

**THE PRESBYTERY OF WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA
COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY
THE REVEREND ROBERT J. TUTTLE, CHAIR
APRIL 28, 2015**

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry recommends the following to the Presbytery of Western North Carolina:

RECOMMENDATION:

I. THAT Patrick E. McElwaine, a member of Asheville First Presbyterian Church, and a student at Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond, VA, be enrolled as a Candidate following the required examination by Presbytery.

Recently, your Committee on Preparation for Ministry conducted an interview with an Inquirer who asked, with the support of his sponsoring congregation and Session, that he be enrolled as a Candidate in the Presbytery of Western North Carolina. We recommend him to you today for your approval.

Patrick E. McElwaine comes with the support of his congregation and the recommendation of the Session of Asheville First Presbyterian Church. His written call to ministry/faith statement is contained in this packet (see CPM Attachment 1).

FOR YOUR INFORMATION:

- Matthew Connor was enrolled as an Inquirer on October 15, 2014. Matt is a member of the Gastonia First Presbyterian Church and is attending Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia.
- Gregory B. Martin was enrolled as an Inquirer on October 15, 2014. Greg is a member of the Kings Mountain First Presbyterian Church and is attending Union Presbyterian Seminary in Charlotte.
- Karrie E. Smith, an Inquirer from the Hickory First Presbyterian Church, withdrew from the preparation for ministry process on October 15, 2014.
- Benjamin R. Garris, a candidate from the Banner Elk Presbyterian Church, was certified ready to receive a call on April 15, 2015.
- Lisle Gwynn Garrity, a candidate from the Black Mountain Presbyterian Church, was certified ready to receive a call on April 15, 2015.
- Andrew J. Bowman was enrolled as an Inquirer on April 15, 2015. Andrew is a member of the Black Mountain Presbyterian Church and will attend Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond, VA.

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) is hoping that you will help to identify and encourage people whom you feel that God is calling into the ministry to be a Teaching Elder. Care for people who are feeling a call to the ministry of Teaching Elder is a shared responsibility of the Session and the Presbytery. The process is described below.

The Process of Becoming a Candidate and Beginning to Receive a Call

It is important that those who are to be ordained as teaching elders receive full preparation for their task under the direction of the presbytery. For this purpose, a presbytery shall enter into a covenant

relationship with those preparing to become teaching elders and with their sessions and congregations. This relationship shall be divided into the two phases of inquiry and candidacy.” (*Book of Order G-20601*)

Inquiry Phase:

In order to begin the inquiry phase, an applicant must be a member of the sponsoring congregation, shall have been active in the work and worship of that congregation for at least six months, and shall have received the endorsement of their session. This person is then examined by CPM, and if approved, is enrolled as an Inquirer.

“The purpose of the inquiry phase is to provide an opportunity for the church and those who believe themselves called to ordered ministry as teaching elders to explore that call together so that the presbytery can make an informed decision about the inquirer’s suitability for ordered ministry.” (*G-2.0603*) A person must be an Inquirer for at least one year.

Candidacy Stage:

When an Inquirer believes, through their discernment, that they are called to the position of teaching elder, they can request that they become a Candidate. The Inquirer will meet with their Session and explain their sense of call. The Session can endorse them and recommend them to the CPM. The CPM, through its discernment, can decide to recommend them to the Presbytery. At the recommendation of the CPM, the Inquirer comes before the Presbytery to share part of their faith journey and their sense of call. The Presbytery can then ask them questions in respect to their sense of call, not questions of content of an ordination exam. They can ask about "their Christian faith, forms of Christian service, and motives for seeking the ministry." (Adopted from a previous *Book of Order*.)

