

**THE PRESBYTERY OF WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA  
COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY  
THE REVEREND DANA VAUGHN, CHAIR  
APRIL 30, 2019**

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

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- I. THAT** Katheryn Anne McGinnis, a member of Hickory First Presbyterian Church and a student at Princeton Theological Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey, be enrolled as a Candidate following the required examination by Presbytery.
- II. THAT** William M. Upchurch, a member of Cherryville First Presbyterian Church and a student at Union Presbyterian Seminary in Charlotte, be enrolled as a Candidate following the required examination by Presbytery.

Recently, your Committee on Preparation for Ministry conducted an interview with two Inquirers who asked, with the support of their sponsoring congregation and Session, that they be enrolled as Candidates in the Presbytery of Western North Carolina. We recommend them to you today for your approval.

**Katheryn Anne McGinnis** comes with the support of her congregation and the recommendation of the Session of Hickory First Presbyterian Church. Her written call to ministry/faith statement is contained in this packet (see CPM Attachment 1).

**William M. Upchurch** comes with the support of his congregation and the recommendation of the Session of Cherryville First Presbyterian Church. His written call to ministry/faith statement is contained in this packet (see CPM Attachment 2).

**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-2.0601*)

**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.
- Take a course in Reformed Theology and Polity.
- Complete Seminary.

## **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. When the person receives a call, the Candidate will be examined by the receiving presbytery.

If a Candidate who is under care of this Presbytery receives a call within our bounds, that candidate will preach before the Committee on Preparation for Ministry and their sermon will be included in the Presbytery report.

## **FOR YOUR INFORMATION:**

- Roger Rizk, a member of the Gastonia First Presbyterian Church, was enrolled as an Inquirer on October 17, 2018.
- Alex McNeill, a member of the Asheville First Presbyterian Church, was certified ready to receive a call on March 20, 2019. Alex currently serves as Executive Director of More Light Presbyterians.
- Allison Greene Simmons, a member of the Gastonia First Presbyterian Church, was certified ready to receive a call on March 20, 2019.
- Loudon A. Young, a member of the New Hope Presbyterian Church in Asheville, was certified ready to receive a call on March 20, 2019.

# CPM ATTACHMENT 1

Katheryn McGinnis  
Statement of Call

Members of Western North Carolina Presbytery, thank you so much for your work here and for this time to allow me to tell you my story of God's call on my life.

In many ways, I believe my call to ministry begins before me. My mother's family is rooted deep in southern Presbyterianism. My grandfather was a Presbyterian pastor, along with my great grandfather, my great great grandfather, and my great great great grandfather. My great grandparents purchased an old home in Montreat, called Shadynook, that is still used and loved by my family today. A life devoted to the church is something my family knows well.

Unfortunately, my grandfather passed away when I only three years old, so I grew up hearing of the works of my grandfather and those before him, but never was able to witness it myself. From a young age, I remember deeply regretting this, and wanting to be just like the grandfather I never had a chance to know.

I grew up in the PCUSA. I am still a member today of the church I was baptized into by my grandfather, First Presbyterian Church in Hickory. I would spend summers going as often as I could to Montreat, climbing the mountains, where I found God spirit alive and rejoicing in the beauty of creation.

I could feel early on a call to ministry. One Sunday in Sunday school, when I was just probably 7 or 8, our pastor came to talk to us kids about what it meant to be pastor. At the end of his talk, he asked if any of us thought about becoming a pastor, and without thinking, my hand shot right up. Even though then I seemed so sure of myself then, I more or less ignored the call until college.

In my first years of college, I struggled to find a major. After bouncing from art to psychology to exercise science, and each time feeling as though I was an outsider looking in, I thought I would give religious studies a try. I signed up for a class on early Christian theology, and from the first few days of that class reading the tales of the early church martyrs, I knew I was home. I was captivated and amazed by the strength, beauty, and resilience of those early Christians. I found studying their writings enlightened a fire inside me I had yet to experience. Theology class after theology class continued to captivate me and I was amazed and in love with studying God and how God had been studied throughout history. I have to give my thanks to my professors, Dr. Ratke and Dr. Schweibert, for being excellent teachers and mentors and for always encouraging me to keep asking questions about God, knowing that my faith would only grow stronger. My final year, Dr. Ratke even pushed me to write a thesis, where I explored doctrines of God in Christianity and Islam and how they intertwined in creation theology. His encouragement and mentorship during that writing process gave me confidence in my academic ability and the future I could have in academia.

My last two summers during college, I worked on Montreat Summer staff as a club's wilderness ranger. It was my job to lead the three-day youth backpacking trips. Though the trips could be stressful, (planning a three-day trip into the mountains with 20 pre-teens and teenagers is never easy) I loved introducing those kids to the spirituality of the mountains. How time in God's creation rejuvenates you and connects you to God's kingdom in a way that nothing else can.

# CPM ATTACHMENT 1

Those summers in the mountains of Montreat reminded me that the PUCSA was and is my home.

As I entered my last year of college, I knew I wanted to go to seminary to learn more. After visiting and apply to different schools, I decided that Princeton Theological Seminary would be the best fit for me. But I decided to defer for a year because I wanted to take some time off to explore the possibilities of a call to ministry. After I graduated, I joined the Young Adult Volunteer (or YAV) program run by the PCUSA. The program is a yearlong program where young adults live in intentional communities all around the world and serve the church through various means. I was placed in the Philippines, where I worked with our partner church, the united church of Christ in the Philippines (or UCCP) in their indigenous people's program, a program where the church helped specific indigenous Christian communities that were working to integrate more indigenous culture into Christian worship.

