

**Presbytery of the James**  
**Called Meeting – November 21, 2020**  
**Via Zoom Videoconference**

**Dismantling Racism Ministry of the Presbytery of the James**



The Dismantling Racism Ministry investigates and proposes steps so that the Presbytery of the James may take steps to witness to the love of God for all people and to express the presbytery's opposition to acts of hate and discrimination. We provide:

1. Avenues through which the Presbyterian Church in Virginia can study, confess, and seek to repent of its own history of racism.
2. Resources for use at the presbytery, community, or congregational level (e.g. books, studies, media, pilgrimages, conversation groups, speakers, seminars and more).

Check out their resources at <https://www.presbyteryofthejames.com/speaking-out-against-racism/>

**Statement Against Racism**

At the June 16, 2020 meeting of the Presbytery of the James, "A Statement Against Racism" was referred to the Dismantling Racism Ministry and the Communication and Coordination Team. The Dismantling Racism Ministry and the Communication and Coordination Team have spent this time in prayerful consideration, approved and support an amended version, and now invite individuals and churches to join us in signing this new document. Signers included 107 ministers, Christian educators, elders and deacons. Six church sessions endorsed it: Blue Ridge, Covenant-Petersburg, Ginter Park, Ogden, Southminster, Tabor and two others wrote their own version: Cove and Laurel.

*"Building the Beloved Community: Walking the Path of Gospel Truth;"  
A Six-Week Curriculum*

"Eye-opening." "I have needed a safe place to talk about these things." "What do we do next?" These are some of the responses of people who engaged in this Bible study. Written in the aftermath of white supremacists' march into Charlottesville, VA with its tragic consequences, this biblical study centers on what kind of life God intends for humanity, believing that dismantling racism is not an option for our time but a call from God for humanity.

There are six topics: Beginning to Walk the Path of Gospel Truth, What Does Salvation Have to Do with Racism?, Breaking Down the Dividing Wall, Dwelling Place of God, The Spirit Says Welcome, and The Path Ahead.

Daily scripture readings inform each week’s 60-minute discussion. Members of the Dismantling Racism Ministry will provide orientation and training for class facilitators. Contact Darren Utleby for more information at [darren@fairfieldpcusa.org](mailto:darren@fairfieldpcusa.org).



*Taking America Beyond the Legacy of Enslavement.*

Coming to the Table RVA (CTTT RVA) facilitates the “courageous, clumsy, and often uncomfortable” conversations on race by creating a safe space for constructive dialogue, implementing circle process, restorative language, and peace-building principles. CTTT-RVA hosts a variety of events, dinners, book discussions, a film series, and facilitator trainings. See their website for the details at [comingtothetable.org](http://comingtothetable.org).

### **Film Series**

CTTT-RVA offers a film series that provides a safe and sacred space to build trust, mutual respect, and acknowledgment across the racial divide. Danita Green, co-founder and co-CEO says, “This is a first for many of our participants, and once you’ve done it once - erasing the fear and aligning with prayer - you will want to do it again and again.”

Here is how it works: Participants view the movie at home or at church one week. The next week there is a two hour or 90-minute meeting. The meeting is facilitated by trained volunteers and trained ambassadors also attend. Since many of our churches lack diversity, the ambassadors are Black persons who join in the conversations from their own perspective. Groups engage with questions about the films that address the 4 “legs” of our table which ground the CTTT-RVA approach:

- Truth-Telling in History - learning something new about our shared past
- Building Relationships - developing a better understanding of each other
- Healing the Wounds - a closer look at why race is a difficult construct
- Taking Action - suggested activities for personal growth and engagement

For more information contact one of the Co-CEOs: Danita Green at <https://danitarountreegreen.com/courageous-conversations> or Marsha Summers at [marshasummers@comingtothetable.org](mailto:marshasummers@comingtothetable.org).

