

COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY – July 20, 2010

CANDIDACY EXAMS

The Book of Order states that by the end of the Inquiry Phase, each Inquirer shall demonstrate adequate promise for ministry by presenting answers to the 6 statements described in G-14.0303g*. The Committee on Preparation for Ministry requires that an Inquirer's *reflections on these six statements be incorporated into an essay* of not more than 1,500 words answering the following question - "Why do you believe God is calling you to ministry of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and how is the Body of Christ affirming this call?" In the written answer, Inquirers are instructed to reflect upon the following:

- What have you learned about yourself during the discernment process of inquiry?
- How has your faith grown during this process?
- What have you learned about the office of Minister of Word and Sacrament and how well suited are you to this office?
- Why do you believe that the Presbyterian Church is the best place to act on this call to ministry?

The CPM presents these essays in preparation for the examination of Inquirers being recommended for enrollment as Candidates. During the Candidacy Examination the Presbytery may only ask questions regarding the Inquirer's

- Christian faith
- Forms of Christian service undertaken
- Motives for seeking the ministry.

* MOTION For Jeffrey Maxin

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry recommends that Jeffrey Maxin, University PC having been an Inquirer for sufficient length of time, having fulfilled the requirements stated in the Book of Order G-14.0303g, and upon satisfactory examination by the Presbytery, and upon his affirmative answers to the questions in G-14.0305f, be enrolled as a Candidate.

* MOTION For JJ Kissinger

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry recommends that JJ Kissinger, University PC, having been an Inquirer for sufficient length of time, having fulfilled the requirements stated in the Book of Order G-14.0303g, and upon satisfactory examination by the Presbytery, and upon his affirmative answers to the questions in G-14.0305f, be enrolled as a Candidate.

ORDINATION EXAMINATION MOTIONS

SARA KOENIG, Presbytery of Olympia

*The Committee on Preparation for Ministry, having received evidence from the Presbytery of Olympia that Certified Candidate Sara Koenig has fulfilled the educational requirements of the Constitution of the Church, has been enrolled for the required time, and has been approved for a validated ministry as Assistant Professor of Christian Scriptures at Seattle Pacific University (Pby action on May 18, 2010), now presents her for examination of her Christian faith, views on theology, the Bible, the Sacraments and the government of this church. (G-14.0402 and G-11.0402)

MARK ZIMMERLY, Presbytery of Seattle

*The Committee on Preparation for Ministry, having received evidence that Certified Candidate Mark Zimmerly has fulfilled the educational requirements of the Constitution of the Church, has been enrolled for the required time, and has been called as Pastor of Madrona PC, now presents him for examination of his Christian faith, views on theology, the Bible, the Sacraments and the government of this church. (G-14.0402 and G-11.0402)

Jeffrey Jon Maxin
Candidacy Essay
March 12, 2009

A: *“Why do you believe God is calling you to ministry of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and how is the Body of Christ affirming this call?”*

Throughout the past several years, I have experienced a deeper and more profound sense of calling to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament than ever before. Through my experience in seminary I was able to spend three rich years learning, studying, thinking, formulating and conversing about what it is that we, as the body of Christ, are called to affirm to the world. Seminary was a place to encounter various traditions of faith, as well as be a part of a community of people discerning their own calling in a turbulent and changing world.

I believe that I entered this stage of my life with a “chip” on my theological shoulder. Some days I acted as if I knew the answers already, and was therefore more often than not in a position of challenging and opposing the various viewpoints at Princeton that I thought were insufficient in their understanding of the Gospel. I have always been intelligent and have found that I usually am able to argue my way through a difference of opinion, and as such I harnessed my “theological wit” against my supposed theological enemies. However, as time progressed, I encountered more and more of the grace of God in my life and in the lives of those around me. I found I was having meaningful discussion with those I disagreed with for the sake of learning, rather than for the sake of proving a point. Through this time I was greatly encouraged in my work with a local Presbyterian church, as well as with a few key relationships I had developed amongst my peers and my teachers. I was becoming a person who is able to seek God, live in humility and grace, and offer the same to everyone, regardless of what they believed or how they lived their lives.