"The purpose of the candidacy phase, then, is to provide for the full preparation of persons to serve the church as teaching elders." (*G-2.0604*)

Preparation for a Call:

Before a person may take a call in our Presbytery, they must have completed the following:

- Pass the Bible Content Exam.
- Pass the four Senior Ordination Exams (Biblical Exegesis, Theological Competence, Worship and Sacraments, and Church Polity).
- Complete a two-day battery of assessments administered by a Career & Personal Counseling Center.
- Complete one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education training (CPE).
- Normally, complete at least one year at a PCUSA seminary.
- Meet annually with the Committee on Preparation for Ministry.
- Have been an Inquirer at least one year and have been a Candidate at least one year.

Must be Approved by CPM to Receive a Call:

A Candidate may not begin to enter negotiations about a call as a teaching elder without the approval of the CPM, which has been delegated this task. When a Candidate has completed the above, the CPM will examine the Candidate and determine if he/she is ready to begin looking for a call, and if so, will "certify the person ready to receive a call." The Candidate will also have their Personal Information Form (PIF) reviewed and approved by CPM. If the person receives a call, the Candidate will be examined by the receiving presbytery.

CPM ATTACHMENT 1

Presbytery of Western North Carolina
Patrick McElwaine
Statement of Call

3/4/2015

"I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind, but now I see." The treasured words of "Amazing Grace" have been floating through my mind as I considered how to share my statement of call with you. Oh how long I held God's call at arms length, averting my gaze from the obvious and denying what had always been there. I was stubborn, but God was persistent. I was willfully blind, but God helped me see. Throughout my life people had always told me I should be a minister. Friends, family, strangers - everyone saw the Holy Spirit at work in me, and I tried for a long time to ignore the ever increasing pull within my own heart. But thankfully God had other plans. In opening my heart and mind to the Lord, I now see that I have been created to be a minister of the Word and Sacrament in Jesus' church. God is calling me to use the gifts and life I have received as a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church (USA). So, how shall I tell you about my sense of call? There are many ways to arrange a story, but I believe organizing this narrative around my relationship with three influential PC(USA) congregations is appropriate here.

My faith journey began with my infant baptism into the body of Christ at Second Presbyterian Church in Roanoke, VA. My parents had visited several churches around the Roanoke valley, and felt that this one was the best place for our family to grow in faith together. Indeed, Second Presbyterian was a wonderfully supportive environment. Many saints selflessly nurtured my development through the years in that congregation, teaching me of Christ's love and embodying the values they taught. Messages of hope, love, and reconciliation were rooted deep in my being through energetic participation in worship, church school, and youth group.

My participation with youth group throughout middle and high school was particularly transformative. This network of friends provided an opportunity to explore, question, and grow in faith. Summer mission trips introduced me to the realities of economic and racial injustice and the projects helped teach me about humble service to others. Multiple trips to the Montreat Youth Conference helped me see myself as part of the larger PC(USA) family. After graduating high school, I even came back and began volunteering with the youth group. It had been such an important part of my spiritual development that I wanted to give back to others that which I had already received. The community at Second Presbyterian Church of Roanoke helped build a firm foundation upon which my faith continued to grow.

The second influential faith community in my call story is First Presbyterian Church of Asheville, NC. A few years after graduating from college, my soon to be wife, Allyson, and I moved to Asheville for work. I had been promoted to manage an optical lab in the city and we were excited to make a new home together. After several months we began attending and eventually transferred our membership to First Presbyterian. This was a momentous transition: for the first time, I claimed my faith as an adult. My

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faith was no longer that which had been passed to me by my family of origin. Rather, through the power and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, I consciously affirmed my faith tradition and came to a deeper recognition of my place in the body of Christ. I was invigorated by this new development on my faith journey and felt quite close to my First Presbyterian family. I volunteered as a youth group advisor, accepted a nomination to the hospitality committee, worked as an usher team captain, and even served on the steering committee for a capital campaign.

