the Lord my God and made a confession, saying"

Ah, Lord, great and awesome God, keeping covenant and steadfast love with those who love you and keep your commandments, we have sinned and done wrong, acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and ordinances."

(Dan.9:4-5) This sounds like our modern day prayers of confession found in the UMH.

Compare our UMH, "We have failed to be an obedient Church", to Dan 9:11, "All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice." And "...but on the ground of your great mercies Lord, hear, O Lord, forgive, Lord listen and act and do not delay! ..." (Dan 9:18-19) We must confess and repent of our sins.

What are things in your life that goes against God that you need to change?

- B. We are called to the same forgiveness that we ask God for. For example, in the Lord's prayer we ask God to forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." What are some sins we need to confess to God as individuals, families, churches or other groups? Who do you need to forgive? To love is to forgive.

Lesson 10. Daniel saw a vision and is visited by an angel. (Dan. 10:1-29)

- A.** Daniel was frightened by the vision. So he prayed, fasted and does not even bath for weeks. (Dan.10:1-3) Have you ever been so concerned about something that you could not eat, sleep, etc.? What do you do when you have a problem? Do you call on God like Daniel did or someone else?
- B.** Even though others were around, only Daniel saw the vision. Some scholars say that this was similar to what happened to Paul in Acts 9:7.²
- C.** "... My strength left me, and my complexion grew deathly pale and I retained no strength." (Dan 10:8) Daniel was scared. Can you relate to being afraid?
- D.** "An angel comes to Daniel..." Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your mind to grow understanding and humble yourself before God, your words have been heard..." (Dan.10:12) Angelophany is the appearance of an angel. And according to the Oxford Annotated Bible "do not fear" is a standard salutation for receiving angelic revelation." Do you recall an angel speaking to Mary, etc. in the New Testament? Have you prayed and prayed and felt God is not hearing you?
- E.** Not only does Daniel have an angel speak to him but he is also touched by an angel in verses 10, 15 and 18. Have you experienced an "angel" in your life? That is one in human form. Perhaps they were a stranger, a neighbor, a parishioner, or a relative.
- F.** We are left with these words of encouragement, "...Do not fear, greatly beloved, you are safe. Be strong and courageous! How many know this is easier said than done? We also see this in the book of Mathew when it says, "Do not worry..." Let us try to give it all to Jesus and leave it there.

Lesson 11. The Jews are being attacked and seduced by other gods. (Daniel 11:29-39)

² Oxford Bible, p.1273.

- A.** Jerusalem is taken over by Rome. Jerusalem is a Holy City where the temple resides. This temple is the Holy of Holies where the Romans have set up idols. This is considered an abomination. Some of the Jews have forgotten and rebelled against God. “They shall abolish there regular burnt offerings and set up the abomination that makes desolate.” (Dan.11:31) Do we disrespect the temple of God which is the church? Remember it is not just a building. We are the church. How do we violate our bodies which are the temple of God?
- B.** We must stay alert and oriented to God. The temptations will not always be obvious. “He shall seduce with intrigue those who violate the covenant; but the people who are loyal to God shall stand firm and take action. (Dan.11:32) What injustices exist today that we need to take action as Christians? Have you ever been attacked? Have you ever stood up for someone being attacked? As disciples of Jesus Christ we are called to stand up for what is right. Dan.10:36 states, “the king shall act as he pleases.” Can we relate? Pride is a factor. However we need to act as we are led by the Holy Spirit and not ourselves. We learned in Daniel 11:3-38 that the people honored other gods such as Zeus. We must honor the one true God of heaven and earth.

Lesson 12. There will be the resurrection of the dead at the end of time. (Daniel 12:1-13)

- A.** References are made to a book in which people names are found. (Dan.12:1)Perhaps this is the book of life that is also referenced in Revelation. Either we are in the book of eternal life (heaven) or that of eternal death (hell). “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and

everlasting contempt.” (Dan.12:2) “Indeed the eschatological book of Revelation is a reiteration of the revelation found in the Hebrew Scriptures.”³

- B.** What is eschatology? According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, “Eschatology is a belief concerning death, the end of the world or the ultimate destiny of humankind.”

Both Daniel and the Book of Revelation reference keeping the book sealed.

According to the Oxford Annotated Bible Daniel 12 is “the first clear biblical reference to a resurrection, final judgement and afterlife.”⁴ The Old and the New Testaments are linked together in many ways and very important to our understanding of Christianity.

- C.** “Happy are those who persevere ...” (Dan. 12:12) There will be a resurrection to eternal life for those who obey God. The word persevere is indicative that we will have trials and tribulations. We are called to finish the race and not give up. Have you ever felt like quitting? Does knowing that you will spend eternity with God motivate you to hang on? Daniel experienced victory after victory because it was the will of God. We have to acknowledge that this will not always be the case in our lives. If not, this “...can lead to a triumphalist theology, if we read from a position of power, where our will, our intention, our purpose is equated with God’s.”⁵ And yet, as Christians we know that we will be victorious in death and spend eternity with God.

³ Shepherd, 118.

⁴ The Oxford Annotated Bible, 1277.

⁵ Jorge Gonzalez, 183.

Detailed Lesson Plan: Daniel 2

Lesson 2. No one in Babylon could decipher King Nebuchadnezzar's dream except Daniel. (Dan. 2:1-49)

A. The king demands magicians, astrologers, enchanters and sorcerers to tell him the dream however no one can do it. "The astrologers answered the king; there is no one on earth who can do what the king asks! No king, however great and mighty, has asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or astrologer."(Dan.2:10-11) What are the two types of Sleep? Did you know we dream during REM sleep?

B. The wise men would be killed if there is no interpretation. "So the decree was issued to put the wise men to death, and the men were sent to look for Daniel and his friends." (Dan.2:12)

C. However, Daniel convinces Arioch the king's guard to wait and let him talk to the king. So the king allows Daniel the time to figure out the interpretation of the dream. (Dan.2:17)

D. Daniel and his friends are faithful and commit to praying to God for mercy. Daniel is given revelation of the king's dream. (Dan. 2:18-23) Daniel saves himself, his friends and his enemies. What circumstances in your life have you prayed for? What things can we pray for now in our community, family, church and lives?

E. Daniel interprets King Nebuchadnezzar's dream and credits God. (Dan.2-27-44). "Daniel replied..., "but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries..." (Dan.2:28) "Your Majesty looked, and there before you stood a large statue-an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thigh of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay." (Dan.2:31-33) These kingdoms represent Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece. No matter what nation claims to have power in this world, God is sovereign over them all. What are some people or things you put before God?

F. The rock represents the eternal kingdom of God. This rock can be interpreted as Jesus because it is not made of human hands. “.., a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them.” In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.”

(Dan.2:34, 44) According to Carol Newsome, “...some interpret the rock as the awaited Messiah.”

Is Jesus Christ the rock in your life? Do you put Jesus before anything or anyone?

G. Daniel and his friends are made leaders in Babylon however Daniel requests to remain in the royal court. These slaves were placed in influential positions which afforded them the ability to be an even greater witness for God. (Dan.2:48-49)

Learning Goals: What do you want your students to learn from this lesson?

1. God is faithful and sovereign.
2. Prayer is a valuable tool to see us through our trials and tribulations.
3. We need to trust God to do the seemingly impossible.

Teaching Strategies: Describe your methods for communicating the lessons.

- Opening prayer
- Questionnaire
- Short summary of the Book of Daniel Chapter 2
- Discussion: personal dreams, challenges, etc.
- Defining types of sleep such as Rem and Non-Rem
- Hands on activities such as: role playing, praying, drawing
- Scripture reading using the participants various Bibles
- Have participants visualize the statue

Questionnaire: Daniel Chapter 2

1. In what part of the Bible is the Book of Daniel found?

___ Old Testament ___ New Testament

2. Does parts of the New Testament reference parts of the Old Testament? Yes or No

3. The Old Testament is not useful for Christians today? True or False

4. Daniel was a:

- A. King
- B. Prophet
- C. Angel
- D. Gentile

5. Where did the Book of Daniel take place?

- A. Jerusalem
- B. Babylon
- C. Greece
- D. Samaria

6. What king ruled during the time of the Book of Daniel?

- A. King Herod
- B. King Johosephat
- C. King David
- D. King Nebuchadnezzar

7. Who said, “But there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries...” (Daniel 2:28)

- A. King Nebuchadnezzar
- B. Daniel

C. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego

D. None of the above

8. King Nebuchadnezzar is troubled by the threat of war.

True or false

9. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are Hebrew names of kings.

True or False

10. Daniel and his friends names were all changed?

True or False

11. Daniel had a dream which he tells the king about?

True or false

12. Daniel describes and interprets King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a statue?

True or False

13. Daniel and his friends offer God their:

A. Sacrifices

B. Children

C. Prayers

D. Inheritance

14. The statue of gold, silver, bronze and iron represents the type of metals in the land?

True or False

15. The statue represents the kingdoms of Babylon, Media, Persia, Greece and Israel.

True or False

16. "But the ___ that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth."

A. Army

- B. Sword
- C. Rock
- D. Egyptian People

17. What kingdom does the stone represent?

18. King Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom represents the head of gold.

True or false

19. Daniel saves himself, his friends and his enemies.

True or False

20. How does Daniel get help to interpret the dream?

- A. Reading scrolls
- B. Advice from prophets
- C. A dream interpreter
- D. Praying to God

The Bible study of the Book of Daniel offered hope for the hopeless, courage in the midst of despair, and faith for seemingly impossible situations as a result of the sovereignty of God. We recognized that Daniel and his friends trusted God and did not give up; so we too could faithfully persevere as disciples of Jesus Christ.

As a result of the group's unfamiliarity with the Book of Daniel, we discovered and explored new learnings together. We recognized connections in the Old and the New Testament . Daniel was a book in the Old Testament which took place in a different context and time, and yet the issues were relatable to us today.

We acknowledged that God answered the prayers of Daniel and his friends in their trials and tribulations and we too have the ability to go to God in prayer.

The Bible study was an impetus for the development of deeper relationships and support. Having the Bible study in one of the participant's home allowed for more relaxed conversations and sharing of ideas amongst us.

One of the challenges for the Bible study was having too much material to cover in one hour. Participants verbalized they needed more time and I recognized that less was better. So, I adjusted the Bible study according to their needs and we extended the time as agreed upon by the group. Although, I planned various activities, I recognized that the group desired and received a great deal of knowledge from the discussions. Sometimes the goal of a Bible study is not just learning about the Bible, but discovering each other's testimonies and diverse viewpoints as well.

Witnessing the many struggles that Daniel and his friends overcame through their trust and faith in our sovereign God; ignited a renewed sense of purpose and hope in us. This lesson also spurred us on to remain steadfast disciples through our reliance on God's strength because God is faithful. Consequently, this Bible study of the Book of Daniel transformed us all.

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1. What do you think are the most effective means of doing evangelism in the 21st century? How have you lived this out in your current context of ministry?

Effective evangelism requires the church community's participation both inside and outside the local church. People will know "we are Christians by our love", should not just be a song we sing. We must intentionally strengthen our Christian community; practice the means of grace; and then bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to others in the places where they gather, live, and work.

I have supported our internal transformation by way of teaching, mentoring and modeling to the laity the ways in which Jesus engaged people. This is multiplied by trained leaders, who then teach others to lead. The result of continually developing new leaders is greater community outreach. Transformation is occurring as members assist in worship services for the disabled and the elderly at Preakness Healthcare Center.

A community garden was created with participation from PS#13 third graders in Paterson, NJ; and the new development of a pet pantry in collaboration with Haldon Public School's National Honor Society. These mission opportunities provide ways to share God's love. I am currently organizing an animal blessing service to reflect the love of God for all creation which is fostering deeper community relationships. These intentional outreaches with children are in line with Jesus who said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matt.19:14)

Technology offers 21st century Christians a means to evangelize in new exciting ways within our current culture. Through modern technology such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, U Stream, etc., we are connecting those beyond the borders of our church. This incorporation of technology into 21st century evangelism continues to be a valuable tool in sharing the Good news and relationship building between the congregation and our neighbors.

However, since the first century and throughout time Christians have utilized the simple method of “word of mouth” and modeling Jesus. These remain some of the most effective means to doing evangelism.

2. What makes a congregation vital, and how do you measure it? How would you envision working with a congregation to become more vital?

Vital Congregations have five key characteristics: inspiring worship, reaching and making new disciples, active small groups, involvement in mission and generous stewardship. In order to improve our worship experience, worship committees were established. Inviting input from the worship team allows for innovation without exclusion of the current church culture. However, activating these committees to function fully has been a slow but yet steady process.

Visitors and members freely express their experiences with the Holy Spirit through their praise, tears, laughter, etc. As a result, there is increased vitality. People remaining engaged with one another after the fellowship hour is reflective of a vibrant church.

Having had Vital Signs Dashboard training has helped myself and the congregation focus on thinking in terms of numerical vitality. Selecting and focusing on five of the *Fifty Ways to Increase Worship Attendance* by Robert Crossman and communicating with past, current, and new members through personal contact has energized the congregation.

Routine conversations held with a variety of committees such as the greeters and ushers, choir, children and youth, nurture, outreach and witness ministries, have resulted in an eagerness to serve the church. Sunday sermons are developed to engage one or more of the key markers for vital congregations. An invitation to Christian discipleship is offered during worship services. Both churches have increased their stewardship and involvement in the life of the church.

This improved vitality is reflected in more mission engagement by way of participation in CUMAC, local schools, midweek prayer, monthly Saturday prayer, and food and pet pantries.

We have afternoon and evening Bible studies with attendance of both non-members and members. We are partnering with a senior day care a few blocks from the church.

Christ church had a wonderful VBS for two weeks in the summer which involved both church and un-church community children and their parents. The involvement of Cedar Cliff UMC with the VBS reflected a connection between the two congregations. Additionally, there are combined worship services. Parishioners are encouraged to be good stewards of their wellbeing by observing their weekly Sabbath; and by intentionally focusing on their health, finances, time, spiritual enrichment and recreation.

Assessment of the congregation through discernment of their strengths and growing edges enables effective growth. The identification of people's gifts and encouraging them to participate in appropriate ministries increases the life of the church. A vital congregation joins in the strenuous work of giving hope and sharing love. Disciples offer spiritual CPR to their neighbors and are inclusive and reflective of their milieu. The ultimate way to congregational vitality is keeping our ears pressed to the mouth of God. This is practiced by the "means of grace" which includes acts of piety: such as prayer, fasting, devotions and studying scriptures and communal acts: such as participating in the sacraments.

3. What is your personal approach to conflict? Provide an example of where you have been involved in resolving conflict. What did you learn?

In the past I have tried to avoid conflict or wait to deal with it. This approach may be appropriate if the situation is being driven by emotions. However, in most cases, conflict should be addressed without delay. For example, there was a misunderstanding regarding membership fees paid for an ecumenical group that helps resource churches. I paid the fee for the church and requested a reimbursement from my pastor's expense account. The SPRC had a problem with it. However, they did not meet with me to discuss it. The chair went directly to the DS. I discovered

this later through an SPRC meeting. I listened to the concern and I apologized for any misunderstanding. I addressed that going forward I would appreciate it if they would first address concerns to me. I referenced, “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If they still refuse to listen tell it to the church...” (Matt.18:15-17) They understood the concern and said, “due to past situations with pastors this is how they handle it.” I expressed my regret for the past; and requested that in the future we operate as referenced in the Bible. I would make them aware of future membership prior to payment.

I learned that dealing with the facts during conflict without becoming emotional allows for a more meaningful resolution. It is important to understand the culture of a group and recognize people are concerned about being heard. Conflict results from a misunderstanding between people, so the better the communication the less the conflict.

4. What is your theological and practical understanding of itinerancy?

In the Gospel of Matthew 28:19 Jesus called the disciples to: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” As ordained clergy it is the polity of The United Methodist Church that we are appointed by the bishop and go where we are sent. As a member of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference, Clergy can be appointed annually to any of the churches in the conference. The gifts and graces of the pastor are paired with the needs of the local church. I have been appointed to two local churches: Cedar Cliff UMC located in the small town of Haledon, NJ and Christ UMC located in the city of Paterson, NJ. The itinerant system helps to promote cross cultural relationships; as well as fulfilling the leadership needs of the local church.

5. How do you engage all age groups in your community?

Being mindful of the variety of ages in my congregations, I try to create age inclusive sermons and intentionally use examples and terminology from a wide spectrum. Often times, the terminology resonates both with the youth and the more seasoned group; as well as those in between. However, I offer age appropriate definitions of the age exclusive terms which usually result in humor. There is a time for children and young disciples during Sunday services.

Utilization of traditional hymns, contemporary worship songs and some technology offers inclusivity for varied age groups. Currently work is being done on having committee meetings with more representation of the youth and young adult in our community.

All age groups are embraced from two to eighty six years of age through the implementation of a community garden; and the fostering of intergenerational participation from Paterson Public School #13, Sunday school and the neighborhood.

Volunteering to give sermons at Preakness Nursing Home; and providing weekly Bible studies at Diamond Senior Day care engages the elderly population. The Haledon Public school has enthusiastically joined us in the development of a pet pantry and their commitment included a bake sale. We look forward to their participation in our upcoming animal blessing service.

Daily involvement with our fun and exciting two week VBS provided interaction with the children, as well as with the teen, parent and grandparent volunteers. The songs, dances, arts and crafts, and the Bible lessons were enjoyed by all.

Intentionally encouraging youth in the worship services as acolytes, scripture readers, etc., adds more diversity to our worship experiences. I routinely have conversations and join activities with all age groups to discern their perspectives about God, church and worship which enables me to engage more effectively in the community.

6. What is your understanding of pastoral authority, and how do you intend to exercise it in your place of ministry?

Pastoral authority is following Jesus and what I am committed to do as an elder in the UMC. For example, as the pastor who orders the life of the church and as chair of the committee on nominations and leadership development, I lead the group to responsibly choose members for church leadership. Through the recognition of a financial secretary who has been unable to carry out her responsibilities, I nominated someone else. I shared that we love this child of God and understand at this time she is unable to take on the responsibility even though she and the others might want her to do so. I shared that Christian love would relieve her of this burden at this time and recommended that the other individual performing this role continue in an official capacity. I followed through as the pastor by helping to make the best choice and not necessarily the most popular in the moment.

7. If you could choose anyone to mentor you in leadership skills, who would that be and why?

I would choose Jesus Christ because after two thousand years he is still leading many souls to eternity. People I admire in leadership reflect some characteristics of Jesus. For instance, I admire John Wesley because his ministry was ecumenical, Mother Theresa because of how she took care of the poor in Calcutta; Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King for his peace and nonviolence leadership. Nelson Mandela, even after over twenty years of imprisonment, was committed to loving his enemies; became president of South Africa, and instrumental in ending Apartheid. My adoration for my mother is seeing her take care of many of the people in Jersey City from nuns to the chemically addicted. Pope Francis could live extravagantly and yet he chooses the simplest form and walks alongside the “least of these.” This type of “Jesus leadership” which I witness in others through their example, and my desire to emulate them, mentors me as a leader.

8. Describe a situation in which you felt a need to assert a professional boundary in the practice of ministry.

One particular situation in which I felt a need to establish a professional boundary was when someone came to me regarding some deep rooted emotional issues with her ex-husband. She also expressed that her son had extremely violent behaviors. I actively listened to the person talk, shed tears along with her, prayed and offered empathy. At the end of our meeting, I invited her to seek professional help from a therapist or other individuals with training and expertise in this area. A hotline number as well as several phone numbers of such professionals were offered and she was invited to contact her insurance for referrals. An explanation was given that pastoral care can continue however, in her situation, professional counseling might be more appropriate. In this situation, my professional boundary was maintained.

9. How have you worked through the experience of forgiving someone?

I have worked hard through the experience of forgiving someone through much prayer, fasting, study of Scripture, counseling and spiritual direction. Before I was able to forgive someone else, I recognized that I needed to work through this process with myself. I believe that the hardest person to forgive is me. It was this process, which better equipped me to forgive others. Embracing the scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself” allows me to forgive someone else. Loving unconditionally using the lens of Jesus empowers me to forgive. Most importantly looking at the loving encounters of Jesus has helped me. Keeping always before me that I’m a sinner who God graciously forgives, enables me to do the same as a disciple of Jesus, to someone who has wronged me. In the Lord's Prayer it states: “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”. I know I had forgiven a particular person when I sat across from him with compassion instead of anger. What a wonderfully liberating God moment!

10. What are you doing to help those around you take good care of themselves?

I am helping those around me take good care of themselves by practicing what I preach.

In my sermons I reference the need for exercise, diet, emotional, spiritual and mental health care. I organized a mental health first aide training seminar for the congregation and the community which was well attended. I initiated a community garden at Christ Church and together we attend events on health and wellness. I have joined the town's community garden in North Haledon, shared the harvest with neighbors and invited others to participate. I faithfully practice and encourage a weekly Sabbath. Nutritious refreshments are shared during our Sunday fellowship hour and other church gatherings. The yoga class at Cedar Cliff is noted in the weekly bulletin. Various health related opportunities are posted in the church. Through my modeling of self-care, inclusion of healthcare issues in sermons and at committee meetings, and the promotion of health related workshops, the community is encouraged to take good care of themselves.

11. How have you invited someone to faith and seen their faith develop?

I have invited people to faith, however the most recent and profound was my daughter Shannon. I recall in the Bible where it talks about Jesus not being welcomed in his own home. I must admit that my own home was an unwelcome territory for Jesus at times. It took every ounce of energy to keep my faith in Jesus Christ, so I could persevere in sharing my faith. I have shared the love of Jesus Christ with my daughter since her inception and taken her to Sunday school, preteen and teen camps and other venues. Finally, one day it dawned on me to stop pressuring her and maintain unconditional love no matter what.

One day she attended service at Christ church which was far and few between. And shockingly, during the invitation to Christian discipleship Shannon decided to give herself to Jesus. I offered to study with her and told her to let me know when she was available. Several months later she announced that she had studied the Bible and was getting baptized; and becoming a professing member of another church. Initially, I was excited and yet, a little

disappointed that it would not be by me or at my church. Then I acknowledged we are all part of the universal church.

Today we read the Bible together, listen and share gospel music; and share our struggles as disciples of Jesus Christ. I have given her several books to read and she remains hungry and thirsty for Christ. She attends a weekly prayer group and has joined the evangelism team. Shannon taught in the VBS at Christ church this summer. Together we have developed a relationship where “iron sharpens iron”. It is a miracle! This exemplifies how we plant the seed and God waters and make it grow. The invitation to faith is a continuous journey, often without words, subject to God's grace; and done uniquely at one's own choice and pace.

12. What have you overcome to come to this season in your ministry?

I have overcome the misconception that my limitations are signs of failure. They indicate that I need help from God and the community. Acknowledgement of limits enables me to work diligently within realistic boundaries without exhaustion. There are many worthy opportunities, and often times, I have to say “no”. Initially this was challenging, however, I learned that it is better to do a few things well, than many things without excellence. Constant yielding to the Holy Spirit has lightened the burden and brought success. Surrendering my ministry to God has directed my footsteps. Delegation and support from the church is vital.

The better I take care of myself enables me to better shepherd the sheep. Self-care and self-awareness are paramount in leadership. I intentionally practice loving myself; so that I can faithfully live out the commandment: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

13. How would you describe your prayer life in this season, and how has it changed your journey?

My prayer life in this season has become increasingly intense and vital. I have painstaking come to the realization that it is not how hard I work but how hard I pray that

matters. Ministry requires more “prayer power” than “human power”. Prayer is the most essential ingredient to living out my call as an elder. Without prayer there is no ministry or life in God. Clarity to God’s will and not my flawed desires manifest itself through prayer. Prayer allows me to lead in spite of my weaknesses. Prayer is my oxygen as a person and a pastor because without it, I will cease to exist!

Leading out of prayer has conquered insurmountable obstacles. Prayers has brought volunteers coming to help with church repairs, healing, increased stewardship and professing members, new ministries, etc. Journeying with prayer has been amazing!

14. When you read the Bible how do you hear God's voice? What example might you give of how you responded?

The voice of God permeates with love and grace when I read the Bible. The Israelites, disciples and many others fell short in their relationship with God and yet, God is always faithful. Reading about the saints before me such as Moses, Esther, Job, Joshua, Paul, Mary and Peter to name a few and having scriptures etched in my soul, help me go through trials and tribulations. There have been times when leading was so difficult with no way in sight. And then, God's word offered me strength: “... Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army, for the battle is not yours, but God’s.” (2Chron. 20:15) There are many inspiring Scriptures. Prov.3:5 encourages, “lean not on your own understanding but in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight”; is one of them. The Creator knows his creation and speaks through the Holy Spirit in a plethora of ways to draw me closer.

15. How has your family of origin influenced your call?

My family has influenced my call in many ways especially my mother. As a five year old, I recall watching my mother care for the marginalized while working at a methadone clinic. She helped start a neighborhood block association in Jersey City. She was a nurse and her

treatment of people was always kind and loving. I witnessed her becoming increasingly passionate for Jesus Christ and during my adolescent years she became an evangelist. She shared the love of Jesus Christ by helping people in need, sharing her resources and handing out tracts. Unfortunately, I did not fully appreciate her deep commitment to the Lord while growing up. As a result of differing doctrine, which did not affirm women; I did not support her church leadership. I guess God has a sense of humor, because, ten years after my mom's death, I was shockingly called into ministry. Many family members and friends were not surprised by this. My step father was a deacon in his church and my three brothers and I attended catholic schools. Consequently, learning about God was weaved into the fabric of my life. My family of origin has significantly influenced my call.

16. Interview three people to tell you what they see in your ministry? What did you hear in these conversations?

I interviewed a family member, a colleague and a friend regarding my ministry. They all discerned that I have been called to ministry and they tell of the many gifts that enable me to do ministry well. They could clearly see my deep passion for Jesus Christ and persevering efforts to live out God's love. Some expressions were: "You are a lover of people, energized by others and eager to meet and relate to anyone and everyone, and you are sensitive to people's pain." Another expressed that there is something "holy" about me, because they can sense God's presence in me. "You have an unconditional love for others even to the ones who treat you poorly." They are witnesses to my deep faith in Jesus Christ and my ability to "see light in the darkness" which fosters hope. The individuals with whom I spoke expressed that they are now motivated to be their best for God. They voiced admiration for my tenacity, integrity selflessness, authenticity, exuberance and uniqueness in following Jesus Christ. They affirmed my call to ordained ministry.

Paragraph 335 in *The Book of Discipline 2012 Theology*:(1) Give examples of how the practice of ministry has affected your experience and understanding of:(a) God, (b) Humanity, (c) The need for divine grace, (d) The Lordship of Jesus, (e) The work of the Holy Spirit, (f) The meaning and significance of the sacraments, (g) The kingdom of God, (h) Resurrection and eternal life.

(a) The more I learn about God, the more I realize how little I know. The vastness of God is beyond my finite understanding. “God is love” and it is through loving God, self, and neighbor that I discern God. Experiencing God, who carries me through seemingly impossible and unimaginable events, has strengthened my faith. God’s presence is manifested through me as a pastor to offer comfort when pain is beyond comprehension, during death and dying, crisis situations, sicknesses, violence, etc. God has, is and will continue to work in people and circumstances. I have become increasingly aware of God through the lives of others. God is in the laughter, tears, animals, sunrises and sunsets, silence and challenges. God is experienced through the Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and witnessed in all creation. Even when I don’t see, hear, taste, smell, feel or sense God, I am certain God is present and sustains my life and ministry.

(b) One way to describe humanity is in terms of how we are in relationship with God. “God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” (Gen 1:27) Our Creator’s unique design of weaving humanity in God's image, allows us to develop relationships with others, as well as deepen our relationship with the Divine. For example, I am able to minister at the Passaic County Jail and to the “least of these” knowing that God’s divine grace is available for each and every person.

(c) The need for divine grace is a result of each and every one of us being born in sin. Sin separates us from God; however God gives us an opportunity to have a loving relationship with the Creator by the gift of grace. Our wrong choices result in sin. However Jesus is the Son of

God who took our sins upon him, so that we can have a relationship with God. (John 3:16) We are weak, never good enough; so it is not earned or deserved. God gives the gift of grace.

(d) The Lordship of Jesus means that Jesus Christ is Lord of humanity and all creation. Jesus is not just Lord over how I practice ministry as a pastor, but in all facets of my daily existence. I conduct myself in a way that is consistent with Christian values. My modeling this “Christ like” behavior teaches and encourages the congregation regarding the Lordship of Jesus. When Jesus is Lord, it is not what we do, but who we are in Christ. The sudden and tragic death of my brother on September 12, 2015 enabled me to learn that Jesus is still Lord in the midst of pain. Jesus is Lord in the good and the bad.

(e) The Holy Spirit is the comforter; guide and sustainer of our souls. It is through the promptings of the Holy Spirit that we live out our Christianity. I have followed the prompting of the Holy Spirit when I did not know how to pray for the pain that a parishioner was experiencing. The Holy Spirit gave me the prayer that offered the person comfort. The Sustainer has given me warnings when things were not safe. The Holy Spirit prompted silence as the best gift when I had no answers. This person of the trinity is a constant presence that transcends human understanding.

(f) The United Methodist Church celebrates two sacraments: Holy Communion and baptism. These sacraments of grace are an outward expression of what God is doing in us. Holy Communion is a reminder of God's love and forgiveness of our sins, because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ's life on the cross. As a United Methodist, I believe that Jesus and the saints are spiritually present at the Lord's Table during communion. While administering the consecrated elements I have witnessed many teary eyes. The sharing of the Holy meal is a response to the invitation of Christ, the host. This sacred sacrament of grace is a priceless gift.

I have had the honor and the grace to administer the sacrament of baptism. It was exciting

to baptize twins for the first time. Prior to this act of grace I taught the parents the meaning of this sacrament. I clarified the difference between a christening, dedication and a baptism. United Methodists baptize infants because it is a gift of God's grace. Along with the parents, I have encouraged our local church to commit to leading the child until they are able to profess their own faith. Through baptism we are received into the Christian community of faith. I have also baptized adults.

As a United Methodist baptism is done in the presence of the congregation. In the UMC there are three methods: sprinkling, pouring or immersion. I have practiced the sprinkling and pouring methods. However, I would love to participate in immersion of a candidate for baptism, because of the profound imagery of dying to self and resurrecting as a new creation in Christ.

(g) I have witnessed glimpses of God's kingdom in the healings of sick individuals, in the peace and love between people of different races, faith traditions, etc. We have the opportunity to be a part of building the Kingdom of God by what we do. The kingdom is also observed when I meet people for the first time, pray with them and we have this spiritual connection. I see God in the faces of the congregation, during pastoral visits, ministering to the incarcerated; and with individuals with whom I experience a first encounter. Through the sharing of another's pain and offering the only word of hope which is Jesus Christ, validates "thy kingdom come on earth". Reconciliation between individuals and communities is evidence of the Kingdom of God. Watching love transform through another person's face, is such a joy. Beholding "God moments" after a scripture reading, prayer, song, silence, smile, touch, preached Word illumines the Kingdom. Also the connectionalism of the United Methodist church is an example of peaceful and loving interactions among diverse people and reveals a foretaste of God's kingdom.

(h) Resurrection and eternal life is when the physical person dies but the spiritual being

lives forever. As followers of Christ we are promised eternal life. Life on earth is a mere mist. I have witnessed the joy of family members whose loved ones died in the Lord. Even though it is a sad occasion at the funeral, I sensed the peace that surpasses human understanding. There were tears, sadness, along with laughter and fond memories. As a pastor it is such a humbling experience to share profound hope in the midst of deep loss. God's presence is so powerful in the service of death and resurrection; I sense a deeper bond with the body of Christ. What is symbolic in baptism becomes manifested through our death and resurrection. Our physical death is not the end, because we are living with the foreknowledge that eternity awaits those who accept Christ as Savior and live out by grace the call of discipleship.

(2)How do you understand the following traditional evangelical doctrines ;(a) repentance, (b) justification, (c) regeneration; (d) sanctification? What are the marks of the Christian Life?

(a) Repentance is when we recognize our sin, desire to change, acknowledge our need for a Savior and seek God's forgiveness. Even in our sin God's prevenient grace is available to us.

(b) Justification is the faith that Jesus Christ died for our sins which gives us the opportunity to live in eternity with God. We are justified through faith in Jesus Christ, and not by works. It is the moment we accept God's gift of salvation.

(c) Regeneration describes the belief in our new creation in Christ. As humans we fall short of the grace of God and are in continuous need of God's grace. Therefore regeneration is a process.

(d) Sanctification is how we strive to grow closer to God and work daily to become perfect in love. This is done through the practice of the "means of grace".

The marks of a Christian life are manifested in love of God and neighbor. He/she is a follower of Jesus Christ at any cost. A Christian exists to try to glorify God in all that they do. He/she is filled with the "Fruit of the Spirit", accepts God's grace and practices John

Wesley's, "General Rules: do no harm, do good and obey the ordinances". These are marks of a Christian life.

(3) How has the practice of ministry informed your understanding of the nature and mission of the Church? What are its primary challenges today?

The practice of ministry has enabled me to see that the mission of the church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Although distractions challenge us, we can overcome them through Kingdom focus. The church is a hospital for sick, in which we all are in some form. Brokenness in our society informs me that the nature and purpose of the church is to offer true hope through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In our gratitude for receiving God's love and grace, we share the love we have received with others.

(4) The United Methodist Church holds that Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason are sources and norms for belief and practice, that the Bible is primary among them. What is your understanding of this theological position of the Church, and how has your practice of ministry been affected by this understanding?

I usually open meetings with prayer using the Psalms and other Scripture. I inform the family of Christ that the authority in our lives is the Word of God even though we use reasoning, tradition and experience. The Bible is my daily bread and the main meal in which I feast daily. It is through the "Wesleyan Quadrilateral" that my theology is based with Scripture as the primary authority. R.E.S.T. is an acronym for reasoning, experience, Scripture and tradition.

For example, a woman who the prior pastor had been counseling came in to church during VBS and said she was ready to be baptized and become a member of Christ Church UMC. This was unusual. Since sacraments are communal events, the tradition of UMC is not to do private baptisms. I prayed with her and asked her about Jesus's death, burial and resurrection; and what God meant personally to her. An explanation was given regarding the need for congregational presence during baptism and profession of faith in the UMC. Baptismal and

profession of faith vows are taken with the congregation, so that they journey together in their Christian walk. I invited a lay servant who is a mature disciple to also speak and pray with her. Scripture does not inform regarding a time to wait for a person to be baptized. The Bible says, “repent and be baptized”. Several Sundays later the lady brought a dozen family members to witness this beautiful sacrament, as she was added to the family of God. I believe utilization of the “Wesleyan Quadrilateral” enabled me to make a Godly and holistic decision.

(5) How has the practice of ministry enriched your understanding of the meaning and significance of the sacraments?

The most beautiful of all my ministerial responsibilities is administering the sacraments. When I serve Holy Communion I see the tears in the people eyes and it affirms a deep sense of God’s love. Presiding over the grace of baptism is a great moment because the individual is received into the body of Jesus Christ. Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion are God’s gifts to humanity in which I have the honor of administering and teaching. These acts of grace are beyond human comprehension and reflect what God has done and is doing on the inside.

(b) Vocation (1) How has the experience of ministry shaped your understanding of your vocation as an ordained elder?

The beautiful Kairos moments which I have experienced with congregants as well as strangers have affirmed my call to ministry. I have a passion to share the love of Jesus with others. Administering the sacraments, ordering the life of the church, proclaiming the Word and service to the church community and beyond; has given me a more profound understanding of my role as an elder. Regardless of the challenges, I find that God’s grace is sufficient and sustains me. I am reminded and humbled by my vocation as an elder, that I am one who assists and guides others in discerning their gifts, and encourage them to use their gifts to benefit God. I believe that “... the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.” (Rom11:29) I am thankful that

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God equips whom God calls, and I am grateful to God my Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer who promises to be with me.

(c) Practice of Ministry (1) How has the practice of ministry affected your understanding of the itinerant system? Do you offer yourself without reserve to be appointed and to serve as the appointive authority may determine?

Throughout my tenure as a provisional elder I served at Wyckoff, Paterson and Haledon NJ. I understand that this is a part of the call to ministry in the UMC. God's gifts to God's chosen vessels can be used in any community. Yes, I offer myself to the will of God and trust that God works through the bishop and the cabinet to appoint me where I need to serve for the sake of God's kingdom regardless of culture or comfort.

(2) Describe and evaluate your personal gifts for ministry and how they have resulted in a fruitful ministry. What would be your areas of strength and areas in which you need to be strengthened in order to be more fruitful in ministry?

As a lover of Jesus who is energized through sharing the "Good News", I have guided people in baptism and to profess their faith. Relationship building across the spectrum is a by-product of integrity, friendliness, authenticity, exuberance and passion. I model evangelism to laity so that our neighbors have an opportunity to be a part of our worship services and to know Jesus. I intentionally teach, encourage and engage the laity to explore their gifts for ministry and this has ignited a desire for outreach. Learning that one of our neighbors enjoyed Jamaican cooking, I asked her to plan a dinner menu for VBS. She cooked and served the food with her teenage children. I walked alongside her in a Christian career development program and now she is gainfully employed. She along with family and friends are getting to know Christ better through their relationship with the church.

Although I am flexible and flow with the Holy Spirit, I respect, value and follow procedures in *The Book of Discipline*. Being an extrovert allows me to collaborate with a

diversity of people. However, introvert characteristics allows for deeper reflection and enhance my intimacy with God. The gift of courage and risk-taking has resulted in the creation of several new small groups, community involvement, mission opportunities, etc.

Learning to delegate has improved my weakness to take on too much. My growing edges have become more balanced by surrendering my ministry to God, understanding the need and wisdom to set limits, asking questions, taking advice, mentorship and collegial sharing.

(3) For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and most effective witness to the Christian gospel and in consideration of your influence as an ordained minister, are you willing to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life; and to this end will agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to physical health, intentional intellectual development, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, integrity in all personal relationships, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge and love of God?

Yes!

(4) Provide evidence of your willingness to relate yourself in ministry to all persons without regard of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, social status, gender, sexual orientation, age, economic condition, or disability.

I have participated with laity at Preakness Health Care Center's worship service which consists of elderly, young adults and disabled persons of diverse ethnicities, socioeconomic status, genders, etc. These are mutually enjoyable and spiritually shaping experiences. As a board member of the Paterson/Passaic Boy's and Girl's Club, I have the opportunity to engage with children, youth, and adults along a cross section of communities. I actively participate in and have loads of fun in VBS. I concur with John Wesley, "the world is my parish." I am a member of clergy and community groups which provides a plethora of diverse interactions.

(5) Will you regard all pastoral conversations of a confessional nature as a trust between the person concerned and God?

I hold all conversations as a confidential manner, unless there is abuse or someone threatens to harm or kill him/herself or someone else; in which I am ethically and legally liable

to report.

(6) Provide evidence of experience in peace and justice ministries.

I am a member of the Greater New Jersey Commission on Religion and Race and participate in conferences, trainings as well as the taskforce of the GNJAC to evaluate diversity. I was a panel member for discussions on racism at SUNY and attended Muslim workshops at The Peace Island Institute. For several years on MLK Day I have been part of the ecumenical programs at Ridgewood UMC. I have helped collect food for CUMAC and packaged food in the community. I am part of an ecumenical prison ministry team and various interfaith groups.

1. Explain the threefold aspects of Wesleyan grace and how have you encountered these in your own ministry/life.

God's love for humanity goes before us; in what John Wesley termed: "prevenient grace". It is through the prompting of this grace, that we develop a desire to change. Through "justifying grace" we confess by faith that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior of our lives. By way of "sanctifying grace," we experience the fullness of love towards God and our neighbors as we strive to live a holy life. I have witnessed this process with a visitor who decided she wanted to be a Christian and accept Jesus as her Lord and Savior. She understood the prevenient grace that went before her and then she was ready to engage in "justifying grace" through her willingness to repent, be baptized and become a new creation in Christ. It is such a joy to watch her in Bible study, mission opportunities as well as witnessing her daily walk through God's gift of "sanctifying grace"; as she reflects a more "Christ like" nature.

2. Share an instance when you found yourself in ministry with someone whose theology was radically different from your own.

I recall an instance of differing theological views on a mission trip on the Blackfoot reservation in Montana. I worked alongside a pastor from a Lutheran church. He was very

adamant about what he had been taught and his belief regarding women in leadership in the church. We worked together planting a garden at an orphanage and I believe in that moment the Holy Spirit intervened. We had a very robust discussion. And yet, as we continued to work in the soil and plant seeds something changed. Both his and my theology regarding women did not change but our kinship as a sister and brother in Christ was fortified. So much so, that we have been pen pals ever since for over seven years. We share our learnings, family, joys and struggles as servants of God. He and I both pray and support each other's ministry. This Godly encounter is forever etched in my soul and proves that differing theological views need not prevent ministry together in Christ.

3. Describe how your image of God has changed over your journey. What has informed it?

My image of God has evolved from that of a male figure, female figure to both and neither. Looking at God anthropomorphically is a way for my finite mind to understand the infinitude of God. I have come to know that my understanding of God is limited for such a limitless God. My relationships with people, increasing experiences in life, sacred and secular readings, practice of spiritual disciplines, retreats, weekly Sabbaths; encounters with deaths, crises, births, failures, triumphs, forgivenesses, reconciliations, evils, miracles, and compassions continue to inform my journey into the Divine. Contrary to arriving at more of a conclusion in my voyage regarding who God is, I have increasingly developed more of a hunger and thirst, along with an insatiable appetite. And while I see God through kaleidoscopic eyes rather than through myopic lenses, the never changing reality that God is love remains!

1. Explain the role of deacons, elders and local pastors in the UMC and how they are uniquely called to function in the church.

¶339 stipulates that “a pastor is an ordained elder, provisional deacon, or a licensed person approved by vote of the clergy members in full connection” and appointed by the bishop in various settings to do ministry. The fourfold ministry for which elders and licensed local pastors are responsible: administration of the sacraments, ordering the church, preaching the Word and serving the community (¶340). ¶139 states, “Ordained ministers are called by God to a lifetime of servant leadership in specialized ministries among the people of God... deacons are called to the ministries of Word and Service, and elders are called to the ministries of Service, Word, Sacrament and Order.” However, at the 2016 General Conference with the approval of the presiding bishop, deacons can be given sacramental authority. Elders lead the Church “in remembering and celebrating the gifts of God and living faithfully in response to God’s grace.” (¶305) Local pastors are licensed to function at a particular local church for a specified time (¶316). Deacons and elders are ordained for a life time of ministry (¶329, ¶332). Deacons are a bridge that connects the church to the world (¶329).

Clergy are also responsible, for embodying the teachings of Jesus in servant ministries, servant leadership, and nurturing the life of the congregation for discipleship in the world, as well as building the body of Christ as a caring and giving community. Clergy are vessels used to extend their gifts of grace to the congregation. Deacons, elders and local pastors are God’s servants who have answered the call into set apart ministries and work alongside the people of God (¶302).

2. What is the process for setting the pastor’s salary? Who can change it, and when can it change?

“The charge conference shall in consultation with the district superintendent set the

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compensation of the pastor”. (§247.13) The church council recommends to the charge conference the salary of the pastor after receiving recommendations from the committee on pastor -parish relations (staff -parish relations) (§252.4d). After the initial appointment of a pastor’s salary by the district superintendent, the SPRC recommends changes to the administrative council, who in turn recommends it to the charge or church conference for approval. The SPRC has the duty to “consult on matters pertaining to... proposals for compensation... affecting the work and families of pastor and staff.” (§258.2.g.16) The committee on finance creates the budget which includes the pastor’s salary (§258.4). Neither the SPRC nor the committee on finance has any vote regarding the pastor’s salary except as voting members of the charge or church conference. “If it becomes necessary to modify a pastor’s compensation, it shall occur at the end of the conference appointment year.” (§624) This modification of a pastor’s salary can only occur in a designated Charge or Church Conference meeting.

3. The Education committee wants to update the curriculum being taught in the Christian Education program. What specific guidance does the *Book of Discipline* give with dealing with this issue?

Pastors are called to order the church. “To give oversight to the educational program of the church and encourage the use of United Methodist literature and media.” (§340.2.c.1.b) The education committee needs to consult the pastor regarding a change in the educational curriculum of the church. The pastor and his or her education committee can utilize the General Board of Discipleship as well as other United Methodist agencies as a valuable resource and for general oversight of the teaching of the UMC (§1108).

4. You have discovered a need in the community for a soup kitchen, and wish to recommend this be a priority for the congregation, using the facilities of the church. What parties and processes need to be involved?

As the pastor of the local church, I have a responsibility to order the church by meeting

the community needs and helping the congregation to serve the community. (§340.2.d.) ¶163.E of the Social Principles deals with poverty. As United Methodists we are to share our resources and meet the needs of the community. The church council needs to be involved in the process of having a soup kitchen because it is responsible for mission and ministry. “The church council shall provide for planning and implementing a program of nurture, outreach, witness, and resources in the local church.” (§252.1)

All involvement with the church facilities must include and have approval of the board of trustees. The board of trustees is responsible to oversee usage of the church facilities as well. It is imperative that the committee on finance is consulted because according to ¶258.4, “all financial askings to be included in the annual budget of the local church shall be submitted to the committee on finance.”

5. A constituent of your church comes to speak with you about their call to ministry. Describe the basic steps that are involved in seeking ordination.

I would pray with my sister or brother in Christ regarding this call and confirm that he/she has been a professing member in good standing of the UMC for at least one year. In order to help him/her discern their call, I would have conversation and encourage the reading of *The Christian as Minister* (§310).

I would inform the potential candidate that a written statement of their call is to be sent to the DS to request admission into the candidacy process; and after being admitted to the process, a candidacy mentor will be assigned. (§310b) The approved candidate will be registered with the GBHEM by the district superintendent. The candidate along with his/her mentor would continue the discernment process by using the approved resource adopted by BOOM: *The Ministry Inquiry Process*.

The prospective candidate meets with the committee on pastor parish relations for an interview of Wesley's historical questions to evaluate his/her call. (§310.1.d) After recommendation by the SPRC the candidate is voted on by the charge/church conference for appointed ministry.

The candidate would be interviewed and evaluated periodically by the district committee on ordained ministry and will need to comply with any requirements of DCOM. The certified candidate is recommended to the BOOM and evaluated to continue as a candidate for ordination. After submission of requirements and interviews, the candidate's call is affirmed to full time ministry, ordained by the bishop and received as an elder or deacon in full connection in The United Methodist Church.

6. Describe the general structures of the annual conference and how each body functions.

The mission of annual conference “is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by equipping its local churches for the ministry and by providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church; all to the glory of God.” (§601)

The Conference Council on Finance and Administration: “The purpose of the council shall be to develop, maintain, and administer a comprehensive and coordinated plan on fiscal and administrative policies, procedures, and management services for the annual conference.”

(§612.1) This council is amenable and reports directly to the annual conference (§612.6).The council recommend and guides the annual conference on finances and financially related matters.

The Conference Board of Church and Society is responsible for maintaining the connectional relationship between the General Board of Church and Society and the conference, district and the local church (§629.1). It functions “relating the gospel of Jesus Christ to members of the Church and to persons and structures of the communities, nation and the world in which

they live. Program shall be developed that provides education and action on issues confronting the Church consistent with the Social Principles and the policies adopted by the General Conference.”(¶629.4)

The Conference Board of Discipleship leads and directs both congregations and districts in Christian Education through training in small group ministries, spiritual formation, camping ministries, evangelism and working with the disabled (¶630).

The Conference Board of Laity is charged to clarify the role of lay members in the local congregation and ministries in the home, workplace, community and the world; in accordance with the General Board of Discipleship (¶631).

The Conference Board of Global Ministries is responsible “to designate committees, sections, or commissions and individual secretaries, coordinators and or other leaders for global responsibilities at the annual conference level.” (¶633)

The Conference Board of Higher Education and Campus Ministry provides a connectional relationship between GBHEM and the conference, district and local church (¶634.2). Training, resources and evaluations are provided for higher education.

The Conference Board of Ordained Ministry bears the primary responsibility for the enlistment and recruitment of ordained clergy. The board reviews candidates, trains and appoints mentors, examines all applicants as to their fitness for ordained ministry, and makes recommendations concerning changes of clergy relationship to the annual conference. The board provides support for the ordained minister’s vocational development, a means of evaluation regarding the effectiveness of ordained ministers, and is accountable to the annual conference (¶635).

The Conference Committee on Episcopacy supports and counsels the bishop, makes

recommendations, interprets the nature and function of the episcopal office, and engages in annual consultation and appraisal of the balance of bishops (§637.3).

The Conference Board of Pensions “have charge of the interests and work of providing for and contributing to the support, relief, assistance, and pensioning of clergy and their families, other church workers, and lay employees of the institutions, organizations, and agencies ...” (§639)

The Conference on Religion and Race shall follow guidelines of the General Commission on Religion and Race. This commission provides training and resources in the areas of race and religion “with particular emphasis placed on pastors and congregations involved in cross-racial/cross-cultural ministry...” (§643) They are involved in matters of cultural competency, racial equality and inclusiveness.

The Conference Commission for the Status and Role of Women maintains the connection with the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women and it functions to educate and promote women within all levels of the Church (§644).

The United Methodist Women and the United Methodist Men are mandated conference agencies which support the local church. The UMW is accountable to the United Methodist Women national organization. The UMM is accountable to the General Commission on United Methodist Men. (§§ 647,648)

The Conference Council on Youth Ministry and Young Adult Ministry function to strengthen the ministries in the local churches (§§ 649, 650).

Other committees that the annual conference may include are: Episcopal Residence Committee (§638), Conference on Small Membership Church (§645), Council on Older Adult Ministries (§651) and Conference Committee on Native American ministry (§654).

“The annual conferences are permitted the flexibility to design conference and district structures in ways that best support the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ in an increasingly global community; which places secondary any prescribed structure, except mandated entities in ¶610.” (¶610.1) The mandated conference agencies are: Conference Council on Finance and Administration (¶611), Conference Board of Ordained Ministry (¶635), Conference Administrative Review Committee (¶636), Conference Committee on Episcopacy (¶637), Conference Board of Pensions (¶639), Board of Trustees (¶640), United Methodist Women (¶647), and United Methodist Men (¶648). This structure supports the connectionalism between the local churches and the Annual Conference; and between the Annual Conference, Jurisdictional Conference and General Conference. In addition this structure enables the Annual Conference to connect to the world.

7. Describe the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of the United Methodist Church.

The United Methodist Church is structured similar to the United States Government. The legislative branch is reflected in the General Conference. The Council of Bishops resembles the executive branch, and the nine members Judicial Council is equivalent in role to the judicial branch of the US government. There are some differences in how the US government and the UMC operate. The president is elected by the citizens of the USA and bishops are elected at the Jurisdictional conference by representatives of annual conferences. The General Conference is an international body of representatives consisting of an equal number of clergy and laity. The General Conference speaks on behalf of the UMC. Official policies are included in *The Book of Discipline and The Book of Resolutions* which are reviewed and amended if necessary each quadrennium. (¶¶ 501-511)

Bishops are ordained elders who are elected at the Jurisdictional or Central conference to

serve in the executive branch of the church. Bishops are considered general superintendents of the church and appointed for life. Bishops are appointed for four years to be the episcopal leader of an assigned region. They can repeat this term two more times for a total of twelve years in that specific region. (§§401-403,414-416)

“The Judicial Council shall have authority as specified in the Constitution, §§ 55-57, and in §§ 2609-2612.” (§ 2601) The Judicial Council is the final step for laws made by bishops in central, annual or jurisdictional conferences to be passed, modified, reversed or affirmed. The Judicial Council provides a court to hear disagreements, charges, and questions regarding interpretations of questions and disputes of the *BOD*. (§§2609-2612) The Judicial Council also preside over clergy trials. (§§ 2701-2719)

8. What is your understanding of the theology behind Shared Ministries giving (apportionments)?

Apportionments are a means by which the local church contributes to the greater mission and ministry of the UMC. “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,” and “love your neighbor as yourself” informs my understanding of the theology behind Shared Ministries. In The United Methodist Church, “World Service on apportionments represents the minimum needs of the general agencies of the Church. Payment in full... is the first benevolent responsibility of the Church.” (§ 812) As the pastor who orders the life of two local churches, it is my honor and responsibility to educate, implement and “lead the congregation... through full and faithful payment of all apportioned ministerial support, administrative, and benevolent funds.” (§340.2.c) (2) (e)

¶247.14 specifies, “It shall be the part of the responsibility of the district superintendent, the pastor, the lay member(s) of the annual conference and/or the church lay leader(s) to interpret to each charge conference the importance of these apportioned funds, explaining the causes

supported by each of them...” I share often with both congregations our purpose. “The church of Jesus Christ exists in and for the world.” (§202) Consequently, one church has paid a hundred percent of their apportionments and the other church has improved from zero to thirteen percent.

9. You have an idea for a unique form of ministry. How does the *Book of Discipline* guide us in seeking affirmation for ministries that are beyond the local church? What is the role of extension ministries in the life of the church?

I would discuss my idea for a unique form of ministry first “with the bishop and/or district superintendent prior to any interviews relative to such appointment.” (§343.3) Extension ministries include a variety of positions listed in (§344.1a) and (344.1b). However, if it is not listed then the bishop and Board of Ordained Ministry would need to affirm that it is “a true extension of the Christian ministry of the Church.” (§344.1d) Extension ministries provide opportunities for elders to serve beyond the walls of the local church “in the witness and service of Christ’s love and justice.” (§343.1)

10. In what ways do your upbringing, your cultural context, and your personal experience shape your understanding of polity?

Growing up in an urban environment of Jersey City, NJ and blessed to have culturally competent parents has shaped the woman I am today. Both my educational development as well as my career as a nurse provided a plethora of interactions with people of diverse cultures. This upbringing has strengthened my ability to see, “the world as my parish”. According to *The Social Principles*: Preamble: “We acknowledge that, because it (church) is a living body of believers gathered together by God from many diverse segments of the human community, unanimity of belief, opinion, practice has never been characteristic of the Church from the beginning to this day.”

Although we are a living organism, the UMC polity is the standard operating procedures of The United Methodist Church and as such keeps us connectional. I have learned from the

work places and various denominations that rules and regulations are very necessary to function effectively. God is a God of order. Polity is in place for the greater good. And yet, we know it comes with imperfections; so every quadrennium we evaluate this human process with God's help and make necessary revisions. United Methodists' polity interprets theology using the "Wesleyan Quadrilateral" with Scripture as the primary source along with tradition, reasoning and experience. Through multicultural and multidenominational lens I interpret theology and understand that others will interpret in view of their particular context.

I appreciate that we as United Methodists strive to work together for, "the truth given to us in Jesus Christ." (§105) This shapes my understanding of God's expression in people and my appreciation of the UMC polity.

Biographical Statement

I was formerly Pamela Grant born in Jersey City, NJ from a remarkable woman the Rev. Lucretta Marie Neal who transitioned in 1997. I am still nurtured by my gentle step-father Israel Neal and gifted step mother Betty Neal. I have two living brothers Darrell and Israel and recently lost my oldest brother Tony. All of whom I am grateful for. I came along third in this creation process.

Formerly, married to Curtis Lee James Sr. and from this union were birthed two beloved children Curtis Lee Jr. and Shannon Marie. I became a grandmother in 2010 to Jeremiah Isaiah and in 2016 to Isabella. Most of my life has been lived in Jersey City and Paterson, NJ. I have also lived in Wayne and Wyckoff, NJ and currently reside in North Haledon, NJ.

My passion for ministry began at the age of nine, when I wanted to become a nun. As I matured, I wanted to work in foreign missions. I adored Mother Theresa, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, as well as many other people who served God because it seemed so rewarding. Yet sadly, in my prior faith tradition, women were not affirmed in ministry. So, when God called me to be a pastor, I had enormous doubts. I sought counsel from a UMC pastor who did prayer walks with me at the school where I was employed as a nurse. He said, "If God called you then God knows your gender; and in the UMC women are ordained as pastors." I continued to beg God to make my call crystal clear. I attended a rural church in Virginia for the first time with my family and the preacher called me to the front of the Church. He said, "God told me to deliver a message to you. God called you to be a preacher and He knows you are a woman. Fear not, God will equip you and He deems you worthy..." I am convinced and confident of my call as a vessel to be used as an ordained elder for God in The United Methodist Church.

I attended New York Theological Seminary and earned after much sweat, tears and prayers, a Masters of Divinity Degree in May of 2011. I was the student coordinator of the NYTS Women's Resource Center. In my learnings about God I recognized how little I knew. This reality continues to lead me to my knees in prayer, study and gratitude for God's gifts of grace.

I enjoy learning, reading, writing poetry, swimming, jogging, tennis, nature, meeting people and sharing the Good News. As a modern day foot soldier for Christ, I have been involved in many community activities such as prayer walks, ecumenical activities, food collections, volunteering with disabled persons, soup kitchens, and interfaith organizations to name a few. Earning three units of CPE at the Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital has helped me immensely in parish ministry. I have served in prison ministry at the Passaic County Jail in Paterson, NJ for eight years.

I have participated in several mission trips to New Orleans, Yakima and the Blackfoot Indian Reservations. I served Grace United Methodist Church as an associate pastor for two years. And I am currently serving Christ Church United Methodist in Paterson and Cedar Cliff UMC in Haledon, NJ. I have held membership in Christ Church United Methodist and St. Philip's UMC in Paterson, the NYC International Churches of Christ and the House of Prayer in Jersey City. I am a United Methodist Women and a member of GNJCORR.

A daughter of "the Holy," created in God's image, I strive with every fiber of my being to do the will of my creator. I am energized and passionate about sharing life in Jesus Christ. I look forward to this journey of grace with the "faith of being sure of what I hope for and certain of what I do not see."

Chronological Resume of Activities for Pamela James

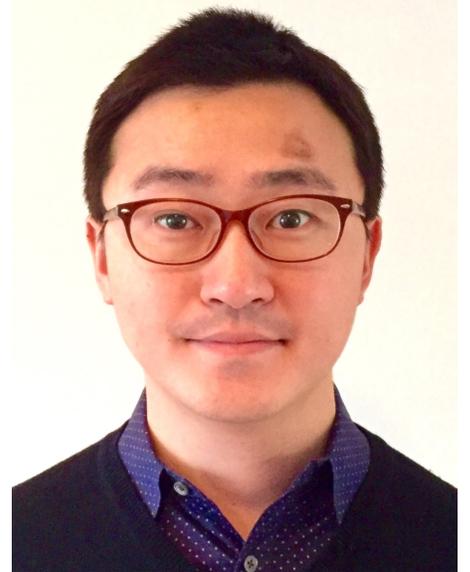
2016 Member of Tri-Boro Clergy Group
2016 Member of North Haldon Community Garden
2016 Member of City Green Dig In Community Garden Passaic County
2015-2016 Member of Paterson Clergy Association
2015-2016 Board Member of Paterson & Passaic Boys and Girls Club
2015-2016 Member of Star of Hope Ministries
2015-2016 Volunteer at Preakness Health Care Center
2014-2015 Volunteer at Eastern Christian Retreat Center Wyckoff
2015-2016 Appointed Pastor of Cedar Cliff UMC Haledon and Christ Church United Methodist Paterson, NJ
2014-2015 Member of Association of Bergen County Chaplains
2013-2015 Member of Wyckoff Rotary
2013-2015 Member of Wyckoff Clergy Association
2013-2015 Appointed Associate Pastor to Grace UMC in Wyckoff, NJ
2013 Commissioned Provisional Elder
2011 Certified Candidate: Palisades District of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference
2010-2013 Member of Christ Church United Methodist Paterson, NJ
2011 Master of Divinity New York Theological Seminary, New York, NY
2010-2013 CPE Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in New Brunswick, NJ
2009 Certificate for Ministry NYTS, New York, NY
2007- 2010 Member of St. Philip's UMC Paterson, NJ
2005-2009 Nurse Volunteer at Diabetes Children's Camp Stillwater, NJ
1996 Birth of Second Child Shannon Marie
1993- 2013 School Nurse: Paterson Public Schools
1993 School Nurse Certification: Jersey City State University, Jersey City, NJ
1991-1993 Registered Nurse: Valley Hospital Ridgewood, New Jersey
1990-1991 Registered Nurse: Paterson Board of Health Paterson, NJ
1989-1990 Case Manager Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Florham Park, NJ
1989-2012 Resident of Paterson, New Jersey
1988 First Child Curtis Lee Jr. Born at Christ Hospital Jersey City, NJ
1987 -2007 Membership at New York City Church of Christ
1987-2012 Married Curtis James
1984-1988 Bachelor of Science Nursing Degree, Jersey City State University
1984-1988 Registered Nurse at Jersey City Medical Center
1988 Registered Nurse Degree from Clara Maass School of Nursing Belleville, NJ
1981 High School Diploma: St. Aloysius High School, Jersey City, NJ
1981-1989 Resident of Jersey City, NJ

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KIM, YEOL (EARL)

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NOTES

PREACHING AND WORSHIP – Earl Kim

THE SERMON

Title: “Make the Best of What We’ve Been Given” (October, 9, 2016)

Scripture Readings: Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7, 2 Timothy 2:8-15, Luke 17:11-19

This sermon was preached at First United Methodist Church of Montclair (FUMC below) on Sunday, October 9, 2016. The audience was the congregation of the church, which is English-speaking congregation and yet highly diverse in terms of ethnicity, race, culture, and age. Many members are from the Caribbean, Africa, Latin America, or Asia plus the almost equal number of African American and Caucasian members. The age of adult members spans from 20s to 70s; the average age of the congregation is approximately 50.

This sermon was given as part of the sermon series, “A Church Builder’s Manual,” which I created on the basis of the lectionary readings for 8 weeks—from the first Sunday of October to Christ the King/Reign of Christ Sunday. The main theme of the series is that God calls us to the church not just to be the residents in it but to be the builders of it. Through this series I attempt to rekindle the members’ passion for the church and encourage them to move forward with grateful hearts, so that we can work together to make this faith community our true spiritual home.

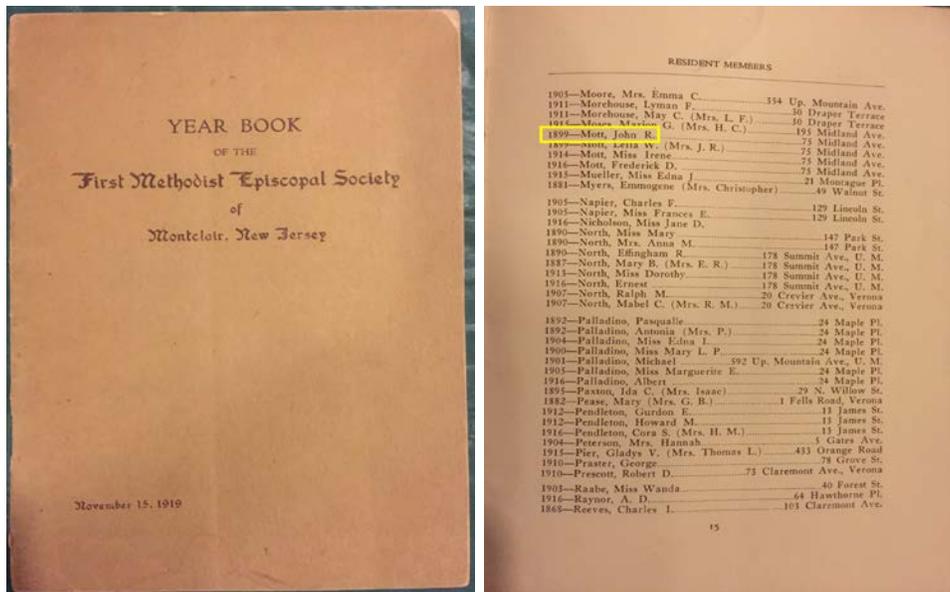
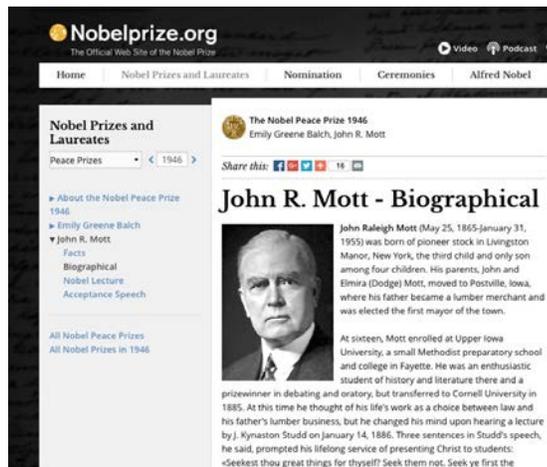


Lectionary Sermon Series

- #1. Start Simple
- #2. Make the Best of What We’ve been Given
- #3. Grapple with God and Faith
- #4. Make Room for the Spirit
- #5. Ask for a Second Chance
- #6. Stay Confident in What We’re Building
- #7. Keep in Mind the Ultimate Model
- #8. Remain Faithful to the Foundation

“Make the Best of What We’ve Been Given” – Yeol “Earl” Kim
Scripture Readings: Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7, 2 Timothy 2:8-15, Luke 17:11-19

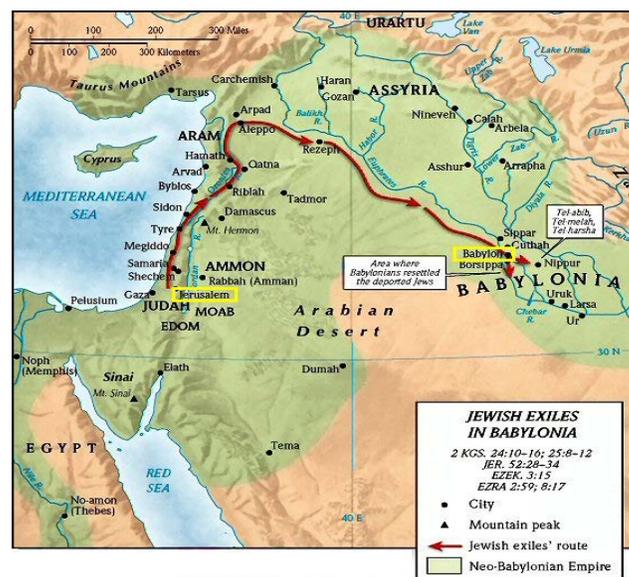
After the very first worship service at our church in 2012, I asked to myself, “Where should we begin? Where is our hope now?” Then, I got curious about the history of this church. I dug out historical documents in my office and read them. I found that Methodist Episcopal Church’s Newark Conference held its annual meeting in this sanctuary, right here. And I was so surprised when I found that the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, John R. Mott (May 25, 1865 – January 31, 1955) was a member of this church.



(Pictures on the screen)

He was the single most important person in Protestant mission in the 20th century. And many of you also told me about the church's famous previous parsonage across Yogi Berra's house. The house was sold before I was appointed, but I had a chance to look inside; it was huge. A church with the glorious past, a church with its mark in the world mission, a church with good resources... yes, our church it was. But did I find a certain hope in that history? No, I didn't. Rather, I simply came to realize this: we may take our pride in the history, but the pride in the past is enough to build up hope here and now. And today, we are not just here to be the proud heirs of the past but to be more like the hopeful builders of the church in our own circumstances. "Where should we begin? Where is our hope now?" We still need to ask these questions if we still want to build our spiritual home anew.

Today's Hebrew Bible reading is a letter of the Prophet Jeremiah. He sent this letter from Jerusalem to the people of Israel in Babylon. What was happening there? In 587 BCE, Babylonia destroyed Jerusalem, held many people hostage, and brought them to Babylon.¹



(map on the screen)

¹ Ronald E. Clements, *Jeremiah, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1988), 169.

Of course, the Israelites exiled in Babylon were miserable. They were seriously homesick for Jerusalem. Reading Psalm 137, we may feel their sorrow a bit:

By the rivers of Babylon—
there we sat down and there we wept
when we remembered Zion.
On the willows there
we hung up our harps.
For there our captors
asked us for songs,
and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying,
'Sing us one of the songs of Zion!'
How could we sing the Lord's song
in a foreign land?
If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
let my right hand wither!
Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth,
if I do not remember you (Psalm 137: 1-6 [on the screen](#)).

They didn't want anything but returning to home. Babylon was not the place they should belong to. Absolutely not!

In this context, God sends them some advice through the letter of Jeremiah. And it begins with a total bummer. "Build houses and live in them" (Jeremiah 29:5). What? I'm sure they couldn't believe what they just heard. The rest of the letter says, in short, live your life fully in Babylon; embrace the circumstances you find yourselves in. What's the purpose of this advice? It looks like the people in exile need to admit the fact that Jerusalem is no longer the Jerusalem of their proud past. It has been totally ruined, and the Babylonian rule is their new reality. These people think, everything would be all right if they can leave Babylon and go back to Jerusalem. However, that is just a fantasy and returning home is not a solution at all. So God wakes them up, "stop fantasizing the past, and start making the best out of what you have in where you are."

The letter of Jeremiah still delivers an invaluable message to us too. Jeremiah's words poignantly challenge us to look into the feeling of nostalgia among us. It's not bad itself, but

sometimes, this nostalgic feeling turns into the idolatry of the past. Although we are growing, we still habitually say: our church was once great, it was more alive, the building was filled with many people and children... But fellow church builders in Christ, perhaps, the task of building our church with hope begins with our departure from the past. To our question, “Where should we begin,” God would reply, “Mark your new beginning right here.” Although society and culture are secularized, although the generation of spiritual-but-not-religious grows, although the ethos of nominal Christianity pervades in us, we are called to build the church right here in the middle of all those challenges. We are called to make the best out of our own circumstances.

When we come to dedicate ourselves to the revitalization of our church, we also need to remember Jesus. Do you think everything worked perfectly for the Son of God and his ministry? Not really. His circumstances and his people were hardly the best. He spent his early years in the poor town of Nazareth. He was a Jew in Judea that was just one of the helpless colonies of the Roman Empire. The religious and political authorities and even his neighbors in his hometown were very often hostile to him and never supportive of his ministry. And look at today’s Gospel story. Jesus heals ten lepers but one, only one of them, comes back to Jesus and asks for salvation. He asks, “Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they?” (Luke 17:17, on the screen) Jesus’ success rate is only ten percent, which seems not very effective. Moreover, this one person is a Samaritan, a foreigner, discriminated and hated by the Jews. Jesus’ own people did not appreciate his ministry. And in this story, Luke is implying that the Israelites soon reject the good news while it spreads out among the gentiles.²

Circumstances were very unfavorable to Jesus, and his ministry seemed to fail when he died on the cross and when most of his followers betrayed him and ran away. But right there,

² Fred B. Craddock, *Luke, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 207.

overcoming the power of death and subverting the circumstances, he arose. The resurrected Christ called and empowered his followers to proclaim the good news and build the church even under oppression and persecution. Hear the story of Paul written in today's Epistle reading, "Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David—that is my gospel, for which I suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained" (2 Timothy 2:9, on the screen). To our question, "Where is our hope now," our ancestors of faith would respond, "Put your ultimate hope in Christ for he has overcome the world" and "If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him" (John 16:33; 2 Timothy 2:11-12, on the screen).

Sisters and brothers in Christ, we believe in Jesus Christ, the one who has marked the new beginning of the world and become the ultimate hope for humanity. With our faith in him, let us truly begin a new chapter of our ministry nowhere else but here, and not any other time but now. Let us be his hopeful builders of his Body on earth—not just the proud heirs of the past. Perfect circumstances... they never have, and they never will. In one way or another, we always find our lives in our own Babylon. Let's start building right here. Prepare the site and pour the foundation of faith. Frame new spiritual lives with prayers. Start running the pipes of love and the wires of forgiveness. Insulate the building with compassion for people in need. Open the door of the good news to all others in the community. Let's dream and imagine the future of our ministry together. On our way of this construction, may our ultimate hope in Christ Jesus always inspire us to learn how to make the best out of what we've been graciously given—this beautiful space, this beautiful day, this beautiful community, and these beautiful people with beautiful hearts. Amen.

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THE ORDER OF WORSHIP – Earl Kim

1. Detail the theological significance of each act of worship. Describe what is happening and why it occurs where it does in the service.

- (1) Processional/Introit: This prelude signals the opening of worship service, gathers people into the worship, and invokes congregation's participation and attention.
- (2) Welcome and Announcements: Announcements are made in the opening of the service right after the welcoming words so that the rest of the service can be more focused on worship.
- (3) Call to Worship: This Call to Worship litany summarizes the beginning part of the service and calls the congregation's full spiritual attention to the further worship.
- (4) Opening Hymn: This hymn is a musical bridge that connects Call to Worship and the opening prayer, which are both spoken words. The hymn harmonizes the worship more effectively.
- (5) Opening Prayer: This prayer serves to open up the service by asking for God's presence in the worship service.
- (6) Prayer of Confession: The Prayer of Confession consists of the statement of an expression of sorrow for transgressions and a petition for forgiveness and assistance.
- (7) Assurance of Pardon: This short litany following the silent prayer after the Prayer of Confession reassures God's forgiveness and reminds the congregation of the faith in God.
- (8) Sharing Our Joys & Concern: The time of sharing congregational issues enhances the communal aspect of worship and strengthens bond and unity among the members.
- (9) Pastoral Prayer & The Lord's Prayer: The Pastoral Prayer lifts up the congregation's issues to God and is concluded with the Lord's Prayer. I take note of the names and the issues when the congregation shares them during the time of sharing and include them in my pastoral prayer.
- (10) Responsive Hymn: This is a musical assurance on hope and comfort in God.
- (11) Children's Message: A message that promotes the meaning of is delivered to the children.

- (12) Hebrew Bible Lesson, and Epistle Lesson: God's words for today are given.
- (13) Anthem: FUMC ensemble plays the anthem on every 2nd Sunday to provide a time of reflection on the first two scripture readings and of anticipation to the Gospel Lesson.
- (14) Gospel Lesson: Jesus' teaching for the sermon is given.
- (15) Sermon: The sermon deepens and shares the meaning of the Scriptural message. Interpreting the Word serves to summarize all parts of worship service.
- (16) Passing the Peace of Christ: This act of sharing the peace of Christ, assured by the sermon, is a communal practice by which the congregation matures in faith together.
- (17) Offering, Doxology, and Prayer of Dedication: The congregation expresses their faith through monetary dedication and sings Doxology in union to proclaim the ascription of faith follows. The Prayer of Dedication serves to express our gratitude to God and bless all offerings.
- (18) Closing Hymn: Singing the closing hymn remarks the conclusion of the service. The closing hymn is carefully chosen, because it must musically express the gratefulness for the assurance of faith, the presence of God, and the reception of the Word.
- (19) Benediction: Benediction is the final proclamation on God's presence among us by blessing the congregation and sending them forth toward the world.
- (20) Circle of Blessing: Concluding the service, the congregation lastly commemorates Christian unity as one body of Christ and praises Christ whose pours blessings and grace upon us.
- (21) Postlude: Postlude provides a moment of reflection and preparation.

2. Explain the following:

(a) Why did you choose the hymns used in the context of the service?

The hymns were selected in accordance the theme of the sermon, which is God's call for us to make the best out of our circumstances whether they are favorable or not. The opening

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hymn was *To God Be the Glory* (United Methodist Hymnal 98). The lyrics proclaim that the reason for us to rejoice none other than the good news that God gave us Jesus Christ to save us. The responsive hymn sung after the pastoral prayer was *The Summons*, verses 1 through 3 (The Faith We Sing 2130). The easy melody and simple lyrics of this hymn effectively made the statement that God is summoning us to be the builders of the church right here, right now. I chose *Are Ye Able* (United Methodist Hymnal 530) as the closing hymn because its lyrics, constructed as a conversation between Jesus and us, prayerfully promote us to re-dedicate ourselves to following Jesus no matter what we are going through.

(b) What was the purpose of the sermon?

The purpose of this sermon was to encourage the members to focus on creating a new beginning here and now with the hope in Jesus Christ. I aimed to demonstrate that we are called to make the best out of what we have now, and to do so, we must move on from the past. I raised two key questions: “Where should we begin?” and “Where is our hope now?” To answer the first question, I engaged with the lesson from Jeremiah in which God says to the exiled Israelites to build houses and live in them in Babylonia. Likewise, God says to us now, “Mark your new beginning here and now.” To answer the second question, I took account of the lessons from Luke and 2 Timothy, which give us the answer that our ultimate hope is in Christ who overcame the world.

(c) Does the Order of Worship help deliver that theme?

The order of worship successfully delivered the theme that God calls us to build our church with what we have been given. For example, the Call to Worship litany and the Opening Prayer well expressed our gratitude for we are given from God, such as love, guidance, and patience. The Prayer of Confession made us see and repent of our inertia. The Children’s

Message and the Sermon vivified and clarified the message of dedication and discipleship. The hymns musically inspired the theme. All in all, the order of worship well presented why and how we make the best of what we have been given through the coherent arrangements of diverse acts of worship.

First United Methodist Church of Montclair

October 9, 2016 +++ Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost +++ 9:30 AM

Abbreviations Key:

* - If able, please stand where indicated.

Bolded text - said in unison by all.

LYRICS ON SCREEN

UMH - United Methodist Hymnal

FWS - The Faith We Sing Songbook

SOZ - Songs of Zion Songbook

CALLED TO PRAISE AND PRAY

*Processional/Introit

The Living Water – Gilbert Martin

Welcome and Announcements

*Call to Worship

Leader: In the midst of your hectic week you have come to worship God.

All: Our lives are pulled in so many directions, we seek God's guidance.

Leader: Let go of the burdens that weigh you down. God will take them.

All: We thank God for the respite we are given.

Leader: Tune your hearts and voices in praise to God.

All: Let our voices bear the joy we feel because of God's love for us. Amen.

*Opening Hymn

To God Be the Glory

UMH 98

Opening Prayer

Leader: For the healing love you have offered to us; for the patience you have with us; for your presence that will never fail, we give you thanks, O Lord. Bring our hearts and spirits to you that we may grow in our faith and service to you by serving others. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

All: Patient Lord, we focus on them as though they were the only things that ever happened to us, forgetting the many blessings that you have given to us and the opportunities you give us to serve you. We feel alienated--you call us beloved. We feel lost--you seek us. We feel broken and battered--your love is a healing balm. Help us to always look to you for our healing and to return thanks

to you by praise and serving others in your name. For we offer this prayer of confession of our failures and gratitude for your blessings. Amen.

(Pausing for Silent Prayer and Confession...)

Assurance of Pardon

Pastor: Turn again to the Lord, for you are beloved of God and have been given many blessings.

All: Let us rejoice in God's love for us. Amen.

Sharing Our Joys & Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Responsive Hymn

The Summons (vs.1-3)

FWS 2130

Children's Message

Avrille Nicholls

(Children from PreK to Grade 6 are dismissed to the Children's Room

- please follow today's teacher, Dr. Leslie Lester)

CALLED TO THE WORD

Hebrew Bible Lesson

Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7

Pew Bible, p.731

Epistle Lesson

2 Timothy 2:8-15

Pew Bible, p.212

Anthem

On Eagle's Wings

FUMC Ensemble

*Gospel Lesson

Luke 17:11-19

Pew Bible, p.80

Sermon

"Make the Best of What We've Been Given"

Pastor Earl Kim

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***Passing the Peace of Christ**

CALLED TO SHARE

Offering *Jesus' Hands Were Kind Hands (Au clair de la lune)* FUMC Ensemble

***Doxology** *Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow* UMH 95

***Prayer of Dedication**

Pastor: Merciful God, your steadfast love endures forever. We are grateful that when we are hungry in body or spirit, you give us food. Help our congregation to bring nourishment to those who are hungry for your good gifts.

All: Strengthen and renew our ministries with children and those who are vulnerable. Use these tithes and offerings to reach people with your loving kindness. We pray through Jesus Christ, the bread of life. Amen.

CALLED TO WITNESS IN THE WORLD

***Closing Hymn** *Are Ye Able* UMH 530

***Benediction**

***Circle of Blessing** *Shalom to You* UMH 666

Postlude *Trumpet Call* – Lani Smith

This Sunday's Worship Team

Preacher: Pastor Earl Kim	Music Director: Ken Rapp	Liturgist: Hilda Taylor
Reader: Robert Kelly	Children's Message: Avrille Nicholls	Children's Church: Dr. Leslie Lester
Acolyte: Jackson Kim	Usher: Dr. Michael & Arlene Stewart	
FUMC Ensemble: Jee Hei Park, Nicole Peaks, Ken Rapp		

**FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
of MONTCLAIR**



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October 9, 2016: Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost

OPEN HEARTS – OPEN MINDS – OPEN DOORS

- Rev. John Schol, Bishop • Rev. Manuel Sardinas, District Superintendent
- Rev. Earl Kim, Pastor • Mr. Ken Rapp, Music Director • Dr. Michael Stewart, Lay Leader

Our Mission Statement

As members of the First United Methodist Church of Montclair, our mission is to **love, encourage, and equip** each other to live as true disciples of Jesus Christ; and by **inviting, embracing, nurturing, and empowering** ALL others, raise up new disciples of Jesus Christ.

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The Power of Prayer

Pray for the ministries of Pastor Earl Kim, Bishop John Schol, D.S. Manuel Sardinias, and Rev. Franck Aguilh. Pray for First UMC of Montclair and its leadership. Pray for our country.

Pray for the health and healing of Jasper Nwafor's mother Edna C. Nwafor, Sylvia Bryant's brother Earl Buck, Nicole Peaks' godparents James and Rochelle Stewart, Hilda Taylor's friend Hamilton Howell, Nicole Peaks' cousin April, Coco Kenny's mother and father, Paula Blackman's sister Karen, and Rob Lester's father.

Pray for Wanda Clydesdale's children Reggy, Anthea, Nicholas, and Terrence. Pray for Gloria's sister Hannah Wedderburn, Arlene Stewart's acquaintances Sherlye and Virginia, Joan and her daughters.

Prayer request forms are in the pews. Please place in the offering plate.

N.O.W. Prayer Meeting We pray together for our friends & family, our church, and our community every 2nd and 4th Saturday. Next meeting is on Saturday, November 12 at 9:00 am. All are welcome!

ALL Adult Bible Study

Sunday Bible study for adults starts at 11:30am right after fellowship except special Sundays.

BE A PART OF OUR FELLOWSHIP REFRESHMENTS PREP!

We welcome and appreciate any food items, any drinks, any utensils for our fellowship refreshments/meals. Please sign up on the 12-week roaster in the Mills Room.



**PASTOR KIM'S SERMON SERIES
"A CHURCH BUILDER'S MANUAL"
IS GOING ON!**

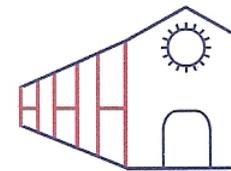


UPCOMING SMALL GROUP MEETINGS

- Jog for Life Running Group: Columbus Day!
- N.O.W. Prayer Group: Sat. Oct. 22 → Church Conference
- Ladies Tea Group: Sat. Oct. 22 → Church Conference
- Bible Reading Fellowship: Saturday, Oct. 15, 10:30am

SUNDAY SCHOOL GOES ON!

- Children's Church: Pre-K to 6th grade during service
- Youth Sunday School: 7th grade and up at 11:30am
- Bible study class for adults at 11:30am



HAITI HOPE HOUSE CHARITY CONCERT

This Saturday, October 15, 7:30pm

Mark Miller is coming to Montclair to support the mission of Haiti Hope House! Mark Miller is a renowned Christian musician all over the world. Don't miss this great chance - come and experience his music and also be part of the wonderful ministries Haiti Hope House is doing!

CHURCH CONFERENCE

Saturday, October 22, 11:45am

This year's Church Conference will be held at Community UMC in Roselle Park. All who want to know how our church is administered are welcome!



KEEP THE FOOD PANTRY GOING, ESP. IN OCTOBER!

Each Sunday we collect groceries for those who are in need of food. All items go to The Human Needs Food Pantry in Montclair.

- 1st Sunday - Canned Goods
- 2nd Sunday - Drinks
- 3rd Sunday - Pasta, Rice & Side Dishes
- 4th Sunday - Breakfast Foods

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Pastor's Hours Pastor Earl Kim is in the office on Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30 am – 12:30 pm.



FUMC's Facebook page

Find First United Methodist Church of Montclair on Facebook! Please "like" the page so that you can be updated with the church's news and photos.



Flowers for the Special Days

Birthdays, anniversaries – mark the special days in your life with a gift of flowers for the Altar.

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

- 15 MICHAEL STEWART
- 15 REGGY JOSEPH
- 18 BRIAN KENNY



WORSHIP SCHEDULE

- **October 9: Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost with FUMC Ensemble**
- **October 16: Laity Sunday after Pentecost with Voices of Praise**
- **October 23: Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost with LIFT Band**
- **October 30: Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost with Children and Youth**



SHARING IN THE LIFE OF OUR CHURCH

Today Sunday, October 9	9:30 AM: Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost Service. Pastor Earl Kim will deliver the message, "Make the Best of What We've Been Given." Please join us for refreshments after the service. 11:30 AM: Youth Sunday School 11:30 AM: Adult Bible Study
Monday, October 10	Happy Columbus Day!
Wednesday, October 12	7:00 PM: LINK English as a Second Language
Thursday, October 13	7:00 PM: LINK Spanish Classes 7:30 PM: Trustees' Meeting
Saturday, October 15	10:30 AM: Bible Reading Group

WORSHIP NEXT WEEK

Worship Team	Readings
- Liturgist: Paula Blackman - Reader: Bobbette Kelly - Children's Message: Nicole Peaks - Children's Church: Vidal Guzman - Ushers: Robert & Bobbette Kelly - Acolyte: Sarah Nwafor - Counters: Robert Kelly & Nicole Peaks	Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7 Psalm 66:1-12 2 Timothy 2:8-15 Luke 17:11-19

BIBLE STUDY – Earl Kim

The Pursuit of Joy

– A Two-Session Bible Study on the Letter to the Philippians –

1. Setting & Purpose of the Study

This study is designed to be taught at the regular meetings of the Bible study group at Verona United Methodist Church (VUMC below), which meets every other Saturday morning. I took over this group about a year ago—not long after I was appointed to this church—from the layperson who had led this group for decades, but unfortunately, became unable to come to church regularly due to his aggravated physical condition. This group, being one of the most active small groups at VUMC, has been a wonderful place for me as well as for the participants to share lives, discuss various issues about the church, the Bible, and the world, and consequently, get to know each other more concretely. The five most dedicated participants share some similarities in terms of their backgrounds—all of them are fairly well educated women with a stable living status. Their cultural contexts are varying—one is from the Philippines, one is from India, one is from Haiti, and two are Caucasian Verona natives. The biggest discrepancies are shown in their stances on faith and politics. There are some dynamics when we discuss the topics of human sexuality, biblical literalism, and even the presidential election, but such dynamics never give rise to any tension because the participants are all respectful of different perspectives.

The foremost purpose of this study is to empower the participants, and furthermore, all the members of the church. Since I was appointed to this church in July 2015, four long-time members deceased and four families, who were the most active leaders of the church, moved to other states or towns. This change has indeed brought disappointment and burden to some

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members although they try to stay positive. VUMC is in need of vibes that can help them find joy from the church again and motivate them to dedicate themselves to the ministry of the church one more time. This is why I chose the Letter to the Philippians as the text of this study. This letter is addressed to the early Christ-believers in Philippi, a Roman colony in Macedonia. These Philippian Christians were experiencing hardships as Paul writes in 2 Corinthians: "...the churches of Macedonia [Philippi]; for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part" (2 Corinthians 8:2).¹ Paul commends the Christians in Philippi because they, even going through such affliction, were still in joy and devoted to ministry. Was Paul in a joyous situation? He was imprisoned while writing this epistle as he writes in Philippians 1.

In Philippians, which is a short letter with only 4 chapters, Paul makes at least 16 explicit references to the noun "joy" or the verb "rejoice."² The joy demonstrated in this letter is paradoxical because both Paul and Philippians had no vivid reason to rejoice. But they could actively seek joy because they possessed the good news of Christ. In this vein, Philippians can bring a meaningful message to the members of VUMC who hope to overcome their disheartenment and building up the church anew. The gist I aim to deliver through this study is that we, as Christians who have the good news, can rejoice in any circumstances.

2. Outline

◆ Session 1: Philippians 1:1-3:1

- ✓ Central theme: The good news as the source of joy
- ✓ Opening prayer
- ✓ Opening question

¹ Philippi is the only city in Macedonia where Paul visited and founded a church.

² Ben Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2011), 58.

- ✓ Study
 - 1:1-11: We rejoice in the good news gathering us together.
 - 1:12-30: We rejoice in the good news holding us in hope.
 - 2:1-11: The essence of the good news – *kenosis*
 - 2:12-3:1: We rejoice in the good news moving us forward.
- ✓ Sing together: *I'm So Glad Jesus Lifted Me* (The Faith We Sing 2151)
- ✓ Closing Prayer

◆ Session 2: Philippians 3:2-4:23

- ✓ Central theme: Discipleship as the practice of joy
- ✓ Opening prayer
- ✓ Opening question
- ✓ Study
 - 3:2-11: We live out joy as the disciples venturing a new future together.
 - 3:12-4:1: We live out joy as disciples with the heavenly identity.
 - 4:3-4:9: We live out joy as the disciples embracing each other.
 - 4:10-23: We live out joy as the disciples sharing the gifts.
- ✓ Sing together: *Leaning on the Everlasting Arms* (United Methodist Hymnal 133)
- ✓ Closing Prayer

3. Detailed Lesson Plans

◆ Session 1: Philippians 1:1-3:1

- ✓ Central theme: The good news as the source of joy
- ✓ Opening prayer offered by the pastor

- ✓ Opening question: Have you been in hopeless situations, and seen God work good out of them? How did the experiences affect your faith?
- ✓ Getting into the Word: General introduction to Philippians
 - Philippians was written by Paul around 61-62 CE.
 - Where is Philippi? [show a map of the 1st century Roman Empire] Philippi is a city in eastern Macedonia. Named after Philip II (father of Alexander the Great). A colony of the Roman Empire. Paul visited this city (he had to travel to Europe!) and founded a community for Christ believers.
 - This letter shows that Paul was in touch with the believers in Philippi after he had left the city.
 - This letter is a collection of two or three letters. How do we know? First, Epaphroditus: in 1:25 Epaphroditus, staying with Paul, was deadly sick but is fine now, but in 4:18 Epaphroditus comes to Paul with the gift from the Philippians. Second, 3:1: seemingly a farewell, rhetorically conflicting with the rest of the chapter
- ✓ What makes Philippians “the epistle of joy”: Goals of the study
 - The paradox of joy: Paul uses the words such as “joy” and “rejoice” 16 times in this short letter. Were the circumstances of the Philippians and Paul optimistic? No. Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-2. Philippians were “wretchedly poor” but collected gifts for the fellow believers in Jerusalem. Paul was imprisoned (will read Phil ch.1 soon).
 - Among the seven authentic letters of Paul, Philippians is written in the friendliest and warmest tone.

- For Paul, joy is not a pleasure that makes us happy when things are all good.
Joy is the disposition, the condition of our hearts.

✓ Study

- 1:1-11: We rejoice in the good news gathering us together.
 - Read 1:1-11: Paul's greetings
 - The tone is very warm – in contrast to Galatians 1:1-9
 - What can you know about Paul's situation?
 - Why did the Philippians bring Paul joy?
 - Paul and Philippians rejoice because the good news brought them together.
- 1:12-30: We rejoice in the good news holding us in hope.
 - Read 1:12-30: Paul's hope
 - In what ways has Paul's imprisonment helped the gospel on its way?
 - Paul admits that his first desire is to be with God, which means death. What maintained Paul's belief and hope in the midst of suffering?

→ Where can we find joy, especially in our church?

- 2:1-11: The essence of the good news – *kenosis*
 - Read 2:1-11: the mind of Christ
 - How did Jesus humble himself and how is he exalted now?
 - *Kenosis*: “Emptiness” is the concept of self-emptying and becoming entirely open to God's grace, which, in the context of this hymn, represents Jesus' obedience and humility.
 - What kind of leadership does this theology of *kenosis* manifest?: servant leadership

- 2:12-3:1: We rejoice in the good news moving us forward.
 - Read 2:12-31: working together
 - What is our role as the children of God in the world? (vs.12-15): We must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, which is often translated as “utter seriousness,” and without murmuring and arguing.
 - How do Timothy and Epaphroditus exemplify the paradoxical joy in Christ?

→ How can the practice of self-emptying bring us joy?

✓ Conclusion: [Activity] Make your own acrostic poem with JOY!

✓ Sing together: *I'm So Glad Jesus Lifted Me*, vs.1, 3 (FWS 2151)

1. I'm so glad, Jesus lifted me,
 I'm so glad, Jesus lifted me,
 I'm so glad, Jesus lifted me,
 singing glory, hallelujah,
 Jesus lifted me.

3. When I was in trouble, Jesus lifted me,
 When I was in trouble, Jesus lifted me,
 When I was in trouble, Jesus lifted me,
 singing glory, hallelujah,
 Jesus lifted me.

✓ Closing Prayer offered by a member

◆ Teaching strategies: Two main methods I use for this study are discussion and lecture.

The study will start with opening questions, which will encourage the participants to open their hearts to me and to others in the group. Then I will give a short lecture to provide general introduction. We will read Philippians 1:1-3:1 line by line and then attempt to explore together Paul's message and the contexts of Paul and the Philippians along with the questions in the handout. There will be a simple activity—making an acrostic poem with JOY—to offer the participants a chance to construct their own meaning of joy based on the study. And the study will be concluded by singing *I'm So Glad Jesus Lifted Me*, which metaphorically summarizes the theme of the study, “the good news as the source of joy.”

- ◆ Teaching aids: The primary aid to be used in this study is the handout that shows the structure of the study. I will also bring a map of the 1st-century Roman Empire and some pictures of the archaeological site of Philippi to help the participants imagine Philippi in Paul's days more easily.

4. Annotated Bibliography

Hamilton, Adam. *The Call: The Life and Message of the Apostle Paul*. Nashville: TX, Abingdon Press, 2015.

- Hamilton's book provides plenty of information on Paul's mission journeys. I found the maps and pictures in the book and also in the DVD helpful in visualizing Philippi and Paul's world.

Ehrman, D. Bart. *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*. 6th Edition. New York: NY, 2015.

- Ehrman's book gives a helpful introduction to the Letter to the Philippians. Especially his analysis of Philippians' compositional integrity is highly persuasive.

Witherington, Ben. *Paul's Letter to the Philippians: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2011.

- Witherington's commentary, especially his rhetorical perspective, helped me think more deeply of Paul's purpose throughout this letter.

Wright, N. T. *Philippians: 5 Studies for Individuals and Groups*. Downers Grove: IL, IVP Connect. 2010.

- Wright's study guide provides a good set of questions in each lesson, which I found helpful in creating the questions for discussion.

_____. *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*. Louisville: KE, 2004.

– This book of Wright provides approachable comments on Paul’s letters along with relevant anecdotes. The glossary in the back helped me explicate the key words such as gospel, apostle, joy, heaven, and so on.

5. Evaluation

What were the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson?

One of the most distinctive strengths of this lesson was that it became a conduit for deeper conversations throughout the session. The members immediately related the lesson to the church’s situation and to their perspectives on its status quo. Another noteworthy strength was that the lesson helped the participants discover the necessity of a new paradigm that we must find joy even when going through hardships—like the Christians in Philippi—as well as when things are going well. The participants were one-minded in that this paradigm brings us back to the fundamental fact that the good news of Jesus Christ and his self-emptying love are the essential basis of joy. One shortcoming was that the study had no sufficient time meditating on the Bible passage because the topic of the discussion quickly moved on to the life of the church. The other weakness was that the study session was so tightly organized that some passages were left underexplored.

What could you have done to make this lesson clear?

I could have brought more casual introductory questions to reset the tone entering each theme. Also, during the session, a very meaningful discussion on the difference between joy and pleasure arose. I think the study could have provided a clearer definition of joy if I had included a question or a theme regarding the similarities and differences between these two concepts.

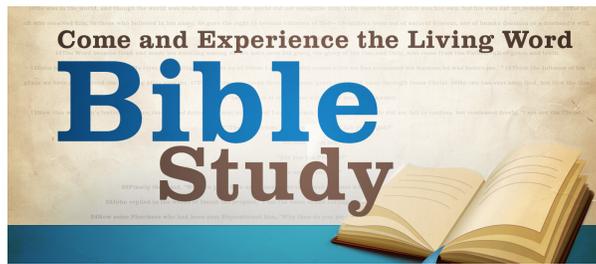
Did you communicate to the people the key concepts of the text?

I certainly communicated to the participants the key concepts such as joy and the good news and saw the definitions of concepts evolve through our fruitful discussions and reflections.

How did you do your evaluation?

Grateful enough, the participants and I opened our hearts to each other, honestly shared our concerns, and finally touched upon the ways in which we may retrieve hopes and joys in our midst.

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Verona United Methodist Church Adult Bible Study
The Pursuit of Joy: Bible Study on the Letter to the Philippians

Philippians 1:1-3:1: The Gospel as the Source of Joy

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTIONS

- Have you been in hopeless situations, and seen God work good out of them? How did the experiences affect your faith?
- What do you define joy?

STUDY

Philippians 1:1-11: We rejoice in the good news gathering us together.

- Let's read Phil 1:1-11
- What can we know about Paul's situation?
- Why did the Philippians bring Paul joy?

Philippians 1:12-30: We rejoice in the good news holding us in hope.

- Let's read Phil 1:12-30
- In what ways has Paul's imprisonment helped the gospel on its way?
- What maintained Paul's belief and hope in the midst of suffering?
- Where CAN we find joy, especially in our church?

Philippians 2:1-11: The essence of the good news

- Let's read Phil 2:1-11

- How did Jesus humble himself and how is he exalted now?

- Kenosis "emptiness"

- What kind of leadership does this theology of kenosis manifest?

Philippians 2:12-3:1: We rejoice in the good news moving us forward.

- Let's read Phil 2:12-3:1

- What is our role as the children of God in the world? (vs.12-15)

- How do Timothy and Epaphroditus exemplify the paradoxical joy in Christ?

→ How can the practice of self-emptying bring us joy?

CONCLUSION

My Acrostic Poem with...

J

O

Y

SING: I'm So Glad Jesus Lifted Me (FWS 2151)

1. I'm so glad, Jesus lifted me,
I'm so glad, Jesus lifted me,
I'm so glad, Jesus lifted me,
singing glory, hallelujah,
Jesus lifted me.

3. When I was in trouble, Jesus lifted me,
When I was in trouble, Jesus lifted me,
When I was in trouble, Jesus lifted me,
singing glory, hallelujah,
Jesus lifted me.

CLOSING PRAYER

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PRACTICE OF MINISTRY – Earl Kim

1. What do you think are the most effective means of doing evangelism in the 21st century? How have you lived this out in your current context of ministry?

I believe that the kernel of gospel is everlasting, but the vessels that hold and deliver it can be diversified according to the context. I think that community-oriented ministries and digital ministries are the most effective methods of evangelism in the current age. First, the good news of Christ must not remain inside the church but go out toward the community in order to make disciples. In Montclair, I found that the number of immigrants was growing but there was no language program for them. This circumstance motivated me to suggest a free English as a Second Language program (ESL) as a ministry. A year later ONE ESL program commenced at First United Methodist Church (FUMC below) with the support from the Congregational Development Fund. Since then, this program has served over 200 locals in need of help with their English. This program has now evolved into LINK Language Learning providing ESL and Spanish classes. The participants' appreciation for the program has led them to visit worship service, and we welcomed some of them as the professing members of the church.

I experience that it is imperative to use technology wisely in order to share the gospel with wider audience. The very first thing I did when I got to FUMC and Verona United Methodist Church (VUMC below) was to set up an informative and accessible website, on which my sermons, weekly meditations, church events and programs, and small group meetings are regularly updated. Now the largest percentage of the visitors find the church through the website. My weekly meditation called "Soul Salad," which I send via email to previous and current members, helps me connect with them during the week.

2. What makes a congregation vital, and how do you measure it? How would you envision working with a congregation to become more vital?

I have learned that the joy of fellowship is the core strength to make congregations vital because joy in God's love and grace nurtures the fellowship and mission of the church. A congregation with joy shows five signs of vitality: inspiring worship experience, participation in small groups, engagement with community mission, making new disciples, and active stewardship.¹ I envision the church as the place where the members initiate new ministries with their focus on cultivating the community of jubilee. In order to bring forth joyful worship, I would diversify the worship experience with different thematic and musical settings. Small groups can be formed for various purposes—maturing faith, sharing common interests, building up relationships among the members as well as serving the members' needs. I would also cooperatively work with the members to create missions for the community and encourage their voluntary engagement. It is my testimony as well as my expectation that the restored joy in the life of the church naturally leads the members to the share good news with others and also to commit themselves to more generous giving.

3. What is your personal approach to conflict? Provide an example of where you have been involved in resolving conflict. What did you learn?

I gleaned wisdom from my experience of resolving conflict, which I can summarize into three principles. First, do not take a side in any case because it may divide the congregation; second, do not leave the members to judge the case from the right-or-wrong point of view; third, address consistently and carefully the heart of the matter.

I was involved with two conflicts in the church. The first case took place when one church leader (A) publicly challenged another leader (B) for not following up the discussion on purchasing a new parsonage and delaying the final process. B consistently demanded me to stand

¹ "Markers of Vitality," <https://www.gnjumc.org/markersofvitality>; "Vital Congregations," <http://www.umc.org/how-we-serve/vital-congregations>.

on her side and to have A officially apologize to her. The second case was that one long-time leader (C), who wanted to continue previous fundraising events, criticized one new leader (D), who wanted to start a new fundraising event. D was hurt through this process and wanted me to change C's attitude. I could resolve both conflicts by meeting two persons separately, fully listening to them, and praying with them. I also asked other church members to keep praying for them without any judgment. The hardest part in the process of reconciliation was to offer them to meet each other for a conversation. Prayerful discernment was needed to set up a meeting.

The first lesson I gained from these experiences is that it is always good to ask for help. Conversations with the District Superintendent or with my clergy mentors helped me come up with better solutions. Another lesson is that it is always beneficial to have a mature and trustworthy mediator—another member or another clergyperson—who can assist me to see the conflict more objectively and help those in conflict open hearts in other ways.

4. What is your theological and practical understanding of itinerancy?

On the ecclesiastical level, the missionary spirit in itinerancy gives mobility to The United Methodist Church and enables the church to be an ongoing missional movement, rather than a rigid ecclesiastical structure. Itinerancy is a crucial way in which the connectional church becomes the vital conduit of God's grace and mission for the ever-changing world. The *Discipline* clarifies that through the itinerant system and "appointment-making, the connectional nature of the United Methodist system is made visible" (§ 430-1). Also, the *Discipline* emphasizes several times the importance of open itinerancy, which means, "appointments are made without regard to race, ethnic origin, gender, color, disability, marital status, or age" (§ 430-1). I believe the tradition of itinerancy fosters local churches to embody inclusiveness.

On the individual level, itinerancy is one of the spiritual disciplines that constantly remind pastors of their obedience to God's call. Itinerancy sets pastors to go anywhere the Spirit leads and to follow Jesus who always travelled with the good news. As the *Discipline* affirms, the itinerant system can make the gifts of pastors be optimally used when well matched with the needs of a particular charge (§ 430-1). It also enables pastors to be more experienced by exposing them to new challenges and different contexts of ministry.

5. How do you engage all age groups in your community?

I try to engage all age groups in my community through the outreach ministries of the church and active participation in the works of the community. I engage with children as I serve the ESL program not only as a manager but also as a co-caregiver of the children whom the adult participants bring with them. ESL offers childcare in order to stimulate the adults' participation, and I take care of young kids every week—from infants to middle school students. I also try to reach out to young families in Verona through the daycare program of VUMC—Mom's Day Out. I keep in touch with the families and share with them the church's ministry programs for children, such as Easter party, family movie nights, and the Christmas drop & shop event.

I engage with young adults in both churches through young adult group meetings. I also had a chance to meet with some undergraduate students at Montclair State University through their Christian gathering. I monthly visit shut-in members—at their home or nursing home—to comfort them and connect them with the life of the church. I am also given opportunities to contribute to the Board of Education of Montclair as its community partner. This fall I was elected as a board member of Pineridge of Montclair, one of the assisted living homes managed by the United Methodist Communities, and I am expecting this new role to offer me more chances to get connected with seniors in the community and develop ministries for them.

6. What is your understanding of pastoral authority, and how do you intend to exercise it in your place of ministry?

I am aware that an ordained elder holds a certain power with regards to laity as an individual whom is granted authority in ordination to perform “a fourfold ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service” (*BOD*, ¶ 340). Authorized to carry out the church’s ministry, I will exercise my pastoral authority responsibly for the purpose of making a virtuous influence on people and community.

I deliver the Word of God to lead people to spiritual fruition. To do so, I employ multiple media including preaching, sending out a weekly meditation email, “Soul Salad,” regular and seasonal Bible study classes, and devotions at small group meetings. It is my special privilege to administer the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion and share God’s everlasting grace with all the children of God. I, as an administrative officer of the church, hold regular committee meetings and manage the integrity of the church with care. I promote and plan various community outreach and mission programs with lay members. Especially, I encourage the leadership to keep their commitment to the worldwide mission of the church by fully participating in Shared Ministry. As a result, FUMC has increased its contribution from none to 100% and VUMC has maintained their full payment.

7. If you could choose *anyone* to mentor you in leadership skills, who would that be and why?

I would choose Rev. Byungmoo Lee, who is an ordained elder in the New England Conference, to mentor me in leadership skills. While he was serving Tewksbury United Methodist Church, I worked with him as a seminary intern of the church from 2009 to 2011. Rev. Lee showed me several leadership skills as a pastor serving a struggling congregation. First, he was a great listener with an open heart. He always listened first, then talked at every meeting,

and did his best to respect embrace everyone's ideas. Second, Rev. Lee was a caring leader who cherished the members of the church and genuinely served them. He was well known in the community for his diligent visits to shut-ins and hospitalized patients. I remember that he visited one hospitalize member every day so one nurse assumed him as a son of the member. Third, he was gifted in resolving conflicts. Several conflicts were evoked among the members of the Christian Education Committee, and some were quite serious—a couple of members decided to leave the church over one person. Rev. Lee took enough time finding a proper resolution by personal meeting all of them and worked with other members of the church to reconcile them.

8. Describe a situation in which you felt a need to assert a professional boundary in the practice of ministry.

I understand that defining and keeping professional boundaries are the basic practices to create appropriate interaction between pastor and church members. It enables me to share love and care in a responsible way and to cooperate effectively for ministry. I have experienced this situation in which the duties beyond mine have come to me mostly due to insufficient human-power. One such example is the urgent building problems, which belong to the Trustees, yet often fall on to me. These end up consuming my time and energy, which I could utilize for other parts of the churches' mission and ministry. At the moment, I felt a strong need to set a professional boundary. It is now much improved. Following up with many pastoral duties of two churches, I sometimes lost my time of Sabbath. I realized the importance to set a boundary to keep my time. I have made it my practice to take Monday as my Sabbath.