During this time I also learned that I was gifted at discussing the gospel with youth as well as adults. Theology has always been my strongest academic suit, but I began to learn that theology is meaningless without engagement in the world. I worked closely with a diverse church, walking through Paul's epistles with high school students every Sunday, as well as sharing time of fellowship with the various adults of the church, both rich and poor, White American and just-off-the-boat Kenyans. My weekly work as a server in a bar in Princeton gave me access to share meaningful relationships with non-churched people my own age, as well as the large population of struggling Guatemalans who speak very little English and were, I believe, encouraged by my ability to share with them in their language, and my desire to know them despite their lower social and economic status.

Throughout this process, I found that I was becoming a man who genuinely experiences the rich

grace of God in his everyday life. In so doing, I became more and more free to share the same with everyone I encountered. I learned that I am gifted at using humor to encourage people, as well as myself. I was told time and again by peers at Princeton that I had a strong gift of speaking truth in love, that I was a born leader, and that I would make a very strong minister within the church. My preaching skills were lauded continually in the classroom, but perhaps more important, I was seen by many students on campus as someone who is able to befriend anyone, despite what they believe, and that my gift of reconciling differences is tremendous. In all this I was, and continue to be, tremendously encouraged.

During this time as well I have grown more in love with the God who is revealed in Jesus Christ. My greatest teachers have been Karl Barth, Earl Palmer, Shirley Guthrie and Bruce McCormack. I have grown from a person with a strict view of how scripture must be interpreted, how church must be done, how various social arguments must be held, to a person who is able to seek truth, live passionately about what I believe, but also not take myself so seriously so that I am unable to offer grace and love to those around me. I would say that I have grown "bigger" during the past four years, and for this I am constantly grateful.

As to the specific office of Word and Sacrament, I have found that I have a much greater understanding of said office, and a much greater desire to serve within it in the PCUSA. As a reformed Christian, I believe wholeheartedly that each member of the body of Christ is called to ministry. Ministry takes many forms, and each of us is called to live out our calling in various social settings. However, I am called to live mine out as a teacher of the faith, as one who lives in a postmodern and pluralistic world, who understands it fairly well, and who can share the Event of the Gospel with those who live in that world. We say the "word and sacrament". I am called to preach the Word of God, which is Jesus Christ, as revealed through the Christian scripture. I am called to preach this with words and well as actions, with pastoral care to my church, as well as responsible engagement to my community. In this calling I am also blessed to offer a constant reminder of the once and for all saving act of Jesus Christ through the gift of the bread and wine. In so doing, we as a church are reminded that it is just as much outside our walls as within to which we are called to go, serve, love, and be present. This office is one that requires strength, faith, humility, grace and perseverance. I can honestly say that I am growing in each of these as a young man.

Finally, I am called to this office within a specific church; my church. I have learned that I am thoroughly reformed, believing solely in God's grace for salvation, believing that the scripture is the faithful witness to this grace, believing in the depravity of humans but even more in the power of God for salvation. I love the presbyterian church, despite its many sins and blemishes. It is where I have

grown in my faith, where I have served, and where I continue to serve as a core group leader to college men. I believe our church is not perfect, but rather, is a working example of what God calls us to be; present, loving, active, engaged.

I have been continually encouraged by this church to continue in this calling. My experience with Community Presbyterian Church in Edison was groundbreaking for me. I had entered that process desiring to work in a more accessible non-denominational church in Princeton, but listening to the council of Dave Rohrer at UPC while under their care, I plunged into work with this wonderful congregation, and am so grateful for that experience. I was encouraged, grown, challenged, and able to come out of the experience having received their blessing. Likewise, I am currently encouraged to continue this calling by the young men in my Monday night core group. Furthermore, in my monthly meetings with several theological leaders at a Karl Barth study group, I have been encouraged to use my gifts by my friend Mansour, as well as Earl Palmer. All of this has been tremendously encouraging.

