

PRESBYTERY OF GLACIER

Stated Meeting
 First Presbyterian Church
 701 Fourth Avenue
 Havre, Montana
 June 22 and 23. 2019

It was a glorious summer day in Havre, the pride of Montana's Hi-Line. Glacier Presbyterians gathered in the beautiful First Presbyterian Church to work, worship, fellowship, and learn. The stated meeting of Glacier Presbytery was combined with a retreat: *Discovering Relational Wisdom, Going Beyond Emotional Intelligence* led by Chip Zimmer, Vice President of RW 360 of Billings.

The retreat opened at 1:30 PM with a welcome and prayer by host pastor, Maggie Lewis.

The afternoon was devoted to instruction and discussion led by Chip Zimmer. The objective was to help us appreciate that relationships are precious gifts from God. Our creator has entrusted us with these gifts with the expectation that we will see them as opportunities to demonstrate divine love and increase the multitude who will glorify and enjoy God forever.

At 4:45 pm, the retreat recessed until 9:30 AM, Sunday morning, with the final of three sessions facilitated by Mr. Zimmer.

STATED MEETING OF THE PRESBYTERY OF GLACIER

Moderator Tim Dalstom called the stated meeting of Glacier Presbytery to order at 5:00 pm, Saturday, February 23, 2019 and offered a prayer.

.A quorum was present.

Roll Call

| CHURCH | PASTOR | COMMISSIONER |
|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Chinook | Maggie Lewis | Ardis Conrad |
| Conrad | J. Kirk Kestler | Darryl Burditt |
| Cut Bank | Excused | |
| Dayton | Ron Fitts | |
| Great Falls--First | Excused | Kathy Herman |
| Great Falls --Sunrise | Dave Anson | Robert Kampfer |
| Hamilton | Patty Stone | Ruth Hazelton |

| | | |
|----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Harlem | excused | |
| Havre | (Maggie Lewis) | Lori Henry |
| Helena | Scott Wipperman | John Gneckow |
| Hot Springs | Risa Paul (CP) | |
| Kalispell | Glenn Burfeind | Joan Siderius Barb Nelson |
| Missoula | Courtney Arntzen Excused | Martha Ripley Erin Wilkins |
| Mountain Lakes | Carrie Benton | |
| Polson | (Ron Fitts) | |
| Potomac | Vacant | |
| Whitefish | Tim Dalstrom | Jean Duncan |
| Whitlash | Sherry Edwards | |

Other voting members present: Mary Fagenstrom (Moderator of Nominating Committee), Ok-Kee Kim [Minister of Word and Sacrament, leader of Basin Presbyterian Church (New Worshipping Community)], Miriam Mauritzen,[Minister of Word and Sacrament, Community Pastor, Serious JUJU, Kalispell (New Worshipping Community)], Marguerite “Peggie” Oury [Commissioned Pastor (Hamilton), Moderator Ministry Cabinet) Arlyn “Butch” Plowman, [Commissioned Pastor (Helena), Co-Moderator Committee on Ministry, Interim Stated Clerk]

*Ministers of Word
And Sacrament*

13

*Ruling Elder Commissioners and Ruling
Elder voting members (includes
Commissioned Pastors)*

15

Visitors and ministry unit members in attendance: Jan Brown, Lois Butcher, Dick Christopher, Kurt Fagenstrom , Julie Finely, Elaine Gingery, Marshall Gingery, Carol Gneckow, Adam Herman, Dave Herman, Carol Johnson, Choonil Kim, Rose Leavitt, Clayton Mauritzen, Cory Pierson, Hap Peters, Pearle Plowman

Presbytery Staff present:

Dick Siderius – Treasurer
Arlyn “Butch” Plowman – Interim Stated Clerk

The proposed docket was adopted.

Havre First Presbyterian & Chinook Presbyterian Churches Celebrated.

The Rev. Maggie Lewis reported what God is doing on the Hi-Line, specifically in Chinook and Havre.