9. How have you worked through the experience of forgiving someone?

I worked through the process of forgiving one person who had been sarcastic and subtly racist to me and to the members of the church. He hurt some members, talked about some members (including me) behind our back, and shattered the relationships among the members; it

was not easy to forgive him. I tried to start my process of forgiving him by seeking a greater good for the church and fostering healing and growth for myself.

The first step was to remind myself of the simple theological reflection on forgiveness: assurance of pardon is given to all God's children. He is also God's child who received forgiveness. Then I prayed for God to give me the power of forgiveness, and to shift my focus from judgment to understanding and my emotion from hatred to sympathy. Because forgiveness is never equal to condoning or forgetting, I finally addressed him with the issues and held him accountable for them. It took time, but eventually, he accepted his responsibility. This process earnestly taught me that in order to forgive someone, I need God's grace to motivate my will and effort to uphold the love of Jesus Christ.

10. What are you doing to help those around you to take good care of themselves?

The foremost thing that I do to help people around me to take good care of themselves is to be steadily present in people's lives by extending points of contact by visiting, calling, and emailing them so that they can easily find me when they need my help. Another thing I do is to form a support group for those in need of care. For example, the members of the prayer group are my great partners who go out to pray for and visit those who need care. It is also critical for me to set and keep a boundary in helping someone. I understand that pastoral care aims not to grow people's dependency on me but to enable people to care for themselves independently and find the ways of taking care of themselves. My relationship with one member who is in a desperate financial situation gave me a good lesson in this regard. I learned how it is vital to care for her within a deliberately set boundary and let her take an initiative to improve her situation.

11. How have you invited someone to faith and seen their faith develop?

At FUMC, I invited two so-called unchurched families to faith. Both are Korean families that migrated to the US and settled down in Montclair. One of the families was connected to the church through the ESL program. The wife was even pessimistic about religion because she saw her family break apart by her father's blind commitment to a pseudo-religion when she was young. But the church's mission, the members' warm welcome, and the diversity of the congregation changed her heart; she came to enjoy worship service and participate more actively in the life of the church. Her kids came to love coming to the church where they are loved and cherished. The other family, especially the kids, also had no contact to the church when they were in Korea. I invited them to the church through small group meetings and children's events. Last spring I taught these two kids and baptized them. And their mother decided to serve the Commission on Diversity and Inclusion this fall. It is a special experience to see how faith in Christ grows in Christian fellowship.

12. What have you overcome to come to this season in your ministry?

The first challenge that I had to overcome in my ministry was disheartenment among the members who experienced a decline of the church. Breaking this negative culture and making a new momentum were not easy. But I ceaselessly encouraged and empower them and demonstrated the hope in Christ by delivering several sermon series on hope, faith and action, and new start. Eventually, this process not only helped me develop my pastoral capabilities of building up trust with the members and implementing new ministries, but also changed the mind of the members to keep the faith.

The second challenge I had to overcome was administrative in nature. The leadership of FUMC and I had many demanding and yet grace-full tasks—closing and selling the old parsonage, purchasing a new one, building up a rental relationship with a local preschool, and

making a covenantal relationship with Ghana Calvary United Methodist Church. It is true that all the leaders and I had to put much time and effort to complete those tasks. But this process of decision-making strengthened our team spirit, improved the church's finances, and enhanced my pastoral leadership and administrative skills.

The third challenge I had to overcome is racism and ageism. As a young Asian male, I often face the prejudice people make as soon as they see me. As a pastor, especially, I am sometimes regarded as less qualified because of my look and thus put into the position to prove my abilities. This challenge is what I need to address and resist as well as overcome with faith, perseverance, and confidence.

13. How would you describe your prayer life in this season, and how has it changed over your journey?

I keep an hour in the morning as my quiet time when I read the Scripture and my prayer journal in which I write down prayer requests from the members and my personal prayers. Journaling is my longtime habit that helps me remember those who need my prayer. My prayer time consists of lifting up the names to God, asking for God's healing hand and mercy, and finally, giving thanks for this hour of prayer. When I feel the nudge of the Spirit during my prayer, I make a call to check in after the prayer time. Also, it is my joy to lead the prayer small group meetings at two churches on Saturdays. It empowers me to pray for the church, the nation, and the world with the members who have prayerful hearts.

My practice of ministry has changed the direction of my prayer. I think that my prayer was need-based in the past. But now prayer is the fountainhead of my life and ministry. There is one ancient Christian principle that I deeply cherish: the law of prayer is the law of belief and is the law of life (*Lex orandi, lex credendi, lex vivendi*). It simply means that the way we pray is the

way we believe and also is the way we live. As this tradition testifies, Christian life actually begins with prayer, and it is the prayer that shapes and holds my faith in God.

14. When you read the Bible, how do you hear God’s voice? What example might you give of how you responded?

When I read the Bible, I use the fourfold way of “Divine Reading” (*Lectio Divina*) to hear God’s voice: read the Bible with a tranquil mind, meditate to find meaning, pray for the Spirit’s help, and contemplate to hear God’s voice. In addition to these four, I have two more practices. First, I examine the context of the Bible in order to grasp the weight and texture of the Word. Also, I introspect about what kind of words and metaphors resonate in my heart.

Recently, I was deeply inspired by the Prophet Isaiah’s call narrative (Isaiah 6:8-13). Rereading the passage and meditating on it, the image of “the stump” touched my heart especially in line with my plan on developing a long-term ministry plan and a new statement with the members. Isaiah receives a message from God that there will be an enduring judgment until everything becomes desolate. Then God says, the stump will nonetheless remain and “The holy seed is its stump” (Isaiah 6:13). This stump came to me as a living metaphor for the church in this age. Despite many struggles in unfavorable circumstances, there still is a stump within which the holy seed of God’s kingdom is germinated. I responded to this precious message of God by sharing it with two churches’ leaderships at the church council meetings.

15. How has your family of origin influenced your call?

My family of origin is the living root of my faith in God. My parents’ life-long dedication to the church has profoundly shaped my faith and calling. My father is a Presbyterian pastor. When I was young he chose to commit his life for the poor as his theological response to economic injustice. He served a Presbyterian church in a slum when I grew up. Later, he planted a church with the mission to assign fifty percent of the church budget to outreach. My family

continually experienced poverty because of my father's firm commitment. Throughout this time, I strongly questioned his faith and radical dedication. However, in the midst of skepticism, I experienced God's grace that turned my heart to respond to the call. My father, who always knew about my struggles, used to come to me and have conversations with me on various topics including theology and ministry. He is always a great friend and a respectful mentor to me. As I decided to take my path to ordained ministry in The United Methodist Church—not the Presbyterian Church, he was the first one who truly elated at and supported my decision. Indeed, I am blessed to have my parents who sincerely, even sometimes radically, showed me the life as God's servants and faithfully pray for me and for my ministry every day and night.

16. Interview three people to tell you what they see in your ministry. What did you hear in these conversations?

I was grateful for this chance to hear from a young adult member of VUMC, a young adult member of FUMC, and an adult member of FUMC. The first interviewee remarked that in my ministry, she sees “hope that stems from God's faithfulness and grace toward” the church and appreciates that I always see the good in the congregation and in the future of our church and connect my approach to ministry with the gospel I preach. The second interviewee commented, “I see openness in your ministry because you are always open to new ideas for new things and work hard to make them really happen,” and took contemporary worship, new education formats and curricula for children and youth, and the arts and crafts fair as the examples. The third interviewee evaluated my ministry as effective, saying, “you are creative and innovative and at the same time, you are respectful of the tradition.”

THEOLOGY, CALL AND DOCTRINE – Earl Kim

Written responses to the questions in *The Book of Discipline* ¶ 335.

a) Theology

(1) Give examples of how the practice of ministry has affected your experience and understanding of: (a) God

I am currently serving two congregations—First United Methodist Church of Montclair (2012 – present, FUMC below) and Verona United Methodist Church (2015 – present, VUMC below). The members of both churches and I have forged through various hardships and endeavored to make a turnaround in the churches. My practice of ministry with these congregations has led me to embark on a down-to-earth theological journey, a journey full of humbling experiences, which have reshaped my understanding of God.

Through the vicissitude of ministry, I have deeply realized that God, both as immanent agency and as transcendent mystery, is always faithful to us. FUMC underwent constant financial crises despite the members' efforts and sacrifices. But even in the time of going through the darkest tunnel, God faithfully illuminated our precarious footsteps in our search for new possibilities. I could witness God as Emmanuel who revives our enthusiasm and leads us to bear fruits such as growth in worship attendance and new membership. God, the Holy Mystery, also has guided the churches in unfathomable ways beyond human imagination. FUMC unexpectedly came to shelter a struggling preschool, which is thriving now, and welcomed Ghana Calvary United Methodist Church (GCUMC below) as a sharing facility partner. As a result, the church has experienced a notable improvement in the finances and increased its contribution to Shared Ministry—from none to 100%. God's intimate presence and God's mysterious intervention enlightened our myopic vision and changed our hearts. This journey has guided me to be confident of God who is faithful to God's people in both revealed and unrevealed ways.

(b) Humanity

The nature of humanity that I primarily reflect on is human finitude, in particular, human weakness. Although God wants us to remain faithful to the covenant relationship with God, we are vulnerable. Especially in a dire situation, human weakness easily bends our good hearts to despair. I intensely witnessed this when VUMC, within a year, experienced four funerals and lost four families by their relocation to other states and towns. The sadness seized the members' hearts for a long time. Many of them did not want to envision the future together even though the church was starting new ministries and having new families join. This experience taught me that human weakness could be the main cause to draw believers back to the original inclination of bondage to sin and death (*The Book of Discipline*, ¶104, The Confession of Faith, Article VII).

(c) The need for divine grace

The more I encounter the bare faces of human weakness, the more wholeheartedly I reaffirm the constant necessity of divine grace on our way of salvation. Human nature is bereft of fertility to grow true goodness by itself. Having been saved by justifying grace through faith, we still are in need of grace to keep the restored image of God in us. On both churches' journey, the most crucial channel of grace has been their prayer small group. A few church members and I started meetings, and in our prayers, we experience the flow of grace that warms our hearts to love anew and heals our weakness to hope afresh. The meetings helped me understand Paul's testimony that the "[Lord] said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness,'" and thus, "whenever I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

(d) The Lordship of Jesus Christ

When FUMC and GCUMC started to formulate the shared facility covenant, I encountered the congregation's attachment to the church building and their fear of losing the space. The members were open to this idea of sharing with generous hearts, but fear sometimes

drove them to be possessive and regard the covenant as a rental agreement between landlord and tenant. What we needed at that moment was to affirm the Lordship of Jesus in the actual life of the church, which commenced with seeing all of us as equal servants under one Lord and dethroning other privileges that we hold onto. As our Lord is the one who took the form of a slave to save us, we are called to practice and obey this Lordship of servanthood (Philippians 2:5-11). Even now sharing the building, we need more time to see each other as a neighbor to love. I am certain that if we genuinely serve one Lord and serve each other as Jesus served us, we will be always able to seek unity in our anticipation of the coming peaceable reign of Christ.

(e) The work of the Holy Spirit

Since FUMC and GCUMC started the sharing, the church councils from both churches have been meeting regularly to resolve issues together. At one meeting, GCUMC asked for more space with a reduced contribution. An antagonistic atmosphere immediately pervaded the room. Simultaneously, the two churches were preparing the first joint worship service as previously scheduled. The Holy Spirit was present at the worship service with Holy Communion and interwove the churches together. After the service, the FUMC church council decided to accept GCUMC's request without further negotiation. The Spirit indeed reconciled people's hearts and sanctified our souls. It has become my living conviction that the Holy Spirit is the Divine Love between the Father and the Son who unites believers in Christ, and she gives the gift of faith and empowers the church's communal effort to pursue holy living (1 Corinthians 12:3)

(f) The meaning and significance of the sacraments

My practice of ministry helped me grasp a concise meaning of the sacraments: the sacraments are grace events. Theological words cannot fully capture the actual dynamic of the sacraments where God's grace turns them into the active vehicles of transformation, more than

just the visible forms of invisible grace (Augustine). I vividly witnessed how baptism and Holy Communion become the conduits through which the graceful relationship with God is renewed and upheld. I served a meaningful baptism for an infant whose mother was just out of college and unmarried. She was very concerned if the church members would have been judgmental on her pregnancy. At the baptism, her worries turned into joy as the members truly welcomed the baby into the church family and vowed to raise him together in faith. It is special for me to share Holy Communion with shut-ins and those who are close to the end of their lives. I often feel the Spirit, present in Communion, binding us with Christ and confirming the redemptive grace.

(g) The kingdom of God

My practice of ministry has concretized my understanding that the kingdom of God has already been inaugurated by Jesus among the believers and yet is to come for its complete fulfillment (Luke 17:20-24). I experienced that the ministry of the church is and must be in continuation of the transformative kingdom of God on earth. Both FUMC and VUMC, as multicultural congregations, welcome all and celebrate cultural differences. Our feeding ministries—Souper Saturday, Irvington Feeding, and Thanksgiving Feeding—feed and console the hungry. Prayer small group members pray for the captives of concerns and sorrow. Indeed, the church is called to share these foretastes of joyful kingdom with others and take charge in Jesus’ name to make the new reality in the world until “[t]he kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord” where “he will reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 11:15).

(h) Resurrection and eternal life.

Unless upholding the Christian faith in Jesus Christ as “the resurrection and the life,” I do not know what else I can share with people facing the power of death (John 11:25). Meeting people at the last stage of their lives, officiating funerals, visiting the intensive care units, and

mourning with the victims of disasters and crimes, I witness every time that God bears in the believers' hearts the conviction in the power of life overcoming death. And I deeply admit, "If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised...then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:13-14).

The resurrection and the eternal life, however, are not merely afterlife realities. The power of resurrection given through our faith in Christ empowers us to live our lives as the living proof of resurrection and eternal life here and now. In this world, where the surge of death tries to swallow life, and at this moment, when the surge of violence devastates peace, what else can we bring forth other than the light of resurrection—the re-surge of life and peace? In my ministry, I learned that "the greatest argument for the validity of the Christian life is the life of a Christian: we are the arguments for the resurrection; we are the living roots for the existence of God."¹

(2) How do you understand the following traditional evangelical doctrines: (a) repentance; (b) justification; (c) regeneration; (d) sanctification? What are the marks of the Christian life?

I understand the vitality of Wesleyan theology comes from its "practical divinity"—practical implementation of the scriptural holiness in the very life of Christian (¶102). Whenever I teach new members, candidates for baptism, and confirmands, I emphasize that the doctrines of The United Methodist Church are not simply theological jargon but an interactive map and a practical guide on how grace works and is experienced on our Christian journeys.

Our journey of salvation begins with repentance, which means to be fully aware of our sin and to change our hearts and lives. Our repentance is not a human initiative but our response to God's prevenient grace that awakens us to our sinfulness. We, having been justified, are still in need of continuous repentance because the sin "does not *reign*" over us, "but it does *remain*"

¹ Peter J. Gomes, *Strength for the Journey: Biblical Wisdom for Daily Living* (New York: HapperColins Publishers, 2003), 281.

in us (Sermon 14, “The Repentance of Believers,” §I. 2). Justification is a milestone on our journey that marks the forgiveness of our sin and our freedom from the judgment. Then, grace restores our relationship with God as the Spirit adopts us to be born of the Spirit (Romans 8:15). This new life is called regeneration—the new birth. By this new birth, we become the children of God with the restored good will to serve God and the spiritual gifts to recover holiness in our lives (¶104, The Confession of Faith, Article IX). Regeneration is the threshold of our sanctification journey where the Spirit works through sanctifying grace to renew our souls and lead us towards entire sanctification—Christian perfection in loving God and our neighbor.

I understand the marks of Christian life indicate our characteristics that testify God’s work among us and our walk with Jesus. According to John Wesley, the marks are the true and living faith, the hope with full assurance, and the love of God and of our neighbor (Sermon 18, “The Marks of the New Birth”). Our lives can also be living testimonies of saving grace when we love God with joy and thanksgiving, with constant prayer and loving others.²

(3) How has the practice of ministry informed your understanding of the nature and mission of the Church? What are its primary challenges today?

My ministry with multi-cultural/racial congregations has taught me the genuine nature of the church, which is a living body of Christ where his reign of love and peace is internally experienced and externally made visible through our diversity in unity. The church is the body of Christ because it is the place where we witness together Christ who “has broken down the dividing wall” and his Spirit who orchestrates our lives and spiritual gifts in God’s harmonious accord (Ephesians 2:14), and where we share the foretaste of Christ’s reign as God’s answer to the troubled world. The members of the body of Christ are “called out” (literal meaning of the Greek word for church, *ecclesia*) from the world and “united together in the service of God”

² Steve Harper, *Five Marks of a Methodist: The Fruit of a Living Faith* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2015), 2.

(Sermon 74, “Of the Church,” §1). As such, the body of Christ is not merely a static institution, but a living body with the mission set in motion by the power of the Spirit. The mission of the church is to nurture disciples, make more disciples, and transform the world by preaching the pure Word of God and duly administering the Sacraments according to Christ’s ordinance (¶ 120; ¶104, Article of Religion, Article XIII). The primary challenges for the church today are the pervasive ethos of nominal Christianity that saps the vitality of the church and the privatization of faith and practice that obscures the communal aspect of the body of Christ. Such challenges prevent the church from being a living body that has a power to change the world.

(4) The United Methodist Church holds that Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason are sources and norms for belief and practice, but that the Bible is primary among them. What is your understanding of this theological position of the Church, and how has your practice of ministry been affected by this understanding?

As a previous Presbyterian, I can testify that the Methodist belief in the primacy of the Scripture (*Prima Scriptura*) among the four sources of Christian life is more practical than the Reformed doctrine of “by Scripture alone (*Sola Scriptura*).” It is practical because it helps us consider various aspects of Christian practices and allows the Bible to be contextually applied to our lives. The Wesleyan quadrilateral offers the criteria by which we can humbly listen to God in multiple ways and keep the church from the dominance of a single theological position.

First, the Scripture is “the primary source and criterion for Christian doctrine” (¶ 104, the Article of Religion, Article V). The Scripture contains authentic testimonies of faith and also where Christians encounter saving grace. Second, tradition includes valuable past practices and testimonies of faith through which Christians see God at work. It also shows how Christian communities have historically illuminated the living core of Christian faith in the Scripture. Third, experience is the ground where Christians interact with the Spirit, enliven their faith, and are transformed by grace within their contexts of life. Finally, reason confirms the essential

statement of faith. Human reason is finite but help us comprehend the Scripture, reflect on the relevance of tradition, and seek appropriate theological languages for experience.

The Wesleyan quadrilateral is important guidance especially when the members have contradictory viewpoints on controversial issues, such as human sexuality, other religions, Gun laws, and the Black Lives Matter movement. When I notice disturbances among the members in bible study classes or prayer meetings, I always refresh the conversation by reminding them of two things: first, the Wesleyan quadrilateral, and second, Wesley's "time-tested approach: 'In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, [love]'" (§ 103). I certainly find the Wesleyan quadrilateral practical in leading us to the Scripture and to the reflection on how the Spirit moves us through our own reasoning and different experiences and cultures.

(5) How has the practice of ministry enriched your understanding of the meaning and significance of the sacraments?

The practice of ministry has enabled me to see the sacraments as the doorways that not only lead us to encounter God's grace but also connect the church to the world. The grace that we commemorate and experience through the sacraments vivifies our sense of gratitude to Jesus Christ and thus renews our commitment to him.

Baptism connects people's life with God's saving grace and incorporates them into the church. It is a signpost of new humanity in Christ to the world. Last year, I baptized two Korean siblings. When they immigrated to America with their mother for their study, the church members and I helped them settle down in Montclair because they had no one else. They found their place of comfort and care in the church, and through baptism, the church has become their new family. Baptism enables the church to establish a new kinship group, God's kin-dom, and it is a strong message to the world. According to Paul, through baptism, God unites us into a new humanity, "Abraham's offspring," beyond any boundaries (Galatians 3:27-29).

Holy Communion is not only a gift that binds us together with Christ, but also a demand for us to open our table fellowship to the uninvited in the world. Celebrating Jesus' table and our diversity on World Communion Sunday, I witness that Christ's table fellowship should be the prime statement of the church against disharmonies in the world. Calling the names of the saints who lived before us during Communion on All Saints Sunday, I feel the power of resurrection that Christians must live out in the world full of death. Serving the bread and wine for the next person at the table on Holy Thursday, I realize that the kingdom of God begins with our humble service to others. Sharing Communion in Black History Month and Hispanic Heritage Month, I find that the open table fellowship sometimes requires us to overturn the table of injustice.

b) Vocation

(1) How has the practice of ministry shaped your understanding of your vocation as an ordained elder?

Last year, I happened to officiate a service of baptism and a memorial service in the same week. I celebrated the life newly initiated into Christ and the life faithfully lived in Christ. We gave thanks to God whence a life comes and whither a life returns. This special occasion drew me into an honest reflection on my vocation as an ordained elder. I reaffirmed my gratitude for the precious privileges and solemn duties to which God calls me.

Indeed, an ordained elder is privileged to walk closely with people who share the everlasting truth in Jesus Christ in their various forms and seasons of life. When I lay hands on babies and bless them, when I visit patients in hospitals and anoint them, when I share lives with various people and counsel them, when I laugh and cry with them, I feel that I am truly blessed to have an authentic relationship with people and build up the body of Christ. Also, an ordained elder is called to serve and empower people so that they can walk faithfully with Jesus on the way of salvation. When I preach and teach the Word of God, when I commemorate Jesus and

encounter God's grace through the Sacraments, when I organize and order the life of the church with the leaders for better witnesses of the good news, when I encourage people to embody Christ's love and renew the church, I confirm that I am called to be a servant of God (§ 340).

c) The Practice of Ministry

(1) How has the practice of ministry affected your understanding of the expectations and obligations of the itinerant system? Do you offer yourself without reserve to be appointed and to serve as the appointive authority may determine?

I was appointed to FUMC as a supply pastor in 2012, and as I was commissioned as a provisional elder in 2015, I received an additional appointment to the UMC in Verona. This two-point ministry led me to see the expectations and obligations of the itinerant system: I am called to serve the body of Christ regardless of its context. The author of 2 Timothy writes, "in view of...his kingdom, I solemnly urge you: proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable" (2 Timothy 4:2). I believe that this is the Word for me as someone who wants to devote myself to the itinerant system of the church and to its connectional mission. The *Discipline* confirms, "All ordained elders, provisional elders, and associate members are appointed by the bishop to fields of labor" (§338). I believe that God works through the decision-making process and that I am appointed to where God wants me to be.

(2) Describe and evaluate your personal gifts for ministry and how they have resulted in fruitful ministry. What would be your areas of strength and areas in which you need to be strengthened in order to be more fruitful in ministry?

Above all, patience and perseverance are the gifts that have been true blessings in my ministry; they have brought forth the intangible and yet most significant fruit in my ministry. These gifts helped me not give up my efforts to change the pessimistic perspective of the members of the two small churches. It was an arduous process to encourage people to come out of their despair from the past decline and to seek a new vision. I patiently waited for the

members to alter their hearts gradually, and at the same time, persevered with hope for new ministries. These gifts supported me to break the status quo and eventually create the momentum that led into making a turnaround in the life of the church. Another gift in relation to patience and perseverance is that I am an empathetic listener. This gift is fruitfully used in my ministry when I counsel the members and when conflicts emerge among the members.

I also had precious opportunities to develop literary competence and academic abilities in theology. My experience as a contributing poet to a quarterly journal in Korea enhanced my sensibility in writing and taught me how to convey effectively personal inspirations through words, which greatly benefits my ministry as a preacher. Pursuing the PhD degree in Theological and Philosophical Studies at Drew University, I have been able to widen and deepen my grasp of theology. This academic experience has proven fruitful in my ministerial role as an educator since it constantly inspires me to be open to various approaches and questions and also to help the church members navigate their own search through various theological subjects.

I need to be strengthened in the aspect of developing more effective ways to translate theological thoughts as approachable and relevant to the children and youth. I hope to engage more with them in the future. Another area that I want to improve is to set a clear boundary between my pastoral tasks and the duties of laity. Because both FUMC and VUMC do not have sufficient human-power, I often need to do the jobs that are not assigned to me when there are urgent situations. I have recently seen much improvement in this area but still hope to learn how to turn down those calls wisely so that the members take a chance to grow their discipleship.

(3) For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness to the Christian gospel and in consideration of your influence as an ordained minister, are you willing to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life; and to this end will you agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to physical health, intentional intellectual development, fidelity in marriage and

celibacy in singleness, integrity in all personal relationships, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge and love of God?

I understand the importance of keeping my integrity and virtue as a minister and pursuing Christian perfection to become more holy. I commit myself to being a disciple of Jesus Christ through my vocation as an ordained minister, by continuously disciplining myself in maintenance of my bodily health and improvement of mental maturity, by keeping all my personal relationships sound, by being faithful to my wife and my family, by working for social justice, and by cherishing my relationship with God. Being upright in front of God is not separate from keeping integrity among people. As Jesus taught that the two greatest commandments are to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves, I believe I can reach the highest ideals of Christian life by dedicating myself to loving God and taking care of my neighbor. I will strive to be attentive to God's call and the needs of others and be virtuous and tolerant in relationships.

(4) Provide evidence of your willingness to relate yourself in ministry to all persons without regard to race, color, ethnicity, national origin, social status, gender, sexual orientation, age, economic condition, or disability.

As a Korean immigrant living in America, I cannot agree more with the United Methodist call for inclusiveness for the ministry of all Christians. The Constitution clearly affirms, “[a]ll persons without regard to race, color, national origin, status, or economic condition, shall be eligible to” participate in the church (§ 4). I also think that for any Methodist who believes in the universal availability of grace, inclusive ministry is not a choice but an imperative.

Serving two congregations that are highly diverse in every way, I have learned that the positive vibe, which changes the church and moves the members forward, is generated when the church's ministry fosters diversity and openly manifests their inclusiveness as a statement of God's unconditional love for all. Ever since I was appointed to these two churches, my direction of ministry has been set toward strengthening the congregations through multicultural/multiracial

and community-oriented missions and programs. Acknowledging the ethnic and cultural diversity in town and the growing immigrant population, FUMC leaders and I started ONE English as a Second Language (ESL) ministry, which is now expanded into LINK Language Learning that provides ESL and Spanish classes. Through this ministry, many immigrant families visit our church, and some of them are now the professing members of the church.

I believe that the church is the place where everyone is adopted by the Spirit, grafted into the vine, and welcomed as a part of the body of Christ. With this belief, I will continuously commit myself to extending the ministry of the church for all people.

(5) Will you regard all pastoral conversation of a confessional nature as a trust between the person concerned and God?

It is when I visit or counsel them that people share their most intimate spiritual concerns and confessions with me not because I visit them, but because they believe me as a person who cares their relationship with God and their journey with God. Indeed, their trust in God is the reason that they show their honesty and open their heart to me.

As a pastor, therefore, I am obliged to keep their trust in myself and in God unless otherwise permitted by them to disclose their situations to certain groups of people. The *Discipline* affirms that a pastor should “maintain all confidences inviolate, including confessional confidences except in the cases of suspected child abuse or neglect, or in cases where mandatory reporting is required by civil law” (§ 340 2. a). (5)). Thus, I will regard all pastoral conversations of a confessional nature as heart-to-heart dialogues based on a trust between the person and God. I will do so for the faithful integrity of a church community.

(6) Provide evidence of experience in peace and justice ministries.

Serving two multi-cultural/racial churches, I have had many chances to discuss social issues and implement steps for peace and justice with the members. The issues that the members

take most seriously are: economic inequality, immigration, and racism. Both churches carry out several ministries with regard to economic inequality. For example, FUMC does bi-weekly soup kitchen ministry every winter, regularly makes contribution to local food pantry and the Red Cross. VUMC has been participating in the monthly feeding program in Irvington for years and serving Thanksgiving meals for hundreds of locals on Thanksgiving Day. With regard to the issues of immigration and racism, FUMC offers free ESL classes to immigrants who want to improve their English. All the members take this ministry as one of the most crucial ministries of the church and see its importance in the community. Racial justice is promoted in multiple occasions. Both churches celebrate Christian unity and diversity on special Sundays such as Human Relations Sunday and World Communion Sunday. We also celebrate Black History Month and Hispanic Heritage Month. FUMC hosted the annual Martin Luther King, Jr. service in Montclair, which is an ecumenical and interfaith service denouncing discrimination.

Additional Questions

1. Explain the threefold aspects of Wesleyan grace and how have you encountered these in your own ministry/life.

John Wesley defines the threefold aspects of grace as prevenient grace, justifying grace, and sanctifying grace. Prevenient grace is God's work of love that comes even before our faith in Christ. It is not something to be achieved by human actions but a free gift of God in all lives (Sermon 43, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," §I. 2). Prevenient grace leads us to awakening of our sin and to justifying grace. By the work of justifying grace through faith, we repent of our sins and receive forgiveness. In the moment when we are justified, the journey of sanctification begins with sanctifying grace, which is God's continuous work in our lives to grow our holiness to Christian perfection. Christian perfection is a state of "a heart habitually filled with the love of God and neighbor" and "having the mind of Christ and walking as he walked" (§102).

I lived my early life in a slum where my father served a Presbyterian church as a pastor. My poor neighbors who once inhabited the shanties in Seoul, Korea were forcibly evicted by the dictatorial government in the 70s for the “beautification” of Seoul and abandoned in a large hill that became a slum. When I was a teenager, the continued experience of poverty triggered me to grow strong skepticism on my father’s radical commitment to God. At that time, I joined a spiritual retreat, and in a prayer time, I repented with tears feeling my heart deeply moved. This was the moment when I vividly sensed God’s justifying grace and realized that God’s grace has been always with me through my struggles, which I can call now God’s prevenient grace.

Since I entered my college as a Theology major, I have pursued the study and practice of theology until now. On this journey, I believe that God’ sanctifying grace has led me. In college, I was imbued too much with the fever of theological radicalism and social justice. But eventually, God strangely opened my eyes to ministry. Now in ministry, I encounter the presence of God more deeply through the church’s ministry. When I administer the Sacraments, when I share the Word of God, when I learn how to love people like Jesus, I feel the nudge of the Spirit who empowers me with sanctifying grace on our ongoing process of becoming holy and whole.

2. Share an instance when you found yourself in ministry with someone whose theology was radically different from your own.

I encounter a member with a radically different opinion on human sexuality from mine in the Bible study group of VUMC. Our conversation is ongoing in a peaceful and loving way. And we both agree that our different opinions originate from our different perspectives on the Scripture. One day, she expressed her belief that the Bible is inerrant, thus, if the Bible literarily says something as a sin, it is not negotiable. I encouraged her to reflect on her theological perspective in two aspects. First, we talked more about how the Bible would be inerrant and in what way. The agreement we made so far is that the Bible is inerrant when it comes to our

salvation, but not necessarily as a scientific or historical truth. Second, we shared our thoughts on the gist of the biblical message. I shared my thought that the Bible shows the salvation history, especially how God changes God's way to love and save people. We looked together at how the detailed qualifications for God's chosen assembly in Leviticus clearly change when the Spirit establishes the Church in the Acts of Apostles. I sometimes convey my heart through the words of Wesley, "Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may" (Sermon 39, "Catholic Spirit," 4).

3. Describe how your image of God has changed over your journey. What has informed this?

My Presbyterian upbringing influenced my faith to develop a solid image of the sovereign God who judges human conducts and elects the saved. In my childhood and youth, my belief in God was always associated with rules and obedience. In my college days, the resonance of my early life experiences in a slum, the influence of my study of minjung theology (Korean liberation theology), and the historical Jesus led me to pursue social justice for the marginalized. Then, my image of God was primarily the God of the Exodus who liberates the oppressed. But later, I realized that this image of God was too much fused with vigorous sociopolitical ideologies. As I study theology in my seminary and in my PhD program, what I repeatedly discover is the serious limitation of human reason in understanding God. This awareness keeps me humble before God, the Holy Mystery. My ministry at FUMC and VUMC constantly leads me to experience God who is faithful to God's people. The image of God I currently hold is the God who is not only mysterious but also engaging with God's people through a covenant relationship; the God who is not a conceptual god of philosophers but the compassionate God of the incarnation whose concrete love takes the power of death unto God-self on the cross.

POLITY – Earl Kim

1. Explain the role of deacons, elders, and local pastors in the UMC and how they are each uniquely called and function in the church.

The *Book of Discipline* (The *Discipline* below) clarifies that deacons are called to serve a lifetime ministry of “Word, Service, Compassion, and Justice, to both the community and the congregation in a ministry that connects the two” (§ 329). As such, deacons work to bridge the worship in the gathered community with the service to God in the world (§ 305). The ministry of deacons includes not only proclaiming the Word and assisting elders in the ministry of sacraments and ecclesial acts, but also leading the church in its servant ministry beyond the local church through connectional outreach and mission (§ 328). Regarding their ministry of Sacrament, however, the 2016 General Conference extended the authority for deacons to preside the Sacraments when the resident bishop authorizes them to serve in this role. Although their appointment is not guaranteed, deacons serve in multiple settings: local church, general agencies, and other affiliated organizations (§ 331).

Elders are “ordained ministers, who, by God’s grace, have completed their formal preparation and have been commissioned and served as a provisional member, have been found by the Church to be of sound learning, of Christian character, possessing the necessary gifts and evidence of God’s grace, and whose call by God to ordination has been confirmed by the Church” (§ 332). In their ordination, elders are authorized by the bishop to serve a lifetime ministry of “Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service” in both the local church and extension ministries (§ 332).

Local pastors, who are appointed and licensed by the bishop, share with the elders the responsibilities of the fourfold ministry, albeit “within the context of their appointment” (§ 316; 318; 340). Elders and licensed local pastors are called to preach and teach the Word of God, perform ecclesial acts of marriage and burial, provide pastoral care and counseling, administer

the sacraments, encourage congregational use of other means of grace, order and administer the church, and embody the ministry of Jesus in the service and mission (§ 332; 340).

2. What is the process for setting a pastor’s salary? Who can change it, and when can it be changed?

The *Discipline* regulates the committee on pastor-parish relations, which consults on matters pertaining to proposals for compensation and makes annual recommendations regarding a pastor’s salary to the church council (§ 258. 2. g). (16)). Upon the recommendation of the committee on pastor-parish relations, the church council is asked to recommend the salary of the pastor to the charge conference (§ 252. 4. d)). The charge conference is the body that has a right to change the pastor’s salary. When there is a new or renewed appointment, the charge conference sets the compensation of the pastor in consultation with the district superintendent (§ 247. 13).

3. The Education committee wants to update the curriculum being taught in the Christian Education program. What specific guidance does the Book of Discipline give you in dealing with this issue?

The *Discipline* encourages two ministries regarding Christian education. One is “the church school,” which covers all age groups, and the other is “children’s ministry” (§ 256). The charge conference may elect “a superintendent of the church school” who is “responsible for helping to organize and supervise the total program for nurturing faith” (§ 256. 1. a); § 255). And children’s ministry may have a coordinator who works closely with clergy and other program-related staff for children’s faith development (§ 256. 2. a)). As an elder, my roles is to “give oversight to the educational program of the church,” I would work with the Christian education committee on the update of the curriculum and “encourage the use of United Methodist literature and media,” which include the curricula developed by the Curriculum Resources Committee of the General Board of Discipleship (§ 340. 2. c). (1). (b); § 1121).

4. You have discovered a need in the community for a soup kitchen, and wish to recommend that this be a priority for the congregation, using the facilities of the church. What parties and processes need to be involved?

Since the church council is the body that “shall provide for planning and implementing a program of nurture, outreach, witness, and resources in the local church,” I will first consult with the church council to share the vision of the new program and receive an initial approval to move forward with developing a concrete plan for a soup kitchen because (§ 252. 1). Upon the approval, three committees need to be involved. First, a group within the church needs to take the initiative in running the soup kitchen mission. This may be the local church unit of United Methodist Women or United Methodist Men, or the church may also create a soup kitchen small group. Second, the board of trustees should assess the adequacy of the church facilities for this mission and modify the suggested space if necessary (§ 2533. 1). Third, I will work with the committee on finance to solicit funding from the approved budget item, or to find a way to raise the funds needed to run the soup kitchen. After formulating a comprehensive plan, I will share this at the church council meeting for the final approval.

5. A constituent of your church comes to speak with you about their call to ministry. Describe the basic steps that are involved in seeking ordination.

I will, first, set a time with the person and encourage him/her to discern the call with prayer and with the resources such as *The Christian as Minister* and the *Ministry Inquiry Process*. Then, I will help the person start the candidacy process if he/she is “a professing member in good standing of The United Methodist Church or a baptized participant of a recognized United Methodist campus ministry or other United Methodist ministry setting for minimum of one (1) year” (§ 310. 1. a)). At this initial step, the person needs to “write to the district superintendent requesting admission to the candidacy process and assignment of a candidacy mentor” (§ 310. 1. b)). He/she is also required to write a statement of call as he/she

requests registration through the district superintendent with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (§ 310. 1. *b*)). Having registered, the candidate is asked to study “the resources adopted by the conference Board of Ordained Ministry” with a mentor and to request a meeting of the pastor-parish relations committee in order to be examined with Wesley’s historic questions (§ 310. 1. *c*); *d*)). Upon approval, the candidate should meet with the charge conference to be recommended as the candidate to the district committee on ordained ministry.

6. Describe the general structures of the Annual Conference and how each body functions.

The annual conference is in charge of “structuring its ministries and administrative procedures in order to its purpose” (§ 601). As stated in the Constitution, it is functionally allowed for the annual conference “to utilize structures unique to their mission, other mandated structures notwithstanding” (Constitution, § 16. 15). The structures of the mandated provisions are these governing bodies: conference council on finance and administration, board of ordained ministry, administrative review committee, committee on episcopacy, board of pensions, board of trustees, United Methodist Women, United Methodist Men (§ 610).

In addition, the *Discipline* regulates each annual conference to develop program units that maintain the connectional relationship between the general boards/commissions and the conference. These include: the boards of church and society, discipleship, laity, global ministries, and higher education and campus ministry; commissions on archives and history, Christian unity and interreligious concerns, on religion and race, and the status and role of women.¹

The agencies in each annual conference function to make disciples for the transformation of the world. First, a conference council on finance and administration maintains connectional relationships and takes care of structural and fiscal soundness for the purpose of developing,

¹ Thomas Edward Frank, *Polity, Practice, and the Mission of The United Methodist Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 292.

sustaining, and administering “a comprehensive and coordinated plan of fiscal and administrative policies, procedures, and management services for the annual conference” (§ 611; 612. 1).

Second, a board of church and society promotes mercy and justice ministries including prison ministry and reform concerns (§ 629. 1; 3). Third, a board of discipleship in each annual conference is in charge of resourcing and fostering spiritual growth of both clergy and laity by planning comprehensive programs in the areas of Christian education, evangelism, worship, stewardship, and spiritual formation (§ 630). Fourth, a board of laity “fosters an awareness of the role of laity within the local congregation,” trains lay members of the annual conference, develops local church leaders, and equips them with leadership, stewardship, and theological basis (§ 631). Fifth, a Committee on Ethnic Local Church Concerns empowers and encourages the ethnic local ministries by providing guidance, resources, and support (§ 632). Sixth, a board of global ministries implements programs to develop a spirit of mission and participation in global ministries. It also supports missionaries in the field and at home and promotes the ministries that alleviates human suffering and promotes peace and justice (§ 633. 1; 4. *b*)).

Seventh, each annual conference forms a board of higher education and campus ministry. Its primary function is “to interpret and promote the United Methodist ministries in higher education that are supported by the general Church and those specifically related to the annual conference” (§ 634. 4. *a*). (1)). Eighth, “each annual at the first session following the General Conference, shall elect for a term of four years a Board of Ordained Ministry” to support and guide those on the journey towards ordination and those in transition, and to encourage clergy to live their call meaningfully (§ 635. 1). Ninth, there should be a conference board of pensions auxiliary to the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits to provide “the support, relief, assistance and pensioning of clergy and their families” and other employees (§ 639. 1).

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7. Describe the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of the United Methodist Church.

Similarly to the three branches of the US government, The United Methodist Church has a legislative branch (General Conference), a judicial branch (Judicial Council), and an executive branch (Council of Bishops). The General Conference is the primary legislative body that has “full legislative power over all matters distinctively connectional” and is the only body that speaks officially for the church (§ 16). It meets once every four years and is composed of “not less than 600 nor more than 1,000 delegates, one half of whom shall be clergy and one half lay members, to be elected by the annual conferences” (§ 13. 1). The General Conference defines and fixes the conditions, privileges and duties of church membership, the powers and duties of clergy and of all forms of conferences and congregational meetings (§ 13. 1; 2; 3). It clarifies the powers, duties, and privileges of the episcopacy, revises the hymnal and ritual of the Church, provides a judicial system and procedures, initiates and directs all connectional enterprises of the church, and authorizes other legislation for the ministry of the church (§ 13. 5; 6).

The Judicial Council has authority to examine the constitutionality of any act of the General Conference, to hear and judge any appeal from a bishop on a law made in an annual conference, to pass on a decision of law made by a bishop in an annual conferences, and to hear and determine the legality of any action taken by any General Conference board or a jurisdictional or central conference board or body (§ 56. *Article II. 2. 3. 4.*). The General Conference decides the number, qualifications, terms of office, and the method of election of its members (§ 55. *Article I*). All decisions of the Judicial Council are final (§ 57. *Article III*).

Council of Bishops is composed of all the bishops of The United Methodist Church (§ 47. *Article III*). Because the church has no single general officer or executive, Council of Bishops acts as the executive branch of the church. The *Discipline* states, “The council shall meet at least

once a year and plan for the general oversight and promotion of the temporal and spiritual interests of the entire Church and for carrying into effect the rules, regulations, and responsibilities prescribed and enjoined by the General Conference.” (§ 47. *Article III*).

8. What is your understanding of the theology behind Shared Ministries giving (apportionments)?

It is the United Methodist connection through which local congregations are connected for a common mission and shared governance, which aims to accomplish John Wesley’s goal of spreading scriptural holiness over the world. Shared Ministry is a missional and financial connection that empowers the worldwide ministry. Thus, local congregations’ participation in this ministry through service and gifts is “a Christian duty, a means of grace, and an expression of our love to God” (§ 801). All members of The United Methodist Church are required to share and support the general Church’s manifold ministries of assisting the work of the boards and agencies, supporting historically black colleges, providing financial support for the education of ordained ministers, and so forth. The *Discipline* states, “payment in full of these apportionments by local churches is the first benevolent responsibility of the church”(§ 247-14; 812).

9. You have an idea for a unique form of ministry. How does the Book of Discipline guide us in seeking affirmation for ministries that are beyond the local church? What is the role of extension ministry in the life of the Church?

According to the *Discipline*, there are two regulations regarding appointments in ministry settings beyond the local church in the witness and service of Christ’s love and justice. First, the institution or agency desiring to employ elders should consult their bishop and secure approval before completing any employment agreement. Second, elders who want an appointment extending the ministry of the church must also consult with the bishop and/or district superintendent prior to any proceedings toward such an appointment (§ 343. 1; 2; 3). Elders in such appointments are still full participants in the itinerant system and are accountable to the

annual conference (§ 344). They may receive an appointment beyond the ministry that are usually extended through the local churches or other institutions endorsed by general boards (§ 344 1. d)). Even in this unique case, elders' appointments should be considered by the bishop and the annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry to be true extensions of the Christian ministry. Also, they should reflect "the commitment of the clergy to intentional fulfillment of their ordination vows to Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service" (§ 344 1. d)). Through this extension ministry, the church finds itself as a movement in the various contexts of the world. As for Wesley "there is no religion but social religion, no holiness but social holiness," the communal forms of faith in extension ministry may mobilize us for mission to the world (§ 102).

10. In what ways does your upbringing, your cultural context, your personal experience shape your understanding of our polity?

My father is a Presbyterian pastor, so I grew up Presbyterian. I found many limitations of the Presbyterian Church's system based on individual churches and their stationary clergy. Because they have no organic connection, issues between clergy and laity are hardly managed or resolved, and individual churches cannot effectively form influential mission for the wider world. This awareness led me to appreciate connectionalism, superintendency, and itinerancy of The United Methodist Church. Connectionalism is not merely a link among churches, districts, and conferences but "a vital web of interactive relationships" for God's global mission (§ 132). Superintendency facilitates and manages effective ministry of clergy and laity (§401). And itinerancy circulates clergy matching the gifts of a pastor with the needs of a particular charge. Moreover, I underwent poverty as my family lived in a slum where my father did his ministry for the poor, and this experience enlightened me and provoked my interest in social justice matters. In this vein, I deeply appreciate the Social Principles in the Discipline, which manifests the church's prophetic voice toward current social and human issues.

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Biographical Statement – Yeol “Earl” Kim

I lived my early life in a slum where my father served a Presbyterian church as a pastor. My poor neighbors who inhabited the shanties in Seoul, the capital of Korea, were forcibly evicted by the dictatorial government in the 1970s for the “beautification” of Seoul and abandoned in a large hill that became a slum. As a manifestation of his theology, my father chose to devote his life to the poor, so I grew up there. A few years later, my father planted a church that assigned fifty percent of the church budget for outreach to the poor. This bold financial policy led my family to endure poverty again. When I was a teenager, the continued experience of poverty since my birth made me strongly question my father’s faith and bold commitment to God. Struggling with growing skepticism, I joined a spiritual retreat in the summer of 1995, and in a group prayer time, I felt my heart warmed while praying with tears. This was the first moment when I realized God’s calling.

Apart from my parents, I spent my high school days in a deep rural area. In the much freer atmosphere, I was imbued with the beauty of nature and fell in love with poetry. Winning some awards and presenting my poems in a writers’ association of the town, I seriously hoped to be a poet. However, still unresolved questions about God and personal struggles for the assurance of faith led me to enter Yonsei University as a Theology major. At college, I was able to learn about the Christian faith more deeply and seek my vocation. The first vocation that I earnestly considered was to work for social justice. The resonance of my early life experiences and the influence of my study of the historical Jesus strengthened my pulse. My colleagues’ pursuit of social justice for the marginalized also ignited my passion. However, the more I became involved in some of the political activities of student associations, the more emptiness I felt inside. And I came to realize that the social movement alone might lack the true answers for the real transformation of society and humanity. In those days, I began to consider ministry as my vocation as it is the work that cares for the spiritual, the innermost dimension of humanity.

In 2007, having completed my military service, I married my wife who had been my best friend through my college years. Then we moved to Boston to find different opportunities for study and ministry. With mutual support and prayers, my wife earned her M.Div. from Harvard Divinity School and I earned mine from Boston University. During my M.Div. days, I more vividly felt that God was calling me to the path of ministry in The United Methodist Church. Through my experiences at Tewksbury United Methodist Church in Massachusetts, which I regard as my home church in America, I was able to strengthen my ministry skills through internship and volunteer experiences. In 2011, my wife and I moved to New York City as my wife started her PhD work at Fordham University. I am also pursuing a PhD degree in Theological and Philosophical Studies in Religion at Drew.

In 2012, God graciously sent me to First United Methodist Church of Montclair. As commissioned as a provisional elder in 2015, I received an additional appointment to Verona United Methodist Church. Serving two passionate multi-ethnic congregations, I have learned not only how Christians from diverse backgrounds are harmonized by serving one God, but also how God’s ministries can reach out to the community. I encounter many joys in the life of two churches and forge through unexpected struggles with prayers and communal efforts.

Looking back on my past journey, I more deeply realize that there has always been the hidden and yet steadfast guidance of God. With gratitude from the bottom of my heart, I hope my service would be a faithful response to God’s precious call. And I prayerfully anticipate the future that God will unfold in my life and ministry.

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YEOL “EARL” KIM

- Home: 41 Conforti Avenue, West Orange, NJ 07052
- Phone: (617) 899-4162 ▪ E-mail: earlkim91@gmail.com

EDUCATION

- **Drew University Graduate Division of Religion, Madison, NJ** 09/2013 - present
- Doctor of Philosophy, Theological and Philosophical Studies in Religion
- **Drew Theological Seminary** 09/2011 - 05/2103
- Master of Arts GPA: 4.02 / 4.0
- **Boston University School of Theology, Boston, MA** 09/2008 - 05/2011
- Master of Divinity, *cum laude* GPA: 3.77 / 4.0
- **Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea** 03/2001 - 02/2005
- Bachelor of Arts (Major: Theology) GPA: 3.91 / 4.3
- Certified Secondary School Teacher
- Completed courses in teaching at College of Education
- **Geochang High School, Geochang, South Korea** 03/1998 - 02/2001

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- **First United Methodist Church of Montclair and Verona United Methodist Church, Gateway North District, Great New Jersey Annual Conference**
Lead Pastor 07/2015 - present
- Provisional Elder (PE)
(Mentor: Rev. James Ryoo, United Methodist Church in Union, Union NJ)
- **First United Methodist Church of Montclair, Gateway North District, Great New Jersey Annual Conference**
Lead Pastor 07/2012 - present
- Licensed Part-Time Local Pastor (PL) 07/2013 - present
(Mentor: Rev. David DeLuc, Vincent United Methodist Church, Nutley, NJ)
- Licensed Student Local Pastor (SP) 09/2012 - 06/2013
- Student Local Pastor (SP) 07/2012 - 08/2012
(Coordinating Pastor: Rev. Don Mitchell, Little Falls United Methodist Church, Little Falls, NJ)
- **Tewksbury United Methodist Church, Central Massachusetts District, New England Conference**
Certified Candidate for Ordained Ministry 04/2011 - 09/2012
(Mentor: Rev. Travis Bonnette-Kim, Wilmington United Methodist Church, Wilmington, MA)
Internship Student 09/2009 - 05/2010
- Participated in the life of the church by teaching Sunday school students and preaching
- Served as a member of N.O.W (Nurture, Outreach, and Witness) Committee
- Served as a member of Worship Committee and coordinated worship services
Teacher of Sunday School and Confirmation Class 01/2008 - 07/2011

- **Geochang High School, Geochang, South Korea**
Internship Teacher 10/2004 - 11/2004
 - Taught Religion classes of all grade levels
 - Delivered sermons at the school services and the Christian Students' Association services
 - Served as Secretary for Christian Leader Training Program that was run by Korean Council of University Chaplains

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

- **Boston University, School of Theology, Boston, MA**
Member of Wesleyan Students Association 09/2010 - 05/2011
Operation Assistant of Print Center at Mugar Memorial Library 09/2009 - 05/2011
- **The Chaplains of Yonsei University Related Activities, Seoul, South Korea**
Executive Director 11/2002 - 01/2003
 - Served as Executive Director for Yonsei University Winter Retreat for Students' Spirituality*Secretary* 07/2002 - 08/2003
- **The Korean Writers' Association, Geochang branch, Geo-chang, South Korea**
Contributing Poet 03/2001 - 10/2004
 - Published poetry on a quarterly journal of Geochang branch of The Korean Writers' Association

LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES

- **Agency for Defense Development, Seoul, South Korea**
Representative of the public service personnel 07/2006 - 01/2007
 - Public Service Personnel in lieu of military service (05/2005 - 07/2007)
 - Served as a leader of security guards who check visitors, protect confidential information and agency premises
- **Student Government Association, College of Theology, Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea**
President 11/2003 - 11/2004
 - Led the enactment of College of Theology's anti-sexual violence regulation with the Women's Student Association
 - Organized a fundraising fair for Korean women drafted for military sexual slavery by Japan in conjunction with the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery
- **Rural Solidarity Activity between Farmer's Association and Student Government Association, College of Theology, Yonsei University, Sangju-si, Gyeongsangbuk-do, South Korea**
Director 06/2004 - 07/2004 & 06/2003 - 07/2003
 - Organized voluntary activities and facilitated group discussion on political and economical issues of rural area
- **Yonsei Theology Academic Society, Seoul, South Korea**
President 12/2002 - 12/2003
 - Served as a leader of semester seminars, summer intensive seminars, conferences and political activities

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

- **United Methodist Church, New England Annual Conference, Wenham, MA**
Volunteer 06/2009 & 06/2010
 - Served as a member of student volunteers of Boston University School of Theology
 - Delivered a sermon at early morning services

- **Hyang-rin Presbyterian Church, Seoul, South Korea**
Teaching Assistant for the Youth Department 03/2006 - 03/2007

- **Lord's Love Presbyterian Church, Seoul, South Korea**
Teacher for the middle and high school students 03/2001 - 07/2005
 - Delivered monthly sermons to middle and high school students
 - Participated in Mission activity with students in Batangas, Philippines & Yanbian, China

- **Mil-al School for Autistic Children, Seoul, South Korea**
Teaching Assistant 03/2001 - 06/2001

AWARDS AND GRANTS

- **Drew University Graduate Division of Religion**
- Graduate Division Religion Award 09/2013 - present

- **Drew Theological Seminary**
- Tuition Grant 09/2011 - 05/2103

- **Boston University School of Theology, Boston, MA**
- Tuition Grant 09/2008 - 05/2011

- **Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea**
 - Scholarship for the President of Students' Association of College 03/2004 - 12/2004
 - Second Prize in the Protestant Reformation Memorial Week Thesis Contest 10/2003
 - Scholarship of College of Theology of Yonsei University 03/2002 - 12/2003

FAMILY

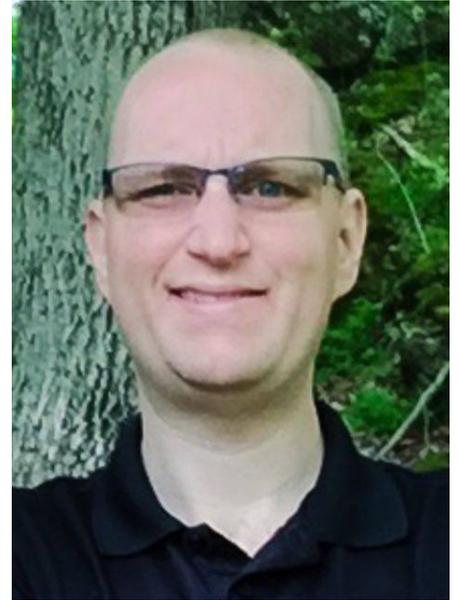
Jee Hei Park – spouse

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LATTIG, TODD

- 1) Sermon
- 2) Bible Study
- 3) Practice of Ministry
- 4) Theology, Call, & Doctrine
- 5) Polity
- 6) Biographical Statement
- 7) Chronological Resume



NOTES

1 **Scripture:** Psalm 137

2 **Sermon Title:** “Whoa! Moments”

3

4 Whoa! Right? Whoa! Where did that text come from? When I was looking at the
5 lectionary, looking at the possibilities of what I might be called to preach on and I saw this
6 Psalm, my first reaction was, "Okay...and what's next?" But, then I thought, "Wait a second, why
7 not preach on this?"

8 For all the talk of violence in the Quran, can we sit here after hearing this text and say
9 that such violence doesn't exist within the Judeo-Christian Bible? I love when people state,
10 "Islam is such a violent religion. Their Quran says they should kill the infidel. And I'm thinking
11 to myself, "What part of Leviticus, what part of Deuteronomy, what part of Numbers, Kings,
12 Chronicles, and Psalms haven't you read yet?" There are, in all religions, texts that are very
13 challenging to us, there are texts that present problems when people take them literally, zealously
14 and act them out in the world.

15 But how could any righteous and/or just person ever write, let alone condone, such
16 attacks? Just as a reminder, the end of the text says, "Daughter Babylon, you destroyer, a
17 blessing on the one who pays you back the very deed you did to us! A blessing on the one who
18 seizes your children and smashes them against the rock" (Psalm 137:8-9)! Now, I can
19 understand being angry at injustice, and wanting retribution and justice for what was done to
20 you. But taking people's children and smashing them against the rock...really?!?! That's how low
21 we're going to stoop?

22 As with any text in the Bible, or the Quran, or any holy text we may be looking at and/or
23 pulling from, we need to put this text in context for us to properly understand what is going on
24 here. So, for the moment, what I would like you to do, is just allow your imagination to take you

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25 away and put you in the shoes of the author of this Psalm so that we can better understand what
26 we are hearing tonight.

27 The Babylonians had come into Judah, destroyed the entire city of Jerusalem and laid the
28 Temple to waste. Now, Babylon was a foreign empire much like Egypt and Assyria. It was an
29 empire that would come in and it would conquer. It would then allow you to have your own
30 kingdom, but you would have to pay a tribute to keep the peace between you and Babylon. This
31 is what Babylon initially did. They came in, they conquered, they said, "Listen, you can be Judah
32 and have Jerusalem and do all the things you want to do, but you owe us 'x' amount of dollars
33 and if it's not paid on the right day at the right time, we're going to come in and we're going to
34 lay you to waste."

35 The king at the time made the agreement but then died. The next king took over, King
36 Zedekiah, and he decided, "I am not going to pay them! I'm the king! I'm going to ally myself
37 with Egypt, one of Babylon's enemies, and I am going to fight against Babylon and show them
38 who's boss." Well, the problem is that Egypt had no plans of allying itself with King Zedekiah,
39 so when push came to shove and Babylon did come marching in, Egypt didn't show up.

40 The prophet Jeremiah warned, "King Zedekiah you are out of your mind! Just relent and
41 do whatever Babylon asks you to do! It will be better for you if you just do Babylon asks you to,
42 submit to their will, and obey the LORD. And that is where King Zedekiah became proud and
43 said, "What you mean 'obey the LORD'? The LORD would never want us to submit to another
44 country!" And so, he ignored the prophet and, sure enough, Babylon came marching in, laying
45 Jerusalem and the Temple completely to ruin and waste.

46 When I say that, I don't just mean buildings, scribes, scrolls, libraries and the stuff that
47 typically gets ruined in cities that are laid to waste; but, men, women, and children. Animals,

48 property, and possessions. Everything, laid to waste! Men, women, and children, ruthlessly and
49 mercilessly killed. Others, who did not die, were taken into captivity and forced to travel to
50 Babylon to live as spoils of war. That was common for empires, who would conquer, take the
51 spoils of war home, and drag them through the streets with everyone cheering over the strength
52 of the emperor and everyone goes on to a happy ending, at least the conquerors; meanwhile, the
53 conquered go on to pay the ultimate price.

54 So, to be precise, at the time of the Babylonian attack on Judah, there was an estimated
55 population of 75,000 people living in Judah, and Jerusalem was probably much of that
56 population being that it was the main city. Of that population, 20,000 people were deported and
57 brought back to Babylon in exile. That's over 25% of the population. Now, we all remember
58 what happened on 9/11, just imagine if, on top of the attacks, 25% of all Americans were taken
59 to another country to live.

60 Just put that into perspective of how horrifying, how awful, and how humiliating that
61 must have been. Twenty-five percent! The remaining 75% were either dead, or were left in Judah
62 to watch their countryside, villages, and the city of Jerusalem smolder, literally. Jerusalem itself,
63 destroyed and depopulated, lay largely in ruins for the next 150 years.

64 I can remember September 11th. I am sure all of us, except for a few of our children, can
65 remember that date vividly, like it was yesterday. I can remember the disorientation I felt, the
66 panic, the fear, the sadness, and the bitter anger that filled me and many others to the very core. I
67 remember it like it was yesterday...the image of the two pillars of black smoke, billowing up
68 from the white haze that was once the brilliant New York City Skyline. Does anyone remember
69 how long that smoke and that haze lasted? It didn't just settle in a day or two, it was days. Over a

70 week and, even then, every time you drove past it you saw the grand hole in the sky where the
71 towers used to be, but were there no longer.

72 So, I can imagine what Judah was feeling and it didn't take us 150 years to build
73 something in the place of what was destroyed, thankfully. Can you imagine what it must have
74 been like, having some 150 years to remember and be reminded of “what used to be” every time
75 you passed Jerusalem? That used to be the city of David. That used to be the House of God. That
76 used to be our nation's pride. And, I can't imagine what those who were exiled must have felt
77 like. I cannot even picture what they were feeling.

78 I want to again go back to the scripture, where it says, "Alongside Babylon's streams,
79 there we sat down, crying because we remembered Zion. We hung our lyres up in the trees there
80 because that's where our captors asked us to sing; our tormentors requested songs of joy: 'Sing
81 us a song about Zion!' they said. But how could we possibly sing the Lord's song on foreign
82 soil? Jerusalem! If I forget you, let my strong hand wither! Let my tongue stick to the roof of my
83 mouth if I don't remember you, if I don't make Jerusalem my greatest joy. Lord, remember what
84 the Edomite's did on Jerusalem's dark day: 'Rip it down, rip it down! All the way to its
85 foundations!' they yelled. Daughter Babylon, you destroyer, a blessing on the one who pays you
86 back the very deed you did to us! A blessing on the one who seizes your children and smashes
87 them against the rock" (Psalm 137 CEB)!

88 The Psalmist gives us a glimpse of the emotions running through them. Many of their
89 men, women and children were dead, the rest exiled to a foreign land or left to rot in a
90 smoldering land, and they were the utter and absolute laughing stock of an empire. Now, is God
91 in line with this author's statement about the joy of dashing Babylon's children against the
92 rocks? No! No, that's not God's idea of what we should be doing to our enemies. That's not God's

93 idea of the right thing to do regardless of the circumstances we find ourselves in. God does not
94 condone that, and the author isn't, if you read this carefully, stating that God condones it.

95 This is where context makes a difference, and where careful reading makes a difference.
96 The author does not say that, "God says, 'Go dash their babies against the rocks.'" The author is
97 lamenting, in utter pain and in horror, hoping that justice is done. As I said, rather than giving us
98 a command of what God is saying, the Psalmist is pouring out the bitter sadness, and the
99 enflamed anger within him.

100 Now, how many of us, honestly, have been so angry that we've thought some of the most
101 awful thoughts because of our anger? We may have been in a righteous place in that anger, even
102 if the words and thoughts were not, necessarily, the most righteous of thoughts. I would be lying,
103 as a pastor, if I told you that I didn't have those moments driving down Route 287, let alone
104 throughout my life. We've all been there, we've all had injustice done to us.

105 No, God does not condone an "eye for an eye", or vengeful violence, but God does hear
106 the cry of the oppressed. God does hear the cry of the one who is in need, of the one to whom
107 injustice has been done, the one who is looking for justice to once again reign on the earth.
108 Here's the good news, now that I took you to that dark place, our God understands the heart over
109 the words!

110 Our God understands that, when we are in a fit of anger, or we're down on our luck, or
111 we've been treated like we're dirt, or we've been stepped on, and beaten, and abused, and
112 oppressed, God understands what's going on in our hearts over what is going on in our words.
113 God does doesn't hold the words of the Psalmist against him anymore than God holds our words
114 against us when we're cursing somebody out while driving down the road, because they almost
115 plowed into us and killed our children.

116 God understands. Now, I am not condoning that we should be cursing people out, but we
117 have a God who understands us, a God who has suffered injustice, a God who has been in those
118 "Whoa!" moments and found himself crying out for help. Think about it, our Lord and our
119 Savior Jesus Christ on the cross cried out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken
120 me" (Matthew 27:46)? If Jesus, in his moment of despair, can cry out the bitter hurt within his
121 pained and anguished heart, can we not do the same and meet a God who understands?

122 When we see people rallying in the street, whether we agree with their cause or not, (and
123 I think most of us agree with the cause of the protests going on for we all want equal justice for
124 all people); but, whether we agree with the tactics or not, at least we can say, "Gee, I understand
125 at least where they're coming from," and we can work in our own heart to be just and to fight for
126 justice. Not just for one side but for all sides, because we serve a God who understands us even
127 when our words and our tactics are not exactly right, but our heart is.

128 Here's the good news: God understands the heart over the words, and our God stands
129 with us in our time of need. Not as judge and jury, not as our convicter or our executioner, but as
130 our father, as our mother, as our guide. Indeed, only fifty years after the exile...only fifty years if
131 you can believe it...after the exile, God led many of those Jews who were exiled back home. It
132 took longer than just fifty years, but the start of it was at fifty years when the Jews were allowed
133 to return to their homeland. This was because those who were in exile never lost faith and never
134 lost hope. What's more, through those who never lost faith and never lost hope, they were able to
135 find their way home. They could start the 100-year process of rebuilding Jerusalem, rebuilding
136 the Temple, and setting themselves right again with God.

137 That's the God we serve. We live in a world that messes things up for us, sometimes we
138 mess things up for ourselves, but we serve a God that shows us The Way. If we don't lose faith,

139 and if we don't lose hope, we can get there. We can get back home. The good news is that,
140 despite evil and violence, our God is with us! Our God with us and liberating us and calling us to
141 be a part of the liberation of others, as shone through our Lord, Jesus Christ, who is our Savior.
142 Amen.

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1 **Detail the theological significance of each act of worship. Describe what is happening and**
2 **why it occurs where it does in the service.**

3 Following the words of welcome, I share announcements and invite the congregation to
4 share their joys and concerns. I do this here for two reasons. First, the whole service builds
5 toward the act of Holy Communion, which is the culmination of the service; therefore, I put the
6 announcements in the beginning so that they do not detract at all from the Sacrament. Second, I
7 invite the congregation to share their prayer requests prior to going live on Facebook for privacy
8 reasons. When we do stream live, I invite the online congregation to private message me any
9 prayer requests they might have.

10 The Prelude, as described above, follows the announcements, joys and concerns. The
11 congregation then rises to sing the “Praise and Worship” song, Sanctuary (TFWS 2164). The
12 congregation is seated and the liturgist opens with the Invitation and leads the congregation in
13 the Confession and Pardon found in “A Service of Word and Table II” liturgy, in the United
14 Methodist Hymnal on page 12. I believe it is important that the liturgist assists in the leading of
15 the liturgy for Holy Communion as it builds up discipleship, it deepens the Sacramental
16 experience, and reinforces that Christ has called us all.

17 We then sing our next praise and worship song, verses 1 and 2 of “Let Us Break Bread
18 Together” (UMH 618). I break the song up because it works nicely in parts, reinforcing the
19 Communion liturgy. Following the song, we remain standing to pray the “Unison Prayer for the
20 Spirit of Truth,” after which we are seated and the liturgist reads the evening’s Scripture. For this
21 week, Psalm 137 was read.

22 It is at this point that I preach. To reiterate, I preach prior to Holy Communion in order
23 that the focal point of the service is the Sacrament. For me, as important as the Sermon is, I

24 believe that Holy Communion is the most important and central element of the worship service
25 because through it the Church experiences the mystery of Christ's presence, as well as the grace
26 of God. We are unable to follow this format during our Sunday Service as it would exclude the
27 nursery-aged kids from partaking in the Sacrament; however, this format works wonderfully at
28 our mid-week service.

29 Following the sermon, we sing the third verse of "Let Us Break Bread Together" (UMH
30 618) in preparation for the celebration of the Great Thanksgiving on page 13 of the UMH. I lead
31 the liturgy from the Great Thanksgiving through the Breaking of the Bread and the Lord's
32 Prayer. The Liturgist and I both serve the elements, first to the musician (who plays music during
33 the giving of the bread and cup) and then to the congregation. I then serve the liturgist, after
34 which he or she serves me. I have modeled taking the elements last because Jesus calls leaders to
35 be servants of all (Mark 9:35; John 13:15-18).

36 Finally, following Holy Communion, we sing our closing song, "My Tribute" (UMH 99).
37 I love how this song exuberantly praises God for our salvation and for our life in Christ who
38 rescued us from sin and death. It is a powerful song to conclude Holy Communion with. Finally,
39 I close with the Benediction and, as a part of the blessing, I invite the congregation to pass the
40 peace which also leads into fellowship and conversation following the service.

41 **Explain the following:**

42 **(a) Why did you choose the hymns used in the context of the service?**

43 I believe that the hymns in a Service of Word and Table should enhance the overall
44 Sacramental experience. The song Sanctuary, invites the Holy Spirit to prepare us for Holy
45 Communion, where we are not only collectively in the presence of Christ, but are called to be "a
46 living Sanctuary" for Christ in the world. We sing "Let Us Break Bread Together" because it is a

47 song that mirrors the Sacrament of Holy Communion and brings us into a spirit of reception. I
48 chose “My Tribute” for the reason I described, starting on line 36.

49 **(b) What was the purpose of the sermon?**

50 The purpose of the sermon was to shed historical and textual context to a very
51 challenging Psalm, and to make it applicable in our modern context. Considering the civil rights
52 protests and social issues in our nation today, I find that people will often dismiss valid
53 arguments and calls for change because of the “tactics” and/or “words” of those calling for it.
54 My sermon reminds us that God hears the heart over the words, and that God calls us to do the
55 same. What’s more, God aligns with the oppressed and challenges us to align our hearts with
56 oppressed, to be filled with compassion, and to work for justice in our world.

57 **(c) Does the Order of Worship help deliver that theme? Explain.**

58 I believe it does, though it does so indirectly because the Order of Worship is structured
59 in a way that I believe enhances the experience of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. With that
60 said, Holy Communion envelopes us in God’s grace and in the mysterious presence of Christ
61 among those gathered. What’s more, during the Sacrament we reenact Christ’s Last Supper,
62 reminding us of the Sacrifice Christ made on our behalf and on behalf of the whole world. It
63 reminds us of our call to serve Christ and to work for justice on behalf of the “least of these”
64 (Matthew 25:31-46). So, I believe that the structure, which builds up to The Great Thanksgiving,
65 does indirectly lend itself to the theme in the sermon.

Weekly Happenings

Monday

10:00 AM: Quilting. For more info, please talk to Claffertene Nystrom.

Tuesday

7:30 PM: AA Meeting

Wednesday

7:30 PM: Mid-Week Worship

Sunday

11:00 AM: Worship Service

12:00 PM: Fellowship



Announcements

Scan to visit us online

- Blairstown UMC is holding their **205th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION** this **Saturday, October 8th** from **1-9 p.m.** If you don't already have plans, let us be good neighbors and stop by to celebrate with them. If you do, be sure to say that you're from Harmony Hill UMC!
- **SAVE THIS DATE: Saturday, October 22nd** our **ANNUAL CHURCH CONFERENCE** will be held at **St. John's UMC, 354 High Street, Hope, NJ 07844** starting at **9AM.**

All of our officers, committee members, and members are strongly encouraged to attend.

Welcome to

HARMONY HILL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

A Christian fellowship sharing the Love of Christ with all by practicing our faith through Love in Action!



October 5, 2016

Season after Pentecost

Sunday Worship Schedule

Sunday Worship	11:00 AM
Fellowship Time	12:00 PM

Mid-Week Worship

Wednesdays	7:30 PM
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Rev. Todd R. Lattig

Liturgist: Susan Smith

Musician: Rev. Todd R. Lattig

Acolyte: Miranda Castner

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Harmony Hill United Methodist Church



HarmonyHillUMC

HARMONY HILL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

919 Fairview Lake Rd., P.O. Box 115,
Stillwater, NJ 07875 ♦ 973-383-4868

www.harmonyhillumc.org

Pastor Todd R. Lattig

pastor.toddlattig@gmail.com

Tonight in Worship

WORDS OF WELCOME

SHARING OF JOYS, CONCERNS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

PRAISE AND WORSHIP*

Sanctuary (x2)

Lord prepare me
To be a sanctuary,
Pure and holy,
Tried and true.

With thanksgiving,
I'll be a living
Sanctuary
For you..

INVITATION

Christ our Lord invites to his table all who love him,
Who earnestly repent of their sin
And seek to live in peace with one another.
Therefore, let us confess our sin before God and one another.

CONFESSION AND PARDON

Merciful God,
We confess that we have not loved you with our whole
heart.
We have failed to be an obedient church.



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To God be the glory
For the things he has done.

BENEDICTION*

Pastor: May the LORD bless you and keep you; may the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; may the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

People: Amen.

POSTLUDE

**We have not done your will,
We have broken your law,
We have rebelled against your love,
We have not loved our neighbors,
And we have not heard the cry of the needy.
Forgive us we pray.
Free us for joyful obedience,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Hear the good news:
Christ died for us while we were yet sinners;
That proves God's love toward us.
In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!
**In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.
Glory to God. Amen.**

PRAISE AND WORSHIP*

Let Us Break Bread Together
(UMH 618, Vs. 1-2)

Let us break bread together on our knees,
Let us break bread together on our knees.
When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.

Let us drink wine together on our knees,
Let us drink wine together on our knees.
When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.

UNISON PRAYER FOR THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

From the cowardice that dares not face new truth, from the

[Back to the Candidate Profile](#)

laziness that is contented with half-truth, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, Good Lord, deliver us, we pray. Now open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit, that, as the Scriptures are read and your Word proclaimed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 137

Alongside Babylon's streams,
there we sat down,
crying because we remembered Zion.

2 We hung our lyres up
in the trees there

3 because that's where our captors asked us to sing;
our tormentors requested songs of joy:
"Sing us a song about Zion!" they said.

4 But how could we possibly sing
the Lord's song on foreign soil?

5 Jerusalem! If I forget you,
let my strong hand wither!

6 Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth
if I don't remember you,
if I don't make Jerusalem my greatest joy.

7 Lord, remember what the Edomites did
on Jerusalem's dark day:
"Rip it down, rip it down!

All the way to its foundations!" they yelled.
8 Daughter Babylon, you destroyer,[a]

a blessing on the one who pays you back
the very deed you did to us!

9 A blessing on the one who seizes your children
and smashes them against the rock!

THE MESSAGE

"Whoa! Moments"

Rev. Todd R. Lattig

PRAISE AND WORSHIP*

Let Us Break Bread Together

(UMH 618, Vs. 3)

Let us praise God together on our knees,
Let us praise God together on our knees.
When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

UMH 13

CLOSING SONG*

My Tribute

(UMH 99)

To God be the glory,
To God be the glory,
To God be the glory
For the things he has done

With his blood he has saved me;
With his power he has raised me;

Welcome to
HARMONY HILL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
*A Christian fellowship sharing the Love of Christ with all by practicing our
faith through Love in Action!*



October 5, 2016

Season after Pentecost

Sunday Worship Schedule

Sunday Worship	11:00 AM
Fellowship Time	12:00 PM

Mid-Week Worship

Wednesdays	7:30 PM
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Rev. Todd R. Lattig

Liturgist: Susan Smith

Musician: Rev. Todd R. Lattig

Acolyte: Miranda Castner

Tonight in Worship

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Pastor: May the LORD bless you and keep you; may the LORD
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you; may the LORD lift up his countenance upon you,
and give you peace.

People: **Amen.**

POSTLUDE



Weekly Happenings

Monday

10:00 AM: Quilting. For more info, please talk to Claaffertene Nystrom.

Tuesday

7:30 PM: AA Meeting

Wednesday

7:30 PM: Mid-Week Worship

Sunday

11:00 AM: Worship Service

12:00 PM: Fellowship



Announcements

Scan to visit us online

- Blirstown UMC is holding their **205th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION** this **Saturday, October 8th** from **1-9 p.m.** If you don't already have plans, let us be good neighbors and stop by to celebrate with them. If you do, be sure to say that you're from Harmony Hill UMC!
- **SAVE THIS DATE: Saturday, October 22nd** our **ANNUAL CHURCH CONFERENCE** will be held at **St. John's UMC, 354 High Street, Hope, NJ 07844** starting at **9AM.**

All of our officers, committee members, and members are strongly encouraged to attend.

Like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter



Harmony Hill United Methodist Church



HarmonyHillUMC

HARMONY HILL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Rev. Todd R. Lattig, Pastor (973) 383-4868 pastor.toddlattig@gmail.com

October 26, 2016

Dear Board on Ordained Ministry Member,

The enclosed DVD and manuscript are of my sermon, "Whoa! Moments", which was based on Psalm 137 and was preached at the Mid-Week Worship Service on Wednesday, October 5, 2016 at Harmony Hill United Methodist Church in Stillwater, NJ. I am currently serving at this church as a Provisional Elder in the Greater NJ Conference.

Harmony Hill UMC is a small, country church located in a rural farm town at the Southern end of Sussex County, neighboring Warren county and near the Delaware Water Gap ridge. The congregation is composed of mostly middle-aged to retirement-aged Caucasians, with a growing number of younger families who have children and teenagers. One of the parishioners is African American and at least one family has Native American heritage in them as well. We also have one parishioner who is quadriplegic.

In terms of theology, the congregation tends to be middle of the road. There are a few who have a conservative theology and a few who have a more progressive theology; however, most people in the congregation are moderate in their theological understanding. Politically speaking, the congregation is divided, though I would say that a small majority are moderate conservatives. With that said, there are quite a few people who would identify themselves as liberals and/or progressives.

Harmony Hill UMC has about 75 members. Out of those members, 35-40 regularly attend worship on a Sunday morning. About 8-10 (on average) attend our Mid-Week Worship service on Wednesday evenings. What's more, we've recently begun to stream live on Facebook, which adds on average about 5-10 online viewers to our attendance. Because of the lower attendance, and because many in the congregation are on fixed incomes, the church operates on a frugal budget. Yet, aside from its financial struggles, the church continually makes it a point to be faithful in paying all its shared ministries in full and continues to actively do mission and ministry in the community.

It is to the Mid-Week Worship congregation that I delivered the enclosed sermon to. For a reason unknown to me, my HD Camcorder did not record the full sermon, but my iPhone did for the live stream. I received permission to edit the beginning part of the live-stream recording into the HD Recording, so that the whole sermon may be viewed. At that service, we had 10 people in attendance (7 adults and 3 teens), plus 7 live viewers online. I hope my description of the congregation helps to give you a picture of the people who attended this service and who attends Harmony Hill UMC.

Sincerely,



Todd R. Lattig

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1 **1. SETTING & PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

2 The purpose of this eleven-week study is to provide a historical/critical context to the
3 book of Revelation, giving the student a chance to examine the book in its own words/context
4 and apart from popular culture. This approach helps the student to have a foundational
5 understanding of the texts, of the traditions/interpretations surrounding it, and gives the student
6 the means of finding relevant meaning from the book that is hopefully as true as can be to the
7 intent of the author. This Bible Study was taught at Harmony Hill UMC, which is my current
8 appointment, and was taught in two other settings as well.

9 Harmony Hill UMC is a small, rural, country church located in Stillwater, NJ. I designed
10 it for, and taught it as, an Adult Sunday School course which happens at the same time as our
11 Children’s Sunday School. This has been a beneficial time as it has drawn parents who would
12 otherwise be waiting for Sunday School to end and church to begin. The group is made up of
13 mostly middle-aged, middle-class, non-Hispanic Caucasians, with a couple who are of Caucasian
14 and Native American heritage. They mostly have a higher education, though one or two have
15 only a High School education and it was made up of 7 women and 5 men.

16 **2. OUTLINE**

- 17 Lesson 1: Introduction to Revelation
- 18 A. Opening Question: What is your understanding of Revelation?
- 19 B. Revelation in popular culture
- 20 a. Show “Left Behind” YouTube Clip
- 21 C. Revelation in popular theology
- 22 a. Dispensationalism (Genesis 3-8, 9-11; Exodus 20; Acts 1:6-11; Revelation
- 23 20:4-6; Revelation 20-22)
- 24 b. Summary of Dispensationalist Eschatology (Matthew 24:1-29, 30-44; 1
- 25 Thessalonians 4:15-17; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4; Daniel 7:8-14; 1 John 2:18,
- 26 22; 4:3; 2 John 1:7; Revelation 13)
- 27 Lesson 2: Historical Context

- 28 A. Authorship: John the Apostle vs. John of Patmos (Revelation 1:1-2, 4, 9)
29 B. Dating: circa 95 to 117 CE (Revelation 1:9; Revelation 13:1-3)
30 a. Correspondence from Pliny and Trajan
31 C. Socio-Political Context
- 32 Lesson 3: Jesus' Letters to the Seven Churches (Revelation 2-3)
- 33 A. Prophetic Authority and Divine Authorship (Revelation 1:1-2; 2 Esdras 14:22-
34 48).
35 B. Pattern of the Seven Letters (Revelation 2-3)
36 C. Three Types of Churches (Revelation 2:1-7; 3:14-22; and 2:12-3:6; and 2:8-
37 11; 3:7-13)
38 D. The Seven Letters (Revelation 2-3)
- 39 Lesson 4: The Seven Seals (Revelation 4-8:1)
- 40 A. Introducing John's Vision (Revelation 4)
41 a. Purpose of vision: assurance of God's justice
42 B. The Seven Seals: kicking off a series of reassuring visions (Revelation 5)
43 a. Christological imagery (Revelation 5:5-6, 8, 12-14).
44 C. The First Four Seals or Four Horsemen (Revelation 6:1-8)
45 D. The Remaining Three Seals (Revelation 6:8-8:1)
- 46 Lesson 5: Good vs. Evil part 1: Jesus Christ, the slain Lamb turned triumphant King
47 (Revelation 1:8, 14, 17-18; 2:8; 3:7; 4:8; 5:5; 12:5; 14:14-16; 19:11-16; 22:13)
- 48 A. The Past: Christ, The One Who Always Was (Revelation 1:8; 4:8; 5:5)
49 B. The Present: Christ, The One Who Is (Revelation 12:5)
50 C. The Future: Christ, The One Who Will Come Again (Revelation 14:14-16;
51 19:11-16)
52 D. Christ and God (Revelation 1:8, 14, 17-18; 3:7; 6:10; Daniel 7:9; Job 38:17)
- 53 Lesson 6: Good vs. Evil part 2: Satan, the Celestial Woman, and the Beast (Revelation 12;
54 Revelation 13; Revelation 17:7-13)
- 55 A. Satan (Revelation 12:7-12; Job 1:6-12; Zechariah 3:1-2; Matthew 4:1-11;
56 John 8:44; Luke 10:18; 2 Corinthians 11:14; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 3:8)
57 B. The Celestial Woman (Revelation 12:1-6, 13-17)
58 C. The Beast (Revelation 13; Revelation 17:7-13)
59 D. Understanding the Apocalyptic Imagery Today
- 60 Lesson 7: What About the Rapture? (Revelation 4; 19:11-14)
- 61 A. Latin Etymology (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)
62 B. Scriptural References Incorrectly Used to Support a Pre-Tribulation Rapture
63 (Matthew 24:30-36, 40-41; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52;
64 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Philippians 3:20-21; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12;
65 Revelation 4:1)
66 a. Each Scriptural passage is looked at individually, followed by a discussion
67 on its textual context.

- 68 Lesson 8: The Martyrs, God's Wrath, and the Bride of Christ (Revelation 6:9-11; 7:9-17;
69 8:6-11:19; 16; 14:1-4; 17:16-18; 21:2, 25-26)
- 70 A. The Martyrs (Revelation 6:9-11; 7:9-17)
71 B. The Bride (Revelation 7:3-8; 14:1-4; 21:2, 25-26)
72 C. God's Wrath equals God's Justice (Revelation 17:16-18)
- 73 Lesson 9: Christ's Second Coming (Revelation 19)
- 74 A. The Heavens Rejoice (19:1-5)
75 B. The Great Wedding Feast of the Lamb (Revelation 19:6-10)
76 C. The White Rider (Revelation 1:14; 2:18; 6:2; 14:14; 19:11-21; 3 Maccabees
77 2:9-14; John 1:1-5, 14)
78 a. New Testament Parallels (Mark 13:26-27; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17;
79 Revelation 1:7)
- 80 Lesson 10: Millennial Reign of Christ, Satan's Defeat, and the Recreation of Everything
81 (Revelation 20-22:5)
- 82 A. Understanding the created order from the Ancient World perspective (Genesis
83 1-2:4a)
84 B. Christ's Thousand Year Reign (Revelation 20:1-6; Genesis 1:2; Mark 13:10; 2
85 Peter 3:8; Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22)
86 C. Satan's Defeat and Final Judgment (Revelation 20:7-15)
87 D. Recreation: Heaven on Earth (Revelation 21-22:5)
- 88 Lesson 11: Conclusion (Revelation 22:6-21)
- 89 A. Jesus' Proclamation (Revelation 22:7, 12-13, 16, 20)
90 B. John's Concluding Words (Revelation 22:6, 8-11, 14-15, 17-21)
91 C. Open Discussion
92

93 2. DETAILED LESSON PLAN

94 Lesson 6: Satan, The Celestial Woman, and The Beast

95 Lesson Objective: To understand how evil works and operates within the book of Revelation,
96 and how Revelation's insight on empire and good vs. evil can inform us in our own context.

97 Key Idea: Satan (Revelation 12:3-4; 7-13, 17; Job 1:6-12; Zechariah 3:1-2; Matthew 4:1-11;
98 John 8:44; Luke 10:18; 2 Corinthians 11:14; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 3:8)

99 Learning Goals:

- 100 1. The cosmic duality found in Revelation (Good vs. Evil)
- 101 2. The developing role of Satan in the Old and New Testaments
- 102 3. The World Order (the Roman Empire) is representative of Satan's power.

103 Key Idea: The Celestial Woman (Revelation 12:1-2, 5-6, 14-16)

104 Learning Goals:

- 105 1. The goddess-like imagery is used to represent Israel
- 106 2. The meaning of the sun, the moon, and the stars
- 107 3. The baby born to this woman represents the Messiah, whom Satan wants to destroy
- 108 4. Her struggle with the dragon is representative of Israel's struggle to remain God's people
- 109 throughout history
- 110 5. Despite Satan's attempts, God protects both the celestial woman (Israel) and the baby
- 111 (the Messiah) from harm and Satan ultimately fails and turns to attack the rest of her
- 112 children (followers of Christ).

113 Key Idea: The Beast (Revelation 13; 17:3-14; Daniel 7:15-28)

114 Learning Goals:

- 115 1. In apocalyptic literature, beasts typically represent empires and/or kingdoms
- 116 2. The seven heads, where they're located, and who they represent are all symbols that
- 117 indict the Roman Empire as the beast.
- 118 3. The heads of the beast, called seven kings, are widely believed to represent seven
- 119 emperors of Rome who were hostile to Christians and/or Jews (See chart)
- 120 4. Interpreting the Number of the Beast as Caesar Nero, the embodiment of the evil of
- 121 Rome
- 122 5. Arguments for and against the Caesar Nero calculation theory

123 Key Idea: Understanding the Apocalyptic Imagery Today

124 Learning Goals:

- 125 1. Understanding how Satan, the Celestial Woman, and The Beast can be interpreted for our
- 126 time and context through class discussion.

127 Teaching Strategies:

128 I taught this lesson, and all my lessons, through what I like to call "interactive lecturing".

129 What this means is that I did lecture the class on the key ideas I wanted them to learn; however,
130 at the beginning of each class I invite the students to feel free to interrupt me, ask questions,
131 and/or spark discussion. I also incorporate time for discussion, which sometimes the organic
132 discussions end up taking way the need for. The class, in this way, is a give and take.

133 I am passionate about film and art and utilize them both when they lend themselves to the
134 lesson. For example, I used art as a teaching strategy to convey the understanding of the created
135 order in Lesson 10. I had a student volunteer to read the creation story and, as she did, I drew it

136 on an easel sketch pad in the way that the ancients understood the earth and the cosmos. So,
137 while my teaching strategy is interactive lecturing, I do also employ other strategies as well.

138 Teaching Aids:

139 I also utilize visuals for those who are visual learners. For this lesson, I utilized a chart I
140 created while taking notes in a seminary class on Revelation. The chart showed pictures of each
141 of the emperors from Augustus through Trajan, listing which ones were understood to be one of
142 the seven heads of the beast and why that was. I also handed out my outlined notes (as I do for
143 all my classes), which helps the students follow along and gives them something to jot relevant
144 notes on.

145 I introduced the study by showing a 5-minute YouTube clip of the film, "Left Behind"
146 prior to discussing Revelation in our popular culture. I handed out a suggested reading schedule
147 of the Book of Revelation, so that the students knew what chapters would be helpful to read prior
148 to each class. My handouts throughout the study include an illustration by Pastor Timothy Baker
149 on the seven Dispensations of John Darby, the Letters between Pliny and Trajan, 2 Esdras 14:22-
150 48 NRSV, a geographical map of the area of the seven churches, artwork depicting "The Lamb
151 of God", a chart of the emperors representing "the seven heads of the beast", a chart that I
152 created showing 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 side-by-side in Greek, Latin, and English, a chart that I
153 created illustrating the different millennial views, and a chart I created of Bible verses that
154 parallel Revelation 19:11-14.

155 4. ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

156 Baker, Timothy. n.d. "Tim Baker Chart." Christianity to Politics to Dragracing. Accessed
157 October 18,
158 2016 [http://shopeshop.org/Searchable%20Riches!/Grace%20Goodies/Charts/Tim%20](http://shopeshop.org/Searchable%20Riches!/Grace%20Goodies/Charts/Tim%20Baker%20Chart.jpg)
159 [Baker%20Chart.jpg](http://shopeshop.org/Searchable%20Riches!/Grace%20Goodies/Charts/Tim%20Baker%20Chart.jpg).

160
161 This is a Dispensationalism chart created, as indicated on the chart itself, by Pastor Timothy
162 Baker. While I am not familiar with Pastor Baker's ministry, this chart is quite a detailed
163 illustration of the implications of Dispensationalist theology that I stumbled upon through
164 Google. Having a visual aid such as this aids the student, especially the visual learner, in
165 understanding what "dispensations" are, and how that manifests itself in the
166 Dispensationalist eschatology.

167
168 Beale, G. K. 1999. *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids,
169 Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

170
171 This resource provides indepth, academic commentary on the entire book of Revelation. It
172 provides the theological themes, in light of the linguistic, historical and textual contexts. This
173 commentary is an invaluable resource for a responsible understanding of Revelation utilizing
174 historical critical scholarship. What's more, it's consideration of theological themes aid in
175 developing an understanding of the Spiritual message for the modern layperson

176
177 Gregg, Steve, Ed. 1997. *Revelation: Four Views, A Parallel Commentary*. Nashville: Thomas
178 Nelson Publishers.

179 This resource is a commentary that parallels the four major ways schools of theology/though
180 through whic Revelation has traditionally been interpreted. The four schools and/or views are
181 the Historicist, The Preterist, The Futurist, and the Spiritualist Views. While I did not use this
182 resource too often, I did refer to it here and there to aid my understanding of different ways
183 Revelation can be interpreted, alongside the historical critical commentary mentioned in the
184 citation above.

185 Harris, Stephen. 2006. *The New Testament: A Student's Introduction, 5th ed.* Boston:
186 McGraw Hill.

187 This is a text book that provides and introduction to the New Testament. It provides general
188 information regarding the dating, authorship, and historical context of each of the books. It
189 also provides the key theological themes, symbols, and textual breakdown of the book. In the
190 section on Revelation, it provides a pithy and well organized summary of the different
191 methods of interpretation. This was invaluable as a resource used in conjunction with Beale's
192 much more dense commentary, and helped me to digest Beale's commentary in a way that is
193 palatable to the average lay person.

194 Havnaer, Melanie. n.d. "Poetry and Paintings." Prophetic Art by Melanie Havnaer. Accessed
195 October 19, 2016. <http://prophetic-art.com/poetry--paintings.html>.

196 I found this image through Google and decided to use it as a hand out to provide an image of
197 the lamb of God found in Revelation. I believe that have images to go along with words helps
198 for the student to have a deeper understanding of the imagery being used. What's more, such
199 images aid the visual learner.

200 In Company with Angels. 2015. "The Seven Churches of Revelation." In Company With
201 Angels: Seven Rediscovered Tiffany Windows. Accessed October 19,
202 2016. <http://www.incompanywithangels.org/the-seven-churches-of-revelation/>.

203 This chart shows the geographical locations of the Seven Churches of Asia on a modern map
204 showing that the seven churches existed in what is now modern day Turkey. This map is
205 used as a visual to help the student gain an understanding of the geographical location of the
206 churches, which also aids in teaching the historical, socio-economic, and religious contexts
207 of the churches to whom the letters are being written.

208 Jerome's Latin Vulgate w/ Deuterocanon. E-Sword. 405.

209 A common question that people ask in relation to Revelation, is whether "the Rapture" is
210 Biblical. This is largely because the word "rapture" cannot be found in any English
211 translation of the Bible. I used the Latin Vulgate, which is in the Public Domain, in a parallel
212 chart that shows 1 Thessalonians 4:17 in Greek, Latin and English (NRSV). The chart shows
213 the etymology of the word "rapture", which means "caught up" in English, and it shows that
214 the only place "rapture" is found is in the Latin Vulgate Translation of the Bible. My access
215 to this translation was through the E-Sword Bible Software.

216 Matera, Frank J. 1999. *New Testament Christology*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox
217 Press.

218 The focus of this book is strictly on the different Christological understandings found in the
219 New Testament Gospels, books, letters and in the apocalypse. I utilized this resource to gain
220 an understanding of the Christology of John of Patmos and the Christological implications of
221 within the book of Revelation. This book discusses Christological themes within the
222 terminology, phraseology, stories and textual context within Revelation, providing an
223 understanding of the Christ being conveyed through John's apocalyptic vision.

224 Moore, Stephen. 2009. *Class Lectures*. Madison, NJ: The Theological School at Drew
225 University, January - May.

226 In the Spring semester of 2009, I took Dr. Stephen Moore's class, "Unveiling Revelation" at
227 the Theological School at Drew University. During the semester, I took notes to aid in my
228 studies and academic work. It was this class that inspired me to develop an Adult Sunday
229 School course centered on conveying an academic study of Revelation to the average lay
230 person. I often referred to these notes to aid me in my development of this class and utilized
231 the notes I took on interpreting the number of the beast as a hand out in Lesson 6 of this
232 study.

233 The Greek New Testament (Majority Text). Patriarchal Edition. E-Sword. 1904.

234 A common question that people ask in relation to Revelation, is whether or not "the Rapture"
235 is Biblical. This is largely because the word "rapture" cannot be found in any English
236 translation of the Bible. I used the Greek New Testament in a parallel chart that shows 1
237 Thessalonians 4:17 in Greek, Latin and English (NRSV). The chart shows the etymology of

238 the word “rapture”, which means “caught up” in English, and it shows that the only place
239 “rapture” is found is in the Latin Vulgate Translation of the Bible. My access to this
240 translation was through the E-Sword Bible Software.

241 The Holy Bible, The New Revised Standard Version w/ Apocrypha. The Division of
242 Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.
243 E-Sword. New York. 1989

244 I utilized the New Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible in order to use a translation
245 that takes a more literal approach of translating the Hebrew and Greek to English. I
246 purchased this copy of the NRSV through the E-Sword Bible Software, which allows you to
247 copy and paste verses with ease.

248 2000. *Left Behind: The Movie (Clip - Raptured!)*. Directed by Vic Sarin. Accessed October
249 18, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vXRrVrkFYlo>.

250 In order to open up this study in a fun and informative way, I showed this clip of a scene in
251 the film “Left Behind: The Movie”. This set up the discussion on the way Revelation has
252 been interpreted in our modern culture and would serve as something to reference back to
253 when discussing topics such as the Pre-Millennial Rapture and/or the interpretation of the
254 Antichrist being a literal, singular person expected to arrive in the future.

255 **5. EVALUATION**

256 This lesson is truly an interesting one. The mystery behind the number of the beast is
257 intriguing, as is the imagery of the dragon and the celestial woman. I was able to convey my
258 knowledge of history and the historical context of Revelation, as well as who the beast may
259 actually represent. Also, the chart of the emperors worked nicely as it gave people something to
260 refer to during the lecture.

261 On the downside, one of its weaknesses is that this lesson has a lot of information packed
262 into it. I found it challenging to both cover the lesson plan and hold discussion. It had a lot of
263 complexity to it and covered a lot of Scripture. While we did have a discussion, much of this
264 lesson was spent lecturing to convey the key concepts of the lesson. I was able to teach those key
265 concepts, but there wasn't too much time for discussion.

266 If I were to change anything, it is simply that I would break this study up into more
267 classes and make it a longer study, which would make each lecture less packed and more
268 conducive to a vibrant and engaged discussion. My evaluation is based on the feedback I
269 received from some of the people who took the class at the time, that it was very interesting, but
270 also that it was a lot to grasp. Overall, I believe the lesson was a success as was the class, which I
271 have taught three times in three different settings.

1 **What do you think are the most effective means of doing evangelism in the 21st century?**
2 **How have you lived this out in your current context of ministry?**

3 I honestly believe that the most effective means of doing evangelism in the 21st century is
4 being out in the community, being present, serving others, and inviting others to join in with us
5 in doing so. Yet, evangelism is more than just doing social justice, helping others, and doing
6 works of charity, it is also bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to people and making
7 disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

8 Since being appointed to Harmony Hill UMC, our church has become more visible and
9 present in the community. We have held services at the Fire Department, alongside of free
10 dinners to include people from the community in worship as well as fellowship. We have hosted
11 a 5K, in partnership with our town's Historical Society, to help raise awareness of and funds for
12 people's needs in our community. We have started a VBS, bringing new families to our church.
13 We have held public health seminars to promote healthy, sustainable living in our community.
14 The ministry we've done in our community, thus far, has put us in a good position to grow.

15 **What makes a congregation vital, and how do you measure it? How would you envision**
16 **working with a congregation to become more vital?**

17 A vital congregation is one that has members who see themselves as missionaries, for
18 whom every opportunity is an opportunity to be the church and serve Christ. I personally
19 measure it by the fruit we are producing. I have laity, active in our local community and in the
20 surrounding towns, who are constantly bringing new mission/ministry opportunities to the
21 church. What's more, they are taking the initiative to lead those ministries, some of which are
22 mentioned above on lines 8-14.

23 I have envisioned working toward the vitality of my congregation through the formation
24 of our visioning team. I serve on the team to guide them; however, it is led by one the laity, and

25 all the team were voted by the church to be on it. What's more, I've equipped our church through
26 Christian education, through preaching, and through leading to be present in the community.

27 **What is your personal approach to conflict? Provide an example of where you have been**
28 **involved in resolving conflict. What did you learn?**

29 In my experience, conflict needs to be addressed right away. My approach is to address it,
30 but to allow for grace amid it. One example of conflict was over a bequest given to us and
31 accepted by the church. The Power of Attorney stated that she was told by the deceased, a
32 member of the church, that she wanted her endowment to go toward an automatic generator and
33 vinyl siding for the church and parsonage; however, she had never specifically written that down
34 and there were some who strongly felt that using it for a generator was a waste of money. What's
35 more, they were arguing that since it wasn't written down and designated toward that, the church
36 wasn't legally obligated to use it for those things.

37 During this period, I began opening our meetings with centering reflections and I handed
38 out a resource (given to me by my D.S.) on rules for engaging each other respectfully. I informed
39 the committee, that our beloved member had expressed to me her desire to see those tasks done.
40 As a Trustee while alive, she had expressed it to other Trustees as well. Outside of that, I aided
41 the Church Council chairperson in facilitating the discussion, and abstained from the vote to
42 allow for the church to decide what it felt was best.

43 In the end, they overwhelmingly decided to honor her request. I learned that, when
44 possible, neutrality is key in guiding people through conflict. By not taking sides, I could gain
45 the trust of both sides of the conflict and, thus, a civil and morally guided decision was made.

46 **What is your theological and practical understanding of itinerancy?**

47 Itinerant ministry has been a part of the Christian Church from the beginning, with all the
48 Apostles being itinerant ministers. It has also been the traditional method used in Methodism.
49 Itineracy models the Great Commission, which tells us to “go into all the world”, as opposed to
50 “stay right where you are.” Also, it requires trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

51 Practically speaking, it allows for the appointive authority to utilize the gifts and graces
52 of clergy where they are most needed. It also helps the congregation from being centered on
53 pastoral personality instead of Christ. Finally, it also empowers the pastor to have more of a
54 prophetic voice, and a far more diverse experience in ministry, serving different congregations in
55 different locations and settings. Churches also benefit from an array of pastoral leadership styles.

56 **How do you engage all age groups in your community?**

57 I have been fortunate in my ministry settings to have a chance to serve a wide range of
58 age groups. At Harmony Hill UMC, we have members as old as their 70’s and 80’s and children
59 as young 2 years old. We also have members who are in their teens, 20’s, 30’s, 40’s, 50’s, and
60 60’s. At Bristol Glen, a CCRC, I have served a wide range of senior citizens as old as 105 years.

61 To engage people of any age, I recognize that all human beings need community,
62 validation, love, education, opportunities to serve, spiritual guidance, pastoral presence and care.
63 While needs may vary from person to person and age group to age group, I find that if a pastor
64 treats people with dignity and recognizes the whole person rather than just their “age”, they will
65 succeed in engaging and relating with those they serve.

66 **What is your understanding of pastoral authority, and how do you intend to exercise it in**
67 **your place of ministry?**

68 As the pastor, I have been given the authority by God, through the appointive power of
69 the Greater NJ Annual Conference, to perform the duties of Elder outlined in the United

70 Methodist Book of Discipline. I intend to continue to use my authority to teach, preach, officiate
71 the Sacraments, and order the life of the church in a way that makes disciples of Jesus Christ.
72 With that said, I do not view the word “authority” in a dictatorial way. I listen for God’s voice
73 through the voice of the congregation; however, I do also exercise my authority in areas that God
74 is guiding me in my conscience and my heart. I have been, and intend to be, that kind of pastor.

75 **If you could choose anyone to mentor you in your leadership skills, who would that be and**
76 **why?**

77 I have had many mentors over the years and I firmly believe that God has put the right
78 mentors in my life to mold me into the pastoral leader that I am today. I would honestly not
79 change one of them, even if I were given the opportunity to. I am thankful for Rev. Thomas
80 Craig who was my first real mentor. I am thankful for Rev. Alec Park, Rev. John Callanan, Rev.
81 Dan Gepford, Rev. Dr. Brandon Cho, Rev. Dr. Jennifer Cho, Rev. Dr. Steve Bechtold, and Rev.
82 Ellen Bechtold. I have looked up to each of these people as mentors and they have taught me a
83 lot about myself, about my call to ministry, and they have helped form me as a pastor.

84 **Describe a situation in which you felt a need to assert a professional boundary in the**
85 **practice of ministry.**

86 I had gotten in contact with a person who had Parkinson’s Disease, was impoverished
87 and needed help in moving into a low-income apartment in our area. I had called a couple
88 members of our Joint Christian Community Outreach committee (made up of members of
89 Harmony Hill UMC as well as our neighboring church) to help this person in need. During that
90 day, one of the members of the committee gave this gentleman my personal cell phone number
91 because that was the practice of his pastor and he did not know that was not my practice.

92 Because of this, the gentleman we were helping started to call me on my cell phone at all
93 times of the morning, day and night, needing a ride or asking for money. I had to ask him to call

94 my church phone during business hours and not my personal cell phone. Having asked him
95 several times, I ended up having to block his number from my cell phone, which worked. I
96 continued to minister to him with that healthy boundary in place. What's more, I requested to my
97 leaders not to give out my cell phone, and they have since respected that boundary.

98 **How have you worked through the experience of forgiving someone?**

99 While at Bristol Glen, I was serving someone who I had come to trust in their leadership
100 and who I had gained an appreciation for as a colleague. We were discussing a transition I was
101 going to be making and I answered this person honestly, to afford them the opportunity to make
102 the appropriate adjustments. I asked this person to keep the information confidential until I had
103 the time to make the announcement myself. I found out from one of the other managers that this
104 information was not kept confidential. What's more, this person was lying about the details of
105 our conversation.

106 Though not easy, I continued to work with and forgive this person, even though I
107 couldn't confront her about it due to the confidentiality of the other manager. The way I worked
108 through this was specifically through prayer and through being able to confide in one of my
109 mentors. Articulating and expressing the hurt to someone I could trust, as well as receiving their
110 prayer and advice, helped me to be able to carry on serving a person that I had learned I could no
111 longer trust. I forgave and continued to work successfully with this person.

112 **What are you doing to help those around you to take good care of themselves?**

113 I truly believe in the power of leading by example. I am very intentional about taking
114 good care of myself, and I do so publicly so that others see my self-care in action. That lends me
115 far more authority and expertise on the subject. I have found that, because of my own

116 intentionality to take good care of myself, others have begun to consider their own self-care as
117 well. What's more, I have encouraged the leaders of my church to be mindful of their need for
118 self-care and to be honest when they need to step back and/or decline to do something.

119 **How have you invited someone to faith and seen their faith develop?**

120 I must mention one of my former youth who showed up at a youth group meeting, having
121 never been to church before. Her friend invited her and she instantly felt welcomed by me and
122 the other youth. Over time, I nurtured her and invited her to faith in Jesus Christ. She received
123 baptism and began serving in various ways. Her involvement in church also ended up bringing
124 her mom and stepdad to church. I have seen her live a life that is navigated by her faith,
125 overcoming hardships such as being abandoned by her abusive, alcoholic father. This youth is
126 now in college and is pursuing her Master degree in Social Working, because she feels led by the
127 Holy Spirit into that line of work of and of helping others.

128 **What have you overcome to come to this season in your ministry?**

129 Honestly, I have overcome a lack of confidence in myself, which stems from being
130 bullied throughout my school years. I have overcome a fear of conflict, a fear of failure, and a
131 fear rejection to name a few. As I have progressed and served in ministry, I have been able to
132 overcome these fears by putting my trust in God and seeing how God has worked in and through
133 me throughout this process.

134 Beyond the fears, I have overcome the challenges of being married with children and
135 putting myself through college. Since 2004, I have been working toward answering this call and
136 have attained my AA degree in Liberal Arts, my BA in Philosophy, my M. Div., as well as
137 working through the process of candidacy and being commissioned. I achieved all of this on top

138 of being a full-time dad, a devoted husband, a youth pastor, a substitute teacher, a local pastor
139 and a provisional elder. I have been able to find a healthy balance between my call to ministry
140 and my call to my family.

141 **How would you describe your prayer life in this season, and how has it changed over your**
142 **journey?**

143 I would say over the course of my journey, my prayer life has become more simple, and
144 my understanding of prayer (and how I pray) has expanded. I used to think of prayer as time
145 spent, tucked away from the world in my bedroom, talking with God. My hands would be folded,
146 my head bowed, my eyes closed and I would pray, asking God for forgiveness, guidance, and
147 help for others.

148 My understanding of how I pray has since expanded. I am a writer and often express my
149 prayer through poetry. I express my prayer through music, as well as through art. I am in
150 constant conversation with God in my thoughts, and sometimes out loud when I am driving. In
151 fact, I see myself as constantly being in and out of a state of prayer. My daily, intentional prayer
152 has become much simpler in that it often consists of praying for those I know need prayer,
153 followed by one petition, "Lord, show me what would you have me do today." I have found
154 silent meditation to be a great form of prayer as well.

155 **When you read the Bible, how do you hear God's voice? What example might you give of**
156 **how you responded.**

157 Some people I was serving were experiencing injustice and had come to me to confide,
158 and were seeking my counsel and support. A day or so later, I providentially ended up turning to
159 Jeremiah 6:19 where God, through Jeremiah, is lamenting the fact that Israel had ignored God's
160 call for justice and, thus, they were reaping the natural consequences to that.