Thus, as I continue the process of seeking ordination within my church, I am able to reflect back on the faithfulness of God. I know I am not perfect. Through my time in counseling and in CPE, I have come to understand better my "wild" side, and how to use it for a blessing rather than a curse. I believe God has gifted me especially to be a leader in the church, and I look forward to continuing down this road of service and growth.

In the spring of 2004, some good friends and I completed the membership class at University Presbyterian Church in Seattle. The vision statement at UPC is simple and straightforward: “Every member a minister.” So, as new members, we spent the next few weeks calling one another “minister” whenever we saw each other at church. “Well, good evening Minister Kissinger, how are *you* this fine Sunday?” All teasing aside, I have long sensed a call to vocational ministry, and as I move through the PCUSA Ordination process, this call is being developed and confirmed in exciting ways.

My personal sense of call to serve God’s Kingdom has been shaped primarily by the grace, hope, and love I have received from God’s people. Throughout my life, I have been encouraged and challenged by a “great cloud of witnesses”...friends, family, and mentors who have pointed me to Jesus and demonstrated God’s grace and love. The true love of God, fleshed out in these relationships, was especially clear during the darker hours of my adolescence and throughout my formative college years. And, as John repeatedly reminds us, it is because *God first loved us* that we are able to love others (1 John 4:19). Receiving and experiencing this love has prompted me to seek out opportunities to love and encourage others in Christian discipleship, and has also helped me to grow into my giftedness. My experiences in college leadership positions, the six years I spent working professionally at Seattle Pacific University, and my recent internship at First Presbyterian in Bellingham have all cultivated in me a deep interest in discipleship, teaching, preaching, encouraging, and “pioneering” (which, for me, means anything where I can help create something new, innovative, and different). It has been exciting to receive affirmation of these gifts from colleagues and students at SPU, and also from congregants and pastors in my work at FPCB. In many ways, these experiences have affirmed the specific call I felt as I entered the ordination process: to work in ministry with college students as they navigate the difficult and critical years of early adulthood. However, my sense of call is expanding, and I feel more opened than ever to other types of ministry. While I am unsure of how or where God might call me to use my gifts in the future, I trust that the Holy Spirit will guide me into all truth (John 16:13), and that the Word of the Lord will be a light for my path (Psalm 119:105).

This past year has been one of the most jarring, difficult, and important years of my life. Oddly, this has been more related to specific challenges and situations in my personal life and marriage, and less related to my coursework or the PCUSA Ordination process. Still, there is always overlap, and I am seeing more connection and related implications all the time. Without sharing too much in this less-than-personal format, what I can say is that my wife and I came to Vancouver with our idea of a “perfect plan” for these three years, and things have turned out very different than what we thought. These unmet expectations—matched with the trauma that naturally accompanies geographical relocation and adjusting to a new city, community, and schedule—have rocked us to the core, and challenged everything we once knew about following God and placing our hope in God’s provision alone. Through this difficult season, I have been challenged to really consider what it means to TRUST...even in the face of suffering, frustration, and sadness. I have seen my prayer life become significantly more robust, and I have understood the urgency of Christian community in a whole new light. I have also learned so much about resting in God’s plan rather than anxiously clinging to my own. One of the best lessons during this season has been the importance of self-care and reflection. After recognizing some of my own weaknesses and blind spots related to how I deal with (read: avoid) difficult situations, I decided to seek counseling, and have been seeing a therapist for the past eight months. This process has brought clarity, balance, and hope. Also, like any theology student, I have had a number of “reflection papers” foisted upon me at various times. While these always seem so trivial at their beginnings, I have come to treasure the practice of reflecting on my experiences, and have gleaned invaluable revelations every time.

All of this has certainly impacted my discernment process related to Ordination, and has shifted my perspectives about what it means to respond to God’s call. The unmet expectations and difficulties in my personal life have challenged my faith in the best ways, forcing me to let go of this crazy idea that I am in the drivers seat of my life. This has brought so much peace in my personal life, and has also helped me release my need to have a perfectly mapped-out five, ten, or twenty-year career plan. God has taken the very specific plan I had for my life coming into seminary and shown me that His plans are better. Has God revealed these plans to me in their fullness? No. Do I trust that God’s plan will indeed surpass my own? Yes...at least I’m learning to. Am I more prepared than ever before in my life to surrender my will and live by faith, trusting that God’s care and provision for me is perfect? By God’s grace, may it be so.