- The Chinook Congregation is participating in an ecumenical [ELCA, UMC, PC(USA)] mid-week church school.
- In Havre fifteen ladies joined in fellowship and love to produce seventeen Ugly Christmas cookies
- Two YAVs, recent college graduates, are scheduled to arrive in late summer to begin their year of service.

Omnibus Motion

A motion to accomplish the following was adopted:

1. Give the privilege of the floor and voice to corresponding members, members of ministry teams and visitors.
2. Approve the minutes of the February 22, 2019 meeting
3. Receive all submitted written reports.

Ministry Cabinet and Search Team Report (see appendix A)

Peggie Oury, Moderator of Cabinet and Search Team Leader summarized her written report. She and several search team members testified to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in their search for a New Presbytery Leader and the selection of Beth McCaw. The Ministry cabinet has endorsed the search team's choice. Dr. McCaw was invited to speak. She related her story of the search process, her discernment process and the Holy Spirit's leadership. (Her statement of faith was distributed and is attached hereto as appendix G)

ACTION: The Presbytery voting members present unanimously affirmed the Cabinet's recommendation that Beth McCaw become the Leader (Executive Presbyter) of Glacier Presbytery.

Glenn Burfeind, a member of the search team, related the process and results of the search for a Stated Clerk. Courtney Arntzen explained her call to become a community pastor/chaplain for non-profits in Missoula. Thus making it possible and profitable for her to assume the duties of stated Clerk.

ACTION: The Presbytery voting members present unanimously affirmed the Cabinet's recommendation that Courtney Arntzen become the stated Clerk of Glacier Presbytery.

Those present gathered around Beth and Courtney for a "laying on of hands" and prayer.

Committee on Ministry Report (see appendix B)

Reverend Glenn Burfeind, Co-Moderator of the Committee on Ministry referred attendees to the committee's written report.

ACTION: The Presbytery voting members present unanimously affirmed the Committee on Ministry's motion that Kirk Kestler's pastoral relationship with Conrad First Presbyterian Church be dissolved, that his status become that of "Honorably Retired", and furthermore, he have a happy and productive transition to his next calling.

Glacier Presbytery Camp and Conference Center Board Report (see appendix C)

Reverend Carrie Benton referenced her written report. Deck construction is underway. She offered kudos to Camp Director Tim Lanham for the changes made and work accomplished.

Presbyterian Women (see appendix D)

Mary Fagenstrom introduced her written report urging attendance at the Annual Gathering in August.

Committee on Representation & Nominating Committee Report. (see appendix E)

Mary Fagenstrom request all present to support the committee's work.

Treasure's Report (see appendix F)

Richard Siderius, Treasurer, Glacier Presbytery, reported the following:

All 18 churches have submitted at least half of their per-capita.

To date the Presbytery is \$24,000 to the good.

The membership voted to adopt the treasurer's report.

Interim Clerk's Report

Butch had nothing to say (see appendix G)

Adjournment

Moderator Tim Dalstrom closed the meeting with a prayer at 6: 15 PM.

Respectfully Submitted

Arlyn L. "Butch" Plowman
Interim Stated Clerk

APPENDIX A

CABINET REPORT TO PRESBYTERY

June 22, 2019

Members of Cabinet: Tim Dalstrom, Moderator, Glacier Presbytery; Carrie Benton, Camp Representative; Mary Fagenstrom, Committee on Representation, and Nominating Committee; Roma Lee Ruson, Presbyterian Women; Risa Paul, Missions; Butch Plowman, Committee on Ministry; Scott Wiperman and Miriam Mauritzen, members at large; Dick Siderius, member Ex-officio; Peggie Oury, representative of Search Team and Moderator of Cabinet. (We are currently without a representative for Presbyterian Women.)