161 In that moment, I felt God’s pain in a way I never had before when reading that passage,
162 to the point I was in tears. I heard God’s voice, through that passage, tell me that I was called to
163 be the prophet Jeremiah in this situation. I ended up bringing the injustice to the attention of
164 those who had the ability to hold the offending people accountable. I also wrote an entire
165 devotion series on the “Wrath of God”¹ as response to what I felt in reading that passage,
166 connecting it with social justice issues going on at that time.

167 **How has your family of origin influenced your call?**

168 My mom is very rooted in the Christian faith. She grew up in Grace UMC in Dover, NJ
169 and has been a woman of strong Christian. I think her passion for Scripture, especially when
170 reading Bible stories to my sister and I, or to students in Sunday School, is what sparked the
171 passion in me. My dad is a person of faith as well, so I grew up in a home in which faith in Jesus
172 was the foundation, and I grew up in the church with ample opportunities to learn, to serve and to
173 grow.

174 I had expressed my sense of call to my parents at a young age. It was later affirmed when
175 I was 10 years old by Rev. Clarence Twigg, who told my parents that he believed I was going to
176 be a pastor one day. Upon retiring, he entrusted my mom with his commentary to give to me
177 when I was old enough to make use of them. I still have his commentary to this day.

178 **Interview three people to tell you what they see in your ministry. What did you hear in**
179 **these conversations?**

180 I heard an affirmation of who I believe God has called me to be. The people I interviewed
181 spoke of my passion and enthusiasm for ministry, my strong faith and trust in Christ, and my

¹ See my devotion at <https://lifegivingwaterdevo.org/2016/06/15/wrath-of-god/>.

182 desire for those I encounter to experience the same “closeness to Christ” that I have. What’s
183 more, I heard an affirmation of my ability relate, and be relatable, with people of all ages ranging
184 from the youth, to peers, to the elderly.

185 The people I interviewed expressed that they saw in me a genuine love for, and
186 understanding of, the Word of God. They spoke of me being intelligent and articulate, and that
187 they saw my gift of teaching as a real asset. It was also noted that I am as eager and opening to
188 learning from others as I am in teaching them. They noted that my style of teaching was open,
189 welcoming, and inviting in such a way that others want to learn and glean from my knowledge.

190 The people I interviewed stated that my sermons were thought out, that the Scriptures I
191 preached on were always put into historical context, but were also practical and applicable in
192 people’s lives. It was mentioned that I make people feel comfortable, yet also challenged at the
193 same time. Even when holding people accountable, it has been noted that my words are spoken
194 with respect, with grace and out of love.

195 One of the people I interviewed is an ordained Presbyterian minister who mentioned the
196 ministry I have done with him and other clergy in the community, and that I have been
197 committed to the local church, to mission, as well as ecumenical outreach. I confess that it is
198 somewhat awkward to be writing these responses about myself; yet, I am thankful for them and
199 for their affirmation because, in moments of doubt, I am reminded that God has called and
200 equipped me.

1 **Give examples of how the practice of ministry has affected your experience and**
2 **understanding of:**
3 **God**
4

5 I firmly believe that God is love (1 John 4:8) and, as an extension of God's very being,
6 has permeated all of creation with grace¹ (Romans 1:20), which is God's unconditional love
7 given to us despite our sinfulness. I am a living example of God's grace at work. As a person
8 who heard God's call at a young age, yet rejected it and walked away from the call and the
9 church for a good 8-9 years, I am writing this as living proof that God's grace is unconditional,
10 invitational, persistent, qualifying, and transforming².

11 God's grace is certainly working in the lives of the people I serve and has been revealed
12 in a fifth grader affirming her call to ministry, in teens starting their own Bible Study, and in
13 elderly people moving beyond their fear of losing independence and of death to visit people in
14 the skilled nursing department of Bristol Glen. God's grace is at work in the youth in my church,
15 who volunteer their time to lead other youth to discipleship. It is also at work in my church, as
16 our leadership and our entire congregation have been intentional about discerning God's vision
17 for the ministry God is calling us to in our community.

18 **Humanity**
19

20 Humanity is the prized creation of God, so much so that Scripture tells us that humans
21 were created in the very image of God (Genesis 1:27). God created humanity out of love, and
22 God created people for love; yet, the reality is that humanity is broken. Our subjectivity stands in
23 the way of seeing others as clearly as we think we see ourselves. What's more, we don't often
24 see ourselves all that clearly either. The result is that humanity has fallen into a state of

¹ See my definition of the Wesleyan threefold understanding of grace on page 16, starting on line 364.

² My biographical statement offers a more detailed account of my faith journey.

25 sinfulness, which has driven us away from God and each other. It is our state of brokenness that
26 leads us to see the need for God’s grace.

27 While there is plenty of brokenness I have experienced in my life and ministry, my
28 experience has also led me to believe that humanity has great potential to do good. Members of
29 my church have invited and led people in our local community to band together to help a local
30 family devastated by a fatal house fire. A resident at Bristol Glen began volunteering to bring
31 health care residents down to chapel, after seeing the need for that with his own ailing wife. The
32 high school marching band helped our church raise over 700 lbs of food for a local food pantry,
33 raising over 1/3 of that themselves. I believe, when given the opportunity, people can and often
34 will live out their potential to do good.

35 **The need for divine grace**

36 Where there is brokenness, there is need for being put back together. Everything hinges
37 on the grace of God. We experience God’s grace through prevenient grace, justifying grace, and
38 sanctifying grace.³ Obviously, on a theological level, we all need grace in every sense of the
39 word. It is God’s grace that leads us to recognize our brokenness.

40 My ministry experience over the years has led me to understand that God’s grace is
41 necessary for the body of Christ to function. God’s grace has worked through me in mediating
42 divisive church council meetings, in helping associates understand their manager’s perspective
43 and vice versa, in looking beyond hurtful comments to see the hurt in the one who uttered them,
44 in extending God’s grace and understanding to a girl experiencing the rejection of her father, in
45 leading people to treat each other with respect and dignity, and in many other ways.

³ See my definition of the Wesleyan threefold understanding of grace on page 16, starting on line 364.

46 I have come to recognize not only our need for God’s grace, but for the need for the
47 extending of God’s divine grace toward others. The ability to extend God’s grace to others is one
48 of the greatest gifts our Lord has given us (Ephesians 4:7-16). To lead by example, I’ve been
49 intentional of modeling the extension of grace to others. My understanding has deepened to a
50 realization of the need not only to receive grace, but to need to extend the grace we have
51 received.

52 **The Lordship of Jesus Christ**

53 Jesus proclaimed, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matthew
54 28:18 NRSV). As I have come to understand and affirm in my faith, the very authority that
55 commanded everything into existence is the same authority that rests in Jesus Christ, who is the
56 very Word of God through whom all things came into being (John 1:1-4). With that
57 understanding, there isn’t an aspect of my life or my very being that Jesus Christ does not have
58 Lordship over.

59 I have followed Jesus Christ as my Lord, at all costs. In my supervised ministry, I
60 endured very tough, and sometimes even harsh, criticism. My family and I have made tough
61 sacrifices, endured financial hardships, and stress for me to answer this call that Christ has put in
62 my heart. In my ministry, I have been placed outside of my comfort zone in mediating conflict
63 within my congregation, counseling families and friends amid suicide, sat bedside with people
64 slowly dying from terrible cancer, and many other situations.

65 I have learned that Christ is Lord even when people are not aware of that reality. As the
66 chaplain of Bristol Glen, I worked with people of many different faiths, and people who were
67 even atheists. Leading a diverse people in forming an Associate Mission Team, and watching
68 them take ownership of it to volunteer their time to do ministry (working soup kitchens, donating

69 and delivering food to pantries, celebrating diversity, etc.), has reminded me that Christ is Lord
70 of all Creation, and that people respond to Christ even when they don't realize it.

71 **The Work of the Holy Spirit**

72 In my ministry, I consistently teach that the Holy Spirit is constantly working in us,
73 transforming us from who we are to who God is calling us to be. God's grace calls us to
74 recognize our need for God, redeems and reconciles us back into a right relationship with God,
75 and sustains us in that relationship. The Holy Spirit is the sustaining Spirit that works and moves
76 within us, continually molding, shaping, and transforming us back to God's perfect Creation.

77 When I was appointed to Harmony Hill, I had a meeting with a parishioner who was on
78 the verge of leaving the church over being hurt. Through counseling, educating, and nurturing
79 his faith, as well as through the congregation continually embracing and valuing him, I have seen
80 this person not only grow into a strong leader within the church, but also a person who has
81 become a presence of peace, mediation and reconciliation. The Holy Spirit not only sustains us
82 in our faith but, through that sustenance, our faith grows stronger and more profound.

83 Through a youth who grew beyond depression and a fear of rejection, to being a bold
84 follower of Christ who is a social worker helping others in need, reminds me of the work of the
85 Holy Spirit. As does a mother I counseled who lost her 2-day old baby due to congenital birth
86 defects and later became empowered to be a hospice volunteer. As does my church growing from
87 fear of finances to faithful use of their finances to affect change in our community. These things
88 have taught me of the unlimited, sustaining and perfecting power of the Holy Spirit.

89 **The meaning and the significance of the Sacraments**

90 Holy Baptism and Holy Communion are the two Scriptural Sacraments, given to us by
91 our Lord Jesus Christ, and they are the means of grace for all believers. What that means is that

92 through the Sacraments, Christians come into the mysterious presence and receive the
93 redemptive and transformative grace of God. Holy Baptism is a performative act where people
94 are initiated into the life of the Church, which is Christ body. It is an outward sign of God’s
95 prevenient, justifying and sanctifying grace in the lives of the Baptized (infants and adults), as
96 well as in the in the lives of the members of the Church.

97 Holy Communion is also a performative act, which reflects the mystery of Christ’s
98 presence with the gathered church. The act of taking the elements of bread and juice are an
99 outward sign of Christ’s mysterious presence with us and Lordship over us. While the elements
100 themselves are symbols, Christ’s presence in the act of partaking in Holy Communion is real!

101 My ministry has taught me that God’s grace is limitless. God’s grace led a non-Christian
102 teen to my youth group, to accept Jesus Christ, to receive Holy Baptism, to partake regularly in
103 Holy Communion, and be transformed into a faithful member of Christ’s Body. The act of
104 partaking in Holy Communion has brought peace in dying to one of the residents in my spiritual
105 care, because she felt the presence of Jesus with her. In my experience, the Holy Sacraments are
106 two tangible ways in which the Church regularly participates, experiences, and extends God’s
107 limitless, redemptive, and transformative grace.

108 **The Kingdom of God**

109 The Kingdom of God is a phrase that underscores God’s sovereign reign of all Creation.
110 It is the wholeness of God (eternal life, love, peace, justice, completeness, equality, welfare,
111 presence, etc.), which is embodied by Jesus Christ, and is strived for by the church. Jesus taught
112 that while the Kingdom is not fully here, it is “near” (Mark 1:15) and he called his followers to
113 pray and seek first the Kingdom of God in all that they do. What’s more, when the reign of God

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114 is full and complete on the Earth, all of God’s people (those alive and those who’ve died) will
115 come to eternal life in God’s Kingdom (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 21:3)

116 Thus, not only does Jesus embody the Kingdom of God, but Christ made it clear that the
117 Church is to strive to do the same (Matthew 6:33). Kingdom building is the work of the church,
118 and my ministry has taught me that the work is ongoing until the day that our Lord’s prayer,
119 “Thy kingdom come...on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10), is fully and literally realized.
120 For that end, my congregation has worked to fight drug addiction and substance abuse. We’ve
121 opened our doors and our resources to those who are struggling to survive financially.

122 At the “Search for Christian Maturity” retreats, youths and young adults who have given
123 their lives to Christ have stepped up into leadership. In doing so, they have welcomed and invited
124 other youths and young adults to let God resurrect them from their brokenness into a life in
125 Christ. Ministry has heightened my realization of the need to “seek first the Kingdom of God” in
126 all things. In my experience, when we do so, God empowers us to see beyond the brokenness in
127 our communities to where we can plant the seed of God’s Kingdom.

128 **Resurrection and eternal life**

129 There is no greater hope than the hope we have in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and in
130 the eternal life that comes through it. Indeed, it is the very foundation of our Christian faith.
131 Christianity is nothing apart from the Resurrection. Though human sin and evil crucified Jesus to
132 the cross, death was not the final word; rather, Jesus resurrected from death, conquering it not
133 only for himself, but for all who put their faith in Christ. As our Lord proclaims, “because I live,
134 you also will live” (John 14:19 NRSV). Because he lives, we are assured that nothing will ever
135 separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:31-39)! Because he lives, we too will be resurrected
136 into eternal life!

137 What an awesome God we serve! God is awesome because, through Jesus Christ, we will
138 experience the resurrection and inherit eternal life. Not only will we experience the resurrection
139 when Christ returns, but we can live into Christ’s resurrection now. It is the power of God to
140 save us from our slavery to sin and death (Romans 7:24-25).

141 The church is made up of human beings who are, apart from Christ, a broken people in a
142 broken world. In my own life, and in my ministry, I have experienced the power of Christ to
143 resurrect people from their sins and their circumstances into a new life. I have witnessed the
144 peace of eternal life expressed in the eyes of people who are actively dying. I have witnessed a
145 mother grieving the loss of her newborn baby turn around and devote her time to becoming a
146 hospice volunteer. Lost teenagers have become bold and devoted servants of Christ.

147 What’s more, ministry has helped expand my understanding of the Resurrection in terms
148 of the church. Younger members rising to take up the proverbial torch from older members, for
149 me, is the one of greatest witnesses to the eternal nature of the church of Jesus Christ. The life
150 shared in the church, which does not begin or end with us, is eternal. It has been experienced by
151 the members preceding us, it is being experienced by us, and it will be experienced by those who
152 follow us. What’s more, that life continues beyond this current age into the age to come, when
153 the Kingdom of God will be the only reality on Earth and all the saints (living and dead) will be
154 alive together eternally in that reality.

155 **How do you understand the following traditional evangelical doctrines: (a) repentance; (b)**
156 **justification; (c) regeneration; (d) sanctification? What are the marks of the Christian life?**

157
158 Humanity is, by its very nature, stuck in a state of subjectivity and the propensity to be
159 centered on self instead of God. It is this subjectivity and self-centeredness that holds all people
160 captive in sin. Repentance is the turning away from a life rooted in sin to live a life that is rooted
161 in and expresses God’s love. The repentant person recognizes his/her slavery to sin, recognizes

162 the futility in seeking self-justification and, instead, seeks forgiveness through the acceptance of
163 Christ’s Lordship over his/her life. This, of course leads to the person’s justification before God,
164 where they are reconciled with God.

165 From that point on the person becomes a “new creation” in Christ, where his/her life is
166 now solely focused on Christ and we are assured in our present salvation in Christ. This
167 “becoming a new creation” is what is called regeneration, where “the old has passed away” and
168 the new life in Christ has begun. Salvation of course is not static in that it only happens once;
169 rather, it is a continual process in which the Holy Spirit is working in us and transforming us
170 from who we are to who God has called us to be.

171 Regeneration is the outset of the Christian life; whereas, sanctification is the Holy Spirit’s
172 ongoing presence in us, working out our salvation and perfecting us in God’s love. This process
173 of sanctification should produce in us visible and noticeable change, where we begin to show
174 signs of our trust and faith in God, where we begin to produce the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians
175 5:22-23) and the marks of the true Christian as the Apostle Paul detailed in Romans 12:9.

176 **How has the practice of ministry informed your understanding of the nature and the**
177 **mission of the Church? What are its primary challenges today?**

178 The Church is the body of our Lord Jesus Christ in and for the world and it exists in the
179 world today primarily to serve people who are non-members out in the local community, as well
180 as in the world. In my experience in churches, one of the great challenges is getting people to see
181 their ministry beyond the walls of the church. When I came to Harmony Hill UMC, the
182 predominant ministries were two major fundraisers, children’s Sunday school, and Sunday
183 worship. The ministries were focused on the church, and not so much on serving the community
184

185 to “make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world”⁴, a motto that lives into
186 our Lord’s Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20).

187 My ministry has been focused on serving the community and making disciples. I have led
188 our confirmed youth to deepen their faith and to step up in leadership roles, including being on
189 our church’s Visioning Team. They also lead on the “Search for Christian Maturity” retreat,
190 where they invite other youth (friends, family, classmates, etc.) to go on the retreat and deepen
191 their faith in and commitment to Jesus Christ. Each “Search” retreat promotes committed
192 discipleship and generates new leadership to serve on team.

193 Our church has joined together with the local Presbyterian Church, forming a joint
194 Christian Community Outreach to help meet the needs of people in our community. We’ve
195 partnered with a local business to provide a safe, drug-free, space for constructive self-
196 expression. The regional High School Marching partnered with our church to raise over 700
197 pounds of food for a local food pantry. We’ve successfully launched a Mid-Week Worship
198 service to meet the need of families displaced from church because they work on weekends.

199 The church is primarily challenged in doing ministry in a post-Christian era, where
200 religion and the church are no longer the center of society. The church struggles to be relevant in
201 a way that is faithful to its mission. Not unconnected to that, the church continues to struggle
202 with division over issues such as human sexuality and full inclusion for LGTBQ persons. These,
203 and the difficulty the church has in showing grace amid division, are its primary challenges.

204 **The United Methodist Church holds that Scripture, tradition, experience and reason are**
205 **sources and norms for belief and practice, but that the Bible is the primary among them.**
206 **What is your understanding of this theological position of the church, and how has your**
207 **practice of ministry been affected by this understanding?**
208

⁴ The Council of Bishops. "Episcopal Greeting." In *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2012* by The United Methodist Church. (Nashville, Tennessee: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012), v.

209 The Wesleyan Quadrilateral affirms that God has given us ample sources for our belief
210 and practices. Each one of these sources are vital to the Christian life, and the life of the Church,
211 but Scripture is absolutely the Primary source. It is in Scripture that we learn about God’s very
212 nature and character, God’s plan of redemption carried out through Jesus Christ, and God’s
213 sanctifying presence in the Church through the Holy Spirit. Without Scripture, we would have
214 nothing to measure our tradition, reason or experience; yet, I wholly disagree with Martin
215 Luther’s theology that we must rely on Scripture alone.

216 The Church was established by, and founded on, Jesus Christ and tradition is the
217 collective beliefs and practices passed down from generation to generation. Tradition is the way
218 in which we practice our faith as we have come to understand it in Scripture. God gave each
219 human the ability to reason and we need that to discern what Scripture teaches us, and how to
220 apply it in our beliefs and practices. It allows us to understand Scripture in the textual, historical,
221 socio-economic and cultural contexts in which it was written. Experience is what makes
222 Scripture real for us today and not just ancient history. Our experience is both informed by
223 Scripture, but also corroborates the truth in Scripture in real and tangible ways.

224 The practice of ministry has helped me to view the Wesleyan Quadrilateral in terms of
225 knowing and loving God with our whole being (Matthew 22:37). I have prioritized Christian
226 Education, Biblical literacy, and mission in our local community to put Scripture, reason,
227 tradition and experience into practice. I have done so with Adult and Teen Bible Study classes,
228 confirmation, Biblically-grounded preaching, mentoring and leading our congregation out into
229 the community to build relationships that invite and encourage discipleship and mission work.

230
231 **How has the practice of ministry enriched your understanding of the meaning and**
232 **significance of the Sacraments?**
233

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234 Counseling a teenager lost in depression and self-loathing and watching her transform
235 into a strong and bold disciple of Jesus Christ was one of the most powerful witnesses to the
236 meaning and significance of the Sacraments. This girl was wholly accepted by the church,
237 despite being rejected by her own father. She was included in the Sacrament of Holy
238 Communion on a regular basis and in the life of the church. It was the grace of God to lead her
239 into communion with God and with the Church, and it was the grace of God that led her to
240 decide to be baptized at 15 years old, even though her parents never, ever brought her to church
241 her entire life.

242 Seeing God’s prevenient grace work in the life of a baptized infant, who is incapable of
243 professing his/her own faith, and seeing God’s sanctifying grace work in the lives of the infant’s
244 parents, family and in the congregation, shows the power and grace of God at work. Church
245 members finding peace and seeking forgiveness during Communion, a prisoner seeking
246 redemption amid confinement, children “remembering their baptism” and expressing their call to
247 ministry, are all examples of the types of things I have witnessed as a pastor. And they all have
248 shown me the transformative grace of God at work through the Sacraments.

249 **How has the experience of ministry shaped your understanding of your vocation as an**
250 **ordained elder?**

251
252 I will say that, in this process, I have come to affirm my call in the parish as opposed to
253 chaplaincy and extension ministry. I had opportunity to explore each of these types of ministries
254 and have come to realize, and appreciate, that I am called to serve the local church. The
255 Sacraments are so important to how I serve and lead the church, because they include us the life
256 of Christ’s body and the salvific plan of God’s Kingdom. What’s more, they mysteriously bring
257 us into the presence of our risen Lord, where true hope, healing and wholeness are made
258 manifest in the Church and carried out to the community.

259 Aside from the Sacramental life of the church, I have also come to realize my call to
260 provide pastoral care and counseling to people. I had ample opportunity to do so in the clinical
261 and parish settings and, in my experience of doing so, I found it to be very much a part of my
262 call as clergy. I have sat bedside next with the sick and dying, I have counseled a convicted
263 criminal seeking reconciliation with God and community, I have counseled grieving family
264 members, and people experiencing marital challenges. In all these things, I've come to realize
265 that I've been doing such things throughout my life, as well as in youth ministry, and I've come
266 to realize it is an inherent part of who I am and what God is calling me to do in my ministry.

267 **How has the practice of ministry affected your understandings of the expectations and**
268 **obligations of the itinerant system? Do you offer yourself without reserve to be appointed**
269 **and to serve as the appointive authority may determine?**

270
271 To answer the latter question first: yes, I do offer myself without reserve. Obviously, the
272 practice of ministry has affected my understanding in that I have had to move my family to my
273 current ministry setting and I understand how itinerancy not only affects me, it also affects my
274 family. Thus, it is an important part of anyone discerning their call to also discern their family's
275 willingness to fully support that call and for the family to feel called, themselves, to wholly
276 embrace that reality in the pastoral life.

277 With that said, I have seen that this is truly a Spirit-led process not only for the appointive
278 power, but also for the pastor and his family as well. Being Spirit-led, there is grace involved in
279 itinerancy. The system requires the pastor to constantly be in discernment as to where the Spirit
280 is calling her or him to be able to express that call to the appointive power. I have seen that the
281 Bishop and cabinet consider the pastor's call, as well as other factors (including family), in their
282 discernment of appointment. Thus, itinerancy is a system I trust in and wholly submit to,

283 knowing that the Spirit is leading the process, despite the obvious uncertainties that can
284 challenge the pastor, the pastor's family, and the congregation.

285 **Describe and evaluate your personal gifts for ministry and how they have resulted in**
286 **fruitful ministry. What would your areas of strength and areas in which you need to be**
287 **strengthened in order to be more fruitful in ministry.**

288
289 I am philosophical and can think through my theology, articulate and defend it, and listen
290 and learn from different approaches and ways of looking at things. I have a gift, affirmed by
291 various people, for teaching. I also am gifted in writing and articulating my theology in written
292 form. While there is always room to grow, I am gifted at preaching, and thoroughly enjoy
293 tackling tough texts in my sermons, to challenge and bring theological growth to my
294 congregation. I am compassionate, empathetic, and a good listener. I have, over the years,
295 developed the skill of listening, thinking, then speaking, which has helped me in my ability to
296 effectively counsel people.

297 Because of my strengths and gifts, I am able to hold intentional, well-rounded,
298 theological conversations with church and non-church members alike. Through Christian
299 education I have built up a thoughtful, well-informed, and theologically-rounded congregation. I
300 am the author of Life-Giving Water Devotional⁵, which is published online and followed by my
301 congregation, people in my community, shared with all United Methodist Communities. The
302 devotional has gained a global, online readership as well

303 In terms of growth, I could always improve my listening skills. In the parish setting
304 particularly, I have not been successful at leading people to a deeper commitment to tithe and,
305 thus, stewardship is an area that I think I could grow in. I can grow in preaching and will
306 continue to take opportunities to learn how to become a more effective preacher. I have also been

⁵ Lattig, Todd R. "Life-Giving Water: A Bi-Weekly Devotional". (<http://www.lifegivingwaterdevo.org/>)

307 reflecting on how to better equip our church for evangelism. While, I've been good about
308 equipping them for mission, I can grow regarding evangelism, which will benefit the church.

309 **For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness to the**
310 **Christian gospel and in consideration of your influence as an ordained minister, are you**
311 **willing to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideals of Christian life; and**
312 **to this end will you agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive**
313 **to physical health, intentional intellectual development, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in**
314 **singleness, integrity in all personal relationships, social responsibility, and growth in grace**
315 **and the knowledge and love of God?**

316
317 Yes. I continue to adjust my life and lifestyle so that I become an even more positive
318 role-model and effective pastor. To date, I have lost over 100 pounds starting in 2012, reversing
319 major diseases such as type-2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol. I have become
320 a much more active person. I have modeled commitment to Jesus Christ and to serving the
321 church, and I am devoted to my family and to my wife, Bernadette.

322 I am an intellectual person, by nature, and I always seek out opportunities to learn. By my
323 experiences in ministry and in life, I believe I am ever growing in the knowledge and grace of
324 God. I am socially aware and responsible, and I view my veganism as a part of my social
325 responsibility to the environment, to sustainability, and to all of God's creatures. I'm self-aware,
326 I'm aware of my boundaries, I'm self-reflective, and always looking for ways to be improve.

327 **Provide evidence of your willingness to relate yourself in ministry to all persons without**
328 **regard to race, color, ethnicity, national origin, social status, gender, sexual orientation,**
329 **age, economic condition, or disability.**

330
331 What "evidence" can I give but that there is great diversity in my life, in my friendships
332 (which span racially, culturally, globally, and include people of all genders and sexual
333 orientations), and as a pastor? In my ministry, I always try include historical, social, economic
334 and cultural contexts in my preaching and teaching. Through my sermons, my classes, and my
335 language, I try to be welcoming of diversity and to encourage inclusiveness. I have had to

336 minister to people of different generations, abilities, and age groups, and believe I have been
337 relatable to those I have ministered to. With that said, I am always looking to be more sensitive
338 and culturally aware.

339 **Will you regard all pastoral conversations of a confessional nature and trust between the**
340 **person concerned and God?**

341
342 Yes, I always do and always will, subject to legal requirements. I have both a moral and
343 legal obligation to report things to the appropriate authorities should I discern that what is being
344 confided is going to lead to the imminent harm of one's life and/or the lives of others. Even then,
345 all other elements of the conversation will remain confidential and the whole of the conversation
346 will remain confidential beyond what I am morally and legally obligated to report.

347 **Provide evidence of an experience in peace and justice ministries.**

348 I have fought for peace and justice in my ministries both as a pastor at Harmony Hill
349 UMC and as the Director of Mission and Pastoral Care at the United Methodist Communities at
350 Bristol Glen. In the church, we have fought passionately for our town to approve and give the
351 appropriate zoning clearances to the Samaritan Inn, which is an organization that helps alleviate
352 poverty, homelessness, and hunger in Sussex County. Thus, the Samaritan is now headquartered
353 in our town, in what was the old Swartswood UMC building. We have also been considering, as
354 a congregation, of becoming a reconciling ministry.

355 At Bristol Glen, without going into detail, I successfully advocated on behalf of
356 associates and managers who were being unjustly mistreated. I have also worked to bring peace
357 between different factions within the church as well as within Bristol Glen, and I believe that I
358 overall succeeded in that. What's more, I have addressed and raised awareness on issues of race,
359 sexual identity, sexism, gender identity, ableism, ageism, xenophobia, and other issues in both
360 the classroom setting as well as from the pulpit.

361 **Explain the threefold aspects of Wesleyan grace and how you have encountered them in**
362 **your ministry/life.**

363
364 God's prevenient grace is the grace that precedes our salvation and justification in Jesus
365 Christ. It is that aspect of God's grace that empowers us to know God and that leads us to a
366 relationship with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Justifying grace is the grace of God we
367 receive through believing and accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, seeking forgiveness
368 through Christ, and accepting him as our Lord and Savior. Sanctifying grace is the ongoing work
369 of the Holy Spirit in each believer, and in the Church, guiding them from who and where they
370 are to who and where God is calling them to be. The Holy Spirit is ever perfecting us in our faith
371 and in our service.

372 Honestly, I have seen youth come to a relationship with Jesus Christ because of attending
373 an open mic. I have encountered God's grace through infant baptism, through the nurturing of
374 baptized children and the response of those children to that grace as they acknowledge their own
375 faith in Jesus Christ through Confirmation. I have witnessed God's grace in people (including
376 addicts and those convicted of crimes) who have accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior, who
377 have sought redemption for their sins, and turned their lives around to be profound witnesses of
378 the power of Christ.

379 God's grace has worked in my congregation, growing them in their discipleship, in their
380 ability to forgive others, and in their willingness to represent their faith in Christ through service
381 in the community. In my own life, God's grace has covered me through all things. In being
382 called as young boy, in my rejecting that call as a teenager, and in answering it as an adult. There
383 is no doubt that God's grace is the reason I am a pastor seeking ordination.

384 **Share an instance when you found yourself in ministry with someone whose theology was**
385 **radically different than yours.**

386

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387 I recently dealt with a woman from another church who is extremely conservative and
388 fundamentalist in her beliefs. She has challenged me on multiple occasions, especially regarding
389 my very open positions on social issues such as marriage equality. She has been very vocal and
390 public in her opposition to my views, even asking me if I was a “false prophet”. In response, I
391 have only ever shown her respect and have engaged in open conversation with her. I respect
392 differences and I believe that none of us are saved by “right” belief, but by the grace of God.
393 Though we have our disagreements, I have engaged in respectful conversation with her and I still
394 stand side-by-side with her in serving our community in ministry.

395 **Describe how your image of God has changed over your journey? What has informed this.**

396 When I first came back to Christ, I saw God as being just and holy and believed that we
397 were created to be just and holy. Obviously, sin stood in our way and we needed Christ to
398 redeem us, wipe the slate clean and lead us back to a state of being just and holy. Of course, we
399 all continue to sin (even as Christians), and I found that I was always falling short of “God’s
400 image” of justice and holiness.

401 Over time, while justice and holiness are a part of God’s character, I have come to realize
402 that God is love (1 John 4:8); therefore, the image of God is love. We were created out of love in
403 the image of love, and it is God’s grace that leads us back to living in love and grace. This
404 change in understanding is a result of not only my theological training, but also a result of
405 serving a diverse number of people, all of whom are different in thought, in theology, in their
406 faith journey, in their personalities, in their abilities and in their gifts. I have learned to love each
407 of them for who they are, regardless of our differences, and that love has informed and molded
408 my understanding.

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Explain the role of deacons, elders, and local pastors in the UMC and how they are each uniquely called and function in the church.

As of the 2012 Book of Discipline, the Deacon's ministry is one of servant leadership, of teaching, preaching, assisting elders in administering the sacraments, of leading and equipping the laity to bring the vision of the church to life. Deacons organize and build community and they carry out the great commission of making disciples. They lead the church in ministries of justice, compassion and peace. In their conference, Deacons have rights to a voice and to votes, to serve on boards, commissions or committees, and they can be elected as delegates to the jurisdictional, central and general conferences respectively (§ 328).

The role of the Elder is a lifetime commitment to the ministry of preaching/teaching the Word, administering the Holy Sacraments ordained by Christ in the Gospels, ordering the life of the church, and leading the church in carrying out Christ's mission and ministry in the world. On top of that, the Elder is one who is called to counsel and provide pastoral care to the church. They are called to lead people to profess their faith and live out that faith in discipleship and servant leadership (§ 332-333, 340).

Licensed Local Pastors are baptized members who have been affirmed by their local church, examined and approved by their dCOM, and have been licensed by the bishop to serve in less than full-time charges, or full-time charges where no elder is available for appointment. This person has been granted by the appointive authority to carry out the duties of an Elder "within and while appointed to that charge or extension ministry" (§316, 340).

What is the process for setting a pastor's salary? Who can change it, and when can it be changed?

Each year, the Commission on Equitable Compensation recommends the minimum salaries for pastors. These are made available to SPPRCs who meet with the pastor to discuss

and negotiate their salary. Upon agreement, the SPPRC sends the proposed salary to the Church Council for a vote of approval and, once approved, it is referred to the church's Committee on Finance to be budgeted and sent to the Charge Conference to be voted on. It is the Charge Conference, in consultation with the District Superintendent, that officially sets the salary (§247.13, 252.4d, 258.2g.16, 625.2a, c).

The education committee wants to update the curriculum being taught in the Christian Education program. What specific guidance does the Book of Discipline give you in dealing with this issue?

The Book of Discipline gives us guidance for the overall goal of Church School, which is to promote and support the formation of Christian discipleship. This includes creating a community in which God's active and living presence is experienced, healthy relationships with God and each other are built and/or deepened, where there is opportunity to testify to the reconciling love of God through Jesus Christ, and where people learn of and have opportunity to "live out their faith in the world as witnesses to the coming reign of God" (§255.1a) All curriculum must be in line with this overall purpose.

The Book of Discipline not only lays out its general goals and purpose for Church School, it has also established the Curriculum Resources Committee (CRC), which is "designed to help local churches carry out the Church's education ministry" (§1121.2). The BOD refers us to the General Board on Discipleship (of whom the CRC is a subcommittee), which has a library of resources on their website, including a list of curriculum¹ to help guide churches in providing quality learning opportunities that are in line with the general goals and purpose of Christian Education within the United Methodist Church (§255, 256.1, 256.1a, 630.2, 1108, 1121).

¹ <http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/choosing-curriculum-resources1>

You have discovered the need for a soup kitchen, and wish to recommend that this be a priority for the congregation, using the facilities of the church. What parties and process need to be notified?

In ¶163.E, the Book of Discipline offers the guiding principles as to why having such soup kitchen should be a priority for the local church. To make the soup kitchen a reality, I would have a discussion of the need for the soup kitchen with the trustees in order to get approval of building use and in order to research any legal issues such as the requirements of the town and/or county board of health.

The SPPRC would need to be brought on board to advocate this as a priority to the congregation, as would the Outreach Committee so that they can also promote the ministry to the community. What's more, the finance team needs to be brought on board in order budget it and find the funding and/or raise the funding for the new ministry. Finally, the Administrative Council would need to approve it as a ministry of the Church and the Nominations Committee would discern who to ask to serve in the ministry.

A constituent of your church comes to speak with you about their call to ministry. Describe the basic steps that are involved in seeking ordination.

I would discuss their call with them and loan them a copy of *The Christian as Minister* and/or *The Ministry Inquiry Process*. The constituent would then need to request to enter the candidacy process by writing the district superintendent, writing his/her statement of call, studying resources adopted by BOOM, and meeting with the SPPRC for an interview considering Wesley's historic questions.

Once the congregation approves the candidate, the person is then sent on to meet with the dCOM who, upon fully reviewing the candidate, votes on approving him/her. If approved, he/she becomes a certified candidate, are assigned a candidacy mentor, and are reviewed /renewed

annually by dCOM until they have been approved for Provisional Membership. This can happen no sooner than one year after being certified, and cannot happen until all candidacy, service and at least the undergraduate requirements are met.

Once approved, the candidate will be sent to the BOOM for Provisional Membership. He/she then needs to meet all the BOD requirements for being commissioned, including the written and oral examination. Upon being commissioned, the person becomes a provisional member (elder or deacon) of the conference, serving for no less than two years in full-time licensed ministry to the local church or to an approved extension ministry. The provisional member then completes the requirements in the BOD, including the exams, before receiving approval by the BOOM and ordination by the bishop. (§310, 311, 312, 324, 325, 326, 335-336).

Describe the general structures of the Annual Conference and how each body functions.

The Annual Conference is a regional body, an organizational body and a session held annually². The regional body can span an entire state (or larger as in the case of the Greater NJ Conference), it can be only a part of a state, or it can even be parts of two or more states. The conference is made up of districts which house local churches/parishes, clergy and membership. It also has a central office that houses the organizational body of the conference.

The organizational body of the conference is overseen by an appointed bishop and has professional staff to coordinate/run ministries and the business of the conference. The conference is organized into many commissions, committees and subcommittees, as well as district superintendents who oversee the local churches within their district or geographical areas, and who ensure that the mission and ministry of the conference is being met at the district level.

² <http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/annual-conferences>

Annually, the conference holds a meeting lasting 3-5 days. It is made up of all the clergy, local church lay delegates, boards, commissions, committees, and agencies as outlined in the BOD. The annual conference is presided over by the bishop, who also appoints the times for holding it, at a place designated by the conference. The purpose of this annual meeting, and/or any other special conference, is to conduct the business of the conference to ensure that the ministry of the church is being accomplished, as outlined in the BOD (§601-657).

Describe the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of the United Methodist Church.

The General Conference is the legislative branch, which is responsible for passing legislation to be executed by the bishops in their respective conferences. The other conferences are responsible for establishing rules for their individual conferences in line with the legislation of the general conference and the constitution of the United Methodist Church (§13-22).

The Judiciary Council is the judicial branch of the United Methodist Church and are in place as a check and balance to the legislative and executive branches. They ensure that the legislation passed by General Conference, as well as decisions made by all conferences, are legal. They hear appeals on episcopal decisions as well (§55-58).

The episcopacy and the council of bishops is the executive branch of the United Methodist Church, and they carry out the rules, regulations and responsibilities put forth by the General Conference. The bishops, as appointed by the Council of Bishops, are responsible for presiding over jurisdictional, central and annual conferences and shall decide on all questions of law that come before the presiding bishop in writing (§45-54).

What is your understanding of the theology behind Shared Ministries giving (apportionments)?

We, as United Methodists, are a connectional church and are to support each other in our ministries, and we are to support the conference benevolences as well as the ministries of the global church. Connectionism and shared ministries are rooted in the practices of the early church (Acts 4:32-37; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8; Romans 15:25-29). It is the responsibility of all pastors, in cooperation with their lay leadership, to lead the church in understanding, embracing, and prioritizing the conference shared ministries (§247.14).

You have an idea for a unique form of ministry. How does the Book of Discipline guide us in seeking affirmation for ministries that are beyond the local church? What is the role of extension ministry in the life of the Church?

Extension ministry serves to extend the ministry of the United Methodist church beyond the local congregation in “witness and service of Christ’s love and justice.” The Book of Discipline guides anyone seeking affirmation to such ministries to: 1) meet and discuss the call with their district superintendent and/or bishop, and that 2) the institution or agency seeking the employment of an ordained minister consults with and secures the bishop’s approval. The request must be submitted in writing by the person seeking appointment, no later than 120 days prior to the potential date of appointment. (§343-344).

In what ways does your upbringing, your cultural context, and your personal experience shape your understanding of our polity?

Being a United States citizen, I find the polity to be structured in a way that is very familiar and makes sense to me. Having had exposure growing up in other church polities, I have come to not only appreciate but embrace the episcopal system. My parents taught me to respect authority, even when standing up for what I believe is right. For example, I strongly disagree with the disciplinary stance on human sexuality, but I do respect it and uphold it. There are ways, built into the Discipline, that allow for me to work for the change my conscience is dictating.

My name is Todd Lattig. I've been married to my wife, Bernadette, for nearly 17 years and I'm the father of two daughters, ages 16 and 13. God called me to be a pastor when I was about ten years old, though there was an 8 to 9-year period where I walked away from the church and from my Christian faith. It was through the unconditional love and support of my family, as well as a mentor and the affirmation of Bernadette, that led me to rediscover and answer my call.

During the beginning of 2004, I came back to Christ and started attending Vernon United Methodist Church. I approached Rev. Alec Park about my calling to pastoral ministry and began discussing with him about the steps I would need to take to begin answering it. I finished my AA degree at Sussex County Community College, enrolled at Montclair State University and attained my Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy. I then enrolled at Drew University and graduated with a Master of Divinity degree in August of 2011, earning a total GPA of 3.960.

At VUMC, I served as the youth pastor from 2007 through June of 2012, and I helped build up a youth ministry starting with only 4 youth. The youth group itself grew from eight to ten youth in regular attendance; however, the number of youth that were connected to the youth ministry at Vernon was exponentially greater than that. I developed events like a monthly open mic night, which consistently attracted 30-60 youth. We also developed Fast for 30, modeled off 30 Hour Famine, to raise awareness and fund to help end local poverty. I served as a Christian Educator, with the aspiration to teach seminary level classes in relevant ways to the Christian laity. I taught a wide diversity of ages ranging from 5-8 grades through adults.

Since July 2012, I have been appointed to Harmony Hill United Methodist Church and I have been diligently working at building upon the community that is already here in Stillwater, NJ. Since my arrival we have worked on reaching out to those in need in our community and we have donated a building and property to Samaritan Inn to use as their headquarters and as an active food pantry for the entire county. We have also successfully formed a Joint Christian Community Outreach partnership with Stillwater Presbyterian Church. What's more, under my leadership and guidance, our church has formed a visioning team and is in the process of visioning how Christ is calling us to grow as a church, in our mission and ministry in the surrounding community.

I have continued my quest to bring theological education to the laity and started a successful adult Sunday school class of 10-12 weekly participants. On top of that, our children's Sunday school has seen growth in the number of teachers it has, as well as the number of classes offered. Our classes include a one-room Sunday school for Elementary aged students, a preschool aged class, and a Teen Sunday School class as well.

Along with serving as the pastor at Harmony Hill, I am the co-coordinator of the Skylands Young People Empowered (formerly Skylands District Youth). On top of that I also served in extension as the Director of Mission and Pastoral Care at Bristol Glen, a Continuing Care Retirement Community of the United Methodist Communities in Newton, NJ from November 2012 to July 1, 2016. I am also serving on the Commission on Archives and History of the Greater NJ Conference and I am serving on the clergy leadership team for the "Search for Christian Maturity" annual retreat for youth and young adults.

I am a person who loves God and loves the life that God has given me. Family is vitally important to me and I am very intentional on setting aside time for them as well. My daughters are involved in their schools through Marching Band, drama, sports and other activities and I pride myself in supporting them in their lives as well. I personally love art and music and take time to express myself artistically when I feel inspired to do so. I am also very health conscious, maintaining a healthy vegan and active lifestyle.

Todd R. Lattig

Spouse Bernadette Lattig

Children Katherine Regina Lattig, 16 years old

Lorien Elizabeth Lattig, 13 years old

Home Church Vernon United Methodist Church, Vernon, NJ 07462

Appointed to Harmony Hill United Methodist Church, Stillwater, NJ 07875

Education	2007 – 2011	Drew University	Madison, NJ
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Master of Divinity

2005 – 2007	Montclair State University	Montclair, NJ
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Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy

2004 – 2005	Sussex County Community College	Newton, NJ
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Associate of Arts Degree

- Phi Theta Kappa

2002 – 2003	Chubb Institute of Technology	Parsippany, NJ
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Business Programming and Web Development Diploma

1999 – 2001	Sussex County Community College	Newton, NJ
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Web Publishing Certificate

1992 – 1996	Wallkill Valley Regional High School	Hamburg, NJ
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High School Diploma

Employment	11/2012 – 7/1/2016	Bristol Glen, United Methodist Homes	Newton, NJ
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Director of Mission and Pastoral Care

- From 7/2013 – 7/2016

Staff Chaplain

- From 11/2012 – 6/2013

7/2012 – present	Harmony Hill United Methodist Church	Stillwater, NJ
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Pastor

Todd R. Lattig

10/2010 – 6/2012	Vernon Township School District	Vernon, NJ
Substitute Teacher		
1/2007 – 6/2012	Vernon United Methodist Church	Vernon, NJ
Youth Pastor		
10/2006 – 9/2009	Freelance Web Developer	Highland Lakes, NJ
Maintained the web site for Montville Township Public Library		
2003 – 2004	Xplore Solutions	Sparta, NJ
Software Engineer		
2001 – 2002	Union Iron Worker	Camden, NJ/Local 399
Journeyman, Rods		
2000 – 2001	Flying Pig Virtual Construction	Sussex, NJ
Web Site Developer, Instructor		
1998 – 1999	Burger King	Franklin, NJ
Kitchen Crew		
1997 – 1998	Bon Chef	Lafayette, NJ
Shipping and Receiving, Stocking the Warehouse		
1997	Ames Rubber	Vernon, NJ
Production Line Worker		

Residence	2012 – present	919 Fairview Lake, Rd., Newton, NJ 07860
	2003 – 2012	205 Alachua Rd., Highland Lakes, NJ 07422
	2000 – 2003	1 Purgatory Ct. Unit 4, Vernon, NJ 07462
	1999 – 2000	Alpine Village, Sussex, NJ 07461
	1983 – 1999	63 Catlin Rd., Franklin, NJ 07416

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MARZ, FREDERICK

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- 2) Bible Study
- 3) Practice of Ministry
- 4) Theology, Call, & Doctrine
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- 6) Biographical Statement
- 7) Chronological Resume



NOTES

Draw Closer

It is no mystery why Jesus told the parable of the Pharisee and Tax Collector. Luke tells us immediately as he introduces this second parable of a set found in Chapter 18. In verse nine, Luke explains: *He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt.* We tend to focus on one part of this explanation, that part being the two approaches we hear in prayers of the Pharisee and by the tax collector, but we can miss an equally important point, that is right there before us as Luke is very deliberate in giving us the details.

The Pharisee starts his prayer off admirably as he first approaches to God in gratitude. I thank you God, he says, and we hear in his prayer that he does admirable things, he prays, we know, but he also fasts twice a week and he tithes generously. In *Wesley's Explanatory* notes, John Wesley specifically notes that this man was not a hypocrite¹, and adds that he himself follows some of the same practice of fasting and tithing that the Pharisee mentions. We should also note that this is not an issue of him bragging about these things, for this is in his private prayer to God. Where

¹ John Wesley. John Wesley's Notes on The Bible: <http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/john-wesleys-notes-on-the-bible/notes-on-the-gospel-according-to-st-luke/#Chapter+XVIII>

he goes wrong is in his prayer is in comparing himself with those he looks down upon, and in this, we get a glimpse of his heart, and better understand how this is connected with *those who trusted in their own righteousness*. It is in his prayer that we realize his motive of good works to be a way of earning his perceived righteousness. We clearly can see that he does not connect righteousness with God's grace.

I was watching a movie the other day and as I was preparing for the message, a particular scene from it came to mind. The movie *Bull Durham* is about a minor league team that hires a veteran catcher, Crash Davis to sooth the rough edges off a talented and young raw pitcher. In the particular scene, when the young pitcher would not throw the particular pitch that Crash signaled, the catcher uses the pitcher's pride as a teachable moment, and relays to the opposing batter what pitch to expect. With that knowledge, the batter is able to launch a shot across the field for a home run that soars into a billboard and a free steak dinner. With that, the batter decides to celebrate in a way considered disrespectful to the pitcher. Crash Davis snapped, "I gave you a gift, don't show up my pitcher".

As we hear the Pharisee's prayer, we see a bit of a spiritual "victory lap" at the expense of the sinners he mentions. The Pharisee did not earn righteousness, it was not through his works.

Across the way was a tax collector who cried out in anguish it would seem. He cried out to God in his prayer: “*God be merciful to me a sinner!*” Here was a man who knew he needed God’s mercy. He understood he was a sinner and how wretched he was. His word sounds very much like Psalm 51 after David is confronted about his sin by God through the prophet Nathan. He too cries out, *Have mercy on me, O God. My sin is ever before me.* When Isaiah came face to face with a Holy God, he realized his helplessness in his sin.

I believe the parable of the tax collector and the Pharisee came to mind when John Wesley wrote a sermon as part of a sermon series of the Sermon on the Mount. In sermon #21, *Upon the Sermon on the Mount*, he speaks about and explains the First Beatitude, *Blessed in the poor in spirit*, and he explains: *Who then are “the poor in spirit”, without question, the humble, they who know themselves; who are convicted of sin; those to whom God hath given that first repentance, which is previous to faith in Christ”.*²

It is through God’s grace that we understand our need for God. Wesley understood grace as God’s active presence in our lives. This grace is a gift always available that need not be earned. God’s grace allowed the tax collector to see that he needed God to save him from his sinfulness. It was in

² John Wesley. *Sermon XXI- Upon Our Lord’s Sermon On The Mount. The Works Of John Wesley. Vol. V.* Zondervan Publishing House. Grand Rapids. 253.

that brokenness, that poor in spirit-ness, that contrite heart, that he was blessed. It was in that cry out for mercy and in his belief, that he was justified. He abandoned any thought that he could justify himself. He cried out for God to do that.

And so we can see the contrasts of approaches in prayer between the Pharisee and the tax collector, but there is something more here, which is an on going lesson for each of us. The part we sometimes miss is in regards, to what Luke details.

This is a short passage, only five verses. Two men, go up to the temple to pray. What is essential to notice is that they are alone and standing by themselves, each for different reasons. According to commentator Culpepper, the Pharisee is off by himself to maintain purity; he did not want to get contaminated by sinners.³ The tax collector was far off by himself, because of his feeling of unworthiness, because of his sin. No one came near to invite him closer. No one came along side him to make him feel welcome.

The Pharisee, may have been a good observer of his faith. He was at the temple to pray, he tithed and fasted and may have been admirable in his faith, but since he did not understand God's grace, his perception of his own righteousness allowed him to compare himself to others and so looked down

³ R. Allan Culpepper. *The Gospel of Luke. The New Interpreters Bible. Vol.IX.* Abingdon Press. Nashville. 1995. 341.

upon them as sinners. The more he looked down, the greater his contempt became for them. That was the other side of the message of the parable. If he had been open to God's ongoing grace, he would have seen himself before God more clearly, and in that realization, would have had empathy rather than contempt for those standing far off in their sin. His empathy would cause a desire to draw them closer.

As Christians, we are meant to be drawing others closer to God. *Standing* by ourselves is the antithesis to being a Christian. Christ desires us to abide in Him, when we do, we draw closer together; we are not meant to be separated, but to be drawn closer in Christ. The very scene Luke describes, illustrates for us how sin can separate. Through God's grace and in loving God and each other we draw closer.

We are meant to stand with each other to nurture each other. A few months ago we had a few baptisms, and we had a few others become members of our church. In baptism there is a covenant made with God, between the baptized and God, but also between the congregation and God. If you remember you each agreed to nurture each other in Christian faith and include the baptized before you in your care. With the new members you responded that you would do all in your power to increase their faith and

confirm their hope and perfect them in love. You see, we are all in this together, not competing with one another but lifting each other.

We can see in the difference between the attitude of the contrite heart of the tax payer, and the self righteous heart; when we are humble in heart, and understand God's grace, we know we are lost without God's mercy, so we do not contrast ourselves with others, we do not have contempt for them. Instead, we realize we are all in the same boat, sinners in need of God's grace. The Pharisee allowed his religion to drive him away from his fellow sinners, and have contempt for them. It is a danger we all can fall into when we rejoice in what we do, rather than what God is doing in us, through grace. We all should be embrace spiritual disciplines and engage in such means of grace as fasting, special prayer times, meditating and reading scripture, and acts of service, not as a way of earning righteousness, not in ways so to compare to another, but to strengthen our faith, and drawing closer to God and each other. That is the test of the intention of our heart: does that motivation for doing good cause us to stand apart or draw closer together?

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Fred Marz
Luke 18:9-14
Sermon Title – Draw Near

Composition of the congregation was diverse age-wise, middle class white, with a number of professionals, and retired. About six teacher or ex-teachers, so there is also a varied educational background. On that day, there were approximately forty members, and regular attendees along with four guests.

Acts of worship:

Praise, song, witness, and testimony: we do each of those things, but the testimony and witness are Holy Spirit driven, so we primarily have praise music, just to allow us to gather and worship the Lord. Also brings enthusiasm to the opening.

Prelude – Centering; a moment of preparing for coming into God’s presence with the right heart and mind.

Opening Prayer: To praise God, restate our purpose of worship.

Opening Hymn – Set the tone of the message and theme as we praise God.

Affirmation of Faith – Restate who we are, what we commonly believe, and in what we are connected, as well as and importantly, reaffirming in what we believe.

Gloria Patri- Glorify God. It also moves us to another place in the service.

Old Testament Reading - I used a Scripture that would compliment the message

Pastoral Prayer – We share joys and concerns and give testimony as to what God is doing in our lives. I then restate our joy, lift up our gratitude, provide intercessory concerns, and we all close with the *Lord’s Prayer*.

Prayer of Dedication of Gifts and Self – as stated prayer

Offering – the grace and blessing of giving.

Doxology – Praising God, and lifting up of the gifts in thanksgiving.

Hymn of Preparation – Hymn selected to highlight Scripture and the message.

Scripture Reading

Message

Closing Hymn- Hopefully an essential element of the reading or mediation is endorsed; and it is a send-off with a message to take depart with.

Benediction- Blessing and I try to include part of the essential part of the message as they depart with God’s blessing upon them.

1. The hymns were chosen as suggestions for the lectionary and to fit the message theme.
2. The purpose of the sermon was to state that when we give God the glory for where we are in our walk with God, when we have gratitude to God for our righteousness before God, (when we understand it is by God’s grace and not our own righteousness), we are less likely to feel spiritually superior.
3. My order of worship did help deliver the theme, as I intentionally coordinate each aspect of it including the children’s sermon that was like a movie trailer

Dennisville United Methodist Church

Pastor Fred Marz

Church Phone 609-861-2196 ; (c) 315-8446

Worship Time: 11:00 AM

Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost October 23, 2016

Welcome

Praise Through Song, Witness & Testimony

Announcements:

Prelude – *Let us prepare our hearts for the worship of our Lord.*

Focus verse: *The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. Luke 18:11*

Opening Prayer:

O Lord our God, we gather together to worship you and to praise you. Allow your Holy Spirit to guide us and to empower us as we glorify your name in our praise and thanksgiving. **We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen**

Opening Hymn # 108 *Rock of Ages

Call To Worship:

One: Let us lift our hearts to God in praise.

All: To God be glory forever and ever.

One: Let us come before our God with joy.

All: To God be glory forever and ever.

One: We join our prayers as one body in Christ.

All: To God be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Affirmation of Faith (on Back)

*Gloria Patri

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son
and to the Holy Ghost,
As it was in the beginning,
is now and ever shall be,
world without end, Amen, Amen

Old Testament Reading Isaiah 6:1-4

Holly Robinson

Children's Message -

Sharing Joys and Concerns

Silent Prayer -

Pastoral Prayer - Lord's Prayer

Prayer of Dedication of Gifts and Self

Gracious God, you have generously given us all that we have. In response to your love, we bring these fruits of our labors and offer them to you in gratitude. We dedicate ourselves to your service that, through us, your love may be proclaimed and that all may have a share in your abundance. **Amen.**

Offertory .

*Doxology #95

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Praise Him, all creatures here below.

Praise Him above, ye heavenly host.

Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen

Hymn of Preparation: # 486 *I Am Thine O Lord*

Scripture Reading **Luke 18:9-14**

Meditation: **Draw Near**

Pastor Fred Marz

*Closing Hymn #523 *Just As I Am, Without One Plea*

Benediction - By Pastor

- Postlude

* **God Love You**

Weekly Announcements

Please notify the pastor if insert is needed for bulletin by Thursday AM

10/24 Mon. 7:00PM Church Council
10/25 Tues. 7:00PM AA Meeting in Social Hall
10/26 Wed. Bible Study Group continues with Luke
Bible Study begins at 7PM with praise time, study follows, and we close with prayer intercession. If you cannot attend, and have a prayer request please see the pastor.

10/27 Thurs. 7:00PM Make sandwiches for Sister Jean's
10/29 – Church Conference 12:45pm - 4:00pm
South Seaville

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified dead and buried, The third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, And sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, of saints, the forgiveness of sins, The resurrection of the body, And the life everlasting Amen.

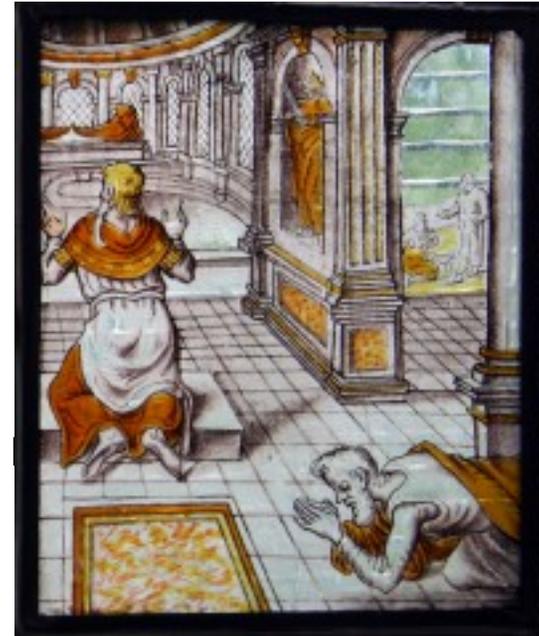
who was conceived

The communion

Welcome to the House of the Lord

Pentecost

October 23, 2016



The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican
Wouter Pietersz Crabeth (c, 1520)

Dennisville United Methodist Church
Twenty- Third Sunday after

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Luke 18:9-14

18:9 He also told this parable to some **who trusted in themselves** that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt:

18:10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

18:11 The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

18:12 I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.'

18:13 But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'

18:14 I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted."

Luke 12:13-21 Better a Poor Farmer Than a Rich Fool

The question of where we place our trust and in what we seek as our security. The question of how we define “treasure” and security will be at the center of the next two sections of Luke.

Notes:

Regarding inheritance in the culture: Culpepper points out that: *the laws of inheritance stipulated that the elder brother would receive a double portion of the inheritance. If the father had no sons, his possessions were to be divided among his daughters, but his daughters were then to marry within their father's tribe so that the possessions did not leave the tribe.*¹(Deut.21:17;Num. 27:1-11; Nun 36:7-9).

Keener adds: *People often called rabbis to settle legal disputes. The eldest son would always receive double of what any of the other sons received. The proportion of the inheritance was thus fixed, and the plaintiff in the case has every right to receive his share of the inheritance.*²

1. Describe the crowd, (go back to vs.1).
2. What prompted Jesus to tell the parable of the *Rich Fool*?
3. What do you think Jesus sensed in the man's, (from the crowd), question?
4. Who does the rich man speak about? Who is absent?
5. Compare verse 19 and 20. How does this tie into the larger section in which this section of Luke falls under, (Luke 12:1-13:9 Readiness For The Coming Judgment)?
6. Self-sufficiency can be a positive trait, but when does it become not so positive? (Consider Deuteronomy 8). How is self reliance meant to be, and why is it a misnomer, (a wrong or inaccurate name), when it is positive?
7. Consider the issue of tearing down the barns. What does this about the harvest? What about the normal year provision and the sufficiency of the existing barns?
8. What does *rich toward God* mean?

¹ Culpepper. 255.

² Keener. 223.

Probing questions:

1. What does this story say about relationships, both with the rich man and the man from the crowd?
2. There once was bumper sticker which read: “*The man who dies with the most toys wins*”. How does that relate to this story? How, (in what ways – examples), does our consumer- driven society endorse that idea? Consider the event of the Super Bowl; how is that adage on the bumper sticker fit nicely with the hype of that event?
3. What is the opposite of greed? Compare the relationship-ism of greed and its antonym.
4. All of your friends and family know that you do not play the lottery. Someone anonymously has sent you a lottery ticket for the next big jackpot. You watch the numbers the night of the drawing and find you have won. After taxes you have an immediate payout of 60 million dollars; If you take it over time it is more.
 - a. How would you spend your new treasure?
 - b. How does this compare with how you dreamed of winning at another time in your life?
 - c. What life changes would you make? Example- if you are working would you continue?
 - d. How would you expect this to change your life? Your level of happiness?
 - e. Would this wealth remove all of your concerns?
 - f. If you had been the anonymous sender, what would be going through your mind?
5. How are you, *rich toward God?*(vs 21).
6. How was George Baily defined as “rich” the end of the movie, *It’s A Wonderful Life?*” How does that differ from what we know of the rich farmer?

Marz

Bible Study : Setting and Purpose

This Bible study has been in place for many years before I arrived. It is on Wednesday evening and is more a Bible Study/Worship service, with approximately 45 minutes devoted to the study. We begin with about 20 minutes of hymns and praise music, followed by the 45 minute Bible Study, followed by about 20 minutes of intercessory prayer.

The makeup of the group is all female with ages that range from 26 to 87. The weekly average attendance is about 10, but we have had as many as 15. All are of the same approximate demographic, and of the community. We have a few who attend who are not members of the church, but they are not always consistent with attendance. Educational background ranges from high school to graduate work levels.

My approach has been to meet the following criteria:

- To teach to read the Bible in context, (of where the passage is located, how the moment was initiated, as well as the context of the culture, and the time).
- To give background to the text, we are reading that evening.
- To apply the lesson to the initial time and culture but more importantly to the context of our time, our individual situations. *What does this lesson me for you?*
- Our lessons are primarily leader led discussion, with maybe a breakout for probing questions.
- We begin each Bible lesson with a prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and for God's revelation in the lesson that evening.

I have based my series primarily on the commentary for Luke by R. Alan Culpepper, using his divisions for the overall direction on how to divide lessons. I take liberties of overlap when I felt appropriate. I use multiple source for additional background, and have used images and clips from the Internet to show areas we may have discussed. I have included all text in the attached Bibliography.

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(Marz)

The Journey To Jerusalem

Unit III

Class 1- **What is Prayer?**

Instructions on Prayer - Luke 11:1-13

- A. The Lord's Prayer 1-4
- B. The Parable of the Shameless Neighbor 5-8
- C. God Hears Our Prayers 11:9-13

Key Concept – Jesus prayer life is a model for us. Luke 11:1

Supporting Jesus model prayer provided the essentials of effective prayer.(2-4)

Supporting Our God hears and heartfelt prayer (5-13)

Key Concept The meaning of authentic prayer 1-13 Conclude with review

Class 2 – **Faith and Staying Filled**

Responses To Charges of Deviancy - Luke 11:14-36

Key Concept: Some are skeptical of the power of Jesus

Supporting: Even when Jesus exhibits grace in healing, some are skeptical.
vs.15 and vs 20.

Key Concept: Authentic Faith is response is belief with assurance.

Supporting: Shaky faith needs more proof; authentic faith obeys. vs 16; 29-32

Class 3- **Better The Right Heart Than An Elaborate Show**

Woes To The Pharisees and Lawyer Luke 11:37-54

Key Concept: What Honors God? Verses the trap of false piety

Supporting: Jesus questions the hearts of those who “show-off” their piety. Vs.39-41

Supporting: Jesus confronts the priority of “religion” over justice vs. 42-44.

Supporting: Jesus confronts leaders for keeping others to high standards, but provide little nurturing or help.
Verses 45-52

New Section : Readiness For The Coming Judgment – Luke 12:1-13:9

Class4 - **Faith With Courage**

Fear Judgment, Not Persecution- Luke 12:1-12

Key Concept: We should not compromise our faith to the pressures of the world.

Supporting: Jesus reminds us what is important, and that God rules over

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our eternal destiny. The Light of God is in whom we should depend entirely. Vs.4-12

Class 5

Loneliness With Plenty

Better a Poor Farmer Than a Rich Fool – Luke 12:13-21

Key Concept: Jesus' defines "being rich" differently than our culture does.

Supporting: Our security cannot be found in anything but God.
Verse 21

Class 6

Where Is Your Treasure, and Where Do you Place Your Security?

More Important Things About Which To Be Anxious – Luke 12:22-34

Key Concept: Your Treasure is where your heart is

Supporting: Worry is tied to self reliance rather than reliance upon God
Verses 22-29.

Supporting: Strive for a deeper relationship with God; that is should be
our greatest concern. Verse 31

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Lesson Plans For Bible Study Lesson 5 of Series

Key Thought – Since greed is fueled by focus of self, it is the antithesis of community.
The result is that greed separates us from God and each other.

Focus Reading: Luke 12:13-21 The Parable of the Rich Farmer

Learning Goals:

1. To understand Jesus purpose of telling the parable and how it connects to the previous section. (reading in context).
2. To see the isolating effect of greed, and understand it causes harm to the holder as well as those in need.
3. To examine the danger of zealous “self-sufficiency
4. To understand what true “wealth” is in God’s kingdom.

The attached detailed lesson provides the questions used to stimulate discussion. All were group discussion questions, but #4 of *Probing Questions*, where there as a discussion with the individual next to them.

Lesson is labeled as “*Bible Study Lesson class 5*”

Bibliography for this lesson

Culpepper, R. Alan. *The Gospel of Luke. The New Interpreter’s Bible. Volume Nine.*
Abingdon Pree. Nashville. 1995

Keener, Craig, S. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary-New Testament.* Intervarsity
Press. Downers Grove, Ill. 1993

Additionally often use :

Tenney, Merrill.C. editor. *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible.* Vol. 5.
Zondervan. Grand Rapids. 1975. 40-41.

for background in other lessons, along with a few other sources, and internet visuals.
Also have used movies such as *The Nativity*.

Evaluation of Bible Study

The lesson went well, but needed to be continued into a second class.

The discussions were lively, especially as we discussed the pronouns used by the rich farmer and the mention of the movie, "It's a Wonderful Life". I expected the question on how to spend lottery money, to have more participate, but it was oddly not discussed much. My guess is that some are playing and do not want me to know, or that I have hit a sensitive issue. This may require a revisit in another lesson.

I believe the lesson was successful in meeting the learning goals, for they were restated as we closed the discussion, and half of the class had some input to the closing comments.

To improve this lesson, I probably would have shown the closing clip of *It's a Wonderful Life*. I also need to evaluate the length of time this lesson required, though, the class seemed satisfied with the two lesson periods for that class.

1. What do you think are the most effective means of doing evangelism in the 21st century? How have you lived this out in your current ministry?

The most effective means of doing evangelism in our world today is being relevant to the immediate community in which we are located. To be relevant is to first know your community, and to know your community you must be present in it. You must know your community to identify how best the church can serve its needs, and in that service, that the community can see the good news of Jesus in a concrete way. As one's who declare themselves to be Christians, we are the presence of Christ in the world. The gospel in action demonstrates the love of Jesus through the love we convey in meeting the needs of others, and providing hope, as we exhibit the fruits of our faith in love and kindness and joy.

2. What makes congregation vital, and how do you measure it? How would you envision working with a congregation to become more vital?

A congregation is vital when it is dynamic spiritually, and enthusiastically moving forward, into God's next revelation in how they may best serve and represent Christ to the world. It is vital when it is moving and nurturing each member closer to the fullness of Christ's love and toward sanctification. We can see vitality in more than just an increase of attendance on Sunday, for numbers are not the only indicator. I see vitality when the laity is energized to the point of initiating new programs or new ideas, and in responding to new ideas with input that is constructive and encouraging. We know the markers of vital congregations to be increased hands on missions work, increased financial giving and increased numbers of professions of faith, but a congregation can be understood as vital before those indicators fully blossom, and signs can be observed in

the fellowship of the believers outside of the service and in listening to members vision for the church.

To move us along on a clearer path to increasing our vitality, now that I have a better grasp on the gifts of my members, I intend to form a visioning task force before the end of February to address where we are and where we would like to be in reference to the markers of a vital church. I expect to include objective ways of measuring these growth areas. I also intend to be part of a Vital Congregation group over the next year.

3. What is your personal approach to conflict? Provide an example of where you have been involved in resolving conflict. What did you learn?

The best way to handle conflict is to understand the authentic reason, or roots for the conflict. The first step is to pray and request guidance, discernment, wisdom and clarity through the Holy Spirit. Pray provides a calming start and provides an awareness of God's presence in the discussion. Many times that root is unstated, so it is important to listen and to attempt to have good communication to understand the issues of the conflict. I try to hear how we can come together to find a solution that is not only comfortable but also positive to each party of the conflict.

I have not had an example from an incident at my current church, as president of a camp meeting. In that capacity I noticed where there was tension between a retired pastor and a number of new members. As I listened to both sides, I found there was great misunderstandings held by both sides. In sharing the truths that I knew with each, not infringing on the issue of confidentiality, I was able to allow each to be more compassionate about the other's issues. I next involved both sides, very intentionally in times of fellowship, (turkey dinner one day; coffee and doughnuts on 2 occasions). From

this the pastor became very close with the three other members, and when he passed to be with the Lord, each of the three spoke of their relationship with their brother in Christ.

4. What is your theological and practical understanding of itinerancy?

Theologically I see the itinerancy of the first disciples of Christ as he sent them out as discussed in the Book of Luke, or even in God telling Abram to go and without question Abram left his comfort zone and security of home and family to follow the call from God.

The practical aspect of itinerancy is also clear, in that in prayerful ways, and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the bishop matches and as, ¶ 425 states: *gifts and evidence of God's grace of those appointed, to the needs, characteristics, and opportunities of congregations and institutions, and with faithfulness to the commitment to an open itinerancy.* Theologically, we also must consider how the Holy Spirit is involved in the process, and find comfort in that understanding, being faithful to where God is calling us to serve, for itinerancy provides opportunities to serve beyond the limits we hold ourselves.

5. How do you engage all groups in your community?

Our church is in a small community caught almost in an era of the past, but in a very positive way. Most people know each other, and the post office is still the meeting place it would have been in 1950. I prefer to embrace the positives of the situation and to work within that reality. I am very much in the community. My wife and I have joined the historic homeowners association and are active participants. I have joined the firehouse as the chaplain, and I visit older residents not of our church, as a way to check in on them. I attend every food pantry and carry out the food so that I may be available for prayer away from the facility, (about 75% ask me to pray with them before they leave). The

community is now involved with the food pantry as different organizations collect for us at some of their meetings. I hang out at the museum on one of the Saturdays each month to discuss history and latest news in the village. Before joining the fire company and within the first six months of arriving in Dennisville, we had a special service for the firefighters, where the local officials, (state senator and two Assemblymen), presented then with a citations from the Senate floor; this was followed by a breakfast we hosted. In that one event many connections were made and the community was brought together at our church. The local girl scouts meet at our social hall and have embraced our “Operation Christmas Child” program. I have had many opportunities to meet with people who do not attend our church, to listen to difficulties they face, to pray for them and to encourage them. I love the community that we are I and know most of my neighbors. In short, we try to be involved in all community organization or functions in some way. The key has been to be in the community and in partnership with them, for it is the only way to know the community and the needs we can address.

6. What is your understanding of pastoral authority, and how do you intend to exercise it in your place of ministry?

Our pastoral authority given in ordination provides us for the responsibilities we are called to administer, specifically and faithfully, the Word, Sacrament, Order and Service. The elder is ordained to be the one responsible for those charges of the Church, for Christ. The authority rested upon the shoulders of the elder, are not meant to be deferred nor compromised.

7. If you could choose anyone to mentor you in leadership skills, who would that be and why?

When we consider the person of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the descriptions, martyr, prophet, theologian, bold, and courageous, often come to mind, but I also see in him as a great

leader. I would choose Bonhoeffer as one to be mentored by in leadership, because of the manner in which Bonhoeffer served those whom he mentored, while never asking more of them than he was willing to do, but in fact put himself at risk to better care for them. In his role as leader, he loved those whom he led, and that love and respect was understood and witnessed by those he mentored. He cared for his students to the point of returning from a secure appointment so to he continue to lead and mentor them. In his leadership, he questioned the status quo, and did so with boldness and courageous in his position as a leader. Most importantly, Bonhoeffer's leadership was directed by Christ, for he modeled his life, no matter how costly, to be like Christ in that leadership role.

8. Describe a situation in which you felt a need to assert a professional boundary in the practice of ministry?

Shortly after arriving as pastor at my appointed church, one of our church leaders would call be every Sunday evening to discuss church issues. The parsonage phone is the church phone, which adds to the difficulty of the situation. In addition it seemed as if the calls would increase when we had family over for dinner on that night. As time went forward, this became a more difficult situation, especially food pantry Sunday's as my first church service is 8:45, the second church at 11:00 and the food pantry does not allow me to get home before 3:15. If my family is visiting, I need that afternoon to be with them. The situation required that I set boundaries for that precious time of Sunday afternoon, and so I set 9 Am , Monday morning as our appointed time to discuss church matters she had previously set aside for Sunday evening.

9. How have you worked through the experience of forgiving someone?

I have worked through a couple of situations of forgiving someone who had caused me pain or great difficulty. In every case the process of forgiveness required prayer and

humility, but in every case there was freedom. A woman and her husband had started a legal case against an organization I was president, purely with the purpose of causing financial difficulties. Their case had no merit, but to cause great pain and difficulty, they appealed to the Superior Court and caused a greater cost. Their vindictiveness caused in me the source of my anger in our relationship. Because I did not like carrying around that anger, I prayed about how I could get past that feeling. As time past, anger has been replaced with sympathy, as the husband has passed and his widow has to deal with her grief. Full forgiveness blossomed when I was able to help her in a recent controversy. Though I am no longer president of the association in question, I am on the board, and this widow who had caused so many problems, recently needed our board to approve some technicalities so that she could sell her cottage. There were enough votes on the board to prevent an easy transition, as some had desired to penalize her. In all of this, I needed to step forward and speak to fairness in her defense, going to bat for her to insure a just transfer of her deed. It was in helping her that I felt a burden lifted, and the healing complete.

10. What are you doing to help those around you to take care of themselves?

To help others take care of themselves, is to first know if they are, but the most important tool that I use is encouragement.

11. How have you invited someone to faith and seen the faith develop?

Just after coming to my appointment, a member of my church mentioned a gentleman in our community that had visited our church a couple of times in the year before I had arrived. She had sensed in him a need and suggested I contact him. Initially I left him messages, but finally caught up with him at the post office where we had a nice

discussion, followed up with a day he opened up to me on my porch about the pain he still feels from the lose of his wife. I listened and prayed with him, and told him how involvement with a church family could help in his grief. He now attends almost every week. Last spring he and an adult daughter enrolled and completed our membership class. Each became members. In our upcoming church conference, this new member will be involved as a member of one of our committees. God orchestrated this as the Holy Spirit directed a member from our church to reach out to another, and to notice their pain and alert the pastor.

12. What have you overcome to come to this season in your ministry?

In the period of five years, in the midst of seminary, presidency of a camp meeting, and internship at a church, and while still at a full time job that required travel and the management of a designated region, my wife was diagnosed and treated for, (and healed), cancer on two occasions, and when my daughter had gotten divorced, she and her daughter came to live with us. As my daughter faced the struggles of being a single mother and working a difficult job, she fell into an alcohol addiction that would eventually send her to rehab for nine weeks. At the same time, as president of the camp meeting I discovered our association was being embezzled, (and had been with the previous two presidents), to an amount exceeding \$100,000.00. Almost simultaneously, a new member challenged our charter in local court, then appealed to Pennsylvania Superior Court, causing us to incur legal bills over \$90,000.00. In all of this, I felt God's presence more powerfully in my life than in any time prior, and that presence seems to be getting stronger everyday. In all of those adventures, I have grown to better equipped to serve in whatever situation God places me. It is in reflecting back and seeing God's

presence through others or in moments of peace, that I am more confident in challenges. God has blessed me and I now better understand. “*my grace is sufficient for you*”.

13. How would you describe your prayer life in this season, and how has it changed over your journey?

My prayer life is essential to my ministry, and deliberate prayer time each morning makes for a better managed day. My prayer life has evolved, in that I really learned to pray during the times of challenge and adversity. It was from those times that I better understood, that peace that is beyond understanding. I find my prayer time now to be so even more uplifting, and I can feel God in my heart when I say “thank you” or when I praise God. I feel God’s presence in the quiet times of prayer in a way I cannot describe but just know. There are times I come from my fellowship with the Lord, that I wonder why I had not sooner had our discussion or why not more often. My prayer life has become more of a sweeter and more valuable time with God.

14. When you read the Bible, how do you hear God’s voice? What example might you give of how you responded?

I especially hear God’s voice most dramatically when I read the Bible in the times that I have come to the encounter with expectation and the full awareness that it was the Holy Spirit, the author who dictated the words to the writer, and who now is with me so that I might listen to those words flow through as I read. The more we grow in God’s love the more we hear of God’s love in God’s revelation, and the better we understand, and so we are drawn closer. The more I hear God’s voice, the more I know God’s heart and so it is more a connection of hearts than vocal words. I better feel God’s anguish for the suffering when I read Micah 6:8 and I understand better the pain God feels for injustice, and the joy God feels in our kindness to one another. If the Word of God truly rolls over our hearts, and saturates our souls, we cannot but respond to those in need of a meal

when we hear Jesus say in Matthew 25, “*for when I was hungry, you gave me food*”. I hear God’s voice directly in my heart, and it is gently warmed, and sometimes not so gently.

15. How has your family of origin influenced your call?

Although my parents were not regulars in the church, they were so concerned about my religious education that they enrolled me in Catholic elementary school. My paternal grandfather and my maternal grandmother, each cared that I knew about God and encouraged me to know God more deeply. My Grandfather was a devout Roman Catholic who lived his faith and demonstrated it in how he loved and cared for others. My grandmother was a United Methodist and encouraged my religious education. As a child I was impressed by the way my grandfather lived the gospel, and though I did not understand that at the time, his Christian walk planted the seeds for me to be more like him.

16. Interview three people to tell you what they see in your ministry. What did you hear in these conversations?

The common thread that I heard is that the strong part of my ministry is my compassion, and they all indicated that they believe that I really care about them as people and as a church family. I found this to be uplifting but also a little uncomfortable, in that sometimes when the comments are complimentary, I am not sure of the best response. One interviewed included my wife in responded to the question, saying that we both had empathy for others and connected well with the congregation. That was very encouraging for we desire to be a team as I, (we), answer God’s calling to serve.

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Fredrick R. Marz

a). My personal experience of God and the understanding of God I derive from biblical, theological, and historical sources.

“My experience of God” continues to evolve. In one respect I understand that God is unchanging, while at the same time I find that the more I open myself to God, the more of God’s character is revealed to me. As I reflect upon those gentle corrections in my walk with God, I better understand Jesus approach of lovingly teaching to his followers. Jesus sat with sinners, and did not come to condemn but to save. We see that gentle approach with the woman at the well as well as with the woman about to be stoned. His commands are clear, “Neither do I condemn thee”, Go and sin no more”; “repent and believe”; “follow me”; “Love”.

The “understanding of God” that I derive from biblical sources is first a Creator God, Creator of all things, and a faithful God who keeps all covenants, as well as a loving God, so intent on loving us that the Word would become flesh, would suffer, (in just becoming human), so that we could be reconciled. The everlasting God, the great I AM, or Ehyeh-Asher Ehey, I will be who I will be, whose nature was evident in the actions recorded though out scripture.

My “understanding of God” has also been affected through theological sources, such as systematic theologians, early church fathers and mothers, and church historic controversies, which I have studied in seminary, and continue to read and study. Reviews and study of Wesley’s sermons and commentary has guided me in my own reflection upon the nature of God, but it is also guided concisely through the traditions and practice of the United Methodist Church. As an example, each Sunday we recite and read our

Affirmation of Faith, and it is in that we hear, in a very concise way, the very core of what we believe: One God, in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The historic source that has most illuminated and clarifies my understanding of God is Jesus Christ. It is in the historic person of Jesus, that we see “who” God is, as well as how we are meant to live. It is in Jesus that God is revealed most clearly, and it is in Jesus, (in Jesus relationship to his Father), that we see how our relationship to God is meant to be. As we know Jesus, as we abide in Jesus, we know more of God’s love and salvation plan.

In each of these understandings though, the journey to understand the nature of God is not an individual endeavor, as the Holy Spirit has guided me in my understanding, and through my biblical, historic, and theological sources. Additionally, the Holy Spirit has brought others along side me to guide me and to journey with me.

As I reflect on the questions contained in Paragraph 324.9, I recognize my growth and the further expansion of “those edges”, and so as I continue to evolve, as God reveals more of God’s love to me, I become better equipped to know how to minister in the moment, and to come along side others on this journey to experience and understand our amazing and loving God.

b). My understanding of evil as it exists in the world.

Evil was not meant to be in God’s creation, but surely exists and is evident to us all as we live in this world, and this temporary realm. When humanity turned from God, evil entered into the world. Humanity was created in God’s image and created sinless and righteous, and with free will, a will that could choose right and refuse to do evil. In turning from God, humanity abused the liberty of will and so evil entered into the world.

Evil is not just to be found in personal sin but also in sinful systems, (governments, institutional practices, unjust laws, etc.), that continue to cause suffering and advance evil in the lives of others. We as the church are meant to advance the work of Christ in the earthly realm, and lift others from their participation in the evil of the world. We are meant to proclaim sinful practices and the evil systems that allow, or do not address the suffering, which we can help to abate. We are meant to advance Christ's kingdom.

c). My understanding of humanity, and the human need for divine grace.

Although we were created in God's image, and when we were created we were declared to be "very good", God's human creation decided to turn from God and in that moment sin entered into a once perfect creation, sin has marred the intended design of humanity. Because God is just and righteous, we as sinful beings can no longer be in the relationship with God in that state of sin. Because there is nothing we can do apart from God, we need God's grace, to rescue us from our sinful state and to lead us forward into perfection. God so loved humanity, God lovingly provided a way of healing that sinful condition in humanity, and what God provided was a way of saving us and justifying us before God. It is God's grace, which is available to all, which begins by convicting us of our sin,(prevenient grace), leads us to salvation and then provides us opportunities to grow in Christ and onward into perfection. When we heed the voice of the Holy Spirit showing us our sinfulness, and go onward to accept the gift of justifying grace through faith, we die to sin and arise with Christ as a new creation, born from above, and so God's continued grace allows us to grow into holiness. God continues to provide "means of grace" for each of us, individually and corporately, to spiritually nutritious us, and to

deepen our knowledge of the love of Christ in actions such as the study of scripture, prayer, fasting and the Lord's Supper. As we partake with spiritually "opened eyes", we be nourished in our journey.

d). How do I interpret the statement: Jesus Christ is Lord?

When we declare "Jesus to be Lord", we are declaring that Jesus is lord over our life, over every aspect of our life, and that we are meant to serve him with our whole heart. By declaring "Jesus is Lord", we are acknowledging that we desire to be emptied of ourselves and filled with the heart of Jesus, and grow into the reflection of Jesus. We are declaring that we desire for Jesus to have complete control of our lives, for in that desire, we can find freedom from the anchor of pride, and self-centeredness. It is in the authentic desire to allow Jesus to have full control of our lives that a joy and peace comes upon us from that freedom. "Jesus Christ is Lord", is a declaration that means that we do not turn away, and cannot in the same breath say "no Lord", as that in itself is a contradiction. It is only in firmly desiring and living by that declaration that the process of sanctification can begin, for the Holy Spirit requires a willing heart. Evidence of living with an authentic "Jesus is Lord" approach to life, can be observed in the outward works of love exhibited in that life. It is not an approach designed to impress others, but lived out through the love of Jesus within the heart of the one who has truly made Jesus Lord of their life, for that love causes a desire to authentically love God and one another. When one can rest in that declaration and live it, when self is released and Christ is embraced as Lord, that life is directed in such a way as to be no longer designed by self but the Holy Spirit. In that, outward works may be evident, for that love of Christ causes us to desire to be "doers of the word".

e). What is my conception of the activity of the Holy Spirit in personal faith, in the community of believers, and in responsible living in the world?

The Holy Spirit is the acting force of God, and the animator of the Church as well as the motivator of the individual believer. The Holy Spirit is the person of God who pursues us and marks us when we are baptized. The Holy Spirit is our guiding force in our daily walk with God. The Holy Spirit is our comforter, and the Holy Spirit empowers us. It is through the “fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control¹, that the evidence of our being “crucified with Christ” is evident, and it is the gifts of the Holy Spirit,² that we are each uniquely gifted to do our part in advancing God’s kingdom.

It is the Holy Spirit that empowers us to be the hands and feet of Jesus in this world. I love that image of God’s transforming power, and how each and everyone can be transformed and gifted by those spiritual gifts provided by the Holy Spirit, to uniquely empower us to do our intended part in the Body of Christ, that is the Church. The Holy Spirit gives us the power and the tools to complete the work that Christ started as he introduced the “Kingdom of God” that “has come near”.³ I appreciate knowing that God is so close and that breath of the Holy Spirit around us. I love how the Holy Spirit guides me through Scripture, a work that is also completed through the inspired and breathed forth action of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the conveyor of grace, and it is the Holy Spirit, active in each step of our Christian journey: urging us to begin that journey through prevenient grace, “reaching out to the repentant believer in justifying grace”⁴,

¹ Galatians 5: 22-23.

² 1 Corinthians 12

³ Mark 1:15 NRSV

⁴ The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2012. 50.

and leading us forward into sanctifying grace. The Holy Spirit initiates, refines, and leads us to the completion of our Christian journey.

f). What is my understanding of the kingdom of God; the Resurrection; eternal life?

The kingdom of God is the heart of Jesus; It is having the heart of Jesus. “The kingdom of God is among us”⁵ as the community of believers, and the kingdom of God is evident in living the commands of loving God and neighbor. The kingdom of God is making disciples, (enlarging that kingdom), of Christ for the transformation of the world. The kingdom of God is both within us as the Holy Spirit works and is among us by the visible mission of an active church doing God’s work. We are the kingdom of God when we take the mission of Christ seriously and allow the Holy Spirit to direct us, and faithfully serve. With other believers, we declare that the reign of God is both present as well as a future reality.

Though the kingdom was introduced in Jesus Christ, as Christians, we are meant to advance the kingdom forward with the eschatological understanding of completion with the return of Christ, and it is an advancement that is one of wholeness.

The Resurrection was the event where Jesus Christ, physically died, arose again to life, walked upon the earth for forty days, before ascending into heaven. In resurrection, Jesus demonstrated to the world that he overcame, defeated death, won the victory over evil and truly reigns over life as well as death. In that resurrection we have the assurance of the possibility of eternal life

Eternal life is the promise we have been given by Jesus, if we are born again from above. Eternal life is the victory Christ has provided over death, and begins in us at the

⁵ Luke 17:21

moment we die to sin through repentance and faith, or as H.F. Rall puts it: “Man’s, (sic) life is eternal when he (sic) enters into a living relation with the eternal world, that is, with God: and this life may be here and now”.⁶ Eternal life is eternal joy as we share fellowship with Christ and other believers.

g). How do I intend to affirm, teach, and apply Part III of the Discipline (Doctrinal Standards and Our Theological Task) in my work in the ministry to which I have been called?

I take seriously the charge of leadership of the people of God in the ministries of Service, Word, Sacrament, Order, Compassion and Justice. As a pastor I must depend upon God’s grace and the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit to apply the doctrinal standards and perform my theological tasks. I intend to be a leader, led by God, and will teach and preach God’s Word, the Good News of Jesus Christ to the Body of believers in a fallen world. The Gospel must be real to those to whom I present it. It cannot be just words, but action, it must be doing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and it must be done with the clear evidence of Christian love. We as the Church must be relevant to the lives we touch, and we also must be true to scripture; we cannot revise it to fit the world, but to teach it in context.

Most importantly, the theological tasks must be applied with authentic agape love. The Church must be seen as a loving and safe place, an oasis for the hurting, for the thirsting. When the congregation understands its task, and finds itself truly surrounded by love, and lives out the Gospel for all to see, it can be said that our theological task has been applied, affirmed and lived. It is key that I as pastor, am the shepherd of that process, fully dependent on the workings of the Holy Spirit within me.

h). The United Methodist Church holds that the living core of the Christian faith

⁶ McCutcheon. 206.

was revealed in Scripture, illuminated by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason. What is my understanding of this theological position of the church?

My understanding of the theological position of the United Methodist Church regarding the relationship of Scripture, tradition, experience and reason in one's faith, is that all other sides are held up and by Scripture. Tradition illuminates through a collective reflection over time by the many believers of diverse experience through the work of the Holy Spirit. That faith is also tested through personal experience of God in the life of the individual, fully unique and fully personal. It is in that experience that faith is relevant to that believer. The last side of the equation is the element of reason, which causes one to try to make sense of God' revelation through that personal experience and examined against tradition and tested against Scripture. Scripture is the anchor that provides the truth of God, as we absorb it through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Tradition also assists us in understanding that truth, and personal experience allows us to apply that truth to our times and cultures. Our reason allows us to combine the first three and prayerfully analyze how those truths are understood in the light of the moment. Nothing can override or change the truth of Scripture, but tradition can clarify, experience can apply it to our situation, and reason, dependent upon the Holy Spirit, can fine-tune that particular and living message from God. All in all, it allows us to see that living breathing Word of God with new eyes in a changing world. That process allows people of different cultures, and different systems, to hear more clearly how God is speaking to them in their place and moment in time.

i). Describe the nature and the mission of the Church. What are its primary tasks today?

The Church is the Body of Christ. We are meant to continue the work that Jesus began.

We are the physical presence of Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to accomplish that

work. As stated in Paragraph 120 of The Book of Discipline, “ The mission of the Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world”.⁷ Just before Jesus ascended into heaven he was clear about our task: “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”, and he provided all that was necessary, the power of the Holy Spirit⁸.

As those baptized into the Church, we are all called to be ministers and meant to love God and each other, but also meant to be a witness of that love to others, and be a “light” to the world. We are meant to tell others about the hope that comes from living a life “in Christ”. The Church also should have the desire to evangelize so “that all may be saved”⁹. But the mission of the Church is one that is meant to be holistic, that is we are meant to tell and show others the message of Christ, but we are also meant to live it, which entails looking to address the suffering of the world, in which we come upon, (the message of Matthew 25:35-40). We are also meant to be proactive in addressing unjust systems, always mindful of what God has said through the prophet Micah: “He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God”¹⁰.

j). Discuss your understanding of the primary characteristics of United Methodist polity.

Thomas Edward Frank describes denominational polity as “both the written text and a lived practice; in word and practice weaves together the functions and contexts of the church’s ministry in immensely complex patterns”¹⁰.

⁷ The Book of Discipline. 2012. P.91.

⁸ Acts 1:8

⁹ 1 Timothy 2:4.

¹⁰ Thomas Edward Frank. Polity, Practice and the Mission of the United Methodist Church. Abingdon Press -2006. 110.

Methodist polity is the governance and organizational structure of the United Methodist Church, and it is one that is meant to be dynamic, living and breathing, responding to social issues, while also being an anchor that is consistent with the Bible. That anchor is The Book of Discipline, and reflects the history and the ideas and concerns of a vital church body connected around the world and by different eras, designed to be listening to every voice. It is both a connection point and, a guidance to the prescribed order of our denomination. It is meant to be examined, and scrutinized by listening to those voices, while reflecting upon tradition and more importantly the Word of God.

I would then say one of the primary characteristics is that it is connectional, in that, all United Methodist are governed by the same polity. I would also say that it is dynamic, as it is constantly under review, with the consideration of new contexts. In our connective-ness, we are like the strands of a rope; individually not able to carry a great weight; but together, intertwined, we can carry a much greater weight. We are also connected in our giving as every congregation regardless of size can contribute to a stream of giving, and the steady streams flow and gathers to form rivers that can move powerfully and make a difference. Together in connectedness, we can bring much hope. In our connectedness, we can share ideas, and resources, including but not limited to financial, as well as prayers. Our connectional nature allows us to blossom, both collectively and individually far beyond what we could accomplish alone, and become more of what God intends us to be.

k). How do I perceive myself, my gifts, my motives, my role, and my commitment, as a provisional member and commissioned minister in the United Methodist Church?

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I perceive myself as called to be a servant leader in a pastoral role, to serve Jesus Christ and my assigned Church. I am awed and amazed and humbled and love what God has done in my life. I am not sure why God has chosen me, and when I reflect upon being picked by God to do this work, I feel unworthy in the sense that it is such a privilege that I do not deserve. When I enter into the administration of the Lord's sacraments, I am moved in a powerful way. I truly feel the Lord's presence at the Table during our Communion service, and there have been times that I have been almost moved to tears. It is a Divine Mystery and an amazing means of grace, which we as pastors must relay more clearly to our church families.

To be specific about my gifts, I understand one of my gifts to be compassion. I enjoy visiting with those who are shut in, and being of comfort to those who are going through a difficult emotional time. I once was touched in a powerful way by a pastor who visited me while I was hospitalized, and so I feel especially motivated and fulfilled to visit those in the hospital.

I am not sure of all of my gifts, but I believe they will be revealed and adjusted as needed. I do know that I love being a pastor, I love my church family, and I sense God equipping me as needed, each step of the journey. Full time ministry has allowed me a new opportunity to appreciate better how God has called me to serve. I now depend upon God more than ever, and I am confident the Holy Spirit will provide each gift as needed. I rest in that assurance.

l). Describe your understanding of diakonia, the servant ministry of the church, and the servant ministry of the provisional member.

Jesus sensed the egocentric desire for a hierarchy of relevance within his followers, and so taught them a lesson on servant-hood by washing their feet.

As Christians, we are all called to be ministers, and so are all called to serve God and each other, in the church and in the world. As one called to be a pastor, one who has been set-apart, we are meant to be an example of servant-hood and to lead in that way of service. As the Book of Discipline states, “we are to lead the gathered community in the celebration of sacraments, and in the guidance and care of their communal life”. We are also set apart “to preach, and teach”, “to nurture and to heal”, and to send the gathered community “forth to witness to the world”. We are meant to be servant leaders, “consciously living the whole gospel”. We are to be ministers of “Service, Word, Sacrament, and Order, Compassion, and Justice”.

As the “set-apart”, I understand that in planning to be an elder, I am giving my life to my calling, and I understand the significance of that servant-hood to God, my local church and the United Methodist Church.

m). What is the meaning of ordination in the context of the general ministry of the Church?

Ordination in the United Methodist Church is a process that is modeled after the Apostolic ministry of early church, and begins by the calling by God of the individual, is confirmed by his local church and pastor, meets the requirement and rigors of the Book of Discipline, while being nurtured and tested and affirmed by the United Methodist Church. Having met the requirements of the process as defined by the Book Of Discipline, they must be found by the Church, “to be of sound learning, of Christian character, possessing the necessary gifts and evidence of God’s grace and have a call confirmed by the Church”¹¹. In being set apart and in being ordained, the called understand that the office of ordained ministry is a lifetime commitment, and as such,

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¹¹ Book of Discipline 2012. 331.

they are meant to “dedicate their entire lives to personal and spiritual disciplines required”¹² to serve God in God’s Church. The ministry of elders is a ministry of Service, Word, Sacrament, Order, Compassion, and justice, and is meant to reflect the ministry of Christ.

n). Describe your understanding of an inclusive church and ministry.

The model of Christ best represents the understanding of an inclusive church. Christ reached out to the neglected, and the untouchables of that society. He healed the sinner, and reached out even to those who though themselves helpless of salvation. The Church of the Book of Acts is from where we originate, (via Holy Spirit at Pentecost and forward), and if we study that book, it is clear that the Church’s very growth was one of increasingly inclusiveness, from a “Hebrew of Hebrew” church in Jerusalem, to the Hellenistic Jews, to the proselyte Jews, and finally to the Gentiles, and beyond. As a pebble thrown into a pond, the waves of the rings spread out and, continue to row on, to the “ends of the world”. I sometimes wonder if we are consistent in relaying the message of Christ: “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick: Go and learn what this means, I desire mercy, not sacrifice.” For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.”¹³ Maybe we are more consistent in our words, but are we always in our actions? That is a challenge for us all. The message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is meant to be a message of hope to everyone.

o). You have agreed as a candidate for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness of the gospel, and in consideration of their influence as ministers, to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life, and to this end agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to bodily health, mental and emotional maturity, integrity in all personal relationships, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, social

¹² Book of Discipline. 218.

¹³ Matthew 9:12-14.

responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge and love of God. What is your understanding of the agreement?

Being called into the mission of Christ is an awesome responsibility, and a wonderful blessing. Christians, especially in our world today, are constantly under the scrutiny of none believers or marginal Christians, (Christians in name only). That watchful, skeptical eye is even more magnified and watchful on those who call themselves pastors. All who are in the family of the baptized are meant to be ministers and witnesses of Christ's love in the world. I take seriously the statement from #3 of paragraph 304 of The Book of Discipline: "Persons set apart by the Church for ordained ministry, are required to maintain the highest standards of holy living in the world".¹⁴ I also intend to grow closer to Christ by continuing with the various disciplines, such as fasting, daily prayer and devotionals, scripture study and meditation. I desire to continue learning and reading from classics of Christian literature to contemporary studies. Lastly I desire to be open to the direction of the Holy Spirit in dedicating my whole self for the advancement of God's kingdom.

p). Explain the role and significance of the sacraments in the ministry to which you have been called.

John Wesley, in one of his sermons, described the sacraments as: "an outward sign of inward grace, and a means whereby we receive the same". The sacraments are significant for they are another means of receiving divine grace, and God has designated them for that special purpose. I am always powerfully moved in the moment of administering the sacraments, and in them I truly feel the presence of God in another way.

As United Methodists, we identify two sacraments, instituted by Jesus Christ: Baptism, which is the sacrament that initiates us into the Church, (the body of Christ),

¹⁴ The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2012. 220.

and Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper, which is meant to sustain us and allow us to receive divine grace as we continue our walk with the Lord.

In Communion, we reflect the life, death and resurrection of Christ, and take the opportunity to remember his gift of salvation to us. In Communion, we heed the command to "do this in remembrance" of him, and so in remembering we consider the sacrificial love and self-giving of a holy God. It is a powerful and holy time of thanksgiving, remembrance, thanksgiving, sacrifice, and the great and powerful movement of the Holy Spirit. In partaking, we receive another means of grace and spiritual nourishment to sustain us in our spiritual journey.

In Baptism, we receive our identity in Christ, as we are marked by the Holy Spirit as God's own, and begin our mission for Christ. In infant baptism, the child is cleansed of original sin, initiated into a three-way covenant with God, which connects the community of faith and the person being baptized. All three are a part of the baptismal covenant, initiated by God. God's mighty acts involving water are acknowledged as God is praised for God's mercy and faithfulness. In addition, all reaffirm their commitment to Christ and reaffirm their faith before God.

In both sacraments we acknowledge the presence and activity of God and consider the Divine mystery of the sacrament before us as we all participate. In the presence of God in the sacraments we reflect on God's faithfulness and give thanks, and in both sacrament, the Holy Spirit is poured out to bless.

q). Describe the Wesleyan view of grace, (preventive, justifying, and sanctifying).

The Wesleyan view of grace can be understood as, the undeserved loving action of God available to us by the Holy Spirit. In differentiating between God's gracious action in our salvation journey, it may best be explained by a metaphor John Wesley used: "prevenient grace is the porch, justification the door, and sanctification the rooms of the house in which we should dwell".¹⁵ Prevenient grace is God's gracious action of divine love upon us while we are yet in a sinful state, prompting us to see our sin and urging us forward to come nearer to Christ. The action of prevenient grace causes in us the desire to get right with God and to shed our sinful nature.

Justifying grace follows our action of reaching back to God's offer of forgiveness in our repentance and faith. In justifying grace "we are forgiven for our sins and restored in God's favor".¹⁶

In sanctifying grace, following our new life in Christ through justifying grace, the heart thirsts to move closer to God, desires to know God's love more deeply and to live like Christ more fully. Sanctifying grace enables us to draw closer to God and to increasingly know the love and heart of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Sanctifying grace is the power and grace of God that moves us onward to perfection.

1. Explain the Threefold aspects of Wesleyan grace and how you have encountered these in your own ministry/life.

In my life I always felt a spiritual hunger since. In college I pursued the study of Eastern religions, but nothing ever really satisfied that thirst. It was in that feeling of the need for something more that I began to read and listen and understand that I was helpless without God. That was the Holy Spirit pursuing me and God's prevenient grace. When I was led by a pastor to the Lord, accepted the gift of God's grace in forgiveness, believing that in

¹⁵ Elaine A. Robinson. "Preaching Methodist Doctrine". *Quarterly Review*. Volume 22: Number 4. Winter 2002. 402.

¹⁶ Book of Discipline. 50.

Jesus suffering, death and resurrection that he took sin, including my sin with him upon the cross, that my repentance and surrender to Jesus justified me before God, I felt an elation and in that experienced justifying grace. As the Holy Spirit continues to work in me, and guide me to be more like Jesus, not satisfied to remain where I am on my spiritual journey, I experience God's sanctifying grace working me forward to completion in Christ.

2. Share an instance when you found yourself in ministry with someone whose theology was different from your own.

I am a member of a camp meeting in Lancaster County, composed of many evangelical churches, though we began in 1870 as a Methodist Holiness Only Camp meeting. Today we have a wide range of denominations and non-denomination churches, with the potential of doctrinal minefield. To best maneuver through that field we must keep Jesus at the center and as our focus and remember that it is in Jesus that we are connected. One gentleman from a strict fundamental church very deliberately walked out of a study conducted by a woman, a good friend, and so I was very sensitive to the hurt she may have felt. When my friend completed her study I left the tabernacle, without planning encountered the man who had left the study. I approached him about the situation, and asked him about a better way of exhibiting grace, and asked if tradition was more important than demonstrating that grace. My instinct had been to debate him on theology, but God moved me in the better direction. His response did not provide an answer to how this was resolved, but I did not notice him duplicate his actions under similar circumstances.

3. Describe how your image of God has changed over your journey.

I feel closer to God more than I ever have. Because of various very difficult times and situations of which I can now reflect, I trust God, and find peace sooner when faced with

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adversity. I feel the presence of the Holy Spirit in ways I cannot describe, but can only equate with a warm and safe feeling. It is a feeling I hope everyone can experience. I better understand the depth of the fruits of the Spirit, than I ever have. God is amazing, and wonderful and loving, and the fullness of knowing God must be our eternal reward.

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Fred Marz

1. Explain the role of deacons, elders, and local pastors in the UMC and how they are uniquely called and function in the church.

The role of the deacon has the function of servant-hood, lived within the church and in the world. Their ministry is one of Word, service, compassion and justice, connecting the church to the community. They are called by God, authorized by the church and ordained by the bishop, but do not administer the sacraments, (from Bishop's Schol's letter of September 29, 2016: *The May 2016 General Conference broadened authority for deacons to preside at the celebration of the sacraments when the resident bishop authorizes the deacon to serve in this role.* This added authority has been addressed as an addition ¶ 328 of the 2016 Book of Discipline.) In addition, the deacon may lead, and assists in nurturing believers, teaches and proclaims the Word. Within the community, the deacon works for justice, and acts as an advocate of the marginalized, needy and neglected. (¶ 305; 328-331)

The role of the elder is to serve the church in Word, service, sacrament and order. In Word, the elder is devoted to the ministry of the Word, to proclaim God's Word through teaching and preaching. The elder is also responsible for administering the sacraments. The elder leads in service by directing the church in its mission in the community and outward to the world. The elder serves in ministry and servant leadership, giving pastoral leadership to order the life of the congregation while acting as the CEO of the local church and ensures that it is fulfilling its mission: nurturing, evangelizing, planning, and leading in worship. In addition the elder is responsible for providing pastoral care to its members. (¶ 305, 306, and 332-340).

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The role of the local pastor is very much that which is listed for the elder. The differences are that the administration of sacraments is limited to the church the pastor is assigned, but they are not required to be itinerate. The local pastors are still considered clergy members of annual conference with the right to vote, but unlike the ordained elder, they are excluded from voting *on constitutional amendments, election of delegates, and matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy.*¹ (§ 316).

2. What is the process for setting a pastor's salary? Who can change it, and when can it be changed?

The pastor's salary has a minimum set by the annual conference and is reviewed and approved through the consultation of the pastor and the Staff/Pastor Parish Relations Committee who then recommends to the Church Council. The Church Council then reviews with the Finance Committee. The Church Council then recommends to the Church Conference for vote of approval.

3. The Education committee wants to update the curriculum being taught in the Christian Education program. What specific guidance does the Book of Discipline give you in dealing with the issue?

The Book of Discipline directs the responsibilities of setting guidelines for Christian education to the General Board of Discipleship, (§1108, 1109,) as the agency to oversee all approved curriculum and insure that the approved materials are consistent with United Methodist doctrinal standards, (§ 104 and conducive to our theological task , (§ 105).

4. You have discovered a need in the community for a soup kitchen, and wish to recommend this be a priority for the congregation, using the facilities of the church. What parties and process need to be involved?

To properly advance a program serving the need in the community, it would be important to do some advance work so as to provide at least a basic logistics to the plan, be able

¹ Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2012. p. 318

demonstrate the need, and identify why it would be a calling for the church to respond. To better understand the logistics, I would look to meet with a pastor or church representative of a church hosting and administering a successful program already in place to better understand the operation, and to observe the operation. I would then plan a joint meeting of the Church Council, being sure to include any committee chairs involved with outreach and missions, along with the Board of Trustees, (use of facilities). I would explain how I was able to identify the need, providing the specifics of that need, including the number expected to be served, and the what all would be needed. I would make a biblical case for our participation, citing perhaps Matthew 25:31-36. I would seek approval of the church council to move forward and to include it as a line item of the budget, and request a vote of approval for the facilities by the Trustees. If approved by the trustees and the Church Council, I would develop a power point presentation for a mission moment during a church service. I would have a follow-up meeting inviting all who would be interested in helping out, ask the mission or out reach committee to assist in organizing and planning the initiation of the process.

5. A constituent of your church comes to speak with you about their call to ministry. Describe the basic steps that are involved in seeking ordination.

Having been a professing member in good standing of the church and having been in attendance for at least a year, the basic steps for one seeking ordination, (not including requirements), would be:

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5. Meet the requirements of DCOM to become a certified candidate.
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 9. Having successfully completed the residency of provisional membership the commissioning concludes. A provisional member of the annual conference who has completed the requirements for Elder's Orders and admission into full membership becomes eligible for election by the bishop. Having been recommended by the Board of Ordained Ministry, the provisional member is presented at the annual conference to the clergy session for election. Following election, the bishop and the secretary of the conference shall provide a certificate of full membership in the annual conference, and then ordained by the bishop by the laying on of hands. (§ 334).
- 6. Describe the general structures of the Annual Conference and how each body functions.**

The Annual Conference is made up of: (A). **Clergy Members:** clergy of full

connection who may vote on all matters but the election of lay delegates to general and jurisdictional or central conferences; provisional members; associate members, affiliate members and local pastors. Those clergy not in full connection have the right to vote at annual conference on all matters but constitutional amendments, the election of clergy delegates to the conferences*, matters of ordination and character*, and conference relations of clergy*. If associate members or local pastors are on the Board of Ordained Ministry, they may vote on these extended areas*. (B). **Lay Membership** of annual conference made up a professing member elected from each charge), per clergy member from that charge), and those qualified as listed in the Book of Discipline ¶602.4. Lay members shall participate in all deliberations and vote upon all measures but those concerning clergy as listed in the Book of Discipline in ¶602.6. Lay members may serve on all committees except those on ministerial relations. (C). A **bishop** assigned shall preside over the conference. (D). A **secretary**, and (E). a **statistician** shall be elected to serve the Annual Conference in those positions. (F). A **chancellor** shall be designated, shall serve as the legal advisor for the proceedings. (G). The **conference lay leader** is responsible to serve as the leader for the conference laity and to be an officer of the annual conference, as a partner with the bishop, and has the responsibility for fostering the awareness of the role of the laity within their churches and beyond. (H). **Director of Connectional Ministries** to focus and guide the mission and ministry of the Church within the annual conference. (I). There shall be a conference **Director of Communications** to direct and the logistics and implementation of communications within the annual conference. (J) Each annual conference is mandated ¶ 611. to have a **Conference Council on Finance and Administration** to provide for the functions of

ministry and connectional relationships. In addition **Conference Agencies** as the annual conference feel are need to accomplish its purposes; The annual conference will elected members to the mandated boards and committees, (§635, 636, 637, 639, 640, 647, 648) as directed in the Book of Discipline, for the Board of Ordained Ministry, Conference Administrative Review Committee; The Conference Committee on Episcopacy; Conference Board of Pensions; Board of Trustees; **United Methodist Women; United Methodist Men.**

7. Describe legislative, judicial, and executive branches of the United Methodist Church.

The Three branches of the United Methodist church emulate the federal structure of the United States. The Legislative body is the General Conference made up of between 600 and 1000 members one half of which is clergy and one half laity and meet every four years to decide on matters of polity, policy and procedure. Delegates are elected by the annual conferences. All legislation and changes to the Book of Discipline are accomplished through this body, and it is bound by the constraints of the Church Constitution and the General Rules. (§ 13) .