As I consider this opportunity to become ordained for ministry of the Word and Sacrament, I recognize that the task ahead is significant. I believe that the basic role of a Minister of the Word and Sacrament is to invite people to participate in

God's story. So many people—in the church and out of the church—fail to recognize the exciting invitation we've been given by God to experience the fullness and richness of life and freedom and hope. Church easily becomes a check-list item, or a social gathering, or a way to please one's wife or parent. But church can be, and *should* be, a place where lives are transformed...where life overcomes death in all of its ugly forms. God's Word speaks beautiful, meaningful, and life-altering truths into the dark voids of our society. The sacraments provide a real opportunity to participate in the mystery and power of God. The ministry of the Word and Sacrament—preaching, teaching, administering the sacraments, coordinating worship, meeting with community members, organizing events, leading people in various capacities—requires a great deal of thoughtfulness, sincerity, and humility. While I am still learning to recognize and use my gifts, I know that I am not, and will never be, truly worthy to minister these precious gifts of Word and Sacrament to God's people. Who is *truly* worthy? However, I do believe that God has important work to do, and that God can use *even the likes of me* in special ways. I know that I am a man who struggles with pride. I struggle to rest, and have a difficult time keeping a Sabbath. I have only recently learned what it means to mourn, and to experience God as distant and quiet. Some of my growing edges are jagged, but being smoothed all the time by the hands of the Father through God's Word and the people of God's Kingdom. It is only by God's grace and only in the power of God's love that I would even consider participating in such a task, and I am eager to see God's strength in my weakness.

Even though I've faithfully attended PCUSA churches for the past eight years of my life, I must admit that I am still no expert on what it means to "be Presbyterian." I have not yet taken coursework in Presbyterian polity, nor have I read through the Book of Order. I haven't even taken Church History II, so my knowledge of post-reformation Christianity still feels incomplete! However, my participation in two PCUSA churches (UPC and FPCB) has helped me begin to understand and embrace what it means to "be Presbyterian."

First, through the preached Word and through personal interactions with people who have loved me despite my flaws, I have been nurtured by the Reformed idea that we are saved by grace alone. I also appreciate the Presbyterian idea that all people are called to serve in God's Kingdom. It is exciting to see the support of women who feel called to vocational ministry, the presence of multiple generations in worship, the commitment of lay people in church leadership as elders and deacons, and the support and nurture of the marginalized of our society, who become equipped to love and serve God in their lives. I've also come to appreciate the organization of the church. I value the accountability and support that comes through Presbytery, Synod, General Assembly, and the Book of Order, and I appreciate that the individual church and individual believers still have a real responsibility and freedom to engage in cultivating their faith and become life-long learners. I am drawn in by the idea that our church is "reformed and always reforming"...that we are sensitive to the work of the Spirit as we continue to gather in the name of Jesus and seek God's truth. This is especially important for us now, in such a tenuous time for the PCUSA. Finally, I appreciate the emphasis placed on both the Word and the Sacrament. Without both, our Christian worship is incomplete. We need the trustworthiness and truth and firm foundedness of the Word, and we need the mystery and movement and riskiness of the sacraments, one speaking to the other in constant dialogue. I have especially enjoyed the thoughtfulness and community focus of baptism and communion at First Presbyterian in Bellingham.

It has been such an encouragement to sense God's presence in so many real, tangible ways as I've walked through this discernment process so far. I know I have many miles to go. Thank you for your thoughtfulness and care as we seek the Lord's best, side-by-side.

Sara Koenig
Statement of Faith

I believe in the triune God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who is witnessed to in the written word of God, the Bible.

God the Father is our Creator, who formed and shaped the world in freedom and in love. As God created, God declared creation to be good. God created humans, both men and women, in God's image, commissioning them as stewards of the earth. And God intended for humans to be in a close, trusting and intimate relationship with God. But almost from the very beginning, humans have rebelled against God, choosing to seek after "knowledge of good and evil" instead of knowledge of the One who is true goodness. The echoes of that long ago fall still reverberate in the brokenness in our world today. We look for a time when God's creation will be restored, but for now we continue to hear it still groan.

