

**Pastoral Transitions Commission Report
Called Meeting of Presbytery of Transylvania
September 27, 2018**

The Pastoral Transitions Commission presents two candidates to be examined for ordination to the office of Teaching Elder/Minister of Word and Sacrament:

1. **Andrew Bowman**, called as **Pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Somerset**, is a under care of the Presbytery of Western North Carolina and has been certified ready for examination by a presbytery having completed all other requirements for ordination (G-2.06). The Pastoral Transitions Commission approved the following call and terms at its meeting on July 18, 2018:

Andrew Bowman (Candidate for Ordination) as Pastor (Full-time) of First Presbyterian Church, Somerset effective October 8, 2018

Cash Salary	\$31,000.00
Housing	14,000.00
Total	\$45,000.00
SECA	3,442.50
Board of Pensions (full participation)	
Reimbursable Allowances:	
Auto Allowance IRS rate up to	3,000.00
Continuing Education	1,500.00
Moving Expenses – reasonable and approved in advance, plus \$1,000.00 relocation bonus.	
Vacation – 4 weeks annually	
Continuing Education Leave – 2 weeks annually	
Consideration of 10 weeks of sabbatical leave after 6 years of service	

2. **Rachel VanKirk Matthews**, called as **Associate Pastor of Maxwell Street Presbyterian Church**, is under care of the Presbytery of Sheppards & Lapsley, and has been certified ready for examination by a presbytery having completed all other requirements for ordination (G-2.06). The Pastoral Transitions Commission approved the following call and terms at its meeting on August 23, 2018:

Rachel VanKirk Matthews (Candidate for Ordination) as Associate Pastor (Full-time) of Maxwell Street Presbyterian Church, Lexington, KY effective September 11, 2018:

Total effective salary (Salary & Housing)	\$45,000.00
Full Board of Pensions Participation	16,650.00
SECA	3,443.00
Reimbursable Allowances:	
Travel expenses at IRS rate	1,000.00
Continuing Education	1,000.00
Professional expenses	1,000.00
Moving expenses up	5,000.00
Vacation – 4 weeks annually	
Continuing education leave – 2 weeks annually (cumulative up to 6 weeks)	
In seventh year of service, 3-month sabbatical for the purpose of clergy renewal.	

***Statements of Faith, Biographical Statements and sermon links for each candidate are attached.*

Andrew Bowman

Brief Biography

Like many Christians my journey of faith has been one of valleys and peaks. I have seen great joys and dark nights, yet experience an ever-increasing assurance of God's presence and care for my life. I was raised in the church from my very beginning, taught to appreciate the faith which had been handed down to me. My parents and countless others served as guides and examples in my faith journey. As a child I strived to make that faith my own, and believed that I had a strong relationship with God. I understood ministry as inseparable from daily life – yet I did not feel called into full-time ministry until my freshman year of college.

Because seminary was not a common path in the tradition of my youth, I transferred from my liberal arts university to a small Bible college. I dove into my ministry and theological classes, and sought out volunteer opportunities and group Bible studies. My coursework was theologically conservative, but through my extracurricular activities my own beliefs began to evolve. I was confused when I saw that the God I was being taught was different from the God I perceived.

A number of consequential events in my junior year of college stressed my untested faith. Most significant among these was a serious head-on car accident which left me with a fractured skull and severely broken nose, but which also shook my naive faith in God's protection of me. The doubts that arose combined with frustrations against my conservative upbringing, and allowed larger questions to surface. I spiraled deeply into mistrust, apathy, and depression. For the next several years I wrestled with the faith of my youth, wandering spiritually and geographically, actively ignoring God's claim on my heart.