The executive branch is the Council of Bishops, composed of all the bishops of the United Methodist Church, composed of all active and retired bishops, who are required to meet at least once a year and “*plan for general oversight and promotion of the temporal, and spiritual interests of the entire Church and for carrying into effect the rules, regulations, and responsibilities prescribed and enjoined by the General Conference.*”² The bishops are elected by the Jurisdictional Conferences and are appointed to assigned to a particular area of one or more annual conferences, providing oversight of mission and ministry of that annual conference. The bishops are responsible

² Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2012.37-38.

for appointing clergy to their assignments within the annual conference of their charge. The bishops also provide spiritual leadership to the Church. (§45-54)

The judicial branch of the United Methodist Church is very much like the Supreme Court of the United States, in that it assures that the other branches do not stray from their constitution. The Judicial Council is the highest judicial body of the UMC and determines church law and the constitutionality of proceedings of all levels within the church. The Judicial Council is made up of nine members of clergy and laity and they meet normally twice a year and determines the constitutionality of acts or proposed acts of the General, Jurisdictional, Central, and Annual Conferences. (§56).

8. What is your understanding of the theology behind Shared Ministries giving (apportionments)?

For me the parable in Luke of the *Rich Fool* is a message Jesus provided to us about relationships and charity, for he uses this man's approach to "rich life" as showing us a life *not rich toward God*.³ This man spoke only of himself and his own abundance, never expressing gratitude to God for his blessing, or caring about another. He in fact is poor for he has no relationship with another to share his joy, nor to find joy in gratitude. The rich man can only speak of "my" and "I" and so is in fact poor, for we hear of no relationships. As United Methodist we are blessed in our connection and can do so much more together in sharing in our giving. As good stewards of the abundance God provides to us, we can "do the Gospel" by sharing Christ's love in giving our apportionments. Our giving together as the Body of Christ in our connectional nature is another aspect of our great commission of going forth. Our streams of sharing become rivers of living water.

³ NRSV Luke 12:21.

When our congregations see the evidence of their sharing in the mission moments we have, they are too blessed in Christ's love.

9. You have an idea for a unique ministry. How does the Book of Discipline guide us in seeking affirmation for ministries that are beyond the local church? What is the role of extension ministry in the life of the church?

In ¶ 202, the Book of Discipline tells us that *the local church of Jesus Christ exists in and for the world*. The local church is to *minister to persons in the community where the church is located, to provide appropriate training and nurture all, to cooperate in ministry with other local churches, to defend God's creation and live as an ecologically responsible community, and to participate in the worldwide mission of the church, as minimal expectation of an authentic church*. Though the community in which we live should be the center of our ministry, the mission is not limited to that ministry.

The role of the extension ministries is to provide pastoral care beyond the local church. John Wesley's understanding of *the world as his parish*, translates to opportunities, in which extension ministries provide pastoral care that reaches outside the local church and into other realms such as the military and other chaplaincy, hospice care, conference administration, pastoral counseling, teaching, as examples. It is the bishop who appoints the elder to the position in extension ministry, and may come at the request of the elder and through consultation with the bishop. (¶¶ 343-344).

10. In what ways does your upbringing, your cultural context, your personal experience, shape your understanding of our polity?

We all have unique aspects of our whole character that continues to be molded by our current experiences and the context of the world in which we live in the moment. We come to the Book of Discipline each with a unique set of eyes, which have been effected by our upbringings, our cultures and our past and current experiences. At the same time

the Book of Discipline and our polity is another point of connection of our Methodism and in which we together journey. Since it is a dynamic road, a fresh wind of the Holy Spirit tests the relevance of our polity against the backdrop of the location of our journey in the changing contexts, as the Book of discipline is looked upon anew each four years. It is in our different contexts and upbringings and cultures and experiences together that we can bring something to add or consider in fully representing the Body of Christ.

Fred Marz

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The Annual Conference is made up of: (A). **Clergy Members:** clergy of full

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connection who may vote on all matters but the election of lay delegates to general and jurisdictional or central conferences; provisional members; associate members, affiliate members and local pastors. Those clergy not in full connection have the right to vote at annual conference on all matters but constitutional amendments, the election of clergy delegates to the conferences*, matters of ordination and character*, and conference relations of clergy*. If associate members or local pastors are on the Board of Ordained Ministry, they may vote on these extended areas*. (B). **Lay Membership** of annual conference made up a professing member elected from each charge), per clergy member from that charge), and those qualified as listed in the Book of Discipline ¶602.4. Lay members shall participate in all deliberations and vote upon all measures but those concerning clergy as listed in the Book of Discipline in ¶602.6. Lay members may serve on all committees except those on ministerial relations. (C). A **bishop** assigned shall preside over the conference. (D). A **secretary**, and (E). a **statistician** shall be elected to serve the Annual Conference in those positions. (F). A **chancellor** shall be designated, shall serve as the legal advisor for the proceedings. (G). The **conference lay leader** is responsible to serve as the leader for the conference laity and to be an officer of the annual conference, as a partner with the bishop, and has the responsibility for fostering the awareness of the role of the laity within their churches and beyond. (H). **Director of Connectional Ministries** to focus and guide the mission and ministry of the Church within the annual conference. (I). There shall be a conference **Director of Communications** to direct and the logistics and implementation of communications within the annual conference. (J) Each annual conference is mandated ¶ 611. to have a **Conference Council on Finance and Administration** to provide for the functions of

ministry and connectional relationships. In addition **Conference Agencies** as the annual conference feel are need to accomplish its purposes; The annual conference will elected members to the mandated boards and committees, (§635, 636, 637, 639, 640, 647, 648) as directed in the Book of Discipline, for the Board of Ordained Ministry, Conference Administrative Review Committee; The Conference Committee on Episcopacy; Conference Board of Pensions; Board of Trustees; **United Methodist Women; United Methodist Men.**

7. Describe legislative, judicial, and executive branches of the United Methodist Church.

The Three branches of the United Methodist church emulate the federal structure of the United States. The Legislative body is the General Conference made up of between 600 and 1000 members one half of which is clergy and one half laity and meet every four years to decide on matters of polity, policy and procedure. Delegates are elected by the annual conferences. All legislation and changes to the Book of Discipline are accomplished through this body, and it is bound by the constraints of the Church Constitution and the General Rules. (§ 13) .

The executive branch is the Council of Bishops, composed of all the bishops of the United Methodist Church, composed of all active and retired bishops, who are required to meet at least once a year and “plan for general oversight and promotion of the temporal, and spiritual interests of the entire Church and for carrying into effect the rules, regulations, and responsibilities prescribed and enjoined by the General Conference.”²

The bishops are elected by the Jurisdictional Conferences and are appointed to assigned to a particular area of one or more annual conferences, providing oversight of mission and ministry of that annual conference. The bishops are responsible for appointing clergy

² Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2012.37-38.

to their assignments within the annual conference of their charge. The bishops also provide spiritual leadership to the Church. (§45-54)

The judicial branch of the United Methodist Church is very much like the Supreme Court of the United States, in that it assures that the other branches do not stray from their constitution. The Judicial Council is the highest judicial body of the UMC and determines church law and the constitutionality of proceedings of all levels within the church. The Judicial Council is made up of nine members of clergy and laity and they meet normally twice a year and determines the constitutionality of acts or proposed acts of the General, Jurisdictional, Central, and Annual Conferences. (§56).

8. What is your understanding of the theology behind Shared Ministries giving (apportionments)?

For me the parable in Luke of the *Rich Fool* is a message Jesus provided to us about relationships and charity, for he uses this man's approach to "rich life" as showing us a life *not rich toward God*.³ This man spoke only of himself and his own abundance, never expressing gratitude to God for his blessing, or caring about another. He in fact is poor for he has no relationship with another to share his joy, nor to find joy in gratitude. The rich man can only speak of "my" and "I" and so is in fact poor, for we hear of no relationships. As United Methodist we are blessed in our connection and can do so much more together in sharing in our giving. As good stewards of the abundance God provides to us, we can "do the Gospel" by sharing Christ's love in giving our apportionments. Our giving together as the Body of Christ in our connectional nature is another aspect of our great commission of going forth. Our streams of sharing become rivers of living water.

³ NRSV Luke 12:21.

When our congregations see the evidence of their sharing in the mission moments we have, they are too blessed in Christ's love.

9. You have an idea for a unique ministry. How does the Book of Discipline guide us in seeking affirmation for ministries that are beyond the local church? What is the role of extension ministry in the life of the church?

In ¶ 202, the Book of Discipline tells us that “the local church of Jesus Christ exists in and for the world”. The local church “is to minister to persons in the community “where the church is located, to provide appropriate training and nurture all, to cooperate in ministry with other local churches, to defend God’ creation and live as an ecologically responsible community, and to participate in the worldwide mission of the church, as minimal expectation of an authentic church”. Though the community in which we live should be the center of our ministry, the mission is not limited to that ministry.

The role of the extension ministries is to provide pastoral care beyond the local church. John Wesley’s understanding of “the world as his parish”, translates to opportunities, in which extension ministries provide pastoral care that reaches outside the local church and into other realms such as the military and other chaplaincy, hospice care, conference administration, pastoral counseling, teaching, as examples. It is the bishop who appoints the elder to the position in extension ministry, and may come at the request of the elder and through consultation with the bishop. (¶¶ 343-344).

10. In what ways does your upbringing, your cultural context, your personal experience, shape your understanding of our polity?

We all have unique aspects of our whole character that continues to be molded by our current experiences and the context of the world in which we live in the moment. We come to the Book of Discipline each with a unique set of eyes, which have been effected by our upbringings, our cultures and our past and current experiences. At the same time

the Book of Discipline and our polity is another point of connection of our Methodism and in which we together journey. Since it is a dynamic road, a fresh wind of the Holy Spirit tests the relevance of our polity against the backdrop of the location of our journey in the changing contexts, as the Book of discipline is looked upon anew each four years. It is in our different contexts and upbringings and cultures and experiences together that we can bring something to add or consider in fully representing the Body of Christ.

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Biographical Statement of Fred Marz

I have been married for forty-three years to my high school sweet heart Peggy, who is also my partner in ministry. We are truly blessed, for each day our love for God and for each other grows stronger. We have two grown daughters, Kristie age 39, and Kellie age 34, and three granddaughters.

Because we married while I was still in school, Peggy worked to provide for our financial needs. At the time I did not realize that in marrying Peggy, I also married into the church she had belonged to since she was a child.

As I look back, I now see how the Holy Spirit pursued me, and sent others to lead me to partake of God's love. Rev. Frank Robinson presided over our wedding and had counseled us and provided us with advice, which we each continue to abide in; his approach in serving the Lord demonstrated the love of Christ, planted a seed within me that would germinate later.

United Methodist pastors have had a great influence upon my spiritual journey: a hospital visit during a difficult time, a call of concern when a family member fell ill, each act of caring demonstrated the love of Christ, and planted another seed. It would be through the ministry of interim pastor coming to my "wife's church" during a time of turmoil that I would finally heed to the Holy Spirit's call, and accept Jesus Christ. It would be through the nurturing by a new pastor assigned to his first church, and in sponsoring me on *The Walk to Emmaus*, that the Holy Spirit would create in me a thirst that continues today. From that point onward, I knew I needed to serve the Lord in some way.

The more I served the Lord, the more I wanted to serve, but in comparing myself with the pastors that had so impacted me, I was reluctant, because I could see their gifts clearly, but not my own. It was again through United Methodist pastors, that I would understand the obvious, that if called by God, God would equip. That realization released in me an overwhelming feeling of warmth and excitement. I remember that moment clearly; it was as if a weight had been lifted, and I knew I wanted to answer the call. I knew God could use me; that if I stepped out in faith that the Holy Spirit would equip me and guide me. I knew that since this was God's plan, it would succeed. I cannot explain that joy or clarity, but I knew, and know, that every experience of my life has led me to, and is preparing me for this calling.

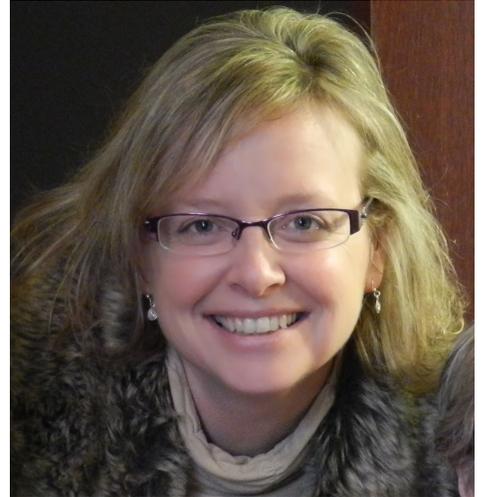
Each day that I serve the Lord as a pastor, the more powerfully I feel that calling confirmed. God has truly blessed Peggy and me, and as we continue in God's ministry, more of that blessing, and fullness of God's love and grace is revealed.

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METCALF, NINABETH

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- 3) Practice of Ministry
- 4) Theology, Call, & Doctrine
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NOTES

This worship service was a joint worship between the Knowlton United Methodist Church and the Panther Valley Ecumenical Church. We gather to worship together 4 times a year. Each church has an opportunity to host. This particular service took place at the Knowlton United Methodist Church. There were 64 people in attendance for this morning's worship.

The Knowlton United Methodist Church of Columbia N.J. is "Dedicated to Outreach and growing in faith, fellowship, witness and service in the name of Jesus Christ". The KUMC is located in rural Warren County, an area that was once a thriving agricultural area, primarily dedicated to dairy and produce. It is a small family centered congregation. Approximately 30 members come regularly to worship. The average age is 50 and the makeup of the congregation reflects its community. The KUMC is dedicated to outreach with a thriving Thrift Store ministry, Food pantry ministry, Medical Equipment Lending ministry, and a Kids Come First ministry. They have a small children's Sunday school, Youth group, one Bible Study group, and a visioning group called Imagine KUMC. They have a Musical director on staff, a choir, and a volunteer Praise Band.

The Panther Valley Ecumenical Church of Allamuchy New Jersey "welcomes all people into our multid denominational community as we seek to grow in the knowledge and love of and service to Jesus Christ." Incorporated in 1969 they are affiliated with The United Methodist Church, The Presbyterian Church USA, The Episcopal Church, and The United Church of Christ. It is a pastor centered church with an average worship attendance of 60. The average age is 70 and the congregation is beginning to reflect the diversity of the community. The PVEC has a full time music director for a choir and bell choir. They have three Bible/book study groups, a youth group, children's Sunday school, four small groups, a food pantry, and a New Beginnings vision group.

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The Seed of Faith

Today we begin a 4 week study on faith. Our key question will be; what is faith? We will listen to what Jesus has to tell us about faith through His sayings, actions, and parables found in the Gospel of Luke: The Mustard seed & Mulberry Tree, The Ten Lepers, The Widow and the Unjust Judge, and The Pharisee and the Tax collector.

Let us pray:

Holy God, Author of the Word made flesh to whom belong both the first Word and the last, open us to your Spirit, that as scripture is spoken and your Word proclaimed, we may be comforted, convinced, and changed to the glory of Jesus the Christ.

2 Timothy 1:1-14 New Living Translation (NLT)

¹ This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. I have been sent out to tell others about the life he has promised through faith in Christ Jesus.

² I am writing to Timothy, my dear son.

May God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord give you grace, mercy, and peace.

³ Timothy, I thank God for you—the God I serve with a clear conscience, just as my ancestors did. Night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. ⁴ I long to see you again, for I remember your tears as we parted. And I will be filled with joy when we are together again.

⁵ I remember your genuine faith, for you share the faith that first filled your grandmother Lois and your mother, Eunice. And I know that same faith continues strong in you. ⁶ This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you. ⁷ For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.

⁸ So never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord. And don't be ashamed of me, either, even though I'm in prison for him. With the strength God gives you, be ready to suffer with me for the

sake of the Good News. ⁹ For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time—to show us his grace through Christ Jesus. ¹⁰ And now he has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Savior. He broke the power of death and illuminated the way to life and immortality through the Good News. ¹¹ And God chose me to be a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of this Good News.

¹² That is why I am suffering here in prison. But I am not ashamed of it, for I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until the day of his return.

¹³ Hold on to the pattern of wholesome teaching you learned from me—a pattern shaped by the faith and love that you have in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ Through the power of the Holy Spirit who lives within us, carefully guard the precious truth that has been entrusted to you

Luke 17:5-10 New Living Translation (NLT)

⁵ The apostles said to the Lord, “Show us how to increase our faith.”

⁶ The Lord answered, “If you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘May you be uprooted and be planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you!

⁷ “When a servant comes in from plowing or taking care of sheep, does his master say, ‘Come in and eat with me’? ⁸ No, he says, ‘Prepare my meal, put on your apron, and serve me while I eat.

Then you can eat later.’ ⁹ And does the master thank the servant for doing what he was told to do? Of course not. ¹⁰ In the same way, when you obey me you should say, ‘We are unworthy servants who have simply done our duty.’”

I have been thinking a lot about seeds this week.

The garden is shutting down - the last fruits of the season are ripening

the herbs are blossoming,

it is time to collect seeds for next year's garden.

Last year was the first year that Tim and I committed to seed saving.

I had learned that seeds taken from the plants grown in your own soil would produce healthier and hardier plants. So we set about choosing the best tasting tomatoes and pulled out their seeds and dried them on paper towels.

We weren't really sure if the seeds would make it over the winter.

So when it came time to plant, I did not really trust my method of seed saving nor did I trust that the seeds would sprout, so I put all of them into the ground – and they all sprouted! We had about forty tomato plants in a 2 foot X 6 foot space! – Note to self – Don't do that again!

What I learned very clearly was that I had to *Trust that the seeds will sprout!*

Seeds are amazing! *They have an amazing ability to endure the roughest handling (Like being stored on a papertowel on a shelf in the laundry room). They are able to lie dormant for long periods of time! And, given the chance to sprout, they do so with tenacity!*

So when I heard the disciples demand from Jesus – Increase our faith – I chuckled to myself! I could have used some faith in myself and in those seeds to sprout!

Faith – I've had a hard time with that word

Honestly, for most of my life I didn't quite understand what that word meant.

I would hear words like – “Her faith has made her strong” or “Keep the faith!” (a favorite salutation of our Bishop) Or sing songs like “Faith of my Fathers” or hear Jesus say – “Ye of little faith!” (Matthew 8:26) and of course our Statements of Faith – the Apostles Creed that I

mumbled aloud, with fear and trepidation of getting the words wrong, to the congregation on the day I was confirmed.

I equated faith with belief.....If I believed then I had faith.... If I doubted then I did not have faith.....and faith and belief do go hand in hand... but faith is more than mere belief.

Listen to what Jesus is saying to us today....

Moments before we hear Jesus Disciples say – “Show us how to increase our faith.” – read in deadpan.... We hear Jesus say to his disciples, “Hard trials and temptations are bound to come, but too bad for whoever brings them on! Better to wear a millstone necklace and take a swim in the deep blue sea than give even one of these dear little ones a hard time!

“Be alert. If you see your friend going wrong, correct him. If he responds, forgive him. Even if it’s personal against you and repeated seven times through the day, and seven times he says, ‘I’m sorry, I won’t do it again,’ forgive him.” (Luke 17:1-5)

The disciples begin to doubt and they are beginning to fear so they demand, “Give us more faith.”

Hard trials and temptations are bound to come

There are going to be times when someone is going to do you wrong.

A bully picks a fight with you. You lose your job. Your marriage falls apart.

The diagnosis is cancer. The one you love is going to die.

Jesus says , “You don’t need more faith. There is no ‘more’ or ‘less’ in faith. If you have a bare kernel of faith, say the size of a poppy seed, you could say to this sycamore tree, ‘Go jump in the lake,’ and it would do it. (Luke 17: 6)

What is this seed of faith?

The letter to Timothy shines some light on this:

Paul tells us that Timothy shares the faith that was his grandmothers and mothers.....

So the seed of faith is something that is shared.....

It is something that resides within you.

It is something that can withstand the roughest handling, it is something that can lie dormant until just the right time....it is God's love freely given, God's grace prompting us to love God and each other.

Each of us is born in the image of God

And when we are baptized God calls us "Beloved children of God" and we are invited into a relationship with God through the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ.

We are the feet and hands of Christ in the world. We are given the power by the Holy Spirit through Christ to be the beloved in the world.

Each of us is a unique and beloved child of God

God desires to be in communion and friendship with each and every one of us.

God desires us to trust that God is Love. You see God called the world good and called each of us to share in God's creation.

God sent Jesus to us to show us his Love and to teach us how to be in relationship with God and each other.

And this trust and relationship with God is faith

God plants this seed of faith within us so that we stay connected, stay in relationship with Him.

This seed of faith can do amazing things to transform the world.

No matter what happens in our life God is there.

God's love is a seed just waiting to blossom.

God is on our side making all things new.

Jesus invites us to trust that the seed of faith that is planted within each of us – trust that when it is nurtured in our own 2X6 foot plot, it will produce fruit that will transform the world.

Come to the Table of Grace, to awaken, nourish and strengthen the seed of faith that is planted in our hearts.

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1. Detail the theological significance of each act of worship. Describe what is happening and why it occurs where it does in the service.

There is one order of Worship for United Methodists and within this order there are four movements; Entrance, Proclamation and Response, Thanksgiving and Communion, and Sending forth.

The entrance is a time of transitioning and shifting our focus from “outside” to “inside”, from busyness to stillness, from ourselves to God. At this service the transition is made up of four movements; Call to Worship, Praise, and Opening Prayer and Centering hymn.

Our Call to Worship acknowledges that we are a community gathering in the Lord’s name to worship, pray, praise, and celebrate at the Table of Grace, united by the bonds of Love. This is a time of linking the human with the divine. This invitation and acknowledgment is strengthened as we sing our opening hymn which affirms our coming together and offers praise to our Creator and Redeemer. The opening Prayer invites us to acknowledge who and whose we are as ask for God’s guiding presence to help us open our hearts and minds to the ways God is moving among us and how we are to respond. The centering hymn invites us to slow our pace, clear our eyes, open ourselves to the joy and pain of the world and make space for Love to enter. This hymn prepares our hearts and minds to see, hear, and feel the presence of the Triune God in the next movement; Proclamation.

The Proclamation and Response consists of six movements by which the grace of God can enter our lives; Prayer for Illumination, Scripture, Sermon, Responsive hymn, Prayers of the People and Offering.

The Prayer for Illumination invites the Holy Spirit to empower us and open our hearts and Minds to what the Word has to say to us. Scripture is the Word of God. The Sermon is an interpretation of the scripture that tells God’s story of the Good News. The sermon encourages people see

themselves as part of this big story. The hymn of response is an invitation to respond to what the Holy Spirit through Christ is nudging us to do. In the prayers of the people the congregation has the opportunity to share the tangible ways that God is at work in the world and to lift up concerns, joys and intercessory prayer. The Offering is a tangible form of gratitude for all that we have been given. It is a giving of the “first fruits” of our money, time, talent, and witness. The Doxology of praise is sung to magnify our joy in all that we have been given.

As the body of Christ we are invited to participate in Thanksgiving and Communion. This sacrament is the high point in the service. At this time we offer up before God and our community the ways in which we have sinned, trusting that God will answer us and reconcile us to Him. The Great Thanksgiving opens us up to experience God’s grace in the tangible elements of bread and wine. In presenting salvation history and it’s culmination in Christ we open ourselves to Christ’s presence “here and now”. In the receiving of the bread and wine we receive not only Christ but Abundant Life and a foretaste of the kingdom to come. In the receiving the gift of grace we are nourished and strengthened to continue being the hands and feet of Christ for the transformation of the world.

The final act is the Sending Forth. This is a transition from the sacred time of Worship back into the world. Having been re-formed in the image of Christ and nourished in Love we sing a hymn that calls us into mission and pronounce a benediction asking for God’s blessings on our lives as we go forth as coworkers in the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ, bringing hope, joy and peace, for the transformation of the world.

2. Explain the following: (a) Why did you choose the hymns used in the context of the service. (b) What was the purpose of the sermon. (c) Does the Order of Worship help deliver that theme? Explain.

(a) The hymns were chosen by myself and our worship team to reflect the theme of today’s service: Faith is trusting and staying in relationship with God. Because this was a joint service

between Panther Valley Ecumenical Church and Knowlton UMC we worked together to choose hymns that would reflect their worship style. It is World Communion Sunday so we felt that the first hymn reflected God's Lordship over all of the earth. Our hymn of illumination was chosen to call us to slow down and open our hearts so that the seed of faith could be nurtured by God who is love. Our responsive hymn invites us to answer the question; will we trust and follow Jesus the Christ? The Offertory confirms that God is with us protecting us. The Communion Hymns are a collection of favorite hymns of the two churches. The recessional hymn gives us hope and encourages us to go out into the world in faith proclaiming love and God's forgiving peace.

(b) The Good News of the message that the seed of faith is God's love in our heart yearning to sprout and produce fruit that will transform our world. Trust in that seed, trust in God who longs to be in relationship with us.

(c) The Call to Worship accentuates World Communion Sunday reminding us that many diverse people from around the world are gathering at the Table of Grace. Our opening prayer is a bridge between World Communion and the Scripture message. It reminds us that we are one in the body of Christ and all are called beloved as we work together to bring shalom. The hymn "Come and Find the Quiet Center" completes the transition from World Communion to our message about faith. The prayers of the people accentuate the ways that we can trust that God cares for and seeks a relationship with each of us. Our offering prayer echoes 2 Timothy. Our prayer of forgiveness speaks to the reality of our need for God in our lives, accentuating what impedes or stunts the growth of our seed of faith. The words of assurance speak of God's prevenient grace and enduring love and care for us. Our Benediction brings together the Scriptures, the message and World Communion Sunday.

Ezekiel Bible Study Setting and Purpose

The Panther Valley Ecumenical; Church's Wednesday morning Bible Study has been meeting for four years. They have traditionally read through and discussed books of the Bible. The group consists of retired members of the congregation. There are three women who are upper middle class of European descent. All are college educated. One is a widow and the other two are married and their husbands attend the class with them. There are four men; all are married, upper middle class, Caucasian, and college educated. The religious affiliation within the group is; congregational, United Methodist, and PCUSA. The group is used to a passive lecture style of Bible Study which was the method that the previous pastor employed. My style is more of a teaching to transform, a method that is question based and emphasizes group participation. The group had spent over a year studying books from the New Testament and had expressed a desire to study a book from the First Testament. Their last study was on the book of Revelation. I thought that Ezekiel would make a good transition. As I researched texts for this study I discovered Margaret Odell's comprehensive commentary, without which I would not have had the courage to teach. It was my hope that I would be able to open our eyes and ears to what Ezekiel had to say to us in the 21st century. I was not disappointed.

Ezekiel Bible Study @ PVEC

OUTLINE

Week 1 – Introduction

Context of the book

Who is Ezekiel?

What is unique about Ezekiel and the book?

What did he struggle with?

Leading Question – What does Ezekiel have to say to us today?

Week 2 – The Prophetic Call

Chapters 1-3

Review – the sign of Ezekiel – swallowing the scroll, the visions; thorns as divine protection (accepting our scratches and scars as emblems of Grace.” (Ezekiel, pg 51)



Art -

Leading question - If someone had a vision like Ezekiel’s today, how would you react?

What does it look like to be “mired in a thicket of one’s own making” or to “Seek protection in God’s brier patch.”? (Ezekiel, pg 50)

Week 3 – The Fall of Judah

Chapter 3-7 – Yahweh announces to Ezekiel his intent to judge Jerusalem, the land, and the inhabitants of Israel.

Ninabeth Metcalf Ezekiel Bible Study

Review – Ezekiel is bound and sits in silence, the sword as a barbers razor; relinquishing his role as priest, using Dung for fire; famine.Honor and Shame

Leading question - In chapter 7, the people have realized that they have brought disaster upon themselves and the lifestyle that they were used to can no longer be maintained. In what ways does their experience parallel ours?

Week 4 – The Fall continues

Chapters 4- 12

Review – gates/entrances to the Temple, the Schwarzrheindorf frescos and the medieval crusades, Political egoism.

Poem – II, 15, Rainer Maria, Rilke, The Book of Pilgrimage, (Rilke, 169)

Leading question: How are we spiritually Blind?

Week 5 – The Fall Continues

Chapter 12-15 – “Gillûlîm” - Ezekiel Speaks for Yahweh

Music – [“Lord I Have Made You a Place in My Heart” Greg Brown](#)

Leading question – Is there room for God in our hearts?

Week 6 – The Offensive Text

Chapter 16 – Personification of Jerusalem

Review – Metaphor, cities as women,

Leading question – What about the problem of lost identity and mistaken love?

Week 7 – The Fall continues

Chapter 17-19

Review – Riddles, parables, proverbs and dirges. “...in rejecting the idea of inherited guilt, Ezekiel does not attempt to put in it’s place a theory of individual responsibility. Rather, he

calls on the present generation to stop blaming the past generations and, as the community of the house of Israel alive today, to turn to Yahweh.” (Beginning Old Testament Study. Pg 86)

Leading question – What does Ezekiel infer when the Lord says: “”get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit”(18:31)?

Week 8 – The Final Blow

Chapter 20 -24

Review – retelling of the exodus story. Ezekiel’s definition of Sabbath; a sign that sets Israel apart for Yahweh’s benefit. Yahweh’s justice towards those on the fringe. Abuse of power.

Not that metaphor again! Two Sisters. Ezekiel’s wife. – the sign of Ezekiel; the turban

Poem: A Sabbath Poem by Wendell Berry from the book: A Timbered Choir

Leading question – When is “moving on” the appropriate response to grief?

Week 9 – The Oracles Against the Nations

Chapter 25-32

Review – Chaos traditions, Tyre the city of trade (and purple dye), Egypt, Assyria, the cosmic tree,

Leading Question – How have these Oracles influenced the New Testament.

Week 10: The fall of Jerusalem and the rise of hope

Chapter – 33 – 36

Review- Shepherds in the land of Israel,



Art -

Leading Question – What does it mean to have our hearts transformed by God?

Week 11: Dem Bones

Chapter 37-39

Review – The hope of Resurrection, Gog, [Dura Europos](#)



Art -

Poetry – [“Peace” by George Manly Hopkins](#)

Music – [“The Handiwork of God” by Mark Miller](#)

Leading question – What would it look like for us to trust the Spirit to knit us back together.

Week 12: Vision of the New Temple

Chapter 40 -48

Review – the gates, Ezekiel’s Vision of Israel, the meaning of sacrifice in ritual, (pg 514-516), God as builder; Psalm 127:1, 2 Sm. 7:27, Psalm 89:4, Genesis 1-11, Razing old structures; John 2:2, Matt 26:61, 27:40, Mark 14:58, 15:29, God removes shame, Access to overflowing blessing and love

Leading question – If God’s house is enlarge to fit everyone how would you describe it?

Discussion - Evaluation of class

Ezekiel – Week 1 – Introduction

Learning Goal: Overview of the book

Question to consider: What does Ezekiel have to say to us today?

Teaching Strategy: This first lesson was presented in a lecture format. We looked at photos of archaeological sites, art and architecture. We looked at maps online to get a sense of distance between Jerusalem and the river Chebar. (The remainder of the lessons was a combination of lecture, reading from the Bible, and dialogue based upon the leading questions.)

Teaching Aids: We used books and a projector for online access to maps, art, architecture, music, video, and poetry.

Context: Ezekiel is rare in that it explicitly describes the exile

587 bce – Babylon conquered Judah and all wealthy and powerful urban residents – poets, scholars, as well as King Jehoiachin were sent to live in Babylonia. The city of Babylonia -, Nebuchadnezzar II (604-561 BCE), renovated the city so that it covered 900 hectares (2,200 acres) of land and boasted some the most beautiful and impressive structures in all of Mesopotamia. Every ancient writer to make mention of the city of Babylon, outside of those responsible for the stories in the Bible, does so with a tone of awe and reverence. <http://www.ancient.eu/babylon/>

Visuals: “Splendors of the Past; Lost Cities of the Ancient World”, Assyrian Palaces

Who Is Ezekiel: Ezekiel – son of Buzi – born in Judah in 622 bce , just before Josiah’s reform, and thus lived through much of Jeremiah’s ministry there. He was married (24:18), was 30 years old when he began his ministry in 592 bce (1:1) and continued his ministry until at least 571 bce (29:27) Ezekiel is a Zadokite priest – in this he is unlike the other prophets. As a priest he is preoccupied by Yahweh’s holiness; Yahweh’s extraordinariness.

Ezekiel is like the other prophets but even more so:

1. Ezekiel's visions are technicolor, wide-screen, virtual reality as he is again and again dazzled by awesome manifestations of Yahweh's splendor. He speaks of it 19 times. He stands with Elijah and Elisha in the oddness of his stories
2. 7 times Ezekiel is gripped, seized, shaken, whisked, bowled over by God's presence.
3. He is propelled by the dynamic, unpredictable, irresistible spirit of Yahweh. Ruah is especially important.
4. Ezekiel speaks 50 times of concrete messages coming to him from the heavenly king.
5. Ezekiel turns folktale motifs into allegory, metaphor, and poetic expositions.
6. Ezekiel communicates via mimes, illustrating and embodying his message
7. Ezekiel is concerned for the house of Israel.
8. Ezekiel wants Yahweh to be recognized – over 70 times; “they/you shall know that I am Yahweh.
9. Ezekiel knows that the community he is speaking to is resistant to his message
10. He is ignored by the community. He becomes an embodiment of their threatened fate.
11. Ezekiel acts as a lookout warning of imminent danger. His message of judgement is extensive. He portrays Israel as the unfaithful wife – “Ezekiel turns this portrayal into a late night mini-series which respectable people hesitate to admit viewing, and after doing so go to bed with a bad taste in their mouth.”
12. Ezekiel speaks of an elaborate and wondrous restoration of Davidic shepherding....
13. Ezekiel is bold in his attributing all that happens to Yahweh's sovereignty.
14. Ezekiel gives us a series of precise dates in terms of the deportation. This is a new phenomenon in prophetic books, and Ezekiel is the only prophet who is said himself to give

dates. (usually they are given in third person) Chronological precision is important because it conveys an impression of actuality and a reminder that God's word tends to be specific to particular moments and needs to be understood in relation to them.

Why Did Ezekiel Write the Book:

“The key to Ezekiel’s proclamation of God is this: *God will not be mocked*. God will not be presumed upon, trivialized, taken for granted, or drawn too close. God takes being God with utmost seriousness.” (Brueggemann 1986:53) Ezekiel is appalled at religious wrongdoing and at the violence which characterizes the community. “He sees calamity as lying in Yahweh’s abandoning of the temple and in the temple’s destruction. It is for this calamity, a truly community destroying event, that he seeks to prepare his people.” Likewise, he sees the restoration as lying in the renewing of the temple and in a reallocation of the land with the temple at its center. Ezekiel is wrestling with the problems posed by the tragedies of Jerusalem’s destruction and the Babylonian exile. Some of the questions he is asking:

Why did God allow the Temple and Jerusalem to be destroyed?

Why did God allow the people of Israel to be carried away into exile?

What future is there for Israel?

Structure: Literary – organized around 3 visions of God. Ezekiel tells the story of God’s attempt to reclaim the loyalty of Israel. The book resembles in form the Building inscriptions of ancient Assyria.

Traditional structure: Prophetic call (1-3) The fall of Judah (4-24), Oracles against the nations (25-32), The fall of Jerusalem and the rise of hope (33-39), Vision of the new temple (40-48)

Annotated Bibliography for PVEC Ezekiel Bible Study

Achtemeir, P. J. (1985). *Harper's Bible Dictionary*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.

We used this source when we had questions about specific words or topics. For instance, what is a Dirge?

Anita Barrows, J. M. (1996,2005). *Rilke's Book of Hours: Love Poems to God*. New York: Riverhead Books.

Rilke captures the sense of longing for God as well as the understanding that we cannot capture the mystery of God with images and symbols.

Berry, W. (1999). *A Timbered Choir: The Sabbath Poems, 1979 - 1997*. Berkeley: Counterpoint LLC.

Wendell Berry's poetry of Sabbath captures the essence of Sabbath.

Bibleworks LLC. (2008). BibleWorks 8. Norfolk, VA, USA.

Bibleworks is a great resource for comparing translations as well as searching for specific words and their use.

Bruggeman, W. (1986). *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

A powerful book that helped me to understand what Ezekiel was trying to convey in the writing of his exile experience.

Collantes, F. Vision of Ezekiel. *Art In the Christian Tradition*. Prado Museum, Madrid.

Collins, J. J. (2007). Ezekiel. In J. J. Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (pp. 185-196). Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

This book gave me a birdseye view of the book of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel's Symbols Wheel within Wheel. *Art in the Christian Tradition*. Cathedral de Amiens, Amiens.

Goldingay, J. A. (2003). Ezekiel. In J. D.G.Dunn, *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (pp. 623-664). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company.

This resource helped me deepen my understanding of certain chapters.

John Carawell, L. D. (1981). *Splendors of the Past: Lost Cities of the Ancient World*. Washington: National Geographic Society.

This book was used to show archaeological sites.

Joyce, P. (1998). The Individual and the Community. In J. Rogerson, J. Barton, D. J. Climes, & P. Joyce, *Beginning Old Testament Study* (pp. 77-92). St. Louis: Chalice Press.

This book is helpful in understanding Ezekiel's concern for community and the overall emphasis on repentance.

Mark, J. J. (2011, April 28). *Babylon*. Retrieved October 1, 2015, from Ancient History Encyclopedia: <http://www.ancient.eu/babylon/>

I used this source to set the geographical context of the book of Ezekiel.

Odell, M. S. (2005). *Ezekiel*. Macon: Smyth & Helwys.

This was my primary source for this Bible Study. Margaret Odell presents various perspectives; from traditional to current. Her research is thorough and scholarly. This book provides additional insightful information on concepts, interpretations, and relevant cultural context. At the end of every chapter she connects the commentary and research to current events.

Sweeney, M. A. (2004). Ezekiel. In A. Berlin, & M. Z. Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible* (pp. 1042-1138). New York: Oxford University Press.

This was the primary text that I read from both in class and in my preparation for class.

The Zondervan Corporation. (1995). *The NIV Study Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House.

I used this as a secondary text for comparison of scripture.

Turner, M. D. (2003). Jeremiah and Ezekiel. In M. J. Steussy, *Chalice Introduction to the Old Testament*. St. Louis: Chalice Press.

Ninabeth Metcalf Ezekiel Bible Study

I used this text in my preparation for the first class. It gives a good and scholarly overview of the book.

Tyndale Charitable Trust. (2004). *Holy Bible*. Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

I used this as a secondary text for comparison of scripture.

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Evaluation of the PVEC Ezekiel Bible Study

This evaluation was made at the last class. It was a group evaluation that discussed the content, format, and asked the question: “where should we go from here?”

This Bible Study was not for the faint of heart. At times it was downright difficult and depressing. Several in the group had difficulty with Ezekiel’s portrayal of Jerusalem and Judah as women. The same folks had difficulty reconciling that God is both threatening and loving in the midst of destruction. This provided a fruitful conversation about how we believe God is active in our day and age. In the middle of the study (Chapters 16-33) we found ourselves despairing along with Ezekiel. Two of our members left to travel at the end of the week 8. They returned after our study was over. Before leaving they expressed that they did not enjoy all of the violence, nor did they grasp the honor/shame worldview. When the glimmer of hope showed itself in week 10 there was an audible sigh of relief. God was there, walking with us through the devastation!

When asked how they liked the new format of the class, everyone appreciated the participatory aspect. A couple people asked that I summarize the reading at the beginning of each class because they had not completed the reading.

PRACTICE OF MINISTRY

1. What do you think are the most effective means of doing evangelism in the 21st century? How have you lived this out in your current context of ministry?

Authentic storytelling is at the heart of doing evangelism on the 21st century. Enthusiastic sharing in the Story of Salvation, His story, and how our own journey of discipleship intersects with that story inspires others to say: “Tell me more!” While this can involve different forms of social media; Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook, online retreats, YouTube; different forms of Worship and preaching... the real transformative sharing happens in face to face trusting relationships.

Like the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:7-42), I live this out by intentionally witnessing to how God is experienced in the tough, the joyous, and in the ordinary moments of my life. I am honest about the way I sometimes stumble, doubt, and fail at being a disciple. I am equally honest about the ways I experience the mystery of mercy and grace.

Whether it is through lament or praise I am committed to listening and naming how I see God experienced in other people’s lives. In Worship, bible study, confirmation classes, council and committee meetings, and in day to day encounters at the grocery store, bank, post office, farmers market, and walks with our dog, I pay attention to synchronicity, name out loud awe and wonder, and lift up the ways that our own stories reflect scripture and the kingdom of God on earth.

2. What makes a congregation vital, and how do you measure it? How would you envision working with a congregation to become more vital?

A congregation is vital when it is both inwardly transformed and outwardly focused on making disciples for the transformation of the world. Vital congregations reflect the diversity of their communities, welcoming all and encouraging all to walk humbly, do justice, and live in loving kindness. They are led by the Holy Spirit as they follow Jesus; embracing his mission to

proclaim Jubilee, bringing good news to the poor, giving sight to the blind, release to the captive, and letting the oppressed go free. A vital congregation is willing to take risks and will celebrate both their successes and failures. Vital congregations do all this through worship, small groups, growing disciples, mission in community and generosity.

Some of the ways that we measure vitality are: the number of disciples in worship, the number of professions of faith, the number of small groups, the number of youth and children, the number of disciples in outreach ministries, and the amount of money given to support the ministry of the church and its mission to make disciples for the transformation of the world. Other ways of measuring vitality are: spirit filled Worship, passionate and empowered leaders, growth in discipleship, maturity in faith, of the gift of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:7-11) that is revealed in leadership and laity, evidence of the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), unity in diversity,

In developing vitality in the congregations that I serve, I have invited the laity and leadership to form small covenant groups that ask the following questions: Where have we come from? Where are we? Where are we going? We answer these questions through Scripture, historical records and narrative, content gleaned from MissionInsight, the Cycle of Blessings¹, preaching, prayer, spiritual practices, Bible studies and other resources appropriate to the individual groups. These answers then inspire more questions; what would our worship look like if we...? How do we empower folks for mission? What is God calling us to do outside of our church community? My task as their pastor is to inspire the community to ask questions and to provide resources to help them live into the questions.

3. What is your personal approach to conflict? Provide an example of where you have been involved in resolving conflict. What did you learn?

Conflict is natural and inevitable in our lives. In every conflict there are a variety of perspectives.

When I approach conflict I try my best to understand as many perspectives as I can. I am

¹ Eric Law, *Holy Currencies: 6 Blessings for Sustainable Missional Ministries* (St. Louis, Chalice Press, 2013)

sensitive to the lens with which I view the conflict, knowing my tendencies toward peacemaking and optimism and observing where my allegiances may be. It is important to create a safe and trusting environment for folks to communicate their points of view. It is important to be sensitive to what is not being said as well as the ones whose voice is marginalized. I strongly believe that the Holy Spirit is already at work in the midst of conflict; therefore I do my best to identify where I see the movement of the Spirit and where there is a building up or a tearing down. After listening to folk's opinions and stories I determine whether the conflict is symptomatic of adaptive change or exposing a deeper systemic issue. Does the resolution require a technical or adaptive solution? Are there parallels in our faith stories and scripture that can help resolution? Because relationship is integral to community I strive to find some common interest as a starting place for dialogue. Once dialogue is established then with God and each other we begin to move toward mutual understanding.

Last spring at an Administrative Council meeting, the Treasurer, with a quivering lip and tears in his eyes, announced to the group that he would be pressing criminal charges against a parishioner for sexual assault unless we throw her out of church. The parishioner is a life-long member of the congregation. After a long pause there was an immediate outpouring of sympathy followed by a normalizing of the parishioner's behavior. "She has always been this way" "You must not let her get to you." "She does this to all men, even men outside of the church." This was a serious allegation. I was aware that the parishioner was bi-polar and that provocative sexual advances were symptomatic of her disease. However, I was not sure how many other folks knew this. Instead of breeching confidence I asked if this particular kind of behavior had been deemed offensive by others. Three women on council shared stories about their husband's complaining, another about an incident at the post office with a stranger, and one man shared that another man

from the congregation had complained. Several spoke of how her forward actions seemed to be cyclical and related to her depression. I enquired if anyone had approached the parishioner about her behavior. No one had because “it was the way she was”. I advised the group that these allegations are a serious matter and that we cannot just write it off as “the way it always is.” I suggested that we gather a group of three individuals to speak with the parishioner about the allegations. I asked if anyone knew her family well enough to ask them to join. It was important to create a safe space for her to tell her side of the story. We discussed candidly why we could not ask her to leave the church and asked the treasurer to have patience while we arrange this meeting. His reply; “She’s never going to change and I will leave the church.” At the end of the meeting that night we identified three people and set a time and place to meet with the parishioner. I reminded everyone to keep this conversation confidential and followed up with a written letter stating the same.

We cannot always control how conflict resolution plays out. In this case, the council chair decided that she would “fix” this right away and went to the parishioner’s house the next morning, confronting her with her behavior. Because no one was with her we do not know what was said. The result was a deeply offended, hurt, and vindictive parishioner. We confronted the Council chair about her spontaneity and her need to fix problems on her own. I focused my sermons on forgiveness and what it means to be the body of Christ.

As you may have expected, rumors, false accusations and drama flared up! I refused to allow this incident to become divisive, reminding those who wanted to create drama that there were real people hurting, that we are all the beloved children of God. When asked from those who were not part of the Council about this or that, I spoke honestly about the situation while keeping confidentiality. I gave the parishioner time to process, perhaps too much time. When she

returned I allowed the parishioner to speak her mind and offered an empathetic ear. I spoke privately with the Treasurer legitimizing his feelings and gently questioning his need to threaten others. After six months the Treasurer did not press charges and the parishioner has returned to Worship. The conflict is not fully resolved, the parishioner is still angry and has not acknowledged that she has violated the Treasurers sacred space, nor has the Treasurer come to understand the parishioner and her illness. But there is perceptible progress!

4. What is your theological and practical understanding of itineracy?

When I think about itineracy I think of Moses journeying with his fellow Israelites through the wilderness. God knew who Moses was and who he could be, so God called him to guide God's beloved children towards the land of milk and honey. And although Moses yearned to step into the Promised Land, it was Joshua who was instructed by the Lord to go. Jesus walked along the Sea of Galilee calling others to follow. He went from town to town, synagogue to synagogue proclaiming the Good news, for that is what he came to do. (Mark 1:38). Then Jesus sent the twelve out ahead of him instructing them to take nothing with them so that they could share peace in hospitality, to proclaim the Kingdom of God and heal. (Luke 9:1-5) The Lord appointed seventy to go ahead of Him in the same manner. (Luke 10:1-11) Paul and Peter went from church to church to speak boldly in the name of the Lord. John Wesley did what was "vile" in order to answer his call to make disciples for the transformation of the world. So too the Circuit Riders in the early days of American Methodism, rode from town to town, church to church boldly declaring the Good News.

Just as Paul planted, and Aleppo watered, we work together to build on the foundation which is Jesus the Christ (1 Corinthians 3:5-11). Itineracy enables one pastor who has already graciously served to allow the gifts of another pastor to greatly help "those who through grace had become believers." (Acts 18:27) We are servants of the One who creates and makes all things.

Itineracy is helpful when there is a high level of conflict in the church whereas the Bishop and the cabinet are able to intervene. Itineracy gives consistency to pastoral leadership, as opposed to a call system where the pulpit might be vacant for a significant amount of time.

5. How do you engage all age groups in your community?

I engage all age groups by encouraging opportunities for generational and intergenerational participation in Worship, Bible Study, small groups, mission, and community events. In Worship we designate specific times to certain ages; a weekly children's message, a children and youth led service, Christmas pageant, intergenerational Hanging of the Greens, Intergenerational sacred dramas, intergenerational acolytes. We offer Sunday school for all ages, youth group, seniors gathering, family game nights, community dinners, VBS. We interact with all ages on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat.

6. What is your understanding of pastoral authority, and how do you intend to exercise it in your place of ministry?

I have made "the journey from spiritual bondage to freedom in Christ"², in my personal life and with a community of fellow Christians. I have been called and set aside by God to leadership in pastoral ministry. This calling has been affirmed by my congregation, pastors, mentors, teachers, peers, the DCOM, and the BoOM. I exercise my pastoral authority thru leading worship, preaching and teaching the Word, administering the Sacraments, providing pastoral care, and ordering the work of the church for mission and transformation.

7. If you could choose anyone to mentor your leadership skills, who would that be and why?

Ruth Haley Barton, founder of The Transforming Center, is the person I would choose to mentor my leadership skills. Mrs. Barton is convinced that "what we do flows out of who we are in

² Ruth Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry*. (Downers Grove, IVP Books, 2008), 87. Ruth Haley Barton speaks about how Moses faithfulness to his own journey prepared him to lead the Israelites.

Christ.”³ As we seek to grow closer to God, we are transformed “in Christ for the glory of God, for the abundance of our own lives and for the sake of others.”⁴ She invites us to see God at work in the world; intersecting our story with God’s story by; telling our story, truthfully naming our hurts and joys, resting in God’s presence, paying attention, and opening our heart to what God desires for our leadership. Mrs. Barton’s emphasis is on the continued transformative journey toward the heart of God (onward to perfection!). She bases her work on scripture, lived experience, discernment, life in community, and spiritual practices.

8. Describe a situation in which you felt a need to assert a professional boundary in the practice of ministry?

KUMC has had a thrift store ministry for ten years. Three years into the ministry a new chairperson was elected. The new chairperson was passionate and energetic introducing new ideas and inspiring volunteers. Over time the chairperson became invested in the financial success of the store. The chairperson began to track volunteer’s hours, criticize others when they did not volunteer, and rejected any new ideas brought forward by new volunteers. At the same time the chair accused the UMW of stealing items from the store. The chairperson ceased the monthly meetings of the Thrift Store. When I was appointed the pastor of KUMC there was a deep division between the Thrift Store and the church. Only the chairperson’s friends were volunteering at the store and the financial contributions to the church were decreasing. When I met with the chairperson it was made very clear that “the Thrift store was not a ministry, it was a business and I was to stay out of it.” The chairperson justified her position by stating that the former pastor fully backed her leadership style. I stated clearly that as the new pastor I felt that the Thrift Store was an outreach ministry of the church, not a separate business. I invited the chairperson to study Colossians 3:12-17 and to think about what motivated her to be the

³ <http://www.transformingcenter.org/in/about/values.shtml#.WAIYyMizXIU> accessed 7/19/2016, 12:24pm

⁴ Ruth Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry*, (Downers Grove, IVP Books, 2008), 15-16.

chairperson. I then asked her to answer two questions: Did the position bring her joy? What would need to happen for reconciliation to begin between the Thrift Store and the UMW? I offered to bring in consultants to work with us in conflict resolution and missional ministry training. At our meeting she was upbeat and thought the consultants were a great idea.

9. How have you worked through the experience of forgiving someone?

My sister was estranged from our family for a long time. My parents and I were not sure why. We would gravitate back and forth from wondering what we did to keep her away to accepting that she just was busy and focused on doing her own thing. Every holiday was clouded by her absence. Eventually my parents “wrote her off” and I came to terms with the fact that my children would never know their aunt. When my mother had a stroke and hospice was called in the chaplain asked if I had called my sister to let her know. I replied that I did not have any contact with my sister. I knew that I could not wait any longer. I spoke with her husband and within 15 minutes my sister called me. It was as if we had just spoken last week. When I told my father that my sister was coming to visit my father reacted with joy but also began to lament and ask what it was that he did that kept her away. I replied that he had done nothing and that she was fully to blame for their estrangement. Suddenly the image of the older brother of the prodigal son came into my mind. I was acting just like him. I called my sister and while we did not talk about why she had stayed away so long I was able to let her know how happy her pending visit made our father. During her visit, she went to see our mother, who woke up and smiled at the sound of her voice! My sister and I spent an entire day together reconciling our relationship. Seeing the joy that her presence brought my parents helped me forgive her for all the hurt she caused our parents. We are continuing to work on healing our relationship.

10. What are you doing to help those around you to take good care of themselves?

I openly model best spiritual practices, healthy eating, physical exercise, and setting aside Sabbath time. I admit my own struggles (being disciplined about my day of rest), challenges (eating healthy foods on days that are spent at the hospital) and successes (aerobic classes!). When appropriate, I ask guiding questions that help others think through what their challenges are and what best health practices are for their lifestyle. I encourage organic and local food at our community events and fellowship. I preach about how important our mind/body relationship and I invite others to witness how taking care of themselves has impacted their lives.

11. How have you invited someone to faith and seen their faith develop?

Several years ago, at a Knowlton Historic Committee Fourth of July party, I ran into a woman that I hadn't seen in a long time. Our girls went to daycare together. Much had changed in the 7 years since we would casually say hello at drop off and pick up. We spent the afternoon catching up. She was divorced and remarried and the owner of a successful business in town. I was embracing my vocation as a pastor. She was intrigued with my story and asked lots of questions. When my family and I left that night I invited her to come to church. A year past before C walked through the doors of the church. She was shy and unsure of herself. I wondered what was going on in her life. At the end of service I told her that I was delighted to worship with her and invited her to join us for fellowship. She thanked me, declined, and left. I wasn't sure if I would see her again but sure enough she showed up the next Sunday. I noticed that day that she cried during the sermon. Knowing that tears open our heart to deep healing through the Holy Spirit, I asked her if there was anything she wanted to talk or pray about. She asked for prayers for her daughter. The following week was Communion Sunday. Before the service, I approached C and after inquiring about her daughter I explained that it is Christ who invites all of us who seek to know Him better to His open table. We are to come as we are after we place before Him all the ways that we have failed to live as God's children, this opens us up to God's grace, peace, love

and hope. Full of tears she came to the table of Grace; visibly transformed. As I got to know her story, I understood her shyness and hesitancy about coming to church. She had been abused as a child and this left a deep distrust in religion and in God. After attending church for a year she began to stay for fellowship, and then she began to contribute to fellowship. She is an amazing cook! As her faith grew, so have her generosity, hospitality, and trust. Last Christmas, her two musically talented daughters played during an advent service. Over the summer her husband and son joined her in worship. She is now focusing her time and resources on those in the community who are broken and in need of healing and wholeness. Slowly and steadily she is learning to trust God and others. She can see how the Spirit of Christ has journeyed with her. Her life is changing as she embraces God's call to be a wounded healer for others who have lived through abuse.

12. What have you overcome to come to this season in your ministry?

I am a lectionary preacher. I have followed the lectionary for fifteen years and in a way, the lectionary has become safe. So this summer, after experiencing a divisive conflict in a church community I decided to preach a series on 1st & 2nd Corinthians and then Luke 11:1-4. While resources for the sermon prep were abundant, I often found myself writing my own liturgies and prayer. Leaving the safety of tried and true worship resources was a challenge and a gift. Another obstacle that I have overcome is my attachment to my sermon manuscript. When I began preaching, there were folks in the congregation that were challenged in their hearing. They had requested a copy of my sermon to follow along. I consciously followed my manuscript. I am a storyteller. Storytellers are most effective when they embody the story. I felt constrained by the manuscript but was too afraid to allow the Holy Spirit to speak through me. As I gained confidence and realized that God works with or without me, I put my ego aside and let go. While I still bring my manuscript with me, I no longer "read" from it. CPE in 2015 helped me

overcome a fear of “saying the wrong words” in prayer. The CPE experience provided me a safe place to retell my personal story enabling me to see that it has shaped who I am as a child of God set aside for pastoral ministry. I continue to let go of my pride, my desire to control, and my self-centeredness.

13. How would you describe your prayer life in this season, and how has it changed over your journey?

There was a time that I really did not know how to pray. I would freeze in fear when I was invited to pray out loud. I joined a small group to learn how to pray. Then I began to read devotionals, prayer books, and books by Teresa of Avila, Thomas Merton and Henri Nouwen. I attended the Fellowship in Prayer 60th anniversary conference on “Prayer: An Answer for the 21st Century” and that conference transformed my prayer life. At that conference I became acquainted with the Global Peace Initiative of Woman and Joan Chittister. I began to practice contemplative prayer. I have worked with Richard Rohr, Cynthia Bourgeault, Jan Richardson, and Christine Valters Paintner to deepen and broaden my contemplative practice. While my personal prayer life became stronger, I still felt self-conscious praying in front of others. CPE helped me overcome my fear of “saying the wrong thing”. Daily pastoral care continues to teach me to trust the Spirit in prayer. In this season my prayer practice is as follows: I wake early and sit outside (unless it is raining, snowing or extremely cold) and read scripture as lectio divina, I write a prayer or blessing (until recently I posted them on Twitter) and then pray with a prayer book. In the evening, I read from a prayer book. If I am anxious I will either sing “Come and Fill Our Hearts” or say a breath prayer. When I wake in the middle of the night or experience something particularly upsetting I will pray the Jesus Prayer; “Lord have mercy”.

14. When you read the Bible, how do you hear God’s voice? What example might you give of how you responded?

On June 21st my lectio divina scripture was Jeremiah 16:6 (NLT); “This is what the Lord says: “stop at the crossroads and look around. Ask for the old, godly way, and walk in it. Travel its path, and you will find rest for your souls. But you reply, ‘No, that’s not the road we want!’”

When I read these words I wrote the following in my journal; “Never before have had I experienced such awareness of the synchronicity within my journey.” And I wrote this poem: “Paused, at a cross road. Toes curled around the curb, afraid to step out. ‘Ask” calls the Lord. G,S,J appear. ‘You called?’ Then, two others. Just in case. For He knows I am stubborn. New faces, old wisdom, showing the way, lighting the path, encouraging the soul. Ha! Lord Jesus, it takes 5 to open my eyes? 5 to loosen my toes? “

The week before I read this passage, I had been struggling whether or not to continue forth in the process for full membership as an elder in the UMC. I prayed every day, asking for guidance. During the week 5 people encouraged me, indirectly, without my asking, to go forward in this process. One offered to coach me, another to mentor me, and another offered me encouragement. Two others, having met me for the first time, asked me to tell them how I had been called into ministry and then had told me how they were called to do what they did (they are not pastors). However, it wasn’t until I chewed on the passage from Jeremiah that I understood clearly what God was encouraging me to do. Step off the curb and move forward with ordination.

15. How has your family of origin influenced your call?

My mother and Father met when in 5th Grade the Gantt’ moved across the street from the Reader’. At first she was just the girl across the street but two years later at 13 they caught each other’s attention and they have been together ever since. After graduating from High School my Dad went to Purdue to study electrical engineering and my Mom went to Augustana to earn a teaching degree. They were married in my fathers’ senior year and Mom transferred to Purdue. Upon graduating my father was drafted into the Army. He was based down in Augusta Georgia,

where my sister was born, on the hottest day of the year. After completion of service, Dad took a job in Lancaster Ohio. I was born on the coldest day of the year.

My mother had an intense love for the common good, and an understanding of the innate worth of people. She was highly intelligent and political; she believed in everything that Lyndon B. Johnson and the Great Society proposed. She loved learning and teaching. Mom felt strongly that children had to have every opportunity to succeed educationally; consequently she organized and began the first “Head Start” program in Moorestown. I attended the classes and workshops that she taught. My mother found this experience exhilarating. I found this experience – normal. In retrospect I believe that it eliminated many barriers and planted a seed of social justice. After Head start, my mother began teaching in Pastor Shaw’s Montessori school. I attended this school as well. In this school my mother was the Grand Storyteller. Thus was planted the seed of teaching, storytelling and the love of books.

My father grew up in a close family that valued family, religion and frugality. He is a man of few words. My Sister and I worshiped him and later thought him a saint for sticking with our mother through her life long struggle with Bi-polar disorder and clinical depression He was well respected in his vocation. He was always active in church as an Elder in the PCUSA and a Sunday school teacher. He became a role model for me.

My Parents joined the First Presbyterian Church of Moorestown. The church was the center of our community. My parents were very active in our church so likewise I spent a great deal of time there. I sang in the various choirs, played hand bells and participated in the community plays. The potluck dinners, holiday craft gatherings, pumpkin sales and Strawberry festivals were a time when my friends and I could run around unsupervised and get into all kinds of mischief. When I was “old enough” I was allowed to go to summer camp for a week. This

opened my eyes to campfires, camp songs, swimming, hiking, boating and nights under the stars. It was magical. I wanted more of it!

Grief visited when I was eight. Our next door neighbors were a family of three. I loved going to their house to play with their daughter. Her father had a shortwave radio in their yard and we affectionately called him “moon man” One day while driving to the mall, Holly and her mom got into a car accident and Holly was ejected from the car and drowned in the lake near our house. Sadness moved into their house, Moon man disappeared, and Holly’s Mom moved away. Buried in our church’s cemetery, I would often go visit her unmarked grave. This experience shaped my call to lament and the roll grief plays in family systems

When I was 10, we headed off to Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Rhodes, Cyprus and Crete to “walk in the footsteps of Paul”. I came home loving history, art and architecture.

When I was 16 my mother disappeared. My father did not say much and my sister and I became very confused. About a month later, she reappeared, no explanations. It was not until we were “old enough to understand” that we were told she went to the Carrier Institute because she suffered from “Manic depression”. Although I understand that it was the stigma of depression kept my parents silent; it was a profound mistake to think we were too young for an explanation. Karla and I mistook the disappearance as her dislike for us and we rebelled horribly. I found myself in an abusive relationship with a boy my age. Healing came to me through art and contemplative practice. These experiences inspired my interest in de-stigmatizing mental illness, family systems and in spiritual formation.

16. Interview three people to tell you what they see in your ministry. What did you hear in these conversations?

“E” is an 18 year old who was my mentee in last spring’s confirmation class. “E” described me as easy to open up to. He appreciates that I take seriously all of his questions and that if I do not

know the answer I own up to it and get back to him. He likes that I ask him a lot of questions. He feels he can be himself in front of me because I do not judge him. He liked the way I taught confirmation by utilizing video, music, art, and field trips. He LOVED that I took him out for pizza every time we met for our mentoring meetings. He thought that I was too strict and did not allow him enough freedom on our youth group trip to Washington D.C.

“R” is a retired person from the Bible Study group that I facilitate. He was skeptical of my teaching style at first. He liked being lectured too and was not used to the study being participatory. After a year of study he likes the way the class is led. He has gotten to know the other folks in the class. He likes my calm demeanor. He appreciates that I do not back down from tough texts or difficult discussions. My modeling of inclusivity encourages freedom of expression and allows everyone’s opinions to be heard. Sometimes I can “go over their heads” with my knowledge.

“S” is a retired pastor and occasionally attends our worship. “S” feels that I have a deep spirituality, a compassionate heart, and an obvious love for the Lord. My sermons are passionate, well written, and delivered with energy. My joy from the pulpit is contagious. “S” finds me refreshing because I am proficient administratively. “S” would like to see me more intentional as I invite folks to become members of the church.

In all three interviews I was blessed to hear an affirmation of my calling.

THEOLOGY, CALL AND DOCTRINE

Theology

1. Give examples of how the practice of ministry has affected your experience and understanding of:

(a) God

Last spring we had 6 students between the ages of 14 – 18 journey together in a confirmation class entitled “Rising up, Stepping Out, and Following”. The first two classes focused on God and the Trinity. We asked: Who do we say God is? By what names is God known by? What do we believe about God? Understanding that kids can ask deep questions, that they can be very skeptical, and that they know right away if you know your stuff or not; I worked very hard to be able to articulate God and the concept of the Trinity. My research led me to read and listen to a diverse group of theologians. Knowing that this particular group of kids had a rather short attention span, I chose to show them a variety of films; [“The Absolute Basics of Christiana Faith”](#), by Philip Tallon [“Created out of Love”](#) by Rick McKinley, a poem [“Ex Nihilo”](#) by Micah Bournes, [“A Stance of Unknowing”](#) with Barbara Brown Taylor, [“The Circle of Shared Love”](#) by Kallistos Ware, [“The Pattern of the Trinity”](#) with Richard Rohr, and [“This I Believe”](#) by Hillsong. Working with the kids on these questions clarified my understanding of the One in Three, Three in One. The Trinity is a relationship of love, a radical relatedness, a continual outpouring of mutual love – or as Richard Rohr would say; A Circle Dance of Love; God is not the dancer but the dance itself!¹

(b) Humanity

As people open their hearts to me, I am privileged to share their blessings and woes. From the woman who appears to have it all together, I hear how her grandfather sexually abused her. From the young addict, I hear how a friend helped her dry out away from the triggers of her addictions.

¹ Richard Rohr with Mike Morrell, *The Divine Dance: The Trinity and Your Transformation* (New Kensington, Whitaker House, 2016),26-27

I witness how each of us are beloved children of God, reflecting God's image at times and at other times denying God's grace and falling into sin.

(c) The need for divine grace

After a particular trying week, where I became frustrated with volunteers who could not find time to do what they said they were going to do; I began to grumble to my husband. I began to say things like; I'm the only one who cares, I'm the only one, I,I,I.. Every time I judge, take the seat of honor, betray or deny Jesus, refuse to serve, love money more than God, trust the world more than God, let fear into my heart, put my light under a bushel basket, refuse to forgive another, or forget that I am beloved, I am reminded of my need of divine grace. We are fragile clay jars, pressed, perplexed, bruised, and constantly stumbling over ourselves. Yet God loves us and is all in for us. We cannot exist without God. Every breath we take is a gift from God.

(d) The Lordship of Jesus Christ

As I prepare daily for leading, preaching, and teaching by dwelling in the word, exegetical study, reading commentaries, and prayer, my understanding of the One whom I follow deepens. It is not the ways of Caesar that I follow, it is the Way of my Lord; a way of humility, obedience, forgiveness, and self-giving love. When I see injustice and violence in the world I yearn for others to know the Way of Jesus. When I witness compassion, reconciliation, peace, and love, I declare that Jesus is Lord. As His disciple I will go out into the world to heal, reconcile, and bring peace in His name. (Luke 9:1-2, 10"1-11)

(e) The work of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is present in the troubled waters guiding us towards reconciliation, healing and wholeness. There was conflict and division between our thrift store ministry and our church. One group was insisting that I intervene and ask the other group to resign from the leadership position. While working with the folks involved in this conflict, I wanted to close the Thrift Store, I held back and I prayed for discernment of the Spirit and for the Spirit to do what it does

best; unify and create something new. As the conflict played out I asked each side to pray for the other. I asked each side to identify where they saw God in the conflict and how they might contribute to healing and wholeness. Surprising answers and decisions were made that resulted in reconciliation between the thrift store and the church. Truly, it was the work of the Spirit.

(f) The meaning and significance of the sacraments

The Sacraments are a means of grace and a gift of unfailing grace that connect us through the Holy Spirit with God. This past year I have had the privilege of baptizing 5 children. Three were infants. There is something in the naming a child, a “beloved child of God”, that captures our attention and the attention of the child being baptized, even when that child is a three month old infant. When I invite the child to the waters in the name of Christ who has raised us, the Spirit who has birthed us and the Creator who is making all things new, there is a widening of eyes and a peace that descends upon the child and congregation. They know that the moment is holy. Perhaps it is the splashing of the water, or the music playing in the background, or the way the child is being held in their white as snow clothing that brings joy and peace to their face. Perhaps the child knows in his heart whose he is and that his story will be God’s story too. The congregation must sense this as well as, in silence they watch the water, listen to the words, and await the reaction. As we witness this moment of interaction between the child, the water and the Spirit we find ourselves remembering that dying comes before rising and that we will need to let go of this child as she grows and let her find her way because she also belongs to God. Remembering our own baptism and the gift of grace that connects us with each other and to God we find ourselves smiling with joy as we become one with Christ who is a beacon of light in our chaotic world. I love to celebrate Holy Communion after a Baptism because having been washed clean and made a new creation in the body of Christ we acknowledge God’s gift of grace and share in the bread and juice that nourish and sustain us for our journey with Christ. I delight in

knowing that in this time and place we are acknowledging that first and foremost we are a gift from God, connected by Love, empowered to bring light and love and hope to a troubled world.

(g) The kingdom of God

The Kingdom of God is near but not yet. We can catch glimpses of the kingdom through acts of mercy, kindness, forgiveness and justice. I catch glimpses when our food pantries share food with folks who are food insecure, when, through our Joyful noise collection, we offer money to a family struggling to pay bills. When one of our youth offers to help one of our seniors carry things to her car and then they lose track of time as they share life giving stories in the parking lot; the Kingdom of God appears. When five year old J declares at the end of the children's message that we forgot to wish the peace of Christ to the congregation, I know that the kingdom of God is near.

(h) Resurrection and eternal life

Before my mother passed in August, reconciliation happened, by the power of the Holy Spirit, between her and my sister. The change in my Mom was recognized by everyone. Before they reconciled she was nonresponsive. After they reconciled she would smile, talk as best as she could, and respond to commands and questions. I had never seen such joy and peace in her. When I saw this, I was assured of her full healing and wholeness when she passed. This gave me full confidence in life abundant. Truly in the end is a new beginning. This experience has assured me that when our physical lives cease we will rise up with Jesus into glory.

2. How do you understand the following traditional evangelical doctrines?

(a) repentance

Jesus calls each of us to repent. (Mark 1:15, Matthew 4:17, Luke 13:3,5) As followers of Christ we are called to repent of our sins and turn back toward God. God is just waiting for us to turn towards Him and receive His gift of grace that surrounds us.

(b) justification

This is the reconciling of our relationship with God. Knowing myself as a forgiven and beloved child of God, I fully trust in Christ. I have nothing to prove, I just have to want to be in relationship with God and be myself.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9 NRSV

(c) regeneration

When Zacchaeus stood face to face with Jesus he declared himself a changed man. This change was demonstrated by his desire to give half of his income to the poor and to pay back 400% of the money he had swindled from folks. When we find ourselves freely forgiven and unconditionally loved, this knowledge brings us to our knees and creates in us a new creation. Did Zacchaeus fall back to his old ways? Perhaps, but God is always waiting for us to be in relationship with God.

(d) sanctification

Knowing ourselves forgiven and beloved we journey into the heart of God by following Jesus’s command to love one another. “Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” John 13:34)

What are the marks of the Christian life?

A Christian is someone who strives to be one with Christ. We see God in them; they reflect God’s love. As such they “Do no harm. Do good. Stay in love with God.”² When we choose to do no harm, we choose healing, wholeness, and unity. We clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience and love. We forgive each other as we have been forgiven. (Colossians 3:12-14) Made in the image of God, we do good because we remember that God created the world and God declared it was good and very good. (Genesis 1:1-31) Jesus declares that we should love our enemies and do good to those who hate us. (Luke 6:27) When

² Rueben P. Job, *Three Simple Rules: A Wesleyan Way of Living*. (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2007),10.

the Holy Spirit inspires us to do good the Holy Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23) As we strive to stay in love with God we grow in faith. We trust that God cares about us. We follow the one who came to set us free. We know that God is Love. (1 John 4:16) We deny our self, and hope, watch, and pray for God's Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

3. How has the practice of ministry informed your understanding of the nature and mission of the Church? What are its primary challenges today?

As the gathered body of Christ we are called to go out and make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. And we do this through faith and good works, mission and service. My experience in ministry affirms that we are in a time where our connectional system and distinctive emphasis on grace make sense, especially to the younger generation. They understand that we are all interconnected, so our polity makes sense. They understand life as a journey as is our understanding of the way of salvation. Folks want to know a relational God who is love. Folks want to focus on personal and social holiness. They want us to model Jesus Christ and teach the gospel and not be afraid to take risks. As a global Church our connection and diversity reflect the ecological world that we live in. We must learn to find ways of building consensus in areas that threaten to splinter our unity. Our biggest challenge today is that we find ourselves in a time of dwindling attendance, steep financial hurdles and increasing negativity about the "church". Folks are spiritual but not religious. Many piece together a religion that works for them, apart from a community of believers. Individualism, consumerism, loneliness are a challenge. Hatred, violence, xenophobia, and tribalism are threatening stability and peace. The pace of change is creating a deep mistrust in our political, economic, corporate, and religious systems. Fear is reality for many in our congregations. Yet, our young adults are yearning for community and they are yearning for Sabbath. To address these challenges we need to embrace

wholeheartedly the ministry of all believers and identify spiritual leaders who are passionate about Christ and willing to take risks. Then we must to equip them; teaching spiritual practices, mentoring best practices, and modeling adaptive leadership. And we need to think outside of the box and the “church”.

4. The United Methodist Church holds that Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason are sources and norms for belief and practice, but that the Bible is primary among them. What is your understanding of this theological position of the Church, and how has your practice of ministry been affected by this understanding?

The beauty of the Wesleyan quadrilateral is that it gives us concrete sources and criteria for our Christian witness and gives freedom for the Church to adjust itself to our changing times. These guidelines help us witness the way that God is currently at work in our world today. While God’s Word is true and final, our interpretation of the word is contextual. Our Christian faith is a lived experience, thus, Scripture and Tradition come alive in our experience. Reason helps us critically analyze our knowledge and experience. This position allows us to become clearer on the theological and ethical positions that we propose. Scripture is paramount; however, all four should point to each other in order to reveal a truth. These guidelines are primarily used for doctrinal issues. I find them useful when writing liturgy and prayer. These guidelines are an excellent tool for discernment, especially when a group cannot come to a consensus on a decision.

5. How has the practice of ministry enriched your understanding of the meaning and significance of the sacraments?

I am serving on a conflict resolution team in the PCUSA. I was chosen for my skills in family systems and my ability to listen (I have temporary membership in the PCUSA through the Panther Valley Ecumenical Church). Our team went into a church that was deeply divided. There was so much hostility on both sides that our group often wondered where Jesus was in this church. At a Council meeting we discovered that this church only celebrated the Lord’s Supper

on the high Holy days of Christmas and Easter. And as Easter was approaching at the time of this meeting, they began arguing over how folks would receive the sacrament. It became obvious to me that they did not understand this sacrament at all. This was a perfect illustration of what Charles and John Wesley meant when they said that refusal to commune was a rejection of Jesus Christ. By not celebrating communion they were missing out on Grace; “A conscious encounter with God who through the message in Christ communicated by the Holy Spirit is reaching out to bring knowledge of the heart of God to the heart of human beings.”³ Renewal, vitality, and unity happen in Holy Communion. Christ’s whole life is active in the remembering. We experience a re-remembering; a reconciling with God and with each other. We are delivered from the cross and given new life by the Spirit of Christ. This experience made crystal clear the reality of refusing God’s grace.

Vocation

1. How has the experience of ministry shaped your understanding of your vocation as an ordained elder?

My vocation as an ordained elder is to seek, welcome, gather folks into the body of Christ, and guide them on a spiritual journey with Christ towards the heart of God, so that together we can live loving, compassionate, and just lives that usher in God’s Kingdom. My experience in ministry has taught me the importance of paying attention and listening to the movement of the Holy Spirit as it leads us towards the Promised Land. In turbulent times staying rooted in God, trusting the Holy Spirit, has helped me to stay welcoming on the path. When conflict arises the importance of neutrality based upon the understanding that we are all beloved made in the image of God is important as we seek welcome and gather folks. Prayer, lectio divina, Bible study, weekly Sabbath has clarified my vocation. RIM has also shaped my understanding of my vocation.

³ Theodore Runyan, *The New Creation: John Wesley’s Theology Today* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1998),150.

The Practice of Ministry

1. How has the practice of ministry affected your understanding of the expectations and obligations of the itinerant system? Do you offer yourself without reserve to be appointed and to serve as the appointive authority may determine?

The practice of ministry has made me aware of the gifts and skills that I bring to my appointment. . The itinerant system sets clear expectations for the pastor and the congregation and provides a yearly opportunity to review the pastors effectiveness and the congregations expectations. I find this very helpful in setting expectations and measurable goals. I do offer myself without reserve to be appointed and serve as the Bishop and the Cabinet determine.

2. Describe and evaluate your personal gifts for ministry and how they have resulted in fruitful ministry. What would be your areas of strength and areas in which you need to be strengthened in order to be more fruitful in ministry?

My gifts for ministry in the church are shepherding, exhortation, leadership, helping, knowledge, and faith. As a shepherd, I emphasize spiritual formation, pastoral care, and group dynamics. I have helped heal division within the congregation. My growing edge is pastoral care, it is challenging with two appointments that are geographically distant. Exhortation has enabled me to raise up leaders within the laity, youth group leaders, lay servants, certified lay servants, and a Local Pastor. This gift is also expressed in the leading of Worship and preaching leading folks to tears and blessings. In leadership, I have a mentoring style that seeks to encourage others to embrace and act on their creative ideas to grow the church. I encourage teamwork. My growing edge in this area is that I work towards consensus and sometimes I need to assert my pastoral authority. My gift of knowledge is expressed in thorough exegetical study of the Bible. This is very helpful in preaching without a text. My growing edge is that sometimes I talk about subjects that are too complicated; I need to simplify. My gift of helps expresses itself with peers. I am often asked to help other pastors in a variety of ways, discernment, administrative queries, and spiritual formation. My growing edge in this area is time management. Faith is expressed in my

contemplative prayer life. It is experienced by others in my ability to stay calm and assured in a crisis. This gift helps me stay calm and balanced as I live out my vocation as a Pastor.

3. For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness to the Christian gospel and in consideration of your influence as an ordained minister, are you willing to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideal of the Christian life; and to this end will you agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to physical health, intentional intellectual development, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, integrity in all personal relationships, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge and love of God?

Yes, I will.

4. Provide evidence of your willingness to relate yourself in ministry to all persons without regard to race, color, ethnicity, national origin, social status, gender, sexual orientation, age, economic condition, or disability.

Over the years that I have spent in servant leadership I have ministered to and with persons who

are autistic, have genetic disorders, are differently abled, are rich or poor, men, women,

transgendered, LGBTQ, and come from different areas of our world and is expressed through

their customs, language, accent, skin color, national and political affiliations. I understand that I

have biases and I work hard to keep them from influencing the way I interact. If I am

uncomfortable with an individual(s) in a counseling or pastoral care situation I will ask another

person to work with them who is better equipped to fulfill their needs. It is important to openly

talk about God's joy and delight found in Genesis 1, Jesus's inclusivity and His prayer that we

all be one (John 17:21) and Isaiah's Peaceable Kingdom (Isaiah 11:1-10). Equally important is

to talk about the ways we have thwarted the reality of the Kingdom of God on earth. Creating a

safe space for the creation of relationships, deep listening and honest dialogue without judgement

or proselytizing is very important when issues come up within our communities that threaten to

divide us. The more we get to know each other the less our fear of "others" holds us hostage. In

our heart of hearts we are all highly favored and beloved children of God.

5. Will you regard all pastoral conversations of a confessional nature as a trust between the person concerned and God?

Yes I will. My role is to walk with the person(s) through the laughter and the tears. Their journey is not mine to keep nor to share with anyone else, so I thank God for the privilege and give the conversation back to God.

6. Provide evidence of experience in peace and justice ministries.

Both of my appointments have food pantries. In one of my appointments we have expanded our food pantry to include a backpack ministry to provide weekend food to children in two schools.

We have a medical equipment lending ministry and thrift store. We host IHN. We host a creation care summer program for kids to raise awareness of God's Creation. In one of my appointments we have just begun a new small group called Food & Faith where we address food justice issues.

I create liturgy and art projects that lift up justice issues in mining, economics, and ecology. I work on the steering committee for LocalShare that connects farmers to local food pantries through volunteer gleaning and waste awareness.

1. Explain the threefold aspects of Wesleyan grace and how have you encountered these in your own ministry life?

There was a man named J who would walk his dog, early in the morning, around the block where I lived. He would see me in our vegetable garden. One day he walked up to the garden and introduced himself, commenting on how we both enjoyed getting up early. Day after day, whenever I was in the garden he would stop and tell me a little bit more about his life. He worked for UPS, he was divorced and remarried, he had a kid who wouldn't talk to him, he made bad choices in his youth, and every Tuesday evening he attended NA at a nearby church. J was raised a Roman Catholic but he never went to church because he was ashamed. The NA helped him believe in a higher power but to him it was not Christ. He commented that the minute he stepped in church God would strike him down. He was serious. I told him about myself and my life journey, my struggles and joys, and how I had recently become a Pastor. Day after day J would stop and give me an update on this or that in his life always ending the conversation with

a question about God or Jesus. Day after day I would invite him to church and he'd shake his head reminding me of God's intention. Then one Sunday he arrived. He sat in the very last pew next to the door, head down. God was calling him; prevenient grace. Winter came and our daily discussions at the garden fence ceased. Thus began the routine of going to worship on Sundays. J was loyal. He would sit in the last pew, head down. He would never take communion and he would never stay for fellowship. Then one Sunday J sat four pews forward next to a widow in her 90's; head up! Still he did not come up for communion nor stay for fellowship. This routine continued through Epiphany. On Ash Wednesday J arrived to receive ashes. He came forward with much hesitation, hands clutched together in front of him. He attended every service we had through Lent and Holy Week. On Easter Sunday he came up for Communion! The following Sunday, during the time of Joys and Concerns he stood up and told us all why he had never gone up for communion. He was a sinner and he did not think sinners were allowed to take communion. "But now", he said, "I know that I am forgiven and that communion is for people just like me." Praise God; Justifying Grace. That Sunday J began to give, his money, his time, and his talent. He told me that the money he gave was the money he would have used on drugs. "It keeps me honest", he said. He joined an evening Bible Study. He prayed at the altar after receiving the sacrament. He volunteered at the food pantry and the thrift Store. And then one day, he stopped at the garden fence to tell me that he would be moving to Florida because he had reconciled with his daughter, who is married and has a little girl. He promised to keep in touch, to find a church, and to stay in love with God. The last I heard, he has; Sanctifying Grace.

2. Share an instance when you found yourself in ministry with someone whose theology was radically different from your own.

My first VBS at PVEC began one month after I was appointed. I had been hearing about the woman who would be in charge of the daily opening and closing but we did not have the

opportunity to meet prior to the first day. Arriving early that day, I walked into the sanctuary where she and her daughters were rehearsing. One of PVEC's members interrupted the rehearsal to introduce me. Her mouth dropped open and one of her daughter blurted out, "Mom, I thought you said woman can't be ministers!" She told her daughter, "We will talk about this when we get home." She did not shake my hand, but smiled politely. Another of her daughters was assigned as my helper in Bible Storytelling and I wondered if she would allow her to help me. She did. As she led the kids in the opening and closing she did express her beliefs in the sinful nature of all human beings, and that God would bring wrath upon them if they did not obey. I spoke to her about the primacy of grace and she shared about the importance of patriarchy in her beliefs. By weeks end we became great VBS partners. She has embraced me as the new pastor and has even confided in me when she was having difficulty. She sought my opinion on a church she recently joined. Through dialogue and building trust we found a way to work together to build up the body of Christ. We had another great week leading VBS together this year!

3. Describe how your image of God has changed over your journey. What has informed this?

When I was a teen ager I experienced God as awe and wonder in creation. Jesus was always in church (Christ was his last name). The Holy Spirit was a word in a song and a creed. Triune was a word that I said on Sundays. In my twenties and thirties God remained distant, up there. The Holy Spirit arrived in church but never made it outside of the walls. Jesus incarnated as the hands and feet of mercy. Beginning in the year 2001, with the crisis of 9/11, until this moment, my concept of God has grown immensely. God is Love. God is a verb. God is relational. God is three-one God, and One and Three. God is Incarnational, Sacramental, and Relational.

In 2001 I began reading the Upper Room Discipline. The synchronicity between the scriptures and my life made me pay attention and become aware of the Holy Spirit at work in my life. I

joined a Disciple Bible study and took a lay speaker class. The lay speaker class introduced me to the distinctive Wesleyan doctrine; the way of salvation. I joined a prayer group and studied Teresa of Avila. This led me into Lectio Divina. In 2009 I took the Walk to Emmaus which provided a personal and profound experience of Christ's agape love. In 2009, I began my M.Div study at Drew Theological School. All of the courses broadened and informed my understanding of God. While at Drew I took a special interest in Theology and attended all of the TTC lectures. During this time I understood the particularity of Jesus the Christ. After graduating from Drew in 2013 I took an online course on Religion and Science which focused on the Trinity and Physics. While at a conference in New Mexico with Richard Rohr in 2014, I finally understood our Triune God as fully relational and self-giving; Perichoresis! I have had the privilege of meeting many people young and old who have reflected the image of God. All of these experiences combined with a continuing study of the Bible, hymns and songs, experience in pastoral care, Worship and my journey in ministry have widened and deepened my image of God.

POLITY

1. Explain the role of deacons, elders, and local pastors in the UMC and how they are each uniquely called and function in the church?

Deacons' unique call to servant ministry within the United Methodist Church is to “embody, articulate, and lead the whole people of God in its servant ministry.”¹ Deacons serve as a bridge between the world and the church, calling attention to the church the needs of the world.

Deacons are called to a lifetime ministry of Word, Service, Compassion, and Justice. They model Christian discipleship in the world. Within the church they teach, lead worship, administer the sacraments within their appointment with the approval of the presiding Bishop(May 2016), and make disciples for Christ for the transformation of the world. Deacons may be appointed to a local church, a board or agency, or to a setting not connected with The United Methodist Church. They are not guaranteed a place of employment in the Church.

Elders are called to full time, itinerant, servant leadership in parish and extension ministries. They lead the Body of Christ in Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service. Elders have the right to vote in all matters except in the election of lay delegates to the general and jurisdictional, or central conferences. They are eligible to hold office in the annual conference and may be elected as delegates to the general, jurisdictional, or central conference.

Local Pastors are called to servant leadership in parish and extension ministry. Like Elders they have a fourfold ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service, but there service is within the limits of their appointed communities. Local Pastors can serve; full, three-quarter, half, and quarter time appointments. Local pastors are under the supervision of the district Superintendent and DCOM. They have “the right to vote on all matters except constitutional amendments,

¹ *Section VIII. The Ordained Deacon in Full Connection, in The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, (Nashville, The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012), 246.*

election of delegates to general, jurisdictional, of central conferences, and matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy.”² They may serve on any board, commission, or committee with voice and vote (except on items listed above). If they have completed their course of study they may serve on the DCoM and BoOM.

2. What is the process for setting a pastor’s salary? Who can change it, and when can it be changed?

The Equitable Compensation Committee recommends to GC on F a minimum based schedule of compensation. The GCon F then recommends this schedule to the Annual Conference for approval. When appointments are made and in the case of part time appointments the District Superintendent will meet with the clergy and the SPRC. (§428.7) SPRC will report to the committee on finance and recommend to the church council the salary. The after approval by the church council they recommend the salary to the Church conference. The Church conference in consultation with the DS set the compensation of the pastor. The only group that can change the pastors salary is the Church conference. Even if it becomes apparent that the church is unable to provide compensation that was set at the church conference, SPRC chair, finance chair, or treasurer will notify the pastor, D.S. and congregation. (§624) All salaries and modifications take place at the end of the Church conference appointment year.

3. The Education committee wants to update the curriculum being taught in the Christian Education program. What specific guidance does the Book of Discipline give you in dealing with this issue?

As the pastor has oversight over the educational programs of the church (§340.2.C.1.b) the Education committee or the Superintendent who is responsible for helping to organize the program should meet with the pastor in this matter. United Methodist literature and media is recommended. The United Methodist Publishing House publishes curriculum through Abingdon

²§316.6 *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, (Nashville, The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012),231.

Press, Cokesbury, and Ministry Matters.com. The GBOD has general oversight of Christian education making sure that it is consistent with the doctrines of the UMC. ¶1108 is helpful in outlining that oversight as well as recommending that the Christian Education program is encouraging folks to commit to Christ, grow in faith and equip them to live as God's children. I would recommend the Superintendent to go to the GBOD website for guidance. ¶256 which outlines the Program ministries may be helpful as it gives recommendations about groups that may be utilize the curriculum. It would be helpful for the Education Committee to meet with the leaders of these groups to discuss their needs and interests.

4. You have discovered a need in the community for a soup kitchen,, and wish to recommend that this be a priority for the congregation, using the facilities of the church. What parties and processes need to be involved?

I would share this need with the chair of outreach. We would then put together a proposal to present to the Trustees and the Administrative Council. In order to write this proposal we would need to do the following: 1) Speak with the county/city/town health department to see what codes our facility must meet. 2) Reach out to other local soup kitchens to see how they run their kitchen, where they get their food and when they share food. 3) Speak with a nutritionist who can consult on the kind of food we supply. 4) Take into account our Social Principals, esp. ¶160, ¶162Q, and ¶163D. 5) Locate sources for the ingredients 6) Determine the approximate number of people the Soup Kitchen will serve and what the criteria is. 7) Determine the Soup Kitchen will be funded. 8) Determine how the food will be stored. 9) Determine when the soup kitchen will be opened. 10) Determine who would be in charge. 11) Determine who will prepare the food. 12) Determine if it will be volunteer based or a paid staff or a combination. 13) Determine what impact this ministry will have on the buildings and grounds, fiscally, insurance, where and tear. 13) Create a monthly budget and a projected yearly budget.

After the proposal has been written it should be presented to the trustees for their approval of the usage of the building and inquiry into insurance coverage. The nominations committee could be consulted about who would be best suited to chair the ministry. The Lay leader and the SPRC should also be informed so that they can provide support for the proposal. Finally the proposal should be brought to the Church council for approval. Once it is approved by the council it should be brought forward to the Church Conference.

5. A constituent of your church comes to speak with you about their call to ministry. Describe the basic steps that are involved in seeking ordination.

I would make sure that they are a professing member in good standing or a baptized participant in a Methodist setting for at least one year. I would ask this person to read and discuss with me “The Christian as Minister” and ask them to write their statement of call. If this person is in the local church, I would bring their name up to the SPRC to see if they do or do not recommend this person. If it is determined that they proceed I would then recommend “the Ministry Inquiry Process”. The person writes to the District Superintendent requesting admission to the candidacy process. The D.S. registers them and assign them a mentor. The SPRC or DCOM will then ask them Wesley’s historic questions. If approved they will be presented as a candidate to the Church Conference. Upon approval from the Church Conference they are then under the jurisdiction of DCOM. At this time they will have a criminal background check, a psychological test, notarized statement certifying no felony, misdemeanor or sexual misconduct or child abuse, and any other requirements that DCoM feels is necessary. The Certified Candidate is then licensed for pastoral ministry. Local pastors must complete the Orientation to Ministry and the studies for a license. The certified candidate/local pastor must have a bachelor’s degree and have completed one half of their M.Div. They will then submit written requirements and be interviewed by the BoOM. Upon approval of the BoOM they become a provisional member. After two years of being

appointed full time in a ministry setting, attending a Residence in Ministry program and completing their M.Div. they will submit written requirements to and interview with the BoOM for full membership.

6. Describe the general structures of the Annual Conference and how each body functions.

The Annual conference is the basic body of the Church. It is composed of an equal number of clergy and lay members (who are elected professing members) These clergy and lay people constitute the voting body. There is a Bishop that presides over the annual conference and sets the agenda and ordains and appoints clergy. There is a conference Lay leader who represents the laity and fosters awareness of the role of laity. There is a Connectional Ministries team who guides the mission and ministry. There are Boards and Agencies (Connectional Table in the GNJAC) under the direction of the Director of Connectional Ministries. This body is composed of: General Boards, Commissions, and Committees. Within this structure the following are mandatory: Conference Council on Finance and Administration, Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, Conference Administrative Review Committee, Conference Committee on Episcopacy, Conference Board of Pensions, Board of Trustees, United Methodist Women, United Methodist Men. These boards and agencies connect the local church, districts, and conference, to the General agencies. They equip the local church to carry out mission and ministry. There is a cabinet that is made up of District Superintendents and the Bishop which provides oversight of the work of the annual conference, districts and local church, and set appointments. There are Districts which are organized regionally and are made up of Local Churches. The Districts issue certificates of Candidacy. Each district has a lay leader and a superintendent. There are Church Conferences who are the governing body of the Local Church which is the primary area for mission and making disciples for Jesus Christ.

7. Describe the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of the United Methodist Church.

The legislative branch of the UMC is the conferences. They are made up of both laity and clergy.

The General Conference is the lawmaking body. The Jurisdictional Conferences elect Bishops and direct church programs. The Annual Conference is the basic unit of the church.

The judicial branch of the church is the Judicial Council. It is made up of nine members who are elected by the General Conference. They are the authority on all decisions, determining constitutionality and abidance to the Book of Discipline.

The Executive Branch is the Episcopacy which is made up of Bishops that are elected for life. They are the spiritual and administrative leaders.

8. What is your understanding of the theology behind Shared Ministries giving (apportionments)?

My understanding of the theology behind Shared Ministries is this: We give because everything we have is a gift from God. God provided just enough manna in the wilderness for everyone's needs. (Exodus 16:14-18) And Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:12-14 encourages us to give what we have now to those in need and when you are in need others will share with you. This generosity of spirit and the sharing of resources are reflected in the way apportionments are determined within the connectional system of the UMC.

9. You have an idea for a unique form of ministry. How does the book of Discipline guide us in seeking affirmation for ministries that are beyond the local church? What is the role of extension ministry in the life of the church?

When I have an idea for a unique form of ministry I first speak with my District Superintendent and then the BoOM, the Bishop and the cabinet. Areas in the BOD that are helpful to look at are Section VII The Method of Organizing a New Church, and Section XI Appointments to Extension Ministries. ¶344.4d provides a great outline of how to go about seeking affirmation of emerging ministries. GBHEM provides standards and assistance in validating the proposed ministry. ¶1421.5 outlines the ways that the GBHEM endorses chaplains and clergy. Extension

ministries extend the Churches reach into the world. They are a response to missional needs that are beyond the local church.

10. In what ways does your upbringing, your cultural context, your personal experience shape your understanding of our polity?

The connectional emphasis, especially the mutual responsiveness and accountability, resonates with my personal experience in managing and running a business. It also reflects my worldview and theology; we are all interconnected in a complex web of life by the energy of Love. My upbringing stressed both social and personal holiness. We not only went to church and participated in all of their programs but we also advocated for those who were not privilege to have the same things as us. My mother was very involved in Head Start Program and providing education to everyone. I share that desire to address matters of justice and practice mercy and piety.

About Ninabeth Metcalf

I found my home in the United Methodist Church after being baptized Methodist, raised Presbyterian USA, and married to a former Roman Catholic by a Baptist Minister in a Unitarian church. Our distinctive emphasis on grace reflected my life experiences and our Social Principles resonated deeply. My journey has prepared me for such a time as this.

God has been calling me to ministry for a long time. It just took a while to listen, understand, and heed His call to “Follow Me”. A trip “in the footsteps of Paul” when I was 10, planted a love of the Bible, God’s story, history, anthropology, and art. A Youth Group hiking trip to the white mountains of New Hampshire birthed a radical wonder and awe for God and God’s creation. The Rhode Island School of Design became the perfect venue to explore those passions. For 25 years I had the privilege of creating and designing fabrics for some of the most beautiful places and houses in the world. In my travels I was attracted to houses of worship and their liturgical expressions, humble and grand. While I loved my career, I felt God’s tug to serve Him as I observed and participated in economic inequality and ecological devastation brought on by our consumer driven lifestyle.

Over time I became very involved in my home church, designing worship, co-leading theater groups and Bible Studies. Encouraged by several Pastors I enrolled in Drew Theological School in 2009. The Drew experience helped me discern my gifts for and call into pastoral ministry. I graduated in 2013 with my M.Div. I am appointed to a two point charge: The Knowlton United Methodist Church and the Panther Valley Ecumenical Church. I serve on the Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships Committee in the Greater NJ Annual Conference. My husband and I have three children and reside in Columbia NJ.

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NINABETH METCALF
12 Oak Lane Rd. Columbia, NJ 07832
(908) 391-2561 ndmetcalf@yahoo.com

MINISTRY & WORK EXPERIENCE

July 2015 – Present **Panther Valley Ecumenical Church** **Allamuchy, NJ**
Senior Pastor – Part Time

- Responsible for the ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service
- Preach and teach the Word of God
- Administer the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion
- Pastoral care
- Perform Funerals and marriages
- Oversight of Christian education and outreach and mission in the community

July 2012 – Present **Knowlton United Methodist Church** **Columbia, NJ**
Senior Pastor – Part Time

- Responsible for the ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service
- Preach and teach the Word of God
- Administer the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion
- Pastoral care
- Perform Funerals and marriages
- Oversight of outreach and mission in the community through KUMC Food Pantry, Medical lending mission, and KUMC Thrift Store
- Oversight of the Christian educational program
- Coordinate and support special programs focusing on community needs. E.g., Screening of “A Place at the Table” and discussion of food justice issues in Knowlton.

January 2006 – 2015 **Ninabeth Metcalf Design** **Columbia, NJ**
Owner

- Consultation and coaching for Non-profit organizations
- Curriculum design E.g., “Birds, Beasts, Blossoms, and Bugs: A summer program for K-4”, “Sacred or Scandal: Asking Ourselves the Question – Are We Sexy?” for Christian women.
- Create Liturgy and Special Worship Services
- Design and create Market Bags and other items out of reclaimed and vintage textiles sold online at Flax & Mallow on Etsy.com
- Design and produce custom art, vestments, banners and worship spaces
- Consult, design, and create custom fabrics for interior designers and architects

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WORK EXPERIENCE CONTINUED

May 2011 – July 2012 **Genesis Farm** **Blairstown, NJ**

Academic Outreach and Program Coordinator

- Establish partnership agreements with institutions of Higher Education
- Responsible for educating special groups, ie: Kittatinny Regional High School AP Science.
- Initiate and oversee mutually beneficial programs for the students and the farm.
- Coordinate implementation of all programs
- Evaluate and provide feedback on all programs

February – May 2012 **The Mining Working Group & United Methodist Women** **NY, NY**

- Consultation and creation of the central presentation for the multimedia exhibit “[Bearing Witness: Panning for Justice](#)” held at the Tillman Chapel at the Church Center of the United Nations on May 8th. The exhibit highlighted the complex social, political, economic and justice questions surrounding extractive industries and the communities that resist them.

January – March 2012 **Caretakers of God’s Creation** **Fairfax, VA**

- Designed their introductory Brochure for distribution at 2012 UMC General Conference in Tampa Florida.

May 2006 – May 2011 **Carleton V Ltd.** **New York, NY**

Design Director

- Designed, edited & colored 2 collections a year.
- Established and maintained budgets.
- Worked with Manufactures worldwide.
- Analyzed sales and design trends to establish the direction of sales and marketing.

2008 – 2010 **United Methodist Women** **New York, NY**

- Developed and presented “Worship Center and the Social Gospel” a workshop for the UMW Quadrennial Assembly in St. Louis.
- Created an interactive Banner for the “New Directors” meeting fall 2008 – spring 2009.

1991 – January 2006 **MTL Inc.** **Jessup, PA**

Director of Contract 2000 – 2006

Design Director 1991 - 2000

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WORK EXPERIENCE CONTINUED

1991 – 1992 <i>Consultant</i>	Baxter Corp.	Franklin Lakes, NJ
1987 – 1991 <i>Designer for C.Cosentino Division</i>	Boris Kroll	Paterson, NJ
1985 – 1987 <i>Designer of Residential Woven and Restorations</i>	Scalamandre Silks, Inc.	Long Island City, NY
1981 – 1985	Waitress at the Providence Art Club	Providence, RI

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

2013 – Present <i>Member of the Steering Committee</i>	LocalShare	Blairstown, NJ
2013 <i>Local group advisor</i>	GirlUp	Columbia, NJ
2013 – Present <i>Contributor to creating a narrative for the 21st Century: Sacred Earth Community</i>	Global Peace Initiative for Women	New York, NY
July 2016 – Present	Christian Unity and Interreligious Relations Committee	GNJAC

WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

[ARISE TO THE EAST](#) on this site I explore the intersection between ecology, cosmology, and theology through poetry, prose, prayer, and multimedia.

TWITTER - @NinabethMetcalf

FACEBOOK – Ninabeth Metcalf

LINKEDIN – Ninabeth Metcalf

ETSY - [Flax & Mallow](#)

TUMBLER – Arise to the East, Palimpsest

NINABETH METCALF
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EDUCATION

2009 – 2013 **Drew Theological School** **Madison, NJ**

Masters of Divinity

- Awards –
2012 Henry L. Lambdin Prize for excellence in pastoral leadership,
2010 – Mead Hall Study Circle Prize for a woman student who has achieved an excellent record in her first year, and the Seminary Allocation Award
- Scholarships –
2012/2013 – Mickel Scholarship in Town & Country Ministry
2011/2012 - Mickel Scholarship in Town & Country Ministry, GBHEM Brandenburg Scholarship
2010/2011 – Carl Michaelson Endowed Scholarship, Leslie & Emma Uphoff Scholarship

1981 - 1985 **Rhode Island School of Design** **Providence, RI**

B.F.A. Degree in Textile Design

1977 – 1981 **Moorestown High School** **Moorestown, NJ**

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Spouse – Ken Metcalf

Children – Tim Metcalf age 27
Chris Metcalf age 24
Caroline Metcalf age 14

Home Church – Knowlton United Methodist Church

Serving – Knowlton United Methodist Church & The Panther Valley Ecumenical Church

PARK, TAE YOUL (LEO)

- 1) Sermon
- 2) Bible Study
- 3) Practice of Ministry
- 4) Theology, Call, & Doctrine
- 5) Polity
- 6) Biographical Statement
- 7) Chronological Resume



NOTES

Tae Youl “Leo” Park

8101 Burgundy Way, Wayne, NJ 07470 | (856) 296-2532 | Leoinpark@gmail.com

October 28, 2016

Greater New Jersey Conference Board of Ordained Ministry

Dear Conference of Board of Ordained Ministry:

The enclosed sermon was preached at Bethany United Methodist Church in Fort Lee during the 1st worship service on Sunday, October 2, 2016. The sermon was preached in Korean language. The manuscript has been translated into English.

Bethany United Methodist Church in Fort Lee is a Korean speaking congregation and has two worship services on Sunday. The 1st service is at 7:00 a.m. and the 2nd service is at 2:30 p.m. The attendance of the 1st worship is about 90 adults on a given Sunday. Most of them are 1st generation Korean Americans who are in 60's and 70's of age.

The title of the sermon was “Jesus abandoned His heavenly throne to seek you.” The Scripture was taken from Luke 15:1-10. Thank you.

Love in our Jesus,

Tae Youl “Leo” Park

Tae Youl “Leo” Park
Candidate for Ordination and Full Membership

Jesus abandoned His heavenly throne to seek you.

Scripture: Luke 15:1-10

“Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”

Hallelujah!

Let’s look at verse 4 again. “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?” How do you think that one sheep got lost? Sheep, by their very nature, do not stay alone, isolated from the flock. To protect themselves against from predators, they stay together and thwart against being singled out by the attackers.

When I came to U.S., my first church was in Southern New Jersey in Collingswood called Frances Childs United Methodist Church. As one of the traditions of that church, during the Christmas season, the members of the church would dress up as shepherds and stand outside with the baby Jesus in the manger in front of the church. They would take turns every night for an hour during the week of the Christmas, and call the event, “Live Nativity.”

As a part of the tradition of the event, we would go to bring live sheep, mother and baby sheep from the local farm. To prepare for the Live Nativity, I was tasked with capturing and bringing the sheep with other members of the church. We went inside the sheep pen. That was

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the first time ever I saw the flock of sheep. I imagined the sheep to be small, but American sheep were huge. They appeared to me like Bull.

There were about 50 sheep inside the pen. When four of us went inside the pen, the sheep suddenly amassed together into a single ball of a group. Whenever we would go to one side, the sheep would tightly run together to go to the other side in unison. The flock was tightly packed together, and it was impossible to capture one sheep. Furthermore, the older sheep would protect the younger sheep by moving them to the center of the flock.

One person in our group suggested that I capture the sheep as a first-timer to the sheep pen. I was told that I should capture the baby sheep first in order to find the mother. I had a really hard time catching the baby sheep in the center of a tightly close-knit flock, that each adult sheep resembled the size of grown cows running around the pen. Luckily, one of the more experienced members of our group helped me to capture the baby and mother sheep that day for the Live Nativity.

Sheep instinctively flock together. They flock together tightly in one group and move rapidly to escape from the predators like wolves to protect each other and avoid getting singled out. In addition, sheep unquestionably follow the leader. Whenever and wherever the leader moves, the entire flock moves.

There was an event in Turkey on July 8th, 2005. Shepherds were having a breakfast in the field. But the sheep made a single file to deathly plunge to a 15-meter cliff, one by one, all 1,500 of them. All 1,500 sheep fell on top of each other. About first 450 of them died instantly from the fall, but the remaining sheep fell on top of the 450 pile to survival the fall. Shepherds at that time couldn't do but just stay watch. Each sheep was following the front sheep to drop off the cliff.

Sheep instinctively stay together and follow the leader. It is a nearly impossible occurrence to have only one sheep to be lost. But in the text today, Jesus describes the scene that out of 100 sheep, one was lost. How do you think that one sheep got lost?

Matthew's account describes similar event in chapter 18. In Mathew 18:12, Jesus asks the following: "What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? Jesus says in Matthew 18, the reason that one sheep got lost was because "one of them wanders away."

"One of them wanders away." NIV translation text puts it "wandered away, wandered off". "Wandered away" in Greek is *planáō*. This means, wandered off, veered off course. It also has additional meaning of "being deceived, or swindled." The reason why that one sheep was lost is because it was deceived and swindled. In KJV translation puts "the sheep being lost" as "gone astray." "Gone astray" has the connotation of being fall short, or being corrupted. In other words, one sheep being lost has the meaning of one sheep being deceived and swindled and ultimately resulting in being corrupted.

For the shepherd, each one of the sheep is very precious. Whether the shepherd has ten or hundred sheep in the pen, the shepherd would care for, and seek out for the one lost sheep. The shepherd would not play the numbers game and comfort himself of having only lost one sheep out of hundred sheep in the pen. That is if the shepherd is a true shepherd...and not a hired hand.

