

**Report to the Presbytery of Transylvania
September 12, 2006
Committee on Preparation for Ministry**

- 1. The Committee on Preparation for Ministry recommends that the Presbytery of Transylvania approve the enrollment of Lee Boyd as an Inquirer for the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. Lee is a member of The Presbyterian Church of Danville, Danville, KY.

- 2. The Committee on Preparation for Ministry recommends that the Presbytery of Transylvania approve the enrollment of Barrett Milner as an Inquirer for the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. Barrett is a member of First Presbyterian Church, Lexington, KY.

- 3. The Committee on Preparation for Ministry recommends that the Presbytery of Transylvania approve the enrollment of Wanda Olive as an Inquirer for the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. Wanda is a member of Maxwell St. Presbyterian Church, Lexington, KY.

- 4. The Committee on Preparation for Ministry informs the Presbytery of Transylvania that the Committee has conducted annual reviews or has met with the following Inquirer/Candidates this year:

<u>February</u>	<u>March</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>July (Retreat)</u>	<u>August</u>
Greg Kubar	Chad Rhodes	Dan Phelps	Pete Jones	Barret Milner
Bob Greer	Amy Dame	Hannah McIntyre	Chad Rhodes	Lee Boyd
	Pam Lee-Miller	Emily Boyce		Wanda Olive

- 5. The Committee on Preparation for Ministry recommends that the Presbytery of Transylvania sustain the ordination examination of Vicki Poole and that she be approved for ordination as Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA). Vicki has received a call as Pastor to the First Presbyterian Church in Prestonsburg, KY, and comes to us from the Mid Kentucky Presbytery.

Statement of Faith, by Vicki Poole

The Trinity. The story of the Trinity is the story of God's love for us. At its heart, the Trinity is about relationships. It emphasizes the relational character of God's love. The Trinity traces its very existence to love, born out of God's loving desire to be revealed to humanity. "There could not be God without the Son, because God's own nature compelled [God] to reveal [God's self]. We say God is Three because of our conviction that God is love," said Jurgen Moltmann (*Trinitarian History of God*, 634), the theologian of the deepest influence on my faith.

Born from love, the Trinity also reveals God's intimate love for humanity. That the crucifixion took place in the Godhead—that God *experienced* the depths of human pain—tells us God is *actively* concerned with human suffering. "The Triune God is not a lonely Lord in heaven, incapable of feeling, who subjects all things to himself, but a God who is rich in relationship" (Moltmann, *Creating a Just Future*, 56). I believe the relationality of the Trinity calls us to care about one another's suffering. We need to work out our theology 'within earshot of the cross,' as Moltmann once put it. I think of this often when I make pastoral visits to difficult situations: to lonely shut-ins, to the elderly who are dying, to teenagers who are struggling to discern who they are. Remembering the Trinitarian history of God—including the passion, the rejection, and the descent into hell—reminds me God knows of and cares about the vulnerability inherent in human living. This is power for ministry, because the Trinity is not just about God's experiential understanding of human suffering, it is also about God's desire to press human crisis toward redemption. If theology and ministry need to be done 'within earshot of the cross,' they also must be done with eyes scanning the horizon, searching for signs of the coming resurrection light.

The Scriptures. The Scriptures are crucial to the life of faith. Although God reveals God's self in the world, John Calvin wrote that we need scripture as a lens through which we may see God's glory, and distinguish God from the false deities that surround us. "Just as old or bleary-eyed men . . . if you thrust before them a most beautiful volume, even if they recognize it . . . with the aid of spectacles will begin to read distinctly; so Scripture, gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds . . . clearly shows us the true God" (*Calvin's Institutes* I. vi.1). I agree with Calvin that God is the author of the Holy Word, which makes the scriptures authoritative. I agree also with his acknowledgment that God spoke to people in a way they could understand at the time the scriptures were written. For example, God spoke to the Hebrew people within the cosmology they knew. God spoke to communities in terms of the legal codes woven into their lives. I believe this in no way diminishes the power of the scriptures. The scriptures' miraculous power is that God speaks eternal truth through them though they were written with the rough hands of history. God breathes eternal truth into our reading of the scriptures today, through the Holy Spirit, who bridges the span of time and makes the Bible a living witness.

The Sacraments. The sacraments are a means by which God's grace brings people in the covenant community to a closer walk with God. I believe the sacraments are crucial to the life and worship of the church. I see the Lord's Supper as a meal in which Jesus Christ promises to be present. At the table, his promise and our faith meet. We, in faith, eat the bread and drink the cup. Jesus Christ, as he promised, is present spiritually and feeds us by his grace. We believe Christ is present because we believe his promise. Baptism signifies to those who receive it the promise of the gospel. I believe the water communicates God's promise to be faithful and is a

sign of the gracious giving of God's spirit, for the forgiveness of sins and for growth in the life of faith.

The Nature and Mission of the Church. The mission of the church is to proclaim in word and in deed the reign of God in Jesus Christ. The church depends on the gift of God's Holy Spirit to lead it to be a faithful witness. This witness is not only for the self-declared members of the Body, but also for the surrounding world. The living Lord calls for a dynamic community to be in mission with a changing world. Members of the church find forgiveness and renewal in Jesus Christ, as this cherished gift of grace is disclosed in preaching, teaching, prayer, and the sacraments. Knowing God's grace, the church finds courage to reach out with mercy to a world in need.

