

Commission on Preparation for Ministry
2020 Yearly Report

Informational Only

CPM'S yearly activities:

- Met monthly except for April and August. Reviewed and approved monthly minutes.
- Liaisons gave monthly updates of Inquires/Candidates and CRES/CPS under our care.
- Reviewed the 2020 Budget.
- Welcomed new members, Rev. Stephen Sanders and Rev. Rollin Tarter.
- Gave a onetime grant of \$262.50 to each of our Inquires/Candidates and CRES/CPS.
- Annual Retreat was held on July the 24th and 25th via Zoom. Candidates and CRES/CPS checked in for their annual evaluations. Workshops included Self- Care, presented by Jennifer Blair, Commonwealth Counseling Services and Online Ministry, presented by Rev. Keith Benze and Rev. Stephen Fearing. Approved all Candidates and CRES/CPS to continue with the program.
- Reviewed and approved several Psychological Evaluations.
- Approved Sarah Green as an Inquirer and approved her for Candidacy, pending Presbytery approval in November.
- Approved Donna Phillips as a Candidate and approved on August the 18th, by the Presbytery.
- Approved Scot Robinson as ready to receive a call. Approved by the Presbytery on October the 8th, through examination and has received a call to Pikeville.
- Approved Mikkle Hampton for admission to the CRE/CP Program.
- Chose ordination Exam Readers for February 2021. Readers are: Ginny Shanda (Ruling Elder), Scott Cervas (Teaching Elder) and alternant, Rollin Tarter (Teaching Elder).
- Approved a CRE/CP Certified Ready to Receive a Commission Protocol.
- Approved a Final Written and Verbal Assessment for CRES/CPS.

Respectfully submitted,
Connie Turner, CPM Chair

Biography

My name is Sarah Lynn Green. I was a *Smith*, before I married a *Green*, and I'm still *Sarah Lynn* if we met before I was 10, we're family, or I've done something notable. *Sarah* was a popular name in south Florida in 1988, and between several of us sharing the name at school and my southern parentage, the double name was the only obvious solution. When folks ask where I'm from, or worse, where is home, it feels like a trick question. Is it about that hint of an accent that's hard to place, the not from here but not quite there, either? Is it just a conversation starter? It's hard to answer. I was born in Florida, raised there, and we gradually moved up the state, changing houses or schools with regularity. I wouldn't call Florida "home," though, as much I will always find myself particularly at ease on the water. After high school I bounced around the south east, hitting parts of Tennessee, Kentucky, Arkansas, back to Florida then ultimately back to Tennessee and Kentucky by the end of my degrees. At this point, I'm something of an Appalachian homing pigeon; I inherited my parent's restless streak, but never stray too far, for too long. My paternal grandmother once shook her finger at my young sister and I, declaring, "you're a hillbilly too, like it or not. It's in your blood." She wasn't wrong. Amid all that moving around as a kid, it wasn't all chaos. At least 2 things stayed consistent: Catholic schools, and visits to Eastern KY.

Mom and Dad were both born and raised in Pikeville, though they had settled in Florida by the time I came along. Evidently, my ecumenical streak began at birth. I was baptized Episcopalian, and raised Roman Catholic until around middle school when they stopped going, which left me sampling youth groups with friends. Once I could drive, I settled on worship at a large non-denominational church where I could blend in, as I often went alone. Most Sundays I worked the nursery at a Charismatic church plant started by a friend's family. As a kid, I liked rules and structure, and I thrived in Catholic schooling. I prayed the rosary during recess and made up sins during my first confession so I'd have something to say, because I was too young to realize that perfectionism was its own sin. Amid all the change, the liturgical year grounded me. Florida doesn't really have seasons, but the church does. I knew, wherever we landed, that when I walked into a Catholic church, I could find my feet and my knees. I knew what to say, when to say it, and believed true even the parts I didn't understand. While I no longer considered myself Catholic, bits of it never leave. As a teenager, it was a rude surprise when my non-denominational church skipped Advent straight for Christmas. Didn't they know we couldn't "Joy to the World," until the Savior actually came? Worse, still, when the church I worked for called the pastor's wife, "Pastor," too, because she married one. I was flabbergasted. I'd felt a pull toward theology, but in the formal life of the church, wasn't sure I fit anywhere.