It would be an extremely rare occurrence to lose a single sheep, with its natural instinct to stay together in the flock. In today's text, Jesus takes the parable of the lost sheep, and describes even with the rare scenario of losing one sheep, he asks that wouldn't it be obvious for the

shepherd to seek out for the lost sheep. Let's look at the background on the reason Jesus chose the parable of a lost sheep. It becomes much clearer in verse 1 and 2. "Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." Jesus was having meal and conversing with non-religious, non-believing sinners and overheard the Pharisees and scribes whispering among themselves, and told the story, likening them of the lost sheep.

The original Greek root for parable means fictitious story. In other words, "Parable" means not a true story, but the fictitious story. It is a fictitious story used to facilitate understanding and deeper truth by using illustrations. Therefore, this parable really highlights an important truth. Let's look at verse 4 again. "What man of you, having a hundred sheep if he has lost one of them, ... " This "man" is Jesus himself. "A hundred sheep" represents the peoples on the earth. "if he has lost one of them" represents the sinners deceived by Satan and left corrupted. Jesus describes Satan in the following way in John 8:44. "... (Satan) does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

Satan is a liar and the father of lies. Dear church, please do not lie. Please do not deceive others. And please do not cheat others. Satan lied from the beginning. From the beginning, he deceived the mankind. There is zero trace of truth in him. Everything he says from the beginning to the end, is lies, deceptions, and cheating. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 11:3, "I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

At the garden of Eve, Adam and Eve fell into Satan's deception. Since then, for the 6,000 years of history of humanity, Satan has swindled and deceived the mankind to sin against

God and fall into corruption. Even today, Satan endeavors to deceive us to fall into sin against God. Satan tries all its might to try to deceive us and veer us off into the ways of evil and wander us away from getting closer to God.

Jesus asks in today's text verse 4, "if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?" In Luke 5:32, Jesus says, "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

Folks, do you understand this truth? Jesus has left his heavenly throne, and came down to this earth, to look for you and me. Jesus, the holy God, has abandoned his heavenly throne, and came down to this world, in the image of man. Jesus, the unlimited, and eternal, creator God took on to become the created to reconcile us to have a relationship with God because the sinful mankind cannot approach holy God.

Dear church, Jesus still bores the scars of the nails in his hands and mark of spears on his side. Do you think Jesus lacks the means to heal his wounded scars, the one who raised decomposed Lazarus from the dead? Of course not! Those scars and wounds are precious to Jesus. The reason: They are the testimony and evidence of His love for us. Romans 5:8 declares, "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." 1 Corinthians 13:8 says, "Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away." Jesus' love for you will last forever. Jesus will leave his scars in his hands and sides as the mark of his sacrificial love eternally.

Jesus, the one who abandoned his heavenly throne, tells us in verse 5 to 7: "And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that

was lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”

Dear church, the living son of God, Jesus Christ left his heavenly throne and came to this earth to find the one lost soul. Even if there was only one. Only one lost in the whole world, and everyone else is heaven, Jesus would gladly abandon his heavenly throne to come and look for that one wandering person. Jesus came to find you. Jesus says he would gladly throw away his heavenly throne to find you. Please hear what Jesus is saying, “Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”

This is the love of our Lord for each one of you. The Lord desperately wants the one sinner to repent and to turn back to him...I pray you understand His love toward you.

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Tae Youl “Leo” Park

Candidate for Ordination and Full Membership

THE ORDER OF WORSHIP

1. Detail the theological significance of each act of worship. Describe what is happening and why it occurs where it does in the service.

Our Sunday Worship Service pretty much follows the Order of Sunday Worship using The Basic Pattern of The United Methodist Church. The service is semi-traditional. Our Sunday worship starts with “Praise and Worship” for about 20 minutes. Because most of the parishioners are 1st generation Korean Americans who are in 60’s and 70’s, we sing many hymns during “Praise and Worship.” However, we also try to include contemporary gospel songs here and there for younger parishioners who are in 40’s and 50’s.

The order of Sunday Morning Worship Service is consisted with four main parts and number of sub-elements under each main part. The four main parts are:

- I. Time of Praise and Prayer
- II. Time of Proclamation
- III. Time of Response to God’s Word
- IV. Time of Sending Forth

The order of the four main parts is based on The Basic Patten of Worship from The United Methodist Book of Worship with a small modification. I separated “Proclamation and Response” into two parts. The Time of Praise and Prayer is “Entrance” in The Basic Pattern of Worship. The Time of Proclamation is “Proclamation.” The Time of Response to God’s Word id “Response.” The Time of Sending Forth is “Sending Forth.”

The Time of Praise and Praise includes six sub-elements:

1. Praise and Worship

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2. Apostle's Creed
3. Intercessory Prayer
4. Announcements
5. Time of Tithes and Offerings
6. Offertory Prayer

The Time of Praise and Worship functions as the time of Gathering calling people to worship. The Time of Praise and Worship is also a time to help people prepare their hearts and minds for the worship service.

The Time of Proclamation includes two sub-elements:

1. Scripture
2. Sermon

We are not doing several Scripture readings as suggested in The Basic Pattern of Worship such as First Reading, Second Reading, and Gospel Reading. We do only one Scripture reading which is the main Scripture text for the sermon.

The Time of Response to God's Word includes two sub-elements:

1. Hymn or Song
2. Prayer of Commitment

I included Hymn or Song right after the sermon because I intentionally choose a hymn or a song that is related to the sermon message and that will be sung by the congregation as an Act of Commitment and Faith.

The Time of Sending Forth includes two sub-elements:

1. Hymn or Song
2. Benediction

The last Hymn or Song is a part of “Sending Forth” as suggested in The Basic Pattern of Worship. Then Benediction.

2. Explain the following:

(a) Why did you choose the hymns used in the context of the service?

I intentionally choose a hymn or a song that is related to the sermon message and that will be sung after sermon is preached by the congregation as an Act of Commitment and Faith.

For this worship service I chose “For God So Loved,” and sang several times. The verse goes, “*For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Amen. Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Amen.*” I encouraged the congregation to look at the cross and see the love of God for each one of us demonstrated in Jesus Christ. As people were singing the song, I wanted them to know how much God loves them. I wanted them to proclaim the love of God for them.

(b) What was the purpose of the sermon?

The title of the sermon was “Jesus abandoned His heavenly throne to seek you.” The Scripture was taken from Luke 15:1-10. The passage is the parable about a shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine sheep in the open country, and goes after the one that is lost until he finds it. The sermon was about the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ, the good Shepherd, who abandoned His heavenly throne to seek to find each and every one of us who were lost. I wanted the people to know who we were and what Jesus Christ has done for us to save us. I also wanted the people to realize how much Jesus Christ loves each and every one of us and such sacrificial love has been demonstrated on the cross.

(c) Does the Order of Worship help deliver that theme? Explain.

I don't think the Order of Worship itself delivers the theme of the message. I think what happens in each order during the worship service delivers the theme of the message. Does the content of each order of worship service deliver the theme? Yes! Scripture text read, Sermon preached and the Song sung were all connected together in the theme of the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ.

[Back to the Candidate Profile](#)



보게, 느끼게, 품게하신 사랑



안성미 권사(7-8셀)

지난 여름 과테말라로 단기 선교를 다녀왔다. 일주일 동안 VBS 사역, 안경, 의료와 침술, 그리고 결혼식등 다양한 사역을 했다. 공항에서 엄청난 분량의 짐을 봉고버스에 빼곡히 싣고 다섯 시간 동안 험준한 산을 아슬아슬하게 넘어가며, "선교사님께서 미국에 오시려면 이런 고생을 하셨겠구나"하며 미안한 마음이 들었다. 이튿날 아침, 큐티와 기도모임을 마치고 첫사역지, 아구아까떼 마을로 향했다. 캐톨릭이 혼합된 토착신앙을 가진 그 마을에서 한 가정만 복음을 받아들였다고 한다. 그곳에서 우리를 맞이하는 얼굴은 호기심과 경계심, 그리고 표정없는 어두움이었다. 집집마다 방문해 선물을 드리고 일일이 기도제목을 받아 기도하며, 주민들을 초청해 점심식사를 대접했다. 그리고 예수님 영화를 상영한 후 영접하는 시간을 가졌다. 그들 대부분이 예수님을 구세주로 영접하는 가슴 뛰는 기적의 현장에서 하나된 기쁨으로 하나님께 영광 돌리는 순간이었다. 이어서 팀사역을 진행했는데, 떠나기 전에 조금 배운 것으로 안경사역을 하며, 육신의 눈이 밝아질 뿐 아니라 영의 눈도 번쩍 띄게 해달라고 주님께 간구하였다.

떠나기 전에 차칼떼 마을에서 드렸던 주일 예배와 결혼식은 잊지 못할 감동이었다. 해발 2천미터의 산, 거의 하늘과 맞닿아 있는 마을이다. 한없는 낭떠러지가 계속 되는 아슬아슬한 길을 달려갔다. 팀원들이 교회 안팎을 아름답게 장식해서 완전 잔치 분위기였다. 언어도 통하지 않는 그들과 한 성령 안



에서 "주님의 높고 위대하심을 내 영혼이 찬양하네" 함께 주님을 찬양하니 주체할 수 없는 눈물이 흘렀다. 천상에서 예배 드릴 때 모습이 이리할 것 같다. 불모지였던 차칼떼 마을에 복음의 씨가 뿌려져 교회가 세워지고 신실한 일꾼들이 세워져서 복음전파를 위해 애쓰고 있다는 점에서 아구아까떼 마을과는 사뭇 달랐다. 아구아까떼에서 우리가 사역할 때도 함께 기쁨으로 동참해준 차칼떼 교인들의 순수함과 열정에 많은 감동을 받았다. 차칼떼의 한 복음전도자는 아구아까떼에서 복음을 받아들인 한 가정을 위해 매주 두 시간씩 그 험준한 산을 넘는다고 했다. 말씀을 기다리는 가정과 산을 넘는 복음전도자의 복된 발걸음이 오버랩되며 가슴이 뭉클해졌다. 짧은 기간 동안 하나님께서는 보게, 느끼게, 품게 하셨다. 그 지역을 통해 이루실 일에 대한 기대와 소망이 생겼고, 아구아까떼 교회 개척을 위해 기도하게 하신다. 아이들이 가난과 무지에서 벗어나 좀더 나은 교육을 받았으면 하는 바람도 생겼다. 신발 하나 제대로 신지 못하고 그 험한 산길을 뛰어 다니는 아이들이 자꾸 눈에 밟힌다. 나 사는데 집중하느라고 제대로 나누지 못했던 삶이 회개가 되어 기회가 되면 선교에 참여하고 싶어졌다. 사랑으로 하나 되었던 팀원들과 팀장님, 신실한 자칼떼 동역자들의 선한 눈빛과 기쁨으로 섬겨 주셨던 선교사님 내외분의 진한 사랑이 마음 속에 아직도 생생히 살아있다.

복음을 위해 섬기는 이

- 감리교 재단** 감리교 총회
- 파송선교사** 이영찬-홍수자(케냐) 서진국-서희숙(과테말라) 김재한-그레이스김(파나마)
- 협력선교사** 김성완(이스라엘) 김해준(캄보디아) 김우종(태국) 김유영(파라과이) 이인호(인도차이나) KH Cho(요르단) 양옥자(가나) 정태순(중국) 김명식(중국) WDJ(중국) SB Choi(NK) 수현 고우덤(네팔) 우바울(이스라엘) 유충선(브라질)
- 지원교회** 동정감리교회(한국) 강화당산교회(한국) 유가교회(중국) 사문자교회(중국) 산시교회(중국) Living God Church(캄보디아)
- 기관선교** SAM 의료재단 JAMA 국제도시선교회 선한이웃선교회 하나선교회 국제선교회 MOM선교회 Harvest Mission KIMNET 개척선교회 운남소수민족사역 새터민사역 KIM Mission 일본 동부선교센터 KCC News 크리스찬_타임스 한족지도자양성(Diktuon) CFM Ministry

교회를 섬기는 이

- 원로목사** 장동찬
- 담임목사** 이기성 **부목사** 안현일 정대선 박태열 임 옥 명민선 David Cho (River) **협동목사** 최호경(사랑의 교실)
- EM 목사** 정찬혜(새가족/셀지원) **간사** 이경애(리더십/상담)
- 전도사** 김희기(예담)
- 협동전도사** 김정중(교육부/유초등부) 신조이(유치부) 최지영(유아부) (BYG 중고등부) Eury Cho Michael Kang Lisa Song
- 교육전도사** 이명희 김태순 임중현(시설관리)
- 사무행정** 김명구 이석제 최진성 곽창운 이범규 장지순 김석문
- 사역장로** 김성권 김중은 박광서 양순걸 윤성기 신민철 윤성도
- 봉사장로** 김영복 강양이 이봉수 이형근 조원록 박현동 김의정 강기원 강태원 이태봉 김용홍 손 번 오역수 유승화 이의용 권혁진 신상태 권오수



창립 1985 주보 31-40 2016년 10월 2일

기도 Prayer 포트리 1부_김석문 장로 2부_박태열 목사
 웨인 1부_윤성기 장로 2부_김중은 장로 3부_김석문 장로

봉헌 Offering 날 대속하신 예수께 (찬321) 포트리 1.2부
 하늘의 주 (중창) 웨인 1부
 복의 근원 강림하사 (현악4중주) 웨인 2부
 성자의 귀한 몸 (주사랑 찬양대) 웨인 3부

성경 Scripture 포트리_ 누가복음 15:1-10 (신약 p.120)
 웨인_요나 3:1-10 (구약 p.1288)

찬양 Hymn 기도 (포트리)살롬 찬양대
 내 영혼에 햇빛 비치니 (고후 4:6) 주은혜 찬양대
 주님의 크신 은혜 놀라와라 주영광 찬양대

설교 Message 당신을 찾기위해 예수님은 하늘보좌를 버리셨습니다 포트리_박태열 목사
 토기장이의 손길(5): 진노 중의 긍휼 웨인_이기성 목사

결단의 찬양 Commitment 포트리_그 크신 하나님의 사랑 (찬304)
 웨인_주 예수님 내 맘에 오사 (찬286)

다음 주일 기도 순서
 포트리 1부_김중은 장로 2부_정대선 목사
 웨인 1부_신민철 장로 2부_윤성기 장로 3부_김중은 장로

예배 안내

- 주일예배 (포트리)** 1부 7:00am 2부 2:30pm
- (웨인)** 1부 7:30am
- 2부 9:30am
- 3부 11:30am
- The River (EM)** 11:30am rivernj.com
- 영어 Youth_BYG** 9:30am
- 한어 Youth_예담** 11:30am
- Gospeland 아동부** 9:30am 11:30am
- 포트리 아동부** 2:30pm
- 사랑의 교실** 11:30am

주중 예배/모임

- 새벽예배** 5:25am (월-금) · 5:15am (토) @ 포트리 & 웨인 성전
- 다락방 수요일예배** 8:00pm (수) @ 웨인 성전
- 중고등부 주중예배** 8:00pm(수) · 8:00pm(금)
- 청년부 NISSI 예배** 7:20pm (금) @ 포트리 성전
- 베다니 한국학교** 6:00-8:00pm(금), 9:00am-2:00pm(토) @웨인성전
- 한글성서학교** 10:00am (주일) 유치/유년부 @ 웨인성전

Welcome We're Glad You Joined Us!

오늘 처음 오셔서 함께 예배드리는 모든 분들을 주님의 이름으로 환영합니다.

주일, 주중 예배 및 셀모임에 힘써 참여하기를 서로 격려합니다. (히10:24, 25)

오늘은 **성찬주일**입니다. 예수님의 십자가 구속의 은혜를 체험하는 귀한 시간이 되기를 기도합니다.



정기 제직회의 10/9(다음주일) 1:30pm

안건: 2016년 재정 / 2017년 예산안 / 재단이사회 / 교역협조위원회의 보고 및 의결

여성교회총회 10/2(오늘) 11:40am 친교실2층

신천집사 ORIENTATION 10/16(주일) 4pm @벨엘성전



매일성경 2017년 1년 정기구독 신청 @ 도서판매부-11/25 마감 / 한글본 \$25 영한본 \$30

지역사역_양로원 찬양사역 반주자 구함
매주 목요일 10:15-11:15 @ Atrium in Wayne
문의: 김진옥(973-876-9645)



찬양의 밤

10/2(오늘) 6:00pm, 웨인성전 본당

주최: 뉴저지 연합감리교 연회 여성교회

목적: 불우한 여성과 아동을 위한 선교기금 모금

참가: 뉴저지 팔리세이드 연회 6개 감리교회의 찬양대, 중창단, 연주와 Worship Dance팀



부서 소식

교육부 소식

증보기도부탁: 모든 부서(영아부/유아부/유치부/초등부/BYG/예뿔/사랑의 교실)를 섬기시는 전도사님, 선생님, 멘토들이 주님의 마음으로 하나되어 섬기도록

유치부_ 지난 주 부모님들과의 미팅에 참여해 주신 모든 분들께 감사

유년부_KIDS EE(5학년 전도폭발): 9/30시작 매주 금 7:30-

9:30pm / 사랑과 은혜속에 잘 마칠 수 있도록 기도부탁

BYG_중/고등부 주일 성경공부(Forerunner/Trailblazers): 10/2시작

청년부(Nissi) 소식

· 오늘 10월 첫째주 주일 패터슨 사역 갑니다. 많은 참석 부탁드립니다.

· 주일과 금요일예배를 통하여 하나님을 사랑하고 이웃을 사랑하는 닥시 청년부되도록 기도부탁합니다.

Messiah for Haiti (선교 일정 12월 5일~10일)

찬양을 통한 아이티 선교의 기금 마련을 위해 이번 10월15일에 열리는 Korean Community Center(Tenafly 소재) 바자 행사에 베다니 booth가 마련됩니다. 판매할 수 있는 가정용품을 새것으로 후원 부탁드립니다. (10월12일까지)

자세한 문의: 이훈 집사(973-590-4980)

원유봉 권사(908-461-1178)



새가족을 환영합니다.

박현정 집사(태희, 민진) 8-6셀(리더: 김경운 집사)



위로합니다.

정규석 집사(-홍수정 집사) 모친상 (2-5셀)

유병석 집사(-최경숙 집사) 모친상(한국) (4-8셀)



지역별 교회 밴 운행

포트리 최재기 권사 201.978.1700 박홍규 권사 973.280.8444

뉴욕퀸스 김권석 집사 718.440.1195

러더포드 강병호 권사 973.567.0007

금주의 매일묵상(QT) 레위기 18:1-21:15

금주의 성경읽기 고전 5-10장

금주의 제단헌화 김중은-강용숙(범사감사), 전명숙(범사감사)

서용산-백혜경(아들생일감사), 포트리: 박숙영(범사감사)

[은혜동산]에 초청합니다.

그리스도 제자의 첫걸음

“베다니 교회를 지금까지 섬기면서 (무엇하나나 부득불) 자랑할만한 베다니 교회의 장점이 있다면, 무엇이냐 생각하셨습니까?”



다음 달 교회 31주년 창립축하예배시 여러 집사님들께서 권사 임직을 받으실 예정입니다. 이를 위해 각 구구별로 신천 권사 교육이 있었는데, 그 시간에 새로 임직 받으실 분들께 위와 같은 질문을 드렸습니다. 많은 분들께서 답하시기를

“(여자 성도님들의 섬기시는 모습도 물론 아름답지만) 솔선수범해서 봉사하시는 남자 성도님들이 의외로 많다는 것이 장점”이라 말씀하셨습니다.

이렇게 섬겨 주시는 분들 가운데 대다수는 남성들을 위해 준비되는 [은혜동산] 수료자였다는 것입니다. 가정에서나 사회에서, 그리고 주님의 몸된 교회에서 남보다 앞장서서 행동함으로써

몸소 다른 사람의 본보기가 되는 삶, 그러한 삶을 살아가는 참된 그리스도의 제자, 그 첫걸음이

이번 10월에 준비된 **[은혜동산]**이 되길 소망합니다.

각 구구와 셀식구들 가운데 아직 [은혜동산]에 참여했던 경험이 없는 분들께 권면하셔서, 말씀과 기도 가운데 변화받는 새로운 체험의 시간 되도록 함께 기도 부탁드립니다.

일정: 10월13일(목) - 10월15일(토)까지

등록: 2부, 3부 예배 이후 친교실

문의: 안지용 권사 (646.522.2104)



월중 모임 행사

10/2(주일)	성찬주일 / 감리교 한인여성교회 찬양제 (6pm)
10/8 [토요새벽예배]	SB Choi (NK) 협력선교사 사역나눔
10/9(주일)	정기 제직회의 (1:30pm)
10/13(목)-10/15(토)	은혜동산
10/16(주일)	창립주일/창립31주년 감사예배 (5pm) -봉사장로추대, 신천권사.집사 임직예배

지난 주일 통계 / 9월 25일

헌금총액	\$52,595.00	출석총인원	1,589명
웨인1부	9,307.20	웨인1부	178
웨인2부	22,019.50	웨인2부	480
웨인3부	13,936.00	웨인3부	314
포트리1부	2,337.00	포트리1부	100
포트리2부	2,975.00	포트리2부	61
주일학교	346.30	주일학교	363
EM	1,245.00	EM	93
기타	429.00		

Tae Youl “Leo” Park

Candidate for Ordination and Full Membership

BIBLE STUDY**1. SETTING AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

For this Bible Study the book of 1 John will be used. For commentary support John Wesley’s Notes on the New Testament will be used. The nature of the gathering is Saturday morning Men’s Bible Study that meets at 7:30 a.m. for one and half hour. The make-up of the group is currently 2 men who are in 40’s. I am working on inviting more men. The purpose of the study is to provide spiritual growth through Bible Study and to live out the Word in everyday life. The study is focused more on the application of Word learned in our daily lives. How can we experience true incarnation—Word becomes flesh—by living out the Word? I plan to finish the book of 1 John with participants in 8 weeks. Through discussion and sharing of personal experiences, I also want participants to practically apply what they learn to their own life. In the end of this study, the participants will be expected to read through the entire book of 1 John and have better understanding of 1 John in Wesleyan theology.

Study Format is very simple. It is the combination of lecture, discussion and sharing. I will go through verse by verse with the participants and share the commentary of John Wesley. Korean people, in general, are so familiar with and very comfortable with classroom style Bible Study lectured by the Pastor from the podium. I want to apply discussion and sharing part to this Bible Study. By doing so, I want to give an opportunity to participants to contribute their thoughts and questions to the group.

2. OUTLINE AND DETAILED LESSON PLANS

Week One Lesson Plan

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Introduction: Introduction to 1 John. Its Author, Dates, and Recipients.

Lecture: Read 1 John, chapter 1. Explain verse by verse according to John Wesley's Notes on The First Epistle Of St. John.

Discussion & Sharing: When and how did you meet Jesus Christ? Your story of conversion.

Week Two Lesson Plan

Introduction: How was your week? Share your struggles and/or successes when trying to live out the Word learned from last week.

Lecture: Read 1 John, chapter 2, verses 1-11. Explain verse by verse according to John Wesley's Notes on The First Epistle Of St. John.

Discussion & Sharing: What does it mean to you that Jesus is the Lord of my life? Lordship in your marriage, in your family, in your work, in your church.

Week Three Lesson Plan

Introduction: How was your week? Share your struggles and/or successes when trying to live out the Word learned from last week.

Lecture: Read 1 John, chapter 2, verses 12-29. Explain verse by verse according to John Wesley's Notes on The First Epistle Of St. John.

Discussion & Sharing: What will be your last words before you die? What do you want to write on your tombstone?

Week Four Lesson Plan

Introduction: How was your week? Share your struggles and/or successes when trying to live out the Word learned from last week.

Lecture: Read 1 John, chapter 3. Explain verse by verse according to John Wesley's Notes on The First Epistle Of St. John.

Discussion & Sharing: How do you prove your love for Jesus Christ in your daily life?
The evidences of your love for God.

Week Five Lesson Plan

Introduction: How was your week? Share your struggles and/or successes when trying to live out the Word learned from last week.

Lecture: Read 1 John, chapter 4, verses 1-10. Explain verse by verse according to John Wesley's Notes on The First Epistle Of St. John.

Discussion & Sharing: What does it mean to you that we are conformed to the image of Jesus Christ?

Week Six Lesson Plan

Introduction: How was your week? Share your struggles and/or successes when trying to live out the Word learned from last week.

Lecture: Read 1 John, chapter 4, verses 11-20. Explain verse by verse according to John Wesley's Notes on The First Epistle Of St. John.

Discussion & Sharing: What does it mean to you that we know God? How do we know the love of God?

Week Seven Lesson Plan

Introduction: How was your week? Share your struggles and/or successes when trying to live out the Word learned from last week.

Lecture: Read 1 John, chapter 5, verses 1-10. Explain verse by verse according to John Wesley's Notes on The First Epistle Of St. John.

Discussion & Sharing: Share difference between “fear-based obedience,” “duty-based obedience,” and “love-based obedience.”

Week Eight Lesson Plan

Introduction: How was your week? Share your struggles and/or successes when trying to live out the Word learned from last week.

Lecture: Read 1 John, chapter 5, verses 11-21. Explain verse by verse according to John Wesley’s Notes on The First Epistle Of St. John.

Discussion & Sharing: Verse 18 says, “anyone born of God does not continue to sin.”
How can we do that?

3. ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Wesley, John, *Explanatory Notes Upon The New Testament, Volume II*, Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, Missouri: Kansas City, 1981.

John Wesley’s Notes offers the core theology of Methodism. It helps and guides common church people understand The New Testament.

4. EVALUATION

There was no formal Bible Study for men at church. One of church members approached to me and asked me about the possibility for me to lead a Bible Study for men like him who are eagerly looking for a certain type of Bible Study during the week. So I created a curriculum and started the Bible Study.

They had very specific expectations. They told me that they wanted to spiritually grow in terms of living out the Word of God in their daily lives. They wanted to experience the Word of God actually leading and working in their home, in their work place. And they felt the need of a Bible Study focusing on such aspect, especially through nurturing and teaching of a pastor. They

have been looking for a Bible Study that is more than a lecture. They have been looking for a Bible Study that actually addresses every day challenges in their life and that gives Biblical and practical application to live out the Word of God. One of the participants is a cell group leader. He felt a great need of being nurtured and educated by a pastor in order to lead the sharing of cell group members. He felt that his scriptural knowledge is so lack that he gets so challenged as a cell group leader. The participants also wanted to have an ongoing opportunity to grow in the Word of God through a relationship with a pastor.

It has been three weeks since I started this new Bible Study. So far, I think that the Bible Study has met their initial expectations. At the meeting, we address the issues and challenges we face in our everyday life as a husband, as a father, and as a leader. One thing that is not working is the lesson schedule. We have met three weeks but we are still on the lecture of the Week One Lesson Plan. The reason of delaying is because the participants have so much to share. I do have to adjust the time schedule to be more faithful to the lesson schedule that I initially planned in order to accomplish the goal to finish the book of 1 John in 8 weeks. Another area to improve is the number of participants. I want to invite more men to the Bible Study. I started with two men but want to expend it to at least 5 men.

Tae Youl “Leo” Park

Candidate for Ordination and Full Membership

PRACTICE OF MINISTRY**1. What do you think are the most effective means of doing evangelism in the 21st century? How have you lived this out in your current context of ministry?**

I believe that the most effective means of doing evangelism in the 21st century is Prayer Station. Prayer Station is a tool through prayer evangelism happens. Prayer evangelism is that we meet people's felt need first and then meet their real need, which is Jesus Christ. A simple question, “May I pray for you?” opens a door for a dialogue. Prayer breaks down fear and barrier that people have against traditional evangelism method. I took several groups of people to missions. At mission field, I set up Prayer Station with a team and prayed for people. One time we prayed for about 500 people. Another time we prayed for about 2,000 people. This summer, I went to Washington D.C. with my church group. On a busy street corner, I remember the moment that we prayed for over 50 middle school students who came for the trip. After praying for their temporal needs, we offer them, Jesus Christ, to meet their eternal needs. When people accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, the joy is so great that there is no word for it.

2. What makes a congregation vital, and how do you measure it? How would you envision working with a congregation to become more vital?

The United Methodist Church defines that "vital congregations are spirit-filled, forward-leaning communities of believers that grow over time, welcome all people; make disciples of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, and serve like Christ through justice and mercy ministries." Vital congregations have measurable activities like "Inviting and inspiring worship; Engaged disciples in mission and outreach; Gifted, empowered and equipped lay leadership; Effective, equipped and inspired clergy leadership; Faith forming small group ministries; and Strong children and youth ministries." Through these measurable activities, a

congregation can measure its vitality. To become more vital congregation, I envision reaching new and younger generations of believers; identifying, training and equipping new lay leadership; growing small groups like Bible studies; and engaging in missions. Through these efforts, I want to see that more stories about changed lives are told; more new disciples are made; and community is transformed.

3. What is your personal approach to conflict? Provide an example of where you have been involved in resolving conflict. What did you learn?

At the previous appointment, I had a person who held both Council Chair position and Trustees President position. A year after I was appointed there, I noticed that the person was controlling the finance of the church in the background. I started to gather the evidence of his misuse of the church money. I had many temptations to act on the issue in my own way to remove him from the two positions but I patiently followed the advice and guidance of my District Superintendent and three senior Korean pastors. It took almost five months to resolve the conflict. Five months were very painful long time for me. What I have learned is that patience in prayer is very important in dealing with conflicts. The wisdom I have learned is that I should continue to stay in the grace of God instead of judgment and punishment.

4. What is your theological and practical understanding of itineracy?

The United Methodist pastors are sent! In Acts, chapter 13, while the leaders of the Antioch church were worshipping and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2, NIV). God sent Abraham. God sent Moses. God sent prophets. God sent His one and only Son, Jesus Christ. The current appointment is my fourth appointment. I began my ministry in 2007 as a part-time local pastor. Since then I have never asked a single question regarding my appointment when I receive a phone call from District Superintendent. I have fully committed myself to the itinerant system

when I said “Yes” to the calling in The United Methodist Church. And I have fully committed to offer myself without reserve to be appointed and to serve as the appointive authority may determine. I trust in God working through the Bishop and the Cabinet in making appointments.

5. How do you engage all age groups in your community?

To answer this question, let me share two examples to give evidence how I intentionally effort to engage all age groups in my ministry in order to create an atmosphere that the entire congregation can feel that we are one spiritual family. At my current appointment, for the last 30 years, the church had been practicing somewhat closed communion by closing the Lord's Table to children. The children had never been invited to the Lord's Table. When I administered the Lord's Table I asked the ushers to go and bring children from Sunday School. The United Methodist Church has been practicing Open Communion, inviting anyone who responds to the invitation. How important and significant not to turn away anyone who wishes to receive Communion! It is, after all, the Lord's Table! This summer, I took a group of people from church to Washington D.C. as domestic missions. The mission group included youth, young adults, adults, and the elderly. One of them said, in his testimony, “This mission experience has made Bethany a more intimate and a larger family to us. Our mission team became an extended part of the Bethany family.”

6. What is your understanding of pastoral authority, and how do you intend to exercise it in your place of ministry?

My understanding of pastoral authority in The United Methodist Church is that a pastor is given an authority by commissioning of a bishop. The laying on of hands by a bishop in ordination means that authority is given in The United Methodist Church. As an elder, she/he is “authorized to preach and teach the Word of God, to provide pastoral care and counseling, to administer the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Lord’s Supper, and to order the life of the

Church for the service in its mission and ministry (BOD 2012, Par. 332). A pastor is a spiritual leader in a local church with the authority given by the bishop. I believe that this pastoral authority has to be exercised with the power of God's love and the attitude of servant leadership. Jesus Christ said in Mark 10:45, "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve." I believe that the highest virtue for a spiritual leader is humility. Humility is considering other above oneself (Philippians 2:34). Humility is serving others rather than being served by others. The direction of humility is going low. Humility is positioning oneself lower than others. A leader, as servant, always should go lower as Jesus Christ, the true Servant, did for His disciples when He washed their feet. I think that the pride is the biggest enemy to a leader. I, as pastor, want to stay always at the feet of the congregation as Jesus, the true Servant, did.

7. If you could choose anyone to mentor you in leadership skills, who would that be and why?

I would choose a mentor who has a loving and caring heart for her/his congregation as a true shepherd. I would choose a mentor who truly loves her/his congregation that she/he diligently dedicates her/his time in preparation of Sunday sermon in order to fee her/his sheep with the Word of God. I would choose a mentor who truly cares her/his congregation that she/he will not do anything that might disappoint even one person in her/his congregation or offend one's mind. I would choose a mentor who truly cares her/his congregation that she/he will go to seek until find when one soul gets lost in spiritual journey. Such mentor is one who truly loves Jesus Christ. The late Rev. Han-hum Oak was such mentor. He was the senior pastor of one of the largest churches in South Korea. He was well known as the forerunner of "Laity Discipleship Training." One time, one of his leaders asked him, "Pastor, you have become a pastor of a mega church. Why don't you start to play golf?" Rev. Oak answered, "I will never do that because I know that somebody will get disappointed and offended in one's mind if I play golf." Rev. Oak's

wife one time testified that Rev. Oak spent 30 hours every week in preparation for Sunday sermon. One week, he wrote and re-wrote his sermon many times. His wife asked him, "Honey, why are you writing the same sermon over and over?" He answered, "Because I haven't found the right scriptural reference yet." That clearly shows how much Rev. Oak loved and cared his congregation.

8. Describe a situation in which you felt a need to assert a professional boundary in the practice of ministry.

I think that taking Sabbath is the greatest challenge as a pastor, especially at a 1st generation immigrant Korean church. At my current appointment, the tradition of the church is that the senior pastor is expected to come to church before 4 a.m. for early morning prayer service every day from Monday until Saturday. Because the senior pastor is coming to church before 4 a.m. for the early morning prayer service every day, I, as associate pastor, have to the same. God Himself rested on the seventh day from all the work (Genesis 2:2-3). I believe that "all" includes even the early morning prayer service. God also commanded us to "remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8). If we do not keep the Sabbath day then I believe that we are disobeying God. I had been struggling with this matter for a while. To be honest with you, I could not assert a professional boundary in this area for the sake of the peace of the church. However, on Monday, after the early morning prayer service, I try to set my professional boundary to keep the Sabbath for the rest of the day. I try not to call or answer a phone call, a text, or an email from church members. I try not to participate in any church-related meetings on Monday.

9. How have you worked through the experience of forgiving someone?

I believe that forgiveness is the greatest gift of love a person can give to someone else. Forgiveness is an expression of mercy. Mercy is not to give what someone deserves to receive.

At my previous appointment, I had a person who held Council Chair position and Trustees President position. He not only embezzled the church money in total amount of over \$20,000 but also borrowed money from church members in total amount of over \$100,000 in the period of about 10 years, but did not repay intentionally. I presented the matter to the church leadership with the evidence. There was anger among church leaders. One of them felt so betrayed that she could not sleep at night. I was constantly in prayer for wisdom and guidance and continually in dialogue with the church leaders for resolution. I offered an opportunity to him to accept the wrongs and damages that he caused and to ask the church leaders for forgiveness and leave the church. I also offered an opportunity to the church leaders to forgive him and let him go. Both parties accepted my offer and at the end the greatest gift of love, forgiveness, was given.

10. What are you doing to help those around you to take good care of themselves?

What I do to help those around me to take good care of themselves is to pray for them because I believe that God will take really good care of them. As a pastor, I believe that making myself available for praying for others is the best help I can give. I pray for those who are in trouble, those who need breakthrough, those who need directions, those who are sick physically or spiritually so that they know and believe that there is God who can and will help. As a pastor, one of my responsibilities is to help my congregation to totally rely on God trusting His promises in the Bible. When I pray I also proclaim the promises of God over their life. God's promise is like an anchor of our faith that we hold on to because God is faithful and He keeps His promises.

11. How have you invited someone to faith and seen their faith develop?

I think that the greatest reward for a pastor is to bring a person to Jesus Christ and see her/his faith grows. At my previous appointment, a mother came to church. She was a Buddhist. One Sunday, she just came into the sanctuary because she was in great physical and spiritual

suffering and desperately needed a place to pray. After worship service, I met her in my office. I presented her the gospel and she accepted Jesus Christ as her personal Lord and Savior. The following week, she brought her teenage daughter. I met her daughter and presented the gospel and she also accepted Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior. A year later, the mother gave her testimony before the entire congregation. In her testimony, she said, "The greatest joy for me is to pray with my daughter at the end of day before going to bed and to go to church together on Sunday." She said that her life had dramatically changed after she realized how much Jesus Christ loves her. She said that she could not live a day without Word, without praise, and without prayer. She served in the kitchen. She served to arrange the alter flower. Her teenage daughter testified that she believes that God will help her and her mother to overcome any difficulty and trouble in their life. The daughter served to help with church media.

12. What have you overcome to come to this season in your ministry?

I had faced many challenges to come to this season in my ministry. I was studying at a seminary full-time for my Master of Divinity. I was pastoring a church part-time. I was working full-time. And I did all these while I was a father of three little children. It took me 4 years to finish the Master of Divinity. There were moments I just wanted to give up because it was too hard to endure. Sometimes challenge was so great that I just wanted to run away. Exams to take, papers to write, books to read, sermons to prepare, bible studies to lead, meetings to attend, projects to finish... There were just routine challenges. When my wife was sick, everything just had to stop. People often asked me, "How do you do that!" I do not even know how I did that. All I can say is that it was the grace of God. By God's grace, I was able to persevere 4 years and overcome countless challenges to come to this season in my ministry.

13. How would you describe your prayer life in this season, and how has it changed over your journey?

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Since I came to Bethany church, I get up at 3:30 a.m. for dawn prayer service every day from Monday till Saturday. On Sunday, I get up at 4:30 a.m. for prayer. It has been over a year and a half. Every day I spend about 3 hours to pray and to meditate on the Word. My prayer life has changed that I give to the Lord the whole tithe of my time. Sometimes, after a late night meeting or an emergency hospital visit, because I get so tired, I get tempted to just sleep in. However, when such moment comes, I think of people who work 12 hours or 15 hours every day and yet who faithfully come to dawn prayer service. Their dedication and passion challenge me and give me strength to overcome such temptation. I remind myself that I am a pastor and my prayer life has to be an example for the congregation to follow.

14. When you read the Bible, how do you hear God's voice? What example might you give of how you responded?

I believe that the Bible is the Word of God. In the Bible, God spoke to many people in many ways and in many places. God is same yesterday, today, and forever. God has spoken and is still speaking to me through the Bible in many ways and in many places. The issue is whether or not I am listening. When I read the Bible, I pray, "Lord, what are you trying to tell me? Help me to listen to you!" Sometimes as I am reading the Bible a certain verse gives me very strong impression or touches my heart as a seed gets planted in the ground. I often experience that while I was in conversation with others, God was actually speaking to me through the verse. In the year of 2002, one day, the Word from Acts 1:8 gave me very strong impression on my heart and I felt as if it was ringing in my ear for three days. I didn't know what it meant at that time. Some days had passed. One day I went to work and my boss who was Clergy in the United Methodist Church told me out of blue, "Leo, are you interested in going into ministry?" When I heard it I instantly knew what the three-day ringing in ear was all about. I knew that God called me to ministry.

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15. How has your family of origin influenced your call?

My own family of origin did not influence my call. However, my mother-in-law has influenced my call to ministry. In the year of 1995, when I was dating my wife, then my mother-in-law-to-be invited me to go to Tres Dias, International 4th –day Christian renewal movement. She told me, “If you want to get married to my daughter, you have to believe in Jesus Christ!” I went to Tres Dias because I wanted to give good impression to my girlfriend’s mother and win her favor. It was Saturday night, July 7th, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. Since that moment, my mother-in-law never stopped praying for me. Because of my mother-in-law's dedicated and earnest prayer, I have become a clergy in The United Methodist Church.

16. Interview three people to tell you what they see in your ministry. What did you hear in these conversations?

I interviewed three people who are in different relationship with me. First person is one of church members. Second person is one of ministry colleagues. And the third person is one of my friends. The church member told me that he sees “God’s love” in my ministry. He said, “Pastor Leo, you demonstrate unwavering commitment and love for God in all aspects of you. Your message on the pulpit consistently has been about the love of God, from the Old Testament to New Testament, wherever the Bible passage that we may happen to land on that week.” The ministry colleague told me that he sees “compassion for people” in my ministry. He said, “Pastor Leo, you are a compassionate man, loving your flock as Christ loves the church. You have a genuine concern for the people under your care. You do not hesitate to pray for those who are in need of prayer and comfort from God.” My friend told me that he sees “servant leadership” in my ministry. He said, “You are a servant leader. You are humble. I have watched in amazement as you were called serve the Lord and followed a difficult path.”

Tae Youl “Leo” Park

Candidate for Ordination and Full Membership

THEOLOGY, CALL AND DOCTRINE
Written Responses to Paragraph 335**a) Theology****(1) Give examples of how the practice of ministry has affected your experience and understanding of:****(a) God**

The practice of ministry at current appointment has increased my knowledge of God who is love. I have heard stories after stories from people regarding their encounters with God. I have realized that God really cares about what is happening in the lives of people. A mother from South Korea visited her daughter living in New Jersey, just to see how her daughter was doing. The mother was a devout Buddhist. The daughter is a member of our church. She had been praying for her mother for a long time to accept Jesus Christ. Her mother, reluctantly, came to church because she could not go anywhere else by herself. She also, reluctantly, attended a cell meeting and I was there to share a message. She also, reluctantly, attended Alpha Course that was running at church during her visit. She heard the Gospel, accepted Jesus Christ, and now she is attending a church in South Korea. I still remember what the mother said to me with the biggest smile on her face, “Pastor Leo, I have accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior!” I witnessed that God had been orchestrating situations in the life of the mother. Through people’s life stories like that, I have experienced the living God working in the lives of people. Through people’s life stories like that, I obtained a deeper understanding of God of love. God is love (1 John 4:8). Yes! Because God is love, God loves people. Because God loves people, God wants to get involved in the lives of people, especially to give them a gift of eternal life. The first person of the Triune God is called “Father.” God’s name is Father because of God’s nature being love.

Father loves the Son. Saint Augustine says, “God is the Lover, Son is the Beloved, and the Holy Spirit is the Love that bonds two” (Augustine, *On the Trinity*).

(b) Humanity

Whenever I hear, from church members, news about a new-born baby, I visit the hospital to see them and to bless the new born baby. As I am holding the baby in my arms, I look at the baby and I get so amazed by the beauty. One beautiful image of God met another beautiful image of God, loved each other, got married, and became one. This, Bible says, is “a profound mystery” (Ephesians 5:32). A man and a woman out of their love for each other bore a baby. This baby is the beauty upon beauty of God. As the creation of a baby is an act of love of two people, God’s creation of human beings was an act of love of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. A family of love! As I am looking at the baby in my arms, I witness a wonderful work of God out of love. John Wesley wrote, “Accordingly, [humankind] at [their] creation was full of love” (Works, Vol. 2, p. 188). The meaning of being created in the image of God is beyond my comprehension. However, I get to witness the beautiful image of God in my practice of ministry whenever I hold a new-born baby in my arms.

(c) The need for divine grace

I believe that God creates only good things because God is good. The Bible says in Psalm 119:68, “You [God] are good and do good.” Because human beings were created in the very image and the likeness of good God, human nature was created good. However, Adam and Eve, as the representative of humanity, sinned. Genesis 3:1-7 tells us how that happened. The image that was God’s intention was disfigured by sin and human nature was marred by sin. The perfect and pure image of good God was distorted and sinful nature has become a universal human condition. Original sin is not only the first sin of human being, but also sinful nature being in

human origin. Only Jesus Christ can save human beings from sin because He is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one can come to the holy and righteous Father except through Him (John 14:6). There is no other name under heaven but that of Jesus Christ given to human beings by which they must be saved (Acts 4:12). Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, and in Jesus Christ alone! Such grace is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8). And the greatest grace of all God's grace is Jesus Christ! I shared the story of the devout Buddhist mother and how she was saved. By grace, God was orchestrating her situations. I have witnessed the word of Ephesians 2:8 being alive in the life of the devout Buddhist mother. I was able to recognize the Prevenient Grace of God leading her to the Justifying Grace of God. Behind her every reluctant action there was the grace of God.

(d) The Lordship of Jesus Christ

People have free will to choose whether or not to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Joshua said to the people of Israel, "Now if you are unwilling to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve,...for me and my household, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15, NRSV). The people of Israel answered, "we also will serve the LORD, for He is our God" (Joshua 24:18). When I say, "Jesus is my Lord," I am saying that I have chosen Jesus Christ to be the Lord in my life. I believe that Jesus Christ holds all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). He is the Lord of lords and King of kings. As it is written in Philippians 2:10-11, "at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." At my current appointment I hear many stories that are full of sadness, brokenness, or troubles. However, I talk to them hope. We can and should have hope because Jesus Christ is the Lord of our life. This world is full of

sadness and darkness, but still we have hope because Jesus is Lord. Ultimately, Jesus Christ has the last to say, not the world. Even in death, we have hope because there is hope in resurrection.

(e) The work of the Holy Spirit

I believe that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. Romans 5:5 says, “and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (NRSV). Through the practice of ministry, one thing that I have confirmed and re-confirmed regarding the Holy Spirit is that the primary work of the Holy Spirit is to testify the love of God demonstrated through Jesus Christ. At the current appointment, there is a nurturing and spiritual renewal program called “Graceland.” This program is similar to The Walk To Emmaus sponsored and offered by The Upper Room of The United Methodist Church. I have heard many stories from men of the church about their conversion experiences at the Graceland. I can relate to those stories because I had my own conversion at the Tres Dias in South Korean back in 1995. John Wesley had his conversion experience on May 24, 1738, at the meeting at Aldersgate Street in London. He reported, “I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death” (Journal of John Wesley). The Holy Spirit reveals to us the truth, “God proves His love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8, NRSV). When we experience the amazing love of God for us through Jesus Christ, we confess that “Jesus is my Lord and Savior.” This is the work of the Holy Spirit because “no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3, NRSV).

(f) The meaning and significance of the sacraments

There are two sacraments: the Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper. They are ordained by our Lord Jesus Christ and they are the means of grace as John Wesley said. In sacraments, God offers the gift of God's unfailing grace to us, for us to accept (By Water and the Spirit: A United Methodist Understanding of Baptism). As John Wesley said, the Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the outward signs of the inward grace of God. Through the Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper we can see and experience the grace and the love of God demonstrated through Jesus Christ. One thing I have learned through the practice of ministry at current appointment is that how important and precious the open communion is. At my current appointment, for the last 30 years the church had been practicing somewhat closed communion by closing the Lord's Table to children. The children had never been invited to the Lord's Table. When I administered the Lord's Table I asked the ushers to go and bring children from Sunday School. How important and significant not to turn away anyone who wishes to receive Communion! It is, after all, the Lord's Table! Through this experience, I have re-confirmed that there is place for everyone at the Lord's Table. We are one in Christ. One bread. One cup. One Lord. Holy Baptism is a proclamation of entering into the community of faith by the grace of God, a representation of the new birth through water and the Spirit in Jesus Christ. I love the practice and theology of infant baptism in The United Methodist Church. By practicing infant baptism, we are proclaiming that it is totally on the grace of God; it is not our works. We are proclaiming that the baptism is God's initiative; it is primarily God's action. I think that the infant baptism is the most significant example of the prevenient grace of God.

(g) Kingdom of God

The kingdom of God is here and yet to come. The kingdom of God is where God is the King and reigns over it. Jesus said, "nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For, in

fact, the kingdom of God is among you” (Luke 17:21, NRSV). Jesus also said in Matthew 12:28, “...the kingdom of God has come to you.” The invisible kingdom of God is inside of us. In regard to the kingdom of God, our life on earth is a journey to the visible kingdom of God by experiencing the invisible kingdom of God. John Wesley said in his sermon, “I want to know one thing, the way to heaven—how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way: for this very end he came from heaven” (Wesley, *Works*, vol. 1. p.105). Our life on earth can be described as a foretaste of the real kingdom of God in which we will live forever and ever. In my practice of ministry I foretaste the kingdom of God at worship services. The presence of God is there. We worship God who is the King of all.

(h) Resurrection and eternal life

I went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land last year. On day seven, we visited the Garden Tomb where Christians discovered to be believed where Jesus Christ was buried and resurrected. I went into the tomb. As I came out of the tomb a thought came into my heart. This is where Christianity started! Jesus Christ was indeed raised from the grave! Resurrection is real and the victory from sin and death is the starting of my faith! Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:13-14, “If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain.” I realized that we who believe in Jesus Christ begin with victory and will always be in victory. And with that victory from sin and death, I have been given the gift of eternal life. The assurance of the resurrection of Jesus Christ gives us the hope of our own resurrection into eternal life (Joyner Jr., *United Methodist Questions, United Methodist Answers*, p.16). In my practice of ministry, over a year, I have officiated at 11 funeral services. When I proclaim the promise of Jesus Christ from the pulpit, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though

they die,” I witness that my faith in Jesus Christ and my hope of resurrection actually not only encourage the family members who lost their loved one but also gives hope to see their loved one in eternity.

(2) How do you understand the following traditional evangelical doctrines: (a) repentance; (b) justification; (c) regeneration; (d) sanctification? What are the marks of the Christian life?

The Greek Word for “repentance” is “metanoia.” Metanoia means “changing one’s mind.” The true meaning of metanoia is well depicted in the Parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke, chapter 15. Luke 15:17 says, “When he came to his senses” (NIV). The younger son realized that he had sinned against his father and changed his mind to go back to his father. Repentance is for the forgiveness of sin. The fruit of repentance is to turn away from his sinful life and to go back to his father, and ask for forgiveness. Metanoia is not regretting what one has done wrong with emotions. Metanoia is realizing one’s sin and changing one’s mind to turn away from sin. God forgives our sins when we repent and believe in Jesus Christ. That is Justification. John Wesley believed that God’s prevenient grace is with us from birth, preparing us for the new life in Christ. John Wesley did not believe that humanity is totally “depraved,” but rather that God places a little spark of divine grace within us which enables us to recognize and accept God’s justifying grace. When we experience God’s justifying grace we come into new life in Christ. Justification is what God does for us through Jesus Christ by forgiving our sins. Regeneration is also known as Born Again or New Birth. Regeneration happens when we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come; the old has gone, the new is here!” Regeneration is what God does in us through the Holy Spirit when we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. After we have accepted God’s justifying grace, we are to move on in God’s sanctifying grace toward perfection. Justification is

the beginning or starting point of our journey of sanctification. Sanctification is to separate one from sin and separate one unto God. We cannot just sit on our laurels, so to speak, claim God's salvation, and then do nothing. We are to participate in what Wesley called "the means of grace" and to continue to grow in the Christian life. I believe that God's work in our lives is a process and is one of "grace upon grace" (John 1:16).

(3) How has the practice of ministry informed your understanding of the nature and mission of the Church? What are its primary challenges today?

What is the nature of the church? United Methodists understand the church is both visible and invisible (Joyner Jr., *United Methodist Questions, United Methodist Answers*, p.46). The visible church is composed of three elements. They are "preaching of the pure Word of God, due administration of the sacraments, and the presence of people of faith (The Articles of Religion, Article XIII). The invisible church is a grace-filled and grace-sharing community of faithful people. The church is the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:1-16) who is the head (Colossians 1:18), in which there are many gifts of ministry (1 Corinthians 12:4). The body of Christ is the grace-filled and the grace-sharing community of faithful people. This community of faithful people come together to worship God. The vision of my current church is "Cell Church." Cell Church is a movement to restore the nature of early church where the people of faith come together, share a meal together, and worship God. Cell Church is composed of many cell groups. The cell group is a small group of people that meet on a weekly basis not at a traditional church building, usually at someone's home. At cell group meeting, people eat a meal together, worship together, share their life together, and pray for each other. Because it is a non-traditional church environment, evangelism takes place much easier. Programs and ministries happen at cell groups that used to happen in the traditional church setting. Cell Church is a good model of what invisible church is.

What is the mission of the church? Based on the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in Matthew 28:19-20, the mission of The United Methodist Church is “to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” (BOD, Par. 121). We carry out this mission of the church “by proclaiming the good news of God’s grace and by exemplifying Jesus’ command to love God and neighbor, thus seeking the fulfillment of God’s reign and realm in the world” (BOD, Par 121). The primary challenge of the church, I believe, is decades-long membership and worship attendance decline. How can we revitalize local churches? The United Methodist Church at its 2016 General Conference reaffirmed its commitment to the Four Areas of Focus. One of four areas is to “create new places for new people and revitalize existing congregations.”

(4) The United Methodist Church holds that Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason are sources and norms for belief and practice, but that the Bible is primary among them. What is your understanding of this theological position of the Church, and how has your practice of ministry been affected by this understanding?

John Wesley taught us to use four sources as guidelines for theological reflection: Scripture, Tradition, Experience, and Reason. Wesley believed that the living core of the Christian faith was “revealed in Scripture, illumined by tradition, vivified in personal experience, and confirmed by reason.” The Bible was John Wesley’s constant and ultimate source of knowledge and authority. Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, is the primary and foundational source of our religious knowledge. We, United Methodists, believe that the Holy Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation (The Articles of Religion of The United Methodist Church, Article V). We also believe that the Scripture is to be received through the Holy Spirit as the true rule and guide for faith and practice (The Confession of Faith of the Evangelical United Brethren Church, Article IV). Thus, the Bible serves both as a source of our faith and as the basic criterion by which the truth and fidelity of any interpretation of faith are measured.

Christian tradition includes the writings of the early church fathers, the ecumenical creeds, and the Book of Common Prayer. John Wesley said, “I exceedingly reverence them [early church fathers] as well as their writings. I reverence their writings, because they describe true, genuine Christianity, and direct us to the strongest evidence of the Christian doctrine” (Burtner & Chiles, *John Wesley’s Theology*, p.34-35). Christian tradition is the history of God’s interaction with God’s people. Over the centuries around the globe, our faith fathers and mothers left us Christian traditions as a richly varied source for theological reflection and construction. In these persons and their writings, we encounter the living presence of Jesus Christ.

For John Wesley, his distinctive doctrine of religious experience was used as a further testing ground for religious ideas. It consists of two elements: a direct inner experience of God’s love, and an appeal to the community of believers for the confirmation of conduct and doctrine (Burtner & Chiles, *John Wesley’s Theology*, p.17). Christian experience gives us new eyes to see the living truth in Scripture. It confirms the biblical message for our present. John Wesley taught us to examine both individual and corporate experience for confirmation of the realities of God’s grace attested in Scripture. Personal experience helps our theological reflection through the personal appropriation of God’s forgiving and empowering grace. Corporate experience helps our theological reflection through the experience of the church and by the common experiences of all humanity.

John Wesley said, “It is by reason that God enables us in some measure to comprehend his method of dealing with the children of men; the nature of his various dispensations, of the old and new covenant, of the law and the gospel” (Burtner & Chiles, *John Wesley’s Theology*, p.28). The reason is faith seeking to understand. The United Methodist Church teaches that by reason we read and interpret Scripture; by reason we determine whether our Christian witness is clear;

by reason we ask questions of faith and seek to understand God's action and will (BOD 2012, p.86). In the Bible Study that I am leading I find these four sources—Scripture, Tradition, Experience, Reason—work together. Each source makes a distinctive contribution and enriches our theological reflection.

(5) How has the practice of ministry enriched your understanding of the meaning and significance of the sacraments?

I remember one little girl, 4 years old. After receiving a piece of bread and a small individual plastic cup with grape juice in it, she did not know what to do with it. She kept looking at the piece of bread in one hand, and looking at the small cup of grape juice in the other hand, and lifting her head up and looking at me. I told her to eat the bread and drink the cup. She bit a little of the small piece of bread and sipped a little of a small cup of grape juice and looked at me and looked at people around with a smile on her face. She kept doing that until she finished eating the small piece of bread and drinking a small cup of grape juice. I cannot forget a wonder and a smile on her face. I have never witnessed a person who took Communion with such delightfulness. That 4-year-old girl brought joy to the entire congregation. She was invited to the Lord's Table and experienced the grace and the love of God. I believe that she will never forget her first Communion experience. The United Methodist Church has been practicing Open Communion, inviting anyone who responds to the invitation. How important and significant not to turn away anyone who wishes to receive Communion! It is, after all, the Lord's Table!

b) Vocation

(1) How has the experience of ministry shaped your understanding of your vocation as an ordained elder?

A call to an ordained ministry is a life-time commitment not only to live out the whole gospel but also to the ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service. I find myself how important it is to set examples for the people of the church to follow by making a complete

dedication to the highest ideals of the Christian life. As sheep follows a shepherd, the congregation follows the pastor. An authority to preach and teach the Word of God is so sacred and precious. People do experience the grace of God by listening to the Word of God preached from the pulpit. That I, as an ordained elder, am to be used by God to be the channel of God's grace is tremendous privilege. When administering the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, people experience "God is with us" in every element. In sacraments, I feel God is everywhere! An ordained elder is charged to order the life of the church. To order the life of the church means that I, as an ordained elder in The United Methodist Church, establish and maintain the ministries and administration in an orderly fashion according to the polity of the *Book of Discipline* and the theology and the doctrine of The United Methodist Church, and the tradition of the Wesleyan heritage. An ordained elder is called by God to a lifetime of servant leadership. In the ministry of Service, an ordained elder is to nurture, equip, and help the congregation in its servant ministry of compassion and justice. I, as a servant leader, am called to exemplify the servanthood to the congregation and lead them into the servanthood lifestyle.

c) The Practice of Ministry

(1) How has the practice of ministry affected your understanding of the expectations and obligations of the itinerant system? Do you offer yourself without reserve to be appointed and to serve as the appointive authority may determine?

Through the clergy appointment system which is referred to as the "Itinerant System," connectionalism comes to life. In The United Methodist Church pastors are connected through the itinerant system. The itinerant system "fosters a network of friendship and collegiality that spans generations" (Frank, Polity, *Practice, and the Mission of The United Methodist Church*, p.20). During the appointment season every year, I am very much interested in finding out who goes where, who is retiring, and who is coming new. I feel connected with them. They are not only my colleagues but also my brothers and sisters in Christ in the family called The United

Methodist Church. The current appointment is my fourth appointment. I began my ministry in 2007 as a part-time local pastor. Since then I have never asked a single question regarding my appointment when I receive a phone call from District Superintendent. I have fully committed myself to the itinerant system when I said “Yes” to the calling in The United Methodist Church. And I have fully committed to offer myself without reserve to be appointed and to serve as the appointive authority may determine. I trust in God working through the Bishop and the Cabinet in making appointments.

(2) Describe and evaluate your personal gifts for ministry and how they have resulted in fruitful ministry. What would be your areas of strength and areas in which you need to be strengthened in order to be more fruitful in ministry?

I have gifts in prayer and evangelism. I love to pray and I love to teach people on prayer. I get up at 3:30 a.m. every day, on Sundays at 4:30 a.m., and pray and meditate scripture for 3 hours. When God answers my prayer, especially prayer for others, the joy is overwhelming. I am passionate about evangelism through prayer. I took several groups of people to missions. At mission field, I set up Prayer Station with a team and pray for people. One time we prayed for about 500 people. Another time we prayed for about 2,000 people. This summer, I went to Washington D.C. with my church group. On a busy street corner, I remember the moment that we prayed for over 50 middle school students who came for the trip. After praying for their temporal needs, we offer them Jesus Christ to meet their eternal needs. When people accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, the joy is so great that there is no word for it.

(3) For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness to the Christian gospel and in consideration of your influence as an ordained minister, are you willing to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life; and to this end will you agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to physical health, intentional intellectual development, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, integrity in all personal relationships, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge and love of God?

My short answer is “Yes!” Jesus Christ set examples for His disciples and said to them, “I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done for you” (John 13:15, NRSV). As an ordained minister for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world, I commit myself to make disciples of Jesus Christ and set examples for them by making a complete dedication to the highest ideals of the Christian life. What I say and how I live my daily life is very important because I, as an ordained elder of The United Methodist Church, represent Jesus Christ and the Church. John Wesley said, “Indeed nothing can be more sure, than that true Christianity cannot exist without both the inward experience and outward practice of justice, mercy and truth; and this alone is genuine morality” (Burtner & Chiles, *John Wesley’s Theology*, p.228). My personal morality and social morality have to be pure and reflect the fear of God and the same time the love of God.

(4) Provide evidence of your willingness to relate yourself in ministry to all persons without regard to race, color, ethnicity, national origin, social status, gender, sexual orientation, age, economic condition, or disability.

Inclusiveness means the participation of all persons in the life of the Church. We, as United Methodist Church, believe that the worship services of all local church must be open to all people. Inclusiveness has to further extend to people with disabilities. Church has to be “church for people of all abilities” (New World Outlook, May/June 2014). I believe that the true inclusiveness will happen in a local church where “the setting of all church activities” in church facilities is accessible to people with any disabilities. At my previous appointment, because the church was a Korean congregation every worship service and ministry was done in the Korean language. However, one of our church members was not a Korean; he was Caucasian. So the church purchased translation equipment in order to provide a simultaneous interpretation just for him during the Sunday worship services. That way, he could participate along with everyone else.

Furthermore, the church invited him to sing in a choir, take a leadership position, and even gave him the highest lay honor, Lay Elder. The church building was more than 200 years old. So the steps were so steep and there was no elevator or any equipment for a disabled person. One of church members was in a wheelchair. What we did for him was that 4 men carried him in a wheelchair to the Sanctuary for the service and carried him down to the Fellowship Hall for the fellowship every Sunday. An inclusive church recognizes and honors every individual as an image bearer of God and a child of God of sacred worth; therefore, an inclusive church accepts every individual as they are.

(5) Will you regard all pastoral conversations of a confessional nature as a trust between the person concerned and God?

“Yes, I will!” One of the responsibilities as an ordained elder in The United Methodist Church is to provide pastoral care and counsel (BOD 2012, p.267). This responsibility is based on a sacred trust. In The United Methodist Church, ordination and membership in an annual conference is a sacred trust, so when the sacred trust is violated the membership of his or her ministerial office shall be subject to review (BOD 2012, p.305-306). However, there is one exception. As an ordained elder, I should keep confidentiality when providing pastoral counsel as long as it is not a case that is mandatory reporting by the court of the law such as child abuse.

(6) Provide evidence of experience in peace and justice ministries

At my current appointment, we had a campaign called “Baby Bottle Boomerang (BBB).” BBB was to partner with Lighthouse and to support their ministry. Lighthouse defends unborn babies and comes alongside mothers and fathers to support them through individual as well as couple counseling and Bible Study, provides material support for those who have chosen life for their child and most importantly, prayerfully shares the gospel that they may make the ultimate life choice of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. At our church, we provided baby bottles

wrapped with a folded sheet of paper with information about Lighthouse, 2 testimonies of babies with their pictures that have been birthed through the ministry of the Lighthouse and on the backside, a Bible Study outline on Sanctity of Life. We asked congregation members to take baby bottles as many as they want, filled with coins, cash or check and then returned to church on Sundays. The name “Baby Bottle Boomerang” is because the bottle is returned to church. All bottles were then gathered and taken to Lighthouse to support their ministry.

In addition to the questions from the book of Discipline, answer the following:

1. Explain the threefold aspects of Wesleyan grace and how have you encountered these in your own ministry/life

The threefold aspects of Wesleyan grace are prevenient grace, justifying grace, and sanctifying grace. John Wesley said salvation was like a house. “Our main doctrines, which include all the rest, are three: that of repentance, of faith, and of holiness. The first of these we account, as it were, the porch of religion; the next, the door, the third is religion itself” (Wesley, *Works*, vol.9, p.227). The first part of the journey to salvation is repentance, what Wesley calls “the porch” (Joyner Jr., *United Methodist Questions, United Methodist Answers*, p.37). It is by God’s grace we realized that we are a sinner and need forgiveness from God. Such grace is called prevenient grace. Only by prevenient grace we become aware of our desperate need to repent of our sin. John Wesley believed that God’s prevenient grace is with us from birth, preparing us for new life in Christ. Wesley did not believe that humanity is totally “depraved,” but rather that God places a little spark of divine grace within us which enables us to recognize and accept God’s justifying grace. The next part of the journey toward salvation is faith, which Wesley calls “the door.” It is by grace, through faith, we are saved (Ephesians 2:8). God forgives our sin when we believe in Jesus Christ. Justification is what God does for us through Jesus Christ. When we experience God’s justifying grace we come into new life in Christ. The third part of

John Wesley's image of the house is holy living; the house itself is holy living (Joyner Jr., p.38). Wesley believed that after we have accepted God's grace, we are to move on into God's sanctifying grace toward perfection. Justification is the beginning or starting point of sanctification. Wesley believed that we are not able to live a holy living; God's grace makes it possible for us to be sanctified. In my life, God's prevenient grace is so evident. I was not a believer before I met my wife. My mother-in-law-to-be brought me to Jesus Christ. I accepted Jesus Christ when I was 23 years old. Now, I have become a clergy person in The United Methodist Church. I cannot deny God's grace in my life. At my church, as I have been listening to people's salvation stories, I have witnessed God's prevenient grace and justifying grace. I have recognized how God, by His grace, had orchestrated situations.

2. Share an instance when you found yourself in ministry with someone whose theology was radically different from you own.

At my current appointment, I am working with 5 pastors who are from different denominational backgrounds. One of them is an ordained Presbyterian clergy. He is somewhat strong Calvinist who believes in TULIP theology-Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Perseverance of the Saints. I believe God's prevenient grace. My life is full of God's prevenient grace. God's prevenient grace is not just theology; it is fact in my life and the fact is true! I do not believe that humanity is totally "depraved," but rather that God places a little spark of divine grace within us which enables us to recognize and accept God's justifying grace. I believe that God's grace is like rain falling down from the sky. Rain falls down on everyone. However, if you are under an umbrella you will not get rain drops on you. If you want to get rain drops on you, you have to fold the umbrella and stand in the rain. Likewise, if you want to get grace drops on you, you have to fold the sin and stand in the grace. I believe that God's grace requires our response.

3. Describe how your image of God has changed over your journey. What has informed this?

John Wesley, in his sermon “The New Birth,” used three phrases to mark the dimensions of being created in the image of God: natural image, Political image, and moral image (Wesley, *Works*, vol.2, p.188). Natural image of God means that we are spiritual beings with freedom of will; Political image of God means that we are governors of the created world and engaged in relationships with others; Moral image of God means that we are intended for holiness and righteousness (Joyner Jr., *United Methodist Questions, United Methodist Answers*, p.28). I have been interested in the moral image of God and focused on the holiness and righteousness in my spiritual journey. I still am, but lately my focus has been shifted to the natural image of God. I am very interested in the freedom of will. I have realized that God really wants me to choose Him, by my freedom of will, 100%. My relationship with God and my intimacy with Jesus Christ have become more important than any other areas in my life. I think that everything has to begin from the right relationship with God. I think that whatever I do in my ministry has to be rooted and grounded in my personal intimacy with Jesus Christ. I think that the biggest and the strongest obstacle to the grace and love of God is the will of I. In any given situation, when I choose God 100% by my freedom of will, I have realized that I have gone closer to the perfect love of God than before. My longing for more love of God has been evident in my sermons. For the last three years, I have been preaching on one subject, “The Love of God.”

Tae Youl “Leo” Park

Candidate for Ordination and Full Membership

POLITY**1. Explain the role of deacons, elders, and local pastors in the UMC and how they are each uniquely called and function in the church.**

Deacons are persons called by God, authorized by the Church, and ordained by a bishop to a lifetime ministry of Word, Service, Compassion, and Justice, to both the community and the congregation in a ministry that connects the two (Par. 329.1). Deacons are the persons set apart especially to care for the physical needs of people in the world. Deacon’s distinctive ministry is to nurture, equip and help the congregation in its servant ministry of compassion and justice.

Elders are ordained to a lifetime ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service. By the authority given in their ordination, they are authorized to preach and teach the Word of God, to provide pastoral care and counsel, to administer the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion, and to order the life of the Church for service in mission and ministry (Par. 332). Elder is a spiritual leader and at the same time an administrative officer in a church. As a spiritual leader, Elder leads the congregation in its mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ. As an administrative officer, Elder administers all the organizational concerns and all the temporal affairs of the church. Licensed Local Pastors are persons not ordained as elders but approved by the district committee on ordained ministry, licensed by the bishop, and appointed to preach and conduct divine worship and perform the duties of a pastor (Par. 315). The duties include the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion as well as, the service of marriage (where state laws allow), burial, confirmation, and membership reception, within and while appointed to a particular charge or extension ministry defined as “people within or related to the community or ministry setting being served” (Par. 316.1).

2. What is the process for setting a pastor's salary? Who can change it, and when can it be changed?

The annual conference may choose to adopt a conference wide plan for compensation of pastors (Par. 605.13). Our annual conference adopted the Minimum Equitable Salaries for clergy in various categories that Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) can use for setting the salaries of the pastors appointed. Each year the SPRC sets salary and benefit package for a pastor. SPRC then recommends, after consultation with the finance committee for budget, the salary and the benefit package to the church council (Par. 258.2.g.16). And then the church council recommends the salary and the benefit package to the church/charge conference (Par. 252.4.d). The church/charge conference shall in consultation with the district superintendent set the salary and the benefit package of the pastor (Par. 247.13). And then finally, the recommendation will be voted to approve or amend.

3. The Education committee wants to update the curriculum being taught in the Christian Education program. What specific guidance does the Book of Discipline give you in dealing with this issue?

A superintendent of the church school shall be responsible for helping to organize and supervise the total program of the church school (Par. 255). Because one of the responsibilities and duties of a pastor in relation to the Christian education is to give oversight to the educational program of the church (Par. 340.2.c.b), the superintendent of the church school should work closely with the pastor. Another responsibility and duty of a pastor in the area of Christian education is to encourage the church to use United Methodist literature and media (Par. 340.2.c.b). The pastor should work closely with the Conference Board of Discipleship. The Book of Discipline gives guidance to use the curriculum resources that are approved by the General Board of Discipleship (Par. 1123). The curriculum resources that have been approved by the General Board of Discipleship meet the requirements that the curriculum resources shall be

based on the Bible, shall reflect the universal gospel of the living Christ, and shall be in agreement with United Methodist doctrine (Par. 1122).

4. You have discovered a need in the community for a soup kitchen, and wish to recommend that this be a priority for the congregation, using the facilities of the church. What parties and processes need to be involved?

The church council shall provide for planning and implementing a program of nurture, outreach, witness, and resources in the local church (Par. 252.1). A pastor should bring the vision of serving the community through a soup kitchen to the church council meeting. This is considered as a program or ministry of outreach to local community. The item can be discussed at a regular church council meeting or the chairperson or the pastor may call a special meeting just for this item (Par. 252.3.a). When the church council agrees with the vision and approves to plan and implement the soup kitchen program, then the church council shall ask the board of trustees to study the adequacy of the building, any insurance related matters, or any legal matters in relation to the use of the building for the soup kitchen program since the board of trustees shall have the supervision, oversight, and care of all property and equipment of the church (Par. 2533.1). If the soup kitchen will be run by outside group then the board of trustees should develop and write the policy in consultation with the district board of building and location and presents it to the church council for approval. The charge conference in the annual meeting shall receive report, review and evaluate the ministry of the soup kitchen (Par. 247.3).

5. A constituent of your church comes to speak with you about their call to ministry. Describe the basic steps that are involved in seeking ordination.

When a person from my church comes to me and talks about the call the ministry, I, as pastor, will set aside a time to meet with the person for discernment and the process of candidacy for ordained ministry in The United Methodist Church. The candidate shall be a professing member in good standing of the church for a minimum of one (1) year (Par. 310.1) and have

been graduated from an accredited high school or received a certificate of equivalency (Par.310.1.e). The candidate is encouraged to read the book, “The Christian as Minister” (Par. 310). To formally apply, the candidate shall write a statement of call, outlining the call to ministry, to the district superintendent requesting admission to the candidacy process and the assignment of a candidacy mentor (Par. 310.1.b). After the registration by the district superintendent with GBHEM, mentor and candidate will study the resources adopted by the conference Board of Ordained Ministry (Par. 310.1.c). The candidate will consult with the pastor to request a meeting with the staff parish relations committee to consider the statement of call and to be interviewed in light of Wesley’s historic questions (Par. 310.1.d). After approval of the staff parish relations committee, the candidate shall meet with the charge/church conference to be recommended to the district committee on ordained ministry (Par. 310.1.e). After approval of the charge/church conference, the candidate will meet with the district committee on ordained ministry (Par. 310.2.a). The candidate will complete and release required psychological reports, criminal background and credit checks (Par. 310.2.b). The candidate provides other information as the district committee may require for determination (Par. 310.2.c). The district committee on ordained ministry will vote for certification (Par. 310.2.e). After approval of the district committee on ordained ministry, the candidate becomes a certified candidate for ordained ministry in The United Methodist Church.

6. Describe the general structures of the Annual Conference and how each body functions.

The purpose of the annual conference is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by equipping its local churches for ministry and by providing a connection for ministry beyond the local church; all for the glory of God (Par. 601). The annual conference is responsible for structuring its ministries and administrative procedures in order to

accomplish its purpose (Par. 610). In doing so it shall provide for the connectional relationship of the local church, district, and conference with the general agencies (Par. 610). In each annual conference there shall be a conference council on finance and administration (Par. 611). The purpose of the conference council on finance and administrative shall be to develop, maintain, and administer a comprehensive and coordinated plan of fiscal and administrative policies, procedures, and management services for the annual conference (Par. 612.1). The annual conference shall organize a board of church and society (Par. 629.1). The conference board of church and society shall serve to connect the General Board of Church and Society and the district and local churches in relating the gospel of Jesus Christ to the members of the Church and to the persons and structures of the communities, nation, and world in which they live (Par. 629.4). The annual conference shall organize a board of discipleship. The conference board of discipleship is to maintain the connectional relationship between the General Board of Discipleship and the conference, district, and local church, and to provide for discipleship functions related to the objectives and scope of work of the General Board of Discipleship (Par. 630). The annual conference shall organize a conference board of laity. It shall provide for the ministry of the laity related to the objectives of the General Board of Discipleship such as fostering an awareness of the role of the laity (Par. 631.1). The annual conference shall organize a board of global ministries. One of the responsibilities is to designate the necessary committee, sections, or commissions, and individual secretaries, coordinators, or other leaders for global ministries responsibilities at the annual conference level (Par. 633.4.b). The annual conference shall organize a board of higher education and campus ministry (Par. 634.1).

7. Describe the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of the United Methodist Church.

In The United Methodist Church, General Conference is the legislative branch; Judicial Council is the judicial branch; and Council of Bishops is the executive branch. The General Conference shall have full legislative power over all matters distinctively connectional (Par. 16) which means the General Conference is the only body that speaks officially for The United Methodist Church. The General Conference shall be composed of not less than 600 nor more than 1,000 delegates, one half of whom shall be clergy and one half lay members, to be elected by the annual conference (Par. 13.1). The General Conference shall have authority to define and fix the conditions, privileges, and duties of Church membership; to define and fix the powers and duties of clergy persons, conferences, and the episcopacy (Par. 16). The General Conference also shall have authority to provide for the organization, promotion, and administration of the work of the Church outside of the United States; to provide and revise the hymnal and ritual of the Church; to determine and provide for raising and distributing funds necessary to carry on the work of the Church (Par. 16). There shall be a Judicial Council (Par. 55). The Judicial Council functions as the denomination's supreme court. The Judicial Council shall have authority to determine the constitutionality of any act of the General Conference; to hear and determine any appeal from a bishop's decision on a question of law; to pass upon decisions of law made by bishops in annual conferences; and to hear and determine the legality of any action taken therein by any General Conference board or jurisdictional or central conference board or body (Par. 56). All decisions of the Judicial Council shall be final (Par. 57). There shall be a Council of Bishops composed of all the bishops of The United Methodist Church. The council shall meet at least once a year and plan for the general oversight and promotion of the temporal and spiritual interests of the entire Church and for carrying into effect the rules, regulations, and

responsibilities prescribed and enjoined by the General Conference and in accord with the provisions set forth in this Plan of Union (Par. 47)

8. What is your understanding of the theology behind Shared Ministries giving (apportionments)?

Through Shared Ministries giving, we, as a part of the Church, are contributing to the mission of the Church. Acts 2:45 says, “They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need” (NIV). The spirit of sharing burden together was the one of DNAs of early church in Christianity. Through Shared Ministries giving, we, each local church, get connected together. Romans 12:4-5 says, “For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others” (NIV). Shared Ministries is grounded in connectionalism. Shared Ministries of the local church is giving toward mission and ministry of the Church and the Annual Conference. Through Shared Ministries giving, we, as a whole, do more together and make bigger impacts. Ecclesiastes 4:12 says, “Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken” (NIV). Through our Shared Ministries giving, we can do more mission and ministry together than we can do along. We are part of the larger church.

9. You have an idea for a unique form of ministry. How does the Book of Discipline guide us in seeking affirmation for ministries that are beyond the local church? What is the role of extension ministry in the life of the Church?

Elders in effective relationship may be appointed to serve in ministry settings beyond the local United Methodist church in the witness and service of Christ’s love and justice. Persons in these appointments remain within the itineracy and shall be accountable to the annual conference. They shall be given the same moral and spiritual support by it as are persons in appointments to pastoral charges. Their effectiveness shall be evaluated in the context of the specific setting in

which their ministry is performed (Par. 343). Elders, associate members, and those licensed for pastoral ministry may be appointed within the connectional structures of United Methodism such as the annual conference, a general agency, a United Methodist institution or other ministry, or an ecumenical agency (Par. 344.1). They still are accountable to their ordination vows to Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service (Par. 344.1.d).

10. In what ways does your upbringing, your cultural context, your personal experience shape your understanding of our polity?

My faith journey began at Manna United Methodist church in South Korea. My spiritual birth happened there and I got married to my wife there. Since I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, my entire journey of faith has been related to the Methodist Church. My wife and I came to the United States and we went to Frances Childs United Methodist church in Collingswood, NJ. I have worked for the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church as a staff for 14 years. For 14 years at the Conference office, I have worked with three different bishops, many district superintendents, and numerous clergy persons in various settings. I have been pastoring a local United Methodist congregation for 9 years. Now, I am preparing myself to be an ordained elder in The United Methodist Church. When I travel to different towns, different States, or different countries, whenever I see the Cross and Flame logo my heart gets always warmed. Even though I am in a totally strange place, I feel like I am home whenever I see a United Methodist church. I think that one word unique and basic to United Methodism, and which I am really fond of, is “connectionalism.” We are connected together as one wherever we are in the world. It is like family members living in different places. I think that one reason that the United Methodist Church can do great things in the world and make a difference is because of its emphasis on connectionalism as a denomination.

Tae Youl “Leo” Park

Candidate for Ordination and Full Membership

BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

I was born in July 9, 1971 and was raised in Soul, South Korea. I met my beloved wife, Sung Hey Choi, in 1995 and got married in July 1996. God has blessed us with three beautiful children. Kenneth is 12 years old, Tiffany is 11 years old and Christy is 9 years old.

My wife and I came to the United States in September 1996 to study. I started my undergraduate study at Drexel University in Pennsylvania but later transferred to Camden County College, New Jersey. In 2001 I completed my associate’s degree in Business Administration. After graduating from Camden County College, I sought for an employment opportunity because I, as the head of household, had to support my family financially. I was hired at the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference office and have been working for the ministry of the Conference for 14 years. I completed my bachelor’s degree in March 2011 and graduated from Thomas Edison State College with a major in Business Administration in June 2011.

As a lay person I had served on various committees and participated in many different ministries at a local church. On a Conference level, I had served as a member of the Board of Directors of Eirene Immigration Center which was to reach out to the immigrant community from a Christian perspective dedicating to provide multiple services to the immigrant community. I also had served the United Methodist Men as a Conference Vice President from 2003 to 2007.

In the year of 2002, I sensed God’s call into ministry. I struggled with the call asking many questions because there was something I wanted to do. I had my own dream but for me to follow the call I had to give up my dream to be an entrepreneur. I actually ran away from the call for three years. However, through people around me God constantly reminded me of the calling. When I finally came to realize and recognize that Holy God really called me to be a priest to carry out God’s purposes in the lives of people, human reasoning got reaped out of me. The “No” answer suddenly disappeared and I suddenly felt so honored and humbled because I knew how unqualified I was for such calling. December 2005, I said “Yes” to God and met my District Superintendent to express my desire to go into ministry.

Since 2007, I have been pastoring a local congregation as a part time Licensed Local Pastor while I have been working for the Conference office full time. With the grace of God, I have started the Master of Divinity study as a full time student at the United Theological Seminary in Ohio in September 2011 to fulfill my educational requirement to become an Ordained Elder in the United Methodist Church. In the year of 2013, the Gateway North District Committee of Ordained Ministry has recommended me to the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry as a candidate for commissioning for the year 2015. I finished the M.Div. in May 2015 and got commissioned. It is God’s grace that I have come to this season in my ministry.

I currently serve, as associate pastor, the congregation of Bethany United Methodist Church in Wayne, NJ. I am in my second year at this appointment. Bethany UMC is a largest Korean speaking congregation, about 2,000 people including children and youths.

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CHRONOLOGICAL RESUME OF ACTIVITIES

Name: Tae Youl “Leo” Park

Name of Spouse: Sung Hye Choi

Names and Ages of Children: Kenneth J. Park (12), Tiffany Y. Park (10) and Christy Y. Park (9)

Church Currently Serving: Bethany United Methodist Church, Wayne, NJ

July 2015-Present	Associate Pastor, Bethany United Methodist Church, Wayne, NJ
May 2015	United Theological Seminary, Master of Divinity, Dayton, OH
June 2011-May 2015	Pastor, Elim United Methodist Church, Rahway, NJ
February 2003-May 2015	Information Resources Assistant, Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, Ocean, NJ
June 2011	Thomas Edison State College, Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Trenton, NJ
March-May 2011	Interim Pastor, Korean Union United Methodist Church, Rahway, NJ
January-November 2010	Interim Pastor, Old Orchards United Methodist Church, Cherry Hill, NJ
November 2008	New Church Planter Leadership Institute, Northeast and Southeast Jurisdictions of The United Methodist Church, Glen Allen, VA
October 2008-2010	Secretary, Steering Committee of The Jersey Celebration of Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Ocean Grove, NJ
July 2007- March 2009	Pastor, Siloam Korean United Methodist Church, Hamilton Square, NJ
June 2007	Local Pastor’s License, Licensing School of Northeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church, Eastern PA

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January 2007- January 2010 Circuit Rider Coordinator, Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church

January-June 2007 Interim Treasurer, Board of Directors of Eirene Immigration Center, Camden, NJ

May 2004 Certified Lay Speaker, Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church

July 2003 Basic Lay Speaker, Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church

May 2003- June 2007 Vice President, United Methodist Men of Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church

July 2002 Northeastern Jurisdictional School of Evangelism, Levanon Valley College, Annville, PA

October 2001- February 2003 Program Team Assistant, Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, Ocean, NJ

August 2001 Certified Internet Web Master, Camden County College, Blackwood, NJ

June 2001 Camden County College, Associate of Business Administration, Blackwood, NJ

March 2001 Certificate of Small Business, Camden County College, Blackwood, NJ

September 1996- June 1997 Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA

February 1991 Cham Shil High School, South Korea

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NOTES

I Don't Want to Miss What Really Matters ~ Luke 10:38-42

Last week we looked at the story of Eutychus who fell asleep and then fell out the window he was perched on. We explored some of reasons people in churches today may spiritually fall out of church windows and what we are capable of doing for Jesus when the church wakes up to the reality of the pain and suffering happening in our communities and beyond.

Today we are going to add another piece to the conversation: In this life, which is full of ups and downs, twists and turns we are going to try to answer the question: what really matters? I want you to imagine with me that you are hosting a big family event for a very special occasion ~ maybe Christmas or Easter. You want everything to be just perfect. Now add that the guest of honor to your home will be Jesus himself.

That is the situation Martha is in in today's Gospel reading. What do we know about these relationships? Martha, Mary and Lazarus lived together in what we are told was Martha's home. She was most likely the older of the sisters and perhaps widowed and had inherited the home they lived in together. We know that they are friends of Jesus: In John Chapter 11, Jesus wept before raising Lazarus from the dead and in John Chapter 12 John tells us that Jesus visited their home before he entered Jerusalem for what would be his journey to the cross. Martha's home is located about a mile and a half from Jerusalem, which is about a half-hour walk, so it's a convenient place for Jesus to stop for the hospitality of his friends on his way to feast days. Today is one of those visits and Martha wants everything perfect.

In her quest for perfection, Martha is running between the dining room and kitchen busy, busy, busy; she's laid out the best linens and tableware, is preparing the

finest foods and as her pots begin to boil, so does she. She glances into the living room and sees her sister sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening intently, like nothing else in the world is happening. Now can anyone relate to that? You are working hard at home or work you glance to see another person that. . .well. . .how can we put it? Not pulling their share of the workload. Martha's beginning to boil over; she starts slamming closet drawers and doors but that doesn't seem to get anyone's attention. . . . so she goes to Jesus and says "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

Jesus doesn't condemn Martha. Instead, Jesus says "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed." I can picture Jesus 'gentle smile and words so full of tender love.

You are worried about many things. Perhaps Jesus is telling Martha that worry is a distraction, a burden we don't have to carry. Worry saps the energy out of us and its health consequences are very well documented. I suspect some of us would be worrying just like Martha was. In a study done last year¹, participants were asked to write down those things that caused them to worry over an extended period of time. Then they were asked to identify which of the events they listed did not actually happen. Interestingly, it turns out that 85 percent of what study participants worried about never happened, and with the 15 percent that did happen, 79 percent of participants discovered either they could handle the difficulty better than expected, or the difficulty taught them a lesson worth learning. This means that 97 percent of what one worries

¹ <http://donjosephgoewey.com/eighty-five-percent-of-worries-never-happen/>

over doesn't happen or doesn't have the effect anticipated. Seems like a whole lot of wasted worry.

On the heels of pointing out Martha's worry, Jesus says Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.

I have a story I want to share with you from a book I have read and reread: "Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World"² written by Joanna Weaver (*illustration paraphrased*). It's about a man who one day meets God in a lovely valley. They exchange the social niceties and then the man asks God if there was anything he could do for God. God gave him a task: I have a wagon with three stones in it and I need someone to pull it up the hill for me. God asked, "Are you willing?" The man looked at the wagon and the rocks and decided he could do what God asked. God gave him very specific instructions drawing the map in the dust and the man sets out. He found the work fairly easy and was filled with joy that he was working for the Lord. After walking for a while, he entered a small village and a man stopped him, inquiring about what he was doing and where he was going. The man explained the job God has given him and the villager exclaimed "I have this rock I need to get up to the top of the mountain and I was just praying this morning for help. Would you help me?" The man replied that he would and added the rock to his wagon. Well as he continued to the destination God had given him, the work of pulling the wagon was a little harder and the wagon felt a little heavier. But the man kept a song of praise on his lips feeling great joy that not only was he helping God but a brother too!

² Weaver, Joanna, *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World*, Waterford Press, Colorado: Colorado Springs, 2022, pages 48-9.

Soon he entered another small village. He had a friend who lived there and his friend offered him a cold drink. As they visited, this friend too had a bag of pebbles that needed to be taken to the top of the mountain. Of course the man stepped right up and added the pebbles to the wagon. He did that at various stops along the route and continued to add more and more to the wagon. Now the work was really hard, he wasn't singing anymore and, in fact, he was feeling exhausted. But still he thought in the back of his mind God will be so pleased with my efforts to be so helpful. As he continued to trudge up the mountain, with more and more people adding more and more stuff to his wagon he finally cried out "God, this is just too hard for me!" As he cried out God came to his side saying "looks like you are having a hard time." The man sobs "You have given me a job that's too hard. I'm not up to it."

God walks over to the wagon and picks up items that have been added as the man traveled village to village. With each item God asks "what is this" and the man explains how he came to have the stuff. God unloaded the wagon telling the man "If you are content with allowing others to take their own burdens, I will help you with your task. I know you were trying to help but when you are weighted down with all these cares, you cannot do what I ask."

That was probably a light bulb moment for the helper and should be for us. Let's go back to the living room scene. Jesus didn't condemn Martha and neither should we. Martha was fulfilling her role dictated to her as a woman. Women were encouraged to show their love for God through good works. But what does Jesus say? Mary chose the better. And that's the tension for us. So many times it is not a matter of choosing between good and bad; it's a matter of choosing between good and better. We fill our

plates with such good intentions to the point we become overextended: Does this sound familiar? OK no one has volunteered to do it, it needs to be done, and somebody has to do it. What's one more thing? But this is what I have come to learn: when my plate becomes so full that I want to scream at Jesus no one will help me Lord, then it's time to discern who put this stuff on my plate: me in my humanity or Jesus. I think if we are honest Jesus doesn't want half the stuff on our plates that we pile on!

So how do we discern what we put there and what Jesus needs us to put on our plates? Paul in his writing to the people of Philippi says this: "This is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ." In other words as we continue to grow in love, in knowledge, in insight, as we continue to join in prayer, as we continue to study Biblical teachings, we will be able to discern what is best. God wants us to choose that which is better among a variety of good choices.

So what is that thing that won't be taken away from Mary or us? What are those things that really matter? I was sitting in an office this week waiting for an appointment and I glanced down and saw a book on the table "50 Things That Really Matter". Knowing I was preaching this sermon this week, I smiled at this very obvious God moment and flipped through the book. Some of the things listed as those that matter were wisdom, faith, seashells, naps, the smell of a baby, kindness, quiet time, holding hands, saying I love you, saying I'm sorry, sunrises, hugs and contentment. As I scanned the list it was impossible not to notice that these were things deeply centered in our emotions (feelings, touch, expressions of love). I also noticed that cooking and

cleaning were not there. Obviously those things are necessary but when placed alongside of sitting at his feet worshipping Jesus it's not even a close choice.

Our own Wayne³ captured what really matters beautifully on a Facebook post this week: To my lovely wife...When we get to the end of our lives together, the house we had, the cars we drove, the things we possessed won't matter. What will matter is that I had you, and you had me. A post on our Facebook page is a story from a woman⁴ very dear to me. She was going about her daily routines one afternoon when she suddenly found it difficult to breath. As she felt her throat becoming more and more constricted, she dialed 911. She ended up on a respirator. They were never able to determine what caused the emergency but thankfully she was blessed with a full recovery. What really matters to her today is her relationship with God and the love of family and friends. So many times it takes a crisis to make us reevaluate our priorities but maybe today is the day. Maybe today is the day we will sit at the feet of Jesus and reevaluate our lives, clearing off those things that, in the scheme of life, really don't matter: worry, anger, bitterness, differences of opinion, the list goes on and on.

I want to make one more point about this story. Sitting at the feet of Jesus was common when Jesus was teaching a disciple. This was not a customary role for women. But Jesus is inviting us, saying my words, my teachings are all for all people. Come, you are welcome to sit with me.

What really matters is that we are the only Jesus some people may ever get to see. You cannot show Jesus to other people unless you know Him. It is impossible to

³ Used with permission.

⁴ Used with permission

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know Him unless you spend time sitting at his feet. But here's the thing: After sitting at his feet, Jesus wants us to get up and go do something! It is about being intentional. . . . It's about finding the balance between Mary's heart and Martha's service. It's about love and service going hand-in-hand outside the walls of the church to change God's world. May God get the glory! Amen.

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Order of Worship

Light of Christ: Jesus said “I am the Light of the world” (John 8:12). I started the acolyte program at Emmanuel which allows our grade school children to participate in the worship service. The light signifies Jesus coming into our worship community; the two candles represents that Jesus was both man and God; and the light being carried out at the end of the worship service signifies carrying Christ’s light out of the church into the world.

Call to Worship: The call to worship transcends us from our activities of the day moving us into a place of settling, shifting our minds and spirits to worship. I use the call to worship to set the theme of the day encouraging worshippers to sit, rest and listen to Jesus as Mary will during my sermon.

Unison Prayer for Worship: Cooperate prayer joins us together with the holiness of God as we turn our hearts to worship. Thematically it acknowledges the busyness of our lives and petitioning the Lord to slow and still us for our time of worship.

The Call to Reconciliation: prepares our hearts to enter into a time of confession before God and each other.

Unison Prayer of Confession: Paul taught that “all have sinned and fall short” (Romans 3:23). Throughout our journeys we all sin through acts of omission and commission. The unison prayer of confession provides a place to humble ourselves before God and each other and acknowledge where we have strayed continuing to follow the theme of focusing on priorities and the use of our time. I included a time of silence so that people can offer their personal confessions to God.

Assurance of Forgiveness: We have the assurance in 1 John 1:9 that “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” Through

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forgiveness we are set back up on our feet to journey on. As the forgiven children of God, we are also called to repent, turn around, and make a different choice next time. The assurance for this day included reflecting on how God rested and encouraging our own Sabbath rest.

Passing the Peace of Christ: Passing the peace offers a space to ask for forgiveness from each other, “If I have sinned against you, please forgive me” or “peace be with you.” It celebrates who we are as the forgiven child of God and who we are as part of the fellowship community.

Church Happenings and Sharing Time: This has been a long held tradition in Emmanuel’s worship service. It is an opportunity to lift up church happenings. I believe that we need to celebrate what we are doing in service so I have begun starting the “happenings” by asking congregants to share any “ministry moments” from the week.

Prayers of the People: The use of Sanctuary has been a cherished part of the worship service at Emmanuel and serves to transition the community from announcements to prayer. Prayer is our door to communicating with God. It is a space where we offer praise, thanksgiving and then present our requests to the One who we worship. Emmanuel views their pastor as the intermediary for their prayer requests. I have trialed the use of liturgies to encourage people to lift up their requests directly to God but they continue to tell me their concerns so that I may incorporate them into our time of prayer. The Lord’s prayer allows us to join our voices together, praying the prayer Jesus gave us to pray.

Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings: I use this space to share with the congregation what we have been able to accomplish because of the momentary gifts we have given.

The Doxology acknowledges that everything we have and are is by the grace of God.

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Prayer of Dedication: Giving is deeply rooted in our theology of stewardship as we return to God a portion of what God has blessed us with. In dedicating our gifts, we acknowledge that what we have first come from God, gives thanks for abundancy and ask God to bless what we give for God's use.

Time with Young Disciples: One of our Lay Servants was offering the "children's message" when I was appointed to Emmanuel. She felt both called and joy-filled by participating in this ministry. She is part of our worship team and aligns her message with the theme of the day.

The Scripture Readings: God's Word is "God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). As we open our hearts to hear God's Word, we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us to what it is God needs us to hear so that we can be edified for our Christian walk.

Reflection on God's Word (Sermon): Through exegesis the sermon proclaims the context in which the Scripture was written, the lessons that have been learned over time and then makes it relevant for today. In this sermon series, each week built on the week before reinforcing what we are called to be and do as disciples of Jesus Christ. This focus of this week was our relationship with Jesus which then leads to a response witnessed through action.

Benediction: The benediction pronounces the closing of worship and the beginning of the next thing God calls us to do in the world. It is a sending out as we receive the blessings of God the Father who created everything, Jesus the Son who teaches us what Christ-like living looks like and the mystery of the Holy Spirit who fills us with fire to be the living Christ to the world.

Music: The use of hymns supports the theme of the worship service and is a powerful means for connecting us with God. We have a very gifted Music Director and our music program includes

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the use of praise, hymns, choir, bells and a youth choir. The Music Director and I plan worship together. For this worship service, we choose hymns that supported the theme of the day which was not missing what really matters. We used the first verses of O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing as our opening hymn and use the last verses as a closing hymn. This hymn is a hymn of pure praise which we used to acknowledge that at the center of everything we are worshipping our Lord comes first. The use of Seek Ye First as our hymn of preparation strengthens my message that Mary was correct in her choice to sit at the feet of Jesus.

I believe that each part of this worship service connected and strengthened the message which was evaluating what really matters in life. Each liturgy that I incorporated prepared our hearts and minds to hear the Gospel message new and fresh. As part of the entirety it supported the purpose of the series which was strengthening vitality in the area of discipleship. We sit at the feet of Jesus to hear and learn from him but then we get up, go out and do something.

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Sermon Series: Outside My Own Little World

This sermon series was preached for the congregation at Emmanuel UMC. We are a blended congregation of ages ranging from young adult to retirees who are at different stages in the life cycle. We have a strong sense of community within the worshipping community; however, an area I have targeted for growth in vitality is discipleship outside the walls of the church. My inspiration for this series was Marcia McFee's Worship Design Studio and is based on Matthew West's song "Outside My Own Little World." As I developed the series, I substituted some of her recommended Scriptures for others which I was lead to use knowing the dynamics and needs of my congregation. The series explores why the church exists and encourages each of us to look beyond ourselves and discern our individual purpose in a broken world. I planned this series to be preached in conjunction with the work we are doing together in Team Vital because one supported the other.

I began the series by providing the congregation with the song lyrics and showing West's video of the song. I introduced the series, while honoring the horrific acts of 9-11, suggesting that witnessing shocking violence, over and over and over again, has forced us to not only look at our vulnerabilities but also created a need to protect ourselves. This may cause us to build some insulation, providing a wall of protection from the horrific way we live together as a society. Using Matthew's story of the sheep and the goats, we explored how we are invited to reevaluate our response to everyday opportunities to help others in need. I ended week one with affirming our call: to see, to feel and to act because it matters how we witness to others making sure that love always wins.

The second week we focused on the story of Eutychus falling asleep during Paul's long-winded preaching. This laid the foundation for asking the question are we spiritually falling asleep as the church failing to answer West's call to see beyond ourselves to the world (bigger picture). Using supporting Scripture from Romans, we explored what it means to wake up from sleep; reclaiming our call for being the church which makes a difference for Christ in our community and beyond.

The third week is my taped sermon. Acknowledging that there are so many things that vie for our attention, this week we explored prioritizing what matters and what probably doesn't. Believing that the foundation for how we live our lives is through our relationship with Jesus this sermon follows Mary's choice to spend time with Jesus despite the busyness of serving their guests. The message ends by encouraging people to understand that discipleship leads to action. Our challenge is in finding the balance between Mary's heart and Martha's hands. Please note: As you view my video recording, you will see that I periodically turn and glance to the right. Our choir sits in the loft (not seen in video) and I am intentional about acknowledging their presence in the loft.

The fourth week of the series asks the question: What if there's a greater purpose? I shared a story of a woman who proclaimed when she retires, she is going to volunteer in ministry. This laid the foundation for reinforcing that through our baptism we are all ministers. I suggested that wherever God has placed us to work becomes our ministry opportunity: To glorify God and to make God known to others. This reinforced the overall theme of the series that the world won't change by going to church; the world will only change by being the church, the loving body of Christ in the workplace, in the market and in the world.

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Sermon Series

The fourth week was also World Communion Sunday so I used that as an opportunity to acknowledge that we have differences (demonstrated by how Communion is celebrated differently in different places) but that the Table is the great equalizer where we remember a limitless love and filled with God's grace.

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Sermon Series Worksheet

Week/Date	Week 1 / September 11 th 17 th Sunday after Pentecost	Week 2 / September 18 th 18 th Sunday after Pentecost	Week 3 / September 25 th 19 th Sunday after Pentecost	Week 4 / October 2 nd 20 th Sunday after Pentecost
Theme	Population Two	I Try to Stay Awake	I Don't Want to Miss What Really Matters	What if There's a Greater Purpose?
Scripture	Matthew 25:31-46 Philippians 2:1-8	Acts 20:7-12 Romans 13:11-14	Luke 10:38-42 Philippians 1:3-11	Romans 8:28-39 1 John 4:7-21
Praise Songs	As We Gather Hear Our Praises Father Make Us One	Welcome Shine, Jesus, Shine Spirit of the Living God	I Will Celebrate Trading My Sorrows	His Love Endures Days of Elijah
Choir Anthem	God Will Make a Way	Shout to the North	I Claim the Cross of Christ	Jesus is the Song
Hymns	This is a Day of New Beginnings Draw the Circle Wide Blest Be the Tie That Binds	Ye Servants of God We Are the Church I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light	O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing (V1-4) Seek Ye First O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing (V 5-7)	Table of Plenty Wounded World that Cries for Healing A Place at the Table
Notes	Installation of Sunday School Workers			World Communion Sunday

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Bible Study ~ Jeremiah

Setting of Study: This Bible Study was offered on Sunday evenings. There were ten (10) participants: two who are fourteen, one who is sixteen, four who are seventeen, one young adult who I am mentoring for youth leadership, and one other adult who co-chairs our youth activities with me. Each participant is active in sports or cheerleading and all have achieved scholastic excellence. They are each part of the middle class local community. Our sixteen year old is from a broken home, lives with his grandmother and struggles with the absence of a paternal relationship. This is his first church experience.

All except one of the youth were confirmed this year. When confirmation classes were ending, the youth said to me “we don’t want this to end” and asked “can we just keep coming?” That began our Bible Studies and this is the third Book we have explored.

Purpose of Study: My youth have minimal Biblical experience and had never studied a Book from the Old Testament. They had been empowered to renovate the church’s youth space last summer and when shopping for wall décor selected a wall hanging with Jeremiah 29:11. That led me to choose Jeremiah as the next Book to study. My overall purposes were:

1. To facilitate understanding that the Old and New Testaments are God’s continuous story of salvation.
2. To embrace the relevancy of the Old Testament stories; identifying themes and how those themes continue to speak to us today.

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Session One ~ September 18, 2016

Key Concept: The God Who Calls Us

A. The background of Jeremiah

1. Contains more words than any other Book in Bible
2. Written during a critical time in history: Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple of Solomon which began the Babylonian exile.
3. Story goes full circle, also laying the foundation for restoration of Jerusalem and the Temple following exile.

B. Who is Jeremiah?

1. Priest and prophet of the line of Eli, territory of the tribe of Benjamin.
2. Probably about 20 years of age.
3. Speaks for a period of 40 years.

Key Concept: The call and commissioning of Jeremiah: Chapter 1

1. Appointed before birth (Chapter 1:4-5)
 - a. Jeremiah can't resist God's call
 - b. Prescribed before birth
 - c. No ability of speech
2. Sometimes called the "weeping prophet"
3. The life of a prophet
4. Traditional response "I can't do it" (Chapter 1:6)
 - a. No respect
 - b. No pay
 - c. People don't like what you have to say
 - d. Speak with the authority of God
 - e. Jeremiah's call was during a time of crisis
5. God will see you through what God calls you to (Chapter 1:7-8)
 - a. Once God gives a prophet words ~ leads to the ability to say "thus says the Lord"
 - b. Our God is personal: speaks directly to Jeremiah

What do you think?

- Put yourself in Jeremiah's shoes. He is about to deliver some devastating news to Israel. What do you think peoples' reactions are when they receive devastating news?
- Have you experienced a time when you found it hard to do what you thought God was telling / calling you to do?

Key Concept: Connecting the Story

- A. By our baptisms we are all ministers
- B. Ephesians 4:11-13

Activity: Let's role play ~ We live in very challenging times and there are many temptations in our day-to-day lives. What would you say or do to help someone who is / has taken a wrong turn?

Key Concept: The Sins of the People: (Chapters 2-3:5)

- A. Forsaking God
- B. Adopting other gods

Key Concept: Connecting the Story

- A. Romans 3:23 ~ All have sinned

What do you think?

- Israel's sin is being unfaithful to God. In what ways are we unfaithful to God today?
- Israel made claims that they were doing nothing wrong. How hard is it to accept responsibility when we stray from obeying God?

Key Concept: The Call to Repentance: (Chapter 3:6-4:4)

What do you think?

- What does it mean to repent?
- If Israel "turned around" what do you think God's response would have been?

Key Concept: Connecting the Story

- A. Matthew 3:2 ~ John preaches repentance
- B. Matthew 4: 17 ~ Jesus begins his ministry by preaching repentance

Key Concept: Consequence for Sin: (Chapter 4:5-31)

- A. The declaration of war and the desolation of the land
- B. The land is not completely demolished which gives God's people time to repent

What do you think?

- What images appear for you as you hear Jeremiah telling of destruction?
- Israel does not repent: What are the struggles we face when trying to change our thoughts and actions? What are some strategies we can use to help us?

Session Two ~ September 25, 2016

Key Concept: God is Not a Physical Place

- A. Jeremiah's 1st Temple Sermon ~ Chapter 7
- B. Jeremiah's Main Issues
 - 1. Priests did not teach Israel's roots and history
 - 2. Prophets were not speaking for God
 - 3. People continued to sin
- C. The temple
 - a. The place where God is most powerfully present
 - b. Considered as the center of people's world
 - c. Intersection of heaven and earth
 - d. People believed that Jerusalem and the Temple would never be destroyed because no one can overpower God and God would never destroy God's house
- D. People remembered that they were not defeated by Assyria leading them to believe that God had rescued them and would continue to rescue them.
- E. Result: false confidence that God will bail them out unconditionally

Key Concept: The six messages in the Temple Sermon

- A. God sent Jeremiah to preach at the Temple because it is the holiest site in Judah.
- B. Faith in a Place Rather than God: Chapter 7:1-7
- C. Corrupt Worship: Chapter 7:8-11
 - 1. Worshipped while breaking the Ten Commandments
 - 2. Refused to repent
 - 3. Believed that God would be pleased by their worship
 - 4. Worshipped and offered sacrifices to multiple gods (i.e. Baal, the fertility god)
- D. Consequences: Chapter 7:12-15
 - 1. God cannot be confined to a specific place
 - 2. History remembers that an earlier worship center, Shiloh) was destroyed (*reference 1 Samuel 4:1-10*)
 - 3. Judah's defeat = the destruction of the Temple
 - 4. One cannot worship but ignore God's word
- E. Withholding Intercession: Chapter 7:16-20
 - 1. God instructs Jeremiah not to intercede because Judah's sins are so grave
 - 2. Idol worship leads to God's wrath
- F. Honoring God: 7:21-26
 - 1. Religious rites without the right heart does not fulfill God's Commandments

G. Judgement: 7:27-34

1. God knew that Jeremiah's sermons would not change peoples' hearts
2. But our God of many chances gave Jeremiah words to speak
3. Judah will lay in ruins

What do you think?

- What does God require from us in worship?
- Where have you experienced God outside of the Church?
- What did Jesus say about false worship? (Consider Matthew 15:1-9 & 21:12-17)

Session Three ~ October 9, 2016

Key Concept: God Uses Many Ways to Reach Us

God uses a variety of ways to reach us: It may be Scripture but it also may be people, nature, something we are watching, something we are reading, a story someone tells us, the list is endless. A prophet also used a variety of ways to convey God's message: Words are certainly an important tool but a prophet also might take to the streets and act out his messages using symbolic meanings or drama.

Key Concept: Sign Acts

A. The Linen Cloth (Chapter 13:1-1)

1. God demonstrates how God will ruin Judah's and Jerusalem's pride
2. Will become worthless
3. The symbolism > buy, bury, dig up, show people how belt is no longer useful

B. The Potter's House (Chapter 18-19)

1. Potter = to make or fashion
2. The potter's workshop was usually located by a field with a good source of clay
3. The process ~ the potter kneads the clay with his feet; then it is washed and placed on a wheel (2 stone discs); the potters fingers shaped the clay into the desired form. If the desired form was not achieved, the clay could be reshaped but if it was dry, the clay would not form properly and was tossed aside.