Cabinet has met twice via Zoom and once face-to-face since our February Presbytery Retreat

Search for Presbytery Leader and Stated Clerk

Our most exciting news is from the Search Team; since our last report in February the search team finalized the call of Dr. Beth McCaw to be our new Presbytery Leader. We are very excited about the prospect of Beth's leadership. Her pastoral gifts became immediately apparent to us, even over the phone and especially in our several Zoom interviews. The terms of Beth's call are attached. The Search Team is still in awe of the way God's Holy Spirit moved us in this direction.

We are also in awe of the way our need for a Stated Clerk was filled. Courtney Arntzen is our candidate for Stated Clerk. She brings skills, enthusiasm for Presbytery, and passion for God's people. Butch Plowman has graciously agreed to continue to serve as Stated Clerk until Courtney can begin in September.

God is good.

Presbyterian Women

We appreciate Roma Lee Fuson's participation on Cabinet as representative of the Presbyterian Women. Romalee's role as Moderator of PW ended in April of this year. PW is in the process of reorganizing its structure, so we will not have a representative to Cabinet from this group at this time.

Future Presbytery Retreats

Our next Presbytery Retreat will be on October 19th and 20th in Hamilton. The speaker for that weekend will be Floyd Thompkins of SFTS's Center for Innovation in

Ministry, specifically Applied Wisdom. Our February Presbytery meeting will be held at Great Falls First church. The date has not yet been determined.

Presbytery Offering

Our funds have been depleted in the Brothers and Sisters fund. Cabinet has voted to have the offering from our Saturday evening worship service go to that fund. Also, it was voted to give permission for the stated Clerk to write to our congregations soliciting contributions to the Brothers and Sisters fund.

Zoom Meetings

The Cabinet asked Scott Wiperman to look into the possibility of holding some of our meetings via the Zoom platform. We experimented a couple of times and found it helpful, safer and less expensive than road travel to face-to-face meetings, and easy. We hope to use Zoom to supplement, not replace, face-to-face meetings. Scott is looking into the possibility for all committees of the Presbytery to use this platform.

I want to give a special thanks to Butch Plowman for agreeing to stay on as Stated Clerk until September 1st, and for his support to Cabinet and other committees.

Another word of thanks and gratitude to the Search Team, Courtney, Glenn, Sherry and Kurt, for continuing to search until we found the people God had called to these ministries.

Gratefully,
Peggie Oury, Cabinet Moderator

Action Item: Election of Stated Clerk and Presbytery Leader

Nominees:

For Stated Clerk



Courtney Arntzen

Most of us are familiar with Courtney. Her first call after earning her MDiv from Regent College in Vancouver was to Chinook, Montana. She served creatively and well there for seven years. She became Associate Pastor at First Presbyterian, Missoula, six years ago. She would now like to serve us in Glacier Presbytery as our Stated Clerk. Courtney and Alec live in Missoula with their two sons, Elias and Ezra.

For Presbytery Leader



Beth McCaw

Currently a pastor to the students at Dubuque Seminary, Iowa, Beth has had a variety of ministry experiences.

She received her Bachelor of Arts degree, cum laud, from Hope College, Holland Michigan, her Master of Divinity, magna cum laud, in Pastoral Care and Counseling, from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Massachusetts; and her Doctor of Ministry in Spiritual Renewal in the Family of God, from Gordon-Conwell.

She and her husband spent four years as missionaries in Namibia, Africa, in churchplanting, literacy work, and famine-relief.

In addition to her current role at Dubuque Seminary pasturing students, she also teaches, coordinates and leads worship for chapel services, preaches and celebrates communion, resources faculty and guest preachers, and coaches student preachers and worship teams. The classes she teaches include Foundations of Pastoral Care and Spiritual Formation; Congregational Systems and Change; Creative Models for Worship. She also provides administrative leadership for seminary student life, and serves on several faculty/staff committees.

Beth and her husband have three adopted children who range in age from high school to college.

One particular sentence in Beth's narrative that caught the eye of our Search Team: "I love ministering among those called to leadership in the church."

