

**THE PRESBYTERY OF WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA
COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY
REV. WHIT MALONE, CHAIR
JANUARY 28, 2017**

FIRST SECTION

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY, AN ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION, OR A TASK FORCE THAT REQUIRE ACTION BY PRESBYTERY:

I. RECOMMEND TO PRESBYTERY FOR EXAMINATION AND ORDINATION:

A. LISLE GWYNN GARRITY

From: Candidate, Presbytery of Western North Carolina

As: Creative Director, A Sanctified Art LLC

Effective: Upon Ordination

(See COM Attachment 1 for Biography and Statement of Faith.)

II. RECOMMEND TO PRESBYTERY THE VALIDATION OF MINISTRY FOR:

- A. Lisle Garrity, as Creative Director, A Sanctified Art LLC, through January 28, 2018.
- B. Katie Cashwell, as Director of Programs, Montreat Conference Center, through January 28, 2018.
- C. Evelyn Coleman, as Director for Programs, Montreat Conference Center, through January 28, 2018.
- D. Kitty Rankin, as Pastor to Seniors, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, through January 28, 2018.
- E. John Pope, as Associate Professor of Counselor Education, Montreat College, through January 28, 2018.

SECOND SECTION

The Book of Order provides that the Committee on Ministry may be given authority by the Presbytery to find in order calls issued by churches, to approve and present calls for service of ministers, to approve the examination of ministers transferring from other Presbyteries, required by G-11.0402 and G11.0502g, to dissolve the pastoral relationship in cases where the congregation and pastor concur, to dismiss ministers to other Presbyteries, and to approve administrative commissions to ordain/install with the provision that such actions be reported at the next stated meeting of the Presbytery. (G-11.0502h) This permission was granted to our Committee on Ministry; therefore, the following actions are to be simply admitted to the record.

I. APPROVED FOR TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP:

A. WANDA NEELY

From: New Hope Presbytery

As: Transitional Pastor, Morganton First Presbyterian Church

Effective: February 15, 2017

(See COM Attachment 2 for Biography and Statement of Faith.)

B. JOHN NELSON POPE

From: Presbytery of the Pines

As: Associate Professor of Counselor Education, Montreat College

Effective: January 10, 2017

(See COM Attachment 3 for Biography and Statement of Faith.)

C. THOM NELSON

From: Great Rivers Presbytery

As: Honorably Retired

Effective: January 10, 2017

(See COM Attachment 4 for Biography and Statement of Faith.)

II. APPROVED TRANSITIONAL PASTOR RELATIONSHIPS:**A. Bryan Hovey and Mount Holly First Presbyterian Church**

Effective: September 1, 2016 - August 31, 2017

III. APPROVED STATED PASTOR RELATIONSHIPS:**A. Kent Smith and West Asheville Presbyterian Church**

Extended: January 1, 2017 - December 31, 2017

B. Chris Wingard and Dorland Memorial Presbyterian Church

Effective: October 4, 2016 - October 3, 2017

C. Theodore Grant and Brittain Presbyterian Church

Extended: January 1, 2017 - December 31, 2017

D. Keith Freeman and Pineola Presbyterian Church

Extended: January 1, 2017 - December 31, 2017

E. Robert Abel and Hayesville Presbyterian Church

Extended: January 1, 2017 - December 31, 2017

F. David Morgan and Oak Forest Presbyterian Church

Extended: January 1, 2017 - December 31, 2017

G. Patrick Hardy and Walnut Presbyterian Church

Extended: November 1, 2016 - April 30, 2017

H. Jay Rabuck and Brittain's Cove Presbyterian Church

Effective: January 15, 2017 - July 15, 2017

IV. APPROVED COMMISSIONED LAY PASTOR RELATIONSHIPS:**A. Russell Reighley and Sherrill's Ford Presbyterian Church**

Extended: August 1, 2016 - July 31, 2017

B. Marcia Reighley and Sherrill's Ford Presbyterian Church

Extended: August 1, 2016 - July 31, 2017

C. Linda Abel and Hayesville Presbyterian Church

Extended: January 1, 2017 - December 31, 2017

D. Kenneth Humphreys and Conley Memorial Presbyterian Church

Extended: March 1, 2017 - February 28, 2018

V. APPROVED MINISTRY INFORMATION FORM:**A. Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church****B. Northminster Presbyterian Church**

VI. APPROVED THE REQUEST FOR HONORABLE RETIREMENT:

- A. Joel David Cherry
Effective: January 1, 2017

VII. APPROVED THE DISSOLUTION OF PASTORAL RELATIONSHIP:

- A. Michael Bailey and Morganton First Presbyterian Church
Effective: November 30, 2016

VIII. APPROVED THE TRANSFER OF MEMBERSHIP:

- A. Michael Bailey
To: Sheppard and Lapsley Presbytery
As: Pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Tuscaloosa, Alabama
Effective: December 1, 2016
- B. Steven Barnes
To: Greater Atlanta Presbytery
As: Associate Pastor, Northminster Presbyterian Church, Roswell, Georgia
Effective: August 26, 2016

IX. APPROVED PASTORAL RELATIONSHIP:

- A. Rebecca Gurney
As: Director of Congregational Care, Asheville First Presbyterian Church
Effective: January 1, 2017