While my spiritual life flourished, my professional life became less than rewarding. My contentment at work flagged alongside a declining sense of purpose in that position. I was succeeding by many measures and had even been pushed towards a management track within the lab's parent company based in Dallas, TX. It felt nice to have my potential recognized, but a nagging question remained in the foreground: "Yeah, but do you really want to do this forever? Is this what you're meant to do or is it just the path of least resistance?" I soon realized that I did not want to pursue that career path, that it ultimately held little appeal to me. I felt a burning yet shapeless desire that I was meant for something more than optical lab management -- but what? If not that, then in which direction should I go?

I began a several months long process of deep discernment, praying for guidance and that God's will would be done. Allyson's heart was already open to God and knew of my call to ministry before I recognized and accepted it. In fact, she only recently shared that she had known for quite some time before then: she had told her mother years before after I first met her parents that I was meant to be a minister! She sensed in me what so many others had, and walked beside me throughout the discernment process. She brought up the idea of going to seminary and becoming a Presbyterian pastor one day and I was shocked; I didn't know what to do. We talked for months about the realities of being a ministry family, of uprooting out lives in Asheville and following God's call where it may lead. It was scary, but I think Allyson knew the right answer all along. She just had to let me get there, too.

One Sunday morning after church, we were in a bagel shop eating breakfast and having a well-worn conversation: "So are we going to do it? Are you going to apply to seminary Patrick?" As we sat there, the sunlight gleaming through the restaurant's front windows, we saw an unexpected sight. Across the street there was a man carrying a huge wooden cross up the steep grade of the highway. There it was, slung over his shoulder with a little wheel on the bottom, a literal cross to bear. He was dressed simply and seemed oblivious to the world, methodically placing one foot in front of the other. As we sat there in stunned silence, our brother in the faith strode unhesitatingly up the way and out of sight. After a moment, Allyson stared at me across the table and spoke Truth. She said, "Patrick, if that's not enough of a sign for you, then I don't know what is." It was a benediction on a moment that I had not even realized was holy. I went home that afternoon and began my application to Union Presbyterian Seminary.

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We now move ahead to the third influential church community on my journey to accepting God's call, Second Presbyterian Church of Richmond, VA. After fulfilling the requirements of the contract with my previous job, Allyson and I moved to Richmond. We faithfully reoriented our lives towards God's will as we understood it, trusting in the Sovereign One's providence to take care of us and lead us on our way. The Spirit led us to Second Presbyterian, a vibrant downtown community into which we were quickly enfolded. I began volunteering with the church's Walk-In Lunch program feeding homeless and under-resourced neighbors at the church each week. At that time I was also working with the Central Virginia Food Bank's "FeedMore" organization packaging meals for Meals on Wheels. I was deeply affected by the fundamental act of feeding neighbors while forming relationships in the community. Soon, I experienced a true trial by fire: I was informed that the Second Presbyterian middle school youth group was going on a summer retreat to Massanetta, and that the church would hire me on their youth ministry team if I went as a chaperone and the kids recommended me at the end of the week.

Needless to say, the trip went wonderfully and I have now been working on staff at the church for about the last two years. Second Presbyterian has a distinctive model for its youth program. Instead of hiring a single youth minister, they employ a team of Union seminary students as a youth ministry team. Together, we plan and implement both Sunday evening youth group and Sunday morning church school programs for middle and high school students each week. The Director of Christian Education gives us a great deal of freedom to shape the program and we work well as a team.

My seminary coursework, involvement in the Union community, and work at the church have all helped me grow into God's call for my life. My understanding of this call has been refined by our time in Richmond. I feel called to work as a teaching elder, preaching, teaching, and visiting pastorally in an urban church setting. As part of a PC(USA) congregation, I feel called to minister and witness to issues such as homelessness, food insecurity, and racial and economic injustice. I feel that gaining more practical experience as an associate pastor in an urban church after graduation would be a worthy vocational investment towards a healthy long term ministry with the PC(USA). I am being called to build bridges between God's children, to guide the church into the future according to the Spirit's will while honoring our distinctive roots and valuable heritage. It is my hope that you will welcome me as a candidate for ministry with the Presbytery of Western North Carolina.