TERMS

- a. Dr. McCaw will provide 27 hours per week to Glacier Presbytery, on line and/or in person.
- b. In person, 10-14 days/month, depending upon time of year, more in the summer, less in winter months.
- c. \$40,000 effective Annual Salary
- d. Board of Pensions pension, plus Death and Disability coverage = 12% of effective annual salary. (Health benefits via husband's insurance.)
- e. Option to contribute to elective Fidelity Program (no cost to Presbytery)
- f. Sabbatical leave: 8 weeks every 5 years with continuing salary and benefits.
- g. Four weeks vacation annually
- h. Up to \$1,500 and two weeks continuing education annually
- i. Fifty percent (50%) of SECA (Self Employed Contributions Act)
- j. Use of Presbytery vehicle, plus travel expenses and lodging while in Presbytery.

APPENDIX B

PRESBYTERY OF GLACIER
Committee on Ministry
 Report to Presbytery
 June 22, 2019

The scope, charge and composition of the Committee on Ministry (COM) is delineated in Glacier Presbytery's *Manual of Operations and Standing Rules* Section M7 beginning on page 5 https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/24b0bd_9359f96ce4034d9698dd456746496918.pdf.

The COM consists of the following Ruling Elders and Ministers of Word and Sacrament:

Class of 2019

Terilyn Lawson
Butch Plowman

Class of 2020

Courtney Arntzen
Glenn Burfeind
Bob Kampfer
Hap Peters

Class of 2021

Jean Duncan
Ok-Kee Kim
Rose Leavitt
Maggie Lewis
Joe Tagliaferre
Roger Wayman

Overview

The Committee on Ministry conducted teleconference meetings on March 7, April 11, May 9, and June 13, 2019. During those meetings, the COM considered the following:

Congregations in Transition

- Great Falls First:* The congregation's PNC has read and considered more than seventy Pastor Information Forms (PIFs). It soldiers on in its search for a called pastor. It has been challenging. Yet, there are no "hot prospects". Chuck Carlson faithfully serves as interim pastor, continuing to do so longer than anticipated.
- Polson & Dayton:* Dave Anson retired after twenty-one years. The Committee concurred with Dave Anson's and the churches' request to Dissolve the Pastoral Relationship between Dave and the Dayton and Polson Churches. Successful efforts by the Interim Pastor Nominating Committee prompted Ron Fritts to move from Florida to become interim/transitional pastor in May.
- Great Falls Sunrise* Joe Tagliaferre resigned as interim pastor effective April 7. It was not good. Steve Shive, Executive Presbyter of Wyoming Presbytery spent April 12, 13, and 14 working with the session and congregation. During an April 14 session meeting three elders were appointed to a interim pastor nominating committee. Within two weeks, the committee completed a Ministry Information Form (MIF) that was approved by the session and submitted to the PC (USA) Church Leadership Connection (CLC). A score of PIFs were referred by the CLC. Dave Anson, formerly of Dayton- Polson, authored one of the referrals. Dave and Marsha are moving into the Sunrise manse. The congregation's Fellowship and Life committee will host a welcoming picnic at 5:00 pm Sunday, June 23.
- Conrad* Kirk Kestler retired after 24 years. An interim Pastor Nominating Committee was formed and hard at work. A MIF was completed, approved and submitted. The committee is reading PIFs and following-up on interesting candidates.
- Kalispell* Glenn Burfeind and the congregation are adjusting to the reality of life without Miriam Maurtizen and Serious Ju Ju. The Weinrich Property (aka Lucy Property), bequeathed to Kalispell First Church is being transferred to Serious JuJu. This transfer is

pursuant to the agreement negotiated between Serious JuJu and Kalispell FPC.

Serious JuJu The vital and exciting skateboard ministry has matured to independence. Faith full volunteers have invested muscle, sweat and time into the Serious JuJu facility. A sink room became an office. Other portions of the warehouse were upgraded thanks to donations of cabinets and pews.

A New Name –Basin Presbyterian Church

Pastor Ok Kee Kim reported there were 11 people worshipping in the rehabilitated Basin “House Church” Easter Sunday.