**Report of the Committee on Ministry**  
**Presbytery of the James**  
November 21, 2020

The Committee Recommends:

- A. That presbytery examine Candidate Wilson Kennedy (Presbytery of New Hope) for ordination to serve as covenant pastor at First Church in Richmond.
- B. That presbytery commission Ruling Elder William Seay (Providence Church, Gum Spring) for particular pastoral service as commissioned pastor at Genito Church in Powhatan.

**Wilson Kennedy**

[wilson.kennedy@icloud.com](mailto:wilson.kennedy@icloud.com)

**Actively Seeking?** Yes, Actively Seeking

**Ecclesiastical Status:** PC(USA) Candidate

**Presbytery Membership:** New Hope Presbytery

**Candidacy Date:** 02/23/2019

**Formal Education:**

- Bachelor of Arts, Religion, Presbyterian College, Clinton, South Carolina, August 2013
- Postgraduate Certificate, Patient Counseling, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia, August 2019
- Master of Divinity, Union Presbyterian Seminary, Richmond, Virginia, May 2020

**Continuing Education:**

- Association of Presbyterian Church Educators, February 2012, February 2014, February 2016
- Annual Recreation Workshop, Montreat, North Carolina, May 2012, May 2013, May 2014
- PC(USA) Big Tent, Indianapolis, Indiana, July 2011
- NEXT Church, March 2014, March 2015, March 2017, March 2018, March 2020
- PC(USA) Big Tent, Knoxville, Tennessee, July 2015
- The Blaze Youth Ministry Conference, Montreat, North Carolina, January 2014
- Progressive Youth Ministry, Chicago, Illinois, March 2015

**Employment Type:** Full-time

**Minimum Effective Salary:** \$65,000 / Year

**Position Types and Experience Level:** Associate Pastor (Other), First Ordained Call

**Geographic Choices:** Virginia

**Languages:** English

**Leadership Competencies:** Hopeful, Preaching and Worship Leadership, Spiritual Maturity, Teacher, Change Agent, Risk Taker, Decision Making, Organizational Agility, Strategy and Vision, Collaboration

**Training / Certification:** Clinical Pastoral Education Training

**Clergy Couple? No**

**Housing Type:** Housing Allowance

**Work Experience:**

- Director of Youth Ministry and Coordinator of Outreach, First Presbyterian Church Shreveport, Louisiana, urban congregation, 700 members, 2013-2014
- Director of Youth Ministries, Palms Presbyterian Church Jacksonville Beach, Florida, suburban congregation, 1300 members, 2014-2017
- Ministry Associate for Discipleship, First Presbyterian Church Richmond, Virginia, 1400 members, 2017-present

**Other Services:**

- Member, Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (2014-Present)
  - Vice Moderator, 2016-2018
  - Moderator, Stated Clerk Nomination Committee, 2018-2020
  - Co-author, "When We Gather at the Table: A Demographic Look at the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2016
- Corresponding Member, Presbyterian Mission Agency Board (2016-2020)
  - Co-Convener, OGA/PMA Relations Committee
  - Member, Audit Committee
- Planning Team Member, Montreat Youth Conferences (2013)
- Recreation Leader, Montreat Youth Conferences (2013)
- Board of Directors, Solar Under the Sun (2014-2017)

**Describe a moment in your recent ministry that you recognize as one of success and fulfillment.**

The work of wholistic change is challenging but fulfilling work. From 2017-2020, I served as the Director of Youth Ministries in my current congregation and led the work of creating a ministry culture that reflects the values of my congregation. Through building relationships and deep listening, I began to influence change within the Youth Ministry at the church I serve and helped instill healthy habits of inclusion, justice-seeking, and radical hospitality that are in line with our church's values of "grounded, growing, and generous" as we all deepen our discipleship to Jesus Christ. I see this as success and fulfillment because the work of ministry is primarily a work of relationship building and deep and abiding trust between a pastor and the congregation they are called to serve alongside. I made myself vulnerable as a pastor to sit with those who were grieving and angry at the actions of previous leadership, took on their pain, and helped the Spirit as the Spirit began to do a new thing among us that drove us all to be more faithful in how we orient ourselves to the life-giving work of ministry. This was ultimately successful because the ministry embodied new ways of doing ministry and I was enriched personally by new and deep pastoral relationships that enlivened and deepened my call to pastoral ministry.