X. APPROVED INSTALLATION COMMISSIONS:

- A. Approve the Administrative Commission for the Ordination/Installation of Jacob L. Douylliez as Pastor of Marion First Presbyterian Church on Sunday, November 27, 2016 at 4:00 p.m.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Responsibility on Commission</u>	<u>Min/Elder</u>	<u>Church</u>
Bob Tuttle	Moderator/Preside	Minister	Honorably Retired
Barbara McLean	Propound Constitutional Questions	Elder	Grace Covenant
Lynn Bledsoe	Propound Questions to Congregation	Minister	Asheville First
Helen Hall	Charge the Minister	Elder	Dulatown
Barbara Ross	Charge the Congregation	Elder	Crossnore
Bobbi White	Lead in Worship	Minister	PWNC
Robert Ayers	Lead in Worship	Elder	Marion First
Ken Humphreys	Lead in Worship	Elder	Fairview

Guests

Rick Douylliez	Preach the Sermon	Minister	Savannah Presbytery
Russel Gladding	Lead in Worship	Elder	Savannah Presbytery

- B. Approve the Administrative Commission for the Installation of Kimberleigh E. Wells as Pastor of New Hope Presbyterian Church, Asheville on Sunday, November 20, 2016 at 11:00 a.m.

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<u>Name</u>	<u>Responsibility on Commission</u>	<u>Min/Elder</u>	<u>Church</u>
Bobbi White	Moderator/Preside	Minister	PWNC
Barbara McLean	Propound Const. Questions	Elder	Grace Covenant
Bunk Spann	Propound Questions to Cong.	Elder	New Hope
Heath Rada	Charge the Congregation	Elder	Grace Covenant
Carol Steele	Lead in Worship	Minister	Montreat Conference Center
Dwight Christenbury	Lead in Worship	Minister	Trinity
Tina Joyner	Lead in Worship	Elder	Kenilworth
<u>Guests</u>			
Luther Smith	Preach the Sermon	Minister	Professor Emeritus, Emory University
Elaine Knight	Charge the Minister	Elder	Presbytery of the James

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Lisle Gwynn Garrity is a Pastorist (pastor + artist), retreat leader, and creative entrepreneur seeking to fill the church with more color, paint, mystery, and creativity. In the midst of a rapidly reforming church landscape, she is convinced that new models for ministry are emerging all over the place, we just have to be willing to discover and pursue them.

After many years away, Lisle and her husband recently moved back to the beautiful blue ridge mountains and currently reside in Black Mountain, NC. A graduate of Davidson College, where she majored in English (and unofficially minored in visual art), Lisle has a long history of formal and informal art training. After being offered a wild and unique fellowship to attend seminary, Lisle completed Master's degrees in Divinity and Practical Theology (with a concentration in worship), all with a sense of wonder and openness to the unique work she is called to offer to the world.

As a visual artist, Lisle loves to get her hands messy using just about any medium, including paint, clay, charcoal, pastel, fabric, and film. She is passionate about re-claiming worship as a sacred form of art and inviting all to participate in creative faith.

Serving the church at-large, Lisle travels widely to share her gifts as an artist and pastor. She loves leading retreats of all kinds, facilitating communal art workshops, speaking on the intersections of art and faith, and creating live worship art and commissions for churches.

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Statement of Faith:

Lisle Garrity

I believe that the core of faith is beautiful mystery; that mystery cannot be contained or dissected, but is infinitely accessible. Though God cannot be reduced to words, images, or concepts, pursuing knowledge of God through many mediums is the constant vocation of faith. Our holy scriptures guide us in the work of uncovering and widening God's mystery; in them we find space for questions and assurance, wrestling and clarity. Paraphrasing Calvin, Scripture provides spectacles through which our vision of God, ourselves, and the world is illuminated and refined. The Word offers us sight—in it we see all that God has done and is doing.

I believe in God the creator, the Divine Artisan, who shaped the womb of the world out of the dark, watery depths. God the father/mother crafted the universe with beauty and goodness, sowing in it seeds of abundance. Scooping up the dirt, God breathed humanity into existence. Sharing in God's likeness, all humans possess the capacity to be creative and to nurture God's abundant creation with mastery and skill.

I believe Jesus is the One who drew God intimately near to every corner of human experience. I see Jesus, the Human One, in the faces of those who hunger, for food and for joy. Jesus is embodied love, who teaches, models, and lures us to live out truth and compassion in all we do. God's love is expressed most profoundly in suffering; in Jesus' death, God chose to suffer with and for human beings. In Jesus, our with-us God suffers in solidarity with the poor, broken-hearted, and sinned-against. Because of this, God calls us to be vehicles, not of charity, but of shared hospitality. This requires being in solidarity with others who suffer; in sharing our brokenness, we open paths to healing for all.

In our suffering Savior, we find unconquerable, self-giving love. This all-powerful servant love banishes evil, shines light in the darkness, and outlives the grave. The narrative of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection inspires and guides us in living as resurrection people; we are called to breathe the mysterious hope of the empty tomb into the shadows of darkness and death in our world. We are not meant to supply answers, but to sustain one another with the radical promise that God is making all things new. In order to do this, we must continually draw upon the model Jesus set, in spilling grace into the most unlikely, messy edges of society. This grace is not deserved or tempered by logic; it is boundless.

I believe that the Spirit dwells in magnificent places, like stained-glass cathedrals, but also in desperate places, like alleyways and slums. I feel the Spirit's nearness when I paint, or manipulate clay in my hands, or inhale a mountaintop's summit breeze—in these moments, God feels as close as my very own breath. The Trinity reveals that God is not distant; instead, God is near and tangible and active. God is human flesh; God is living Word. God is the breathing, beating heartbeat of our world.

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Luke 2: 8-20

Nearby, in the fields outside of Bethlehem, a group of shepherds were guarding their flocks *from predators* in the darkness of night.**9 In the darkness of night, they kept watch over their flocks.**

Suddenly, a messenger of the Lord stood in front of them, and the darkness was replaced by a glorious light—the shining light of God's glory. They were terrified!