Open House: There will be an open house sponsored by the Basin Presbyterian Church and Helena First Presbyterian Church, Sunday, July 21: 4:00-6:00 PM in on the lawn at 106 Silver Street in Basin. Fried chicken, water, and celebration cake provided by Helena's Mission Committee. Bring a favorite dish to pass. Celebrate the 1001 New Worshipping Community in Basin. Support Ok-Kee and Choonil. Introduce the Basin Community to fun loving Presbyterians. Come; enjoy Christian fellowship on a wonderful summer afternoon.

Action Item Dissolve Kirk Kestler's pastoral relationship with the Conrad Church changing his status to Honorably Retired

APPENDIX C

Glacier Camp and Conference Center Report to Presbytery _ 6.22.2019

Glacier Presbytery Camp Board: Dave Herman, Dave Anson, Sandy Smith, Patty Stone, Loren Smith, Phil Springer, Roma Lee Fuson, Kurt Fagenstrum, Carrie Benton, Dick Siderius (Treasurer), Tim Lanham (Executive Director), Butch Plowman (Interim Stated Clerk, ex-officio).

- The Camp Board met on March 22, 2019 at the First Presbyterian Church in Great Falls, MT. All were present except Sandy Smith (excused) and Butch Plowman (ex-officio). Our next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 9, 2019 @ 1 p.m. at the camp.
- Here is a snap-shot of the primary points of discussion/action March 22nd:

- Roma Lee Fuson was elected Board Secretary
- Deck Construction Update - Guy Tabacco Construction will begin sometime in May. Approx. 2-3 months for completion depending on material availability, pressure treating large wood pieces, etc. Tim L. & Dave Herman plan to meet with Guy before construction begins.
- Maintenance - lots of on-going updating and repairs.
- Budget – The camp budget was approved with addition of staff health compensation. These figures were given to Presbytery Cabinet for review.
- Summer Camp - Discussion of possible future camps - one for those with disabilities?
- Tim working on developing new Camp Policy Manual.
- Board Committee Development – Copies of the current Standing Rules were distributed to board members.
- Updates since the last board meeting:
 - Deck reconstruction began on May 20, 2019 and is an on-going reality at the camp. Camp staff and the construction crew are exercising flexibility and professionalism concerning needs of guest groups.
 - Staff training took place June 5-16, 2019. The staff has been doubled for this year!!
 - Since having Tim Lanham as the director of the camp, more theological instruction is taking place. Tim has provided Lenten Reflections and a Pentecost Celebration since our last Presbytery gathering. The next event, TIM (Theology in Ministry) Talks (formerly Lanham Lectures), is July 7-9th, "Born of a Woman: Reflections on God's Preferred Way of Saving Humankind."
 - We have lots of Camp Volunteer Opportunities and many items on our Camp Wish List. Check out the current newsletter for details.

- New this year – Family/Church Camp Experience – July 29- August 2. Join us as we gather to explore the wonder of God’s Creation. “On Earth and In Heaven – Exploring God and Nature.” Besides the usual camp activities (canoeing, kayaking, horse-back riding, vespers, camp fire), we will reflect on the glory of the created world. The camp includes an entire day exploring Glacier National Park.

After a few years of transition and devastation following the deck collapse, we now seem to be moving forward together in a positive direction. Please continue to pray for the ministry of this camp, for all the staff (including the summer staff), and for the board to trust and rely upon the Holy Spirit for the life and vision of this great gift of Glacier Presbyterian Camp.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rev. Carrie Benton, Board Moderator

APPENDIX D

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN OF GLACIER PRESBYTERY PRESBYTERY REPORT JUNE 22, 2019

PWP faces a daunting dilemma. The future of PWP depends upon thinking prior to meeting, sharing our thoughts, listening with open minds, loving one another, praying alone and together, accepting where we are and where we will be. Remembering the purpose of PWP, remaining loyal to what it is we believe as women and as Presbyterian women, and perhaps reimagining PWP in some way that might lead us in our decision making. “To be or not to be is the question...”.