**Describe the ministry setting to which you believe God is calling you.**

I am called to serve a congregation who is willing to take a critical look at its history and tradition and, with the leading of the Holy Spirit, begin to do the hard work of transformation into a congregation that is well-equipped to exist in the present moment and equip ourselves for the work of ministry right now and into God's future. I am called to serve alongside committed faithful Presbyterians who take the gift of the mind seriously, have a sharp sense of humor, and, most of all, do their work with glad, generous, and humble hearts. I am called to serve alongside people who put worship at the center of all they do and who don't mind a sermon or two that compare the reign of God to Southern food! I am called to serve alongside people who value partnership, look deeply for the places God resides in their community, and return thanks to God in gratitude for the grace God gives us so freely and undeservedly. Most of all, I am called to serve alongside a church community who are bound together in mutual affection for Christ, love the world God loves to the glory of God, and are not afraid to get their hands dirty in the messy work of being the church right now and into God's future.

**What areas of growth have you identified in yourself?**

In this next season of ministry, I hope to grow my gifts for preaching and teaching. Throughout my ministry before the prospect of ordination as a Minister of the Word and Sacrament, I have led programming and necessary administrative tasks. In my next place of ministry, I hope to grow my skills in preaching through more frequent preaching opportunities and reflection on the task of preaching with trusted colleagues. The practice of action-reflection-action in preaching will grow my ability to allow the Spirit to lead my writing and create a Spirit-filled event when God's Word is read and proclaimed. Similarly, I hope to increase the efficacy of my teaching through more frequent teaching and study leadership as well as a greater focus on deep study of the Biblical narrative, theological writings, and contemporary resources that will enliven both preaching and teaching while also stimulating me to use all that is available in this important facet of ministry. These identified areas of growth will, as I grow in faith and discipleship through these essential tasks of vocational ministry, cause me to serve more faithfully and creatively as a pastor.

**Describe a time when you have led change.**

My service on the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) has been full of opportunities to lead change. One of these opportunities was a moment for reconciliation between COGA and the Board of Directors of another institution that is affiliated with COGA. The relationship between these two groups had devolved over time and I was asked to lead a series of conversations to attempt to bring these groups closer aligned while also bringing about much needed reconciliation. I began this by listening deeply to my colleagues on the Board of the other organization over a shared meal. We then entered a series of directed truth-telling conversations that always looked for ways we could bring about reconciliation between these two groups that were deeply hurt by one another. We prayed together at every turn and found common ground on which to stand. Over two days we began to find a way forward that

involved the agency, dignity, and inherent value of each party while forging a path of common ministry that has paid dividends through renewed relationships and creative collaboration. As is so often the case, change begins through listening and relationship building and is made complete through new ways to communicate, shared experiences around common tables, and deepened relationships that reflect the love we share for one another through Christ.

### **Statement of Faith**

I believe in God, the Holy One of Israel, whom alone we worship and serve. I believe in the God who made Godself known in three persons: Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, uniquely distinguishable yet mysteriously indistinguishable. I believe that the God who set the planets into their whirling harmony is the same God we see in the face of a loved one, the same God we meet again for the first time when a person experiencing homelessness asks for a few cents, the same God who became flesh and lived among us in the person of Jesus Christ.

I believe in God the Creator, who spoke all things into existence, who turned formless and void creation into order and declared it good. As part of this good creation, God created humanity in God's own likeness. In frailness born from the reality that humanity is not God, we sinned against God yet God, because God loves us like a Holy Parent, took our sin and created covenants. Through the lives of faithful people who lived into the covenant promises like Abraham and Sarah, Moses and Deborah, Solomon and David, Elijah and Nehemiah, Amos and Micah, God established God's reign that cares for the widow and the orphan, the stranger and the foreigner. And because God's covenants cannot be broken, God continues to create in the fullness of time. For all of this creation out of nothing and this continuing love and action in the world, what else can we do but return thanks to God through worship and faithful work in all our daily tasks?