Messenger: **10** Don't be afraid! Listen! I bring good news, news of great joy, news that will affect all people everywhere. **11** Today, in the city of David, a Liberator has been born for you! He is the promised Anointed One, the Supreme Authority! **12** You will know you have found Him when you see a baby, wrapped in a blanket, lying in a feeding trough.

At that moment, the first heavenly messenger was joined by thousands of other messengers—a vast heavenly choir. They praised God.

14 Heavenly Choir: To the highest heights of the universe, glory to God!

And on earth, peace among all people who bring pleasure to God!

15 As soon as the heavenly messengers disappeared into heaven, the shepherds were buzzing with conversation.

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Shepherds: Let's rush down to Bethlehem right now! Let's see what's happening! Let's experience what the Lord has told us about!

16 So they ran into town, and *eventually* they found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in the feeding trough. After they saw the baby, **17** they spread the story of *what they had experienced and what had been said to them about this child.* **18** Everyone who heard their story couldn't stop thinking about its meaning. **19** Mary, too, pondered all of these events, treasuring each memory in her heart.

20 The shepherds returned to *their flocks*, praising God for all they had seen and heard, and they glorified God for the way the experience had unfolded just as the heavenly messenger had predicted.

They were in the darkness. Those shepherds, hanging out in the shadows of the fields. They were considered nobodies, mostly. They were low-wage workers pushed to the edges of town. Some called them lazy, shiftless, maybe a little delinquent, not to be trusted. And so they kept to the fields--those wide and unpredictable spaces where danger might always be lurking--watching over the flock by night, knowing that the safety of their sheep--and maybe even their own lives--was always at risk.

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I never really thought much about how dangerous a shepherd's life might be. Maybe it's because, as Christians, we're always talking about God as the good shepherd. We shape the image of our God as one who lies us down in green pastures, brings us beside still waters, comforts us with the rod and staff, leads us through the valley of death, and who makes our cup overflow with goodness and mercy. This is an image of comfort, of guidance, of unrelenting presence.

But in this story, I'm reminded that half of a shepherd's job--maybe even the most important part--is done in the dark. And here we see these darkness-dwellers, guarding their flocks against the predators in the night.

I've been thinking a lot lately about those who dwell in the shadows, and what it means to keep watch by night.

I've thought about our homeless neighbors on the streets of Asheville and Black Mountain who, with the creeping in of winter, are beginning to seek new nightly routines.

I've thought about our neighbors just a few hours away who, in the darkness of the recent storm, have watched streets, homes, neighborhoods swell and flood.

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I've thought about civilians in Syria who take shifts through the night in anticipation of the next rumble, the next airstrike, the next split-second disaster that could leave their children and loved ones trapped in the mix.

And I've been thinking about the many peaceful protesters who have kept watch by night in Ferguson, Baltimore, Dallas, Tulsa, Charlotte--all these cities that have erupted with public outrage every time a black body lies dead in the street.

Keeping watch in the darkness is dangerous, especially when the darkness seems to get darker.

And I think it gets darker particularly every time a black person is killed and, instead of tending to the wounds of systemic racism, we shift into denial and violence. I think it gets darker every time a fatal tragedy is twisted into a us v. them, a black vs. white, a black vs. blue polarized war where we all become gross caricatures and echo chambers of one extreme.

I think it gets darker every time we cut ourselves away from the shadows, refusing to trust in the promise that, in the darkness, the light shines. Turning away from the possibility that, with that light, we

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may also be confronted by the words of a strange messenger: “Do not fear. Listen. I bring good news.”

In our text, we find the shepherds on the outskirts of Bethlehem. I imagine them in a sleepy, yet alert haze, on edge for any rustle of leaves or snapping of sticks that might signal a trespassing predator. And then, all at once, they are wrapped in light.

In the middle of their night shift, they take on a new calling: to testify to what they have seen in the darkness. To testify to a world born anew, to the wondrous peculiarity of a liberator who comes in the form of a child, to a God who takes on flesh even in a world of human suffering.

And so, they are sent out “buzzing with conversation,” and become the first people to proclaim to all the world that goodness will overcome evil, that light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it.

During Thanksgiving a few years ago, when I was eating dinner with my extended family, my uncle told us about going to Ferguson to protest after Michael Brown’s death. As a minister, he responded to the call for clergy and stood in the streets with other pastors and clergy to protest.

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"Were you afraid?" We asked. "Not really. Not until we were pushing forward in the line and the cops began to resist. I wasn't expecting the police to be so forceful, but one of them shoved me back and I almost fell. That scared me."

My uncle's fear, though, was tempered. Did he fear for his life? Probably not. He's a white minister, after all.

Cornel West was there protesting too, and was later arrested. But during that weekend, he was set to speak at an interfaith rally where 2,000 people were gathered. Before he took the stage, some local protesters demanded a chance to speak. Breaking through the crowds, they came up to the podium and shared about what they had seen in the darkness.

"If you can see a dead black boy lie in the street for four hours and that doesn't make you angry, where is your humanity?" One of them said.

"Nonviolence is really important because you're not going to change someone's mind by being violent. And also there is just so much more power in taking a stand and doing it nonviolently," Another said.

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My uncle told me, "It was better that they spoke. We needed to hear from them--they are the ones who have been here witnessing what has happened."

They were keeping watch by night and telling what they had seen.

A few summers ago, I was helping my friend, Shelli, keynote for a youth conference at Montreat. As we were planning our presentations for the week, Shelli said, "I'm gonna talk about white privilege. I'm tired of coming to this conference and never talking about the hard stuff." I was on board, and also braced myself for the backlash I predicted would occur.