When I started college, I was focused on horses and leaving Florida. I picked up riding in high-school and thought I would work in the equine industry. I soon found myself elbow deep in a thoroughbred, and decided this wasn't fun anymore. I re-joined my family outside Orlando and took a scholarship to the community college for my A.A., transferring to UCF with a focus on early childhood development. I was a semester shy of graduation when an abusive relationship

ended, and I failed my classes and quietly all but dropped out. I worked full time and took a single night course. It was “The Classical Texts of Judaism,” and I loved it. After our first exam, the rabbi stopped me after class. I thought I was in trouble, exposed as an interloper. Instead, he thanked me for “getting it.” It was a pivotal moment. I wasn’t sure what the path would look like, but I was going to do *something* with theology, the tug was firm. So naturally, I ran.

I moved back to Tennessee to work for my aunt, and met the man who would become my husband 2 weeks in. He took a job on the road and supported my return to school. I moved to Pikeville because we still had a house there, enrolled at UPike, a Presbyterian birthed college, and took the Religion degree specific courses in a year. I found mentors in my professors; I wasn’t reading and thinking in an echo chamber anymore. One was a Presbyterian woman. She had a Ph.D. and read Hebrew when she didn’t like an English translation, and to top it all she was an ordained minister. She might as well have been a unicorn. Her husband led the church in Prestonsburg and I attended there. I’d stumbled back into a mainline, liturgical church, and this one let women stand up front. While at UPike, the chaplain signed me up for a Sunday at FPC Pikeville, and I delivered my first sermon. It wasn’t earth shattering, but it planted a seed. The same church later allowed my husband and I into the sanctuary one Friday after my classes so we could elope. In the course of a year, this little Presbyterian church was the touch point for some of the more defining moments of my adult life.

I was the only person surprised by my decision to go to Vanderbilt for graduate school. I entered Divinity School unsure what I was doing, but expected it to end with a quiet library, graded papers and a Ph.D. At the end of the first semester, I got pregnant and miscarried. It wrecked me. While I was no longer on speaking terms with God, people showed up in surprising, loving, life-giving ways. I came to accept that if God wasn’t somewhere “up there” playing chess and killing babies, maybe God was still at work in the people who showed up. It corresponded with my first field education placement, Vanderbilt Hospital, and my notions of staying in the ivory towers faded. I needed to “get my hands dirty,” and I set firmly on the path to chaplaincy. While in school, still reeling from the miscarriage, I went to what I thought would be the furthest end of the spectrum from where I had been—I hung out with an Alliance of Baptists congregation (Glendale Baptist) for 3 years. They were lovely, affirming, co-pastored by 2 women, and graciously made space for my anger and doubts and reconstruction. We had a few conversations about ordination, but in the end I couldn’t do it. I was “Glendale” but I knew I wasn’t “Baptist.” I graduated in December of ’18, and spent the winter with my husband in South Florida for his job. By spring, I had lined up my CPE Residency year to start in August at UK in Lexington, but had no plans for the summer. I reached out to my people at UPike, still thinking about teaching or picking up some PRN shifts at the hospital. Instead, Rob (the chaplain) replied with, “what about a pastoral internship?”

It was the last thing I’d had in mind, but by this time I’d learned to recognize and heed “the tug.” It was time to circle back to Pikeville, and to this same congregation, so I did. And it was a gift I never expected. I didn’t have a “home-church” growing up, and was always envious

of those who did. In its own way, FPC Pikeville took that on. There are several members who, while my family wasn't Presbyterian, remember the grandfather I never met, or grew up with my father, or were friends with my grandmother, and they welcomed me as if I'd always been among them. I found joy in using the lectionary to craft messages and apply all of this experience and schooling that I'd just finished. Standing there with them every week, walking up to the lectern, it all felt like putting on an old pair of jeans. They didn't balk the time my childcare fell through and I went through an entire service with my toddler on my hip. In serving that congregation, I was able to bring my full self, and in the process realized that "self" happened to be Presbyterian. It was suddenly so obvious it was laughable. In that sense it was sort of anti-climactic, more matter of fact than single moment of clarity, more quiet assurance than novel discovery. My name is Sarah Lynn Green, and I'm a Presbyterian.