I believe in God the Redeemer, fully human, fully God. So that humanity might know the height, breadth, and depth of God's love, God became flesh and lived among us. In the person of Jesus Christ, God showed us the epitome of human potential that is obscured by the reality of sin. Through Christ's life and work, God showed the world a different way: a way of everlasting peace, righteous justice, and redemptive love. Throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus taught the world to not live under the suppression of human forces, but to radically live in the freedom of the peace, justice, and love he taught. Taking on our sin, Jesus died for our sake, sacrificially giving humanity the gift of life eternal. And on the resurrection day God showed the world that no power or principality can defeat death, only God can. We know salvation because of Jesus Christ so, in utter thankfulness to God for the gift of life and grace made known in Jesus, we joyfully perform the work of ministry. We experience grace, the undeserved and feely given love of God, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I believe in God the Sustainer, the Holy Spirit that lives and reigns among us nudging us to be the people of God across time and space. God's continuing presence as the Spirit furthers the work of creation and reconciliation so that the reign of God might be perceived anew. We are bearers of that good news.

We know all this through the authority of Holy Scripture which has given us the history of our faith, a recounting of the ministry of Jesus Christ, and ancient guides for the journey of discipleship, and is sufficient so that we might be faithful Christians.

In our life together as the church, with worship at the center of all we do, we are given visible signs of the invisible grace we know in Jesus Christ in the sacraments of baptism and communion. These markers of our faith renew in our hearts the salvific work God has done in the world through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and will continue to do until God comes again in glory while galvanizing and nourishing the people of God for the work of ministry.

The church exists to be the hands and feet of Christ, Christ's continuing work in the world. We worship the God we know in Christ, work even at the risk of our lives in advocacy and engagement for those things Christ worked for, pray for the world which wholly belongs to God, and commit our lives to promote the way of peace that surpasses all understanding because in all we do we give all glory, praise, and honor to God who was labored with us for all time, labored on this earth as Jesus Christ, and continues to co-labor with us as the Holy Spirit until that time God comes again.

**William C. Seay, Jr.**  
[wcseay@vcu.edu](mailto:wcseay@vcu.edu)

**Citizenship:** U.S. Citizen. British and Canadian resident.

**Academic Specialisms:**

- International Relations
- International Political Economy
- Economic History
- Human Cultural Geography
- Global History
- Comparative Colonial History
- Modern American History
- Biblical Studies

**Education:**

- 1994 BA World History, Government and Religious Studies, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia, USA.
- 1998 MAT (Master of Arts in Teaching) International Social Studies Education, (History, Economics, and Political Science), Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia, USA.
- 1999 Cert.(Certification Citation) British History and European Studies under Dr. Christopher Catherwood, St. Edmund's College, University of Cambridge, The University of Richmond and the University of Cambridge School of Continuing Education Summer Studies programme.

- 2005 11 M.Phil. and PhD Study-Comparative International History, Queen Mary College, University of London. PhD Thesis under Professor Felipe Fernandez-Armesto. M.Phil. awarded in 2007. PhD completion paused as per family medical affliction.

**\*\*Doctorate thesis to be completed and defended in Fall 2021.\*\***

- 2011 Cert.S(Certificate of Study) Medieval History, The Institute of Continuing Education, University of Cambridge, GB (Summer student at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge University).
- 2012 Cert.S Biblical Studies, The Institute of Continuing Education, University of Cambridge, GB. (Visiting summer pupil in the University of Cambridge Divinity School).
- 2013 Cert.S Economics, Modern History and International Relations-Institute of Continuing Education, University of Cambridge, GB (Summer pupil in Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge).
- 2016 PG.Dip(Postgraduate Diploma) External Study in International Relations and Geography, The London School of Economics and Political Science, London, GB.
- 2020 Certificates in Commissioned Pastor programme-Union Presbyterian Seminary, Richmond, Virginia.
- Spring 2021(Anticipated).Completion of Certificate in Ministry and Theology-Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, N.J.