And so, Tuesday of the conference week rolled around and Shelli told the story of Naomi and Ruth, and Ruth's deep commitment to Naomi to stand by her side no matter what. She preached about the family of God and how we belong to each other. Then she told the story of Jordan Davis. She told about how a white man named Michael Dunn became aggravated when Jordan Davis and his friends were playing loud music in their car at a gas station. After a shouting match ensued, Dunn shot Davis to death through the door of his car.

At the time when Shelli told the story, Dunn had not been convicted of any crimes, as he was protected by Florida's stand-your-ground law.

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Shelli reinterpreted “stand-your-ground,” to mean that instead of fearing each other, we should stand our ground for each other.

Speaking to a sea of light-skinned faces, Shelli said, “If we belong to each other, then Jordan Davis is our brother. We take care of our own.”

As you might imagine, this sparked a bit of controversy within the crowd. All throughout the rest of that day, we heard stories of a few unhappy campers. One of those was a white pastor from Alabama. He was especially tiffed and had a few choice words for Shelli. “She has no right to say things like that at a Christian conference. And she doesn’t know what it means to own a gun in the South. We need protection.” We heard him say.

On the last day of the conference, this same pastor found Shelli in the crowd after the keynote presentation was over.

“I owe you an apology,” he said.

Not at all worried about what this man thought of her, Shelli decided to hear him out. “I was really angry at you for what you said about guns and white privilege. But I want you to know that there was a black girl in my small group. She broke down after your keynote and began

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crying. She told the whole group what it was like hearing a white preacher talk about these things. And she shared about how she has often been treated because of the color of her skin. I had no idea. Her courage and the stories that she shared with us have totally changed my life and I don't think I'll ever be the same again. This changes everything for me--how I pastor, and how I preach. So, thank you."

Shelli certainly didn't feel the need to take credit for that one.

This man listened to those keeping watch in the darkness--he witnessed a glimpse of light in the darkness, and he was no longer the same. And now, like the shepherds, he had to share with others what he had seen.

Though I've certainly ignored the main star of this scripture text--this peculiar baby Liberator--I think that one of the most miraculous things about the Christmas story is that it emerges in the dark.

Here we are, in a nation more politically divided than ever before, simmering in unhealed racial wounds of the past. Here we are, in a time when we can access the world's darkness with the touch of a screen.

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And yet, I think we forget our world may not look so different from the world in which Christ was born. I think it's easy to forget that there was a command sent for this baby's murder. It's easy to forget that there were shepherds fending off the danger of the night before the angel appeared. It's easy to forget that our beautiful baby savior was born into a world of oppression and deeply-knit pain.

Because this--this--is precisely the type of world in which God's light shines. This is precisely the type of world in which God becomes flesh and dwells among us.

So when we begin to lose heart, when we feel caught in the dark, let us look to the ones who dwell in the shadows. Let us look to those who are keeping watch by night. Let us listen to their stories and testify to the light. If we're paying attention, we might just hear the message our God is so desperate to tell:

“Do not fear. Listen. I bring good news.”

Amen.

COM ATTACHMENT 1

Committee On Preparation for Ministry

October 14, 2016

1:30pm

Black Mountain Presbyterian Church

Present: Bob Tuttle, John Lamotte, Marylynn Huff, Margaret Peery, Carol Steele, Katie Cashwell.

This commission, approved the CPM, met for the purpose of hearing Lisle Gwynn Garrity preach and approve her sermon.

5 other guests joined us.

Bob Tuttle called the meeting to order with prayer and made introductions.

Bob turned the pulpit over to Lisle Garrity who through prayer, scripture and proclamation brought the Word of God to us.

Bob opened the floor for discussion. Wonderful discussion was had on the impact of Lisle's sermon.

John LaMotte made a motion that we approve Lisle Gwynn Garrity's sermon. Marylynn Huff seconded. Motion was unanimously approved.

Bob Tuttle ended our time together with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
[signed] Bob Tuttle

COM ATTACHMENT 2

Wanda Suddreth Neely

Brief Biography

I have always felt called to be a pastor. But after years of exchanges with PNCs, I decided it was not to be. Many PIFs were sent, but there was never consideration for a church call. Instead there were other opportunities, wonderful and exciting experiences in ministry. Over the years, I have had the privilege of having the following classifications with our Board of Pensions: 701, hospital chaplain; 641, college pastor; 305; middle governing body staff; 185, interim presbytery associate; 108, temporary supply pastor; 106, stated supply pastor; and 105, interim pastor. Yet I always thought, "I'm really a 101," an installed pastor.

In 2001, I received the call for which I had been preparing since seminary, the installed pastor of Union Presbyterian Church, Gastonia. I will never forget the day I drove up, and they had put on their church sign, "Welcome to our new pastor, Dr. Wanda Neely." I sat there and wept; it had been a 27-year journey to that point. It was a wonderful and exciting time in ministry, a dream finally realized. Not long after our church was recognized as a thriving congregation of the presbytery, I found myself resigning to move with my husband to eastern North Carolina where he had taken a call. I assumed my time as a 101 was over.

A year passed, and members of First Church Greenville, where my spouse was serving, approached me about an associate position to help them build staff. We met, and the committee said an amazing thing. They wanted to nominate me for the position of co-pastor. "After all," the chair said, "you are not a 103; you are really a 101." My task at the church was to help build program and staff, applying skills in church development I had obtained in presbytery work. Six and a half years after I began, the church had grown in membership and program and had added three and a half associate positions. Then the economy fell, and I realized that if the church was going to make payroll for the staff I had convinced them to call, my work was done, and I needed to step down.