God the Son is our Redeemer, who for us and for our salvation became incarnate as a human. Jesus Christ is the perfect and complete revelation of God. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary, as one both fully human and fully divine. Although he was equal with God, he did not consider that equality a thing to be grasped, and made himself into a servant. He was crucified on a cross for our sins. He bore the full weight of our iniquities, and became the atoning sacrifice so that we could be saved. Through Jesus Christ, we are set free from the bondage of sin. Through Jesus Christ, we have been made righteous. Through Jesus Christ, we have been adopted as sons and daughters of God. Jesus was resurrected from the dead and conquered the powers of death and hell. He ascended into heaven where he rules with God.

God the Holy Spirit remains in us and with us as our comforter and our guide. The Holy Spirit inspires us in our daily lives and in our worship, and teaches us and reminds us of what Jesus said to us. The Spirit prays for us when we cannot find the words ourselves. Through the Spirit we are given different gifts to be used for the good of the entire body of Christ. As Christians, we seek to live lives that are both led by the Spirit and filled with the Spirit. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we are shaped more and more into the likeness of Christ.

As Christians, we are able to live our lives as joyful witnesses to the works of the triune God. Having been justified by grace, we are free to do good works for God and for others. Though we can embrace a personal and intimate relationship with Christ, we are also part of the church, God's covenant community that has been set apart, is universal, and sent out to bear witness to the reality of God. The sacraments are the church's visible signs of God's invisible grace which give us strength for the journey. Through baptism we are sealed with the Holy Spirit, and we remember how we died to sin, and were raised in a new life. In the Lord's supper we remember Christ's sacrifice for us on the cross, as we eat and drink the bread and the wine and take Christ's real presence into our bodies. We seek for justice and righteousness in this world. We work for the kingdom of God to be a reality in our midst, and we wait with expectant hope for the time when that kingdom will be made fully manifest.

Sara Koenig – Brief Bio – June, 2010

My first experience with the Presbyterian denomination was in my freshman year in high school when my parents decided that our family ought to go to a church with a more active youth group than the local Lutheran church (in which I had been baptized and confirmed). I found myself at Chapel Hill Presbyterian Church in Gig Harbor, where biblical and theological study was taken quite seriously: youth group basically consisted of playing Bible Trivia, and I remember one Sunday School class where the whole discussion – student initiated, no less! – was about the distinction between “soul” and “spirit.” Between my freshman and sophomore year in high school, the church called a new youth pastor. He brought more of a Young Life model to the youth group, and the attention that he and his wife paid to me encouraged me to grow deeper in my own faith.

I began college at Seattle Pacific University (SPU) desiring to study marine biology, but although I did well in my classes, I started to question if I really wanted to spend my life working with fish or marine mammals. With that question echoing in my head, I went home the summer after my freshman year of college to work as an intern at my church, and I fell in love with youth ministry. It was so exciting! It was so challenging! It was such significant work! When I returned to SPU in the fall of 1992, I promptly changed my major to Educational Ministries. My professors at SPU encouraged further study, so my senior year of college, I applied to seminary and became an Inquirer shortly before graduation in 1995. However, I wanted – and needed – a break from studying, so I deferred my applications for a year, and went off to do another youth ministry internship in 1995-1996. That internship was outside of Cairo, Egypt at Maadi Community Church, a protestant interdenominational English speaking church which mostly served the expatriate community. I learned so much about the catholic nature of Christianity during my year there. I also learned that perhaps youth ministry was not the particular ministry where my gifts would be best used. While I was in Egypt, I received my letter of acceptance from Princeton Theological Seminary. When I began the M.Div. program at PTS in 1996, I still very much felt called to ministry; I was just not certain what form that ministry would take.