**Employment:**

- 2013-Present: Collateral Professor-International Relations and Economics, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia.
  - Instruct Honours and Basic International Political Economy Courses as well as classes in Financial History.
- 2016-Present-Supply Minister with Presbytery of the Peaks-Presbyterian Church USA, Lynchburg, Virginia.
  - Provide supply preaching and other pastoral needs in church parishes during clergy absences.
- 2019 Supply Minister with Presbytery of the James-Presbyterian Church USA, Richmond, Virginia.
  - Provide supply preaching and other pastoral needs in church parishes during clergy absences.
- 2002-13: Instructor of Geography and History, John Tyler Community College, Chester and Midlothian Virginia.
  - Developed and instructed the college's first cultural geography courses as both a Teacher Education requirement and Liberal Arts transfer credit.
  - -Instructed course in Western and American histories in class and online.
- 2002-04: Adjunct Professor, Virginia State University, Ettrick, Virginia.
  - Instructed courses in World and U.S. histories
- 2002-Present: Adjunct Professor, J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, Richmond, Virginia.
  - Instruct online courses in Western Civilisation and in U.S. History.

- Designed the college's first online history courses in 2003.
- Instructed lecture courses in both U.S. History and Western Civilisation from 2002-05.
- 2000-02-Eighth Grade Social Studies Teacher, Cumberland Middle School, Cumberland, Virginia.
  - Instructed World Geography and American History. Organised and sponsored the National Geographic World Geography Bee.
- July 2001-Visiting ESL Instructor Virginia International University, Fairfax, Virginia.
  - Instructed Advanced ESL courses to Turkish, Chinese as well as South American students.
- 1998-2000-Instructional Assistant in Alternative Education, Liberty Middle School, Hanover County Schools, Ashland, Virginia.
  - Tutored At Risk students in Reading and Social Studies. Assistant operated In School Suspension.
  - Part Time ESL and Literacy Instructor for Hanover County Public Schools Adult Education Programme.

#### **Visiting Professorships**

- Fall Semester 2012: Visiting Substitute Adjunct Professor , The Wilder School for Government and Public Policy, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia.
  - Instructed course in International Political Economy.

#### **Publications:**

- January 2015: Offered position by Bloomberg Productions, New York, to design and teach an online GMAT course in International Political Economy to be marketed by The Economist magazine in London by 2022.
- 2015: Offered and accepted publishing proposal to author international political economy text for Cognella Publishing, San Diego, Ca. Text to be released in Fall 2022.
- 2008: Co-authored textbook ancillary for Western Civilisation: Eighth Edition by Perry, Perry, and Jacob.

#### **Honours:**

- 2020 Ordained as Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Church, USA-Trinity Presbyterian Church, New Canton, Virginia.  
\*\*Permits one to become a Commissioned Pastor upon completion of seminary training.\*\*
- 2017 Knighted a Chevalier(French Knight) by the Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem, Geneva, Switzerland. 16 November 2017, Bruton Parish, Williamsburg, Virginia. Appointed Chaplain in 2018. Appointed Ammonet in 2019.
- 2016 Awarded Distinguished Adjunct Faculty Teaching Award for Political Science by Humanities and Sciences Department, Virginia Commonwealth University.
- 2014 Invested as Member and Esquire in The Venerable Order of St. John of Jerusalem-Britain's oldest religious order of chivalry. Appointment by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Invested by Prince Richard, Duke of Gloucester at Grace Anglican Cathedral, San Francisco, California, 1 November 2014. Awarded credentials by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace, London, 22 November 2014.

- 2009-Present: Professional Biography listed in Who's Who in America as well as in Who's Who in the World.
- October 2007: Presented lecture: "Virginia Huguenots and the Birth of American Identity" to the Manakintowne Huguenot Society, Powhatan, Virginia.
- May 2005 Faculty Ambassador for J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College to the U.S.-Russia International Student Exchange Symposium, The World Trade Center, Moscow, Russia.
  - Worked as exchange student liaison between J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College and the Volgograd Institute for the Humanities.