I always followed my spouse in ministry, because he could draw the larger compensation. This time my husband said it was his turn to follow me, and surely my experience would bring good opportunities. Yet I still found challenges applying for the more competitive positions: being the female half of a clergy couple, sadly still a paradigm committees thought they had to address; having experience in many areas rather than one track, like those who topped me for the higher positions; my age, even though I had 8 to 10 more years before retirement, and my desire to stay in the southeast near family, a mother and a son with disabilities.

A year passed while I worked as a hospital chaplain. Once again I thought my time as a 101 was over. Then I received a call to serve as pastor/head of staff at First Church, Kinston. That congregation has given me more than I could ever give them, and the gift of being their pastor has been life transforming.

In summary, there were times in my life when I thought that my calling was to boldly go where no woman had gone before. Then there were times when I thought my calling was simply to go where no one else would. And then there were times when I wondered if I would ever get to go anywhere. There were times when people mentioned a stained-glass ceiling for women in ministry, and I would say, "No, it is a basement ceiling." During those times, my recurring prayer was always, "Lord, just do not let me end up an embittered old woman." I had watched women in the decade before me make it all the way to retirement saddened because they never got a call to be an installed pastor.

Now I come to my last years in ministry, old but I do not think embittered. I thank God for the privilege of fifteen great years serving three congregations as their installed pastor. I also give thanks for all those other good experiences that helped prepare me. And now I find myself ready to switch roles, feeling privileged and excited to get to serve again as a 105, interim pastor.

COM ATTACHMENT 2

Wanda Suddreth Neely Statement of Faith

My personal faith pilgrimage began in another Christian denomination, where I was nurtured in the Christian faith by loving parents and dedicated Sunday school teachers. During my college and seminary education, it became clear to me that theologically I was not in the mainstream of that church's thought. Though I spent my early years in Baptist settings, I was never really at home until I became a member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

I believe that there is nothing I have done nor can do to deserve the grace that God has poured out upon me. The primary message that the church has to offer is that God is in Christ reconciling the world. The theological premise that God becomes one of us continues to overwhelm my senses and reason. I continue to stand in awe of a God who loves the world and me enough to identify with our humanity.

I have always been struck by the beginning of the answer to Question One of the *Heidelberg Catechism*, "What is your only comfort in life and death? That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ" and the statements that follow about the redeeming work of Christ. In *The Brief Statement of Faith*, I resonate with the words that wrap that beautiful statement, "In life and in death we belong to God. Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel, whom alone we worship and serve."

Over the years I have found the concept of the covenant community to be one of the most powerful beliefs of the Presbyterian Church. I find exciting the idea that we are participants in God's plan for the redemption of creation by being the covenant people. God continually calls out the faithful to cooperate in God's work.

All individuals who are a part of the church are there because of God's will in Jesus Christ. We may be tempted to question how such a diverse group of individuals can become the church, but we are reminded that God is no respecter of persons. God calls equally men, women, boys, girls, from all groups of people. We are all called to be God's instruments in the world for salvation, healing, peace, and justice.

We celebrate our oneness as we seal individuals into the covenant community at the font. We are nurtured each time we gather at the Lord's Table and find boundless grace through the body and blood of Christ in the receiving of the bread and the cup.

In the Presbyterian system of connection, all churches can see themselves as part of the whole; for it takes all to make the body of Christ. We are not isolated congregations who are struggling to uphold the word. We are the church in the world. We are involved in caring for the world locally, nationally, and internationally. In our worship, we struggle to be inclusive in terms of age, physical and mental abilities, gender, sexuality, race, and ethnic background. This gives strength to the global message of the gospel. Perhaps our greatest criticism is our major strength in that we seek to be heterogeneous instead of homogeneous as we stand with the gospel.

I see the church as the only institution that can call forth from people an aspiration to work for peace and the alleviation of starvation, poverty, and oppression. At times we think of the church as the local congregation, or presbytery, or the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). But we know that denominational or national boundaries do not contain the body of Christ. In fact, the church is the only global community that crosses all political and national boundaries.

COM ATTACHMENT 3

John Nelson Pope Biography

January 3, 2017

I was born in a small town in the coal mining region of southeastern Kentucky. Ever since I was a young child, I was raised in the Presbyterian church, taught bible by my father and paternal grandfather, and sang with my mother and my paternal grandmother while they played hymns on the piano.

When I was six or seven, I began to hear God's call in my life. Slowly, I developed a relationship with Jesus Christ and understood what it meant to receive the Father's love and the comfort of the Spirit. I learned to share, to seek peace in conflict, and to try not to judge. As I grew, I saw that the church brought people together. There were rich people, poor people, troubled people, haughty people, humble people, hopeless people, hopeful people, faithless people and faithful people. It was a place where I and my family belonged.

A few years later, my family moved to the Tampa Bay area. I was terribly homesick for my childhood home and longed to go back to the mountains, to its people, and their embrace. My family joined the First Presbyterian Church in Bradenton, Florida. My sister and I joined the youth group and choir. We were ministered to and mentored by the assistant pastor, Jimmy Morrow. He encouraged us to deepen our relationship with God. The church sponsored a number of missionaries who told of their ministry in faraway places—the Congo, Korea, or Japan. They talked of preaching the gospel, building houses, digging wells, teaching school, or treating diseases.

When the family visited family in Kentucky one Christmas, I realized how economically impoverished many of the hill folk were. The acrid smell of coalsmoke no longer evoked pleasant childhood memories. I saw the world in a harsher light. One thing, however, remained the same: I realized how vital, muscular was my kin's faith in Jesus Christ was.