God's Grace. At the heart of my faith is a belief in the transformative power of God's grace. Grace describes not just the nature of the Triune God, who is revealed in Jesus Christ; grace also describes how God operates in the world. Grace is at the foundation of the Reformed tradition. "We make the freely given promise of God the foundation of faith," wrote Calvin. "Faith properly begins with the promise, rests in it, and ends in it" (*Calvin's Institutes* 3.2). As a Reformed Christian, I believe grace frees us to participate in the transformation of the world. Christians in the pre-Reformation church felt they never could be sure God had forgiven their sins. Their constant state of uncertainty found relief in Martin Luther's fresh reading of Paul's letters, in his retelling of the Christian story, that salvation comes simply through faith in Jesus Christ. This gracious gift brings forgiveness and renewal. Because we know grace is at the heart of who God is, we feel free to risk involvement with the world.

Biography, by Vicki Poole

I was born into a family of devoted Christians, who were deeply committed to the Presbyterian church. I have been active in the church throughout my life. The church in which I grew up, Harvey Browne Presbyterian, showed great respect for lay leadership throughout my formative years. That respect extended to the youth. Therefore, throughout my youth, I found many opportunities to participate in the life of the church. I saw many church members from all walks of life taking seriously their call to serve. I, too, found joy in volunteering to visit the sick, rake leaves, teach children, and paint buildings. I accepted invitations to serve on committees, to write worship dramas, and even to preach a time or two as a teen.

At 17 years old, I felt deeply called to the ministry, and I expressed it. Someone told me the ministry was not an appropriate vocation for women, and unfortunately I believed the person. I went on to look for ways to live out my sense of call, in other ways in the church. I went to college and majored in English, volunteering in church ministries and enrolling in every religious course possible. Afterward, I taught high school. Later, I worked for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as a researcher, writer, and editor, mostly to raise support for church mission. Again I began to feel God calling me to congregational ministry, the same call I sensed as a teenager. This time I followed, knowing it was permissible for a woman.

I enrolled in Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and I graduated in May 2002. I thoroughly enjoyed my studies, especially those that contributed to my understanding and growing sense of identity as a Reformed Christian. I also was deeply interested in homiletics, took every preaching course I could, and felt that interest affirmed when I received the seminary's award to an outstanding female student preacher.

To gain more experience, I interviewed for a student supply pastor position of a small church during my senior year. I was hired, and that experience changed me forever. I sensed God calling me deeply to congregational ministry. I completed four years as the part-time supply pastor of a small church in Southern Indiana, when I stayed on after graduation. The experience was one of the highlights of my life. Each moment was more fulfilling than I imagined. I believe the primary reason God called me to the church was to minister to the dying and to those who mourned their loss. Our church suffered many deaths during the four years. An entire generation of elderly members, friends since childhood, died within months of each other. No experience changed me more than that of ministering to the dying and to those who grieved their loss. I visited and offered spiritual support to many while they were leaving this life. I wrote and conducted their funerals after their deaths. And I continued to visit those who grieved, while they healed. As I discovered and shared the intimacy of God's compassion during those difficult days, and felt fed by the dynamic energy of God's resurrection work in the aftermath, I was shaped in ways too deep for words. Through it all, I felt a level of fulfillment that led me to feel deeply called to the ministry of word and sacrament. My progress in the ordination track was delayed when my father became ill, and I wanted to be free to help care for him in the last year of his earthly life. After his death and my recovery from grief, I enrolled as an inquirer, in January 2004.

One of the gifts of small church ministry is the opportunity to provide many kinds of leadership. My first four years in ministry flew by in a dance, in weekly rhythms of preaching, praying, visiting the sick, negotiating decisions, and entering the life of the larger, surrounding, ecumenical community. Through it all, I felt God leading me and supporting me. In addition, I felt God calling me to full-time congregational ministry. I left the church in July 2005 in order to

have time to begin the church search process. (I was working full-time at the same time that I served the church part-time.) I look forward to the next chapter in my ministry. From the first conversation, I felt a deep sense of call to be in partnership with First Presbyterian Church of Prestonsburg, to discover and live out God's call for the community. I feel deeply blessed to have come to know the members of the church's Pulpit Nominating Committee and to hear their vision for the church.

A faith biography of my life would be incomplete without describing my father and mother's influence on my sense of call. My father taught me much about who God is. My faith roots developed by watching how he lived his life. He was a devoted Presbyterian who owned restaurants. During the years before there were soup kitchens and homeless shelters in the city of Louisville, he fed the poor for free, with my mother's support. He instructed everyone who worked at his restaurants, including me, never to turn a beggar away. His reputation for feeding people who had no money spread so far that the police and the public regularly brought the desperate to him for help. After he died, our family created the "Howard Poole Hunger Fund" through the Presbyterian Foundation, to continue to feed the poor at the Presbyterian Community Center in the "Smoketown" community of Old Louisville. There is no doubt that my call to ministry took deep roots when my father gave me the opportunity to feed the poor at his restaurants. I felt God's presence so powerfully as a child whenever he pointed out a hungry person and told me to hand him a meal, for free. Though he has passed away, I am sure throughout my ministry I will be searching for ways to be in spirit with him, to feed the poor with the bread of life.