**Charitable Work:**

- 2010-Present: Fundraiser and Donor for St. Jude's Children's Hospital, Memphis Tennessee, USA.
- 2010-Present: Fundraiser and Donor for Cedars Cancer Institute, Royal Victoria Hospital, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.
- 2010-Present: Fundraiser and Donor for CancerUK.org. London, GB.
- 2010-Present: Fundraiser and Donor for the Cancer Centre, St. Barts Hospital, London, GB.
- 2011-Present: Fundraiser and Donor for the Royal Marine Association, Portsmouth, GB.
- 2011-Present: Fundraiser and Donor for the Marine Corps Association, Quantico, Virginia.
- 2012-Present: Organising and proposing project called SAC(Scholars Against Cancer) with VCU Massey Cancer Center and the American Cancer Society. Objective: To organise lectures given by prominent scholars from universities nationwide and open to the public to raise funds for cancer research. To be proposed in the United Kingdom and Canada as well.

**Religious Work:**

- Commissioned Pastor(Candidate) Supply Minister.
- 2020-Given membership at Providence Presbyterian Church, Gum Springs, Virginia, Historic church founded in 1747 by the Rev. Samuel Davies, Fourth President of Princeton University. The Rev. George Whitefield-Visiting Preacher in 1749.A Presbytery of the James parish.
- 2016-20-Sunday School Teacher and Ruling Elder at Arvon Presbyterian Church, Arvon, Virginia-part of the three parishes of Christ Parish, Presbytery of the Peaks.

**Professional Organisations:**

- The Royal Geographical Society, London, GB.
- The Royal Historical Society, London, GB.
- The International Political Science Association, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.
- The American Historical Society
- The American Political Science Association
- The World History Association

**Clubs:**

- The Royal Commonwealth Society, London.
- The Oxford-Cambridge Society of Central and Southern Virginia.

- The University of London Union

### **Reflections on Ordination Questions:**

*Question 1: Do you trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?*

Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world! Why else would so many thousands worldwide exclaim they are better, happier, more thankful souls because of Jesus and his everlasting message of hope! The truth therefore speaks for itself and best of all, it sets us free! It already has for those individuals mentioned. And the greatest joy—it will continue! Jesus always stands at the doors of our hearts and knocks! Yet we must let him in. And this explains why those of us who have—such as the writer—are so eager to continue ministry by entering the clergy to furthermore help others unlock the said door and meet Christ! The greatest honour is to be a child of God! As such, we experience a never-failing love through God’s grace. Yet the greatest duty is to serve God by bringing all who are willing to be redeemed unto him by introducing them to Christ. By living and breathing Christ, the best way to obey the gospel, we help others find salvation by teaching them God’s grace and everlasting love. By doing so, we give even greater thanks to our God and Saviour for our own salvation.

The Lord is One. Yet God is one in spirit. As such, he was able to enter the world as a man named Jesus. He is God, the Son, who enslaved himself humbly for our sins. Christ then died for them and made salvation a reality for all who are willing to come unto God through him. Was all this possible and predicted by the prophets? Indeed, it was. Isaiah taught of a “Suffering Servant” to come and be the living lamb of God for our sins. Best of all, Jesus affirmed he was such a servant before his home synagogue. And God, the Father, can also become an earthly man who is Saviour. The prophets Daniel and Micah made clear even that God would soon enter the world as a human to redeem humankind. And God did and does still as Jesus Christ! God is our Father and Creator. Christ is God the Son who redeems. And the Holy Spirit is God’s spiritual extension from the throne to help us feel peace and inform us that God is pleased. The purpose of the Trinity is to give us a threefold assurance that God is with us always, that God wants us to be connected with every bit of God—every way. What an amazing love!