At the Annual Spring Gathering April 26-27, the hosting PW of Missoula welcomed us with gracious hospitality and smiles of joy. Linda Curtis Brooks and her fellow women of First Presbyterian Church planned and provided attendees with delightful Spring tulip decorations, pastel tablecloths, delicious and plentiful meals, and homemade nametags with a gift of a small cross as a bookmark. Moderator Roma Lee led the CT Meeting and Business Meetings. She had met the speaker Carol Day, from Wyoming, at a Synod meeting and invited her to be the guest presenter. Carol shared the experience of her Mission Trip two years ago to Indonesia. She not only told us about the people she met through a power point presentation, but she also brought multiple pieces of Indonesian culture for us to see and touch. The women of Indonesia seem to be women of growing strength and independence. Carol said, “Her experience was one of a lifetime.”

At the CT Meeting, the leadership learned that due to health issues Linda Curtiss Brooks would not be able to assume the duties of the Moderator for 2019-2021. As a result, the CT discussed who could take her place. After Roma Lee asked for suggestions of a possible replacement and with no one volunteering nor having any one in mind, the discussion came to whether PWP should try and find another leader or whether it was time to disband. The

CT decided to take two motions to the General Business Meeting. They were- to set a date to find a replacement for the Moderator by and to discuss the possibility of disbanding due to lack of participation in leadership as well as declining numbers. At the Friday afternoon Business Meeting, the motions became recommendations. No decision took place but much discussion occurred. We were asked to pray and think about how to proceed, and we would make a decision of some sort on Saturday morning.

Saturday morning the women in attendance decided to discontinue the Spring Gathering and again much more discussion of disbanding at the PWP level. The Great Falls and Helena women present came up the same idea to preserve the August Retreat by having a PWC plan and carry out the Retreat; that became our temporary plan. At the Retreat at Glacier Camp, we would make a decision about our future. However, before then we had to find out if we could disband as a PWP, what was involved, and how it would affect our standing in the Presbytery. Carol Gneckow sent questions to Cabinet and Mary Fagenstrom called Patricia Longfellow at PW INC (PCUSA). The information learned is too lengthy for this report, plus we need to present it at the Retreat in an organized and meaningful as well as in an effective manner.

The answer to the “to be or not to be...” will come when the time is right and good with the women involved and more importantly with prayer and God.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Fagenstrom

APPENDIX E

COMMITTEE ON REPRESENTATION/ NOMINATING COMMITTEE PRESBYTERY REPORT JUNE 22-23, 2019

The COR/NC will search for individuals to fill vacant committee and/or board positions at the Presbytery level. Our Committee members include Dan Cravy, Mary Fagenstrom, Carolyn Heinz, Jack Mattingly, Corey Pierson, and Joan Siderius. We will begin the search process in late August. With six committee members, our task at hand will be undertaken more efficiently and completed by early October.

As the Moderator, I will contact the Clerk of Session for each of the 18 churches within our Presbytery. I will request the list of Session members, their dates of term(s) in office, their committee responsibility (ies), their designated Commissioners, their phone numbers and emails, and gender. The purpose of this request is to provide the COR/NC with names and information of individuals who may be potential nominees for positions at the Presbytery level.

The first individual we will seek is the Moderator of Presbytery. This person may be a Teaching Elder or Ruling Elder. According to the COR, the Moderator should be Female and from the East; however, due to the number of Interim Pastors in the East this will be most impossible. Therefore COR/NC will be combing both the East and West for our new leader. If members of the

congregations, Sessions, Presbytery Committees and/or Boards or Cabinet, or Pastors have recommendations for a possible nominee, please notify a COR/NC member.

While the COR/NC responsibility presents a bit of a challenge, the Committee will approach the endeavor with open hearts and minds as well as with much prayer and God's guidance.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Fagenstrom
Moderator COR/NC

APPENDIX F

Report of the Interim Stated Clerk

The Glacier Presbytery Minutes for 2018 were reviewed by the synod and found to be in good order.