Activity: Bible Theater; You Tube The Potter's

Wheel <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4WCrlXbkX90>

Video showing the actual work of a potter

Activity:

Show the group two pieces of clay: one which I baked and one which has been kept moist in its container. Allow participants to try to reshape the dry clay.

Now using the moist, soft clay, try to shape it in to a bowl.

1. What is the difference between the dry and moist clay?

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Bible Study: Jeremiah

2. What can we do to stay soft and pliable in God's hands?
3. Use your clay to create a symbol which is meaningful to you. We are each God's unique masterpiece. What causes us to become dry and cracked?

C. The Yoke (Chapter 27)

1. Yoke is used as a sign for submission

Key Concept: Connecting the Story

- A. In Matthew 11:29-30, Jesus tells us "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."
 1. Are the yokes Jeremiah and Jesus talking about different? How?
- B. Read Colossians 3:16.
 2. What are ways this Scripture tells us we are molded?

Session Four ~ October 16, 2016

Key Concept: There Are Consequences BUT Hope Remains

Chapter 19

- A. God foretells of impending disaster
- B. Another sign act
 1. Buy a jar (Verse 1)
 2. Break the jar in front of the people (Verse 10)
 3. God says I will smash this nation (Verse 10)
- C. Demonstration – break the jar into shreds to show how the nation will be smashed. How does this compare with Jeremiah's trip to the potter's house that we discussed last week?

Chapter 20

- A. Jeremiah is beaten and put in stocks.
- B. Jeremiah may be wondering if he has heard his call wrong; was he really called to be a prophet? Have you ever been in a situation where you thought you heard wrong? What lead the choice you made?
- C. Jeremiah's lament: What do you think is easier to endure? The internal struggle going on in Jeremiah's heart (reference verse 9) or the external conflict through the community who is against him?

What do you think? Have you ever been in a situation where you thought you heard wrong? What lead the choice you made?

Chapter 21:8-10

- A. Up until now, the people have not witnessed consequences for their sins. They may even see Jeremiah as a joke: announcing disasters that never occur. But now they are witnessing their leaders taken away, officers being killed and soldiers in place.

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- A. Choices, choices, choices
 - 1. Seek protection of Babylonia
 - 2. Cooperate with Egypt seeking their protection
 - 3. We don't need affiliation with either; we are OK on our own
- B. Jeremiah proposes
 - 1. Submit to Babylon
 - 2. Worship the Lord
 - 3. Pay taxes to Babylon BUT don't adopt all their policies
 - 4. Ideological independence (Belief in God) is priority over political independence

What do you think? As Christians do we sometimes have to make choices between Ideological and political independence? What are the challenges we face when we have to choose?

Chapter 25:4-11

- A. God spells out the consequences for the people of Judah
- B. God tells the people "you have brought harm to yourselves" (Verse 7) How does that relate to free will as you understand it?
- C. Lesson Learned? The people cannot reap the blessings of God but ignore God's instructions. Do you agree or disagree with that statement?

Chapter 26

- A. The threat on Jeremiah's life
- B. Jeremiah is sent again to preach repentance and consequences
- C. Honesty angers the priests, prophets and community
- D. Jeremiah is saved

The Stages of Exile

598 BC ~ 1st Exile

587 BC ~ 2nd Exile;

- 1. Jerusalem becomes a wasteland
- 2. City is destroyed
- 3. The leaders are taken into exile

582 BC ~ A smaller number of people were exiled; this is only mentioned in Jeremiah

539 BC ~ Opportunity to return during King Cyrus' reign as act of fostering good will

Chapter 29: Key Concept ~ Hope Chapter 29

- A. The time of destruction leads to a time of rebuilding offering significant change and a new way of doing things.
- B. The prophetic voice helps people make sense out what's happened; to find a way back out of the trouble they are in.
- C. Jeremiah instructs them:
 - 1. Treat where you have been sent as your community
 - 2. Build house and settle down
 - 3. Plant and eat what you grow
 - 4. Marry and bear children
 - 5. Seek peace

6. Pray

What do you think? How might Jeremiah's instructions give the people hope?

Key Concept: Connecting the Story ~ Jesus is Our Hope

What do you think? Reviewing the following Scripture passages, what are we told about hope?

- A. 1 Peter 1:3-5
- B. 1 Peter 1:21
- C. 1 Timothy 5:4-5
- D. Hebrews 11:1
- E. Romans 8:24-25

Session Five ~ October 23rd 2016

Key Concept: God Promises Us Restoration

- A. God will bring God's people back (Chapter 30:3)
- B. God will break their yokes releasing them from bondage (Chapter 30:8)
- C. God will restore and heal (Chapter 30:17)
- D. God will restore fortunes (Chapter 30:18)

Key Concept: Connecting the Story: 1 Peter Chapter 5:10

1. After suffering, God restores

Activity: Divide into two teams. One team read Chapter 30:8-11 and 18-24 and the second team read Chapter 31:1-14. Each team answers the following questions:

- What must the people do to claim redemption?
- How will God bless their obedience (God's promises)?

Key Concept: God is our God that gives many chances (Chapter 32:30-41)

A. God outlines the sins of Israel and Judah

1. Continued in evil
2. Turned their backs on God
3. Not listened to God's discipline
4. Worshipped idols
5. False sacrifices

B. God outlines how God will answer obedience

1. Bring them back
2. Ensure their safety
3. Relationship – Be God / Be God's people
4. Holy fear
5. Never stop doing good for them

What do you think?

- Israel and Judah were given many chances to repent. Perhaps they became complacent because the consequences they were warned about never occurred. Imagine this: You run a red light or talk and text while driving and you don't get caught. Does that make it easier for you to continue to break the law?
- Why did Israel and Judah keep backsliding?
- In what ways do we backslide today?

Key Concept: A New Covenant

A. Chapter 31:31-34 ~ Write my law on their hearts; be their people; forgive their wickedness

1. The heart is internal not external as in circumcision (old Covenant)
2. Heart is the seat of emotion controlled by brain
3. Matters of the heart cannot be avoided if one is going to be true to self

B. Chapter 33:14-17 ~ A Branch from David's Line

What do you think?

- How does this new covenant connect us to the New Testament?
- What are the qualities we learned about God through Jeremiah's story?

Key Concept: Connecting the Story

A. Matthew Chapter 3:16-17

1. Jesus is baptized
2. God proclaims Jesus as God's Son

B. John Chapter 1:32-33

1. John proclaims Jesus as Son of God

Wrap Up ~ As Jeremiah ends, God's people are still in exile. The Northern Kingdom defeated in 722 BC and Babylon has conquered Jerusalem in 586 BC.

Let's Review: Our goal was to learn some life lessons from this book. What did you learn about:

1. God's call? Who is called?
2. What is sin and repentance? Are there consequences for sin?
3. What does it mean that God is not a place? Where do you find God?
4. What are some of the ways God uses to reach us?
5. How did God give the people hope? How do we cling to hope today?

Annotated Bibliography

Hoffman, Dr. Herbert. *Class Lecture Notes: Jeremiah*. Drew University: Madison, NJ, Fall Semester, 2012.

I took Jeremiah with Dr. Hoffman as an elective at Drew which helped me to understand this challenging text so I incorporated what I learned then into this study.

NIV Archaeology Study Bible. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.

The Biblical text I used for the study.

R.P. Carroll. *Jeremiah*. New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997.

This book is a commentary providing insight into the types of literature (poetry, prose, narratives) and basic themes.

Shepherd, David. *Shepherd's Notes: Jeremiah/Lamentations*. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 1998.

This is a basic study guide to accompany the text.

Wesley Publishing House. *Wesley Bible Studies: Jeremiah*. Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2015.

I chose this study guide because it looks at the text through themes and includes Wesley's own interpretation on selected sections.

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Evaluation

The study achieved my goal of introducing my youth to God's story in the Old Testament and providing opportunities to understand that the Old and New Testaments are one story. The youth were able to witness that there are themes in this Book which are repetitive and continue today (sin, the need for repentance and hope

The strengths of the study were the hands-on opportunities (molding clay), the use of video (trip to the potter's house) and the opportunities to work in teams to discern what the text was saying. I was intentional in allowing them opportunities to work with the text independent of me as a means of growth in their times independent study.

The weaknesses of the study were the difficulty in reading this text which jumps forwards and then backwards in order and events making it somewhat challenging to follow. The language and especially the names were difficult for some to pronounce.

I believe that a huge benefit in studying the life of Jeremiah and the cost of his call as a prophet was that it opened a door for a safe place for the youth to share their experiences as young Christians. They discussed how they are ridiculed for being "Jesus freaks" which provided us with an opportunity to discuss their own challenges.

I feel strongly that my youth own their programming so they are always part of the evaluative process. They are very committed to Bible Study and open to new experiences. They express gratitude that they have this group to come to and explore what God's word means for them today. In my own evaluative process, I believe that I meet the key concepts but admit that it was a very challenging book to study with them.

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Bible Study: Jeremiah

Practice of Ministry

**1. What do you think are the most effective means of doing evangelism in the 21st century?
How have you lived this out in your current context of ministry?**

Our most effective means of doing evangelism is to follow Jesus' model. Jesus was constantly on the move going place to place, sharing the good news and meeting the needs of others crossing boundaries and barriers. To follow Jesus' model we need to get out of our churches and go into our communities, meeting people where they are and showing the unconditional love of Jesus.

Evangelism is an intentional process of building relationships, sharing conversation, listening to other peoples' stories and seeking opportunities to share your story, connecting it with God's story. Peter states, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15). But he also cautions that we are called to do this with gentleness and respect. When we examine the story of the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:4-30), Jesus took a road that would intersect with the woman's path, he engaged her in conversation by asking for a drink, he offered her an opportunity to be honest (Go and get your husband) and on hearing her answer, Jesus didn't condemn her, but rather affirmed her for being truthful. Built upon the relationship he had established, Jesus taught her about salvation. This was possible because Jesus established relationship and offered this woman respect and love. Her response was to share her story of the encounter with others.

Being a witness to Christ in our community means love goes first. Our congregation has been intentional about getting out of our doors, meeting and praying for our neighbors. We are invitational and welcoming, as demonstrated by walking the neighborhood and inviting people to our Easter Egg hunt, hosting an outside barbecue this summer, showing an outside movie, having our neighbors attend our VBS, establishing a relationship with our elementary school providing

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backpacks, school supplies and food and most recently establishing a safe space for our high schoolers to come and be together in fellowship twice a week. We continue to look for opportunities to seek, invite and welcome others into the fellowship of Jesus Christ.

2. What makes a congregation vital, and how do you measure it? How would you envision working with a congregation to become more vital?

I feel fortunate that GNJAC has a strong program for vitality. In accordance with our established program, vitality is measured through five (5) markers: planning and leading worship in a manner that provides substance and draws worshippers into a deeper commitment to their faith; inviting new worshippers into the community and walking with them towards their own personal commitment as a disciple for Christ; offering and encouraging participation in small group activity; providing and encouraging opportunities to participate in mission; and a commitment to be good stewards of all that God has given us (presence, talents, time, and financial resources). Vitality is measured by various markers or responses: number of new disciples, number of people involved in mission, number of people participating in small group activities and dollars contributed for the purpose of mission, within the church and beyond.

I am working with my congregation on growing in vitality. I have used the Committed to Christ Series and am currently preaching a series based on Matthew West's song "Outside My Own Little World" to further explore our call to be disciples in a very broken world. We have small group Bible studies occurring both in the church and community. I participate in the Vital Signs Dashboard which is helpful in tracking our outcomes.

We applied and were accepted to participate in Team Vital and we have begun the process of evaluating where we are and dreaming of where we are going. As part of the Team's growth plan we acknowledged that it was important that the Body, and not just the Team, have input into our plan for vitality. In order to provide an opportunity for inclusive input we are

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currently in the process of hosting small group house meetings to provide a space for others to share what their vision and dreams are for Christ's Church at Emmanuel.

3. What is your personal approach to conflict? Provide an example where you have been involved in resolving conflict. What did you learn?

As unique creations of God, we each come to the whole with a variety of life experiences and opinions. As such, times of conflict are inevitable and can even provide an opportunity for growth. My personal approach to conflict is bringing those involved together, listening and exploring options for resolution. I believe unresolved conflict will continue to fester and may cause disruption to the Body.

I have two members who were in conflict over the arrangement of tables in fellowship hall. One person wanted them in a parallel arrangement, the other in a U-shape to encourage fellowship and prevent peoples' backs from being to each other. One member believed that the other member said to her, "Well if you want your back to someone else, fine." This was so traumatic to her, that she sent me a text saying, "I will be in touch with you to move my membership." I was completely taken by surprise because this member is very active and engaged in our ministries.

As I explored the issue, I learned that the comment she heard was not the comment made and in fact the member had said, "Our backs to each other." The member who heard something that actually was not said was very hurt. She has a history of abuse and heard the comment as if it was from the mouth of her abuser. She was further offended that anyone would think she would turn her back on another. We discussed communication and addressing questions and feelings as they arise. We reached an alternative plan for the lay-out of the room; providing opportunities to encourage sitting with people others do not normally sit with to support relationship building.

Through this event, I witnessed the fragility of relationships and the importance of stories was reinforced. Stories affect how we hear and respond and in this episode changed the whole dynamic of the situation. This situation had a positive outcome: I was able to pray with them, the relationship was re-stabilized and a solution was reached for building fellowship. As I continued to chat with the woman who was offended in private, I encouraged her to question what she does not understand rather than just leaving hurt, angry and upset. I also felt it was important to explore her response of “I’m leaving” because she has a history of walking away before I was appointed here. I encouraged her to embrace working out conflicts as they arise as an opportunity for healing and growth. I also encouraged her to consider the effects of resolving conflict by walking away; being in a perpetual state of starting over and forfeiting the blessing of witnessing the fruit of our work together.

4. What is your theological and practical understanding of itineracy?

Our tradition of itinerancy is part of our Methodist history, begun by Wesley, supported by Asbury and rooted through the Circuit Riders who traveled from place to place. The practice of itineracy ensured an organized system for preaching and spreading Scriptural Holiness (as claimed by Wesley) which led to the growth of the Methodist movement. Through our itinerant system a covenant relationship with all ordained elders is maintained as we “offer ourselves without reserve to be appointed and to serve” (§333) based on the model of Jesus’ first disciples who were sent out, in obedience to the Great Commission to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19).

Under the authority of our presiding Bishop, information is gathered from the local church’s Staff-Parish Relations Committee and pastor in conjunction with the District Superintendent. Appointments are made without regard to “race, ethnic origin, gender, color,

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disability, marital status or age” (§425). The Bishop, District Superintendents and Cabinet meet to review the data and then strive to match the gifts and graces of an individual pastor with the needs of a particular congregation to support growth in vitality and mission.

5. How do you engage all age groups in your community?

We are intentional about identifying relevant opportunities for each age group in our community and offer something for everyone. We have both adult and youth Sunday school; music programs for adults and our church school youth; our high school youth participate as worship leaders by leading us in liturgies and reading Scripture. We offer a Children’s message during worship and additionally offer a Jr. Church service.

This community is home to three senior residential centers. We have expanded our van ministry to provide transportation to our worship services and activities which has increased our retirees’ participation in our activities. Additionally, we offer a weekly outreach Bible study at one of the centers and offer transportation from the other centers to the study site.

Last summer we completely overhauled VBS, writing our own program, which received positive feedback. We collected and compiled a VBS mailing list and invite those who participated in VBS but are not members of our worship community to join us for quarterly activities. We are invitational and continue to maintain contact with all visitors.

After being appointed to Emmanuel, I recognized the need to engage our high school students. In my first year at Emmanuel, we offered a confirmation class with eight youth being confirmed; established a youth Bible Study and began a youth group. Our youth were empowered to own their space and over the summer they completely renovated their youth rooms which had gone unused for years. As they designed the program they wanted, we

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established open youth hours twice a week where they can gather, be in community, play games or do homework.

6. What is your understanding of pastoral authority, and how do you exercise it in your place of ministry?

I understand pastoral authority to mean that I am accountable for ordering the life and ministry of the churches I am appointed to oversee the church in its entirety. I am held accountable to ensure that our ministries are lived out in a way that reflects the mission of Jesus with the world in accordance with our Biblical story and our Methodist doctrine and polity. Through ordination and the laying on of hands, I am given the authority to serve as a witness of Jesus in and through our fourfold ministry of “Word, Sacrament, Order and Service” (§340).

I exercise pastoral authority in my place of ministry by ensuring that people are nurtured and supported to grow in their faith. I encourage others not only to identify their gifts but to claim and use them for kingdom growth, providing glory to God.

7. If you could choose *anyone* to mentor you in leadership skills, who would that be and why?

This is a difficult choice for me because there are so many theologians who have provided insight and learning and choice words of wisdom. If I have to choose one out of all of those who I have a deep respect for, it would be Detrick Bonhoeffer.

I have a deep admiration for Mr. Bonhoeffer’s selfless martyrdom. When he was given the opportunity to flee from Hitler’s reach to the safety of Union Seminary in New York, he chose to serve in the underground seminary providing instruction on the teachings of Christ to those who opposed Hitler.

When Bonhoeffer was imprisoned for sharing Jesus, his witness was so admired that he converted the very prison guards who kept him secured even as they apologized for having to do

so. The guards actually worked with him to make his writings public, taking them out of the cell that held him to the outside world. That speaks volumes to his impact on others.

I especially respect his beliefs and writings related to grace. Although John Wesley gave us the threefold aspects of grace, I believe that Bonhoeffer built upon it, defining what he terms costly versus cheap grace. Although I completely understand that God's grace is a free gift, I agree with Bonhoeffer that God's grace should elicit a response from us. In his work "Cost of Discipleship"¹ Bonhoeffer states, "Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our church. We are fighting today for costly grace. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, and grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate." I believe that is both powerful and meaningful as we strive to grow and lead others towards Christian perfection.

8. Describe a situation in which you felt a need to assert a professional boundary in the practice of ministry?

To build relationships and thank our community workers for all they do, we agreed to deliver homemade cookie platters to all of our neighborhood agencies. Cookie drop off dates and times at the church were identified and communicated. The doorbell of the parsonage rang at 9:30PM and standing on the porch was a male congregant who had come to the parsonage to deliver his cookies. Through RIM, we had a speaker who spoke about the need to set and maintain personal boundaries and space in our ministry which was helpful in my response. I wanted my congregation to know I was available but I also wanted them to understand the need to respect my personal space especially because the parsonage is adjacent to the church. As a

¹ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*. New York: Macmillan, 1966.

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single female pastor I felt a need to clarify the limits of access for non-emergent situations which I did through grace filled words.

9. How have you worked through the experience of forgiving someone?

Being called a “false teacher” and charged with building the “church of Laodicea” (Reference Theology, Question 2) was an incredibly hurtful experience. I read and reread the applicable passages in Revelation. I read and reread the sermon I had preached. Although those involved were no longer worshipping with us, they both continued to be active outside the church, participating in our prayer chain, keeping up with activities through others and attending our outreach Bible studies. I was troubled by that because I believed that it was a potential barrier to the congregation moving forward in filling vacancies and assuming ministerial roles. It felt like I was being constantly reminded of their external presence allowing my wound to fester and remain open.

I prayed repetitively that God would not allow me to have a bitter heart. I asked God to help me to let it go and continue to move forward on the path God had called me to. As I continued to stay focused, I felt The Holy Spirit lead me to Joseph’s story and particularly Joseph’s words, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good” (Genesis 50:20). As I continued to pray for Emmanuel, the congregation and ministries, people started stepping up, assuming offices vacated, bringing new ideas to the table and getting involved. In retrospect I believe that God was clearing the way for the next thing God would do at Emmanuel. As I let go of my anger and embraced forgiveness in my heart, God showed me that, indeed, sometimes the very things that we believe will destroy us are turned around to be a blessing for God’s glory.

10. What are you doing for those around you to take good care of themselves?

I include the practice of self-care in sermons, Bible studies and one-on-one conversations.

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As we follow the model that Jesus himself lived, we observe that Jesus lived a combination of hands on ministry, times for rest, renewal and prayer and other times that he enjoyed weddings, festivals and fellowship. I encourage others to find the balance between these so that homeostasis of body, mind and spirit are maintained.

In illustration, I encourage others to visualize a plate and then to put everything they are trying to be or do on the plate. I then ask them to discern what God has called them to put on their plate and what s/he has elected to put there. In a world which is so abundantly busy and noisy, I encourage others to let go of the stuff that, in reality, is not of God or part of God's plan. I believe that if we fail to take care of ourselves, we become parched and dry which can potentially lead to burn-out. I also believe that leading by example is important.

11. How have you invited someone to faith and seen their faith develop?

A family returned to our worshipping community after I was appointed at Emmanuel. Shortly after their return their teen daughter began bringing her boyfriend to church. He was seventeen years old and had no church experience. We developed a rapport and he was eager to chat about my sermons and explore what he was experiencing. Late last year he approached me and stated, "I want to be baptized!" We began meeting to discuss the meaning of Baptism and our Baptismal Covenant. His Mother did not attend worship with him, so with his consent and understanding I spoke with her. She was in full support of his desire to become a Baptized member of the Church. His Baptism was celebrated in January of this year with his whole family in attendance. I can still see the glow on his face as he told me, "I feel so clean." He immediately started participating in our Confirmation Classes and was confirmed in April. He is an active member of our newly formed youth group, participates in weekly Bible Study, attended IGNITE and serves as a worship leader.

12. What have you had to overcome to come to this season in your ministry?

During this season of my ministry I have wrestled with abandonment and isolation. The only orientation I received for my quarter-time appointment was “this is quarter-time, they get a sermon and that’s it.” The Lay Leader met with me before my first Sunday and said “I never wanted to be an officer. I want to come here for an hour a week and that’s it. I have been preaching a lot and I don’t want to preach this Sunday, you will have to do it.” Not knowing the dynamics of the congregation, I searched resources for Scripture applicable for a pastor’s first Sunday and selected Ephesians 1:3-14. In my message I focused on transition as a door to new opportunities, the emotions of change and my joy at being appointed to serve at Embury.

The following Sunday, the Lay Leader met me outside and stated, “I didn’t hear the Spirit through you last week and you have one month or I’m leaving. My daughter and son-in-law won’t be back at all.” Three weeks later she handed me the meager church records that she had at home and said good-bye. The following week, there were only three worshippers.

It was a challenging time. I repetitively cried out to God asking why God brought me to this foreign land to abandon me? I didn’t know the area, I didn’t know anyone in the District, I had emptied a church and I felt totally alone. Despite that, God’s grace was sufficient and mercies were new every morning (2 Corinthians 12:9, Lamentations 3:23). Through clinging to God’s promises, I was able to explore and trial ministries to bring vitality to Embury. I moved worship outside to let the neighbors know we were still there; developed a relationship with the daycare center housed in the church; and began a mid-week dinner church. Unfortunately none of these undertakings bore the fruit of vitality and at this time there is no worshipping community. I have witnessed that sometimes closed doors are God’s will and believe that God will do a new thing in that space. I now realize that this church has been declining over the years

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and that I was not responsible for emptying the church. To God's glory the lone three (3) worshippers from Embury are now worshipping at Emmanuel and have been welcomed into the fellowship and community.

13. How would you describe your prayer life in this season, and how has it changed over your journey?

Prayer has always been a part of my journey and I believe the way I live my life is a prayer. In this season, I have embraced my prayer life as I sought God's guidance for the next thing God wanted me to do. There have been times of lament, times of stillness to allow me to listen for God's voice, and certainly times when the only thing I could do was allow the Holy Spirit to intercede for me (Romans 8:26) but always, I am intentional in acknowledging and thanking God for all God has done and continues to do in my life. My prayer life has become broader over this season as I give voice to the needs of my congregants and community. I have embraced the privilege of praying for and with others. One of the blessings in serving at Emmanuel is that the bells chime at noon and 6 PM followed by a hymn; I use that as a pause to stop and be filled with God's Spirit and love and express gratitude for the day.

14. When you read the Bible, how do you hear God's voice? What example might you give of how you responded?

As I read Scripture I hear God's voice in a variety of ways. During my journey in pastoral ministry, I have had periods where I felt separated from God and relied on the Holy Spirit to lead me to what Scripture God wanted me to study. I began the kaleidoscope method of study, repeating passages that I was drawn to over and over and then prayerfully discerning what is God showing me, asking me to do or change through God's word. Intermingled with this method, I began a journey into imagery, picturing in my mind what I was hearing looked like and then began journaling what I was picturing. It became a place of comfort and calm and I was able to

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gain restoration of feeling God's presence and closeness. My response was to continue to move forward on the path that God has called me to in this season, in this place, despite the challenges that I have encountered and have overcome.

15. How has your family of origin influenced your call?

Embracing my "gift" as a wounded healer is directly related to my family of origin's influence on my call. In reality my Mom (who died while I was still in the candidacy process) struggled to understand why I would leave a lucrative career where I was successful to pursue my call to ministry.

Due to the dysfunction of my family of origin, I did not have a close relationship with my brother or sister; however, it was the dedicated perseverance to claim my call that allowed them to see how God was working in my life. As they witnessed that, they became supportive, encouraging, and celebrated God working in my life.

16. Interview three people to tell you what they see in your ministry. What did you hear in these conversations?

One of the Scriptures that sustains me is Jeremiah 29:11. As I navigated this journey to Ordination, I would hear God telling me to settle in and do what God has sent me here to do. As I met with congregants and posed this question to them, I was humbled and blessed to receive feedback that demonstrates they feel we have experienced renewal and are on the path to vitality.

They appreciate what they see as "out of the box", innovative and creative ministry. They embrace sermon series and feel an increased opportunity to relate to the Holy through the "flow of the service, use of color, symbols and props." My growth plan included growth in exegetical skills as evidenced by comments such as "good sermon" and each person I interviewed provided positive feedback related to preaching.

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As their pastoral leader, those I interviewed said that, “they are grateful for my administrative and organizational skills, my attention to detail and level of energy.” What I learned from their feedback is that as I obediently press on, God will bless what God calls me to do.

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(1) Give examples of how the practice of ministry has affected your experience and understanding of:

(a) God: One of my favorite assurances is that there is nothing we can do to make God love us more or less. One of my treasured moments at Emmanuel is when I had the privilege of restoring someone back into relationship with God and the fellowship of the church. As a gay man, he shared that the “church had made him feel dirty and unworthy of God’s love.” As I shared my reality of God as agape love, he told me “you gave me back my God.” He then joined the church through profession of faith and serves in various capacities. I believe that it is not my job to judge, but rather, to share God as the ultimate picture of what true love looks like with others.

(b) Humanity: In Genesis 1:27 we hear God created everyone! I have witnessed God’s design as I help others discern their different and distinct gifts which we then use to build the Body, understanding that we also come with a whole palette of differences and opinions. God brings us together in a connectional relationship with God and each other to love through our differences and find mutual grounds for serving Jesus the Christ.

(c) The need for divine grace: Paul told the Romans “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Through that lens, we all are in need of divine grace which sets wrongs right and puts us back on our feet again. We are filled with God’s grace as we humbly come before God to confess our weaknesses and shortcomings ask for and are granted forgiveness through God’s love and the sacrifice of Jesus. God uses me as a conduit for that divine grace to flow through to another to God’s glory.

(d) The Lordship of Jesus Christ: To proclaim Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior means that we will honor him through how we live our lives. Studying the life of Jesus sets the standard on how we are to live. Through my sermon series, I taught that for our every action, we should be

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asking does this honor the life of Jesus, make him known to others and demonstrate that we are walking our talk.

(e) The work of the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit is the breath of God allowing us movement, direction, memory, conviction and a burning fire to do the work of ministry. I see the movement of the Holy Spirit in worship and study as people experience conversion and a deepening of their faith through those light bulb moments. I witness the work of the Spirit when my sermon is redirected from my transcript in another direction.

(f) The meaning and significance of the sacraments: The sacraments are the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace of God. We have had the joy of welcoming two of our youth into the family of Christ. The parents of those baptized are not actively involved in worship or ministries but both families came and celebrated the choice and commitment their child was making. As we celebrated baptism, I had the opportunity to teach about the awesome grace of God, sharing that our growth in grace occurs through the lessons taught in our homes, church and community. I also believe that baptism provides an opportunity for each worshipper to remember their own baptism and our spoken promise to mentor each other as we each journey on to Christian perfection.

As we come to Christ's Table, we re-member God's story and what Jesus did for each of us. At the Table we are united with the saints that are no longer with us and celebrate Christ's presence in the faith community we are part of. I treasure our open table and as I am privileged to offer Christ's invitation, I am filled with the magnitude of God's love. As people come forward to participate, I hear the murmurings of "thank-you" offered to God and see the Holy Spirit moving through the congregation making us part of God's story.

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(g) The kingdom of God: I have experienced the kingdom of God as a present reality and a future hope. I see the kingdom of God present and active when the church lives out the mission of Jesus, reaching out to our community sharing God's love and hope. Through sermons and Bible Studies I have challenged my congregation to be intentional in seeking opportunities to be missional throughout the week and then to share those moments in worship. We have celebrated many glimpses of kingdom living when someone's physical hunger was fed; a hug was given to someone having a bad day; taking time to listen to someone who just needed to be heard; using our time and hands to work a feeding program; welcoming youth to VBS and welcoming a new visitor to worship and fellowship. Our future hope for the kingdom of God will be realized when Jesus returns righting all wrongs, when hunger and thirst are eradicated forever and tears are wiped away (Revelation 7:16-17).

(h) Resurrection and eternal life: We have the promise that those who have faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will live forever. This belief is witnessed every time we gather to celebrate one's life in our service of death and resurrection.

I also witness resurrection every time a congregant chooses to walk through one of life's challenging and traumatic events and claim life rather than defeat. I believe we have a choice: we can choose to be laden with guilt for our past transgressions or overwhelmed with the storms we face or we can choose to accept the gift of forgiveness and journey on in joy.

(2) How do you understand the following traditional evangelical doctrines:

(a) Repentance: Repentance is an act of humility as we acknowledge our sinful nature; turn around and away from our sin-filled acts and turn back to the ways of God. The doctrine of repentance is observed throughout Jonah's story. Nineveh was a city filled with wickedness (1:1) and Jonah was called by God to go and preach the need to change their ways or be destroyed

(3:4). Upon hearing Jonah's message, the king issued a corporate decree for man and beast to "call upon God, give up their evil ways, and cease their violence" (3:7-9). Nineveh turned from their evil ways, repented, and God showed them compassion.

John the Baptist preached repentance as a precursor to the forgiveness of sins (Luke 3:3) as he traveled around the Jordan River, as a means to get people to straighten their paths and be readied to receive Jesus. As people reacted to John's preaching, people questioned what their response should be? John taught that through repentance, our responses change from self-fulfilling to self-giving: If you have two, give one; Be honest in your dealings with others; Don't accuse people with justification to do so (paraphrased Luke: 3:11-14).

John was imprisoned by Herod for his teaching and immediately thereafter Jesus began preaching the same words: "Repent, the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matthew 4:17). Jesus preached that new life is offered through Him as we seek to live out repentance through righteousness; choosing to be in right relationship with God and all people.

(b) Justification: Justification is what God does for us through Jesus as we are saved from sin. Jesus was betrayed and handed over to Pilate and despite having no sin, was convicted and sentenced to crucifixion. Jesus took upon himself all the sin we have committed and paid the price once and for all. As Paul taught the Romans (4:23-25) through belief in the power of God to raise Jesus to life and claim Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we are heirs to the righteousness undeserved, unearned and unmerited.

(c) Regeneration: Regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit through which we are changed from being spiritually dead to spiritually alive. We observe this through Jesus' interaction with Nicodemus. Nicodemus, under the cover of night, sought Jesus, knowing something was different about Jesus. Nicodemus hungered to know more. Through Nicodemus' questioning,

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Jesus instructed him that “no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again” (John 3:3). Jesus helped him to understand that being born of water and Spirit was essential for rebirth. As God’s story continued we observe the effect regeneration had on Nicodemus: He is present in the daylight, asking for Jesus’ body so that he can participate in the traditions of care for burial.

Through regeneration we cease to be the person we are and journey forward in grace towards Christian perfection. We are “a new creation; the old has gone the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Regeneration changes us from who we were to all God created us to be.

(d) Sanctification: Sanctification is a life-long process. Sanctifying grace is the ongoing activity of the Holy Spirit. Continuing to grow in and through the means of grace (prayer, reading and studying Scripture, worship, participating in the Sacraments, holy conferencing, participating in small group activities, fasting, and good works) we journey towards Christian perfection. I agree with Wesley that we can achieve Christian perfection in our lifetime. He summarized sanctification as having a heart “habitually filled with the love of God and neighbor and having the mind of Christ and walking as he walked” (§102, page 51).

What are the marks of the Christian life?

The marks of a Christian life are God’s piety, mercy and love lived out in our day-to-day responses and actions in community, sharing the Gospel message and God’s love and hope. God’s love is offered to us freely, however, as James said “faith without works is dead” (James 2:20). Faith should illicit a response from us. That response is what Wesley emphasized as the marks of Christian life: “faith and love put into practice” (§102).

(3) How has the practice of ministry informed your understanding of the nature and mission of the Church? What are its primary challenges today?

The mission of the church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ. The nature of the church is to love unconditionally. The local church is to reach out and receive people into the fellowship

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of Christ encouraging and supporting their relationship. The mission is internal through the process of nurturing discipleship and external through service to our community and beyond.

Through the practice of ministry, I believe that one of the challenges we are facing as the connectional church is our very public debate over inclusive language. I believe that acknowledging our differences in love can provide an opportunity to find common ground where we can continue to serve and love Christ together. I also believe that we need to embrace ways of being the church which is inclusive and inviting, but also, relevant for each member who enters our door. We need to offer a range of opportunities for people to be in relationship with God.

(4) The United Methodist Church holds that Scripture, tradition, experience and reason are sources and norms for belief and practice, but that the Bible is primary among them. What is your understanding of this theological position of the Church, and how has your practice of ministry been affected by this understanding?

The “quadrilateral” provides a formula for reflecting on our appropriate response as we make choices, ensuring that they are theologically grounded. I hold Scripture as primary, always placing my actions against the works of God, Jesus and the flow of the Holy Spirit. We evaluate the lessons learned through history honoring tradition and building on it to answer our call in our current context. Experience is a part of the process as we learn from others what has been successful and what hasn’t been. In addition, we add what we have learned through our own journey. Reason allows us to look at something and to evaluate if it makes sense or fits in with the conclusions we reached while working through Scripture, tradition and experience.

This formula was valuable when we revised our VBS program. We were able to discern which traditions were outdated; which were working and needed to be continued and what new ideas should be tried. As we tossed about ideas, we placed them against the lens of Scripture to

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ensure that what we were doing expressed God's love, gave glory to God, and provided a variety of ways for our communities' youth to grow deeper in their faith walk.

(5) How has the practice of ministry enriched your understanding of the meaning and significance of the sacraments?

The sacraments are the outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace of God. As I officiate at baptisms, I am awe-struck by the true meaning of being a member of Christ's family. In a world where people are sometimes considered expendable, one thing remains true: no matter where we wander or the times we fail, we are always welcomed back and embraced as a beloved child of God.

Christ's Table of Communion is a means of grace, offered to us through nothing we do or deserve but as a remembrance of how much we are loved by God, as witnessed through the sacrifice of God's own Son. Participating in Communion is a truly holy moment. I am blessed in a mighty way as I share God's love with each person coming forward wanting to commune with Jesus.

b) Vocation (1) How has the experience of ministry shaped your understanding of your vocation as an ordained elder?

Paul tells the Romans that "all things work together for the good of those who love him, who are called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28) As I reflect on this past year, I understand that the blessings I have experienced resulted from studying God's Word together, celebrating baptisms and Holy Communion, seeking ways to be in service with our community and organizing the church in accordance with our UM Disciple. Each area brought something to the whole. I believe it is in maintaining a balance in each area that I have claimed my vocation as an ordained elder, honoring God and my call. Frederick Buechner said, "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." Serving Christ

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has filled my heart with joy and with certainty I know that God is using my life's journey as I serve others.

c) The Practice of Ministry

(1) How has the practice of ministry affected your understanding of the expectations and obligations of the itinerant system? Do you offer yourself without reserve to be appointed and to serve as the appointive authority may be determined?

I transitioned from being a full time RN, seminary student and a quarter-time licensed local pastor to being a commissioned elder. I can still replay the scenario of my current appointment: I received a call telling me I was changing districts. I then received a call to tell me that I was being appointed to two churches in Camden County and provided with a date for meeting with the SPRC. As I took in my first glance at what would become my home, it was a startling reality for me. I was leaving a career I had for thirty (30) years to answer a call God had placed on my heart which I just couldn't shake; I was leaving the only area I knew for the last thirty-five (35) years and moving out of the home which I had lived in for fifteen (15) years. I was told that being commissioned was dependent on accepting this appointment.

My call to ministry was stronger than my resistance to the complete and drastic changes in the life I had known. In retrospect I can see that indeed my gifts and graces are a match for growing vitality at Emmanuel UMC. This experience served to strengthen my understanding of our itinerant system, understanding that I will go, without reserve, where sent and I do offer myself and my gifts for ministry to be used wherever they will best serve Christ in the mission of creating disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

(2) Describe and evaluate your personal gifts for ministry and how they have resulted in fruitful ministry. What would be areas of strength and areas in which you need to be strengthened in order to be more fruitful in ministry?

My personal gifts for ministry are healing, exhortation, leadership and administration. I have witnessed the use of my gifts bringing fruitfulness as evidenced by the number of people

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who have professed their faith in Jesus this year, the return of members who had left the worshipping community and the increased number of members participating in ministry with the community. When I was appointed here, there were some who labeled us a “Sunday Church.” The ministry was Sunday worship, period. Through exhortation, small groups, visionary conversations and Biblical studies we have experienced budding growth in all areas of ministry.

My targeted areas for personal growth are time management and continued attention to self-care. As the church grows, the demands on my time have increased and I need to ensure that my time is used most effectively. I am addressing this through the setting of daily goals, prayer and observing Sabbath.

(3) For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness to the Christian gospel and in consideration of your influence as an ordained minister, are you willing to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life; and to this end will you agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to physical health, intentional intellectual development, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, integrity in all personal relationships, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge and love of God?

Yes! With God’s help and through the power of the Holy Spirit, I am continuing to grow in grace as I journey towards Christian perfection in love of God and neighbor. Knowing the means of grace will help me grow in my knowledge and love of God, despite knowing that at times I fail, I will strive to exemplify the person and mission of Jesus Christ through my witness and how I live my life. As a targeted area of my growth plan, I am being intentional about self-care, tempering care of others with care of self. To remain goal focused and accountable in that area, I am participating in our coaching program.

(4) Provide evidence of your willingness to relate yourself in ministry to all persons without regard to race, color, ethnicity, national origin, social status, gender, sexual orientation, age, economic condition, or disability.

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Our worshipping community welcomes all persons into an inclusive relationship based on God's unconditional love for all people. We are fortunate to have a congregation which demonstrates the diversity of God's people as evidenced by the landscape of our community. I seek opportunities to reinforce the worth and value of all people in both sermons and Bible Studies.

In my ecumenical discussions with other faith based communities, we have each observed an imbalance in the diversity of worshippers. Together, we are exploring more ways to heal division, be invitational and welcoming.

Our neighboring town, Collingswood, is a diverse community which welcomes LBGT members. The town hosts support groups to address the unique needs which the group describe as experiencing distancing, out casting and bullying. I have been a guest speaker at their meetings sharing God's love, hope and vision. I have offered sermon series on inclusiveness and encouraged my congregation to engage in healing conversations with all people.

(5) Will you regard all pastoral conversations of a confessional nature as a trust between the person concerned and God?

Yes. I will hold all pastoral conversations in confidence with the exception of those which fall into the requirements for mandatory reporting: harm to self or others (§341.5).

(6) Provide evidence of experience in peace and justice ministries.

I believe that each and every life matters! In ecumenical meetings, I have discussed the ways the clergy community can promote peace. We have held a community prayer meeting in a neutral location to bring people and township officials and workers together in prayer and thanksgiving for each other. I consistently reinforce the worth and rights of all people to participate in relationships that are based on equality and respect through sermons, studies and one-on-one conversations. I believe that justice means that every person has an equal opportunity

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to realize “life to the full as Jesus came to bring” (John 10:10). I particularly feel called to walk with women who feel trapped in abusive and difficult life situations. I have volunteered at Fellowship House in Camden during parents’ night to engage and support women. I am awaiting training to serve with the Domestic Violence response team locally.

1. Explain the threefold aspects of Wesleyan grace and how have you encountered these in your own ministry life.

Prevenient, meaning goes before, grace is God’s love extended to all people before we ever recognize our need for it. Through prevenient grace we are awakened to our sin and moved towards our need for repentance. Prevenient grace awakens us to the God-sized hole in our heart that only God’s love can fill. I have encountered prevenient grace when I had the privilege of watching one of our youth awaken to the desire to be in relationship with God which led him to claim and own his place in Christ’s family through baptism.

Justifying grace is what Jesus did for us on the Cross, God’s love poured out for us for the forgiveness of our sins. Through justifying grace, we are restored to right relationship with God. Through the action of the Holy Spirit, we experience a change of heart (conversion) as the process of personal transformation begins. During the process of justifying grace we are led to understand the cost of salvation and acknowledge Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

I encountered justifying grace while I worked through confirmation classes with our youth. As we studied Wesley’s theology of grace, I witnessed light bulb moments in the youth which was a place of pure joy. As we continued our work in Bible Studies, they were so excited to identify the categories of God’s grace as they exclaimed “that’s justifying grace” or that’s “sanctifying grace.” Wesley gives us rich imagery that I have used to help others understand the threefold aspects of grace: Using the structures of a house, the porch is prevenient grace: God has invited us into the house but we have not yet accepted the invitation. Wesley compared the

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door of the house to justifying grace: as we respond to God's invitation, we open the door and enter God's house. Sanctifying grace guides us as we continue to move within the house growing towards a complete and mature faith. It is a joy and a privilege to accompany someone on their journey and witness her/his awakening by the prompting of the Holy Spirit in response to God's grace.

Sanctifying grace is the Holy Spirit's action in us as we continue to grow in holiness of heart, striving only to love God and neighbor in a mature and complete love. I have witnessed times of perfect love when differences are set aside and we come together as a congregation to love God and one another despite differences.

2. Share an instance when you found yourself in ministry with someone whose theology was radically different from your own.

I preached on Ephesians 2:11-22 from our lectionary during August of 2015. After discussing the context of Paul's writing, I engaged the congregation to identify some of the issues that separate us from each other in our current society. The following Monday I received a phone call from one of our members (Our Chair of Church Council) who stated that her husband (Our Lay Leader and Treasurer) wanted to meet with me. We set a time for that Wednesday and they came into the meeting room with Bibles. She spoke for both of them and said to me, "We can't stay in a church with a false teacher. You are building the church of Laodicea here and we can't be part of it." They told me that they are offended that I preach God's love as inclusive of all people. They shared their belief that people engaged in homosexuality are doomed to go to hell. I suggested that we do a Bible Study together and explore some of the passages that lead them to believe that but they declined. I encouraged them to continue to worship with us stating that although there are times when Scripture is interpreted differently by people, that our love for Jesus Christ rises above that and we can continue to work together for the good of Christ's

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Church. She declined my invitation on behalf of both of them and prayed for our Bishop's and my salvation. They subsequently transferred their membership to another Methodist Church.

3. Describe how your image of God has changed over your journey. What has informed this?

I have grown in my understanding of the depth and breadth of God's love for me. As I reflect on my journey, my reality is that sometimes God works in ways that I cannot see in the moment but only as I look backward. I have grown in my vision of the Sovereignty of our God whose will supersedes mine and whose plans are bigger than mine. In this season God continues to mold and shape me, separating me from what was familiar and comfortable in order to burn off my dross as I journeyed towards total dependence on the One I was created to worship and serve. When I felt abandoned and alone, God says, "I am enough."

Persevering through times of discouragement, I have grown in my understanding of the magnitude of Jesus suffering and gift to me, realizing that there is nothing that I experience that could even compare a thimble full to what Jesus experienced.

Praying for the Holy Spirit to continue to lead, guide and sustain me for ministry, in retrospect, I am grateful that no matter what I was going through, the Holy Spirit embraced and filled me to continue to be in ministry with God's people. This is evidenced through conversations and sermons whereas at the end of the day I breathe a prayer of gratitude murmuring "that was so you God."

Polity

1. Explain the role of deacons, elders and local pastors in the UMC and how they are each uniquely called and function in the church.

Deacons are called by God, authorized by the church and ordained to a lifetime of servant leadership by a bishop (§328). They are ordained for the ministry of Service and Word with a vision for upholding justice and serving with compassion to the world. A change which occurred at General Conference this year is that our resident Bishop may give Sacramental authority to deacons to celebrate Baptisms and Communion in their ministry setting. Deacons provide leadership to the church through the interpretation of the world's needs and hopes building a bridge to connect the church and community.

Elders are called to a lifetime of service to the ministries of Word, Sacrament, Order and Service. Elders are given authority through ordination to preach and teach God's Word, to provide counseling and pastoral care, administration of the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion and to order the church to be an effective witness of God's love and salvation through Jesus Christ. Elders serve either in the local church or extension ministry as appointed by the resident Bishop leading others to be in mission with God's world (§322).

Local pastors are persons who are not ordained but are called to serve in the ministries of Word, Sacrament, Order and Service. A local pastor's license is renewed annually either by the District Committee on Ministry or the Board of Ordained Ministry. They are appointed to the local church or extension ministry by the Bishop and their license for pastoral ministry is only active while appointed (§315 & 316).

2. What is the process for setting a pastor's salary? Who can change it, and when can it be changed?

Our General Conference sets the guidelines for equitable compensation which establishes the minimum salary for a pastor. The staff-parish relations committee meets and reviews the

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guidelines, providing a proposed compensation package to the Church Council while reporting the budgetary requirements to the committee on finance (§258.16).

The church council, which includes the church treasurer and a representative from the finance committee, reviews the salary recommendations and makes their recommendation to the charge conference (§252.4d).

In accordance with §247.13 of our Book of Discipline, the charge conference provides the recommendation for the pastor's salary to the District Superintendent which is then voted on and approved or disapproved at the annual church/charge conference.

Once approved at annual/charge conference, the salary can only be changed through a special charge conference as approved and scheduled by the church's District Superintendent.

3. The Education committee wants to update the curriculum being taught in the Christian Education program. What specific guidance does the Book of Discipline give you in dealing with this issue?

We are charged with providing lifelong education which is distinct and appropriate for each season of life. The UM Publishing House is charged with making available applicable multimedia resources for the advancement of our faith knowledge base (§1613).

Our Book of Discipline (§1109) provides specific guidelines for organizing our education program: It must be biblically and theologically based and adhere to our Doctrinal Standards and General Rules; It must be developed in such a manner that all people along the education curve can relate to the teaching; If the curriculum is changed, there must be adequate training available for those who will participate in teaching in our education program and there must be standards for the program and markers established to evaluate its compliance and achievement of learning goals (§1109.1-13).

4. You have discovered a need in the community for a soup kitchen, and wish to recommend that this be a priority for the congregation, using the facilities of the church. What parties and processes need to be involved?

Our call to address hunger in our local community falls within the scope of church and society. In accordance with ¶252.2b in our Book of Discipline “the outreach ministries of the church should give attention to local larger community ministries of compassion, justice and advocacy.” Access to adequate nutrition is both an act of compassion and justice. This ministry is consistent with our Social Principles, and therefore, meets the basic requirements for granting permission for use (¶2533.3). In the absence of a mission and outreach team, the first thing I would do is ask that the item (consideration for beginning a soup kitchen) be added to both the Trustees’ and Church Council’s meeting agenda.

The trustees are charged with the responsibility of “supervision, oversight and care of all property and equipment acquired by the local church” (¶2533). They are also responsible to ensure that adequate insurance exists to protect the church from liability resulting from harm, acts of crime and structural damage (¶2533.2). At the trustee meeting, I would explain both the need for the soup kitchen and my recommendation that we allow the use of our church facility to offer house this ministry. Subsequent to discussion, the trustees proceed with voting whether to support use of the church facilities for a soup kitchen ministry.

The Church Council is charged with the responsibility of “planning and implementing” (¶252.1) programs which include outreach and witness. The vision for a soup kitchen would be presented at the Church Council meeting for discussion. The potential start-up costs would be presented to the finance committee to ascertain the availability of funding. If the Council agrees with moving forward in establishing a soup kitchen, a request for a motion to do so is made,

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seconded and a vote taken. I would recommend a sub-committee be formed to continue the vision and steps to fruition of the goal using the SMART goals formula.

I would also engage community support to establish the soup kitchen. In reading J. Clif Christopher's work on stewardship¹ I learned that there is evidence that gives in both the church and community will financially support ministry if there is a strong vision, a leader who will oversee the work to achieve the vision, and evidence of changed lives. Therefore, I would seek donors, both inside and outside of the church, that have supported our past ministries to minimize the financial stress on our church budget.

5. A constituent of your church comes to speak with you about their call to ministry. Describe the basic steps that are involved in seeking ordination.

Upon meeting with a member of my church and listening to their story related to hearing a call to ministry I would guide and support her/him through the following steps as outlines in Paragraph 310 in our Book of Discipline:

I would provide or encourage her/him to obtain and study "The Christian as Minister" and the "Ministry Inquiry Process" suggesting that we meet again to further discuss their call and answer questions related to their study of the suggested materials.

As s/he moves to begin candidacy, I would support my member as s/he writes her/his statement of call, contacts our District Superintendent and requests to meet with her/him to enroll in the candidacy process and the assignment of a mentor to work through the Candidacy Guidebook.

I would request scheduling a Staff-Parish Relations Committee meeting to meet with the candidate. Once approved, I would request through my DS, a Special Charge Conference to be scheduled at which time the candidate would make a public declaration of their call to the Body.

¹ J. Clif Christopher, *Not Your Parents' Offering Plate*, Abington Press, Tennessee: Nashville, 2015.

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By written ballot, the Charge Conference confirms or declines the applicant's candidacy by an affirmative two-thirds vote as a candidate for ordained or licensed ministry.

The candidate will be scheduled to meet with the District Committee of Ministry. The candidate will provide in writing their statement of call, formative experiences, belief, gifts, existing support system and their understanding of their call to the elder, deacon or licensed ministry. As the process continues, the candidate will provide authorization and consent for psychological examination, criminal background and credit checks. The candidate continues to work on the educational requirements (bachelor's degree followed by master's degree in theological studies; reference ¶324.3; ¶324.4).

The District Committee of Ministry is responsible for interviewing and affirming the candidate's call and recommending the candidate to the Board of Ordained Ministry. As the candidate's call is affirmed, s/he will begin their relationship with the BOOM, being voted on at the next General Conference and then beginning the process of preparing for consideration in Provisional Membership.

Once approved by BOOM and the membership of Annual Conference, the Provisional Member begins a two year period of full-time service. S/he participates in the Resident in Ministry meetings and is assigned a clergy mentor. At the end of the provisional period and upon successful completion of examination (written work and verbal interviews), the candidate will be presented for full membership as an Ordained Elder by the vote of Annual Conference.

6. Describe the general structures of the Annual Conference and how each body functions.

The Annual Conference is the organizational body of the United Methodist Church. The Annual Conference is comprised of both clergy and laity and meets annually to review the current status of ministry and to review and implement plans for vitality in ministry and mission.

The local church is the basic unit of our annual conference. The local church has an appointed clergy who works with the laity through the power of the Holy Spirit to grow in witness and vitality to the community where it is located. It is in the local church that people are edified and led to accept and profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior which results in a movement from inside to outside the church in service to God's World.

Local churches are organized into Districts. In our GNJAC we have nine (9) districts with each district being comprised of approximately sixty-five (65) churches. Each district has a District Superintendent, appointed by our Bishop, who serves to oversee and resource the local churches in his/her district. The District Superintendents are part of the Cabinet and meet at regular intervals under the leadership of the Bishop to discuss "the spiritual and temporal issues that exist within the region" (§424.2). Our districts are organized into three (3) main regions: North, Central and South.

Our annual conference has an administrative team housed in a central office and charged with the responsibility of resourcing the local church in targeted areas (i.e. Small Groups, New Disciples, Worship, Stewardship, Vitality) and maintaining statistical data related to each church within the conference.

7. Describe the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of the United Methodist Church.

The General Conference "has full legislative power over all matters distinctively connectional" (§16). Its body has a minimum of six hundred (600) delegates and caps at one thousand delegates (1,000). To ensure an opportunity for all voices to be heard, one-half of the conference is clergy and the other half is laity. Representation is compiled from all annual and central conferences. The General Conference exclusively can declare our official position of the United Methodist Church. General Conference meets every four (4) years and as outlined in

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paragraphs 13 through 16, is responsible for defining the duties and privileges of church membership, the role and responsibilities of clergy, the role and responsibilities of conferences (annual, missional, charge) and congregational meetings. General Conference is also responsible for setting the powers, responsibilities and privileges of the episcopacy. Through the General Conference changes may be made to our Books of Discipline, Resolutions, worship and Hymnal.

The General Conference is not authorized to revoke, change or alter the Articles of Religion, Confession of Faith, rules of government, General Rules or alter the net income from funds from their designated purposes (§17-22).

The composition of our Judiciary is determined by our General Conferences who determines the number and qualifications of its members and the terms of their office including how they will be elected and the handling of interim vacancies (§55). They hold the authority to determine whether a proposed act of the General, Jurisdictional, Central and Annual Conferences fits within the scope of being constitutional. This body listens and evaluates appeals from a Bishop's decision on a question of law as raised in the Annual Conference as long as the request is affirmed by one-fifth of the conference vote. They are also charged with determining the legality of actions taken by any General, jurisdictional or central Conference. The judicial system ensures clergy's' right to trial during an alleged breach of her/his vows (§55-58).

The executive branch of the United Methodist Church is the Council of Bishops. They are elected from the elders of the church at jurisdictional conferences and central conferences and serve four (4) year terms. They are charged with oversight of all the affairs of the church meeting at a minimum of annually to discern plans for the future of Christ's Church. A bishop presides over our General Conference, does not have a voting voice, and is responsible for

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ensuring that the rules and regulations as affirmed at General Conference are adhered to throughout their Conference (§47).

The Judicial Council is “the highest judicial body of the UMC” (§2601). Nine members sit on the council, reflecting diversity in their members, including the service of both laity and clergy. The Judicial Council is responsible for reviewing actions taken to determine their legality and every decision made as a point of law made by a bishop during annual conference (§2609).

8. What is your understanding of the theology behind Shared Ministries giving?

Stewardship is deeply ingrained throughout God’s story and is our love response to God for all that God has done for us. Upon hearing that Lot had been captured by the kings as they pilfered Sodom and Gomorrah he assembled troops and rescued Lot (Genesis 14:8-16). Abram was considered blessed by God for this victory and immediately gave God a “tenth of everything” (Genesis 14:20) in worship and thanksgiving to God. Abram gave acknowledging that victory was only possible through the God he worshipped. God subsequently directs Israel in Leviticus 27:30 that holy living includes returning a tithe to the Lord. Stewardship acknowledges that all things come from God and therefore we are called to return a portion of what God owns to God.

Jesus consistently taught on the management of money and possessions. In Matthew 6:19-21, Jesus cautions us not to store up our treasures here on earth, but rather, to do the work of building heaven on earth. This goes directly to our value system: we are not blessed in order for us to have bigger; we blessed by God to allow us to bless another who has less than needed.

I particularly embrace the image of stewardship created by the Acts Church (Reference: Acts 2:42-47). They gathered together, ate together and each contributed what they had so that everyone would have what they needed.

At the very heart of Shared Ministry is stewardship and support of our connectional system. Each Church contributes what they have for the greater good of all people allowing us to do more. In accordance with our Discipline, our Shared Ministry giving represents “the minimum needs for mission and ministry in the annual conference” (§247.14). This is our first responsibility as a church and supersedes any and all additional missional contributions we participate in as a church.

9. You have an idea for a unique form of ministry. How does the Book of Discipline guide us in seeking affirmation for ministries that are beyond the local church? What is the role of extension ministry in the life of the Church?

The role of extension ministry in the life of the church supports our mission as we “send people into the world to live lovingly and justly as servants of Christ” (§122). To fulfill our mission, elders “in effective relationship may be appointed to serve in ministry settings beyond the local United Methodist Church” (§343.1). The Book of Discipline provides the following guidance: Those feeling called to serve in an extension ministry shall advise the Bishop and / or District Superintendent of same “prior to any interview related to position” (§343.3). Once approved by the Bishop and the Board of Ordained Ministry, s/he may be appointed. As an extension of the ministry of a local church, clergy are held accountable for their commitment to Word, Sacrament, Order and Service. S/he continues to be part of our itinerant system and is accountable for submitting evidence of fruitfulness, continued missional need for the extension ministry, and fulfillment of ordination vows annually to the bishop, the district superintendent and the Board of Ordained Ministry for evaluation and continuation (§344.2a).

10. In what ways does your upbringing, your cultural context, and your personal experience shape your understanding of our polity?

Although I was raised in a Methodist Church, I was not introduced to our polity until I started my journey into pastoral ministry. My upbringing and life experience speaks to the need

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for a loving God, the need for divine forgiveness and salvation through Jesus Christ and a method for infusing hope into a very dark and broken world. Our polity provides the structure to live out the hope and promise of Christ to the world. As I am provided with the cumulative experience and history of the church, I am provided with wisdom from the past to facilitate moving into the future of the church. Our polity as ascribed in the Book of Discipline is beneficial in ordering the life of the church, minimizing debates over process and expending our energy to being the church. The Book of Discipline provides guidance in the what's, how's and why's which is invaluable as I live out my call in fulfilling my role as an elder.

My own experience also has lead me to make our Discipline both available and applicable to my congregants which helps them to not only appreciate our rich history but also understand our call, our methods and the rationale for what we do.

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I was born into a middle class family, the youngest of four children. Baptized in the Methodist Church, I attended both Sunday School and worship weekly and participated in the youth group. In retrospect, that was the extent of my Christian training. Outside of our Sunday mornings, our lives were filled with mental, emotional and physical abuse. When I was fortunate enough not to be the target, I was exposed to the abuse of my Mom and brothers and sister by my father. My Mom did her best to protect me, her youngest, but she paid a price, as I did, because resentment towards me grew. It is difficult to assimilate the teachings of the church while living abuse. Only in retrospect do I understand that I had not achieved major developmental tasks such as relationship building and the ability to play. As I grew in age and began to establish future goals, I was consistently told, “Don’t bother, you will never make anything of yourself.”

Once eighteen, I was locked out of my childhood home and began a long journey of crises and survival. I worked in minimum paying jobs, eventually entering nursing school while working all night at a Veteran’s Home to support myself living in someone’s home bartering their care for room and board. My graduation was not celebrated. I plunged myself into proving that I could make something of myself and through the years was hired into more and more lucrative positions in the health field believing that was proof of my value as a human.

Along the way, I met my husband perhaps because he also was broken. The marriage produced two daughters, Jessica and Courtney. My husband’s father, who died when he was in his early teens, made a death plea that he would have a son to carry on the family name. Those words would become a barrier to our family relationships especially after I bore a son who died. I worked at being good enough as a wife for eighteen years but the commitment was one-sided and he left me for someone else.

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Just months after our divorce, my husband was diagnosed with terminal cancer. I allowed him back into my life and took care of him. He died within two months of diagnosis. Courtney was only 11 when he died and in her childlike mind, she had believed that daddy would get well and be a changed man. Once that didn't happen, a whole set of new challenges were before me as she plunged into behavioral symptoms unable to deal with her grief. I was empty and exhausted.

There was no one event, but rather an accumulation of years of events. I began attending worship at my home church. One night in the depths of my brokenness, on my knees I cried out to God that I just couldn't do it anymore. My conversion was as immediate and complete as Wesley's at Aldersgate or Paul's on the road to Damascus. I was alive. I would spend hours studying Scripture and praying well into the early morning hours. One night in the cover of darkness, I was privileged to have a life changing experience. As I prayed I heard the voice of God assure me that "no life is too broken." It was an earth shaking moment for me and I have ever since been plunged into sharing God's message of hope and recovery.

I was blessed to have the pastor of my home church disciple me. She was patient as I was insatiable for ministry and service opportunities. I walked away from a six-figure job knowing that I didn't have to prove my worth through material means; I was and always had been good enough for God. I was the butterfly, freed, a witness to the resurrection of the walking dead.

I enrolled in a program to become a Christian Life Coach but that did not satisfy the call God had put in my heart. Although I wrestled with being called to pastoral ministry because of the season of my life, I was committed to being a witness to it is never too late to be all God created one to be. I completed an accelerated program in Christian Counseling through Somerset, achieving my Bachelor of Arts in eighteen months. That opened the door for me to apply and

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enter Drew. Through my candidacy process, I became Licensed as a local pastor and subsequently appointed. I am in awe of what Jesus has done in my life. I am privileged to be appointed to a local church where I can share the good news of the Gospel and walk with others in discipleship, service, healing and recovery.

Sandra Lee Stenstrom
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Education:

Drew University Madison, New Jersey
M.Div. May, 2014

Somerset Christian College
Zarapath, New Jersey
BA in Christian Counseling, December, 2010

Professional Christian Coaching and Counseling Academy
Certified Christian Life Coach, Awarded Certificate April, 2008

Nursing Diploma - Elizabeth General Hospital and Dispensary
Elizabeth, New Jersey
Graduate Nurse, May, 1979

Associate in Science - Union College
Cranford, New Jersey
Associate in Science, May, 1979

Chronological Ministry and Work History:

July, 2015 to present
Emmanuel United Methodist Church
21 East Cedar Avenue
Oaklyn, New Jersey 08107

Embury United Methodist Church
1 Wayne Terrace
Collingswood, New Jersey 08108
• Provisional Elder

July, 2012 to July, 2015
Wayside United Methodist Church
1229 West Park Avenue
Ocean, New Jersey 07712
• Licensed Local Pastor

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February, 2012 to June, 2012

Squankum United Methodist Church
45 Old Tavern Road
Howell, New Jersey 07731

- Led worship for Elder on extended leave of absence

July, 2011 to January, 2012

Wesley United Methodist Church
159 Bate and Pine Avenues
West Berlin, New Jersey 08091

- Led worship under the direction and supervision of Coordinating Elder three Sundays/month.
- Facilitated National Day of Prayer Community Service May, 2009

Lacey United Methodist Church (Home Church)

203 West Lacey Road
Forked River, New Jersey 08731

- Certified Lay Speaker
- Developed and Chaired “The Way” Outreach for Women and Youth
- Volunteer Coordinator for Family Promise
- Developed and Facilitated Loss and Recovery Group during Advent; Annually beginning 2010 to present
- Sunday School Teacher (6th, 7th, and 8th Grades)
- Facilitated National Day of Prayer Community Service May, 2011
- Facilitated “God in the Tough Stuff” Ocean City Youth Week-end, 2010
- Nurse for Youth Mission Trip to Russia, July, 2009
- Secretary United Methodist Women (2009)
- Prayer Director, Capital Campaign (2009)

NURSING:

Staff Nurse, April, 2005 to Present

Southern Ocean County Hospital Manahawkin, New Jersey

Director of Nursing, October, 2002 to February, 2005

Keswick Pines Lifecare: Whiting, New Jersey

- Twenty-four hour accountability for 66 bed unit.

Director of Nursing, November, 2000 to October, 2002.

Crystal Lake Healthcare and Rehabilitation: Bayville, New Jersey

- Returned to assist the Facility into Regulatory Compliance.

Director of Nursing, August, 1998 to November, 2000

Genesis Eldercare: Jackson Healthcare Center: Jackson, New Jersey

- Twenty-four hour accountability for overseeing all nursing operations of a 182 bed facility including a 44 bed sub-acute unit and 22 bed State Certified Dementia Unit.

Director of Nursing, December, 1991 to August, 1998
Crystal Lake Healthcare and Rehabilitation: Bayville, New Jersey
(Formerly Bayview Convalescent Center)

- Twenty-four hour accountability for overseeing all nursing operations and aspects of resident care in a 320 bed long term care facility providing care for a diverse resident population.

Director of Nursing, January, 1991 to December, 1991
Supervisor, September, 1989 to December, 1991
Logan Manor: Whiting, New Jersey

Staff Nurse, Oncology 1986 to 1989
St. Barnabus Medical Center, Livingston, New Jersey

Field Supervisor, 1985 to 1986
Visiting Homemaker Services, Toms River, New Jersey

Peritoneal Dialysis Coordinator, 1981 to 1984
Community Medical Center, Toms River, New Jersey

Staff Nurse, Medical-Surgical Critical Care Unit, 1980 to 1981
Norfolk General Hospital, Norfolk, Virginia

Staff Nurse, 1979-1980
New Jersey Home for Disabled Soldiers, Menlo Park, New Jersey 08837

TILLISCH, DAVID

- 1) Sermon
- 2) Bible Study
- 3) Practice of Ministry
- 4) Theology, Call, & Doctrine
- 5) Polity
- 6) Biographical Statement
- 7) Chronological Resume



NOTES

Board of Ordained Ministry

David Tillisch

Sermon

Preached October 9, 2016

The following sermon was preached on Sunday, October 9, 2016 at the First United Methodist Church of Blairstown, New Jersey (FUMCB) as part of a 12-week sermon series on “What Disciples Do.”

FUMCB is a rural congregation located in the hills of northwestern New Jersey. The demographics of the community are a largely Caucasian working class community with deep roots in the area, with a small percentage of white collar workers that commute to the suburbs and urban areas east along route 80. There are 7 different churches in the community, including one other UMC.

The congregation celebrated their 205th anniversary the day before the sermon was preached, thus attendance was lower than our average of 60. Like many UMCs we have a large percentage of senior members, but are also blessed with a good number working couples and families with children.

The community has undergone a shift from traditional organ music to more contemporary music led by a praise team over the past 4-5 years. This shift initially caused a good amount of conflict in the church, but we have now found our stride, and are enjoying our new format. The worship music leader makes sure to include at least one traditional hymn with each service, so that all people in attendance can find resonance with one or more of the songs that we use.

The sermon series was selected based on my assessment of the congregation’s discipleship practices, and a desire to increase their understanding of how disciples live their lives and practice their faith in our increasingly secular world.

Title: Disciples Make the Best of Babylon

Lectionary Texts: Jeremiah 29: 1, 4-7 & Luke 17:11-19

This morning, I want to talk to you about Babylon, and before you worry about whether or not I'm going to give you a history lesson for the next 15 minutes, I want to assure you that I'm not. But I want us to think about what we know about Babylon. What is Babylon? Where is Babylon? Why is it significant? And why is it important for us to talk about it as people living in Warren County, New Jersey, in the year 2016?

Well, historically speaking, Babylon was a large city in Mesopotamia, or modern day Iraq, that was at various times in our past the largest city in the world. When describing it, most people depicted it with a sense of reverence and awe, not only for its size but for its culture and economic significance to the region.

Biblically speaking, though, Babylon is known as the place where the Israelites were exiled to during the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar. In the year 597 BCE, Jerusalem was under siege by the Babylonian army, and when it fell, many of the leaders and people were moved into Babylon, while the Babylonian army occupied Jerusalem and continued to expand the empire. Thus most Christians probably don't have a positive impression of this once great city.

Metaphorically speaking, Babylon represents a place where you aren't happy with your circumstances and you don't want to be. It's a place where you don't feel at home, you don't like the leadership and the ways that they're running things, and you feel like a cultural outsider, and this is where I want to focus our time this morning.

In our reading from the book of Jeremiah this morning, Jeremiah shares a message from God to the people of Israel who are living under these circumstances. And essentially God tells the people of Israel to make the best of their circumstances. Make a home; establish a family, and be

fruitful in this place. Furthermore, “seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.” Jeremiah 29:7

Imagine the reaction from the Israelites receiving this word from the prophet Jeremiah. Here they are, they’ve been forcibly relocated; they’re living in a strange land where they’re made to comply with their rules and even worship their gods; they’re not happy with their circumstances and are convinced that the only way they will be happy is to return home. And so, they don’t want to invest any more of their time or energy into this place. They simply want to look out for themselves until they can get out of this place and go back home.

And yet, here’s God saying to these people that he loves, “invest in your family; invest in the land; invest in your home; and invest in the welfare of the city.” Why would God ask them to do this?

The first thing is that in doing so, they will improve their circumstances and become part of the solution instead of just being miserable and being part of the problem. The second reason is that in doing so, they are declaring in unspoken words that their happiness comes from God and not from their external circumstances. And the third thing this says to the Israelites is that they’re keeping a long term outlook beyond the current situation towards the hopeful future that God has promised for them and the world.

Jeremiah goes on to say, “‘for I know the plans I have for you,’ says the Lord. ‘They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.’” In other words, the mess that you’re in right now is just a temporary situation, and not the true source of your joy, so there’s no reason for you to despair in your present predicament.

So what does this faithful living look like? How can we imagine ourselves living in Babylon and seeking the welfare of the city?

For that, we go to our reading from Luke this morning. Jesus finds himself somewhere between Samaria and Galilee; someplace between what is for the Jews hostile territory and home where he feels comfortable. And while he is in this in between place, ten lepers; ten people that are ritually unclean approach him. Now in this society, if you are ritually unclean, you were not allowed to live in the village or the city. You were cast out by the priests to live outside the community and fend for yourself.

And so these people come to Jesus and are careful not to touch him, because if they touch him he would become ritually unclean as well. And they say to Jesus, “Master, have mercy on us,” and Jesus has mercy on all of them. He then tells them go and show themselves to the priests.

Now why would Jesus tell them to do this? Because, the only way for them to be allowed to reenter the society was for them to be declared ritually clean by the priests, so they needed to see them in order to be declared clean. But notice that Jesus has not made them clean. He just tells them to go and see the priests, and while they are walking, they will be made clean. They need to take a step in faith and follow Jesus Christ, knowing that as they do so, God will make them clean.

Well, as they’re walking, they do indeed become clean, and one of them stops and turns around and praises God and offers his thanksgiving to Jesus Christ. He was the only one out of the ten who was saved from his sin, because he was willing to turn and praise God and offer his thanks to Jesus Christ for the mercy he received.

Jesus didn’t care that he was a Samaritan, he was just thankful that he was made clean. Because Jesus sought the welfare of the village by showing mercy to all and healing everyone regardless of who they were or what they did. He knew that in doing so, it would have ripple effects that would improve the welfare of the entire city, and so he didn’t judge them for being unclean or

being outsiders; he didn't focus on just helping his own kind, and he wasn't angry that everyone wasn't saved. He was just happy to know that all of them were healed. He did what was best for the people of the city regardless of the circumstances he found himself in. Because Jesus knew without a doubt who he was in the eyes of God, and didn't base his happiness on his external circumstances. And that freed him to serve people around him without wishing that he was someplace else.

So this morning, as you come into this house of God, I ask you, "where are your Babylons?" Where is it in your life that you are unhappy with your external circumstances? Is it at home? Is it at work? Is it in a relationship or maybe more? Is it with our political system? Is it with the community that you live in or you thought you lived in? Where is it in your life that you wish you were someplace else and how are you responding to those circumstances? Are you seeking the welfare of the city, or are you circling the wagons and hunkering down until you can go and find your joy someplace else?

Like the ancient Israelites, we need to rely on God for our happiness and not our external circumstances. We need to believe that God has a future in store for all of us that is worthy of our hope and set our sights there. We need to make the best of our current circumstances by settling in, being fruitful, and seeking the welfare of those around us.

So if you don't like your neighborhood, be part of the solution. Establish a home there, raise your family, and seek the welfare of others. If you're unhappy with your job, continue to do it with integrity. Learn all you can from it while you're there, and do your best to make the company a better place both for you and everyone else that works there. If you're tired of being single, the answer doesn't lie in finding the perfect match. But instead, pursue your interests, make friends, and build a better life that you love while caring for others. If you're sick of the current

administration or the prospects for the next president of our country, stop looking for property in Canada – it's not the answer! Commit to the community where you live, raise a family and multiply, and do your part to make our nation great, because we are the people that do so.

We will always find ourselves living in a proverbial Babylon in some part of our life. But God wants you to know that your lasting joy doesn't come from things outside of you, but from the image of God that dwells deep inside of you. Make the best of any situation that you find yourself in, knowing that God is with you and knowing that God has a future that is planned for you that is worthy of your hope. Seek the welfare of the city knowing that it will have ripple effects that go far beyond your wildest dreams which will improve not only the city or village or community that you live in, but your own welfare as well. Amen.

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The following order of worship was used in conjunction with the readings from Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7 and Luke 17:11-19. The focus of the sermon was on God's faithful presence in the midst of our Babylons, and God's call to serve the welfare of the city while we are there. This theme is repeated through the prayers, scriptures, sermon, and songs.

GATHERING – Worship begins as people gather for the worship service. During this time, various activities occur that focus their minds on the work of worship and connect them with one another.

GREETING – The pastor greets the people, welcomes them to the church, and introduces the theme of the worship service. The congregation is then moved into an ordered time of worship through the words of greeting in the name of the Lord. Typically a responsive reading is used based on the lectionary readings for the day.

OPENING SONGS – the opening songs are a continuation of the greeting – a time to focus our minds on God and offer praise for the Divine presence that we have experienced in our lives throughout the week. As the congregation has transitioned into a more contemporary format, we have chosen to group three songs together, rather than the traditional format of having an opening hymn. This allows the praise team to lead the congregation from the high energy of the world into a more contemplative space for worship. “Everlasting God” and “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” both address God's faithfulness as we wait upon the Lord to change our circumstances. “10,000 Reasons” addresses our response of praise to God's faithfulness throughout all the seasons of our lives.

OPENING PRAYER – a unison prayer is shared to establish our purpose in gathering before God and ask for God’s grace in opening our hearts and minds to the message that God has for us that day.

CHILDREN’S TIME – this is a time for us to share the day’s message with our youngest disciples in an engaging way before they are dismissed for Sunday School. It also serves to reinforce the theme with the adults in the congregation.

PRAYING FOR JOYS AND CONCERNS – often people come to church burdened with their concerns and standing in the need of prayer, thus the time of prayer is offered early in the service. The body of Christ shares their joys and concerns with each other, and witnesses to their faith journey. The prayer leader then offers a prayer, which leads in to the Lord’s Prayer.

SCRIPTURE READINGS – The time of proclamation begins with two scripture readings: a reading, either from the Hebrew Testament, the Psalms, or the Epistles, and the gospel reading. The scriptures chosen typically work in conjunction with one another to provide a deeper understanding of God’s message. On this particular Sunday, the passage from Jeremiah was chosen because of the message God delivered to the Israelites through the prophet Jeremiah, which connected with the story of Jesus healing the lepers in the Luke reading.

SERMON – the sermon seeks to interpret the scriptures and apply them to our contemporary lives through the use of elements such as articles, videos, poetry, etc. On this particular Sunday, my goal was for people to understand that we all experience Babylon-like circumstances in our lives that make us want to be somewhere else, but they are not the source of our joy, God is. Instead of focusing on being somewhere else to be happy, God calls on us to trust him for our happiness and serve the welfare of the people around us no matter where we are.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION, WORDS OF ASSURANCE, PASSING THE PEACE – Our response to the word begins with the prayer of confession in light of what we have heard. If sin is what separates us from God and one another, than the only way to reconcile our relationship is to acknowledge our sin, repent, and receive and share God’s forgiveness. The words of the prayer of confession are based on the scriptures for the day and spoken corporately, to acknowledge our communal sinful nature. Following is a time of silence for personal examination and confession. After this time, words are shared, assuring us of God’s forgiveness and love. Once we have confessed our sin to God, and received forgiveness, we are then free to share God’s peace with one another through the passing of the peace.

GIVING GOD’S TITHES AND OFFERING – our final response is through the offering. By offering our gifts, we acknowledge and respond to God’s generosity towards us. Through our giving, we affirm our baptismal commitment to support the church with our entire lives.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING – a prayer offered in thanksgiving for God’s presence in our lives and dedicating the gifts that we have offered to the work of the Church.

CHURCH NEWS – before leaving to re-enter the world, the pastor highlights ministry and mission opportunities in the life of the congregation.

CLOSING SONG – the closing song transitions the people from a time of worship in the sanctuary to a time of worship in the world. It affirms the day’s message, and encourages people in their walks of faith as they leave the sanctuary. “Blessed Be Your Name” was chosen to remind us that God’s name is blessed no matter what circumstances we find ourselves in.

DISMISSAL WITH BLESSING – The pastor offers final words, usually summarizing the message for the day, and encouraging people to bring it into the world in service to God.

Welcome Friends!

October 9, 2016

We are glad that we can worship God together today. Please take time to greet one another and center on God's presence.

Join us for fellowship after worship.

If this is your first time here,

we'd like to extend a special welcome to you!

Here are some quick notes to make your visit easier:

- * *Children are welcome, and may stay in worship or join our Sunday School, which begins after the children's time. Books and activity packs are available on the bookshelf in the foyer.*
- * *Bathrooms are out the rear doors, and down the hall to the left. If you have any other questions, just tap the shoulder of the person sitting next to you and we'll be happy to answer them.*

Church Meetings - Trustees Tues @ 7;
Encounters with Jesus Wed @7;

Encounters with Jesus – Wed Eve Study Think you know everything about Christianity? Come and challenge your assumptions! In this 10-week study, we'll look at conversations Jesus had with everyday people and uncover unexpected answers to life's biggest questions along the way. Contact Pastor Dave to reserve a copy of the book and join the conversation Wednesdays at 7 p.m.

Mark Your Calendars – Church Conference October 22

Our annual church conference will be held Saturday, October 22 from 9-11 at the St. John's UMC in Hope. Like last year, we will be gathering with 9 other churches from our area for worship, presentations, and our church's business session. All are invited and encouraged to attend!

31 Days of Prayer for America

During this time of challenges and decisions for our country, we invite you to join us for a month of prayer for the USA. Prayer journals are available in the sanctuary that will guide you through a daily 5-minute time of prayer for every state, as well as our leaders and Christ's ministry in our land.

Halloween Candy Collection

Our church will be participating in the town's Halloween festivities by handing out candy on East Ave. This is an opportunity to connect with hundreds of children in our community and share God's love. Donations of individually wrapped candies are appreciated and may be dropped off in Fellowship Hall.

Support First UMC through Amazon Smile

Announcing a new way to support our church while you shop! First UMC is now partnering with Amazon Smile! Shop online from the comfort of your home, and support our ministry at the same time! Simply visit <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/23-2536311> to associate our church with your account, and start shopping at smile.amazon.com - it's that simple!

Flower Power Fundraiser

Help support our ministry and beautify your home with bulbs and perennials just in time for fall planting and invite your friends to do the same. In addition to catalogs, you can customize your own online ordering page to share with your friends and family. For more information, contact Michelle Peterson.

PT Youth Director Opening

The Sparta UMC is seeking a part-time youth director. Candidate should be a grounded Christian, creative, well organized, & technologically savvy. Also required are excellent communication and relational skills with youth and parents of all backgrounds and situations. Please email resume to admin@spartaumc.org

Love Your Neighbor

Jesus affirmed the Old Testament teaching to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18). There are many ways to do this: give someone a ride to church, teach a Sunday School class, invite someone to a Bible study, mow someone's lawn. Stephen Ministry is one important, tangible way to show God's love to others. To find out more about this distinctive way to be a caring Christian, contact Pastor Dave.

Our Friends Serving Us Today

Lay Reader: Barbara Dwiggin **Prayer Leader:** Bill Willix

Children's Time: Pastor Dave

Ushers: Odessa Kise, Holly Moyna,

Lois Bedell, Rose Schoen

Greeters: Kathy Chambarry

Audio-Visual Ministry: Jack Tironi



October 9, 2016 21st Sunday after Pentecost

Today's Worship Service:

Responsive Greeting

Opening Songs

Everlasting God

Great is Thy Faithfulness

10,000 Reasons

Opening Prayer

Children's Time

Praying for Joys and Concerns

The Lord's Prayer (#895)

Scripture Reading

Jeremiah 29: 1, 4-7

Luke 17: 11-19

Message

Disciples Make the Best
of "Babylon"

Pastor Dave

Prayer of Confession

Words of Assurance

Giving God's Tithes & Offering

Anthem Draw Me Close

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Church News

Closing Song

Blessed Be Your Name

Dismissal With Blessing

FIRST UNITED METHODIST

CHURCH OF BLAIRSTOWN

10 Stillwater Road; PO Box 364

Blairstown, NJ 07825

Phone: 908-362-6693

Pastor Dave Tillisch

Email: info@firstumcblairstown.com

Website: firstumcblairstown.com

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Visitors and Regular Attendees
We are delighted to have you worshipping with us today!
 If this is your first time here, we invite you to register your presence by completing this form and placing it in an offering plate as it is passed. *If you regularly attend FUMC of Blairstown and have updated information, please complete this form.*

(TEAR ALONG PERFORATION)

I want to learn more about becoming a Christian
 I have recently become a Christian & I am interested in more information about the Christian life
 I am interested in being baptized
 I am interested in membership at the FUMC of Blairstown
 I would like the pastor to call me
 I would like to pass along the following prayer/visitation request to the pastor:
 I would like to talk to someone about using my gifts/talents in the following area:

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone _____
 Email _____
 Children's Name/s _____ Age/s _____

 I'm a student at: _____
 I'm a visitor
 I'm a regular attendee

Those in need of our prayers:

For Prayer Requests or Pastoral Care, contact Pastor Dave
 908-362-6693, or by email, pastordave@firstumcblairstown.com

Praises. . .Successful Heart Failure & Transplant Walk ; New Meditation Trail; 205th Celebration; Meeting Baby Patrick; People who helped with the Memorial; Ignite Youth Conference; Aunt Elsie Successful surgery; Aunt Bev visiting

Our Loved Ones. . . Rita (healing); Marjorie (surgery); Betty (illness); Josephene (kidney); Amy (pregnancy); Marilyn (terminal illness); Daniel (in need of kidney transplant); Barb D. (osteoporosis); Ella B. (Michelle P's grand-niece); Fred C & his son, Bob; Betty (recovery from fall); Rob (surgery); Emily (surgery); Lisa (family issues); Alex (incarceration); Pastor Dave (Ordination work); Jean (hospice); Don (heart surgery); Casey (addiction); Bob (hospital)

Those dealing with cancer diagnosis and treatment. . . Kayla (chemotherapy); Ginny (breast cancer); Chris (stage 4 cancer); Karen S; Tom S.; Heather (stage 4 cancer); Bobbie; Tony & Tisha; Bria; Barbara S. (surgery); Dennis; Rose; Shannon (chemotherapy)

Those who are mourning. . . family and friends of: Dottie Duckworth;

Our Church and Its Ministry, especially. . .

- New visitors at our church;
- Our Food Pantry and the people it serves;
- Our denomination to go where God leads;
- Our Stephen Ministry and the people who need their care;

Victims of Terror Attacks in the past 2 weeks. . .

Nineveh (25); Bagdad (17); Al-Hasakah (32); 131 attacks in September.

Our Community, Leaders and the World. . .

- Our Representatives, serving in Congress;
- Police and First Responders; Firefighters battling wildfires;
- People impacted by Hurricane Matthew;
- For reconciliation & forgiveness;
- Those who suffer silently with mental illness and fear asking for help;
- Our country's veterans and all who live with scars from combat.
- The unemployed, marginally employed, & those stuck in dead-end jobs;
- Our friends, family members and neighbors struggling with addiction;

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Board of Ordained Ministry

David Tillisch

Bible Study

November 1, 2016

BIBLE STUDY ON THE BOOK OF ROMANS

SETTING AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This Bible Study was offered as a 14-week study in the spring of 2016. Initially, we intended for it to be an 8-week study covering 2 chapters a week, but found the material too dense to compact two chapters into each week, so we decided instead to pace ourselves at a chapter a week. The group gathered from 7-8:30 on Wednesday evenings. Most weeks we had 7 people in attendance. Half the group is college educated and upper-middle class; the other half is working class with a high school education. All are in their 50s or above, white, and moved to a rural community from a more urban/suburban setting.

The purpose of the study was to engage in this foundational text for our faith, and strengthen our commitment to discipleship. It was taught using an informal conversational method with the pastor serving as the facilitator, and questions being provided to guide the group discussion.

OUTLINE

Intro & Chapter 1

1. Summary of Book of Romans
 - a. Significance to Christian faith
 - b. Significance to John Wesley (handouts: John Wesley's Heart Strangely Warmed, and Martin Luther's Preface to Romans)
2. Chapter 1:1-17 – Paul's mission to the Gentiles
 - a. Paul and his ministry (1:1-15)
 - b. The gospel that Paul proclaims (1:15-18)

3. Chapter 1:18-32 – Our need for salvation

- a. ALL are in need of salvation (1:18-23)
- b. What happens when we're left to pursue our hearts' desires (1:23-32)

Chapter 2 – All have fallen short and need God's redemption

1. 1-16- Don't be so quick to condemn

- a. We have all fallen short and are in need of redemption (2:1-11)
- b. Knowledge is only half the battle – we must live differently (2:12-16)

2. 17-29 – Our actions must match our words

- a. Christianity is more than being moral (2:17-24)
- b. Circumcision and baptism are only the beginning (2:25-29)

Chapter 3

1. 1-20 – Understanding our sinful status

- a. Sin is a state of being – you are either sinful or not. (3:1-8)
- b. Sin impacts many parts of our lives (3:10-18)
- c. Doing good cannot wipe sin out (3:19-20)

2. 21-31 – New understanding of how made righteous

- a. Christianity's road to righteousness (3:21-25)
- b. What is justification and redemption? (3:26)
- c. This is not our doing (3:27-31)

Chapter 4

1. 1-8 – God hasn't changed the rules

- a. Abraham was righteous because of his faith (4:1-3)
- b. Trusting God for our righteousness (4:4-8)

- c. Why should God let you into heaven?
2. 9-25 – Is salvation really for everyone?
 - a. Salvation isn't just for Jews (4:9-10)
 - b. Abraham – a study in faithful living (4:11-23)
 - c. The difference justification makes (4:24-25)

Chapter 5

1. 1-11 – Why justification matters
 - a. Justification has its benefits (5:1-4)
 - b. How we know our hope is true (5:5-8)
2. 12-21 – How Christ's sacrifice makes a difference
 - a. The human condition (5:12)
 - b. Why we still pay the price for Adam's sin (5:13-14)
 - c. A tale of two Adams (5:15-19)
 - d. Grace rules over sin (5:20-21)
 - e. Handout – the mistakes of legalism and liberalism

Chapter 6

1. 1-14 – Why bother being good if salvation isn't based on deeds?
 - a. We've 'died to sin' (6:1-5)
 - b. Sin's choke hold broken (6:6-11)
 - c. Living into our new reality (6:13-14)
2. 6:15-7:6 – Do we still have to follow the Law?
 - a. Everyone lives for something (6:15-16)
 - b. Slaves to God = freedom (6:17-23)

- c. Free but not totally free – a love story (7:1-6)

Chapter 7

1. 7-25 – Is the law sinful?
 - a. The law and sin (7:7-13)
 - b. Sin: a parasite in a righteous host (7:14-20)
 - c. Godly minds; sinful bodies? (7:21-25)

Chapter 8

1. 1-17 – Living into our new reality
 - a. Black clouds of our past are removed (8:1-8)
 - b. We go where the Spirit goes (8:9-13)
 - c. We are heirs to God’s promises (8:14-17)
2. 18-30 – Is faithful living worth the hardship?
 - a. New creation is worth the hardship (8:18-25)
 - b. Those who love God will stick with him (8:26-30)
 - c. Salvation is not a one way street (Handouts: Do United Methodists Believe “Once Saved Always Saved?” and “John Wesley on Predestination”)

Chapter 9

1. 1-33 – It’s hard to leave friends behind
 - a. Paul laments the Jews’ rejection of Christ (9:1-13)
 - b. Does God play favorites through election? (9:14-18)
 - c. There is always purpose to our lives (9:19-23)
 - d. God always intended to save people from all nations (9:24-33)

- e. Grace is available to all, not just the elect (Handouts: “Understanding Romans 9 Without the Calvinist Spin” and “Predestination: Does God Choose Your Fate?”)

Chapter 10

1. 1-21 – Moving forward with those who will listen
 - a. Faith needs zeal and knowledge (10:1-4)
 - b. Christ is the goal of the law; salvation is based on faith (10:5-10)
 - c. God’s salvation is available to all (10:11-13)
 - d. We all have an obligation to share the gospel (10:14-15)
 - e. Why haven’t the Jews responded? (10:16-21)

Chapter 11 – Reconciling the promises of the Jews with the covenant of Christ

1. God has not rejected the Jews (11:1-6)
2. Jews too focused on earning salvation (11:7-10)
3. Paul now free to share with Gentiles (11:11-15)
4. Bringing in the gentiles will reinvigorate the faith (11:16-24)
5. Still hope for the Jews (11:25-32)
6. God is a mystery beyond our grasp (11:33-36)

Chapter 12 – A life lived in grace

1. Now that you know of Christ’s sacrifice, live sacrificially (12:1-2)
2. Holding ourselves in the right esteem (12:3-8)
3. Be genuine and love one another (12:9-16)
4. Never engage evil with evil (12:17-21)

Chapters 13 & 14

1. Chapter 13 – A life lived in grace II

- a. Relating to Secular Governing Bodies (13:1-7)
 - b. Don't be in debt except in loving each other (13:8-10)
 - c. Live as if Jesus may come soon (13:11-14)
2. Chapter 14 – A life lived in grace III
 - a. Food Culture: a study of how to nurture new disciples (14:1-12)
 - b. Don't let food come between you and loving your neighbor (14:13-18)
 - c. Eating and living according to your conscience (14:19-23)

Chapters 15 & 16

1. Chapter 15 – A life lived in grace IV
 - a. Sharing your power with those who have less (15:1-3, 7-13)
 - b. Sharing hope in the community (15:4-6)
 - c. Carrying on Paul's ministry to the Gentiles (15:14-21)
 - d. Paying our 'debt for our faith' forward (15:22-29)
 - e. Praying for our evangelists (15:30-33)
2. Chapter 16 – Closing greetings
 - a. Our faith takes a village (16:1-16)
 - b. Guard against divisions (16:17-20)

DETAILED LESSON PLAN

What Does a Life Lived in God's Grace Look Like? (Romans 13 & 14)

Learning Goals

While Christians do not follow the Law in order to gain our salvation, our lives will be lived differently once we receive God's gift of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

1. Understand Paul's perspective about secular governing bodies and call to treat those who serve as servants of God
2. Be financially free of debt while living with a debt to love our neighbor
3. Live our lives with a sense of urgency about the work we do, believing that Christ may return soon.
4. Nurture and instruct those who are new to the faith without condemning their practices that are different
5. Don't let trivial differences in culture prevent you from loving your neighbor
6. Live according to your conscience in matters that are not crucial to our faith.

Teaching Strategies

The lesson was taught using a combination of biblical commentary and exegesis, and group discussion based on questions provided.

Teaching Aids

The handout that follows includes the commentary and questions provided to the group

Chapter 13

(1-7) How should the Christian relate to the state? This is the question Paul engages as he begins Chapter 13. Paul, living in secular Greek world, and writing to an audience living under Roman rule, where Caesar is seen as divine, says clearly that Christians should “place themselves under the authority of the government.” (13:1) Paul’s theology is interesting here. He believes that whether good or bad, the authorities have been placed in their position by God (13:1-2), and therefore are worthy of respect. He also believes that the government is there to serve God and is necessary to establish order in the society (13:3-4). Lastly, Paul tells his readers that they are to pay the government what they owe in taxes to support God’s assistants and keep their consciences clear (13:6-7).

- Paul’s words make it seem that Christians should support the authorities of the state without exception. What Biblical examples can you cite in support of this idea, and in opposition to it?
- In a country that is deeply divided along party lines, what does it look like to support a candidate you do not agree with and place yourself under their authority? In what ways should Christians speak up when injustices occur?
- What do you believe Paul would say to the recent shootings of unarmed black men by police in our country?
- How do you respond to Paul’s view to pay your taxes, or render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s?

(8-10) Paul believes that Christians should not be in debt “except for the obligation to love one another.” (13:8) This follows on the heels of his imperative to never repay evil for evil, but defeat evil with good (12:17 & 21).

- Have you ever thought of loving your neighbor as a debt you have to pay? Why do you think Paul believes this is the only debt a Christian should have? How do other obligations impact your ability to follow God’s call?
- Paul is very clear that Christians are to be a part of the society, and not separated from it. How might his notion of a love debt be connected to his instructions regarding evil?

(11-14) Paul lives with the notion that the Day of Judgment is near, and that there’s an urgency to his ministry.

- As people living with a very different perspective on Jesus’ coming, how do we not become complacent and ‘behave appropriately as people who live in the day?’ (13:13)
- How would you live differently if you knew that “salvation was nearer than when you first had faith?” (13:11)

Chapter 14

In chapter 14, Paul moves on to discuss how we should treat each other within the community of faith – specifically, how those who are ‘strong’ in the faith should treat those who are ‘weak’.

(1-12) Paul uses different faith practices around food to illustrate some of the conflicts that tend to arise between those who are ‘strong’ in their faith, and those who are ‘weak’. The first question we must answer is what Paul means by ‘strong’ and ‘weak’. Timothy Keller describes ‘strong’ as referring to “those who are assured that they are saved by the gospel [, and not by

works of the law,] and therefore understand that there are areas in which they are free to choose based on their conscience; and ‘weak’ as “those who cling to a legalistic spirit, and have not worked out the implications of the gospel.”¹

Underneath this discussion of how the strong should treat the weak is a dialogue about what faith practices are basic principles that should be followed by all believers, and which are preferences of conscience. Paul believes that those who are new to the faith may come to the conclusion that they should be vegetarian, while those who are more mature may not feel the need to have any laws around food, since God made all things clean. In the end, Paul implores the ‘strong’ to have an attitude of humility and accountability that both embraces their obligation to nurture the faith of the ‘weak’ and doesn’t take their own faith practices too seriously.

- What do you make of Keller’s definition of ‘strong’ and ‘weak’? Do you think this aligns with Paul’s? Is there anything you would add? Can you think of a life experience that would support or dispute these definitions?
- How might being dismissive about a new Christian’s faith practices impact their adherence to the faith? If you’ve been a Christian for a long time, how might you better support those who are new to the faith, or, if you’re new to the faith, how would you want to be supported?
- Where do you find yourself being judgmental of your brother or sister’s faith practices? How might you better honor another’s convictions while being true to your own?
- When challenged by a particular faith practice, where do you go for answers? How do you discern if it’s a basic principle or a preference of conscience?

(13-18) Paul connects the discussion about judging one another’s eating habits with the command to love one another. If food is becoming an issue, then eat something else! Don’t let it prevent you from loving one another, and certainly don’t let it ‘destroy someone for whom Christ died’ (14:15)

- While food was a good example for Paul to use in his context where people who had strict food laws were coming in contact with people who didn’t, it may not be a good example for us to use today. What are some situations that come up in today’s context?
- Paul says that “God’s kingdom isn’t about eating food and drinking but about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.” (14:17) What disagreements within our church, or the church at large divert our focus from God’s kingdom?

Paul closes this chapter by telling the faithful to keep their beliefs about food to themselves. People are blessed when they can live according to their conscience, as long as it doesn’t cause them to sin.

- Where do you find yourself not being able to live according to your conscience because others have expressed their opinions about your actions? How do you find balance between being sensitive to other’s consciences, and living according to your own?
- How do you determine when to express your opinion and when to keep it to yourself?

¹ Keller 147

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EVALUATION

It’s difficult to separate this particular lesson from the evaluation of the entire 14-week Bible study, because there were cumulative effects that impacted how people received this individual lesson. Cumulatively speaking, this was a wonderful study that really opened the eyes of the participants to the life changing message of Jesus Christ, and the grace that we have been given. Without that context, this lesson might seem like a lesson on moral living, but in the context of

the entire study, these changes in our living are understood as our response to the grace that God has shown each of us, and the power the forgiveness has in transforming our lives.

Because this lesson came towards the end of our time together and dealt with life application, I felt more comfortable challenging the participants with applying the scriptures to their lives and our modern world, especially with regards to Romans 13:1-7, and Paul's words about relating to the state. I believe this to be a strength of this lesson. In addition, the questions provoked good conversation, even though it was occasionally challenging to keep it from becoming overly political in the first part. Again, I take this as a good indication that this was a strength.

If I were to teach this lesson a second time, I would have liked to send the participants home with a list of questions to consider as they did their reading in preparation for the following week's discussion, so that they would have more time to prepare for the discussion. I also would encourage them to come up with their own life applications, and possibly find a news story or article that engaged one of the topics that Paul mentions. Lastly, I would call out more key concepts in the handouts, so people could have a clear set of goals, and be able to check for understanding after the discussion.

In talking with the participants about the study, they all indicated that they really enjoyed it and benefitted from it, and hoped that we would continue to do more like it. They prefer studies like this based on books of the Bible rather than topical studies or book studies. They also like the informal conversation approach where I am a facilitator and participant, rather than a straight lecture.

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What do you think are the most effective means of doing evangelism in the 21st century? How have you lived this out in your current context of ministry?

The most effect means of evangelism are sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with people through genuine relationships that seek to understand where God is present in their lives and communities, and connecting people to that presence. What changes are the ways that we establish and nurture those relationships and communicate the Good News.

The 21st century has witnessed a revolution in the way people communicate with one another. We have gone from a people centered on the written word and face to face contact to a people centered on images and videos that connect virtually through social media on a worldwide stage. This radical change has forced me to step outside my comfort zone and adopt new technologies, while still encouraging people to connect face to face.

Two of my primary communication outlets are email and Facebook. Email allows me to communicate with my entire congregation at the stroke of a key, and through Facebook I can potentially connect with thousands in my community, and billions around the world. While these mass communication methods are important, they are not always adequate. When people need to talk about their walk of faith, or discuss a theological issue, nothing beats an in-person meeting over a cup of coffee.

What makes a congregation vital, and how do you measure it? How would you envision working with a congregation to become more vital?

Vitality connotes an image of liveliness. In the context of a local church, it is living out our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by sharing the gospel and making people aware of God's love and grace; bringing people into the church where they can commit their lives to Christ and be embraced and supported by a caring community; nurturing people in their understanding of our faith and walking with them as they grow in grace;

and engaging people in missions of mercy and justice where they can respond to God's love and share God's grace with others.

In the Church, we have a number of metrics to measure these areas of vitality: attendance in worship, professions of faith, numbers of small groups and people in them, giving to the church and to mission, and the numbers of people involved in missions. In addition to these quantitative statistics, I would add some qualitative evaluations: are people helping each other see and seek Christ in their lives?; do they care for one another?; are they partnering in ministry with other community groups and organizations?; do they work well together and seek to expand the ministry?; are they willing to change?; do the demographics of the church match the community?; and is this a place they would want to invite people to come to?

In two of my appointments, I have increased vitality by working with congregational leaders to establish strategic plans and visions for our ministry. This process helped not only clarify where we were heading and unify our efforts, but also engaged them in the process and gave them a sense of ownership. We also reached out to community leaders to get their input about issues facing our community, which helped to build relationships with them and let them know that we were interested in working with them to be a part of the solutions. Lastly, this process identified where we needed to grow in order to meet our goals, and engaged the laity in coming up with ideas on how to bridge the gaps and bring us closer to our vision.

What is your personal approach to conflict? Provide an example of where you have been involved in resolving conflict. What did you learn?

My approach to conflict is to deal with it in a collaborative way so all parties involved can move forward. Before doing so, though, I do my best to step back and understand what's causing the conflict both in the organization and within me, and then seek to sit down with the parties involved, hear all sides, and move towards a resolution.

When I came to my current appointment, there was a fair amount of conflict within the church over the way decisions were being made and the direction things were going. Most of the conflict centered on the worship format and music, but extended to the way money was being spent and the direction the church was heading. In response, I had conversations with various leaders in the church to hear their concerns and understand what they felt the sources and solutions were. What I discovered was two or three people were making decisions for the entire congregation, and implementing them without communicating why they were being done.

After much thought and prayer, I implemented some changes to help bring more voices into the conversation, and better communicate what was decided and why. This not only helped to engage more people in the ministry, but also increased their comfort with what was happening, which greatly decreased the level of conflict.

What is your theological and practical understanding of itinerancy?

There are both theological and practical foundations for using the itinerant system to appoint clergy to charges in the Church. Theologically speaking, God has appointed or called people at certain times to serve places and people based on the gifts God saw in them. Moses was appointed to speak to Pharaoh and lead the Israelites; Noah was appointed to build the ark and save a remnant of creation from the flood; Jonah was called to go to Nineveh and call them to repent; and Saul was transformed to Paul and appointed to preach to the Gentiles. In each of these cases, God saw the gifts these people had, often unbeknown to them, and sent them to minister in places they might not have chosen to go.

On a practical level, the itinerant system allows the bishop's cabinet to match a pastor's strengths with a congregation's needs; to broaden cross cultural interactions and understanding; to help congregations focus on Christ rather than being attached to a personality; and to increase the authority of the pastoral office and the ability to speak prophetically without the fear of being

fired. It also ensures that there is a charge for every pastor, and a pastor for every charge. No church ever has to go through the painful process of seeking a new pastor; and no pastor ever has to worry about finding their next place of vocational employment.

How do you engage all age groups in your community?

The church is one of the few intergenerational community organizations. Most civic organizations are for adults; and all schools segregate children by age. Therefore, it's important to engage all age groups in the ministry in order to increase understanding across generations and allow the wisdom of our seniors to interact with the energy and passion of our youth.

One of the best examples of intergenerational ministry happens with our food pantry where elementary school children work with our most senior members to meet the nutritional needs of our community's poorest members. The children learn how to do different facets of the ministry, and are involved with all aspects. What's most encouraging is when they want to invite their friends to come and serve with them! In addition, we also invite all age groups to participate in our worship services, play music with our praise team, and serve on our committees.

What is your understanding of pastoral authority, and how do you intend to exercise it in your place of ministry?

As a provisional elder, I am called by the Church to take authority in matters of Service, Word, Sacrament, and Order. While that sounds great on paper, the practical application is one of earning respect and asserting authority in a way that respects the members of the congregation, and picking and choosing my battles while letting others wait for another time. In most situations, I see my role more as teacher than authoritarian ruler. Yes, there are times when I need to establish boundaries over what people can and can't do, but there are others where I need to nudge and teach in a certain direction until the laity decides that it's the right direction to go.

Because of the itinerant relationship I have with my appointed charge, I know that most members will have a longer term relationship with the ministry than I will, so I can't just walk in and say,

“I have authority, listen to me!” At the same time, I realize that I am there as the appointed authority of the conference, and need to keep the church connected to it. Therefore, my approach is one of relationship and trust building, assuring the members that I am there to support them in their faith and care for their church, and in the process gaining their trust and increasing their willingness to respect my pastoral authority.

If you could choose from anyone to mentor you in leadership skills, who would that be and why?

I would choose Pope Francis. As someone who is great at the administrative aspects of ministry, my leadership could gain from studying Pope Francis’ ability to delegate that part of his ministry and focus on reaching out to the poor and marginalized, and inspiring his flock as an example of Christ’s love in action.

Ever since he was installed as pope, I have been inspired by his willingness to be with the people, take selfies with the crowd, stop his motorcade to bless someone, feed the hungry, visit the orphaned, open doors to the homeless, and challenge leaders of the world to do better. Because of his example, I want to be a better pastor and continue to work with God’s grace to transform my life, and I want my leadership to have the same impact on the people I serve.

Describe a situation in which you felt a need to assert a professional boundary in the practice of ministry.

In my first charge, I was engaged in a pastoral counseling relationship with a church member who also had children that my children enjoyed playing with. Boundaries quickly became blurred, and I found myself in an uncomfortable dual role relationship. Was I Dave, my kids’ father, or was I Pastor Dave, counselor and theological educator?

Eventually, it became painfully clear why professional boundaries are necessary, and I was forced to go through the painful process of reestablishing them for my protection and my family’s well-being. I had to keep things strictly professional, which included not letting my

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children play with their friends. Since that time, I have been very clear about my pastoral and personal relationships, and it has helped me be a more effective pastor.

How have you worked through the experience of forgiving someone?

During my ministry, one of my church leaders took it upon themselves to convene a meeting of the SPPRC at their home without my knowledge. I was deeply hurt when I was informed about this meeting a few days before it happened. This person had been someone I considered an early ally in my ministry, and in many ways I felt stabbed in the back by his actions.

Following the meeting, I spoke to the person that convened the meeting. In addition to discussing the fact that the meeting was in direct violation of the Book of Discipline, I let him know how much I was personally hurt by his actions. He also shared the frustrations that led to them, and we were able to come to a greater understanding. We offered each other forgiveness, and were able to move forward with a stronger working relationship that continues to go well.

What are you doing to help those around you take good care of themselves?

As a pastor, my role is to encourage people to serve others and support the church, while taking care of themselves in keeping with the command to your neighbor as yourself. In our church's Stephen Ministry, we talk a great deal about the importance of caring for others without jeopardizing our own well being. In supporting one another, we ensure that we are not overextending ourselves, and becoming martyrs along the way. This is a practice that I try to not only apply to myself, but also carry throughout my ministry.

With my church leaders, I check in with them to understand what's going on in their personal lives, and ensure that their work at the church is not becoming an undue burden. When things are out of balance, I encourage them to find someone else to take care of things, or pitch in to help.

I also encourage my fellow clergy to care for themselves through our weekly lectionary group. During our time together, we provide a safe space to discuss the challenges that we face and

offer support by sharing our collective wisdom, and encouraging each other to care for ourselves as we serve in ministry.

How have you invited someone to faith and seen their faith develop?

Through our church's food pantry ministry, I had the opportunity to connect with one of our guests who had questions about her faith and about God. During our conversations, I invited her to come to church and check it out. She started coming to worship, and really enjoyed the messages, the support, and the experience of being a part of the community. After a few months, I invited her to come to our membership class, which she gladly accepted. After completing the class, she joined our church, and since then, she has gone on to attend the Walk to Emmaus, become a part of the UMW, and attend Bible study regularly.

I have watched her deepen her understanding of Jesus the Christ and the grace that God shares with her, and become an integral part of our congregation. I have also witnessed how her faith is carrying her through a life-threatening illness, and sustaining her spirit in amazing ways.

What have you overcome to come to this season in your ministry?

I was not a person who had immense obstacles thrown in front of me that prevented me from following God's call. What I did have to overcome, though, was my self-reliance and my unwillingness to commit to God's calling. As someone who was competent and physically capable, I often described myself as a jack of all trades and master of none. I could do lots of things relatively well, but had a hard time picking one thing that I wanted to do. Instead of seeking God's call, I sought jobs that were well regarded and paid decent salaries. Because of this, I felt trapped in a job I did not want, and yearned for the opportunity to be free.