Jesus is undoubtedly the Christ to the writer. Why else would such a fascination with Jesus have begun at age three with the reading of Bible stories and the immediate excitement to “work for Jesus” as soon as possible when the writer’s father explained that Jesus was always looking for “new helpers?” What is more, the desire and calling to serve Christ as a commissioned pastor has always managed to find the writer in every life stage over the years only to ignite the desire to serve even more. Now, the biggest flame of desire has grown with the completion of Pathways studies, continuous work as a pulpit supply, and presently being at examination stage. May God’s continued will be done!

*Question 8: Will you pray for and seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?*

A pastor must indeed be the people's servant. Indeed, this was Jesus's duty as the "Good Shepherd." And it must be ours as well for we are "shepherds of the Shepherd." Most of all, this sacred duty can and must be done in many creative ways by which we reflect gifts God has given us to share with others. In the end, we help others see God and Christ in everything.

The use of historical, literary, musical, and artistic references are made whilst preaching. These connections allow others to relate the Word to themselves in ways that remind them the reasons for all things in life. The reason? God has a message to share in all life knowledge. Therefore, the truth that all of life has reason and purpose is reaffirmed.

Yet a faithful servant must be a doer of the word not just a preacher who also teaches Christ with all knowledge disciplines. Others must see Jesus in us. And see us, they will, through compassionate service deeds. As St. Francis of Assisi taught, "Preach the gospel always, and with words only when necessary." The writer is very naturally compassionate. Putting others first and watching them grow to maturity and most importantly accomplish their goals has been a great reward as an educator and more recently a ministry candidate. The first duty, however, is to learn others' strengths, weaknesses, and adversities to overcome. This responsibility enables both the shepherd and those whom they guide to both pray together and individually for the best guidance to soldier through these challenges to reach victory. And victory, it will be when both sheep and shepherd grow in their faith and even help each other discover areas for growth! God's love continues constantly, after all. Why? We are all constant works in progress and God is eternally eager to show us the way to be better! And he needs pastors and all ministers to do it. Serving God and others is the greatest calling. It must be. It gives us all meaning! This is the lesson godly service has taught the writer!

C.S. Lewis wrote, "Being selfless is not thinking less of one's self but thinking of one's self less." The writer has therefore learnt the value of this teaching. Life's greatest joy has been and continues to be found in tending to the needs of others—teaching and preaching the Word, giving care to the sick, doing a simple favour for the burdened that lessens the burden, and most importantly, offering simple presence to the lonely and afflicted. It is in this offering alone that both giver and receiver feel, and further testify of, the holy presence of God. May these opportunities thus be God's will to further have as a commissioned pastor.

*Final Question: Will you be a faithful ruling elder in this commission, serving the people by proclaiming the good news, teaching faith and caring for the people, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?*

I will indeed serve as a faithful shepherd of Christ whilst a commissioned pastor. Already, service to God has shown the wonders of his love and of the ways we may be used to help others find the same joy and happiness. In turn, both we ourselves and those whom we serve either discover or have reaffirmed that life truly is worth living. Why? God and Christ love

us. They help us and wish to guide us home to the kingdom of heaven. Yet they always need help and in many ways. Becoming a commissioned pastor along with my present educational calling will help others even more discover these truths. How? By loving compassionately and bring out the “best of the best” in others. In the end, it will be said that my life was one of service to God and a more peaceful world—yet on all life fronts—not just one. What satisfaction that will continue to bring!

### **Statement of Faith**

My faith aligns with the Reform tradition. Our church emphasizes Paul’s Galatians 2:16 that we are saved by God’s grace. And we are. The greatest act of grace was indeed shown by God giving Jesus Christ his only begotten son to die for our sins and make eternal possible for all. The sins of Adam and Eve have made us all totally depraved as we have become tainted with sin. Yet we are saved by God’s grace in the blood of Christ—not by good works—and thus have salvation although doing good is the essential expectation of those saved by grace. It is how others see Christ’s light in us. Truly it must be grace that saves lest God would not continue to bless and protect us even as we continue to sin and think we can make it alone. What an awesome God we have!