I am required to report annually on the members of the presbytery's Permanent Judicial Commission (PJC) including those who have served in the last six years:

Current: Bob Kampfer, Steve Hundley, Janet Malone, Ken Peterson, Cory Pierson, Dewey Hartman, Lynn Wood and Jody Wills.

Others from 2011 to 2017, Lori Evans. Bob Schurr, Jack Oates,

I am required to report annually on how we balance representation of Ministers of the Word and Sacrament and Ruling Elder Commissioners. In Glacier Presbytery, we do that by allowing voice and vote to all CREs and to all RE who serve as moderator or co-moderator of a presbytery committee and PW moderator if she is a RE.

It has been an honor and privilege to serve as interim stated clerk. It has been interesting. I have learned much, but not all I needed to know. I look forward to delivering the boxes and files to my successor on September first. Thank you for your cooperation and patience.

Respectfully Submitted With Gratitude
Artlyn "Butch" Plowman

APPENDIX G

Statement of Faith – Beth McCaw – 2019

I am thankful for the care that God has taken to be revealed to us in creation, in the person of Jesus, and in the Scriptures. The Bible is just one beautiful example of a God who will meet us by very human means—the Spirit inspiring particular people to

write in personal style and within particular cultures, and yet conveying divine truth. We can depend on the Bible to be wholly true in all that it affirms for matters of faith and practice, and it represents the Word of God that I receive as authoritative in my ministry and my life.

The Trinity is also a mystery – one God with distinct persons—Father, Son, Holy Spirit. In this we glimpse that God is by nature communal. This has been expressed by God having created the word, and people. What a wonder that God should choose to make anything to exist beyond God’s self—God is not needy! The conclusion that I reach is that God is, by nature, also loving—and has chosen to create us in God’s image for a relationship of love.

This relationship of love was broken when humanity turned away from God in sin. The resulting separation has left us unable to love and perfectly glorify God. We also find ourselves helpless to make amends or fix the breach with a loving—but also holy and just—God. The damage is seen not just in our relationship to God, but also in our broken relationships to one another, and to all of creation.

I believe that because of both holiness and love, God was grieved in our separation and set out on a mission to give us new life and restore our communion. After we rejected the call of many prophets, God sent his Son, Jesus.

The mystery of Jesus’ humanity and divinity is wondrous. Born a baby—by the power of the Holy Spirit, God incarnate, Emmanuel—God is among and with us broken, sinful people in astonishing ways. Jesus has demonstrated for us what God is like, and what godliness is like. In Christ’s life we have seen the love and justice of God manifest. And in Christ’s death, God’s justice and love toward us have been met by atonement for our sin, victory over death, and promise of shared resurrection.

While the completion of resurrection life is still on the way, Christ has sent the Holy Spirit to “give us ears to hear” good news, turn away from sin and death, and live with faith in Christ. By the Spirit we are baptized into Christ and also into the body of Christ, the church. As a spiritual discipline, I sign all of my correspondence “Yours in Christ...” It is a reminder to me of my identity as a child of God, and also my given relationship to all other children of God.

I believe that the church created by Jesus through the Spirit is a new covenant community including people not by national heritage but by adoption as children of God. The beauty of this theology has been deepened by Scott’s and my experience of family through adoption. The church is given the joyful charge to share globally the good news about reconciliation with God and one another, and to invite others into

life in Christ. We are called to be hopeful people—being signs of the coming kingdom of God, and to be just people—lovingly doing right by all of creation.

Because of all that represented above, I cherish communion and baptism as the sacraments given to the church. By them we experience the grace of God that draws us into relationship with Christ and one another, and we are spiritually nourished for this life and beyond. Our hope is strengthened for a day when Jesus' kingdom will come in fullness, judgment will be exercised, the promise of eternal life in Christ will be fulfilled, and the heaven and earth will be made new.