When my daughter was born, I got that opportunity. I was given the gift of being a stay-at-home father and living without my salary. This freed me to discern my call to ministry and assured me that I did not need all the trappings that enslaved me to corporate life and corporate paychecks.

How would you describe your prayer life in this season, and how has it changed over your journey?

Prayer continues to be an important part of my relationship with Jesus the Christ. I pray regularly, but not always in the same place, time, or way. My wife and I typically start each day in prayer for our lives, our family, our marriage, our ministries, and our world. This has been a consistent practice of ours throughout our marriage. Beyond that, I pray during my times of silent meditation, walks on the meditation path, and exercise on my bike or at the gym.

What has changed over my journey is the need to be more intentional about prayer. As a results oriented person, I am susceptible to letting my tasks overtake the practices that sustain my ministry. When I do this, I find that I lose my center. Therefore, I work to ensure that I intentionally work time into my schedule to be in prayer, connect with God, and center myself.

When you read the Bible, how do you hear God's voice? What example might you give of how you responded?

As a pastor, I read the Bible differently than I did as a lay person. While I continue to read with a focus on listening for God's voice, I do so with two audiences in mind: myself, as a child of God, and my congregation, as a pastor leading them into a relationship with Jesus the Christ. When I read for personal study, I am more focused on how God is speaking to me; and when I reflect on the scriptures in preparation for a sermon, I focus more on how God is speaking to the community. When I hear God's voice, it is not an external voice, but my inner voice conversing with God's message as conveyed through the scriptures. At times it affirms God's love for me, and at other times challenges me to live differently, see things from a different perspective, and go places I might not otherwise choose to go.

One such example happened when I was approached by someone in need of temporary housing when I was still single. He was in a recovery program and attended the church where I was a lay member. He asked if he could live with me until my new roommate was ready to move in. I was

reluctant because I did not know him well, but I was nagged by God's voice drawing me to Matthew 25:34-45. Here was a stranger in need of a home, and I was someone with a home to give. God wouldn't let me be one of the ones who turned Jesus away, and so I went where I did not want to go, and opened my home to this young man.

How has your family of origin influenced your call?

Growing up, I would describe my family as Christian by tradition, but not practice. We did not attend church until I was 8 or 9 after my father had his own experience of justification. It was not easy for me to suddenly start going to church. I had had some negative experiences, and it took a while before I began to feel comfortable there.

In my early twenties I began to sense a call to ministry, even though I was still wrestling with God and discerning where I stood with my faith. If not for my experience of seeing my father's conversion, I probably would have given up and walked away, but after seeing the change in his life, I was unwilling to give up so easily.

When I began to seriously reconsider God's call in my 30s, I began to talk to my father about my call. He was very supportive, and encouraged me to pursue it. I am certain that his support had a positive influence on my willingness to answer the call.

Interview three people to tell you what they see in your ministry. What did you hear in these conversations?

To answer this question, I sought input from a lay member of my church, a clergy colleague, and a personal coach. As each of these people knows me differently, each had different perspectives to share. My congregant appreciated my enthusiasm for the church, preparation and delivery of my sermons, and sense of humor. She felt I was consistent, transparent, and diplomatic in my leadership, wise beyond my years in offering pastoral care, and conveyed a vision for the church. My colleague from the local Presbyterian Church appreciated the work I did in bringing the local clergy together and engaging them in supporting one another and responding to the needs of the

community. As someone who has served the community for over 20 years, he was impressed with my desire to learn the history of the community, and become active in the local government and business association. He feels that my ministry has been instrumental in bringing the churches together and helping them to work more ecumenically.

My coach observed that I have a desire to embrace the traditional pastoral role, and am becoming increasingly comfortable with that role. She sees me as someone who wants to be present with people during their life events and engage people in the broader community with the ministry as an evangelistic outreach without pushing my religion. She sees me as someone who is interested in growing as a pastor and sees me growing in my focus on relationships over achievements, my engagement with people who disagree with me, and my use of self care as a means of connecting with my core with a focus on better attending to the needs of my congregation and my family.

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Board of Ordained Ministry
Theology, Call and Doctrine

David Tillisch
November 1, 2016

Give examples of how the practice of ministry has affected your experience and understanding of:

God

As a pastor, I am invited into the most sacred parts of people's lives: their loves, griefs, doubts, joys, and struggles. Through all of these moments, I see God at work in their lives. In the high points, it is easy to acknowledge God's presence, but it is during the low moments, when God is seemingly absent, that my understanding of God continues to be challenged and refined.

"Why is there evil in this world?" "Why is my loved one struggling?" "Why can't I find a job?" "How could God let those people die?" These are the questions that challenge me and force me to reexamine my understanding of who God is and how God operates in our world. Though I have not had a great paradigm shift during my ministry, I am much more willing to say "I don't know", or ask "What do you think?", rather than come up with something profound to say.

As an example, my friend's wife has been struggling with leukemia for a number of years. During that time, she has spent more time in the hospital than she has at home with him and their young daughter. I watched this experience cause him to lash out at God and go from a practicing Jew to an adamant atheist. Some of the things he has stated about God and those who worship God have been downright hurtful, and yet I find him to be one of the more thoughtful people I know, because he has experienced what he has, and is willing to ask the questions he does.

Rather than correct him, or condemn him, I do my best to listen, and trust that God continues to walk beside him and shower grace upon him. While it is difficult to see him struggle, I know God is working out a future that I cannot see right now, and thus, I am free to simply walk alongside my friend and support him.

The other growth area I have witnessed is in my ability to be open to and receive conflicting experiences of God, even when they go against my own beliefs. Parish ministry has put me in

contact with fundamentalists, evangelicals, progressives, liberals, conservatives; farmers, business people, children, senior citizens, saints of the faith, and people who have yet to know God. Each of these people have very different experiences and understandings of who God is, and yet, they all have a valid experience of who God is that is at work in their lives. Rather than be a voice of correction, pushing my own viewpoints, I seek to be a voice of encouragement, offering alternatives, and enticing them to explore more about God.

Humanity

Parish ministry has connected me to people from diverse backgrounds. Through my experiences, I have come to realize that all people have struggles in their lives and all people have questions in their hearts about who they are, what their purpose is, and how they are to go about their lives in a “successful” fashion. We are all broken in our own way, and asked to serve others in our brokenness. Thus the human condition is this: how to best live our lives given the resources we have while caring for our neighbors and Creation, with the goal of being received into the arms of God hearing her say, “Well done, my good and faithful servant, well done.”

The problems occur when individuals have competing definitions of success and worry more about their own success than their neighbor’s. While people may be able to love God and their neighbor, they still have a hard time trusting them with care for their wellbeing. Add to that the fact that 5% of the population controls 95% of the world’s resources and wealth, and 80% of the world’s population lives on less than \$10 a day, and it is easy to see why good people are forced to rely on themselves and sin against God and their neighbors in order to put food on their table.

I am dealing with a situation at my church in which our clothing donation bin is being robbed. While it is clear to me that this is wrong and needs to be stopped, my experience as pastor causes me to wonder about the people perpetrating the crimes and why they are doing so. Are they

“bad” people, or are they hungry, marginalized, and lacking access to opportunities to better themselves? There are no black and white easy answers.

My experience has also broadened my understanding of the debate between human agency and Divine intervention. Where are we to trust God to work in our lives and world; and where are we to be led by God’s grace into action? Medical intervention is a great example of this. There are those who believe that our body was created by God to survive and thrive in our world, and to intervene with treatments is to go against God’s will. Others believe that God is working through the doctors and scientists to deepen our understanding of the human body and create groundbreaking discoveries that extend and enhance human life. Who is right? There are no textbook answers to these questions. Each person must answer according to his or her understanding of God, and each situation must be dealt with individually.

Lastly, my experience has challenged my understanding of human beings as sinful and willfully rejecting God. While I believe that we are all in need of God’s grace to resist sin, I also see us as “distracted” and “disconnected”, and living in a technological world where our minds have a stronger connection with our devices than we do with the working of the Holy Spirit. It is hard for people to intentionally connect with their Creator and Redeemer when their children, spouse, job, social media accounts, bills, and other miscellaneous “To Do List” items are all clamoring for their attention. To make matters worse, our society supports these disconnections and distractions and does not think or speak theologically, which increases the difficulty of connecting with God’s grace and growing in our relationship with Christ.

The need for divine grace

All of the challenges, distractions, and uncertainty in life lead us farther and farther from the Source of Life, and that is where the need for divine grace becomes apparent. When I started in parish ministry, I was more focused on working out my own salvation than trusting in the Author

of Salvation. But as I've lived out my calling, I've come to understand more and more that I am not capable of saving myself – that only in acknowledging my need for God's grace can I be reconciled with my Creator and live a life filled with love for God, love for neighbor, and love for self.

While the words are simple, the ramifications are great. In stating that I cannot save myself, I am not saying I am flawed as an individual or lazy; rather I am stating and acknowledging what is simply true about all human beings and feeling myself to live in God's grace.

The Lordship of Jesus Christ

If Jesus Christ is Lord, there must be others that are his subjects. Otherwise, who is he Lord of?

My struggle with this concept has been my reluctance to be a subject to anyone. As an US American, I have been raised to believe in and value my freedoms. Thus the notion that I was subject to anyone, including Christ, felt like something I needed to struggle against.

Eventually I came to realize that accepting Jesus as Lord was not a sign of defeat or subservience, but rather liberation and empowerment. Because if Jesus Christ is the mediator of God's grace and I require that grace for my salvation, then he is my Lord.

But the wonderful thing about Jesus as Lord is that he never holds his position over me. He doesn't demean me as his subject, he doesn't make me beg or plead for his mercy or grace. He simply asks that I accept the reality of my condition, and serve him in gratitude for all that he has sacrificed. Thus to say that Jesus is Lord is to willingly accept a gift from God, and to grant Jesus Christ authority over my life so that I might fully live.

The work of the Holy Spirit

The rush of wind, the sound of thunder, a dancing flame, a descending dove, a comforting advocate... These are some of the images used by the Bible to describe the Holy Spirit. But I might add a gentle breeze, a stunning sunset, a call from a distant friend, a spark of imagination,

peace in the midst of chaos, an unquenchable desire to try in the face of improbable odds...

These are the ways that I have seen the Holy Spirit at work in the life of my ministry.

I experience the Holy Spirit as the presence of God in my life. The Spirit emboldens, empowers, accompanies, informs, challenges, inspires, and most of all, assures me that I am not alone as I go into the world to share the Good News.

In so many aspects of my ministry, the Spirit has been present: giving me words when I didn't know what to say; bringing me to places I didn't have the courage to go; opening my mind to perspectives I couldn't understand; sharing unexpected insights into Biblical texts; and guiding me to silent spaces when my soul needed to unwind and catch up. In short, the practice of ministry has enlivened and affirmed the Biblical depictions of the Holy Spirit, and taught me that I could not be the pastor I am today without it.

The meaning and significance of the sacraments

The sacraments are two sacred rituals, which enable people to experience God's presence and transforming grace in tangible ways. Through Baptism, we are initiated and dedicated into the ministry and body of Christ. And during Communion, we are gathered as the body of Christ, offer thanks and praise to God, affirm our Baptism, and are nourished in body and soul. In the life of the church, it is easy for these sacraments to become mundane rituals that lose their meaning. But when they are shared with people who have not participated in them for a while, their power and significance comes alive.

During my time in Blairstown, we started a monthly worship ministry at a nursing facility. When we started leading worship there, we began offering Communion monthly. The protestant residents hadn't received Communion in a long time, and the first time we shared the Eucharist together, people's faces lit up. They were so thrilled to be welcome at the table, and share in the Eucharist, albeit virtually, with the communion of saints!

I experienced a similar reaction when we shared a reaffirmation of Baptism. One of the ladies, who was well into her 80s and a lifelong Methodist, was deeply moved by the sacrament. She said that it was only the second time in her life that she had felt the baptismal waters. Even the residents who were unable to communicate had a huge smile as they placed their hands in the bowl and felt the water flowing over their fingers. Surely the grace of God was at work!

The kingdom of God

I once preached a sermon on the God's kingdom based on Matthew 13 in which Jesus uses a number of images to describe what the kingdom of heaven is like. During my sermon, I asked the congregation to break out into small groups and come up with their own metaphors. Their answers ranged from an all you can eat buffet where you can have anything you want, to their favorite flavors of ice cream. In short, their understanding of the kingdom of heaven was that it was a place where their every desire would be met. While I do not think that is what God has in mind for us when he envisions the kingdom, it did open my eyes to the misconceptions about what God's vision is for humanity.

The kingdom of God is what the world would look like if our relationship with God had not been broken, and the whole world was the Garden of Eden. The division of heaven and earth would be gone; the desire to hoard resources would be replaced with a desire to share; the lion, the lamb, and even the humans would lie down together; all the swords, guns, missiles and other weapons would be beaten into tools that feed and build up the world; the natural world wouldn't be fighting against humanity for its right to life; and humanity would treasure their time with God more than they treasure their devices, their money and their stuff.

As both a present and future reality, there are times when I question whether or not we are making progress towards it. In the midst of that uncertainty the kingdom serves as a homing

beacon: our true North by which we compare our current direction. It gives us a vision of what can be if we, as God's children, choose to respond to God's ever present grace.

Resurrection and eternal life

A saint of our church recently died. She was 91, and by all accounts had enjoyed a wonderful and faith-filled life. During her final days, I was blessed to spend some time with her and talk about death, resurrection, and eternal life. While I didn't have all the details for her, I was able to assure her that it would be a wonderful experience that went beyond our expectations or understanding. It was also a blessing to assure her that she didn't need to be afraid; that Jesus had promised to prepare a place for us, and even though we didn't know what that place was like, he would be there with her, and that made it ok.

Resurrection and eternal life assure us that God, who nurtures and cares for us during our earthly lives, promises to care for us in the life beyond. They empower us to see beyond the circumstances of our earthly lives and possess a hope that stays with us through our darkest days. Because Jesus defeated death on the cross, the poor can call themselves blessed, and we all can face life's final hours with the blessed assurance of God's promises.

How do you understand the following traditional evangelical doctrines: Repentance, Justification, Regeneration, and Sanctification?

Throughout my years as a pastor, my own understanding of the path of salvation has continued to evolve. Perhaps my best moments of clarity have come from reflecting on my own struggle with my weight. While not an exact correlation, it has helped me to explain the process in terms that I can personally relate to.

Sooner or later, if you do not eat the right foods or move enough, your body is going to tell you by the way it feels and looks. Yes, you can continue to eat hot fudge sundaes three times a day, but eventually you realize that this is not working. You have to live a different way. In faith speak, this is repentance: an acknowledgement that living life on your own, and going about

things your own way is not working. God has something else in mind, and rather than reject the prevenient grace that has been knocking at your door and hinting that you should not be doing what you're doing, perhaps it is time to do it God's way.

Once you realize what you have been doing wrong, and reject it, it is time to start heading in God's direction. Weight-wise, this is where the hard work of eating right and getting back in shape comes in. Thankfully, with regards to our sinfulness and rejection of God, God is much more forgiving than your body. Instead of having to earn your justification, God gracefully justifies you through faith in Jesus' ability to save you and washes the slate clean, thus regenerating you in the eyes of God and allowing you to restart debt free.

Once you have been restored to your original image and assured of your forgiveness, you can then continue to grow in your holiness. Using the body metaphor, this is where you continue to bring in new practices that increase your health and reinforce your decision to reject unhealthy practices. In the spiritual realm, this process of sanctification increases your understanding of the Scriptures, knowledge of God's presence in and desires for your life, and love for God, others, and yourself. The good news is that you do not do this work alone, but continue to work with God's sanctifying grace that is drawing you in the direction of righteousness.

Like our bodies, if you stop putting effort into seeking and working with God's grace in your life, there is always the possibility of regressing and going back to your old ways and shape. This is why it is important to remain vigilant and attend to the practices that keep you connected to God's grace through a covenant community that holds you accountable for your actions and supports you in living a life that is in keeping with God's will.

What are the marks of the Christian life?

Throughout the history of the Church, numerous creeds, articles, catechisms, and confessions have been drawn up to say, "Christians must believe xyz in order to be considered a real

Christian.” Core among them are a belief in Jesus the Christ as the incarnation of God, the Bible as the inspired Word of God, and a faith in and reliance on Jesus’ ability to save us from our sins. While all of these are essential doctrines of the Christian faith, they are not instantaneously believed when someone dedicates their life to Christ.

A Christian is someone who is devoting time, energy, and focus to growing in his or her faith and responding to God’s grace. The marks of the Christian life are like growth marks on a wall. One would never tell a child they’re not human just because they’re not a fully grown adult. Similarly, we cannot say someone is not a Christian just because he or she has not mastered all the items on a spiritual checklist.

What marks someone as Christian is participation in the way of salvation through his or her relationship with Jesus Christ and growth marks in the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, which result in the increase in love for God, self, and neighbor, and an openness to be transformed by God’s grace.

How has the practice of ministry informed your understanding of the nature and mission of the Church? What are its primary challenges today?

I continue to understand the church as the primary means of sharing God’s desire to reconcile with humanity through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection; nurturing people in their understanding of the Christian faith; engaging them in a relationship with Jesus the Christ; helping people discern their spiritual gifts; and giving them opportunities to engage their gifts in service to others as part of God’s ongoing work of salvation. This is all done toward the goal of making disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

The application of this mission is as diverse as the contexts in which we find ourselves engaged in that mission. In two of the churches that I’ve served, I have worked with the lay leadership to create a mission, vision, and values statement for their ministries. The process involved

understanding the current context in which we find ourselves in ministry, knowing the strengths and gifts of the members of our congregation, and discerning how the Spirit is calling us to engage those gifts and strengths in our current context. Through this process, we came to better understand who the people are in our communities, what their needs are, and how we might communicate with them, engage them, and serve them.

The challenges of the Church in living out its mission are many, but primary are reimagining the church in the context of the 21st century; a willingness to be the church that the current context needs; the busyness of people's lives; the changes in the family structure and the raising of children; the diminishing importance of church in our multi-cultural society; and overcoming the impacts of the 9/11 attacks, Christianity's debate over LGBTQI rights, and the clergy sex abuse scandal.

The United Methodist Church holds that Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason are sources and norms for belief and practice, but that the Bible is primary among them. What is your understanding of this theological position of the Church, and how has your practice of ministry been affected by this understanding?

The Wesleyan four-fold approach to understanding and discerning God's will was one of the factors that drew me to the United Methodist Church. For years, I felt that I had to suspend my intellect and blindly follow Scripture literally in order to be a faithful follower of Jesus the Christ. But when I came to the Church, I was overjoyed to find my intellect being engaged as I interpreted the Scriptures and discerned where God's grace was leading me in my life.

Scripture serves as the primary revelation of God's will. Through these sacred texts, we see how faithful people have understood and responded the prompting of the Spirit across numerous times, places, and contexts. As the inspired Word of God, Scripture provides the most direct understanding of how God wants us to live a righteous life.

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The understanding we gain from scripture is broadened, enlivened, and applied through the tradition of the church, our intellect, and our personal experience. In addition to the wisdom contained in the Bible, we are blessed with 2000 years of application of that wisdom through the Church. By studying this we can better discern how to apply the Scriptures to our modern context. Through our intellect, we are able to interpret the Word of God and come to a better understanding of God's will through various scholarly approaches. We are able to use scientific study to better able to understand God's creation. Each of these disciplines enables us to come to deeper more nuanced understandings of righteous living in our current context. Finally, our personal experience takes the insights we gain through the Scriptures, church tradition, and reason, and brings them alive by seeing them in action.

While I cannot claim to always intentionally apply this approach to every decision that our church makes, the quadrilateral has freed me to include scientific discoveries in my ministry, rather than shy away from them or reject them as contrary to the scriptures. This is helpful when engaging a society that is indoctrinated with science as the best approach to understanding truth. It also has enabled me to draw upon multiple sources to clarify difficult scriptural passages, and wrestle with challenging issues facing people today.

How has the practice of ministry enriched your understanding of the meaning and significance of the sacraments?

It is one thing to receive Communion from and be baptized by a minister. Through each of these sacraments, I experience the grace of God, and connect with the mysteries of life, the presence of Christ, and my fellow sisters and brothers in the faith. But it is another experience entirely to be the pastor administering these sacraments as a clergy person.

I remember the first time I served Communion at my church with the presiding elder, as well as the first time I was privileged to lead the liturgy on my own as a licensed local pastor. I also

remember the first time I held a child in my arms and baptized them in the presence of God, their family, and the congregation. In each of these instances, it was an honor and sacred privilege to gather people at the table of grace and at the baptismal font, invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit, and share the sacrament with the congregation. There is an unspeakable sacredness in bearing the presence of God with someone as they receive the bread and cup or feel the water from the font. These are moments in which I witness ordinary elements of water, juice, and bread being transformed into hope, mercy, and grace by the Spirit of the living God.

How has the experience of ministry shaped your understanding of your vocation as an ordained elder?

My practice of ministry has exposed me to many unexpected situations that have expanded my understanding of my vocation. According to the Discipline, an elder is called to a vocation of Word, Sacrament, Order and Service. Based on this description, I expected to be leading worship, teaching Bible studies, organizing the work of the church, administering the sacraments, and serving those in need. What I didn't expect were the challenges I would have in envisioning how I personally would live out those tasks, and the unexpected situations they would entail.

It is one thing to say a pastor's job description includes doing x, y, and z and quite another thing to understand who David Tillisch is as a pastor in Christ's church. Initially, I made the mistake of trying to be the pastor everyone expected me to be, including myself. But eventually, after quickly realizing that that was an impossible task, I began to embrace that God had called me with my unique gifts, experiences, and foibles to be a pastor, and that is who I needed to be as an ordained elder.

The other surprises and discoveries have come in the wide variety of situations I was called to be in ministry. Building additions, investigating thefts, nurturing relationships, being present in the

community, managing a business, raising money, and recruiting volunteers are all part of the job. There are no courses that can adequately prepare you for all of them. But in all of these situations, the job of an elder is to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit and serve as an ambassador of Christ by reminding people of God's continuing presence in the world, and encouraging them to be in a relationship with the living Christ.

How has the practice of ministry affected your understanding of the expectations and obligations of the itinerant system? Do you offer yourself without reserve to be appointed and to serve as the appointive authority may determine?

"Are we moving this year, daddy?" "Are you going to still be here next year, pastor?" These are the questions I have to answer as a pastor serving in our itinerant system. The answer to both of them is simply, "I don't know." As an itinerant pastor, I offer myself without reserve to serve at the discretion of the bishop and the cabinet. Yes, I, as a pastor, and the church both have input into the process, but ultimately, it is up to the cabinet to discern the call of the Spirit and set my appointment to serve where I am most needed.

Like all systems, the itinerant system has its strengths and challenges, but in the end, I believe it serves the local churches and charges well. As an itinerant pastor, I am a member of the Annual Conference, and not the local church, thus I am expected to represent the interests of the conference while serving the parish. This relationship empowers me to say things that might be harder to say if I was employed by the church, and presents challenges to me in building relationships with the local congregation and gaining their trust. It also encourages me to build up the laity of the church and give them a sense of ownership of and involvement in the ministry, instead of having them rely on the pastor to make all decisions. This ensures a minimum disruption in the vitality of the ministry if and when there is a change in pastoral leadership, and maximizes the variety of gifts applied to the ministry.

Additionally, I have an obligation to enter each new appointment with a sense of curiosity about how that charge engages their ministry, and a willingness to explore with them how we can best work together in serving our mission. There is no cookie cutter definition. Some charges need the pastor to take the reins and be a strong leader, while others want the pastor to take a more supportive role, and focus on teaching, pastoral care, and preaching.

Describe and evaluate your personal gifts for ministry and how they have resulted in fruitful ministry. What would be your areas of strength and areas which you need to be strengthened in order to be more fruitful in ministry?

I am amazed at how all of my previous experiences have been brought to bear in the practice of ministry. As a pastor, I have found my management, computer, interpersonal and public speaking skills to be invaluable assets. Administration is definitely my strong suit. It has empowered me to organize calendars, events, and worship services, manage finances, and envision practical ways to strengthen the organization. My computer programming background and interest in technology have helped me to automate processes, engage technology, and broaden our reach through social media and other electronic forms of communication. My interpersonal skills have helped me to build relationships with a wide variety of personalities and backgrounds both in and out of the church, and find creative ways to deal with conflicts and move beyond them. Finally, my public speaking skills have enabled me to confidently share the Word of God in front of large groups of people.

My growing edges lie in the areas of evangelizing and making disciples, leadership development, and delegation, all of which require me to let go of performance oriented tasks that I enjoy doing and can easily check off my list, and intentionally invest my time with the long term health of the ministry in mind.

For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness to the Christian gospel and in consideration of your influence as an ordained minister, are you willing to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life;

and to this end will you agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to physical health, intentional intellectual development, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, integrity in all personal relationships, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge and love of God?

Yes, with God's help. I understand that like all United Methodists, I am to dedicate myself to the ideals of the Christian faith, and evidence my "desire of salvation" by doing no harm, doing good, and attending to the ordinances of God.

Provide evidence of your willingness to relate yourself in ministry to all persons without regard to race, color, ethnicity, national origin, social status, gender, sexual orientation, age, economic condition, or disability.

The ministry I have been called to is in service to Jesus Christ and all that Christ loves, which includes all of humanity in its rich diversity of hues, cultures, abilities, genders, loves, giftedness, etc. When I engage in ministry, especially when administering the sacraments, I experience people as children of God seeking connection with their Creator.

Perhaps the clearest example of my willingness to relate to people who are different from me is in my marriage to a woman that is defined by our society as being a different race than my own, and raising our children in a multi-cultural, multi-lingual family. Yes, we have our differences and misunderstandings, but we love one another, care for each other, and seek to understand each other, which helps us to better understand the diverse world around us.

In my ministry setting, I am involved with people across different generations, genders, theological understandings, cultures, social statuses, abilities, etc. I serve economically challenged people in our food pantry ministry; I worship with the elderly and disabled in our nursing home ministry; and I serve with people of various genders, ages, and cultures in our church leadership.

Will you regard all pastoral conversations of a confessional nature as a trust between the person concerned and God?

Yes. I consider it a privilege to be invited into people's most personal spaces. I understand that comes with a great deal of trust for me as a person, as well as the office that I hold. To violate

that trust is to violate the sanctity of our relationship as individuals as well as that individual's relationship with the office of pastor.

Provide evidence of experience in peace and justice ministries.

A building across the street from our church recently came up for sale, and a local drug and alcohol rehabilitation organization was interested in purchasing it to open up an outpatient mental health clinic. Notifications were sent to the area residents, because the sale required a variance from the township committee.

Knowing that there was a growing need for mental healthcare in our community, I was excited to hear that this organization was going to establish a clinic in town, where people could easily access it. Unfortunately, others in our community were opposed because of its proximity to one of our schools. In their minds, a mental health clinic meant attracting unstable people who abused substances, fought with their spouses, and might do harm to the community's children.

I felt that their responses were ill informed and perpetuated the stigmas that prevented people from getting the mental healthcare they needed, and so I began my own efforts to raise awareness and push back against the stigmas through social media. In addition, I met with the principal of the school and spoke with the leadership of our church to see what they felt. Both were in favor of the clinic, and wanted to help move it forward.

At the hearing, both the head of trustees from our church and a representative from the school board came out to speak in favor of the clinic, and the variance passed, paving the way for the clinic to move forward and serve the people who need care in our community.

Explain the threefold aspects of Wesleyan grace and how have you encountered these in your own ministry/life.

God's grace is the Divine force that draws us away from our primal and often sinful instincts and lures us into a life-giving relationship with our Divine Creator, which broadens our perspective, transforms our living, and enables us to trust in Christ alone for our salvation. This grace is

always present with us from the moment of our creation, but we experience it in different ways along our journey of salvation. Prevenient grace precedes our knowledge of God and Jesus Christ; justifying grace defines our experience of God's grace once we are aware of Christ's presence and begin working with it to realign our lives with God's desires and receive God's forgiveness; and sanctifying grace continues the process of refining and purifying our lives, opening our eyes to God's truth and perspective, and enabling our hearts to love as God loves.

I've experienced God's prevenient grace never letting me go, and drawing me into the church after I turned my back on it during and after my college years. Responding to this grace took some time and reminders from caring people, but in retrospect, I know God's grace was there all along. My experience of justifying grace happened during my late 20s and early 30s, when I wrestled with what it meant to take my faith seriously and worked with God's grace to engage in the practices of our faith, study with fellow Christians, and discern where God was calling me to go. Finally, in my late 30s and early 40s, I experienced sanctifying grace leading me to let go of my reservations and trust God to lead my life, and trust Jesus Christ for my salvation. This is an ongoing process of sanctification that I need to be intentionally present to.

Like most things in life, my faith journey has not been a straight line: there have been seasons of growth when I am eager to connect with God's grace; and times of backsliding when other things have taken my attention away. But the overall trajectory has been in the direction of God and perfection in love, and grace has been my constant companion.

Share an instance when you found yourself in ministry with someone whose theology was radically different from your own.

I have a congregational leader whose worldview is in many ways the polar opposite of my own.

From our views on gun control, gender orientation, abortion, politics, and immigration, to our

understanding of the inerrancy of scripture and God's redemption of people of other faiths, we see things differently.

When I started at the church, my defenses were raised when discussing things with him, but eventually we opened up a life affirming dialogue where we could talk from our hearts without trying to change each other's perspectives. This space has opened each of our eyes to see things in new ways, and helped us to grow closer. We not only have a great working relationship with one another in our ministry, but have also grown to value the ability to be candid with and learn from one another.

Describe how your image of God has changed over your journey. What has informed this?

My journey of life and faith has broadened and deepened my image of God from being a storybook wish granter and discipline dispenser for a chosen people, to being a profoundly mysterious source of life, wisdom, power, and grace for all peoples. In my youth, adolescence, and early adulthood, I sought definitions and understandings of God that were absolute and fit neatly into simplistic notions about life and the way things were. As I have grown older and explored more about God through my seminary studies and ministry practices, I have worried less about definitions and conclusions and been more open to mysteries and nuances.

While scripture continues to be the primary source for my theological understanding, it has been supported, broadened, and challenged by my maturation, knowledge and wisdom about life, awareness of different cultures, faiths, and circumstances in the world, and my own experience of God's presence in my life. When these sources come in conflict, I do not seek to have one overrule the other, but rather put them in conversation with each other, and seek to understand where my image of God falls short and needs to be expanded.

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Board of Ordained Ministry
Polity

David Tillisch
November 1, 2016

Explain the role of deacons, elders, and local pastors in the UMC and how they are each uniquely called and function in the church.

Deacons are called to ministries of Word and Service and serve to “embody, articulate, and lead the whole people of God in its servant ministry.” In the local church, their functions include assisting the elder in proclaiming the Word, teaching and nurturing disciples, leading people in servant ministry, and equipping and supporting the laity for ministries of justice and mercy. (§139, 328-9) Beyond the local church, deacons serve in various settings to “extend the witness and service of Christ’s love and justice in the world and connect the Church with the most needy, neglected, and marginalized.” (331.1.a)

The ministry of elders is modeled after the apostles. Elders are called to lifetime ministries of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service and give spiritual and temporal leadership to the Church. Their functions include preaching and teaching, pastoral care and counseling, administering sacraments, and ordering the life of the church. They lead the community in worship and prayer, lead people to professions of faith, and provide pastoral supervision. They offer themselves without reserve to be appointed by the bishop and serve the Church in “special covenant with all the ordained elders of the annual conference.” (§139, 302-3, 332-4, 340)

Local Pastors serve the Church in less than full-time appointments or full-time appointments where no elder is available. They can perform all of the functions of an elder to people in their appointment. (§316)

What is the process for setting a pastor’s salary? Who can change it, and when can it be changed?

Minimum full-time salaries for pastors are set at annual conference (604.13). In the fall, the pastor meets with SPPRC to set the salaries for church staff. The SPPRC then presents their recommendations to finance to include in the budget and to Church Council for approval

(258.2.g.16). Once approved, church council recommends the salary to the church conference (252.4.d), which then sets the compensation in consultation with the district superintendent (247.13). The salary can only be changed by the church conference at the beginning of an appointment, a change in pastor's status, or the beginning of the calendar year. (624.1)

The Education committee wants to update the curriculum being taught in the Christian Education program. What specific guidance does the Book of Discipline give you in dealing with this issue?

The goal of Christian Education programs in the Church is to “build members’ knowledge of the Bible, the Christian faith, the United Methodist Church, and the societal context in which the church finds itself,” (256.1). As there is no set curriculum that United Methodist churches are required to use in their Christian education program, the education committee is charged with selecting materials to use. The committee should consult with resources that are available from the General Board of Discipleship (1108&9) and the Annual conference (630.2), and work closely with the pastor, who has “oversight of the educational program of the church and encourages the use of United Methodist literature and media.” (340.2.c.1.b)

You have discovered a need in the community for a soup kitchen, and wish to recommend that this be a priority for the congregation, using the facilities of the church. What parties and processes need to be involved?

Whenever a new ministry is being introduced to the ministry, it is essential to get buy-in from the laity, otherwise the ministry will only last as long as the pastor who introduced it. In our polity, the following committees need to be involved:

- SPPRC works with the pastor to establish this as a priority for the congregation and communicate it to the membership. If necessary, the SPPRC will also recommend a staff position be established to run the soup kitchen, and establish a job description. (258.2)
- The Outreach committee considers how it fits with the church's ministries of compassion, justice and mercy (252.2.b) and presents it to the church council for approval.

- Trustees will determine if the property can adequately provide for the soup kitchen, and ensure that the church is properly insured and operating within the local laws (2533)
- Nominations and Leadership Development will identify people whose spiritual gifts match the needs of the new ministry (258.1)
- The Finance Committee will need to be made aware of any budgetary implications and, if so, make adjustments to the budget with church council's approval. It will then need to identify funding sources to meet the ministry needs. (258.4, 258.4.g)
- Church Council will need to approve the new ministry and coordinate the activities of all of the above committees.

A constituent of your church comes to speak with you about their call to ministry. Describe the basic steps that are involved with seeking ordination.

The first step is to be in conversation with this person about their call and go through a period of inquiry using materials such as "The Christian as Minister" (310). The person needs to be a member of the church for at least one year. If the person affirms their call to ministry, they need to write the district superintendent to request admission to the candidacy process and write their statement of call (310.1.b&d). From here, they need to be affirmed by their church's SPPRC, and approved by the Church Conference by 2/3 vote via closed ballot (310.1.e).

The candidate is then passed on to the District Committee of Ordained Ministry, where they will need to submit written work, pass the required background and psychological tests, and be certified by ¾ vote. (310.2) Certified candidates then ask to be passed on to the Board of Ordained Ministry (BOOM) to become provisional elders or deacons.

After completing at least one year as a certified candidate and being passed on to BOOM, the candidate must complete at least ½ of their seminary requirements or other equivalent (324.4,5), pass a physical examination, and respond to a written and oral doctrinal examination (324.8,9).

Upon a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote, the candidate will be commissioned as a provisional member of annual conference and serve under full-time appointment by the bishop for a minimum of two years (326). After two years, they can apply for full connection by responding to a written and oral examination, and being approved by BOOM by a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority vote.

Describe the general structures of the Annual Conference and how each body functions.

The Annual Conference represents a regional body, an organizational unit, and an annual meeting (<http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/annual-conferences>). As a regional body, the annual conference is a geographical grouping of churches and charges that work in connection with one another to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world (601). The conference is broken out by districts, each of which is served by a district superintendent who supports the local churches in their ministries of nurture, outreach, and witness (661).

As an organizational unit, the Annual Conference functions under the leadership of the appointed bishop, conference lay leader, district superintendents, pastors, and laity, to guide the mission and ministry of the Church within its boundaries (607, 8). These duties include the appointing of clergy to charges; collecting apportioned funds for shared ministries; connecting local churches to the district, annual conference, and general conference ministries; and providing administrative structures and procedures to accomplish its mission. (608, 10)

Lastly, the Annual Conference is an annual gathering that conducts the business of the church including, but not limited to, admitting clergy into full connection, recommending of candidates for bishop, electing delegates to Jurisdictional and General Conferences, receiving reports, approving budgets for Annual Conference boards and agencies, establishing and discontinuing local churches (2549.2), and giving recognition to new churches (604).

Describe the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of the United Methodist Church.

The United Methodist Church is structured similar to the government of the United States, with three branches of governing bodies: the executive branch, or college of bishops; the legislative branch, or conferences; and judicial branch, which is our judicial council. The college of bishops plans for “the general oversight and promotion of the temporal and spiritual needs of the entire Church and for carrying into effect the rules, regulations, and responsibilities prescribed and enjoined by the General Conference.” (47) It also arranges for “the plan of Episcopal supervision of the annual conferences, missionary conferences, and missions within their respective territories.” (48)

The conferences are representative bodies made up of equal numbers of laity and clergy, which gather at the international (general), central, jurisdictional, annual, and charge levels, to enact legislation as it pertains to each of their jurisdictions, and perform the work of the church as described in paragraphs 8-44.

Finally, the Judicial Council is a judicial body of nine people made up of laity and clergy that determines the constitutionality of legislation passed by the conferences and their authorized bodies, or decisions of the bishops. Their decisions are final. (55-57, 2600-12)

What is your understanding and theology behind Shared Ministries giving (apportionments)?

Shared Ministries is our way of living out our connectional nature and supporting the administrative needs and ministries of the Church in a united fashion. By combining the giving power of the local churches in an annual conference or general conference, we increase our giving exponentially and magnify our ability to make an impact in the needs of the poor and ministries of justice. Shared ministries are calculated based on a formula agreed upon by annual conference that is proportional to the giving ability of the local church. This formula takes the entire approved conference ministry and administration budget, and apportions it out the local

churches based on the agreed upon formula. The same formula is applied to all churches within the annual conference (614.3).

The theological basis of this approach is based on the Biblical understanding of stewardship and the need for all to give as they have been blessed by God. As Luke 12:48 teaches us, “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.” (NIV) And earlier in the chapter we read of the rich man who built a bigger barn, “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself? This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.’” (Luke 12:20-21 NIV) As local churches in the UMC, we need to support the needs of the people and the mission of the Church as we have means to do so.

You have an idea for a unique form of ministry. How does the Book of Discipline guide us in seeking affirmation for ministries that are beyond the local church? What is the role of extension ministry in the life of the church?

While the local church is the “primary base from which Christians from which Christians move out to the structures of society,” (202) it is by no means the only one. There are many other forms of ministry that “extend the ministry of the United Methodist Church and the witness and service of Christ’s love and justice in the world. (337.3)

If an elder or deacon feel called to serve in a ministry beyond the local church, they need to submit a detailed proposal including the proposed setting for their ministry, their sense of calling to that ministry, and an explanation of ‘how the proposed ministry is an intentional fulfillment of their ordination vows to the bishop and Board of Ordained Ministry for approval. (331.4.a, 344) Once approved, the elder or deacon remains accountable to the annual conference, and under the care and appointment of the bishop.

In what ways does your upbringing, your cultural context, and your personal experience shape your understanding of our polity?

As a middle class white male born and raised in the United States of America I have come to believe and trust in our representative form of government where both the people and elected officials have a voice in determining the direction and laws of our nation, and our three branches of government serve to hold one another accountable and balance the governing power. I see many of these same values in our United Methodist polity, and have come to appreciate the way that they work to guide our denomination in seeking God's will and create a church where all voices are represented.

Like the US government, it can be difficult and frustratingly slow to bring all the voices of the church together in order to gain consensus and move forward, but when we do come together, it is powerful, and a witness to God's spirit alive in the world. As an old African Proverb states, "if you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together." While we have split at times in our history, for the most part, Methodists have worked hard to stay together, and because of that, we have shared the gospel of Jesus Christ around the world.

I understand our polity to be a labor of love that contains thousands of faithful voices that span many times, cultures, and contexts. As I read through the Book of Discipline, it is clear to me that each word has been thought out, prayed over, and discussed at length, that we might have a thorough understanding of one another, and the ways that Christ is speaking in and through our lives.

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David Tillisch has served in ministry since 2011, and is currently appointed as the pastor of the First United Methodist Church of Blairstown in Warren County, New Jersey, where he has served since 2014. Hi previous charges include the Frankford Plains and Delaware Valley United Methodist Churches in Sussex County.

David is a native of New Jersey, having grown up in rural Hunterdon County, where he and his parents attended the Lebanon Reformed Church starting when he was 8. It was there that David first experienced the joy of belonging to a church family and being nurtured in the Christian faith.

After being away from church while he was in college, David returned to his Christian roots to be reconnected with the Body of Christ and develop his own faith as an adult. It was during this time that he first felt God’s grace tugging at his heart, and calling him into ministry. He and his pastor began having conversations about the ministry and his calling, but David felt he needed more assurance before he was ready to answer the call.

David worked in retail management, computer programming, and business analysis while putting God on “call waiting” for the next 14 years. Vocationally, he found work to be less and less fulfilling, and began to explore his skills, abilities, and passions in life. During this time, he continued to nurture his faith, and found his way to the Morristown United Methodist Church, where he engaged in their young adult ministry and participated in the leadership of the church.

In 2007, after four years at home as a stay-at-home father, David’s heart grew restless. He knew that God had placed a calling on his life, but he didn’t know in what direction. To help him gain clarity, he went on a guided silent retreat. During his time there, the retreat leader sensed that David was wrestling with his next steps in life. She asked him to make two lists: a list of things he was good at, and another of things he enjoyed doing. After looking at the list, she proclaimed, “well, it’s clear to me that you should be a pastor!”

That was all the assurance David needed. In the fall of that year, he enrolled in Drew Theological School, and eventually began his journey towards ordination as an elder in the United Methodist Church. When asked how he was feeling during orientation, he stated, “I’m home. I’m where I’m supposed to be.” That feeling of being home has continued as David has led his churches and experienced the joys and challenges of local church ministry.

David is married to his wife, Wen-Ling Lai, who also serves in the ministry as a Local Pastor appointed to the Walnut Valley United Methodist Church. They have two children, Anna & Geoffrey.

In his time away from the church, David enjoys on and off road bicycling, swimming, and walking in the woods. He and his family enjoy vacationing in Maine, and visiting with their extended family in Texas and Taiwan.

Board of Ordained Ministry

David Tillisch

Chronological Resume of Activities

November 1, 2016

Summary

I currently serve as a full-time pastor of the First United Methodist Church of Blairstown. I have been married to my wife, Wen-Ling Lai, since October 2000, and have two children: Anna, who is 13 and in the 8th grade, and Geoffrey, who is almost 11 and in the 5th grade. We are a two pastor household, with my wife serving as a local pastor appointed to the Walnut Valley United Methodist Church, which is also in Blairstown. Our home church is the Morristown United Methodist Church.

Activities

Pastor

July 2014 to present

First United Methodist Church of Blairstown, Blairstown New Jersey

Full-time pastor appointed to a rural church in a small town in northwestern New Jersey. The congregation consists of 110 members, with an average attendance of 60-65 on Sundays. In addition to my pastoral duties, I coordinate a weekly group of about 10 clergy from various denominations that meet for mutual support and study of the lectionary.

Pastor

July 2013-June 2014

Delaware Valley United Methodist Church, Sandyston, New Jersey

Appointed to a second charge as a quarter-time leader of a rural church of approximately 60 people with 30-35 in attendance each Sunday.

Pastor

July 2011-June 2014

Frankford Plains United Methodist Church, Augusta, New Jersey

Half-time leader of a congregation of 105 people in northwestern New Jersey. Responsible for all aspect of church leadership including, but not limited to, worship, administration, pastoral care, missions, and outreach.

Masters of Divinity Student

August 2007 – May 2013

Drew Theological School, Drew University, Madison, New Jersey

Stay-at-Home Father

December 2003 – July 2011

Mendham Township, New Jersey

After the birth of our first daughter, I left my full-time career to become her and, later, her brother's primary caretaker, while my wife supported our family financially through her full-time career.

Vacation Bible School Director

2009-2010

Morristown United Methodist Church, Morristown, New Jersey

Assembled and led team of volunteer leaders for summer vacation bible school program serving approximately 120 children ages 2 ½ to 11.

- Coordinated marketing to attract people from within and outside the church
- Involved area churches to make it an ecumenical community event.

Firefighter

2004-2009

Brookside Engine Company, Mendham Township, New Jersey

Interior qualified volunteer firefighter serving a department that responded to approximately 300 calls a year in a suburban community.

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Contemporary Worship Committee Member 2006

Presbyterian Church in Morristown, Morristown, New Jersey

Worked with a church committee that organized weekly contemporary worship services.

- Managed successful search for paid part-time worship leader.

Church Treasurer 2004-2005

Mendham United Methodist Church, Mendham, New Jersey

Handled bookkeeping including weekly receipts, payroll, and all expenses.

- Implemented procedures to ensure two people were needed to issue checks.
- Ensured books were kept in accordance with church guidelines.

Business Analyst 2000 – 2003

Wyeth Consumer Healthcare, Madison, New Jersey

Began as a Sales Technology Analyst, providing retailer promotional effectiveness insights to multiple departments. Promoted to Business Analyst, training and supporting field sales force and evaluating business needs for future software development.

Worship Committee Co-Chairperson 2001 - 2002

Morristown United Methodist Church, Morristown, New Jersey

Coordinated volunteers to setup the worship space and support the efforts of the pastoral staff.

Worked with pastor to create different worship experiences on special Sundays.

Administrative Council Vice-President 2002

Morristown United Methodist Church, Morristown, New Jersey

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Igniting Ministries Committee Chairperson

2001 - 2002

Morristown United Methodist Church, Morristown, New Jersey

Implemented church marketing program and looked at ways to make our church more welcoming to newcomers.

Contemporary Worship Committee Chairperson

1999-2001

Morristown United Methodist Church, Morristown, New Jersey

Led worship team that led a monthly worship service. Looked at different forms of worship and means of presenting the message, and explored new music for our congregation.

Young Adults Ministry Chairperson

1998-2001

Morristown United Methodist Church, Morristown, New Jersey

Scheduled activities and events for young adults in their 20s and 30s.

Computer Programmer

June 1998 - June 1999

Chubb - Professional Resources Division, Parsippany, NJ.

Consulting at United Parcel Service as a mainframe computer-programmer after successfully completing a rigorous four-month training program. Worked on a new 250,000-line billing program project with a team of 30 programmers that combined five separate systems into one.

- Programmed in DB2, COBOL, JCL, and CICS languages, and used various utilities.
- Successfully coded and tested over 14 programs

Sales Manager

1998 - 1999

Mendham Fireplace Center, Inc., Mendham, New Jersey

Managed independent retail company representing over 30 manufacturers of hearth equipment, grills, and awnings. Coordinated advertising, monitored inventory, and merchandised sales floor.

Retail Distributor

1997 - 1998

Phillips/Van Heusen, Bridgewater, New Jersey

Allocated merchandise to retail outlet chain based on sales history, current sales trends, and sales to stock ratios. Evaluated individual item performance, set stock levels, and recommended pricing and promotional strategies.

Sales Manager

1987 – 1997

Sears, Roebuck and Company, Various Locations, New Jersey and New York

Began as a part time stock clerk. Rapidly promoted to a Salesperson, and then Commission Sales Leader. I worked through the ranks to become a Sales Manager of a \$7 million department supervising 30 associates, then Merchandise Support Manager, managing 7 supervisors and 60 associates in a 160,000 square foot facility producing \$36 million annually.

Bachelor of Science - Economics

August 1987 - May 1991

Cook College, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey

- Programs and Activities Council President - Planned and organized student activities.

VALOSIN, HEATHER

- 1) Sermon
- 2) Bible Study
- 3) Practice of Ministry
- 4) Theology, Call, & Doctrine
- 5) Polity
- 6) Biographical Statement
- 7) Chronological Resume



NOTES

SERMON: “Making Ourselves at Home” Jeremiah 29:4-7 (NRSV)

This sermon was preached on October 9, 2016 at Montville United Methodist Church. This is an upper-middle class Caucasian congregation that ranges in age from 2-92. In general, they are hard-working individuals and families who are committed to the Church, seek to grow in faith and are unsettled by the current state of the nation.

Since I arrived two years ago, current events including immigration and race have been two topics that have been debated by parishioners. Long-standing members can remember the sponsoring refugees as a church in the 1990s, which gives them a sensitivity to the challenges that immigrants often face. Some of the newer members who don't share such an experience are more protective of our country's borders and wary of changes in the fabric of our society.

Now as we approach the presidential election, friendships even within the congregation are being tested as people reveal their presidential stances and grapple with how to react and respond to violence and discrimination highlighted by the Black Lives Matter movement. In general, right now there seems to be a desire to do something, a reservation about how the future is changing and a frustration with those who differ in opinions. Despite having a variety of political stances, this congregation is unified as they pray for our country with a devotional book by Jack Countryman entitled, *If My People: A Prayer Guide for Our Nation*.

As I studied Jeremiah 29:4-7 from the lectionary, I found a similarity between Jeremiah's instruction to the captives in Babylon to pray for their captors and the movement in this church to pray for our divided nation. I hope that my sermon will reaffirm their commitment to prayer and encourage the congregation to put aside fear and hostility during this tense time in order to

enjoy the blessings of life while they serve others for God's glory.

SERMON MANUSCRIPT:

Recently I heard a story about a teacher who asked her young students, “Who are your ancestors?” One child responded confidently, “I don’t have any!” Her teacher told her to ask her mother if she had ancestors. So the little girl went home and asked her mom, “I don’t have any ancestors, right?” Her mother laughed and began to tell her some old family stories about their ancestors.

I think the same thing often happens in Christianity. Since our faith is largely based upon personal beliefs, it is easy to assume that we don’t have religious ancestors. But we do!

Now this is simplifying history— before there were United Methodists, there were Methodists and before that, members of the Church of England. Before the Church of England, our religious ancestors were Catholics. Before the Catholic Church was formed, our religious ancestors included Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews). Paul insisted that as believers in Jesus Christ, the Gentiles were “grafted onto the olive tree” of God’s people where the Jews are like natural branches (Romans 11). It reminds me of the family tree that I drew in elementary school— Jews are represented by the lower branches and then Gentiles’s branches are grafted on to them.

These extend to include members of the Catholic Church, the Church of England and eventually The United Methodist Church. We can claim ancient Jews as our religious ancestors because we joined their family of God. When we read the Old Testament, including today’s Scripture

passage from the Book of Jeremiah, we're reading stories about the Jews. As we read these stories of our religious ancestors, it can be helpful to consider, "What can we learn today from their experiences of God?"

Today's Scripture passage from Jeremiah 29 is part of a letter by the prophet Jeremiah.

What is a prophet? It is someone who acts like a mouthpiece for God or an amplifier. I'm reminded of a line from the musical, *Hamilton*. Has anyone heard this new musical? At one point right before King George speaks, the chorus sings, "*A message from the king, message from the king, a message from the king!*" A prophet is like someone who sings, "*A message from the Lord, a message from the Lord, a message from the Lord!*" and then tells us what God wants.

The prophet Jeremiah was writing to Israelites who had been exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon in 597 BC. These Jews were displaced captives who probably wanted to hear a hopeful message that soon life would return to "normal;" that they would be able to go home soon. Instead, Jeremiah urges them to make themselves at home here in Babylon despite their displacement. Speaking as God's mouthpiece, Jeremiah encourages them to build houses for themselves, plant gardens & harvest from them, get married & have children, and seek the welfare of the city where they live & pray for it "for in its welfare, you will find your welfare" (Jeremiah 29:4-7).

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Essentially, they were supposed to do what they would be doing if they were at home in Jerusalem— live their lives and proactively work for good. But it was certainly more challenging to ask this of them in a foreign land. Jeremiah said that even as captives, they were to proactively work for good rather than begrudge the bad.

Jeremiah's letter was written for a specific community at a specific time, and yet its message is timeless.

Today, the world is changing so rapidly that it can feel difficult to adjust to. Many Americans, although not all, want a return to a simpler life, perhaps when teachers had more authority, when kids could play outside unattended or when there was less pressure to be sensitive to life experiences that are different than our own. As Christians, we may want to return to the time when it seemed like everybody attended church and the consumer mentality didn't dictate the church holiday schedule. It may feel like we live in a foreign land where we are suddenly the minority and we just want to go home.

But it is impossible to return to the familiarity of the past. That's why Jeremiah's message becomes timeless. I wonder if God is calling us today to make ourselves at home in the midst of these changes around us. To do what humans have been doing for generations upon generations:

- Build homes,
- Plant gardens to harvest from,
- Build relationships, get married & have kids if you want to.

I don't think God wants us to let fear of the present or of the unknown future limit our lives.

Jeremiah concluded his message from the Lord by instructing the Israelite captives to "seek the welfare of the city where you lived." Similarly, instead of begrudging the bad, we should try to proactively improve the world within our reach.

One of the benefits of globalization is that the world within our reach is no longer limited to to the city or the zip code we live in. I was impressed with the United Methodist Women of this church who met yesterday and decided to respond to Hurricane Matthew's devastation in Haiti by immediately taking up a collection to send to UMCOR, the United Methodist Committee on Relief. They have a basket out in the Fellowship Hall today for donations.

Seeking the welfare of the world within our reach can include serving local needs on a monthly basis through our new interfaith mission group called "Everyone in Action for Community." Those of you who knit or crochet could make hats for babies in the NICU or for cancer patients. You could invite a friend to worship or a small group. Seeking the welfare of the world within our reach can be as simple as smiling at a stranger or doing a random act of kindness. The possibilities are endless!

Lastly, Jeremiah added, "Pray for the city, for in its welfare you find your welfare." At the time, he was asking Jewish captives to pray for the people around them including their enemies in the land of their exile. Imagine that! Today, there is so much polarization between Democrats and Republicans, conservatives and liberals, men and women, Whites and Blacks, stay-at-home parents and working parents, Millennials and everybody else! If the Jews could pray for their

captors in Babylon, then we can certainly pray for the people around us even when we don't see eye-to-eye with them.

Consider that friend or relative who spouts off political views that surprise you. Or the person that you don't understand because of age, religious or racial differences. Instead of reacting with anger or fear, avoiding them until you find common ground, let us pray for the people who don't look or act like we do. Not a prayer that they would become like us, but a prayer for their welfare and well-being.

I have to admit, when I meet someone that I disagree with or don't understand, tension naturally seems to build up in my chest and I want to retort something provocative back to make them change their minds or at least understand me better. What would happen if we took a breath and prayed for them instead? Not a prayer that God would change their minds, but a prayer for their welfare: "God, I don't understand where this person is coming from. But please bless him. Help me to bless him."

"For in their welfare, you find your welfare," Jeremiah advised. We see that so often in the reflections of people who go on mission trips or help at the food pantry— "I felt better after helping." Blessing others blesses us. Somehow we are all linked and our lives affect each other.

As we observe the world around us, let's not be frozen in fear. But rather let us live our lives, seeking the welfare of the world within our reach and praying for those around us. For in

their welfare we find our own. Let us be proactive like our religious ancestors who were told to make themselves at home in a foreign land during their seventy year captivity. If they could do it, then we can do it too. May God grant us peace as we seek to live at peace. Amen.

the souls to see such miracles.
**All: God forgives us,
God guides us through the wilderness of the world,
God leads us home.
Thanks be to God. Amen.**

Prayer for Illumination (*unison*)

Holy God, open our ears to what you would have us hear. Open our minds to fresh insights and open our hearts to the moving of your Spirit. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7 (NRSV)

These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

Song "Into My Heart" (*v. 1*) TFWS # 2160

Message for Young Disciples & The Lord's Prayer

Afterwards, children are invited to Sunday School.

*Passing the Peace of Christ

*Hymn "Lord, Be Glorified" TFWS # 2150

Sermon "Making Ourselves at Home" Rev. Heather Valosin

Musical Reflection Joe Zelman

Holy Communion UMH pg. 13, musical responses TFWS # 2257b-d

Offering of Tithes & Gifts with Doxology Response

UMH

95

*Prayer of Dedication (*unison*)

Holy God, we are grateful for your presence and guidance. May these gifts symbolize our love for you and may they be used for your glory. Amen.

Prayers of the People with Joys and Concerns

*Closing Song

“Lift Every Voice and Sing”

UMH # 519

*Blessing & Postlude

1. Detail the theological significance of each act of worship. Describe what is happening and why it occurs where it does in the service.

In Matthew 21:13, Jesus quotes Isaiah 56:7 to explain that the Temple should be a “house of prayer for all peoples” (NRSV). This could be interpreted two ways: that our sanctuaries should be inclusive so that every person can pray and/or our sanctuaries should be locations where we pray for all people. I address the first possibility by creating a gathering time when all are encouraged to commune with God. The second interpretation is addressed later with the prayer of joys and concerns.

We prepare our hearts for worship with a prelude, greeting, announcements and two praise songs. An old church tradition called “The Birthday Bank” follows during which congregants announce the blessings in their lives and make a donation to Shared Ministries. This reminds me of the catchphrase “blessed to be a blessing” that comes from Genesis 12:2. Next we read a responsive call to worship followed by a traditional opening hymn. Then we begin a time of prayer with a unison opening prayer, and a silent prayer of confession followed by an

assurance of pardon. These gathering acts of worship invite all of us to focus on God with praise and prayer.

Next we move into a time of proclamation and response beginning with a prayer for illumination before the Scriptures are read by a layperson to demonstrate that the Bible is available and accessible to all people. Then children are invited forward with a simple transition song that is used throughout a liturgical season so that they can learn its lyrics and basic theology. With this song, I am reminded of Colossians 3:16, "Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts." The children's sermon is followed by The Lord's Prayer so that the children can learn how to pray it. Then the children say to the adults, "The peace of Christ be with you," to which the adults respond, "And also with you." Then everyone rises to pass the peace of Christ as the children leave for class.

A centering song transitions the congregation to the sermon which is followed by a jazz improvisation so that the congregation has time to reflect and pray about the sermon topic. In Matthew 15:7-8, Jesus quotes Isaiah 29:13 to criticize those who honor God with only their mouths. This time of reflection encourages the congregation to worship God with their hearts.

Next, we celebrate The Great Thanksgiving with musical responses from *The Faith We Sing* because it seems only fitting to follow the Communion liturgy about joining the singing company of heaven with an actual song (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, 13). Then we gratefully respond to God's grace by offering and dedicating our tithes and gifts to God's glory. We also

respond by praying for the joys and concerns named by our faith community. This is when I strive to acknowledge worldwide concerns so that we can be a house of prayer for all people according to my second interpretation of Isaiah 56:7.

Lastly, the congregation is sent forth with a thematically relevant upbeat closing song, a blessing and a postlude. On this Sunday, I blessed them with a prayer for God's peace as they live their lives, seek the welfare of the world within their reach and pray for those around them.

Explain the following:

(a) Why did you choose the hymns used in the context of the service?

The praise songs were chosen to create a positive atmosphere of praise and to rededicate our focus and lives to God. The opening hymn was chosen because it acknowledges a number of pertinent ideas to the theme including our desire to "*seek in worship to explore what it means in daily living to believe and to adore,*" (v. 3) and "*in an age of change and doubt... help us work your purpose out*" (v. 4). "Lord, Be Glorified" was chosen as the centering song because it extends our focus from ourselves to the world. Our closing hymn, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," was chosen because I felt like the ancient Israelites in captivity could have sung this song about surviving their dark past in Babylon. It could also be interpreted as a song of hope as we look forward to the day when we have been delivered from this present time of tension.

(b) What was the purpose of the sermon?

The purpose of the sermon was to help the congregation see modern relevance in the prophet's message to our religious ancestors in Jeremiah 29:4-7. I hoped to calm their anxiety,

fear and anger about current events related to the election season and race relations by asking them to follow Jeremiah's instructions to live, work and pray for the welfare of others.

(c) Does the Order of Worship help deliver that theme? Explain.

"God Has Made Me Glad" might have initially appeared out of place or even forced because the sermon assumes that people are instead wistful, longing for more familiarity in the midst of contentious current events. Yet the call to worship recognizes that when we are exhausted and depressed, God strengthens us and relieves our sadness thus giving us many reasons to praise God. So when the congregation arrived, they were encouraged to praise God in spite of the negative emotions that I suspected they were bringing with them.

The closing hymn might have required a stretch of the imagination to envision the captives encouraging us from the past or our own sense of relief in the future. I could have been more blunt in conveying the theme if I had used the songs, "All Who Love and Serve Your City" and "Great is Thy Faithfulness" which are recommended by www.hymnary.org for their references to Jeremiah 29. Otherwise I think that the order of worship did deliver the theme.

2. BIBLE STUDY - "Letter to the Galatians"

1. SETTING & PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This Bible study was created to be taught at Montville and Mt. Fern United Methodist churches where I am currently appointed. Presently, Montville UMC has an ongoing lay-led Bible study that involves reading chapter by chapter through books of the Bible, comparing any Bible translations that are brought by participants and discussing possible answers to questions that arise. Mt. Fern UMC is accustomed to pastor-led short term Bible studies. Participants of this specific Bible study about Galatians included men and women between the ages of 29 and 90. We met in their respective fellowship halls for accessibility. This Bible study involved four one-hour-long sessions that I taught at each church throughout the month of July 2016.

My purpose was to demonstrate strategies for studying Scripture while guiding participants into a deeper understanding of the Letter to the Galatians. These strategies included asking journalistic questions, comparing and contrasting Bible commentaries, studying references to other Biblical passages and discussing the letter's relevance to personal life and the world today.

2. BIBLE STUDY OUTLINE

Lesson 1. Key Concept: Answers to journalistic questions might be found by reading directly through the text of Scripture.

Supporting ideas:

- A. Who wrote this text? Paul (Galatians 1:1).
- B. What was written? A letter (Galatians 1:1-3).
- C. To whom was it written? The churches of Galatia (Galatians 1:3).

D. When was it written? Unknown.

E. Where was it written? Outside of Galatia (Galatians 4:20).

F. Why was it written? To persuade them that they don't need to be circumcised in order to be a Christian (Galatians 6:15).

G. How was it written? Partially by Paul's own hand (Galatians 6:11).

Lesson 2. Key Concept: A deeper understanding of the Scriptures can be found by comparing commentaries and historical/cultural information.

Supporting ideas:

A. Who wrote this text? The members of God's family who were with Paul are also recognized as contributors to this letter (Galatians 1:2).

C. To whom was it written? Scholars believe this letter was written to the churches of either Northern or Southern Galatia depending upon when the letter was written (Galatians 1:3).

D. When was it written? Various commentaries speculate that it was written between 47-48 CE or 49-56 CE depending upon whether the Book of Acts is an accurate historical record of Paul's travels.

E. Where was it written? It is unknown where this letter was written, perhaps Ephesus or Corinth.

F. Why was it written? This letter was written to rebuke the teachings of Christian missionaries who have challenged Paul's gospel by insisting upon circumcision

for Christians.

G. How was it written? There are various ideas within the letter that we understand differently as a Western culture than they likely did in an Eastern culture.

1. Galatians 1:15- It was not assumed that everyone was set apart by God, but rather only certain religious leaders including Jeremiah (1 Jer. 1:5) and Isaiah (Is. 49:1) (*Misreading*, 197).
2. Galatians 2:11-14- Unlike our guilt culture, this was a shame culture so Paul wasn't being offensive when he publicly critiqued Peter. Instead he was trying change his behavior within reasonable cultural expectations (*Misreading*, 117).
3. Galatians 3:1- This is not simply an exasperated comment but rather an ethnic slur (*Misreading*, 58).
4. Galatians 4:4- This describes a *kairos* rather than *chronos* understanding of time (*Misreading*, 142).
5. Galatians 6:2- This highlights the Eastern view of mutual care rather than the Western value of self-sufficiency (*Misreading*, 184).

Lesson 3. Key Concept: An even deeper understanding of the text can be found by studying the references within this letter to other sacred texts.

Supporting Ideas:

- A. Galatians 3:6 refers to Genesis 15:6 which notably describes Abraham as righteous before he was circumcised in Genesis 17:24.
- B. Galatians 3:10-14 refers to Deut. 27:26, Hab. 2:4, Lev. 18:5, Deut. 21:23 in order to emphasize that if you choose to live by the law, you are cursed under the law.
- C. Galatians 3:16 refers to Gen.12:7, 13:15, 24:7 which can be confusing depending upon the translation for singular and plural terms, ex. offspring vs. descendant(s) vs. seed(s).

D. Galatians 4:27 quotes Isaiah 54:1 and Galatians 4:30 quotes Gen. 21:10 in order to establish Paul's analogy in the Sarah and Hagar story.

E. Galatians 5:14 quotes Lev. 19:18 as the most important commandment, not the gospel references to the greatest commandment that were written after this letter was written.

Lesson 4. Key Concept: Having read straight through the Letter to the Galatians twice with different translations, studied scholarly opinions about the historical context and reviewed Old Testament references, a much more complex understanding of this text that can be applied both to contemporary culture and personal experience.

Supporting Ideas:

A. Even today, it can be difficult to distinguish a distorted version of the gospel from the "one true gospel of the Anointed One" that Paul describes (Galatians 1:7).

B. The requirements of Christian identity have been debated for millennia but Paul adamantly believed that faith in God's grace was the only requirement and that the fruits of the Spirit would follow as proof of God's presence working in a Christian's life.

C. The message of God's redemption through faith not works is for all people.

3. DETAILED LESSON PLAN- Lesson #2: The Historical Context of Galatians

Key Thought or Idea: A deeper understanding of the Scriptures can be found by comparing commentaries and studying historical/cultural information.

Learning Goals:

1. When we read Galatians today, it is a vastly different experience than that of the original audience.
2. Theologians have a variety of scholarly ideas about the historical context of this letter which can help us gain a better understanding of the text.

Teaching Strategies: I facilitated discussion and utilized short lectures based upon a comparison chart of four Bible commentaries and information from *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes*.

Teaching Aids: For this lesson, I prepared a comparative chart about how four Bible commentaries explain the answers to the journalistic questions (who, what, when, where, why, how) about Galatians. I also provided a handout of the NRSV translation of the Letter to the Galatians. I omitted the verse numbers and footnotes in order to present the text in a more original format than it typically is published in the Bible. I numbered the pages and underlined the specific passages that I would refer to when discussing information from *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes* so that participants could locate the references easily.

Agenda:

1. Gathering questions: “What is something that you have created? Imagine that in two thousand years, in 4016, people find your creation— do you think that they would understand it?” Discuss how difficult it might be for someone in the future to understand your original intentions. Draw the participants’ attention to Paul’s original context and how he couldn’t have imagined this letter would be considered a sacred text 2,000 years later on a different continent for people who speak a different language.

2. Compare, contrast and explain the answers to the journalistic questions provided by four Bible commentaries. Discrepancies between commentaries may be related to the dates of the commentaries or their intentions as they reflected upon this ancient text.
3. Remind participants that this letter was written in a completely different culture than we experience today. Handout a copy of NRSV translation of the letter. Using information from *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes*, explain a number of specific points in the text that were probably understood differently than we might read it today due to the difference in Western and Eastern cultures.
 - a. Galatians 1:15- It was not assumed that everyone was set apart by God, but rather only certain religious leaders including Jeremiah (1 Jer. 1:5) and Isaiah (Is. 49:1) (*Misreading*, 197).
 - b. Galatians 2:11-14- Unlike our guilt culture, this was a shame culture, so Paul wasn't being offensive when he publicly critiqued Peter. Instead he was trying change his behavior within reasonable cultural expectations (*Misreading*, 117).
 - c. Galatians 3:1- This is not simply an exasperated comment but rather an ethnic slur (*Misreading*, 58).
 - d. Galatians 4:4- This describes a *kairos* rather than *chronos* understanding of time (*Misreading*, 142).
 - e. Galatians 6:2- This highlights the Eastern view of mutual care rather than the Western value of self-sufficiency (*Misreading*, 184).
4. If there is time, read through the letter again in its entirety.
5. Offer the time and space for participants to reflect upon how they see the letter differently having reviewed this scholarly information.

6. Close with a prayer that includes prayer requests.

4. ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anderson, Ken. *Where to Find it in the Bible: The Ultimate A to Z Resource.* Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996.

During the first session of this Bible study, participants were asked what questions they had after reading directly through the letter. One of the groups was interested in learning more about circumcision and why it was so important in the Jewish faith. This resource was used to help us to find and study Old Testament passages about circumcision.

Fee, Gordon D. and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible Book by Book.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.

This commentary was written with an awareness of the debates about historical details of

Scriptural texts but without a desire to elaborate, the authors present a simplistic understanding of the journalistic questions as “orienting data” (10-11). Their goal was to present the overall narrative of the Bible so they only spent seven pages on Galatians. This source seemed like the least scholarly commentary that I used in the comparative chart of journalistic questions, and yet it offered a unique perspective on the authorship of Galatians by including the “brothers and sisters” with Paul who are mentioned in Gal. 1:2.

Harris, Stephen L. *The New Testament: A Student's Introduction.* 4th ed. Sacramento, CA: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2002.

This commentary was chosen to provide a college-level systematic introduction to the content and major themes of Galatians, along with methods of biblical scholarship (vii). It uniquely suggested a possible location for the authorship of this letter.

Neil, William. *The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible: The Letter of Paul to the Galatians.* London: Cambridge University Press, 1967.

This commentary, published almost fifty years ago, was written for an intended audience of high school students and their teachers in Britain. Special attention is paid to the historical background of the text and main theological context (v). This source provided background information about Paul and a feisty description of Paul's motivation for writing this letter.

Richards, E. Randolph and Brandon J. O'Brien. *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012.

This resource highlights the differences between the historical Eastern culture of the Bible compared to our contemporary Western culture. I used this resource to explain the original contexts behind five verses in Galatians and how they would have probably been understood by Paul's original audience compared to how we understand them today.

***The Harper Collins Study Bible, The New Revised Standard Version*. New York: HarperCollins Publisher, 2006. [biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com), <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+1&version=NRSV>. Print and Online.**

I used this translation of Galatians because of its recent scholarship and intention to provide a literal translation for the purposes of study. Using Bible Gateway, I copied the whole Letter to the Galatians from this translation and formatted it without verse numbers or footnotes. I also changed the font to Papyrus and rewrote Galatians 6:11-18 with capital letters and a different font size to emphasize Paul's own handwriting. Then I folded copies of the letter in three and placed them into envelopes so that the participants would realize that Galatians was originally a letter, not a Scripture passage bound within a book. During the first session, the participants opened their letters and we read directly through the text taking turns to read it aloud.

“The Journeys of St. Paul,”

http://www.loyolapress.com/~media/Images/Loyola%20Press/saints/Saint%20Paul/st_paul_journey_rome.ashx?la=en. Online.

This map was brought to my attention by a participant to help explain the debates about the date of authorship and the original audience based upon Paul’s travels.

The New Interpreter’s Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes. Vol. XI. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000.

This resource was chosen as a more contemporary commentary compared to the Cambridge Bible Commentary. According to its description, this resource intended to provide a text-centered exegetical approach rather than historical approach for use by preachers and teachers (xvii-xviii). Yet Dr. Richard B.Hays, who was the Professor of New Testament at The Divinity School of Duke University, offers a thorough description of the debate about the letter’s original audience.

The Voice Bible, The Voice Translation. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2012.

[biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com),

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians+1&version=VOICE>. Print and Online.

I used this translation of Galatians because of its recent scholarship regarding the artistry of the original language and its commitment to translating Scripture into modern English. Like the NRSV translation, I used Bible Gateway to copy the whole Letter to the Galatians from this translation and formatted it without verse numbers or footnotes. I also changed the font to Papyrus and rewrote Galatians 6:11-18 with capital letters and a different font size to emphasize Paul’s own handwriting. Then I folded stapled copies of the letter in three to be read straight through during the final session before we discussed our contemporary lens by which we read.

5. EVALUATION

After the final session, I asked participants for their feedback about this Bible study. It received rave reviews from participants who appreciate history in general and already enjoy the complexities of how history is written and studied. However, one participant with a Catholic background earnestly questioned me about the value of studying the original context of Scripture, “Can’t you just tell us what the Bible says and what we’re supposed to do with our lives?” Reflecting on my preparation for this Bible Study, I regret not preparing a clearer explanation of why in-depth Bible study is valuable. At the time, I’m afraid I rambled about gaining integrity in our Christian faith by learning about the the origins and transformations that the Bible has experienced before arriving on our nightstands. In the future, I shouldn’t assume that everyone comes to the table with an interest in the complexities of Scripture.

I also needed to be careful to explain the importance of learning about the original context of the Bible without making participants feel like reading the Bible is useless without commentaries. God can certainly speak directly to us with the wisdom of the Holy Spirit as we read the Bible by ourselves without other resources. But we’re more likely to discover God’s true character if we try to understand the journalistic questions about each book of the Bible.

<i>The Letter to the Galatians</i>	The Cambridge Bible Commentary	The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary (p. 184, 191, 193)	The New Testament: A Student's Intro (p. 333)	How to Read the Bible Book by Book (p. 340)
Who wrote it?	Paul, a Roman citizen	Paul	Paul	The apostle Paul, joined by "all the brothers and sisters" with him (1:2).
When was it written?	If he wrote to unknown churches in North (53-56 AD) or those in South referred to in Acts (before the council in Jerusalem, then 48 AD).	49-56 CE, but without hard evidence, probably between 50-56 CE.	About 56 C.E.	Probably ca. A.D. 55 (although some think as early as 47-48).
Where was it written?			Perhaps Ephesus or Corinth	No indication of place of origin
To whom was it written?	Most likely it was these four young Christian communities founded on Paul's first missionary tour in southern Galatia (Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe).	Paul's Galatian converts who were formerly Gentile pagans (4:8-9) but it is impossible to be sure whether "the churches of Galatia" (1:2) were located in the traditional territory of the ethnic Galatians ("North Galatia") or in the places mentioned in Acts 14, in the Roman provincial Galatia ("South Galatia"). Likewise, we have no idea how many "churches of Galatia" there were.	The "churches of Galatia" perhaps southern Galatia, a Roman province containing the towns of Lystra, Iconium, and Derbe.	Gentile believers in Galatia, either ethnic Galatians (whose territory in central Asia Minor had been earlier settled by people from Gaul [modern France] or those in the Roman province of Galatia, which also included peoples of Pisidia, Lycaonia, and Phrygia).

<i>The Letter to the Galatians</i>	The Cambridge Bible Commentary	The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary (p. 184, 191, 193)	The New Testament: A Student's Intro (p. 333)	How to Read the Bible Book by Book (p. 340)
Why was it written?	Paul was extremely annoyed that the Galatians were stupid enough to be taken in by agitators who have been stirring up trouble, twisting the gospel into something quite different from what it ought to be, and defaming Paul himself.	An intra-Christian dispute between Paul and the Jewish-Christian missionaries who were preaching "a different gospel" (1:6).	To refute opponents who advocated circumcision and to demonstrate that Jew and Gentile are equally saved by faith in Jesus' redemptive power.	The churches of Galatia have been invaded by some agitators (5:12) who have questioned Paul's gospel and his apostleship; apparently some Galatians are on the verge of capitulating to them, which sparks a vigorous defense by Paul of his gospel and his calling.

Lesson 2 Handout #1 Comparing Commentaries

Did Galatians 2:1-10 occur during Acts 11:27-30 (Southern churches) OR Acts 15 (Northern churches)? **Most scholars accept this later idea but the "argument remains inconclusive and almost entirely irrelevant for interpreting Paul's letter" (NIB, pg. 191).*

Bibliography

Fee, Gordon D. and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.

Harris, Stephen L. *The New Testament: A Student's Introduction*. 4th ed. Sacramento, CA: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2002.

Neil, William. *The Cambridge Bible Commentary on the New English Bible: The Letter of Paul to the Galatians*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1967.

The New Interpreter's Bible. Vol. XI. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000.

Richards, E. Randolph and Brandon J. O'Brien. *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012.

Lesson 2 Handout #2: Letter to the Galatians (NRSV) without verse numbers and with specific passages underlined that I elaborated on using *Misreading Scripture*.

Paul an apostle—sent neither by human commission nor from human authorities, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— and all the members of God's family who are with me,

To the churches of Galatia:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed! As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed!

Am I now seeking human approval, or God's approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus.

Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him for fifteen days; but I did not see any other apostle except James the Lord's brother. In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie! Then I went into the regions of Syria and

Cilicia, and I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea that are in Christ; they only heard it said, 'The one who formerly was persecuting us is now proclaiming the faith he once tried to destroy.' And they glorified God because of me.

Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. I went up in response to a revelation. Then I laid before them (though only in a private meeting with the acknowledged leaders) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure that I was not running, or had not run, in vain. But even Titus, who was with me, was not compelled to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. But because of false believers secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might enslave us—we did not submit to them even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might always remain with you. And from those who were supposed to be acknowledged leaders (what they actually were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those leaders contributed nothing to me. On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel for the circumcised (for he who worked through Peter making him an apostle to the circumcised also worked through me in sending me to the Gentiles), and when James and Cephas and John, who were acknowledged pillars, recognized the grace that had been given to me, they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do.

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned; for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, 'If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?'

We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law. But if, in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I

demonstrate that I am a transgressor. For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified! The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh? Did you experience so much for nothing?—if it really was for nothing. Well then, does God supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?

Just as Abraham ‘believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness’, so, you see, those who believe are the descendants of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, declared the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you.’ For this reason, those who believe are blessed with Abraham who believed.

For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the things written in the book of the law.’ Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law; for ‘The one who is righteous will live by faith.’ But the law does not rest on faith; on the contrary, ‘Whoever does the works of the law will live by them.’ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’— in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Brothers and sisters, I give an example from daily life: once a person’s will has been ratified, no one adds to it or annuls it. Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring; it does not say, ‘And to offsprings’, as of many; but it says, ‘And to your offspring’, that is, to one person, who is Christ. My point is this: the law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. For if the inheritance comes from the law, it no longer comes from the promise; but God granted it to Abraham through the promise.

Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring would come to whom the promise had been made; and it was ordained through angels by a mediator. Now a mediator involves more than one party; but God is one.

Is the law then opposed to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could make alive, then righteousness would indeed come through the law. But the scripture has imprisoned all things under the power of sin, so that what was promised through faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise.

My point is this: heirs, as long as they are minors, are no better than slaves, though they are the owners of all the property; but they remain under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father. So with us; while we were minors, we were enslaved to the elemental spirits of the world. But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.

Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to beings that by nature are not gods. Now, however, that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits? How can you want to be enslaved to them again? You are observing special days, and months, and seasons, and years. I am afraid that my work for you may have been wasted.

Friends, I beg you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You have done me no wrong. You know that it was because of a physical infirmity that I first announced the gospel to you; though my condition put you to the test, you did not scorn or despise me, but welcomed me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus. What has become of the goodwill you felt? For I testify that, had it been possible, you would have torn out your eyes and given

them to me. Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth? They make much of you, but for no good purpose; they want to exclude you, so that you may make much of them. It is good to be made much of for a good purpose at all times, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, I wish I were present with you now and could change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

Tell me, you who desire to be subject to the law, will you not listen to the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and the other by a free woman. One, the child of the slave, was born according to the flesh; the other, the child of the free woman, was born through the promise. Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One woman, in fact, is Hagar, from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the other woman corresponds to the Jerusalem above; she is free, and she is our mother. For it is written,

‘Rejoice, you childless one, you who bear no children,
burst into song and shout, you who endure no birth pangs;
for the children of the desolate woman are more numerous
than the children of the one who is married.’

Now you, my friends, are children of the promise, like Isaac. But just as at that time the child who was born according to the flesh persecuted the child who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also. But what does the scripture say? ‘Drive out the slave and her child; for the child of the slave will not share the inheritance with the child of the free woman.’ So then, friends, we are children, not of the slave but of the free woman.

For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you. Once again I testify to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obliged to obey the entire law. You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love.

You were running well; who prevented you from obeying the truth? Such persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough. I

am confident about you in the Lord that you will not think otherwise. But whoever it is that is confusing you will pay the penalty. But my friends, why am I still being persecuted if I am still preaching circumcision? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. I wish those who unsettle you would castrate themselves!

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.

My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor's work, will become a cause for pride. For all must carry their own loads.

Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher.

Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will

reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.

See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand! It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to compel you to be circumcised—only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh. May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything! As for those who will follow this rule—peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

From now on, let no one make trouble for me; for I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.

3. PRACTICE OF MINISTRY

1. What do you think are the most effective means of doing evangelism in the 21st century? How have you lived this out in your current context of ministry?

The importance of building relationships for evangelism was brought to my attention when I heard multiple parishioners defend why they couldn't invite people to worship, "All my friends are here." Our mission "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world" is always before us and we shouldn't get complacent with our accomplishments. We need to build relationships outside of our insular church communities and understand that faith is not actually a forbidden conversation topic. While we strive to talk about our faith honestly and authentically, we also need to put our faith into action by serving the less fortunate and working for justice. Then when we invite new friends to join us in these pursuits through mission projects, small groups and worship services, we need to welcome not only their presence but also their ideas and opinions while praying that God's grace becomes apparent in their lives.

I have been encouraging parishioners to break the invisible boundary against discussing faith outside of church by preaching on Richard Peace's *Holy Conversations: Talking about God in Everyday Life* and giving parishioners the opportunity to practice talking about their faith by hosting small groups in public settings outside the church. Through preaching and small group discussions, I've also encouraged congregants to make connections within the community, explore local needs and determine how we could address them. Together we have formed two new small groups, one focused on recognizing and responding to local needs as an interfaith community and the other that meets to discuss life, faith and God in a public setting while

collecting books for prison inmates. In these ways I've tried to inspire and model a holistic approach to evangelism that involves building relationships, talking about faith and serving needs.

2. What makes a congregation vital, and how do you measure it? How would you envision working with a congregation to become more vital?

I was able to participate in the pilot program of Team Vital in the Skylands District with the congregation at Montville UMC during the summer of 2015. According to Team Vital, a vital congregation has inspiring and engaging worship, ample small groups for discipleship, a growing number of new disciples and participants in mission work, as well as increased giving. I would add that a vital congregation transforms and evolves with an awareness of the needs of its local community in order to glorify God. This can be measured quantitatively by tracking worship attendance, the number of small groups and their participants, professions of faith, opportunities for mission work, and the amount of money given to the church for ministry and mission work. Through Team Vital, the congregation at Montville UMC is learning to assess local demographics and needs, set goals, use our time and energy efficiently, and track our progress. Over the past year, we have empowered more laity for leadership which has allowed us to organize more small groups and mission opportunities. We've also been able to gather narratives about the impact these experiences have had on spiritual growth and shared these stories with each other and with the wider community via social media.

3. What is your personal approach to conflict? Provide an example of where you have been involved in resolving conflict. What did you learn?

Within four months of arriving at Montville UMC, I was informed that its thirty-year old church-run nursery school was expected to have a deficit of \$18,000 in the upcoming school year. On one hand, this school employed a number of church members and was considered a

“mission to the community” because of its low prices. On the other hand, the church was already struggling financially and did not have an extra \$18,000 to donate to the school. I carefully selected financially-minded church leaders to review the possible outcomes of this conundrum. The church decided to give an ultimatum to the nursery school based upon the financial logistics— if you can’t get a certain quota of students registered, then we can’t run the program next year because it will be too burdensome to the congregation. The school was unable to reach the quota and Church Council unanimously voted to close the school despite the sadness of church members who were losing their long-held jobs. While I tried to ease tension by organizing a community celebration of the school’s thirty years of service, another school with incredible timing miraculously offered to pay rent to start a new preschool program which is finally providing the church with some income rather than debt.

This experience taught me that as a pastor, I am not responsible for making important decisions like this for the congregation. Instead, I have the responsibility to empower the right people based upon their gifts to make good decisions that will glorify God. My role is to remain pastoral to people on both sides of the conflict. Conflict is inevitable but it can provide the opportunity for growth and learning rather than cause tension and division.

4. What is your theological and practical understanding of itineracy?

There are many Biblical examples of God instructing people to move including Abraham (Genesis 12:1), Moses (Exodus 9:1, 33:1), Mary’s husband Joseph (Matthew 2:20), Jesus’ disciples (Matthew 28:19), Ananias (Acts 9:11) and Paul (Acts 23:11). It seems like people are more willing to hear a transformative message from a stranger than they are from someone

familiar (Mark 6:4). For this reason, itineracy can be beneficial by providing a fresh, outside perspective to a congregation that can elicit change for God's glory.

Itineracy also enables congregations to benefit from the varied gifts of its pastors (Romans 12:6). There are times when a specific church needs a practical, business-minded pastor to help them renovate a building or restructure leadership, and there are other other times when a church may need a healing presence. Itineracy enables the Cabinet to identify and align the needs of congregations with the strengths of pastors so that ministry can be most effective.

5. How do you engage all age groups in your community?

I try to be intentional about welcoming all ages in the faith community from those in strollers to those with walkers. The church nurseries are clean although babies are welcome to stay in the worship services according to their parents' preferences. Young children are offered coloring sheets and older children have special bulletins that help them reflect on the services. Teenagers and adults participate in the service as acolytes, liturgists, ushers and Communion stewards. We also strive to have efficient sound systems, printed bulletins and powerpoint projection of liturgy for those who are hard-of-hearing. Since commissioning, I have assisted with Sunday School, VBS, "God & Family," Confirmation class, adult Bible studies and mission projects for a variety of ages. At both churches, we offer regular small groups, potluck meals and game nights to build intergenerational friendships. I am also trying to be more intentional about having youth and young adults in leadership roles. Essentially I try to embody a welcoming presence that values people of every age in the Body of Christ.

6. What is your understanding of pastoral authority, and how do you intend to exercise it in your place of ministry?

I've been pressured at both Montville UMC and Mt. Fern UMC to use pastoral authority to be a judge and dictator over decisions regarding church keys, finances, etc. However, I understand pastoral authority differently. Peter 5:1-3 and Hebrews 13:7 suggest that pastoral leaders provide a model of faith for their "flocks" through the example of their lives. While I am ministering to the congregation by proclaiming the gospel, taking care of the administrative duties required of elders, celebrating the sacraments and serving the community, I want to model Christian faith and a faithful lifestyle to encourage others to grow closer to God and put their faith into action.

7. If you could choose anyone to mentor you in leadership skills, who would that be and why?

I would choose President Barack Obama to mentor me in leadership skills because he has managed to maintain his health, his family relationships and his calm in the midst of extreme work-related stress, criticism and prejudice.

8. Describe a situation in which you felt a need to assert a professional boundary in the practice of ministry.

At Montville UMC, the pastor's office is currently located in the basement of the parsonage. With the parishioners' generous support to the pastor's discretionary fund, I have been able to invite people to the office to talk about their needs and provide them with assistance. Unfortunately, one of the individuals we were helping turned out to be a notorious church scammer. During a dramatic day involving the police, I was advised to get a gun immediately and file a restraining order. My husband walked in the door while I was on the phone with the police and I asked him to get an overnight bag ready— we couldn't sleep at the home if this individual was emotionally unstable and knew where we lived. This experience taught me the

value of setting a professional boundary against meeting anyone one-on-one at my home office, especially strangers. Instead I should meet them at public places in order to protect myself and my family.

9. How have you worked through the experience of forgiving someone?

The day after I graduated from high school, my father announced that he was divorcing my mother after nineteen years of marriage. The news caught me off guard since there was no discord; he simply wasn't interested in her any longer. Beginning college, I left behind two furious siblings, a grieving mother and a father who was oblivious to the pain he was causing. While he ultimately asked for forgiveness about ten years later, I worked through my grief, disappointment and anger with a process of denial and distraction, prayer, difficult conversations and counseling.

10. What are you doing to help those around you to take good care of themselves?

When I arrived at Montville UMC, a small circle of hard-working leaders was accustomed to spending numerous hours at tense committee meetings. I have been trying to help them re-evaluate their priorities from checklists to relationships, from the pursuit of accomplishments to the recognition of blessings, from frustration to joy. I led a study on Dr. Leonard Sweet's *A Well-Played Life* that accompanied a sermon series inspired by Rev. Rachel Hackenberg about how childhood games relate to Christian faith. I also preached a sermon series called "Take a Break" about avoiding busyness, greed and consumption. I have led small group discussions about self-care to encourage parishioners to reflect theologically about the importance taking care of their of their minds, bodies and spirits. When I meet parishioners one-on-one to discuss grief, sickness or leadership, I try to be sensitive to their self-care needs for

rest, exercise, healthy eating, spiritual disciplines, etc. I am also learning to model healthy self-care practices myself.

In the two years that I've been pastoring at Montville, the congregation has reassessed its attachment to traditional church commitments like the church-run nursery school and yearly fundraising dinners that proved more hassle than worth, and they have cut back their committee meetings significantly in number and length. There is more interest now in building relationships within the community, working together on mission projects and incorporating children as vital participants in the faith community.

11. How have you invited someone to faith and seen their faith develop?

When I was in college, I was asked to start a Christian a cappella group. The premise was that members weren't required to be Christian but that we would sing songs with Christian themes. This enabled us to welcome non-practicing Christians and even atheists into the fold. Besides offering the opportunity to build relationships between Christians and non-Christians, we were also positioned to have conversations about what Christianity means, various perspectives about the character of God and how Christians could put their faith into action. Through these relationships, I saw a number of young adults explore their faith (or lack thereof) and grow closer to God. I learned the value of welcoming the presence, as well as the active participation, of people with a wide variety of backgrounds at church functions.

12. What have you overcome to come to this season in your ministry?

Within three weeks of becoming a theological student, I developed ulcerative colitis, an autoimmune disease that caused me to become severely ill twice a year for seven years. At one point when I was preaching with a dangerously low hemoglobin level of 4 while getting multiple

blood transfusions throughout the week, I was forced to make the life-death decision whether or not to have my entire large intestine surgically removed. Over the following seven months with two subsequent surgeries, I tried to fulfill my pastoral obligations in between hours of laborious and painful wound care.

Now as a young healthy adult, I now minister with a surprisingly personal experience of pain, suffering, grief, fear, healing, recovery, gratefulness and praise. When I walk into hospitals to visit church members, I am silently processing flashbacks while empathizing with them about daily blood draws at 4:30am, the ever-present lights and sounds in the hospital, and the frustrating lack of control when our bodies are failing. I pray with them for God's healing touch and comfort, the doctors' knowledge and wisdom, the nurses' compassion and patients' strength and patience. My body carries numerous scars but my perspective has become deeper and more sensitive to the challenges of sickness, the inevitability of physical death, and the joys of life in Christ due to these experiences.

13. How would you describe your prayer life in this season, and how has it changed over your journey?

Like many lifelong Christians, I grew up with family prayers around the dinner table and memorized bedtime prayers. In high school and college, I began journaling prayers about private hopes and concerns. More recently, my personal prayers are spur of the moment, verbal or internalized, praising God for the blessings of life and asking for God's care for those in need. I also pray for the many situations that seem to be out of my control and for guidance living faithfully as a disciple of Jesus and the pastor of these congregations.

14. When you read the Bible, how do you hear God's voice? What example might you give of how you responded?

When I read the Bible, I seem to hear God's voice saying, "See how this is relevant today?!" It's incredible to me that these texts which were written millennia ago on a different continent in different languages can resonate in our lives today. For example, Psalm 146 emphasizes the need to trust God rather than human leaders. What a valuable message this is as we approach the presidential elections. We shouldn't expect the candidates to save us but we can turn to God for hope and help as we seek justice for those in need. Not only do these revelations inspire and challenge me in my personal life, I also share them from the pulpit and in conversations.

15. How has your family of origin influenced your call?

My grandfather struggled with the identity of being a pastor's kid in the Methodist Episcopal Church in the 1920s and 30s. He promised that no child of his would ever become a pastor. To his consternation, my mom became an ordained elder in The United Methodist Church in the 1970s. While he learned to support her ministry, he was sensitive to the demands and sacrifices that my siblings and I faced.

When I was a teenager, my family itinerated with a cross-conference appointment from Pennsylvania to New Hampshire. Unfortunately, my parents divorced within the year in large part due to their loss of social circles and accountability. Thankfully during this turbulent time, my mother's congregation was supportive and patient while she recovered from the grief.

These significant experiences have given me and my biological family a complex understanding of the calling of ordained ministry. I accept my calling with a contentionsness of the pressure it puts upon my husband and children, and I want to be intentional about helping

them thrive. My parents and siblings are both supportive and sympathetic to my experiences as a pastor and my desire to be an ordained elder.

16. Interview three people to tell you what they see in your ministry. What did you hear in these conversations?

One parishioner described me as “the happy pastor” and said that he appreciates my positivity especially when leading worship because he finds it a rare attitude to encounter. Another congregant who recently started attending Mt. Fern UMC said that what appealed to him about my ministry was when he saw me smile as people arrived late to worship. He expected pastors to be critical of tardiness but instead saw that I was genuinely happy to see people gather for worship.

The President of Trustees at one of the churches, a retired quality control worker for the train system, told me that I seem to trust people too easily, that I consistently look for the best in people and may be limited in my discernment to understand negative motivations because of my lack of “real work experience.” While he thinks it may be important for my position in ministry to be accepting, he is also critical of my ability to clearly identify who is simply power-hungry rather than seeking to “support the Church.”

What I heard in these conversations is that I convey a positive welcoming spirit and that I may potentially offer people the benefit of the doubt more often than is necessary.

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4. THEOLOGY, CALL AND DOCTRINE

a) Theology

1) Give examples of how the practice of ministry has affected your experience and understanding of:

(a) God -

Pastoral ministry has enriched my understanding of God as I regularly study how God was and is revealed through Scripture to prepare for worship and Bible studies and as I listen to the reflections of my parishioners. For example, a 91-year-old World War II veteran responded to a sermon, "I agree that God is with us during our darkest moments because God was with me when I was a POW being forced to eat bread made with sawdust and glass shards." My studies and stories like these have helped me expand my understanding of God as a Guide and Provider to that of a Constant Loving Presence, Helper, Healer, Transformer, Creator, Redeemer and Reconciler. While in pastoral ministry, my own prayers have changed from those of requests for personal guidance and safety to praise for the many blessings of life and prayers for healing, wisdom, reconciliation for those within my churches, the community, our nation and the world.

(b) Humanity -

Ministry provides access to the inner struggles within people and families where pastors have the opportunity and responsibility to encourage reconciliation and inspire hope. While providing pastoral care related to a heroin overdose, suicidal thoughts and domestic abuse, I've witnessed how despair, greed and escapism has the potential to be dangerous and self-destructive. This realization makes me more committed to share Jesus' message of good news because we need God's peace, forgiveness, healing and freedom. At the same time, humanity has

the potential to embody and share God's love as the Body of Christ. It is a joy of ministry to witness people follow Jesus' commands to love God and each other.

(c) The need for divine grace

Each of us constantly needs divine grace because "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). From those of us who are tragically unaware of our shortcomings to those of us who are overly sensitive to our failings, we all need God's grace in order to be redeemed with a right relationship with God where we can experience unconditional love, hope and peace as God's children (Galatians 4:5). While it can be helpful to have unison prayers of confession to acknowledge our communal sins, I think it's also important to give parishioners time to reflect upon their lives and the ways they personally need divine grace. I'll often include a silent time of confession before the assurance of pardon during worship because I want to provide the time and space for private prayer to strengthen our relationships with God.

(d) The Lordship of Jesus Christ

We honor Jesus' authority as Lord and Savior when we reprioritize our behavior, relationships and goals to demonstrate our gratitude and commitment to God. Unfortunately, in my interactions with parishioners, I don't see much esteem for human authority in White American culture today and I wonder how that affects our respect for Jesus Christ. Few people value historically respected positions of power, and while there may be good reasons to hesitate

when trusting human leaders, this attitude may make it difficult for congregants to accept and trust Jesus' authority as Lord and Savior. However, God was able to overcome Saul/Paul's animosity towards Jesus through a powerful spiritual experience that provided a transformational witness that went viral as word spread throughout the land (Acts 9). We can encourage others to also recognize and honor him as Lord and Savior when we share stories about how our understandings and experiences of Jesus.

(e) The work of the Holy Spirit

My practice of ministry has reaffirmed my belief that the Holy Spirit is working when we recognize Jesus' authority and when we begin to realize how deeply God loves us. As I've witnessed teenage confirmands grow in faith and bring their families back into the church, lay-led Bible studies become more open-minded and accepting of profound questions, and lay leaders begin to address the needs of our local community, I'm convinced that the Holy Spirit indeed moves among and through us to reveal God and God's way to us, helping us live responsibly in the world and courageously seek God's merciful justice for all people.

(f) The meaning and significance of the sacraments

Baptism and Holy Communion, our two Sacraments that John Wesley described as "outward signs of inward grace," provide interactive, tangible expressions of God's love. Over the past two years, I've been able to baptize infants, children and adults and celebrate Communion at least twice a month.

Baptism for all ages is meaningful to the individuals and to the faith community on spiritual and relational levels. While preparing to baptize an infant, I've explained to parents that God is working through water and the Holy Spirit to demonstrate God's prevenient grace, an undeserved gift of love for their child, that follows the tradition of the early church. When baptizing the children and adults, I've discussed their sense of God's call to be baptized and how it also initiates them into the Church and gives them a mission.

While preaching about and celebrating Holy Communion, its vast array of meanings described in *This Holy Mystery* as "thanksgiving, fellowship, remembrance, sacrifice, action of the Holy Spirit, and eschatology" has become more apparent to me (17). When I began pastoral ministry, Holy Communion was largely a time of remembrance for me, a time to reenact Jesus' last supper with his disciples and remember the sacrifice that Jesus was willing to make on behalf of humanity. It has become a time of unity, a celebration with the faith community around God's Table of Grace and a time to refocus on God's work of creating, redeeming and sustaining the world historically, presently and into the future through the eating, drinking and sharing of the consecrated bread and juice.

(g) The kingdom of God

For commissioning paperwork, I described the Kingdom of God as an ideal state where God rules over those who abide by God's will (Matthew 7:21). Praying The Lord's Prayer with the congregations every week continually inspires me with the hope that God's kingdom can

come on earth as God's will is done. The Gospel of Matthew furthermore describes the Kingdom of God as a valuable treasure that is created or found, such as the tree that grows from a mustard seed, a batch of dough mixed with yeast, a treasure found in a field and a pearl found by a merchant (Matthew 13:31-34, 44-45). The treasures in these parables didn't just materialize out of nowhere— the characters actively planted, created or found them. We too can and should actively strive to build God's kingdom on earth by doing God's will.

(h) Resurrection and eternal life

Death is one of the most common human fears, but I believe that Jesus died and rose again to relieve our fear of death and to assure us of the opportunity to be forever in God's loving presence. I have offered pastoral care to grieving families who took comfort from Psalm 23, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for you are with me," and John 14:3, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also." I've also read Eben Alexander's *Proof of Heaven* and talked with a few people who have described similar near-death experiences of feeling of completely loved and accepted. Such descriptions of life after death affirm these Biblical teachings about eternal life.

- 2) How do you understand the following traditional evangelical doctrines: (a) repentance; (b) justification; (c) regeneration; (d) sanctification? What are the marks of the Christian life?**

If lifelong faith journeys were like trips to the carwash, the marks of the Christian life described in Galatians 5:22 and Romans 12:9-21 would involve how we learn to behave while the car is upgraded. First, God's prevenient grace prompts us into a relationship without us having earned one, like a billboard that is set up to direct people towards a free carwash. With convicting grace that helps us realize our errors and invokes a desire to avoid wrongdoing, we would clearly be able to see the mess we've made in the car and on its body. Repentance, our commitment to change our ways, is like the decision to pull up to the free carwash asking for help. Justification, when God forgives our confessed sins and restores us to a right relationship with God, is like going through the carwash where the grime is washed away. Regeneration involves the transformation of being born into new life through the Holy Spirit as was explained to Nicodemus (John 3:7). This would be like getting a complementary paint job and detail. Lastly, sanctification is the process by which we continually strive to be in more perfect relationships with God and with others through God's sanctifying grace. This would be like our effort to keep the car as clean as possible afterwards.

3) How has the practice of ministry informed your understanding of the nature and mission of the Church? What are its primary challenges today?

The practice of ministry has highlighted to me the challenges we face today as a doctrinal, sacramental, missional Church that strives "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." Both of my congregations experienced significant declines in recent years but those who remain are eager to turn the tide. In order to share the Good News of God's creating, reconciling and redeeming power, we need to strengthen relationships within the

church, prayerfully build relationships within the wider community and learn how to communicate effectively in today's rapidly changing culture with technology. With the Holy Spirit's guidance, we need to accept the challenge of missionary work to analyze today's American culture and explore effective and faithful ways to preach, teach and worship God.

4) The United Methodist Church holds that Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason are sources and norms for belief and practice, but that the Bible is primary among them. What is your understanding of this theological position of the Church, and how has your practice of ministry been affected by this understanding?

This year I was asked by a Catholic-turned-United Methodist, "Why do we need to know about the historical context of Scripture? Can't you just tell us what God wants us to do?" I explained that we have Scripture as our main resource but we can also use the tools of tradition, experience and reason to understand God and God's will for our lives. As the pastor, I can provide the Bibles and historical perspectives of our tradition but each person in the Body of Christ has the opportunity and responsibility to use their experience and reasoning skills to develop a Christian witness to Jesus Christ.

My practice of ministry has been affected by this understanding by making me more open-minded as to why Christians can develop radically different interpretations of Scripture. The diversity of our understandings of tradition, our experiences and reasoning skills provides a complex witness to God's power. These factors also influence changes in our personal theology through our own lives. Therefore, the development of our theology is an ongoing process that enables us to continue growing in our relationships with God and each other.

5) How has the practice of ministry enriched your understanding of the meaning and significance of the sacraments?

The practice of ministry has helped me gain a deeper understanding that the Sacraments are more about what God is doing within us rather than what we are doing ourselves. Recently I heard a true story about a burnt-out pastor who prayerfully asked God, "What should I do next?" She heard God respond, "Feed my sheep." She was taken aback and was frustrated with such a simple response. "That's what I *have* been doing!" she replied. And she heard God explain, "I meant with My body. Feed them My body, not your own." Now as I prepare to celebrate Communion, I remind myself to "feed them Christ's body, not [my] own." Similarly, when I preside over a Baptism, I am reminded that this is a recognition and celebration of God's work within the individual, not a tribute to our own activity.

b) Vocation

1) How has the experience of ministry shaped your understanding of your vocation as an ordained elder?

I initially felt called into ministry as an ordained elder because a Divine message to "tell My children that I love them." As a provisional elder, I have seen how the proclamation of God's love has many facets. It includes preaching and teaching in intergenerational settings, as well as being present with families during the celebrations of birth, marriage and birthdays and during life's challenges like prolonged fatal diseases, sudden deaths and abusive relationships. In these many situations, I have witnessed and witnessed to God's presence, compassion, patience,

forgiveness, inspiration and transforming power. I feel that my calling has been confirmed through my experience of ministry and my hope is to help people recognize God's grace throughout their lives and so that they can respond with personal and social holiness.

c) The Practice of Ministry

1) How has the practice of ministry affected your understanding of the expectations and obligations of the itinerant system? Do you offer yourself without reserve to be appointed and to serve as the appointive authorize may determine?

There are benefits and challenges to itinerancy. As a top-down decision from the Bishop, honest and open communication with district superintendents can help the Cabinet discern congregational needs and the gifts of clergy. At the same time, congregations and clergy may feel frustrated by a lack of power to make leadership decisions for themselves. Yet I do offer myself without reservation to be appointed and to serve as is authorized. Having transitioned into pastoral ministry in two United Methodist congregations, I value the teamwork of transitioning pastors to make process as smoothly as possible for congregations and each other who are understandably anxious about a pastoral change. This practice can make itinerancy more effective and beneficial.

2) Describe and evaluate your personal gifts for ministry and how they have resulted in fruitful ministry. What would be your areas of strength and areas in which you need to be strengthened in order to be more fruitful in ministry?

My personal gifts for ministry include pastoral care and interpersonal relations, while I need to be strengthened in stewardship and evangelism. I am naturally a good listener which is helpful when providing pastoral care and building interpersonal relationships. This has also been fruitful as I've sought to rebuild both of my congregations after significant declines by healing tumultuous relationships and providing opportunities for fellowship and new lay leadership. Becoming stronger in the areas of stewardship and evangelism would help me assist these

congregations to become more financially stable as they hopefully grow in attendance and their impact in the community for God's glory.

- 3) For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness to the Christian gospel and in consideration of your influence as an ordained minister, are you willing to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life; and to this end will you agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to physical health, intentional intellectual development, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, integrity in all personal relationships, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge and love of God?**

Yes, and I hope that by doing this, I can be a good model for parishioners of all ages who might need the inspiration to be healthy, continue learning, have integrity in all relationships, be socially responsible and strive to love more perfectly.

- 4) Provide evidence of your willingness to relate yourself in ministry to all persons without regard to race, color, ethnicity, national origin, social status, gender, sexual orientation, age, economic condition, or disability.**

With a background working with disadvantaged Black and Native American communities, I have been surprised by my more recent ministry sites in the affluent communities of Summit, Warren and Montville. At the NEJ Transformational Leadership Conference last year, I was challenged to consider, "Who is in the margins of the church?" While the workshop leaders sought to inspire us to minister to the poor, I realized that in my context - specifically now in Montville, NJ - we have very few poor, and the wealthy are often the ones neglected by our church. We are a middle-class faith community surrounded by mega-mansions, similar to my previous churches in Summit and Warren. I have begun reassessing my personal theology related to wealth so that I can inspire and teach this congregation to reach beyond its economic comfort zone to minister to their wealthy neighbors. What needs and concerns do they have? Hopes and dreams? Limitations and desires? I imagine that this is a process that I will face many times

throughout my ministry as I analyze local demographics and strive to minister to all persons without regard to, but with an awareness of their race, color, ethnicity, national origin, social status, gender, sexual orientation, age, economic condition or disability.

5) Will you regard all pastoral conversations of a confessional nature as a trust between the person concerned and God?

I will regard all pastoral conversations of a confessional nature as a trust between the person concerned and God unless I learn that a child or vulnerable adult is being abused or neglected, in which case I would report it to the authorities.

6) Provide evidence of experience in peace and justice ministries.

Our American society is developing a social media culture that promotes self-centeredness and honest free expression without regard to respect or kindness. With a breakdown in face-to-face conversations, people no longer see how their comments affect others. There is a need for the development and practice of conversation skills in a way that teaches respect of the other— not in a way that creates uniformity of thought but by creating a safe place for sharing. This skill can lead to improved relationships and peace within families, churches and communities, ideally leading to justice ministries where people understand, value and work for the rights of those who experience life differently.