God also has predestined us with a life plan as well as knows who will choose to follow Christ and who will not. Nonetheless, we must still preach God’s word to all. Jesus commanded it. The Lord knows there are some who will still choose to be saved—even in the end—whilst some who may have been righteous or who arrogantly thought so of themselves. The first may truly become last whilst the last become first. It is therefore our church mission to seek out, preach to, and save as many of these souls as per God’s will.

The sacraments of baptism and communion are truly the most necessary. The first allows us to become one with Christ and receive his blessings whilst the second enables us to honour his death and resurrection for our sins and thus receive more blessings from Christ’s atonement. Therefore, the said two sacraments are a mandatory part of our covenant with God.

Lastly, the scriptures are the main driving force of my faith. They enable us to learn the sacred truths and necessities of living a godly life, as explained, to return home to glory one day. The exciting mystery, however, is that both God and Christ always have something new to teach us about who we are as well as how much they love us. Therefore, we can never know enough about God’s love. This is why God’s love is infinite. And that is the beauty of being a child of God!

## **First Reading Presentation from the POJ Strategic Planning Team Saturday, November 21, 2020**

### **Members of the SPT:**

Jen Rowe, Ruling Elder, The Presbyterian Church, Fredericksburg, moderator  
Patrick Dennis, Teaching Elder, Tuckahoe Church, Richmond, vice-moderator  
Liz Hulme Adam, Teaching Elder, Tabor Church, Crozet  
Tom Coye, Teaching Elder, Honorably Retired, Milford Church, Sharps  
Elizabeth Gatewood, Ruling Elder, First Church, Charlottesville  
Shannon Waite Hendricks, Teaching Elder, Member at Large, Fredericksburg  
Katherine Jackson, Teaching Elder, Bott Memorial Church, DeWitt  
Marilyn Johns, Ruling Elder and Certified Christian Educator, Gayton Kirk, Henrico  
Lamar Lockhart, Ruling Elder, Chester Church, Chester  
Susan Mapes, Ruling Elder, Chester Church, Chester  
Hal Raddin, Jr., Ruling Elder, The Brandermill Church, Midlothian  
Katherine Todd, Teaching Elder, Forest Hill Church, Richmond

Bobby Hulme-Lippert, Teaching Elder, former member  
Stephen Hodges, Teaching Elder, former vice-moderator and member  
Peter Ro, Ruling Elder, Lord Jesus Korean Church, Richmond, former member

The Strategic Planning Team of the Presbytery of the James is eager to share with you the results of our work together over the past two years. Our hopes, intentions, and objectives for the future of the POJ have come together in the Strategic Plan you will see, hear, and read during and after the November 21<sup>st</sup> called meeting.

This first reading of the Strategic Plan gives the SPT an opportunity to walk members of the POJ through the history, formation, and purposes of our report. Beginning with a PowerPoint presentation as a way to offer an introduction and exploration of the Strategic Plan together during the Called Meeting, the SPT will then distribute a comprehensive description of the mission statement, vision statement, strategic plan, and budget via email to all members of the POJ immediately following the close of the November 21<sup>st</sup> Called Meeting.

In January 2021, the Strategic Planning Team will host several Listening/Feedback Sessions via Zoom and audio conferencing for responses and reactions to the proposed Strategic Plan. The timeline for the Strategic Planning Team is as follows:

<b>November 21</b>	<b>Present SPT Report to a virtual Called Meeting of the POJ</b>
December 17	SPT meeting (hybrid = Zoom & In Person)
<b>January 4-8, 2021</b>	<b>Listening / Feedback Sessions via Zoom and audio conferencing</b>

<b>January 11-15, 2021</b>	<b>Listening / Feedback Sessions via Zoom and audio conferencing</b>
January 21, 2021	SPT meeting (hybrid = Zoom & In Person)
January 28, 2021	SPT meeting (hybrid = Zoom & In Person)
February 4, 2021	Packet posted online for POJ Stated Meeting
<b>February 20, 2021</b>	<b>POJ Stated Meeting / Vote on SPT Report</b>