After High School and during college, I would return to my parents' home in Florida during the summer. I sang in the choir, and worked with the youth group. Some of family and most of the members of my home church thought I would make a fine preacher, but I would have none of it. No, I wanted to go to law school. But that's not what my heart was telling me. When I graduated college, I had not applied to any school. I returned to my home church and began assisting the new Associate Pastor, Jim McNaull with the youth group. One day, he asked me, "John, have you given any thought to attending seminary"? And my heart filled with joy. The ministry is where God wanted me. Three months later, I began my studies at Columbia Theological Seminary.

I've traveled through some deserts since ordination. Working with some of God's people have been challenging and nothing like my idealized vision of the church as a child. I've learned that all of God's people are broken and need healing which only Christ in His Spirit can bring. I've learned that I am broken and could never ever fix myself or make myself right with God. It is only Christ who brings that sort of rightness to me and others. It's all about His grace given freely and sacrificially to us. It's like the hard scrabble faith that drives and animates my mountain kin. Despite lives of hardship, God is their lodestone.

I've also traveled through a few oases. I've been blessed with an exceptional spouse to whom I've been married for 34 years and three grown children. I've served as a Navy and hospital chaplain, held hands and prayed with dying sailors or marines as they faced the final mystery and then saw their joy. I witnessed the resurrection of a church thought dead, how it seized a new vision of what God would have it do.

A few years ago, I heard God calling me to another form of ministry. After thirty years in the ministry and chaplaincy, I entered the doctoral program in Counselor Education and Supervision at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. It was a natural transition. Much of my education at Columbia was geared to counseling and pastoral care. My work as a Navy and hospital chaplain involved counseling informed by a Christian world view. My ministry has always been relational and circle-widening.

COM ATTACHMENT 3

Statement of Faith (John Nelson Pope)

Presbytery of Western North Carolina

I believe in the Triune God—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, maker of the stars and who formed all living things from dirt and calling it good. I believe in God who loved His creation so much that He allowed it to decide to separate from Him. I believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, causing them to leave cities of wealth to a virtual wilderness. I believe in the One who broke Moses and then called him to leadership, who led a stiff-necked people out of bondage to the edge of the Promised Land. I believe in the God who rose up the Judges, prophets, and kings—even the bad ones—to forth-tell the only Truth that matters and who foretold the coming of a Savior to reunite all humankind and even creation itself to God..

I believe that the same God, who spoke the universe into existence, touched a young virgin in a time and place long ago and faraway in such a Holy way that she gave birth to His Son. It was His Son that proclaimed the Good News to all who would hear it and could bear it. He preached redemption. He healed the disabled and gave purpose and joy to the lives of those who had lost hope. Despite this men and women rejected him and killed him unjustly. Just before He died, he cried, “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing”! Cast away and buried, most believed they had destroyed Him. But on the third day, His Father raised Him from the dead. He appeared to the few followers who remained despite their despair. He broke bread with them and they rejoiced. Before He returned to His Father, he breathed God’s Spirit upon them.

And so the Church was born—carried by Jesus’ followers and their descendants to this day. It is these Christ-followers who experience God’s joy, even when they are oppressed. Christ has charged them to proclaim His message with love and seek those far away from Him. Even when they stumble and it’s difficult to tell the difference between Christ-followers and those who are evil-followers, Jesus Christ will love His Church. During those times, He will reform and revitalize it. Jesus Christ gives us His sacraments-Baptism and Lord’s Supper--to draw us and seal us in His Presence. Even when Christ’s Bride is corrupted, God calls forth truth-tellers who herald repentance and constant renewal and reformation.

I believe that one day, perhaps soon, Jesus Christ will return again to reconcile humankind and the universe with God. On that day, everyone who believes and receives His Spirit will join in a heavenly celebration that will last forever and ever. Sadly, there will still be those who will reject Christ’s offer of His Presence.

Several years ago, when I was seeking a new call, a pastor nominating committee asked me what I thought about the importance of preaching in the lives of the congregation. I wrote:

God willing, I preach with enough skill not only to inspire people, but also challenge them, even reminding them of their sinfulness. Artful preaching challenges the listeners to allow God to transform them. It permits the listener to reduce his or her anxiety and accelerate the process by which the listener grows spiritually, emotionally, and even intellectually.

So it happens that I attempt to cause grace to fork down from Heaven and consume the people’s anger, faithlessness, and grief and fill them instead with Spirit, faithfulness, love, and power. A new language of Zion must be constructed, word-by-word, phrase-by-phrase, and meaning-by-meaning, so that people may once again hear and embrace the Truth. The preacher conveys God’s truth by ‘holding the Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other’.

Aside from sounding a little too sure of my skills, I was attempting to demonstrate how vital the proclamation of the scripture is to God’s people and to whomever will listen. It *can be* life changing. It is His inspired, complete, and perfect Word and yet it constantly changes—transforms—those who embrace it. Followers of Christ, simply *have to hear* His message:

Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death (The Theological Declaration of Barmen 8.11).

The problem is that in our common post-modern times, there are fewer and fewer listeners who will come into sanctuaries to hear the Word proclaimed. Those churches that are growing seem to cater to those who wish to be entertained during worship. They forget Bonhoeffer’s admonition to remember the cost of authentic discipleship. Christ calls us to take up *our* crosses and follow Him (Luke 9:23). Jesus’ command can be interpreted with any number of nuances, except that a follower models his or her existence after the Christ.