Yet I had not rejected God completely, and was still drawn toward much that seemed mystical and divine. I pursued spiritual wisdom, seeking the God I instinctively knew in my heart. My spiritual quest took many different directions, but in the end I experienced an overwhelming revelation of God's presence that haunts me to this day. It spurred me to seek a community that could help me process what I had experienced. The woman who became my wife introduced me to Presbyterianism, and then I knew I was home. I involved myself in youth ministry and the church community, while my thirst for theological knowledge continued to grow. Meanwhile God's call on my life urged ever stronger. A job in outdoor education at a YMCA retreat center helped me realize how much I enjoy teaching, so I finally acknowledged the call and enrolled in seminary.

My time at Union Presbyterian Seminary has been among the most formative of my life. I was challenged and nurtured, awed and inspired by the struggle and the beauty that is life in the church. Professors and classmates alike helped me to see who I was, but more importantly who I could be. Mentors shared their wisdom, and internship congregants welcomed my flaws. All of this pushed the boundaries of what I thought God had for me. Now I embark on a new stage of ministry, shaped by my experiences in ways I could not have imagined when it all began. Even now I realize I do not see my journey clearly. Yet through it all I know God has been guiding and directing my path. I am looking forward to what comes next.

Sermon Link: <https://andrewjbowman.wixsite.com/mysite>

Andrew Bowman**Statement of Faith**

I believe in the triune God: Father (Creator), Son (Redeemer), and Holy Spirit (Sustainer). One God made known to us in three distinct Persons. The same mighty God who made the universe and breathes life into all creatures desires to be known in the deepest places in every heart. God the Father loves and cares for us like a mother hen, nurturing us and calling us ever further into relationship. God is pure love and goodness, and God's righteousness and mercy are ever-present and all-encompassing.

I believe the purest and best expression of God's love ever seen was in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus embraced the outcast, laughed with sinners, and sought out the downtrodden. Fully God yet fully human, Jesus brought to life the world-changing message that God is truly with us. In his life and ministry, we learn what God desires for us. Through his death and resurrection, we discover the expansiveness of God's love and the profundity of God's grace. It is by that grace that we receive the promise of eternal life.

As the Spirit moves through and among us we see God's presence in the everyday. The beauty of a forest stream, the complexity of a mathematical equation, or the joys and pains of life lived together can allow God to draw near to us. The Spirit works continually to inspire and empower the people of God to be the Church. By the Spirit we take up the ministry of Jesus Christ, proclaiming the kingdom of God in our own time and place, and working for reconciliation and renewal.

In the Church we discover a life in community, bound together by the ties of the Spirit. By praying with and for one another, we find the courage to both acknowledge our differences and work together for justice and peace. The Church is the body of Christ, grounded in the scriptures and called to a new way of living. As we wrestle with the scriptures together, listening for the guidance of the Spirit, we are being faithful to Reformed tradition.

I believe our sacraments are beautiful mysteries given to us by Jesus Christ, which we enter into by faith, with expectation. They lead us closer to the presence and desires of our Creator. Each time we approach the font or gather around the table, we are drawn nearer to God. The gifts of grace we receive shape who we are, and how we live.

Washing in the waters of baptism reveals our true identities as children of God, and leads us as sisters and brothers into loving and supportive community with one another.

When we share the bread and cup at the table, we dine as guests of Jesus Christ, whose life was poured out for our broken world. Through these profound signs we remember and re-experience his faithful, self-giving act, even as our own faith is nourished by the outpouring of grace we encounter there.

Faith Journey

I grew up in a small town in which all my grandparents also lived. I spent every weekend at one grandparent's house and saw the other set almost as often. Between my four grandparents, three different corners of Christianity were represented: Baptist, Catholic, and Presbyterian. A religious year-in-the-life consisted of multiple Vacation Bible Schools, dinners including my grandmother's priest at special occasions, midnight Christmas Eve mass, and many local mission opportunities. Through different expressions, all four grandparents shared a strong commitment to their faith and a love of servitude and hard work. One set of grandparents delivered meals on wheels every week, helped with building projects, and opened their home for meals or shelter when needed. The other set were deeply invested in their one-acre vegetable garden behind their house and providing healthy food for their family and friends. Because of their example, my understanding and embodiment of faith is rooted in creativity, service, and hard work.