I loved my experience at PTS and became a Candidate in the spring of 1998. That fall, just after our wedding and right before the start of our senior year at Princeton, my husband and I had a significant conversation about our individual and joint sense of call. Matthew, an academic at heart, felt called to serve the pastorate, while I, a pastor at heart, felt like the academy could use more pastors. We decided that, like Gideon, we would set our fleece out before God by having me apply to doctoral programs. As with Gideon, the “test” worked for us, too – I was accepted into the Ph.D. program in Old Testament at PTS. Matthew supported me by working as an associate pastor in a church close to Princeton.

I continued to be in conversation with my CPM during my Ph.D. coursework and exams, and they encouraged me to keep thinking and praying about my gifts for and my call to ministry. What I heard is that I am gifted and called to teach. That call was affirmed for me by different schools – PTS, when I was accepted into the Ph.D. program, and later SPU, when I was called to return to my alma mater to teach in the School of Theology. I very much see my teaching as my ministry, and I would love to serve within the body of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Mark Zimmerly Bio:

I was baptized and confirmed at First Presbyterian Church of Concord in the SF Bay Area, where both my parents and grandparents were active members. I moved to Seattle in 1997 to attend the UW where I was active in the college ministry of University Pres. After graduating with a degree in Comparative Religion and African Studies I spent three years in missions programs of the PC(USA), including a year in Northern Ireland and a year at the Campbell Farm in Wapato, Washington. I then attended McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago where I did field studies at an African American Presbyterian Church. I was recommended to the Seattle Presbytery as an inquirer and candidate by the (now closed) Westminster Pres on Capitol Hill and have also worked at Rainier Beach Pres and Mt Baker Park Pres. I now live in Rainier Beach with my wife, Liz, and my son, Elijah (3), who tolerate my hobbies of ‘chickens, goats, bees, and fruit-bearing trees.’

A STATEMENT OF PERSONAL FAITH;

I believe in one triune God, perfect in unity, complete in community.

I believe in God the Hallowed Creator, the author and origin of all that is and is to come.

I believe in God the Human Christ, the redeemer and Lord of all Creation

I believe in God the Holy Spirit, the sanctifier and giver of life

I affirm one human family, made good in God’s image, made whole by God’s love.

I believe that all were created equally to be children of God and yet all have equally sinned and fallen short of God’s glory. With our sin we were alienated, one from another, and each from the companionship of our Creator. Even the law and the prophets were unable to restore us fully to the righteousness of the Word.

God the redeemer then sought us out in human form as the Israelite named Jesus, reconciling one to another, and all to the fellowship of God’s divine community. On earth Jesus resisted and condemned the powers which enslaved God’s people and marred God’s divine image. And as a result the One who knew not sin was executed by those who knew not the truth. This Son of Man was brought back from death to life to show God’s power over sin and death, confirming God’s liberative promise for those who believe the good news that in Jesus Christ we are forgiven.

We who follow Jesus continue to proclaim God’s powerful, reconciling love; that Word of God which is witnessed with authority in Holy Scripture and displayed with compassion in our care for all of God’s children. Assured of Christ’s presence at the table, we join together as his body to remember the life that is ours through his name; breaking and sharing bread in the celebration of our joyful reunion, and giving thanks for the good gifts of God that are new to us each day.

We gather also as Ecclesia--those called out by the Holy Spirit to resist the powers of hatred and fear that would continue to denigrate the precious work of God’s hands. Living not in fear but in joy, we daily take up our crosses and affirm the covenant we received in Baptism—that promise of love which is ours though the life, death, and resurrection of Christ Jesus our Lord.

I affirm one good creation, which was brought forth for God’s glory, and which rejoices in God’s presence.

I believe that God created all things to be regarded as belonging to, and giving glory to God alone, yet the powers of evil have sought to claim this world for their own ends. Thus we who follow the Redeemer Christ have been called as God’s partners to care for and restore that which Humanity has helped to destroy; through the power of the Holy Spirit we work toward the sanctification and consummation of all that is and is to come.

I affirm the Realm of God proclaimed by the Human One; that heavenly kindom that has graciously drawn near to us; that which is both here now and also has yet to come; the mysterious fulfillment of history we look to with joyful expectation, in which all of creation shall participate fully in God’s abundant peace, justice, and love.