COM ATTACHMENT 3

Statement of Faith (John Nelson Pope)

Presbytery of Western North Carolina

We also live in a post-Christian era. Our worldview has changed. We don't believe the same things as our grandparents. Whereas God was once the center of peoples' beliefs, He has now been deposed. Although the shards of Christendom remain embedded in some of our government institutions, such as the military, government and legal system and in many volunteer organizations, they have been excised from public schools and universities, and most noticeably throughout the various media and popular culture. And the worldview of the prevailing culture is often skeptical and increasingly overtly hostile to Christianity.

And people are hurting, mentally and spiritually traumatized. Too many children are abused, thrown away like garbage or neglected. People crave love, so they seek it from whomever will show attention. Sometimes a young woman is trapped in a brutal relationship. Sometimes a man sells his soul to get ahead with his career. Other times, life becomes too difficult and people descend into alcohol or drug abuse. Too many folks follow their hearts, desires, temporal things, trends, and are anesthetized to the loving call of Christ. And yet, all are God's children and all need succor-healing.

However, they don't trust the Church. They'd heard stories about the preacher and "hypocrites" judging them, condemning them, and rejecting them.

This is why I counsel and why I prepare people [as a teacher] to provide counseling to all people [God's children]. This is my particular cross. He has called me to minister to the outsider, the poor in heart, the broken, the profligate, and the rigid. He called me to counsel those who'd never let the shadow of a church steeple fall upon them. So, I listen to their stories and realize that we share together in that therapeutic hour—a sacred, grace-filled place. And I am privileged to witness God transform them, heal them, even if they never utter His Name.

Respectfully Submitted,



John-Nelson Pope, M.Div., Ph.D., LPC-S (LA), ACS, NCC

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COM ATTACHMENT 4

Rev. Dr. Thomas G. Nelson

Rev. Dr. Thom Nelson grew up in Dearborn, Michigan. He holds a B.A. in Theology and Religious Studies from Alma College, a Master of Divinity from San Francisco Theological Seminary 1977 and Doctor of Ministry from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary 2002.

Dr. Nelson began ministry as the Associate Pastor of Calvin Presbyterian Church, Tigard, Oregon in 1977. In 1981 he became the organizing pastor of a new church development in Tualatin, Oregon. In 1985 he was called to be the Pastor of the newly chartered Tualatin Presbyterian Church. Thom served the church as pastor, head of staff, until June of 2002.

In June of 2002 Thom became the Senior Pastor at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Beulah, Michigan. In August of 2005 Dr. Nelson began as senior minister and head of staff at Farragut Presbyterian Church in Farragut, Tennessee. Thom served as Interim Pastor/Head of Staff at Knox Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati from 2012 to 2014 and Interim/Head of Staff at First Presbyterian Church in Jacksonville, IL from August, 2014 to September, 2016.

Thom is a member of the Association of Reformed and Liturgical Worship and The PCUSA General Assembly Study Group on the Sacraments. He is the author of "Recovering the Catechumenate—Implications for Presbyterians" and co-author of "Invitation to Christ: A Study of the Sacraments", published by the PCUSA. He has published articles in various journals. He has taught classes in liturgical studies and reformed theology and chaired and taught in the Certified Lay Pastor Training Program for the Presbytery of East Tennessee.

Thom lives with Cindy, to whom he has been married for 42 years, and their dog Isabelle, a Spinone Italiano. They have two grown children. Their son lives in Chicago and their daughter in Atlanta.

COM ATTACHMENT 4

Rev Dr. Thom Nelson

Statement of Faith:

Karl Barth once summarized his entire theology with the phrase, “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so!” That brief sentence captures my theology and is a good entrance into Reformed faith.

Christian theology and knowledge of the triune God begins and ends with Jesus Christ, Jesus is God’s self-revelation and is the foundation of our knowledge about God. Jesus fully reveals who God is and what God is like. Through Christ we see that God is the Creator of all that is and the same One whom Jesus called “Abba, Father.” God continues to lead and guide creation and empower the witness of the Church in the person of the Holy Spirit, God’s abiding presence with us.

In taking human form, Christ also shows us what it means to be a true human being. In the light of Jesus’ own obedient life, we come to see that we are sinners, that we miss the mark of God’s intention for us personally and corporately. We cannot do otherwise for it is who we are. But in Christ we become a new creation. As we follow him, abide in his love and live out his teachings, we find ourselves in the process of becoming what we were intended to be; reconciled to God and one another.

It is important to notice that Barth’s statement does not begin with our love for God, but begins, “Jesus loves me.” God’s love and call are first. Our love and obedience is in response to God’s initiative and grace. We are elected to witness to the birth of our Savior, his sacrificial death on a cross and his glorious resurrection. The church is to bear witness to the new life that is available through Jesus Christ. We are God’s children. We live in faith. We proclaim the forgiveness of sin. We show compassion in service to the “least of these.” We live the teachings of Jesus Christ. We affirm that Jesus has triumphed over all the powers of sin and evil and death. We affirm that all people are God’s children.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is a particular family of God’s church guided by a representative form of governance which is derived from Scripture. We are the body of Christ. We are organic and connectional and Jesus Christ is the head of the church.

We recognize two sacraments. Baptism is a sign and seal of the covenant promise and an outward sign of an inner reality, namely, God’s grace manifest in the life of the believer through the Holy Spirit. The Lord’s Supper is a covenantal sign of the saving work of Christ and of our union with Christ and one another. The Lord’s Supper holds before the Church an ultimate vision of God’s kingdom, a reality toward which we work in the here and now as we seek justice.