When the congregation in Montville asked me to teach them how to talk about their faith, I preached a sermon series based upon Richard Peace's *Holy Conversations* and provided them an opportunity to describe their faith experiences over meals at local restaurants. At the last of eight meals, a young couple said, "This is great but can we meet at a local bar instead of IHOP?" So we continued meeting regularly as "Boonton Pub Theology" to discuss God, faith and life

over drinks and bar pies. I took this opportunity to expand the conversation into controversial topics so we could discuss how faith affects our perspectives and behaviors. When I predicted the conversation might get heated, I would prepare for it by having a night devoted to imagining the beloved community of God or discussing the value of respect. We also have ground rules in order to offer each person a safe space to speak and listen. Essentially, we are teaching people how to talk about controversial issues face-to-face in healthy, respectful ways that enable us to leave at the end of the night with new understandings. These conversations have helped us practice controlling our tongues and emotions while listening to other perspectives. This has become a peace ministry in a most unlikely location and equips us to bring peaceable change within potentially controversial issues of justice and inequality.

d) Additional Questions

- 1) Explain the threefold aspects of Wesleyan grace and how have you encountered these in your own ministry life.**

God's grace is an undeserved gift of love offered to each of us through Jesus' life, death and resurrection and the power of the Holy Spirit. Baptism, especially that of infants, demonstrates God's prevenient grace as the congregation celebrates God's desire to be in relationship with us without us needing to earn or deserve God's attention. Teaching Confirmation class gave me the opportunity to witness God's justifying grace as the teenagers described how God forgives them through Jesus Christ and puts them into a right relationship with God. And when I see Christians striving to grow closer to God and to minister to their communities, I am witnessing God's sanctifying grace that prompts us to grow in personal and social holiness.

2) Share an instance when you found yourself in ministry with someone whose theology was radically different from your own.

A woman in her late 80s was adamantly expressing Baptist views about the inerrancy of Scripture during a lay-led Bible study while across the table, a bold 90-year-old lifelong Methodist argued back with progressive views aligned more closely with my own. The parishioners' eyes nervously bounced between these two while they debated an Old Testament characterization of God before the small group turned to me for an explanation. When I said that there is room in The United Methodist Church for many interpretations of Scripture, a parishioner surprised me by asking as he pointed to the 90-year-old man, "Even a progressive view?!" "Yes, and even a conservative view!" I replied with a nod towards the Baptist woman. Then I explained that as we interpret the Bible, it can be valuable for us to take into consideration the original context of the writing. Later, this woman sat down with me to explain that she and I had very different theologies, as she had had with the previous pastors. I explained some of the differences between the United Methodist and Baptist theology and explained that she was welcome in spite of the differences. A few months later, I led a small group through Adam Hamilton's *Making Sense of the Bible* to help congregants who were feeling unfaithful because of their personal questions about God and Scripture. Neither the Baptist woman, nor the lifelong Methodist came to this small group, but I've since noticed a cultural shift in the lay-led Bible study as parishioners have begun to remind each other that Scripture was written about God by men with cultural perspectives from their time.

3) Describe how your image of God has changed over your journey. What has informed this?

I was raised with the traditional, Anglo-American view of God as all-powerful paternalistic God who loved me and was very similar to my own father. As a teenager, I was profoundly disappointed when my father divorced my mother so I adapted my image of God to “My Perfect Father” who would never disappoint me. Having altered my understanding of God, I was open-minded to the critiques in theological school about the masculinity of God and how it can fail to convey all of God’s dynamic qualities. Spending time in pastoral ministry, I have had the opportunity to listen and learn about how parishioners view and relate to God which has expanded my understanding of God even further. Now I interact with God as Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, Healer, Teacher, Source of Inspiration, Nurturer, Transformer, Reconciler, Peacemaker and Divine Presence.

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5. POLITY

1. Explain the role of deacons, elders, and local pastors in the UMC and how they are each uniquely called and function in the church.

Both ordained elders and deacons are called to follow Jesus' example by ministering to all people with the Holy Spirit's guidance throughout a lifetime of ministry (§ 139, § 140).

Elders are called by God to minister within church communities through Word, Sacrament, Order & Service while deacons are called by God to connect the church and local community by ministering through Word, Service, Compassion and Justice (§ 139, § 329). These callings upon elders and deacons are affirmed by their home churches, the District Committee on Ministry, the Board of Ordained Ministry and the clergy session of Annual Conference. Elders are authorized to celebrate the Sacraments and deacons can receive authority from the bishop to celebrate the Sacraments within their ministry settings. Elders are uniquely itinerant while deacons may have more than one appointment within or outside of church settings (§ 328). Both ordained elders and deacons in full connection have voice and vote in the annual conference where their membership is held, are eligible to serve as clergy on boards, commissions, or committees of the annual conference, and can be elected to be delegates at general, jurisdictional or central conferences (§ 329.1, § 330, § 334.1).

Local pastors are neither elders nor deacons although their ministry within a local congregation may look similar to that of an elder. Both local pastors and elders serve a local church, administer the Sacraments, preside over weddings and funerals, and confirm and receive new members (§ 316). However, the local pastor's authority is restricted to a specific local

church whereas an ordained elder can celebrate the Sacraments anywhere. Local pastors are allowed to vote on all matters at annual conference except “constitutional amendments, election of delegates to general, jurisdictional, or central conferences, and matters of ordination, character, and conference relations of clergy” (§ 316). They are under the supervision of the district superintendent and have a clergy mentor (§ 316). Local pastors, unlike elders, are not itinerant.

2. What is the process for setting a pastor’s salary? Who can change it, and when can it be changed?

The pastor’s salary is set by the Church Conference after being approved by Church Council upon the recommendation of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee in consultation with the district superintendent based upon the conference-wide compensation plan for clergy adopted by annual conference (§ 252.4d, § 604.13).

3. The Education committee wants to update the curriculum being taught in the Christian Education program. What specific guidance does the Book of Discipline give you in dealing with this issue?

The Book of Discipline specifically advises that the church’s education ministry should inspire people of all ages to “experience God’s active presence in their lives; foster healthy, nonviolent relationships within the congregation and community; testify to the reconciling love of God through Christ; and live out their faith in the world as witnesses to the coming reign of God” (§ 256.1a). *The Book of Discipline* requires elders to encourage the use of United Methodist materials, both literature and media, as they oversee church education (§

340.2c(1)(b)). United Methodist materials include those that have been recommended by the Curriculum Resource Committee and approved by the Board of Discipleship Ministry (<http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/using-approved-united-methodist-curriculum>).

4. You have discovered a need in the community for a soup kitchen, and wish to recommend that this be a priority for the congregation, using the facilities of the church. What parties and processes need to be involved?

First I would need to assess the potential commitment of the congregation by describing the need to the outreach committee (§ 252.2b). If they were supportive and willing to recommend it to Church Council, then the Council could help recruit a volunteer team including representatives from the finance committee and trustees to prayerfully assess the logistics, needs and goals (§ 252.1). With a review of the details, the Trustees could then approve the usage of the church facilities and Church Council could continue to put the plan into action. With more congregants involved in the planning of this ministry, more support is ideally rallied and feeding the hungry through a soup kitchen would become a priority for the church.

5. A constituent of your church comes to speak with you about their call to ministry. Describe the basic steps that are involved in seeking ordination.

If the constituent remained interested in pursuing ordained ministry after describing his or her call to ministry and prayerfully reflecting upon *The Christian as Minister*, he or she would apply and enroll in the candidacy process by writing to the district superintendent, enrolling online and being assigned a clergy mentor who would meet with them regularly throughout this process (*Fulfilling God's Call*, 27). Then the constituent would publicly declare candidacy by requesting a recommendation by the Staff-Parish Relations Committee to Church Conference to the District Committee on Ordained Ministry (Kohler, 63). Upon examination and approval by the District Committee on Ordained Ministry, the constituent would become a certified candidate

for ministry. After at least a year as a certified candidate, during which he or she completes a year of service ministry and at least one half of the Master of Divinity, the candidate would be eligible for commissioning (*Fulfilling God's Call*, 27). With a health certificate, a criminal background check, a written exam and at least 3/4 support from the District Committee of Ordained Ministry for recommendation to the Board of Ordained Ministry, the candidate would be interviewed and could be recommended to provisional membership by the Board of Ordained Ministry (*Fulfilling God's Call*, 27). With fruitful ministry as a provisional elder for at least two years, as well as a written and oral exam by the Board of Ordained Ministry, the provisional elder could then be recommended to the Clergy Session of Annual Conference to become ordained. This process provides for inward and outward discernment and support as we seek to understand God's calling upon the individual as a potential ordained clergy in The United Methodist Church.

6. Describe the general structures of the Annual Conference and how each body functions.

Annual Conference consists of clergy and laity members. Clergy membership includes ordained deacons and elders, provisional members, associate members, affiliate members and local pastors while an equal number of laity include at least one professing member from each local church, the conference president of United Methodist Women, conference lay leader, one youth and one young adult from each district, district lay leaders, etc. (§ 602.1, § 602.4). Each body has the right to vote on matters of the annual conference as well as the election of its own representatives to general and jurisdictional conferences (§ 602.1a). Clergy members in full connection are the only ones who can vote on "matters of ordination, character, and conference

relations of clergy” (§ 602.1a). The Annual Conference is presided over by the bishop according to an agenda that the bishop, district superintendents, conference lay leader prepare and submit for adoption by the annual conference (§ 605.2). A chancellor, who is licensed to practice law, is nominated by the bishop and elected quadrennially by the annual conference to serve as a legal advisor to the bishop and the annual conference (§ 604.8). The conference lay leader, who is elected by the conference laity, partners in ministry with the bishop during sessions of annual conference (§ 604.9a). The responsibilities of annual conference are described in §§ 604-606, 608, 610 of *The Book of Discipline* while *The United Methodist Handbook* summarizes them, “Annual Conference elects delegates to General and jurisdictional or central conference, votes on constitutional amendments, sets ministry priorities and budget for its region and is where clergy hold membership” (16). Within each annual conference there is also a variety of boards to oversee the vast array of relationships between the annual conference and national agencies, as well as a Conference Council on Finance and Administration and a Conference Board of Trustees. More information about these can be found in the §§ 600s of *The Book of Discipline*.

7. Describe the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of the United Methodist Church.

The legislative branch of The United Methodist Church is General Conference which meets every four years with an equal number of clergy and lay delegates to create policy for the denomination. The judicial branch of the United Methodist Church is the Judicial Council which interprets the church law in our *Book of Discipline* as “the final court of appeal in the church’s

judicial system” (*Handbook*, 16). The executive branch is the Council of Bishops that meets at least once a year to oversee the “temporal and spiritual interests of the entire Church and [carries] into effect the rules, regulations and responsibilities prescribed and enjoyed by the General Conference” (§ 47).

8. What is your understanding of the theology behind Shared Ministries giving (apportionments)?

Theologically, when we support Shared Ministries, we are imitating the early church in Acts which shared their belongings to support each other rather than claim private ownership (Acts 4:32-35). We also demonstrate our awareness that we are members of the Body of Christ and not lone rangers seeking to glorify God by ourselves (1 Corinthians 27:14). As a connectional worldwide Christian denomination, we can accomplish more if our congregations combine efforts, financially and otherwise, rather than act independently. Shared Ministry provides an opportunity for The United Methodist Church as a denomination to financially support the education, ministry and leadership of The United Methodist Church around the world. By donating to the World Service Fund, Africa University Fund, Black College Fund, the Interdenominational Cooperation Fund and the Ministerial Education Fund, we are supporting a variety of educational and ministerial needs that have been recognized by General Conference as being valuable (*Handbook*, 40-42). Supporting the Episcopal Fund and the General Administration Fund through Shared Ministry gives us the opportunity to share the responsibility of overhead denominational costs including the implementation of trustworthy administrative and financial systems, the salaries of the district superintendents, the bishop and Conference staff members and the maintenance of official documents, historical artifacts and landmarks

(*Handbook*, 42). Our connectional system provides for accountability within the structure of the Church.

9. You have an idea for a unique form of ministry. How does the Book of Discipline guide us in seeking affirmation for ministries that are beyond the local church? What is the role of extension ministry in the life of the Church?

Depending upon one's gifts and talents, as well as sense of call, there is the possibility of being appointed to an extension ministry as an elder. Such appointments are "initiated in missional response to the needs of persons in special circumstances and unique situations and shall reflect the commitment of the clergy to intentional fulfillment of their ordination vows to Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service" (§ 344.1d). *The Book of Discipline* explains that ministry positions outside of the local church that serve to witness to Christ's love and justice can become extension ministries for elders who would remain itinerant and be accountable to the annual conference (§ 343.1). The following paragraph describes the categories of appointment as those within the connectional structures of United Methodism which include district superintendents, staff members of conference councils and boards, treasurers, bishops' assistants, campus ministers, general agencies missionaries, faculty and administrators of United Methodist Schools of theology and ecumenical agencies, as well as other extension ministries that the bishop and Board of Ordained Ministry may designate (§ 344.1).

The Book of Discipline also explains the process for requesting such an appointment. First, submit a written statement to the Cabinet and the Board of Ordained Ministry describing the ministry setting and your understanding of your call no later than 120 days before the desired

appointment. With the recommendation of the Cabinet and the Board of Ordained Ministry, extension ministries can be approved by 2/3rd vote of clergy members the annual conference (§ 344.1).

The Book of Discipline continues to explain the dynamics of the continued relationship between elders in extension ministry and the annual conference, including an annual evaluation, in the form of a narrative reflecting their ministry if they are already evaluated by the institution of their ministry setting, to be submitted to the bishop, the district superintendent, and the Board of Ordained Ministry. The bishop, representatives of the Cabinet, and an endorsed representative of the Board of Ordained Ministry are to meet annually with the elder in extension ministry to understand one another's role and function in ministry (§ 344.2). Thus elders in extension ministry can maintain a relationship of accountability and support with the annual conference.

10. In what ways does your upbringing, your cultural context, your personal experience shape your understanding of our polity?

My great-grandfather was a pastor in the Methodist Episcopal Church and my mother became a pastor soon after the United Methodist Church was formed. These family connections to the Church help me value the history and development of polity within our denomination. I also have a heritage that includes both English and Native American ancestry which has largely affected my awareness of white privilege and the prevalence of marginalization within our society. Within the polity of our Church, I most appreciate The United Methodist's commitment to connectionism that values diversity and accountability.

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6. BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Heather Valosin was raised in The United Methodist Church as a pastor's kid, and even as a young child, Heather felt called to share God's love with the world. Unfortunately her only platform at the time was the backseat of the family minivan where she once loudly sang an original song about Jesus' love out the crack in the open back window. When she was eleven years old, Heather began exploring the idea of becoming a pastor and was encouraged by church members and youth workers. While she waited to focus on ministry, middle school sometimes seemed like an unbearable delay. By the time Heather arrived at Drew Theological School, she was eager to study Christianity but had become critical of pastoral ministry. Her mindset didn't change until she spent a summer working with Communities of Shalom on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota.

When a young Lakota man asked Heather about theological school, Heather explained that she was unlike most of her classmates who wanted to become pastors.

"Why don't you want to become a pastor?"

"People unfairly put pastors on a pedestal. They expect pastors to be like Jesus."

"Who is Jesus?"

Heather looked at him with surprise trying to discern whether he was genuinely unaware, "Jesus? Jesus is the Son of God, an incredible Teacher who reimagined Jewish theology, died and rose again expressing God's love for humanity." Then the Lakota man asked, "And why don't you want to be like this Jesus?" Heather stumbled over her words as she tried to explain the impossible expectations upon pastors but his question left a lingering impression. What was wrong with the challenge to follow Jesus? At that point, Heather began to consider pastoral ministry again.

When Heather graduated there were no available pastoral appointments within The United Methodist Church in the area. Desiring to be in ministry, she became the Director of Pastoral Care at Trinity United Church, a bi-denominational Presbyterian and United Church of Christ congregation in Warren, NJ. As the Director of Pastoral Care, Heather visited shut-ins, made hospital visits, led a walking prayer ministry and a Christian book discussion group, helped lead worship and preached monthly. It was a valuable time of exploration and a confirmation that Wesleyan theology and polity resonated more strongly with Heather than that of the other denominations.

Heather also approaches ministry with an emphasis on God's grace because of a near-death experience due to a chronic illness. Instead of offering a hasty deathbed confession, Heather confidently faced a major emergency surgery with the faith that human successes were not the criteria for everlasting life. She was reassured by the belief that God's compassion and grace would enable her to eternally be in God's presence for eternity. "Lord, I trust that you want to be with me more than I have acted like I wanted to be with you," was her prayer in the ER. After she miraculously survived the surgery, Heather recommitted herself to ministry based on God's grace rather than guilt and fear-tactics.

Heather currently serves Montville and Mt. Fern United Methodist Churches with the support of her husband Eric, who is a professional artist, and their son Micah, who thrives as a pastor's kid himself.

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7. CHRONOLOGICAL RESUME OF ACTIVITIES

Heather Valosin

Spouse: Eric Valosin

Child: Micah Valosin, age 4

Home Church: UMC of Summit, NJ

Churches that I am Currently Serving:

Montville UMC, Towaco, NJ & Mt. Fern UMC, Randolph, NJ

Date	Education	Employment	Location
July 2015-present		Provisional Member at Mt. Fern UMC	Randolph, NJ
July 2014-present		Local Pastor, then Provisional Member at Montville UMC	Towaco, NJ
August 2011-June 2014		Part-time Director of Pastoral Care at Trinity United Church	Warren, NJ
September 2011-June 2014		Part-time Nanny for two families	Harding, NJ Warren, NJ
September 2010-June 2011		Sales Associate at The Rocking Horse	Madison, NJ
September 2008-May 2009		Youth Director at the UMC of Summit	Summit, NJ
January 2008-May 2011	M.Div. at Drew Theological School		Madison, NJ
August 2007-November 2007		Volunteer Youth Leader	L'Eglise Protestante Réformée de Grenoble, Grenoble, France
2006-2007		Teacher through Teach For America	Henderson, NC
2002-2006	B.A. from Drew University, double major in Psychology and Theatre		Madison, NJ
Five Summers during College and Theological School		Camp Counselor & Dean of HOPE Camp	Jumonville Christian Camp and Retreat Center, Hopwood, PA
2000-2002	Diploma from Gilford Middle-High School		Gilford, NH
1998-2000	North East High School		North East, PA

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NOTES

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Princeton United Methodist Church
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Scripture: 1 Timothy 2:1-7 (The Message)

1-3 The first thing I want you to do is pray. Pray every way you know how, for everyone you know. Pray especially for rulers and their governments to rule well so we can be quietly about our business of living simply, in humble contemplation. This is the way our Savior God wants us to live.

4-7 He wants not only us but everyone saved, you know, everyone to get to know the truth we've learned: that there's one God and only one, and one Priest-Mediator between God and us— Jesus, who offered himself in exchange for everyone held captive by sin, to set them all free. Eventually the news is going to get out. This and this only has been my appointed work: getting this news to those who have never heard of God, and explaining how it works by simple faith and plain truth.

In the huge pile of mail that greeted me upon my return from Trinidad a couple of weeks ago, was a letter from our Bishop, John Schol. *Dear Catherine*, it began, *I understand you are preparing for next year's full member retreat and examination. You have already been affirmed in your calling and have been leading people to make disciples and grow vital congregations to transform the world, Thank you.* A quick glance through the rest of the letter assured me I wasn't in any trouble – whew! The Bishop actually wrote to offer me words of hope, admonition, encouragement, and support in advance of my upcoming ordination assessment period. His closing words - “Keep the Faith! John.”

When spiritual overseers write to the pastors under their care, their words carry great import for good or for ill. I'd like to think Pastor Timothy felt at least as supported and cared for when he received his letter from his Bishop, Paul, as I felt when I received this letter from my Bishop, John. Bishops or spiritual overseers tend to be rich in faith, grounded in the Scriptures, and seasoned in life and ministry experiences; any instruction they give to those under their care could very well be the Word of the Lord to the minister and to the church.

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So we are fortunate this morning to hear this Word from the Lord as we peer over Timothy's shoulder, reading what his Bishop had to say as he offered words of instruction and administrative guidance to this young leader of the well-established church in Ephesus. Ephesus was a bustling, commercial metropolis in Western Asia Minor; we now call that region Turkey. Paul had left young Timothy in charge of this urban congregation, where philosophical and theological issues were beginning to pose a threat to the faith. So Paul did some fairly close mentoring and coaching in both letters to the young Pastor. In this first letter, just prior to where we begin reading, Paul gives the same exhortation to Timothy as John Schol gave to me – hold on to faith, he says. Hold on to faith and a good conscience. Then he proceeds to suggest how: *First of all, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made...* The Message Bible translation – which provided the title for today's sermon – puts it this way, *The first thing I want you to do is pray. Pray every way you know how, for everyone you know.* The slightly nuanced differences between supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings don't really warrant separating them into discrete categories of prayer. It was the writer's way of saying, *pray every way you know how.*

In our Christian tradition, to pray is essentially to talk to God. If God does not factor into this faith-building practice, we may as well call it a pious little monologue. Furthermore, if God is not expected to have something to say in response to our petitions, supplications, intercessions, or thanksgivings, then...what can I say? You probably know how it feels to have a conversation with someone where you couldn't get a word in edgewise to save your life? Granted, God's response in the conversation may take all kinds of delightful or terrifying forms, but that calls for the kind of discernment we only get by the act of prayer, by practicing to pray. Prayer is a

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conversation; it is being in a place of God-awareness. *Keep the faith*, Paul tells Timothy; hold on to faith by first of all praying.

You might be saying, “but I don’t know how to pray.” You probably have in mind the eloquent prayers given by clergy or other spiritual leaders in worship. I am happy to clarify that verbal prayer is only one of many, many ways to pray. “How do you pray?” I asked a few friends. Some kneel and clasp their hands, some walk and lift their hands, some pace the floor and clap their hands, some need to locate themselves in a special place, others pray anywhere, even while they do hair in a crowded salon. Every way you know how, can also mean *any* way you know how. Our hymn of response suggests prayer can be an upward glance, a falling tear, a heavy sigh; it can be simple, eloquent, or desperate words.

Episcopalian priest, and one of my favorite preachers, Barbara Brown Taylor hilariously describes her prayer life in her book *An Altar in the World*. “Sometimes,” she says, “when people ask me about my prayer life, I describe hanging laundry on the line.” Taylor talks about picking up her husband’s T-shirt and shaking it like a prayer flag. The wooden clothes pins inspire her prayer for the Penley Corporation of West Paris, in Maine, which is still willing to make clothes pins from wood instead of colored plastic. “All day long,” she says, “as I watch the breeze toss these clothes in the wind, I imagine my prayers spinning away over the tops of the trees. This is good work, this prayer. This is good prayer, this work.”¹

Like Barbara Brown Taylor, I believe our work can be prayer. Preparing that lesson plan can be a prayer for God’s influence over those we teach. Working in the garden can be a prayer for the earth – the blessings it yields and the dangers it faces. As we put the recycling out on the

¹ Barbara Brown Taylor, *An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2010), 46.

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curb may that be a prayer for the sanitation workers who will empty those bins? Taylor encourages us to make the world our altar in this practice of prayer.

In my own prayer practice I often sit in a comfortable spot with my Bible and hymnal. I've been known to pray words from hymns I've never sung, simply because the poetry expresses so fittingly what is on my heart at the time. I've been known to utter groans and moans that have no English translation, breaking out into tear-filled song eventually – feeling the release that music can bring. Then the psalmists have been my prayer mentors for every kind of prayer. They teach us how to give thanks, how to interceded on someone else's behalf, how to wail in grief and pain, how to shake our fists and say a few choice words in a fit of rage over evil people and horrendous situations over which we have no control. These all qualify as prayer, you know, because they are done before God, with an awareness that God is most present, and welcoming - no matter the state of our heart and mind.

Then the Bishop's instruction to Timothy takes one further step. *Pray every way you know how for everyone you know. Pray especially for rulers and their governments to rule well so we can be quietly about our business of living simply, in humble contemplation. This is the way our Savior God wants us to live. He wants not only us but everyone saved, you know, everyone to get to know the truth we've learned: that there's one God and only one, and one Priest-Mediator between God and us – Jesus, who offered himself in exchange for everyone held captive by sin, to set them all free.* (The Message) Did you catch the frequency of the words 'everyone,' and 'all?' What does that mean? It addresses the question, *For whom are we to pray?* When Jesus commanded the disciples to go into all the world, preaching the gospel, he didn't mention any exclusions or exceptions, did he? Are there people for whom we should not pray, or

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people who don't deserve our prayers? The answer from 1 Timothy is a resounding *no*! Yet I know of Christians who are okay praying for victims while cursing the perpetrators. Some of us feel justified in praying for the murdered and damning the murderer. But according to the Word of the Lord through Paul to Timothy this morning, *all* people deserve our prayers – the narcissistic liars and the ethically shifty deserve our prayers. Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief, presidents, kings, presidential candidates, rulers and leaders of every kind – we pray for everyone, because God desires that all be saved. And through prayer we get to participate in God's work in caring for and saving the world – no exceptions!

I am confident enough to say this morning, that if this looks difficult, it is only so *before* we begin to pray. *Thinking* about praying for our enemies is more difficult than actually praying for them. Because once we begin we discover God is there; and somehow in those moments of aligning ourselves with God, and in the process of attuning ourselves to the Holy in that spiritual realm, we are transformed into a kind of God-likeness that is not possible otherwise. We become overshadowed by the Spirit in prayer, and a holy thing is born in us, that is not of human doing – it is called LOVE. There is where we hear God's heartbeat of empathy, feel God's pulse of grace, and enter into God's storehouse of mercy, mercy that treats us better than we deserve. It is in prayer that we learn to forgive those who trespass against us. This is not armchair Christianity sisters and brothers; this is getting on the field and into the action of the Kingdom. God wants liberty and justice for all – that is the message of the Kingdom Jesus demonstrated and taught; that is what we pray for every time we say Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

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John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, called the practice of praying without ceasing a hallmark of the Christian. When Wesley preached that “prayer continues in the desire of the heart, though the understanding be employed on outward things,”² he was describing a life of constant, albeit subconscious engagement with God, where everything we do happens in that subliminal awareness of God with us, God in us, God for us. So that not only are we in continuous engagement with God, we are also in a constant posture of openness to hearing, seeing, discerning God’s response, which may come in the words of another person, in the words of a poem, in the inspiration of a work of art, in the cry or laughter of a child, in the melody of a song – one of my colleagues refers to this as the ubiquitous grace of God.

Pray every way you know how for everyone you know. We have a prayer chain ministry here at PUMC that lifts up the needs of people here and around the world. I am part of that prayer chain, so for every request that comes in, I join my voice and heart, praying for everyone I know. Allow me to share a deeply personal reason why I pray for others; it is because at a time when I needed it more desperately than I knew, others prayed for me, and prayed me through to a personal victory.

I’ve been married to the kindest man on the planet for thirty-eight years now, but less than 8 years into the marriage it was broken, and we eventually parted ways. We had friends and family who prayed for our restoration. My Dad told me he prayed every day for my marriage during those five years of separation. At one point I said sarcastically to my friends, “You know there are famines in Africa, and monsoons in India that you’d be better off praying for.” Not only did my friends ignore my pessimism, the prayers were amped up by people whom I subsequently

² From John Wesley’s sermon titled, “A Plain Account of Christian Perfection.”

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Sunday September 18, 2016

met, who never even knew Harran. Hindsight helps me believe all those accumulated prayers amounted to what I could only call a spiritual battering ram. That's the only explanation I could give for the stupendous outcome of a marriage retreat Harran and I reluctantly attended, led by a couple of eccentric lay people. We went there totally estranged, and left there three days later arm in arm and googly-eyed, because we fell hard in love all over again. My vivid recollection of how that weekend felt was like a battering ram of accumulated, stubborn, intercessory prayer crashed through that heavily fortified wall of protection around my heart, and the healing light of God's love came streaming in. I call that 180-degree turnaround my miracle of Red Sea proportions. Our friends and family had no idea – nor did we - what God would do in response to their repeated prayer for us. They simply refused to become weary in well-doing.

I don't offer this as a formula for God at work in our relationships; God responds to prayer in mysterious and customized ways, and there is a great deal more to the story. But this weekend episode is a major source of my inspiration to pray for everyone I know, because over, and over, and over I have witnessed the activity of God in complex situations that defied human remedy or solutions. And I believe, like it says in 1 Timothy that there are no exclusions to God's love and mercy, there is no-one outside the merits of God's grace. And so people of God let us pray, pray every way we know how, pray for everyone we know. Pray for our country in this critical hour of decision; pray for our world as wickedness and violence tear apart human community. Who knows when and how those seeds of prayer will sprout and grow, and bear life-giving fruit? Thanks be to God, Amen!

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Order of Worship, September 18, 2016
Princeton United Methodist Church

Catherine E. Williams

Prelude

This is our musical entry into the service of worship. The organist plays music that helps us become centered in - and focused on - the presence of God.

Entrance of Light

The acolytes walk down the center aisle with a flame that will light the Christ candle and altar candles. This act symbolizes the presence of Christ, the light of the world, in our midst.

Introit

This is a musical call to worship. The lyrics are usually connected with the theme of the day or the Scripture.

Call to Worship

This responsive call between the liturgist and the people, serves to further help us focus on the purpose of our gathering. This morning's call was taken from the words of a hymn.

Passing the Peace

For a minute or two we acknowledge and welcome the people around us with greetings, smiles, and handshakes. It reminds us that worship is a communal act, not just a personal one.

Hymn of Praise – “For the Healing of the Nations”

This opening hymn is another communal act that unites us physically (our voices) as well as theologically (a petition to God.)

Prayer of Confession

The scriptures admonish us to confess our sins to God and to one another. This prayer does both. There is time allowed for silent, personal confession at the end of the corporate prayer.

Words of Assurance

God promises to forgive us our sins if we confess. These words are thus spoken on God's behalf.

Music Ministry

Music is a beautiful, creative way to worship God. This piece by the choir is given both as a musical offering to God, and a musical act of ministry to God's people.

Children's Time

This reminds children that they are important to Jesus, and his Word is important to them.

Scripture Lesson – 1 Timothy 2:1-7

I believe this is where the preaching actually begins – the proclamation of the Word of God.

Sermon: Pray Every Way You Know How

God's word to us in the Scriptures often needs to be interpreted in ways that capture our imagination and call for a response. Preaching connects the people with God.

Order of Worship, September 18, 2016
Princeton United Methodist Church

Catherine E. Williams

Hymn of Response – “Prayer is the Soul’s Sincere Desire”

This hymn is usually selected as a corporate response to the sermon. If well chosen, it nurtures the soil of the heart in which the seed of the Word was planted.

Sacrament of Baptism - This is an exciting time of welcome where the Holy Spirit initiates baby Penelope into the family of God, and gives her new life. This is also a time for the baptized to re-affirm their faith as contained in the Scriptures and our confessional creed.

Prayers of the People

In one sense these prayers are a continued response to the sermon, sometimes making confessions of our falling short of what God has asked of us. In another sense they are petitions on behalf of specific needs – in the congregation, the community, and the world.

Offertory and Doxology

Giving is a joyous act of worship. The doxology praises God for what God has given us.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

This act models a way to be thankful. We thank God for the gifts, the givers, and those whose lives will be touched by these gifts.

Hymn of Discipleship – “Come and Find the Quiet Center”

This hymn is our corporate reminder of the claims made on us by the Word of God. In may function as a statement of intention or as parting instructions for the faithful.

Recession of Light

The acolyte takes a flame from the Christ Candle, extinguishes the candles, and exits the sanctuary - a symbolic reminder that we take the light of Christ out into the world as we go.

Benediction

As God’s representative, the preacher pronounces a blessing on the people as they go. Often this is a reminder that God is with us to help us in our resolve to do God’s work.

Postlude

Brings musical closure to the corporate act of worship.

Why did you choose the hymns used in the context of the service?

Hymn #1 – *For the Healing of the Nations*. Each verse of this hymn is a prayer for God’s kingdom to come on earth, and God’s will to be done in and through us. It gives worshipers the chance to pray in song.

Hymn #2 – *Prayer is the Soul’s Sincere Desire*. Five of the six verses in this hymn describe a different way to pray, it is a musical continuation of the sermon. The final verse echoes the disciples request when they asked Jesus, “Lord teach us how to pray.”

Order of Worship, September 18, 2016
Princeton United Methodist Church

Catherine E. Williams

Hymn #3 – *Come and Find the Quiet Center*. This final hymn functions as a reminder that in the midst of our crowded lives lived at a hurried pace, there is a quiet center, a place of prayer where God waits for us. We can find God not only here in the sanctuary, but out there in our busy lives.

What was the purpose of the sermon?

The closing words of the sermon express its purpose, to encourage people to pray: “And so people of God let us pray, pray every way we know how, pray for everyone we know.”

Does the Order of Worship help deliver that theme?

Yes. The focus of prayer is reflected in the hymn selections, the music, and the liturgical prayers.

SHARING IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY

Choirs: 9:30 Youth Choir
11:00 Chancel Choir

Soloist: 9:30 Leanne Griffiths

Greeter: 9:30 Doug Fullman

Coffee Hour: 9:30

Ushers: 9:30 Tom Rinehart, Ralph Newhall
David Gange
11:00 Harran Williams,
Doug Fullman, Rich Kahn

Altar Guild: 9:30 Cindy Gordon
11:00 Beverly Masters

Lay Readers: 9:30 Eric Mortensen
11:00 Cindy Gordon

Liturgists: 9:30 Jana Purkis-Brash, Susan Victor
11:00 Jana Purkis-Brash, Tom Shelton

Sound: 9:30 John Macdonald
11:00 Ed Sproles

Projection: 9:30 Kristin Tunkel
11:00 Yannick Ibrahim

We welcome all who have come to worship with us. If you are a visitor, please provide your name, address, and email address on the Ritual of Friendship form and introduce yourself to a member of our staff. Please pick up a visitor bag as you leave the church or as you go into coffee hour. Find out more about the missions and programs at PUMC at princetonumc.org.

PUMC Staff

Pastor: Jana Purkis-Brash
Associate Pastor of Pastoral Care: Catherine Williams
Youth Pastor & Wesley Foundation Campus Minister: Skitch Matson
Deacon, serving as Director of Counseling Services at Womanspace, Inc.: Susan Victor
Resident Theologian: Donald Brash
Director of Christian Education: Machaela Irving
Office Manager: Debbie Blok
Communications: Jasmine Cianflone
Director of Music: Hyosang Park
Director of Children's & Youth Choirs: Tom Shelton
Organist: Christopher McWilliams
Custodian: Gilmar Enamorado



**PRINCETON
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**
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18TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
SEPTEMBER 18, 2016



We are a diverse community joyfully responding to God's love and growing as disciples of Christ by nurturing, teaching, reaching and serving all people.

The Church Gathers

Enter Reverently, Meditate Quietly, Worship Sincerely

WORDS OF WELCOME

PRELUDE "Theme" A. F. Hesse

INTROIT

9:30 "Welcome" Mark Miller
11:00 "Jesus Calls Us" W. Jude

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Stand up and bless the Lord, ye people of his choice; stand up and bless the Lord, your God with heart and soul and voice.

God is our strength and song, and his salvation ours; then be his love in Christ proclaimed with all our ransomed powers.

Come, one and all, let us worship God
Let EVERYTHING that has breath praise the Lord!

*THE PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you.

And also with you.

***HYMN OF PRAISE** # 428
"For the Healing of the Nations"

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Oh holy God, who by your love has made us, and through your love has kept us, and in your love would make us perfect: we humbly confess that we have not loved you with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, and that we have not loved one another as Christ has loved us. Your life is within our souls, but our selfishness has hindered it. We have not lived by faith. We have resisted your Spirit. We have neglected your inspirations.

Forgive what we have been; help us to amend what we are; and in your Spirit direct what we shall be; that you may come into the full glory of your creation, in us and in all your people; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Followed by silent prayer

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

To Hear the Word and Reflect

MUSIC MINISTRY

9:30 *Special Music*
11:00 "Somebody's Knocking" J. Clemens

CHILDREN'S TIME (9:30)

SCRIPTURE 1 Timothy 2:1-7 pg. 196

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON Catherine Williams

"Pray Every Way You Know How"

To Respond in Faith

***HYMN OF RESPONSE** # 492

"Prayer Is the Soul's Sincere Desire"

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM (11:00)

*We celebrate the baptism of
Penelope Violet Cwick
daughter of Alison & Joshua Cwick*

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE Followed by the Lord's Prayer

OFFERTORY "Our Lord, Our Refuge" Lani Smith

***DOXOLOGY** # 95

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

And Scatters To Be in the World

***HYMN OF DISCIPLESHIP** # 2128

"Come and Find the Quiet Center"

*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE "Allegro in A minor" A. Hoffmann

Please remain seated for the postlude.

***Those who are able are invited to stand**

Please join us after the service in the Sanford Davis room, next door, for coffee and light refreshments.



PRAYER: For our **Prayer Chain** call Mary Lib Stewart 609-448-4082 or Yvonne Macdonald yvonne.mac@verizon.net 609-497-0337. You may also contact the church office with prayer requests for our intercessors who will pray for you daily.

Prayer Cards are in the pew racks and friendship pads; please check all requests that apply and hand your completed card to an usher.

PRAYER CONCERNS

Emma King	Gladys Keidel	Ralph Armento
Bill & Lynn Hight	Laura Hughes	Beverly Burdwood
Dorothy Johnson	Beth Griner	Brooke Gordinier

*Prayers for the victims of violence and families who have lost loved ones to violence
Those affected by natural disasters
Those struggling with terminal, chronic, and mental illness, and their caregivers*

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Church Announcements

Adult Sunday School

Sunday 9:30 am

Contemporary Issues

Discussing "Cosmopolitanism" by Kwame Anthony Appiah

CONTACT: Charles Phillips: ccphillipsiv@gmail.com

Heart of Faith

Topic is "Persevering Hope in Troubled Times".

CONTACT: Larry Apperson: appersonsr@aol.com

Youth Group

Tonight 6-8:00 pm

Every Sunday we have dinner, play games, worship and dig into small groups. All 6th grade - 12th grade youth are invited to *come join the family!*

Meals are prepared by parents & friends; volunteers are asked to contact Christine Shungu:

shungu@princeton.edu to sign up to cook.

CONTACT: Skitch Matson: skitch@princetonumc.org

Men's Bible Study

Tuesday 7:45 pm

Discussion will center on Leviticus chapter 16.

CONTACT: Doug Fullman: dougfullman@prodigy.net



TODAY!

following the 11:00 service

Please bring a

dessert or side dish to share.

DIRECTIONS: Take Washington Road towards Route 1, through the traffic circle and turn left onto Rte 571.

Continue on Rte 571 for about 2.5 miles. Pass the high school, turn right at the traffic light onto South Mill Road and continue for about 3 miles. (S. Mill becomes New Edinburgh Road, then Edinburgh Dutch Neck Rd) Before you get to Old Trenton Rd there will be a sign for **Mercer County Park East**.

GPS address is 1346 Edinburgh Rd, Princeton Junction.

Music Announcements

Concert

Tom T. Shelton's "Songs of Love and Loss," three song cycles set to the poetry of Sara Teasdale, will be performed on Sunday, September 25, at 3 p.m in Bristol Chapel.

Admission to this Westminster Faculty Recital is free.

Performers include sopranos Elizabeth Sutton and Sally Wolf, contralto Jessica Kerler, and Tom T. Shelton (director of our Children's Choirs), piano. Dr. Carolann Buff will lecture on Teasdale's poetry.

Children & Youth Choirs

Grades K-1 Wednesday at 4:30 pm

Grades 2-5 Wednesday at 5:30 pm

Youth Choir Sunday at 5:00 pm

CONTACT: Tom Shelton:

tom@princetonumc.org

Chancel Choir

Rehearses Wednesdays at 7:30 pm

PUMC Ringers

Bell Choir rehearses 1st, 2nd and 4th Sundays at 12:30 pm

Ensemble

Those who play an instrument or love to sing, but cannot commit to regular rehearsals are invited to join *Ensemble*. A wide variety of music enhances worship each 4th Sunday.

CONTACT: Hyosang Park: hyosang@princetonumc.org

Opportunities to Serve

Join the Acolyte Team

All 5th-7th graders are encouraged to join our acolyte team. We will be serving each Sunday at the 9:30 am service. Sign up in the Sanford Davis Room or email Mrs. Lee with your name, grade and email address. Acolyte training will take place on Sunday, 9/25 at 9:40 am in the Sanctuary.

CONTACT: Tracey Feick-Lee, tracey_feick@hotmail.com

Coffee Hour Hosts

Fall dates are now available. Please call the church office or sign up on the sheet at the coffee table.

SoundTechs

PUMC recently invested in a new Sanctuary sound system. Now that the system is fully operational, we are looking for volunteers to run the sound board during Sunday services. Please contact John Macdonald at john.macdonald@verizon.net Training and support is provided.



Calendar of the Week

For a full listing of calendar events, visit our website: www.princetonumc.org

Sunday, September 18 Church Picnic

9:30 am	Sunday School for all ages	
9:30 am	Worship	Sanctuary
11:00 am	Worship	Sanctuary
	Penelope Cwick baptism	
12:00 pm	Church Picnic	Mercer Cty Pk E
5:00 pm	Youth Choir	Music Room
6:00 pm	Youth Group	Youth Room

Monday, September 19

10:00 am	Monday Morning Bible Study	Library
4:00 pm	CCK English classes	Room 204
7:30 pm	Stewardship/Finance	Conference Rm

Tuesday, September 20

9:00 am	Bulletin Deadline	
7:45 pm	Men's Bible Study	Library

Wednesday, September 21

4:00 pm	CCK English classes	Room 204
4:30 pm	K-1 Children's Choir	Choir Room
5:00 pm	Cornerstone Community Kitchen	Fellowship Hall
5:30 pm	2-5 Children's Choir	Choir Room
7:30 pm	Chancel Choir	Music Room

Friday, September 23

4:00 pm	CCK English classes	Room 204
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Sunday, September 25

9:30 am	Sunday School for all ages	
9:30 am	Worship	Sanctuary
11:00 am	Worship	Sanctuary
12:30 pm	Handbell Choir	Music Room
2:00 pm	Ministerio Internacional	Room 202-205
5:00 pm	Youth Choir	Music Room
6:00 pm	Youth Group	Youth Room

Nursery Care is available during the worship service.

Ushers will be happy to direct you to the nursery.

Weekly Twelve Step Meetings:

A.A. M, T, and Th 12:15 pm in room 204 and
M 7:30 pm in the Fellowship Hall.

AI Anon meetings Friday at 12:15 pm in Room 204.

N.A. meetings Thursday at 8:00 pm in the Chapel.

The flowers on the altar are given
in honor of
our clergy and staff
by Iona Harding

Giving and Donations

Outreach Committee

All Packed and Ready for School...thanks to PUMC's generosity! Thanks to your donations, our "Summer Sunday Fun" kids and teachers packed and distributed over 55 backpacks! Your gifts supported each student in starting school with confidence and hope. Thanks to all who contributed and helped with this project!

Thanks to all the volunteers who served at Threads of Hope on Saturday, Sept. 10. Next date is October 1.

The committee is now collecting new or gently used Halloween costumes for our younger guests at Threads of Hope and CCK. Donation bins will be in the Sanford Davis Room. There is also a need for canned food, books in Spanish, infant clothing and diapers. These donations should be taken to the Donation Center and labelled for Threads of Hope.

Collecting Heart Healthy Non-perishable food for Crisis Ministry/ArmlnArm

Crisis Ministry has changed its name to ArmlnArm. More than 1300 households continue to visit ArmlnArm's Client Choice stores in Trenton and Princeton each month for basic food provisions and personal care items. The shelves of these stores are literally life-lines for families struggling with self-sufficiency. Please consider picking up a few heart healthy, non-perishable food items for our neighbors in Mercer County. The collection basket (shopping cart) is located in the stairwell on the lower level. Thank you for your continued outreach to our community.

Terracycle Program

Weekly - Supporting ASP

Your trash supports this worthy cause. Here are the items we collect: GoGo Squeeze (healthy squeezable snacks and caps), personal care products, drink pouches, energy bar wrappers, salty snack bags, electronic waste (cell phones, graphing calculators, MP3 players, printer cartridges, laptops and tablets etc.), cereal bags and liners, scotch tape containers.

CONTACT: Joan Nuse at jnuse@comcast.net

Receptacles for Terracycle, Personal Care Products, McCaffrey's Receipts, & Food Donations, are located in the Sanford Davis Room.

Missing Anything ?

Please check the lost and found outside the church office for clothing, umbrellas and tools. If you are missing something smaller: eyeglasses, dishes, books, earrings, keys or charms please check inside the church office.

SETTING

I have prepared this study for a small group of mostly retired women: the Monday Morning Bible Study Group of Princeton United Methodist Church. There are eighteen of them on the roll, but the average weekly attendance is between 8 to 10. From 10 to 11:30 each Monday morning they meet for prayer, Bible study, fellowship, and support. Some of them have lunch together after the meeting. They typically go through the lectionary passages for each week, following the Upper Room Disciplines, a daily devotional published by Abingdon Press. This small group has been meeting for well over forty years with women who either work at home, or who are retired. Participants range in age from mid-fifties to upper eighties. Almost all of the women have a college education; one has a PhD. They are journalists, librarians, artists, educators, and teachers. Their discussions are usually thoughtful and probing; theologically they have different, sometimes conflicting points of view.

PURPOSE

The book of Ruth is generally read and understood from a romanticized perspective; this is not surprising, given it's 'happy-ever-after' ending. Most sermons and studies tend to idealize the characters and plot, avoiding the edgy, ambiguous parts of the text. This study aims to de-romanticize the story, and identify the ways in which Divine and human agency work together to impart God's grace (*hesed*) into our lives.

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LESSON OUTLINES

LESSON 1 – Loyalty and Loss: Ruth 1

Key thought: Whether our lives are full or empty, sweet or bitter, nothing can separate us from God's love.

A. Our most thoughtful plans do not protect us from loss - verses 1-5

Naomi had no idea her husband's relocation plans would lead to the death of the three men in her life, plunging her into poverty.

B. We have choices in the midst of loss – verses 6-14

Ruth and Orpah, faced with the same choice, went two different roads. One was not necessarily better than the other. The scripture does not condemn Orpah's choice.

C. Human loyalty: an expression of God's faithfulness – verses 15-22

God's *hesed* (faithfulness, grace) comes to us through our relationships.

Discussion questions:

- Who are our contemporary 'widows' and 'Moabites'?
- How do you – or don't you – connect with Naomi's understanding of God's actions in her life?
- What makes it so hard to be faithful in times of emptiness or bitterness?
- How have you experienced God through the loyalty of a friend?

LESSON 2 – Theology of Grace: Ruth 2

Key thought: God’s grace abounds in unlikely places and extends to unlikely people.

A. Overview of John Wesley’s understanding of Grace: prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying.

B. Outsiders and Insiders – verses 1-7

Ruth is exposed to the hardships of being a foreigner, an outsider from a hated country.

C. Extending generous grace to the outsider – verses 8-18

God draws Ruth into God’s circle of grace through the powerful influence of an insider.

D. The hope of Grace – verses 19-23

Naomi recognizes signs of what could be a hopeful relationship. Boaz’ kindness calls forth a blessing from the same lips that complained of God’s treatment of her in chapter 1.

Discussion questions:

- What would be an example of a contemporary Boaz? (Think back on the answers to last week’s question about contemporary widows and Moabites.)
- How does this chapter inform or instruct our ministry to persons less fortunate?
- How might a Theology of Grace inform a response to the immigrant or refugee crisis?

LESSON 3– Shady Developments?: Ruth 3

Key thought: God’s uncovering and covering grace - *hesed* - follows us no matter who we are, where we go, or what we do.

A. Textual ambiguities – verses 1-7

The narrator uses words such as “feet” and “lie down” that have ambiguous connotations. There is an air of mystery

B. The threshing floor encounter – verses 8-13

Ruth follows Naomi’s instructions, and then goes beyond them to instruct Boaz, who complies. The narrator continues to supply just enough information to suggest more than meets the eye.

C. The covering of Ruth – verses 14-18

Boaz covers Ruth’s integrity, her physical need, and her future.

Discussion questions:

- What examples of *hesed* can you pinpoint in this chapter?
- In what ‘unconventional’ ways might we see God at work in this text?
- Can you see any connections between John Wesley’s idea of prevenient grace and the movement of the plot in this chapter?
- How have you experienced God’s covering grace in your life, or in the life of someone you know?

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LESSON 4 – Redemption – Ruth 4

Key thought: God’s greatest miracles often involve flawed human agency.

A. Meandering paths of redemption – verses 1-8

Boaz’ plans seem to take a roundabout route, involving the uncertainty of the close relative.

B. The chorus of witnesses includes “Sainted Sinners.” – verses 11-12

The women mentioned as models for Ruth all have a shady past of their own, especially Tamar.

God does uses people whom we might not consider deserving, to fulfill God’s plans.

C. Humans have a part in the Divine plan of redemption – verses 13-22

Ruth is one of five women mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus. The ending of this chapter

shows how she has secured that place of honor in Matthew 5.

Discussion questions:

- The narrator does not tell us Ruth’s feelings about this ending. How do you imagine she may have felt, and why?
- What do you think of the connection the witnesses made between Ruth and the trickster female Israelite heroes?
- Can you think of an amazing act of God in your life - or in the life of someone you know - where human agency was involved?
- With which character or group of characters would you identify in this story?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Collins, Kenneth J. *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007. A comprehensive, thoughtfully balanced treatment of the theology of John Wesley. It gives credit to Wesley's diverse and all-embracing approach to theology, that allows for seemingly opposite views to be held in tension.
- Coogan, Michael D., ed. *New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha*, Third Edition. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. A scholarly study Bible with a reputation for accuracy of translation.
- Matthews, Victor H. *Manners and Customs of the Bible*, Revised Edition. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988. Gives helpful information about the customs surrounding use of the threshing floor.
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- New Interpreters' Bible*, Volume II. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998. Insightful commentary and reflections on the covering and uncovering themes of Ruth chapter 3.
- The United Methodist Hymnal: Book of United Methodist Worship*. Nashville, TN: United Methodist Publishing House, 1989.

DETAILED LESSON PLAN

RUTH 3– Shady Developments?

Key thought: God’s grace - *hesed* – sometimes works in unconventional ways, always through our relationships.

Learning Goals

1. Be able to explain the Old Testament concept of *hesed* – God’s grace
2. Identify in the chapter the ‘unconventional’ ways in which God is at work.
3. Share one example of how God’s grace has come to us through our relationships.

Teaching Strategies

1. Have women read the entire chapter aloud. For each of the three sections, we read around the room, each person reading one sentence
2. Lecture: background information on the book, including its political and cultural setting. The women fill in this part of the handout.
3. Gathering information from the participants – how much do they bring to this study?
4. Discussion questions suggested. However, the discussion must benefit the participants, and so it may go in ways not suggested in this outline.
5. Viewing of a short video clip; compare the visual interpretation with what we have studied about this text.
6. Select and sing one hymn on the theme of God’s grace.

Teaching Aids

1. Printed handout
2. List of discussion prompts
3. YouTube video clip: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bfS__SaaGtY
4. United Methodist Hymnal
5. Evaluation sheet: completed at the end of the lesson.

HANDOUT p.1

RUTH 3– Shady Developments?

Background notes:

- Ruth is one of two books of the Bible named after women
- It is read every year in Jewish tradition at the feast of weeks (around Pentecost) because of its association with the harvest season.¹
- Political and cultural background
 - Era of the Judges - between conquest and kings.
 - Agrarian society with practice of gleaning, legislated in Lev. & Deut.
 - Patriarchal society with practice of levirate marriage
 - Land redemption is significant; remember God’s promise to Abram

Main characters:

Plot – in 6 or 7 major moves:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Themes:

- Full & empty
- Location & relocation
- Famine & food
- *Hesed*
- Loyalty & faithfulness
- Divine & human agency
- The Peaceable Community

¹ Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *Ruth. Interpretation Bible Commentary* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1999), 7. *Future references will be in parentheses only.*

HANDOUT p.2

CHAPTER 3 – Exploration and Discussion

Verses 1 – 7

A. Textual ambiguities

- Consider the implications of Naomi’s instructions as she looks after Ruth’s security. (Bathing was not an everyday or even a weekly practice in ancient Israel)
- “The word translated “feet” is not the usual word, but a less common synonym better taken as “legs.” Nonetheless the possible connotation of genitalia, for which the ordinary word for feet is sometimes a euphemism, hovers near at hand.” (Sakenfeld, 54)
- The verb “to lie down,” can mean literally to lie down, including lying down to go to sleep, but also in certain constructions it can mean to “sleep with, have sexual relations with.” Never is there any indication of the consummation of sexual relations, yet the choice of words keeps that possibility always before the reader. The storyteller creates an atmosphere of ambiguity and mystery.” (Sakenfeld, 54)
- Consider Ruth’s response to Naomi’s instructions here in contrast to her response to Naomi in chapter 1.

Verses 8 - 13

B. The threshing floor encounter:

- This scene, more than others, invites speculation because of the way the narrator has presented it.
- Ruth’s choice of the word “wing,” translated with its secondary meaning “cloak,” is charged with significance. The idiom to cover with the wing/garment is not an ordinary request for warmth, but refers to the establishing of a protective relationship, a marriage bond. Boaz had used the term earlier in 2:12 (...*may you have a full reward from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge*). Ruth in effect invites Boaz to make good on the prayer he made on her behalf, by providing some measure of the “full reward” of refuge under God’s wings through his own action, by marrying her. (Sakenfeld, 58-59)
- The Hebrew term *go’el* – redeemer - is significant to this book. Redeemers are to take responsibility for the unfortunate and stand as their supporters and advocates. They are to embody the basic principle of caring responsibility for those who may have been subject to injustice. This role is given to God frequently in the Old Testament.
- Boaz commends Ruth for her loyalty. She has embodied the concept of *hesed*, which has three main criteria: 1) the action is essential to the survival or basic well-being of the recipient. 2) the needed action is one that only the person doing the act of *hesed* is in a position to provide, and 3) it takes place or is requested within the context of an existing, established, and positive relationship between the persons involved. (Sakenfeld, 24)

HANDOUT p.3

- Boaz takes Ruth's term *go'el* beyond its general implications. He is able to anticipate consequences well beyond those she had in mind as she approached the threshing floor.

Verses 14-18

C. The covering of Ruth

- Ruth lay at his feet until morning – can we assume she was covered by his garment, at least symbolically?
- Boaz expresses concern that Ruth's presence be kept secret – a covering of her integrity.
- Ruth leaves with a substantial gift of barley – a covering of her physical need.
- Boaz' covering of Ruth is intended to be large enough to cover Naomi too. The term for "empty-handed" that Ruth attributes to Boaz is the same that Naomi had used earlier in asserting that the Lord had brought her back "empty" from Moab to Bethlehem. Their future lies in the hands of this man; how fortunate that he has grounded his promise in an oath ("as the Lord lives," 3:13) by the name of the God who is Redeemer par excellence of the widow and the poor. (Sakenfeld, 66)

Key thought: God's grace - *hesed* – sometimes works in unconventional ways, always through our relationships.

Discussion questions:

- What examples of *hesed* can you pinpoint in this chapter?
- In what 'unconventional' ways might we see God at work in this text?
- How does the interpretation of this scene in the video clip compare with your understanding of the text? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bfS_SaaGtY
- Can you see any connections between John Wesley's idea of prevenient grace and the movement of the plot in this chapter?
- How have you experienced God's covering grace in your life, or in the life of someone you know?

Closing Hymn – UMH 561 *Jesus, United by Thy Grace*

EVALUATION

Strengths of this presentation

- Theological insight.
- Presenter’s knowledge of the scriptures and ability to explain the material.
- Helpful responses to our questions.
- Willingness to discuss many points of view.
- Beautifully prepared and taught.
- Answered our concerns about anachronistic behavior.

Weaknesses of this presentation

- We needed more time.
- Chapter 4 should have been assigned.
- I wish we had spent more time on the rest of the book.
- Initially I thought I didn’t like her messages included in the notes. Now I’m grateful for those notes.

One or two concepts taught

- *Hesed* and its three features.
- Differences between our culture and Ancient Israel.
- God’s grace is given sometimes in unlikely ways.
- How fragile and complex are God’s ways to nurture us.
- God acts through people in their time and place.
- Grace is among us as we care for each other.

Your personal takeaway from this lesson

- The more one learns of God’s ways the more wonderful God becomes.
- To be more open-minded about differences in cultures; God is working in all.
- Stop judging the stories in the Old Testament by our current cultural ideas.
- Grace comes in unexpected places.
- How can I extend God’s love and grace to others, letting God work through me?
- Dismiss nobody, because God doesn’t.
- Jesus franchised *hesed* to other peoples.

Other comments

- This destroyed my Sunday School version of the story. I was initially upset, but I am intrigued by this study.
- Clear, concise, and timely instruction.
- Stimulated lots of heartfelt comments.

This evaluation is compiled from the answers submitted on the evaluation forms the women completed at the end of the lesson. The only thing I would add is the strength of being comfortable with the theological differences in the room, and the weakness of attempting to do too much in the given time. We did not get to all the discussion prompts.

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1. What do you think are the most effective means of doing evangelism in the 21st century? How have you lived this out in your current context of ministry?

Two effective means come to mind: a) Presence, b) Meeting a need for the sake of Christ.

a) Every spring the Princeton Chamber of Commerce hosts a community wide event in collaboration with Princeton University; they call it Communiversity. Merchants and vendors bring their goods and services into the streets, musicians and artists put their talent on display, and local entertainers mingle with the crowds. For the past three years our congregation has come up with ways to be a strong presence at this event, since our church is located at a major downtown intersection in the middle of the happenings.

Whether we meet people on the street in front of the building, play live music on the front lawn, or invite folks inside for some cool refreshment or a building tour, our presence in this community event is an excellent opportunity to be a witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ in word and deed.

b) Our Community Kitchen feeds ninety to a hundred guests each Wednesday evening. A well-stocked clothing closet supplements the kitchen's food program. Weekly guests come to have several needs met: food, drink, and clothing; a sense of belonging to a community of regular diners; conversation between English and non-English speakers to help both sharpen their second-language skills; companionship for persons who live alone and look forward to dining in company; and a need to feel valued – guests are served seated at cloth-covered tables decorated with beautiful centerpieces. Jesus made it clear that when we meet such basic needs of the people around us, we do it as unto Him. These contacts and conversations open opportunities for sharing stories and bearing witness to God's goodness and mercy in our lives.

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2. What makes a congregation vital, and how do you measure it? How would you envision working with a congregation to become more vital?

First, I would pay attention to the quality of the worship service to ensure it connects with and inspires worshipers. Through the work of a worship committee we would use visual, aural, and experiential means of making the worship hour meaningful. We measure effectiveness by sustained or increased attendance, and by carefully solicited feedback.

Second, the attitudes and practices of the congregation around giving and stewardship are important for vitality. I would invite faithful and generous givers to share their testimony with the congregation during stewardship month; this can inspire present and future givers, and allow the laity to share in shaping congregational attitudes around money. We measure vitality through increased giving over time, or increased numbers of givers.

The third marker of vitality is people involved in mission – both local outreach and short term mission trips. Testimonies of participants who return, profoundly changed by their service, would inspire future participants. I would also use videos showing projects completed and grateful recipients. The numbers of trips and operations, as well as the numbers of people participating and supporting, are the best measure of growth.

Fourth, every vital congregation needs small groups. I would encourage organic growth based on spiritual, physical, or other kinds of need, for example we have just started a small group for a number of divorced women in our church. We measure effectiveness by the number of new or revitalized groups over a given period.

Last, I would give attention to the formation of new disciples. The measurement is straightforward – an increase in professions of faith. But the strategies are as varied as the personalities within the congregation. I would start with the youth and children's ministries in seeking to make new disciples.

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3. What is your personal approach to conflict? Provide an example of where you have been involved in resolving conflict. What did you learn?

My default approach to conflict is to try and diffuse negativity through empathic listening, if at all possible. I listen to identify critical or underlying issues. EXAMPLE: Our Stephen Ministers are required to meet twice monthly for supervision, where they bring to the group an in-depth report on visits with their care receivers. The number of care receivers had hit a low point to where we had just two Ministers reporting every two weeks. At the end of one supervision session one of the reporting ministers expressed openly to me her irritation over the frequency of the sessions. She was not usually this forthright or critical during meetings. I heard her out, then began to ask clarifying questions. As it turned out she was right about our needing to have more time between reporting sessions, with so few people giving a report about their care-giving relationship. As the discussion turned in that direction, the Stephen Minister felt validated. Because of this spontaneous, open conflict, we subsequently reduced our meeting times to once per month. I learned once again the importance of listening first before asking others to listen to me. I also learned the value of extending God's love through listening. My CPE supervisor used to tell us that being listened to feels so much like being loved, most people can't tell the difference.

4. What is your theological and practical understanding of itineracy?

Theological: Elders are God's servants, called and sent by God, through the church, into the world. For this purpose God has endowed Elders with particular gifts and graces to sustain and grow the Body of Christ at large (Ephesians 4:8-12.) If then the Elder is called and sent by God through the church, submission to the itinerant system is symbolic

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of our submission and availability to God who has commissioned and empowered us to take the gospel to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8.) Practical: the itinerant system serves the church because it is an open itinerancy, this means appointments are made “without regard to race, ethnic origin, gender, color, disability, marital status or age.” *BOD*

¶425.1. Such intentional inclusiveness is a blessing to the church of North America today where churches are becoming more diverse. Also, at its best, the system ensures that the needs of each charge is taken into consideration by matching the congregation(s) with an elder whose gifts and graces will best fit the church’s needs. Itinerancy also ensures that all congregations will have a pastor, particularly the tiny or rural churches to which a pastor may resist going if given the choice.

5. How do you engage all age groups in your community?

My engagement with all age groups is currently limited to our church community.

Children’s time in worship is an exciting, challenging opportunity to engage our bright, biblically literate children. I also enjoy talking with them in the hallways, in the fellowship room after worship. I engage the teens by stopping in on their choir rehearsals and thanking them for their ministry. During fund raising projects, as kids approach me, I use the opportunity for conversations about how they’re doing in school and at home. I am not happy with this level of engagement; this is an opportunity for growth.

I more often engage the older folks by sitting with them in worship, attending their fellowship events, and making home visits and phone calls.

6. What is your understanding of pastoral authority, and how do you intend to exercise it in your place of ministry?

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I understand pastoral authority to stem from three sources: first from the call of God on the life of the pastor. Jesus told his disciples, *whoever receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me.* (Matthew 10:40) Second is the authority given by the denomination, and symbolized by the Bishop's laying on of hands at the ordination ceremony. Third is the authority earned by the pastor through effective ministry in the congregation and community. Pastoral authority gives me courage to lead, teach, and preach in the name of Christ; I minister as one sent by God and supported by the church. I intend to exercise it in collaborative rather than authoritarian ways; I aim to be humble and responsive to the Spirit of the One who sent me, and whose servant leadership is my example.

7. If you could choose anyone to mentor you in leadership skills, who would that be and why?

I would choose my senior pastor, Jana Purkis Brash to mentor me in leadership skills. She has been an effective pastor for more than thirty years, and it shows in her style of servant leadership. The only woman to ever lead her current congregation, she has not been afraid to exercise her nurturing gift of hospitality, and her flair for visual aesthetics in worship. The people she leads can be disagreeable, yet listening to her speak about those who oppose her I hear a pastor's heart. I have learned from her how to choose my words graciously in speaking of others' shortcomings. She is also excellent at mentoring ministers and helping them discover their gifts and graces. Jana is not only a servant leader, she is at her best in collaboration with others; this resonates with me since the competitiveness and individualism I saw in so many leaders before this were examples I felt uncomfortable with. Her connectional, astute leadership is a model for me.

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8. Describe a situation in which you felt a need to assert a professional boundary in the practice of ministry.

Once a parishioner wanted to become my benefactor by directly giving me a monetary gift towards my needs as a student. I suggested instead that the person use the designated giving options of the church's Pastor's Discretionary Fund or the Seminary Bursar's office. I had to find two or three ways to make this point before the person got the message, but I was determined not to fall into an ethical trap.

9. How have you worked through the experience of forgiving someone?

The pastor of the non-denominational church I attended ten years ago stopped speaking to me after she realized I was leaving to be an Assistant Pastor at a United Methodist church. She ignored my calls and emails, and made excuses for not being in contact with me. Our families had been very close since my childhood, so this hurt deeply, yet I was not prepared to let our relationship dissolve. When this kind of separation had happened before with someone else she had confessed to me that she struggled with abandonment issues; so I continued reaching out, particularly during her period of serious illness.

Finally a time came where I was tasked to drive her home after an event. During the drive our hesitant conversation began to soften the relationship once more. While I had forgiven her soon after the initial separation, it took years before the relationship could even begin to thaw; patience won in the end.

10. What are you doing to help those around you take good care of themselves?

At home, I ensure we purchase healthy food, and keep routine doctors' appointments. We plan balanced weekly menus together and keep one another accountable for exercising a couple of times per week. (I try to set a good example by exercising first thing every

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morning) Recently I persuaded my burnt-out daughter-in-law to get away for a night by herself while my husband and I kept the children. Her 3-yr-old and twin 9-month babies had run her ragged, and it was time for a personal time-out. At the office, I check in on staff ever so often to see how they are doing, especially if they look exhausted. A couple of our staff prefer to self-diagnose and self-medicate; there are times I have helped to convince them to see a doctor.

11. How have you invited someone to faith and seen their faith develop?

At a former church I visited the sister of a close friend and invited her to a series of revival meetings we were having. She came and made a confession of faith before the meetings ended. I continued visiting her, encouraging and praying with her, and supplying her with reading and devotional materials. I encouraged her to become active in a Sunday School class. Even after she migrated, she kept in touch, letting me know her faith was still active.

12. What have you overcome to come to this season in your ministry?

I have had to overcome a traumatic cultural change upon migrating to this country, a near divorce in the first ten years of my marriage, gestational sickness during a pregnancy that brought me close to death, repeated financial hardships and reversals as my husband and I struggled to keep our family's head above water, and challenges of mental illness in my family. Through all of these trials my faith in God has been strengthened; these victories have developed my ability to journey alongside and empathize with others in crisis.

13. How would you describe your prayer life in this season, and how has it changed over your journey?

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I would describe my prayer life as my daily lifeline. Praying is the first thing I do every morning of the week. Every Saturday morning for the past twenty one years I have spent one to two hours in prayer over the phone with two praying friends. Those Saturday prayer relationships have sustained me through dire straights in my life and ministry.

When I first learned to pray it was in a Pentecostal church, where fervency in prayer was what mattered. As I met other genuine Christians who prayed differently, and read inspiring books on prayer by Christians of different faith expressions, my prayer life has been enriched by an expanded repertoire of ways to communicate with and listen for God. Prayer is not only how I begin my morning, it is how I end my day.

14. When you read the Bible, how do you hear God's voice? What example might you give of how you responded?

God speaks to me through the Scriptures as they connect with my current circumstances, and provide insight that lights my path and gives me a sense of direction. I hear God's voice often through the Psalms. Once when I was going through a period of spiritual and emotional dryness, I confessed to my Spiritual Director that I felt dehydrated. She encouraged me to find places of water – fountains, canals, lakes – to practice discerning God's presence. Not long afterwards I was reading the Upper Room Disciplines one rainy morning, and found these words of hope from Psalm 65:9-10 *You visit the earth and cause it to overflow; You greatly enrich it; the stream of God is full of water; you prepare their grain for thus you prepare the earth. You water its furrows abundantly, you settle its ridges, you soften it with showers, you bless its growth.* I bookmarked that passage and read it every morning afterwards for almost two months until that spell of dryness went away and I began to feel spiritually alive and alert again.

15. How has your family of origin influenced your call?

My father was my first pastor. He was a life-long learner who gave pastoral leadership to a church even as he lectured in New Testament classes at the local Bible College. My eldest sister, Gwen, now retired, was also a pastor/educator who taught both in a Bible College and in high school. Now, in her retirement years, Gwen and her husband have started a school for pastors in Columbia; they travel there from Trinidad and Tobago twice yearly. The combined gifts of teaching and preaching seem to run in my family. I am grateful for fine examples of how this dual calling can be done effectively, with diligence and compassion.

16. Interview three people to tell you what they see in your ministry. What did you hear in these conversations?

One person said, “You have a deep spiritual connection with God which shines through everything you do. Your sermons are inspiring and your prayers caring, sensitive, and very spiritual. You are also very organized.” Another person said, “You have a gift for praying thoughtfully, and your sermons contribute immensely to the congregation. I appreciate the work you have done in growing and strengthening the Stephen Ministry, and starting the Longest Night Service at Christmas.” The third person said, “Your preaching is amazing. insightful, creative, eloquent, captivating and delivers God’s word in such a way that all wish to hear and act AND your pastoring is compassionate and caring. You are a valuable friend and advisor to many people.” In all of this affirmation I hear that I provide spiritual leadership for God’s people through my life and ministry of preaching, teaching, and caring.

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THEOLOGY

(1) Give examples of how the practice of ministry affected your experience and understanding of:

(a) God

In my understanding God is One Being in Three Persons, Holy, Sovereign, Eternal, Creator, Savior, Spirit, Provider, Healer, Love...the list can go on indefinitely; God is so incomprehensible.

Preparing the order of worship for Sunday services has often caused me to reflect on the triune nature of God. When preparing for Earth Day I focus on God as Creator. I select hymns and prayers that give attention to the handiwork of God in nature, such as *How Great Thou Art*. UMH #77 Preparing for Holy Week deepens my understanding of: 1) how central the death and resurrection of Jesus is to our Christian faith, and 2) the mystery and power of Jesus being fully God and fully human. During Communion, as I pray for God's Spirit to be poured out upon the gifts of bread and wine, and upon us who will partake, I can sometimes sense the active energy of the Holy Spirit, who is at work sanctifying and perfecting us.

Preparing for funerals of people who have died untimely deaths challenges and strengthens my understanding of God as sovereign. Reading and studying the gospels also deepens my understanding of God as love, when I see the compassion of Jesus for people at the margins of society. Then, each year when the stewardship season approaches, I am reminded of God as our Provider, the one who has given us everything; the one who owns our resources, and requires us to be good stewards of them.

(b) Humanity

As human beings we are made in the image of God. Yet we have fallen from the perfection that once was ours, and through the redemptive work of Jesus and the

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perfecting work of the Holy Spirit, that image is daily being restored in us. Giving pastoral care to someone who is bound up in an addiction reminds me of our fallen nature as humans. When I read yet another news story of victims of violence, bigotry and hatred, I am painfully reminded of how far from God's glory humanity has fallen. Yet I believe that because we are created in God's image we somehow have the ability to love and forgive. When I see the love a parent has for a suicidal son, or the compassion a retired business man has that drives him to spend hours feeding hungry people, I see a small reflection of that image of God in us.

(c) The need for divine grace

Being human means having limits. Life events such as terminal illness or sudden unemployment send our lives into a tailspin. At such times, God's all-sufficient grace enters our lives through the presence and actions of other people, to do for us what we are unable to do for ourselves. When Beth lost her husband, she was paralyzed by numbness. One of our Stephen Ministers came alongside of her, and through weekly visits, patient listening, fervent prayer, and a constant presence, she nurtured Beth emotionally and spiritually until she slowly regained a sense of balance, and could think clearly again. This was God's grace in action through a relationship that provided a faithful, non-judgmental presence, necessary for Beth to survive those first few weeks. God's grace is ultimately offered to us through Jesus Christ whose sacrifice for us pardoned our sins, and restored us to right relationship with God, something no-one else could have done for us. Every service of Holy Communion makes me grateful for this divine grace.

(d) The Lordship of Jesus Christ

Every Baptism service reminds me how important it is to confess the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Whether it is the parents who promise to serve Jesus as their Lord in union with

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the church, or the congregation who affirm together, “I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord...” this confession is foundational to our salvation according to Romans 10:9. On a personal level, I believe Jesus is Lord over my life. That means I aim to live my life in complete submission to his example and his teachings. If he says do good to those who spitefully use you, then when that member behaves offensively towards me, I remind myself that if Jesus is my Lord my response to that member must be life-giving.

(e) The work of the Holy Spirit?

I have taught classes, at the end of which I’ve been convinced the content and delivery were ineffective. Yet afterwards someone would share some insight, or comfort, or answer they received through the lesson. That reminds me of John 14:26 where Jesus says, “...the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything...” The same happens with some of my sermons in worship. I once preached on forgiveness, how it is a heavenly tool to solve earthly problems. The sermon included a personal testimony of forgiveness in my marriage. I had a number of people come to talk with me that week, saying the sermon convicted them of their need to forgive, asking me to pray with them. To me that was the convicting power of the Spirit at work through the Word.

(f) The meaning and significance of the sacraments

When I make Eucharistic visits to the homebound members of our congregation, there is often some noticeable evidence of God’s presence. I often witness God’s grace imparted to them through an uplifted countenance, a more hopeful outlook, or through some profound insight into the Scriptures. There was one time at the retirement home I felt a palpable sense of peace that left everyone in the room at a loss for words for a long time

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after the final blessing. This brought home to me our Wesleyan belief that Holy Communion is a means of grace. It is one way God becomes present with us, providing strength and everything we need for our Christian journey.

(g) The kingdom of God

The kingdom of God is God's rule and reign in the earth. In this kingdom values are turned upside down so that we give away in order to keep, and we lose our lives in order to find them. In outreach ministry, we have some of the best opportunities to experience the kingdom of God here and now as we feed the hungry through community kitchens, provide clothes for the naked through clothing closets, minister to those in prison by writing letters of encouragement, and advocate for liberty and justice for everyone, especially those who society marginalizes, and renders voiceless. There is also another dimension of the kingdom of God that is not here yet. It is that time when Jesus will return to right all wrongs and establish forever the reign of God upon the earth. In this new heaven and earth, God will dwell with us, and there will be no more death or mourning, or crying, or pain (Revelation 21:1-4)

(h) Resurrection and eternal life

I am grateful for every opportunity to prepare for a funeral. I use it to re-engage - and share with the bereaved - my own beliefs in the bodily resurrection of the dead to eternal life in the presence of the Lord. Sometimes people ask me if Methodists are okay with cremation. I respond that the Scriptures remind us that the form that dies is not the same form that is resurrected. Paul explains, "So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." (1 Cor. 15:42-44) Whether bodies have decomposed, been lost at

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sea, or burned, we believe God the creator will resurrect them to a new, spiritual body that is eternal. I encourage bereaved family members to think of that time when they will reunite with loved ones in eternity. Sometimes it is only that promise of eternal life in the presence of God that gives loved ones the strength to carry on through their grief.

(2) How do you understand the following traditional evangelical doctrines:

(a) Repentance – it has been my joy to watch confirmation students engage the long slow process of turning away from places of agnostic or sometimes atheistic faith, to a lively, energized faith in Jesus Christ. Repentance is not an instantaneous event. It is a slow, often life-long process. I stop going my own way, turn around, and walk with God in God's paths of righteousness. This is not just a personal act; entire communities can be called to repentance for going against God's ways. Once our congregation went through a sermon series on the seven deadly sins. Each sermon was an invitation to the entire community to turn away from pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth. At least one of those times, people were invited to publicly come to the altar for prayer. This coming forward was an outward indication of repentance.

(b) Justification - this is a gracious act of God in response to our confession and repentance. Acts 3:19 encourages us to repent and be converted, that our sins may be blotted out. We do the act of repenting, and the Spirit does the converting, as God erases our sin from the eternal records. *My sin, not in part, but the whole is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more.* (UMH #377) We are reconciled, pardoned, and restored to right relationship with God, thanks to the work of Jesus Christ in his life, death, and

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resurrection. My understanding is harmonious with Wesley's belief that justification is a divine act not dependent upon human merit or works.¹

(c) **Regeneration** – the introduction to the Service of Baptism says, “Brothers and sisters in Christ: through the sacrament of Baptism we re initiated into Christ’s holy church. We are incorporated into God’s mighty acts of salvation and given new birth through water and the Spirit. All this is God’s gift, offered to us without price.”² New birth is a synonym for regeneration in Christian terminology. I understand it to be necessary for every Christian, and for entrance into God’s kingdom. Just as growth is expected following a natural birth, so it is for the new birth by water and the spirit. Within the covenantal relationship between God, the community of believers, and the baptized person, there is room for growth and opportunities for the born again person to faithfully respond to the work of the Spirit who cultivates the image of God in us.

(d) **Sanctification** – sanctification is the process by which we are made holy, set apart, developed in the image of God. This requires both the activity of God’s Spirit and the cooperation of the human will. Just as we do not wish to see a baby remain a baby for its life span, neither does God wish us to remain in the condition we were in when we were born again. After the administration of the water in the Sacrament of Baptism the pastor says to the candidate, “The Holy Spirit work within you, that being born through water and the Spirit, you may be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ.”³ Our part is to engage in spiritual practices that facilitate growth: worship, prayer, Bible reading and study, giving, fasting, and reaching out in ministry to the world. The Holy Spirit breathes

¹ Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 162.

² *United Methodist Hymnal*, 33.

³ *Ibid.*, 37.

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the life of God into these activities, giving them transforming power. Sanctification calls for both human and divine involvement that yields growth in faith.

What are the marks of the Christian life?

Faith, hope, and love are umbrella categories for me that demonstrate a living Christianity. Faith is what Larry had when he envisioned feeding hungry people in an affluent town, then he found out there *were* hungry people there. Then hope – particularly hope in God - is another identity marker that I've seen Christians demonstrate even as I sit by their bedside watching them slip into eternity. Finally love, Wesley would say, is the capstone or the lodestone of our faith. It was Sue's love of God and neighbor that led her to sit next to homeless Louie in church every Sunday, even though he did not smell very clean.

(3) How has the practice of ministry informed your understanding of the nature and mission of the Church. What are its primary challenges today?

Over the past few years, I have been learning to see the church more as a scattered/sent out community rather than a gathered one. I grew up thinking of church in terms of services, church buildings, Bible studies, prayer meetings, youth groups, and evangelistic meetings intended to draw others into a gathered community. More recently my concept of the church has broadened to include other ideas such as a farminary,⁴ where Christians can make a difference in food scarcity; a prison education initiative, where Christians can spread the knowledge and love of God as they teach various courses to prisoners, on line or in classrooms; a community kitchen where Christians can serve others by preparing

⁴ A venture initiated by Princeton Seminary that brings theology and agriculture together.

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and serving food, restaurant style; or other kinds of inter-faith or ecumenical action groups in the neighborhood. This kind of outward-looking church seems to better represent a God who cannot be contained within human boundaries.

The primary challenge to the church today, as I see it, is institutionalism, where Christians can be so tightly bound to organizational church structures that they lose their responsiveness to God's creative Spirit. The church could use more of the flexibility Christianity had as a fledgling first century movement. This gave the early Christians a sense of creativity and adaptability that allowed for the rapid spread and powerful impact of the gospel. As United Methodists, we have a legacy of being first of all a movement, blown across England and the United States by the moving of the Spirit. Our challenge is to reclaim that legacy today.

(4) The United Methodist Church holds that Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason are sources and norms for belief and practice, but that the Bible is primary among them. What is your understanding of this theological position of the Church, and how has your practice of ministry been affected by this understanding?

The primacy of the Bible in the practice of our faith is a doctrine John Wesley made very clear. "Scripture for [Wesley] was fundamental; and tradition, reason, and experience functioned in supportive roles, not as coequals."⁵ Tradition refers to the teachings and interpretations passed down to us through the centuries, in our creeds, and in the writings of early church fathers and scholars. Experience refers to personal as well as communal encounters between our daily lives and the Scriptures. There are contemporary experiences that are not spelled out in the Bible; however we understand that since biblical records are accounts of human experiences with God, experience can help us

⁵ Michael Cosby, "Using the Wesleyan Quadrilateral to Teach Biblical Studies in Christian Liberal Arts Colleges," p.72.

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come to a fuller understanding of God. Finally we apply the divine gift of human reason to Scripture, tradition, and experience to help us grapple with new, rational understandings of God. This was the way in which the church was able to slowly change its understanding of slavery, and of women in ministry. The way this plays out in my practice of ministry is that in my preaching I start with a biblical text, rather than a theme or topic. My preparation begins and ends with reading the text. The reasoning of the commentaries, my personal experience and the experiences of the congregation, and the traditional interpretations of the Scriptures are all important, but they factor into the sermon only after I have grasped the challenge of the biblical passage itself.

(5) How has the practice of ministry enriched your understanding of the meaning of the sacraments?

Recently a couple preparing for their wedding asked for Communion to be part of the ceremony. I responded I'd be happy to do this if everyone present was welcome to share in the sacrament. They eventually chose not to have Communion as part of the ceremony; they thought it was simply a religious ritual with private implications. I was struck once again with the generosity of God, who makes grace available, through these concrete elements of bread and wine, to all people – no exclusions. When Holy Communion is served as part of a service of Christian marriage or a service of death and resurrection, “It is our tradition to invite all Christians to the Lord’s table, and the invitation should be extended to everyone present; but there should be no pressure that would embarrass those

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who for whatever reason do not choose to receive Holy Communion” (BOW; page 152).

It is not appropriate for only the couple or family to commune.”⁶

Before becoming United Methodist I came from a tradition that did not practice infant baptism. Now I baptize infants with the joyful understanding that they too are welcome into the family of God; they too can be recipients of God’s grace, and they too can be saved by water and the word. This is the work and the will of God. Helping parents prior to baptism to understand the significance of the sacrament, has helped me come to understand that the child is baptized under the umbrella of the parent’s profession of faith, and he or she is invited to confirm this covenant once she or he is older.

VOCATION

(1) How has the experience of ministry shaped your understanding of your vocation as an ordained elder?

WORD: My study of preaching at the doctoral level has honed my gifts and graces both in preparation and in presentation. In this provisional period I have experienced increased confidence in the ethnicity and gender of my distinct preaching voice. Students in my classrooms and parishioners under my care all continue to affirm the effectiveness of this aspect of my vocation as I teach and preach from an explicit foundation of the Scriptures.

SACRAMENT: I will always remember the fixed, knowing gaze of one particular infant the moment my hand touched his head with the baptismal water. Deep in those wide brown eyes I saw a child of God who felt totally welcome and at home in my arms. The experience of introducing a baptized child to the congregation, and the warm acceptance and affirmation when that child is initiated into the church, remind me of the significance

⁶ *This Holy Mystery*, 17.

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of my spiritual leadership. I have had professors thank me after presiding over Communion in seminary chapel, for the gift of my strong presence and leadership in that role.

ORDER: As mundane and unrewarding as some of it can seem, the ordering of the church's life has provided its own kind of inspiration and encouragement for me. Conducting a meeting, or pouring over a budget, has often put me in touch with my role as steward of God's people and resources. When I've come up against some insurmountable obstacle, like aging church members who refuse to acknowledge the congregation is dying, I've learned that Christ is truly the Head of the church, the Good Shepherd who cares for the sheep. Going over end of year financial reports reminds me of the many instances of God's provision in spite of us, and encourages me in my calling.

SERVICE: In the life of the church I have had the joy of serving in the Threads of Hope clothing closet operated out of Chambers UMC, the smaller legacy congregation where I give administrative service. I've also had the joy of participating in community interfaith and ecumenical services sponsored by the Princeton Clergy Association. In my Capital District I've had the joy of serving fellow clergy by leading a workshop in worship. At the seminary the service opportunities have been many, including a faculty search committee, and a sexual harassment arbitration panel.

In all of these aspects of what it means to be an elder in church and extension ministry, I have discovered elements of joy, fulfillment, and a great deal of personal and vocational growth.

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THE PRACTICE OF MINISTRY

(1) How has the practice of ordained ministry affected your understanding of the expectations and obligations of the itinerant system? Do you offer yourself without reserve to be appointed and to serve as the appointive authority may determine?

In practice I've seen the itinerant system achieve excellent results in terms of well-matched appointments, yielding thriving congregations and elders who feel fulfilled in their calling. I've also seen a great deal of hurt and frustration as leaders have been either poorly matched or reassigned within a year of being appointed. No system within the institutionalized church is perfect; for this reason I deeply appreciate the prayerful dedication of our Bishop and cabinet as they strive to be faithful within the itinerant system. Ultimately I trust in God, who called me, to oversee every aspect of my placement in ministry. As such I offer myself without reserve to be appointed and to serve as the appointive authority may determine.

(2) Describe and evaluate your personal gifts for ministry and how they have resulted in fruitful ministry. What would be your areas of strength and areas in which you need to be strengthened in order to be more fruitful in ministry?

Teaching, Pastoral Care, Preaching, Counseling, Worship design and leadership are my strengths. There have been students for whom lectures or teaching moments in my classes have contributed to their spiritual and personal formation; student evaluations every semester affirm my ability to communicate complex concepts with clarity, simplicity, and respect for the knowledge students bring with them into the classroom. The Stephen Ministry – an extension of pastoral care in our congregation – has grown under my supervision. A recent congregational survey identified pastoral care as one aspect of ministry our church does really well. I am both a teacher and a student of preaching. My doctoral classes have stretched me as a preacher, and have honed my gift of pulpit

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delivery. Every time I preach I hear from those in the congregation that it was a blessing, gave them something to reflect on regarding their own spiritual growth, and was enlightening. I remember one couple saying close to the wedding date that their counseling visits with me were the only thing that seemed to be going well. Their parents also confirmed the benefit of the counseling experience. I believe my success in counseling is primarily due to the presence of the Holy Spirit, whom I invite into each session through prayer. And in worship design and leadership I find much joy. Students in my worship class at the seminary gave very good reviews in their final course evaluations. One student said it was his most meaningful class all semester. A growing edge for me is the ministry of evangelism. I would do well to find a way of explicitly sharing my faith with others that works for me.

(3) For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness to the Christian gospel and in consideration of your influence as an ordained minister, are you willing to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life; and to this end will you agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to health, intentional intellectual development, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, integrity in all personal relationships, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge and love of God?

My answer is a wholehearted YES. I intend to continue being diligent regarding personal nutrition, rest, and exercise. I am committed to continuing education as a pastor and teacher. After being married to my husband for over thirty eight years, I have come to believe that being faithful to my husband is part of being faithful to God. I will strive to the highest ethical standards in my life and ministry, and will seek every day to find ways to sincerely express my love for God and neighbor.

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(4) Provide evidence of your willingness to relate yourself in ministry to all persons without regard to race, color, ethnicity, national origin, social status, gender, sexual orientation, age, economic condition, or disability.

I have had the opportunity to coach and informally mentor several seminary students of different gender, age, physical ability, and sexual orientation, including one person who has been wheelchair bound all his life. In my times of service at the clothing closet, I have engaged in conversation with persons who have been homeless, mentally challenged, non-English speaking, and undocumented. In my classrooms I have had to accommodate several visually impaired students, which taught me a different level of sensitivity in choosing words. I voluntarily took a seminar in cultural competency training offered at the Seminary, so I could improve my effectiveness in teaching and ministering to people different than me. In January 2017 I am scheduled to teach a class titled "Preaching in Diverse Cultures." Doing the research for this class has shown me an entirely new way to think about social justice; it calls for multicultural awareness and sensitivity that empowers those who face constant discrimination and prejudice. Teaching this class is another way to demonstrate the inclusive nature of God's love.

(5) Will you regard all pastoral conversations of a confessional nature as a trust between the person concerned and God?

Absolutely YES. Confidentiality is one of the elements of giving care that I am constantly reminding our Stephen Ministers of. Sometimes I find myself reminding my husband that I cannot share with him the details of certain conversations that have him waiting for me after the worship service, even if I do seem temporarily burdened. Cases of child abuse or neglect are an exception to such confidentiality. *BOD* ¶341.5.

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(6) Provide evidence of experience in peace and justice ministries.

I have been a member for the past two years of a Micah Group of twelve preachers, different from one another by gender, race, ethnicity, and denomination. We have met monthly to learn from one another, and from a curriculum designed by the Lloyd John Ogilvie Institute of Preaching at Fuller Seminary. Micah Groups exist to help preachers address current, pressing issues of justice. This has produced tremendous growth and courage in my own sermons.

In my own academic work, my dissertation has focused on advancing marginalized or non-mainstream preaching to a place of acceptance around the homiletical table. Not only do I believe God can speak to us any way God chooses, I also believe mainstream and non-mainstream preaching methods have much to learn from each other. While this may not be the typical justice ministry activity, it does draw from the principles of the kingdom of God in which all are equal in God's sight.

1. Explain the threefold aspects of Wesleyan grace and how have you encountered these in your own ministry/life?

Wesley believed God's grace was present in three dimensions: prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying.

Prevenient grace anticipates our need for God; it prepares our lives for moments of divine encounter. This was my experience upon coming to the U.S. to attend college. Friends, employment, finances, and a faith community – these had all been prepared for me in ways that mystified me – there was no way I could have anticipated these needs, coming from a developing country. I experienced the God who was ahead of me, preparing ways for me to experience God's grace.

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Justifying grace is the loving power of God that facilitates repentance and conversion. It also cleanses our record of wrongs before God and imparts God's righteousness to us just as if we had never sinned. It is difficult to point to one encounter as evidence of justification, since it concerns the condition of a person's heart and their standing before God.

Sanctifying or Perfecting grace is the sustaining power of God that keeps us on the straight and narrow way as we strive unto perfection. I've seen this grace at work in Grace (not her real name,) a mentally ill young woman. Through the love of her mother, her church family and the Spirit at work in her medical care, she has come a long way in her faith and self-understanding. Lately, it has been the role of motherhood, unexpectedly yet diligently assumed, that has demonstrated the sanctifying, consecrating power of the Spirit in her life.

2. Share an instance when you found yourself in ministry with someone whose theology was radically different from your own.

I was a teaching assistant to a professor whose theology was radically liberationist. As we shared weekly in teaching ministry, I could not understand her vehement opposition to my ideas; liberation theology was foreign to me. I quietly deferred to her out of respect. Asking her to explain her position did not help; she seemed always on the offensive. Eventually, after doing my own reading, and discussing this approach with fellow students, I came to a better understanding of her position. This eased the tension between us, and even helped me to help other students, hurt by her dogmatic position, to understand her better.

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3. Describe how your image of God has changed over your journey. What has informed this?

Over the course of my journey I have had a wide variety of God-sightings (a term I learned from Bishop Schol.) They made me come to terms with my embedded image of God as judge. I would not have acknowledged that ‘judge’ was my primary image of God until I was forced to confront my own judgmental attitudes towards other Christians. My experiences with a) different expressions of faith in the classroom, b) end of life and other crisis moments in medical care facilities, and c) generous grace demonstrated in the lives of parishioners – these experiences have been more consistent with God as love. God as judge belonged in the tiny theological box into which all my formative Christian beliefs fit. God as love has outgrown that box, or any other box I’ve tried to make since leaving behind my childhood Pentecostal indoctrination. Hearing the stories of other Christians, being deeply moved by the writings of Christians of a very different faith expression, watching God heal wicked people whom I secretly thought deserved to die, and experiencing God in worship with people of different faiths – these and other experiences have caused me to examine more closely the life and teachings of Jesus, who said to Philip in John 14:9, *Anyone who has seen me, has seen the Father*. It is the love of Jesus in his life, ministry, death, and resurrection that has helped me see God differently. Thanks be to God!

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1. Explain the role of deacons, elders, and local pastors in the UMC and how they are each uniquely called and function in the church.

Deacons are called to serve in both the church and the world in the ministry of Word and service, compassion, and justice. At General Conference 2016, the rules were changed to allow Deacons to preside and administer Holy Communion upon the approval of their Bishop. The Deacon has a “bridge-like” ministry that facilitates the two-way movement between the church and the world. Deacons are ordained ministers in full connection, appointed by the Bishop – though they find their own place of ministry - and are not subject to itinerancy. *BOD* ¶328 – 331.

Elders are called to lead – by word and example – in the lifetime ministry of Word, Sacrament, Order, and Service. In fulfilling this call the Elder preaches and teaches the Word, administers the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion as means of God’s grace, orders the life and ministries of the church for nurture, outreach, and witness, and serves the congregation giving pastoral oversight and care. The Elder is an ordained minister in full connection, appointed by the Bishop and is subject to itinerant movement within the conference. *BOD* ¶332 – 342.

The Local Pastor is appointed by the Bishop to a specific charge; only in that location is she or he is authorized to perform the duties of an Elder. Local Pastors are not subject to itinerant movement within the conference, but they are supervised by their District Superintendent and meet yearly with their DCOM during the process of recertification. *BOD* ¶315 – 320.

2. What is the process for setting a pastor’s salary? Who can change it, and when can it be changed?

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“The annual conference may choose to adopt a conference wide plan for compensation of pastors. Such a plan shall provide the method for setting and funding the salaries...of the pastors appointed to the charges of the annual conference.” *BOD* ¶604.13 Within this plan, that sets the salary ranges, the local staff parish relations committee decides on an appropriate figure for their pastor, which they recommend to the church council. The church council then makes this recommendation to the charge or church conference, which votes to accept the salary recommendation. *BOD* ¶252.4.d At its annual meeting, or at an interim meeting authorized by the district superintendent, the charge conference may change the pastor’s salary, based on the recommendation of the staff parish relations committee and the church council.

3. The Education committee wants to update the curriculum being taught in the Christian Education program. What specific guidance does the Book of Discipline give you in dealing with this issue?

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry’s curriculum resources committee provides options and resources for Christian Education curriculums. Although the local Education Committee is not bound to utilize these resources, it should give attention to the guidelines by which this GBHEM committee develops curriculum. “The curriculum resources shall be based on the Bible, shall reflect the universal gospel of the living Christ, shall be in agreement with United Methodist doctrine...” *BOD* ¶1112 The decision to update should involve the pastor, and church school superintendent; a focus group of teachers and parents is also advisable. Ultimately, the Church Council, in its role of planning and implementing a program of nurture in the local church, would give final endorsement to this change. *BOD* ¶ 252.2.a.

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4. You have discovered a need in the community for a soup kitchen, and wish to recommend that this be a priority for the congregation, using the facilities of the church. What parties and processes need to be involved?

I would first discuss this project with the Outreach Committee since this is their direct area of ministry. Then the Board of Trustees and Finance Committee need to have input regarding the impact this venture might have on the church's budget and facilities. The Church Council ultimately needs to agree that this venture will align with the church's mission statement and program of outreach. *BOD* ¶ 252.2.b. It is also a good idea to consult the District Superintendent to identify any conference agencies or funding that may help resource this venture. It would be wise for the church to be in conversation with municipality officials to ensure compliance with municipal regulations and possible collaboration or conflict with similar ventures in the community.

5. A constituent of your church comes to speak with you about their call to ministry. Describe the basic steps that are involved in seeking ordination.

This person – let's call her Faith – would need to be an active, contributing member of the congregation for at least a year. Faith should share her call with the Pastor and work through the book, *Christian as Minister*. Faith would then go before the Staff Parish Committee, and her District Superintendent, to share with them her sense of call, and answer questions they would ask by way of vetting her. If they are convinced of Faith's sense of call and the appropriate gifts and graces to support it, they would recommend her to the congregation during the annual charge or church conference as a candidate for ministry. If the congregation votes yes, Faith would be referred by the District Superintendent to the District Committee on Ministry, who would put Faith through their own vetting process. Once approved, the DCOM would appoint Faith a candidacy mentor

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who would prepare her for full DCOM review the following year. If Faith is successful at this level, the DCOM then recommends her to the Board of Ordained Ministry for commissioning. BOOM would require Faith to comply with educational and health requirements, and to submit written answers to a number of questions from the Book of Discipline about her theology, doctrine, call, and practice of ministry. Faith would then attend a BOOM retreat with others seeking commissioning to be interviewed by the Board, who will discuss Faith's answers and her paperwork. If the Board is satisfied that Faith is qualified and ready, they recommend her to the clergy at the Annual Conference who will vote to have her proceed as a candidate. Then Faith is commissioned and undergoes a 2-year provisional period of full-time residency. During the residency period Faith receives professional development training and mentorship by another clergy member of the Conference. At the end of the provisional period Faith would be required to submit a final set of paperwork and attend another interview retreat with the Board. If those interviews are successful she is recommended by BOOM to the Conference, the clergy vote to accept her, and she is ordained as a member of the Annual Conference in full connection.

6. Describe the general structures of the Annual Conference and how each body functions.

Churches or charges connected within a specified geographic region make up a district. Similarly, several districts within a specified geographical region make up an Annual Conference, a body of believers in a connectional relationship. The Annual Conference functions as a legislative body when it meets annually in a specified location to order the collective life of the churches through passing legislation, approving programming and

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budgets, and examining, recommending, commissioning, and ordaining candidates for ministry. “The Annual Conference is composed of clergy members, lay members elected by each charge, diaconal ministers, conference presidents of United Methodist Men and United Methodist Women, conference and district lay leaders, and presidents of young adult and youth organizations. The annual conference is the primary link in the church’s world-wide connectional structure.¹ There are several committees, councils, and boards that work within the Annual Conference structure to facilitate the life and ministry of the Conference on a connectional level. Some of the responsibilities held by these groups include, but are not limited to, fiscal management, giving direction to the church’s mission in the world, developing and strengthening the laity, promoting ministry in higher education, giving oversight to candidates for ordained ministry, giving due focus to issues of justice, and providing support and oversight to the ministries of the denomination’s women, men, youth, and children. The Bishop appointed to the area by the Jurisdictional Conference is the episcopal leader of the Annual Conference, and presides over the proceedings of its annual meeting.

7. Describe the legislative, judicial, and executive branches of the United Methodist Church.

General Conference, which meets for eleven days every four years, is the primary legislative body of our denomination. At least six hundred, and not more than one thousand delegates convene at an appointed location to examine and either approve or reject suggested changes to the denomination’s rules and constitution. The General Conference also “defines the powers and duties of the episcopacy, authorizes the official

¹ The United Methodist Handbook, 12. No copyright information provided.

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hymnal and book of worship, provides a judicial system and procedures, initiates and directs all connectional enterprises of the church, and enacts other legislation for the operation of the church.”²

United Methodists have a nine-member Judicial Council, our denomination’s “supreme court,” that interprets church law, and determines constitutionality of proceedings at all levels of church life. It meets twice per year, and its members are elected by General Conference – five laity and four clergy in one quadrennium, and four laity and five clergy in the next.³

Our Council of Bishops – comprised of all active and retired bishops - is our denomination’s executive branch. “The Church expects the Council of Bishops to speak to the Church and from the Church to the world and to give leadership in the quest for Christian unity and interreligious relationships.” *BOD* ¶ 422.2 The council meets twice per year.

8. What is your understanding of the theology behind Shared Ministries giving (apportionments)?

As a connectional church, we are committed to pooling our resources to accomplish together ministry that is necessary, but that we cannot do as individual persons or congregations. Shared ministries, also known as apportionments, are a vital aspect of our United Methodist connection. Our apportioned giving to our denomination’s General Funds sustains the essential work of mission and ministry across the United Methodist Church; such giving is “the first benevolent responsibility of the church.” *BOD* ¶247 and

² Ibid., 13.

³ Thomas Edward Frank, *Polity, Practice and Mission of the United Methodist Church*, 2006 Edition (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 312.

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¶812. I believe the theology behind Shared Ministries is comparable to the theology behind the giving of tithes and offerings. Everything we have is God's; therefore whatever monetary resources are needed to do God's work in the world should first be the responsibility of God's people. In the same way we expect members to demonstrate faithful connection through giving, we demonstrate our larger connection likewise. 2 Corinthians 9:1-5 provides a biblical pattern for such benevolent responsibility within the church; this is the passage where Paul boasts about the generosity of the Corinthian church in helping other churches.

9. You have an idea for a unique form of ministry. How does the Book of Discipline guide us in seeking affirmation for ministries that are beyond the local church? What is the role of extension ministry in the life of the church?

According to our doctrinal heritage there is no religion but social religion BOD ¶102, which affirms the need for us to think beyond the walls of the church when it comes to ministry. So let's say this unique form of ministry is to teach classes in best agricultural practices. Such ministry would be affirmed by our Social Principles that relate to food justice - BOD ¶160.H. I would speak with my pastor, SPRC, and my District Superintendent, all of whom, as I describe the nature of and the need for this venture, will seek to discern a sense of my specific call. The Conference Board of Ordained Ministry has a mandate to study needs and resources for ordained and diaconal ministry, including identifying new types of ministry BOD ¶1405.6. I would seek help from that direction, under the guidance of my District Superintendent, particularly if I felt this move to be a vocational one. Extension ministries are a way for the mission of the Church to be extended into the world. The BOD provides guidelines for persons to be appointed to

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extension ministries. “These ministries shall be initiated in missional response to the needs of persons in special circumstances and unique situations, and shall reflect the commitment of the clergy to intentional fulfillment of their ordination vows. For Elders this includes being subject to itinerancy. *BOD* ¶ 344.1.4.d.

10. In what ways does your upbringing, your cultural context, your personal experience, shape your understanding of our polity?

I was brought up in a developing Caribbean nation by strict parents, who taught me the value of authority and order. My spiritual formation was in a denomination established by Canadian missionaries to whose authority and structure I watched my father submit; he eventually became the first local bishop of the churches once the missionaries turned over the work to the locals. My dad taught me to have great respect for authority and institutional policy, especially when it reflects the essence of the gospel, and is in service to the nature and mission of the church. By temperament, I have a personal preference for order, which makes me accepting of leadership and authority structures by default.

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Biographical Statement

Catherine E. Williams, M.Div. B.Mus.

At the age of sixteen I was in a chapel service on the campus of a Bible College, in Trinidad & Tobago where my father served on the faculty. That morning after the sermon, we were invited to spend some time in individual prayer listening for the voice of God. After a few moments, I sensed an inner voice saying, "I want you to be in my service exclusively." The journey from that point to now has been a process of preparing for, and refining, that sense of call, which I believed to be God's voice.

I migrated to the United States some ten years later, and did studies at Westminster Choir College of Rider University as a Church Music major. However, ten years after graduating, as I journeyed slowly through the Master of Divinity program, particularly in Field Education, and Clinical Pastoral Education, it became clear that there were untapped pastoral gifts in me that I had ignored or avoided. My Field Ed. congregations did not allow me to ignore these gifts. They recognized and drew upon them with results that were often as surprising to me as they were comforting to the beneficiaries. It was my Field Ed. mentor who counseled me that the call to ministry comes from God but is clarified and refined through the church.

I've also spent considerable time in seminary classrooms teaching future leaders of churches. The courses have been in theological writing, worship, and preaching. The joy and success I have experienced in the classroom matches the joy and success I've experienced pastoral work. It has become clearer that my call to ministry is both to the church and to the academic institution that prepares the church's leaders. The two roles are symbiotic in my experience. Seminary classrooms need professors who are hands on in current ministry to give relevance and vitality to the classroom experience. Churches could use pastors who reflect on their ministry in ways that take into account current theological scholarship and ministry trends. By God's grace I hope to be in an appointment that takes both these gifts and settings into account.

My primary support system is my immediate family. My husband, Harran, to whom I have been married for over thirty-eight years, is one of my most avid and prayerful supporters. We have an adult, married son, an adult daughter, and a daughter-in-law who have all been unwavering sources of encouragement and inspiration. In addition to my immediate family, I have four older siblings, the eldest of whom is an ordained Pastor and Bible College professor. My siblings all provide strong support of my call. They believe it honors our late father, who was an ordained pastor for fifty-six years of his life, and a college instructor for over twenty years.

My pastor and church congregation at Princeton UMC have also been affirming and supportive of my sense of call. It was my Field Education Supervision Tseam at PUMC that pressed me to confront the reality of my pastoral gifts during my internship. Also deserving of mention is a small group of women who pray for and with me routinely. Their unflinching support has sustained me repeatedly over the years.

I am in my sixth year as a PhD student in Homiletics at Princeton Theological Seminary; I plan to graduate in 2017. My current research project analyzes the Calypso, the indigenous music of Trinidad and Tobago, my country of origin. I identify rhetorical markers that would characterize indigenous preaching that resists oppressive missionary influences. It is my hope that this research will validate grass-roots preachers who bring so many people to faith using their own idiom. I also hope it will introduce to the field of Homiletics new ways of assessing and appreciating value in effective preaching that falls outside the homiletical mainstream.

To God be the glory!

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Chronological Resumé of Activities

Catherine E. Williams, M.Div. B.Mus.

EMPLOYMENT

Jan 2014 - present – Associate Pastor, Princeton United Methodist Church
September – December 2015 - Teaching Fellow, Princeton Theological Seminary. Course: “Musical Resources for the Congregation.”
Sept 2012 – May 2015 - Teaching Assistant, Princeton Theological Seminary. Course: “Introduction to Preaching,” 6 semesters
July 2010 - Dec 2013 – Pastoral Care Assistant, Princeton United Methodist Church
September 2009 - May 2010 – Seminary Intern, Medford United Methodist Church
September 2008 - May 2009 – Seminary Intern, Princeton United Methodist Church
September 2009 - May 2010 - Adjunct Writing Instructor, Palmer Theological Seminary
September 2007 - June 2010 - Instructor of Worship and Music, Eastern’s School of Christian Ministry at Palmer Theological Seminary
September 2007 - June 2010 – Teaching Assistant, Palmer Theological Seminary Courses: Alfred J. Institute: Speak Until Justice Wakes, Systematic Theology I, Systematic Theology II, Critical Analysis for Theological Ministry, Pastoral Ministry, Introduction to Pastoral Care
January 1996 - June 2007 – Special Assistant to Senior Pastors, Abundant Life Fellowship, Edgewater Park, NJ
1995 - 1997 – Minister of Music, Abundant Life Fellowship, Edgewater Park, NJ
1990 - 1991 Assistant Director, Westminster Conservatory of Music, Princeton, NJ
1986 - 1990 – Minister of Music, New Covenant Church of Philadelphia, PA
1988 - 1994 – Piano Instructor, Westminster Conservatory of Music, Princeton, NJ
1997 - 2007 – Owner and Instructor, Catherine Williams Piano Studio, Delran, NJ
1981 – 1986 – Instructor, West Indies School of Theology, Trinidad & Tobago, West Indies. Courses: Music in Worship, Music Theory, Private and Group Piano, Private and Group Voice.
1977 - 1986 – Bank Officer, Royal Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, Arima, Trinidad & Tobago
1976 - 1977 – Bank Clerk, Chase Manhattan Bank, Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago
1974 - 1976 – Junior Teacher, Salem Junior Secondary School, Montserrat, W.I.

EDUCATION

September 2011 - present – PhD candidate, Practical Theology, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, NJ
September 2005 - May 2010 – M. Div., Palmer Theological Seminary, Wynnwood, PA
September 2001 - May 2005 –Diploma of Biblical and Theological Studies, Eastern’s School of Christian Ministry, a program of Palmer Theological Seminary
September 1986 - May 1990 – Bachelor of Music in Church Music, Westminster Choir College, Princeton, NJ,
June 1974 – High School Diploma, Bishop Anstey High School, Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago.

Chronological Resumé of Activities

Catherine E. Williams, M.Div. B.Mus.

FAMILY

SPOUSE: Harran E. Williams – married July 8, 1978 in Arima, Trinidad & Tobago

CHILD: Harran Jesse Williams – born February 3, 1981 in Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago

CHILD: Joanna Elizabeth Williams – born January 24, 1995 in Mt. Holly, NJ, USA

HOME CHURCH: Princeton United Methodist Church

CURRENTLY SERVING:

Princeton United Methodist Church as Associate Pastor of Pastoral Care

Chambers United Methodist Church as Administrative Pastor

Princeton Theological Seminary as 6th year PhD candidate, and Graduate Instructor.

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