Statement of Faith

C.S. Lewis noted, “Besides being complicated, reality, in my experience, is usually odd. It is not neat, not obvious, not what you expect.” I apply that to God, too. So of course, the one God of my monotheistic faith is also triune, his son Jesus is both fully human *and* fully divine, and then there is this Spirit who doesn’t care a bit about the plans we’ve made for ourselves and sends us wherever She pleases. It’s hard to come up with a statement of faith because the Holy is just so unruly it’s hard to know where to begin. But then, that’s also the fun of it, because while I do love theology, it’s a wild goose chase, and if I’m trying to get God figured-out then not only will I fail, I’ll have missed the point. Here are the things I do believe.

I believe in God, the creator of everything, who didn’t stop and wipe their hands clean but continues to create. There is “God,” and there is everything that is “not God,” that still bears some resemblance to the One who made it. Just like it’s easy to tell a Picasso painting at a glance, I believe that if we could have some grand over-view vision, we could look at God and look at creation and go, “yeah. That’s got God written all over it.” The implications of this are staggering and often inconvenient. We don’t get to trash the world we live in, our environment was created with care and deserves care, and we were specifically tasked with that job. The hardest, messiest places and times we can imagine are still holy ground, there is sacred in the profane. I know, because as a chaplain that’s where I work, and I meet God there regularly. God seems to have a thing for diversity or we would all fit the same mold, so maybe we should quit trying to cram people into one, or claiming that one is better than another. The people I can’t stand, the jerk who cut me off in traffic, my political opposites, that guy who refuses to pull his mask up over his nose...they have something to teach me about God (and maybe myself!), and therefore cannot be simply dismissed. I might think they’re stupid, but they’re also beloved.

I believe in Jesus, the Son of God, born to Mary (who never gets enough credit), and he was fully human and fully divine. As people, beautiful people but still “not God,” we couldn’t handle Love staring us in the face, it’s uncomfortable and makes us do things like care for widows and question authority, so we crucified Him. And thank God, despite our best efforts, He didn’t stay dead, so we don’t have to either. The totality of it matters, it is Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection that elicit the praise we give Him, and serve to right our relationship with God, in Jesus is our salvation.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, thanks to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit stays busy, the source of wisdom and creativity, the Spirit brings us to faith and shows us how to live it out. All analogies fall short but, in the Godhead, I picture Her as the flour-dusted apron wearing matriarch everyone calls “Ma’am,” who keeps up with everyone in the family’s dealings, is the source of support and counseling, and sticks with you even when you insist on trying things the exact way She told you not to. She brings clarity when we would otherwise be fumbling around blind.

The Spirit is also concerned with salvation and scripture. I believe it was the Spirit present and guiding the development of our Holy Scriptures, and the Spirit who testifies to their validity despite the humans who wrote it all down. When we read them, when we meet God and Jesus in their pages, it is through the work of the Spirit that it happens.

I believe that sacraments are “outward signs of invisible grace,” and wish we celebrated communion more than once a month. Baptism happens once, in community, a sign of the covenant and the entry into Christ’s church. It’s the start of the journey. The Lord’s Supper is the bread for that journey, nourishment as we carry on, the provision of grace. It is the family dinner where Ma’am reminds us what we know in our bones, that everything gained in Christ’s life, death and resurrection are ours, too, in the sacrament as we partake.

I believe that it is not coincident that Godself is a relationship, and that we humans are also meant for relationships, as messy as they tend to be. We are accountable to God and to one another, and our involvement in the life of the church helps us do it.