As our family moved a few times, my parents were open to establishing new church homes within varying denominations. Before college, I would be a member of a PC(USA), Baptist, Methodist, and Assemblies of God congregation. I was continuously challenged and encouraged in new ways, and made lasting relationships with inspiring, faithful Christians from different backgrounds. My faith grew more curious and thirsty for both new experiences and an understanding of how it all fit together.

During my time at college, I found a church and campus ministry home with First Presbyterian Church and UKirk in Tuscaloosa, AL. These two communities, and my job as a Resident Advisor, provided leadership opportunities to serve and love particular people, all while being loved and questioning my own faith. My campus ministry helped rebuild a row of houses after a tornado, the fourth grade girls Bible study and I discovered that there are all kinds of heroes in the Bible, and a hallway of freshman made unexpected friendships. In the little, particular moments of connection, realization, and lending a hand, my faith was connecting to both the past work of my grandparents and the future possibilities found in following God's call.

After college, I experienced a call to seminary while working as a full-time engineer. While writing code, I was aching for the creative, hard work of serving people's needs. Rather than the little, particular needs it was the big needs of communities without clean, safe water and healthy food that drew me to Columbia Theological Seminary. At CTS, the diversity of the staff, student population, and faculty opened my understanding of the complexity of human suffering and each person's calling as a neighbor and helper. I served in both a homeless, community church and a traditional PC(USA) church. I struggled in work on campus for fairer learning and working environments and a more responsible and engaged use of our community garden. By pairing theological education with practical experience, I learned to hold together the prayer requests of homeless friends and middle-class friends, both for the hopelessness they were experiencing, the illness they had, or the doubt of faith they were experiencing. I learned to hold together the hope for healthy food for every one and the joy that baked goods bring, the diversity of my classmate's opinions and the sensitivity to the pain we could cause one another. All my life, God has shown me the wideness of the body of Christ, the beauty of creation, and the love that holds it all together in its diversity and mystery. I pray God's Spirit continues to show me how I should love, learn, create, and connect within creation and Christ's body as I hope to follow God's will for my life.

Sermon Link: <https://vimeo.com/274766241#t=1410s>

Statement of Faith

I believe in a Triune God who is the perfect communion of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit. I believe in the incarnation of the Triune God as Jesus Christ whose birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection are the primary revelatory acts of God. It is through Jesus Christ that God has revealed God's creative and salvific power, God's spirit, and God's love. I believe in the merciful, liberative message and ministry of Jesus Christ who proclaimed the reign of God. I believe in the union of the human and divine natures of Jesus that allowed him to both eat with the outcasts and heal the sick, to both suffer on the cross and rise from the dead. I believe in God, the creator of the universe, by whom all things and people were made good. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God and of Jesus Christ, who spoke life into creation, wisdom into the prophets, and who speaks life and wisdom into us and our communities today.

I believe the earliest Christians gathered in response to the liberating, transformative power of faith in the Triune God as revealed through Jesus Christ. Like the earliest Christians, I believe every generation is empowered to continually reimagine our tradition with the canonical Scripture which is the means of grace through which God's Word is ever and anew received in the Christian community. I believe in the priesthood of all believers. Every Christian is a minister of the Gospel and called to the same vocation of faithful living as disciples of Jesus Christ: generosity to the poor, mercy for the outcasts, and care for creation. Our vocation is lived out in ways that are as unique as Jesus Christ was as an incarnated person. Each person's vocation is both a response to experiencing God's grace and deepens our understanding of grace. I believe that this faithful life is sealed and symbolized through the mystery of baptism which imitates Jesus' dying and rising. Remembering our baptism renews our understanding of ourselves as people with one foot in this present world and one foot in God's kingdom. Finally, it is God's everlastingly new and patient grace, demonstrated by the Lord's supper, a meal that is always waiting, that makes discipleship possible despite our humanity.