Even now, over a year and half later, it's hard to articulate how a year living way up in the mountains of the rural Philippines and worshipping with indigenous Christian communities changed me, my life, and my relationship with God. But I can say with the utmost certainty that I have never felt closer to the kingdom of God than I have when dancing to beat of the kankaney gongs. My beloved coworkers Butog, Mishell, and nomad, took me under their wings and with endless grace and laughter and love allowed me to step into their lives and witness God with them. That year was equally the hardest and most magnificent year of my life, and when it came to end, it was hard to leave. But I did, and after leaving, I moved to New Jersey and started seminary.

I am now finishing my second year at Princeton Theological seminary, and in these past two years, I have fed my love for learning and grown in my understanding of what ministry is and can be. I feel so grateful for my time at PTS, where I've made wonderful relationships with people like me, who feel called to a life of serving God. Through mentors like Reverend Karen Hernandez Gransen, pastor at Westminster Presbyterian Church in downtown Trenton, where I have worked for the past year, I have seen the powerful things God can do through a church. In this small, intercultural urban church, Reverend Karen has created a loving and inclusive worshipping community that at its core works for justice for all God's people. It has been a gift to learn from her and all the people at Westminster.

Going in to my final year of seminary, I am overwhelmed with gratitude for where God has taken me so far and the people I've encountered along the way. I do not know where God will take me next, but as I follow in the footsteps of my grandfather, and great grandfather, I put my trust in God, and with joy will follow where God leads me.

# CPM ATTACHMENT 2

Will Upchurch  
Call Story

My journey began before the beginning of all things, in the loving grace of the Triune God. With good humor he looked out through the ages and thought I'll call Will Upchurch to Christian ministry.

So, he placed me in my mother's womb, in a loving Christian family. My parents embodied the ideals of Christian love and nurturing. I was baptized and raised, along with two brothers, at 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian Church in Cherryville NC. We were always active in congregational life. We attended the programs from Sunday school to Youth Club. We weren't shoved in some class during worship but made to sit in "Big Church". In doing so we always felt to be in full communion with the rest of the congregation. Church is not an individual exercise but a communal function. As we came of age, we said our Catechism and were confirmed in the church. As I entered high school, I continued to be nurtured in the faith. I attended regularly and became even more active. I taught cherub choir and sang/napped in the adult choir. I was on the Western Presbytery Youth council. In short by the grace of God I was given solid foundation in Christian faith.

In 2001 I graduated from Cherryville High School. Right after graduation I left for a week at Ocean Lakes Campground near Myrtle Beach, which is Cherryville part II. During that week I was asked multiple times what I was going to do with my life. I had decided to attend NC State and hoped to figure it out later. But the question kept rolling over in my head to the point I got up one night and headed for the beach to walk to Surfside pier. It was one of those nights that where you just feel the presence of the Lord. The moon was almost full, air was warm with a light ocean breeze. As I reached the beach access, I threw up the most eloquent prayer I could muster, "Lord what the hell am I supposed to do with my life?" I walked along the water nearing the limits of the campground I came across a boy digging in the sand. He was way too young to be out at 3am. I walked up and let him know it was way too late for him to be out and that his parents were probably worried about him. He said he had to finish and then he would go in. I wished him goodnight and walked on a bit. Then turned to go back and make sure he made it home. But he was gone. I went back to where he had been digging and there in the sand was the answer to my prayer. He had dug a square with a cross in the middle in the right bottom corner were the words "Give your life to him." I looked to the Heavens and thought Lord good enough for me.

I returned home with the seed of Christian ministry planted in my being and began to discern my call. My family and 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian were super supportive. I was given opportunities to participate in worship. I really enjoyed the praise and attention. Yet the Lord knew what I needed. While being blessed with an astute mind I had no desire to perform well in college and soon flunked out. This put a ten-year moratorium on my formal call to Christian ministry. I was continually active in the church. I taught Sunday School, sang in the choir, and was even made an elder. But God knew I wasn't ready. Looking back had I gone through school and been ordained in my early twenties I would have been a narcissistic asshole. In holding me back I was able grow, mature, and discern where God wanted me.

At 30 I had the opportunity to attend the School for the Laity. This awesome program opened the door to ministry to a formally uneducated indivual like myself. I can't express how

# CPM ATTACHMENT 2

Will Upchurch  
Call Story

much practical knowledge this program provided. During my last semester God blessed me with the chance to fill the pulpit at Shiloh Presbyterian in Grover. After two weeks I was asked to be their pastor. This began a five-year call that made me fall in love with small church ministry. During the examination process Dr. Boyce, Dean of Union Presbyterian Seminary, offered me the chance to apply to Seminary without an undergraduate degree. So, for the past five years I have been getting two educations. One formal form Upsem where the focus is on theory and one practical at Shiloh. Both have been invaluable shaping my ministry. Due to health, school and family issues I stepped down from Shiloh this year. I am taking this time to finish my education and focus on where God is calling me next.

At the presence I have discern that God has called me to a life of small church ministry. I have no desire to preach at a larger church. Nor do I desire for the ministry to be my only source of income. I am aware that some may wonder why not just do the commissioned lay pastor route? Why spend the time and money to be ordained to a church that may not be able to pay a minimum salary? My answer is because they are worth it. Small churches deserve every resource available to them. I just pray as God has opened doors to get me to this point, he will continue to open them to his glory in this calling.

Blessings,

Will Upchurch