And how do we come to know anything of God, of Jesus Christ, of the Christian life? Because, “the Bible tells us so”. Scripture is the unique and authoritative foundation for our knowledge of Christ and the salvation story, from the beginnings of creation to life everlasting.

COM ATTACHMENT 4

PERSONAL INFORMATION FORM

Rev. Dr. Thomas George Nelson
Interim Pastor

Preferred Phone: 865-437-6371

E-Mail: thomnelson1@gmail.com

Address: 6 Acadia Drive
Asheville, NC. 28806

Availability: Winter 2016

Ecclesiastical Status: Teaching Elder

Presbytery Membership: Presbytery of Great Rivers

Ordination Date: 6/19/1977 Ordained Minister in the Presbyterian Church USA

Formal Education:

- Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies from Alma College of Alma, Michigan 1973
- Master of Divinity from San Francisco Theological Seminary 1977
- Doctor of Ministry from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary 2003
Preaching and Worship

Continuing Education:

- Alban Institute: Church Conflict and Healthy Congregations 1998
- June 1999-March 2003: Completed required courses for the Doctor of Ministry
Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary--Degree conferred June 2003
- Member of General Assembly Study Group on the Sacraments: Office of
Theology/Worship PCUSA 2002-2012
- Post Doctoral Course in Theology, Austin Theological Seminary June 2008
- Preaching and Worship Conference PCUSA, June, 2009
- Association of Interim Pastor Training PCUSA August 2010, Montreat, N.C.
- Turner Center for Ministry, Training in Conflict Assessment and Resolution 2011
- Interim Pastor Advanced Study 2014

Positions I will consider:

- Interim Minister

COM ATTACHMENT 4

Rev. Dr. Thom Nelson

Primary skill choices:

- Preaching and Worship Leadership
- Compassionate
- Communicator
- Strategy and Vision
- Organizational Agility
- Self-Differentiation
- Flexibility
- Bridge Builder
- Teacher
- Hopeful

Work experience:

- Associate Pastor: Calvin Presbyterian Church, Tigard, Or. Suburban 650 members 1977-1981
- Organizing Pastor: Tualatin Presbyterian Church, Tualatin, Or. Suburban 1982-1985
- Pastor: Tualatin Presbyterian Church, Tualatin, Or. Suburban 260 members 1985 – 2002
- Pastor: St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, Beulah, MI. Recreational/Small Town 350 members 2002 – 2005 (Unintentional Interim: served in a highly conflicted church and my ministry became the work of Interim Pastor)
- Pastor/Head of Staff: Farragut Presbyterian Church, Farragut, Tn: Suburban 600 members 2005- 2012
- Interim Pastor/Head of Staff: Knox Presbyterian Church, Cincinnati, Oh. Urban 1300 members 2012-2014
- Interim Pastor/Head of Staff: First Presbyterian Church, Jacksonville, Il. Town 550 members 2014-2016.

Other services to church or denomination for the past 10 years:

- Served on various Presbytery Committees, Synod Commissioner, and General Assembly Task Force/Study Group.
- Catechumenate Adult Faith Formation Pilot Project Office of Theology/Worship of the PC (USA). Event(s) speaker.
- Contributing Author: “Call to Worship” PCUSA
- Member of the PCUSA General Assembly Study Group on Sacraments
- Co-author of “Invitation to Christ” (Study of the Sacraments) published by the PCUSA

COM ATTACHMENT 4

Rev. Dr. Thom Nelson

- Instructor of Preaching and Worship and the Theology Courses of the Commissioned Lay Pastor Program, Presbytery of East Tennessee

Statement of Who I Am and My Vocation

I am called to serve churches in transition that want to use this time to build, energize and focus on being the body of Christ. During a time of transition it is important to maintain a spirit of gratitude to God for our call to be the church. As Presbyterians, worship on the Lord's Day, celebration of the sacraments and good and relevant preaching are essential. Mission, outreach and fellowship are priorities. Prayer and spiritual life should be emphasized. People need to be cared for and the past, present and future of your church needs to be addressed.

I bring 40 years of experience as a pastor. I have been a new church development pastor, a solo pastor and I have been a head of staff. I have served a church with multiple ministers and a very large staff. I have served three years in a conflicted church as an "unintentional interim". I am a solid and effective preacher, worship leader and teacher. I am trained in conflict resolution, group process and am a trained hospital chaplain. Above all, I am a committed Christian who has been called as a pastor. I have been "around the block" and I will approach a time of transition, which can be an anxious time, by being a model of peaceful presence.

I am a strong leader with a warm manner. I can "go with the flow" but I won't compromise integrity. As a transitional pastor I do ministry in a time of change, but I do not think that it is my task to make change for change sake. It is important for me to listen, to be objective and to be able to share with you what I see. I will see many things that do not need to be tweaked or changed and I will see opportunities and need for changes. I will be open and kind--but also honest as we work together toward the time when your new pastor comes to you. I have a flexible attitude and a sense of humor. I have the support of my wife, the good sense to take care of the important parts of life and a strong sense of my vocation.

Salary, Housing, Moving Expenses, start date, etc. are all negotiable.

COM ATTACHMENT 4

Rev. Dr. Thom Nelson

References:

Name	Relation	Phone	Address
Jill Moormann	Elder Knox	513-490-2802	Cincinnati, OH
Tim Chipman	Member First Church	217-883-9095	Jacksonville, IL
Rev. Jana Reister	Associate Pastor	513-255-0077	Cincinnati, OH
Mary Boyd	Elder/CE Dir.	865-777-9352	Farragut, TN
Dale Prindiville	Elder/Friend	815-861-6102	Rockford, IL

You have my permission to contact my references