



**PRESBYTERY**  
of West Virginia

**Virtual Called Meeting  
Presented on Zoom  
January 6, 2021**

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# THE PRESBYTERY OF WEST VIRGINIA

Synod of the Trinity – Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Called Meeting – Zoom

January 6, 2021

## A MISSION STATEMENT FOR THE PRESBYTERY OF WEST VIRGINIA

**Who are we?** The Presbytery of West Virginia is a baptized, covenant people called by God to reflect Christ's love through mission, ministry and relationships.

**What is our vision?** It is our vision that everyone will experience the love of God.

**What is our mission?** The Presbytery of West Virginia strengthens, supports and serves our worshiping communities as they share God's love through mission, ministry and relationships.

\*Indicates "Order of the Day" (To be taken up precisely at the time indicated)

1:30 – 2:00 Registration

\*2:00 Call to Order Andrew Kent Rice, Moderator

Midday Prayer

Business of the Presbytery

- Suspension of the Presbytery Manual
- Election of a Recording Clerk Pro Tem
- Seating of new Corresponding Members Maureen Wright, Stated Clerk
- Introduction Visiting Teaching Elders
- Recognition of Ruling Elders attending Presbytery for the first time
- Statement of Quorum
- Approval of Docket
- Appointment of Temporary Clerks
- Appointment of Standing Committees
  - o Committee on Bills and Overtures
    - Leadership Team members present

Report of the Vocations Committee Dawn Adamy

- Examination of Samantha Coggins

Report of the Committee on Ministry Peter Vial

3:15 Anticipated Time of Adjournment with Charge and Benediction by the Moderator

**NEXT Stated Meeting: February 20, 2021 – Virtual Meeting**

# **PRESBYTERY OF WEST VIRGINIA**

## **REPORT OF THE VOCATIONS COMMITTEE**

Dawn Adamy, Vocations Committee Chair

January 6, 2021

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

1. That the Presbytery proceed to examine **Samantha Coggins**, a candidate from New York City Presbytery seeking ordination, to serve the **Westminster Foundation** as UKirk campus pastor at **West Virginia University**.

### **INFORMATION:**

1. The committee reviewed Ms. Coggins's preparation file from New York City Presbytery and noted that she has fulfilled all of the requirements set forth in G-2.0607 regarding preparation for ministry. The committee reviewed a sermon, statement of faith, exegetical work, and biography, and conducted a thorough examination of her readiness for ordination. Ms. Coggins's autobiographical statement and Statement of Faith are included in the packet.

## Samantha Coggins - Biography

I am a 32-year-old woman from Virginia, eager to embark on my first ordained call with college students in Morgantown. Since my early twenties, I have wound my way around the East Coast and Rust Belt: from Charlottesville, VA, to Syracuse, NY, to New York City, and (most recently) to Pittsburgh, PA. I graduated with my M.Div. from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in May. I am married to Joel, a book designer who grew up in Ohio. I am also pregnant with our first child, a baby girl expected to be born in February 2021. My call to ministry is a defining aspect of my life so far. Since I was a teenager, I've been discerning that call, sometimes as a big push from God, sometimes as a subtle movement in my faith journey.

I grew up in Fredericksburg, VA, with my two parents and one sister. There, I was confirmed in a PCUSA church, Fredericksburg Presbyterian (FPC), where I became an active member during my teenage years. I had several interests as a child and teenager. My two biggest ones were music and attending church youth group. At FPC, I enjoyed playing the piano and handbells, and I sang in the youth choir. In high school, my involvement in church began to reach beyond musicianship and fellowship, into spiritual formation.

The impetus for that shift was having surgery on my back for scoliosis when I was 14. At that age, I was a high school freshman, and my life felt upended by the surgery. I missed eight weeks of school to recover at home, and I had to stop playing field hockey. My body changed permanently. The doctors corrected the curve in my spine using two titanium rods and other metal hardware, all of which remain in my back today. My spine surgery in 2002 was a confusing time, physically and spiritually. In middle school, I had worked hard to avoid surgery by wearing a back brace while sleeping at night. Despite that bracing, the curve in my spine kept getting worse as I developed into adolescence.

This time in my life was also when I had my first personal experience of the Holy Spirit. In the moments when my doctor announced I would need major surgery, I sensed God with me while sitting with my mom in the examination room. I felt in my body and heart a comforting, all-encompassing presence that I could only identify as God. It was invisible, yet powerfully and undeniably the Holy Spirit. While I cried and my mom hugged me, I felt my fears and worries dissipate. I sensed strongly that God was there in the room with me, sustaining me for the surgery that was coming.

In tandem with this Pentecostal experience of God in the doctor's office, I also experienced God incarnate. This happened through the friends and family of my church community. Before I left for the hospital, my Sunday school teachers led a prayer for me through laying on of hands. All of my friends put a hand or finger on my back, while my teachers offered a prayer that my surgery would go smoothly and that I would stay healthy. My youth group leaders treated my class to dinner at a local restaurant to send me off into my surgery with happiness, surrounded by friendship and love. Finally, on the day of the surgery, my pastor traveled to the hospital, to sit with my parents for eight hours while they waited for my surgery to be over. These people cared for my embodied self, showing me what it meant for Jesus to heal and bless human beings during his lifetime.

From that point onward, I became progressively more involved in the life of the church. As a junior and senior in high school, I served as Moderator of my presbytery's Youth Council in Virginia, running monthly meetings in Richmond, VA, and helping to put on themed retreats for local youth. During the summer before I left home for college at the University of Virginia, I served as a youth delegate to the 2006 PCUSA General Assembly meeting in Birmingham, AL. There, I learned even more about Presbyterian polity, especially the high value we place on accountability through committee structures in our denomination.

In hindsight, I see that God used these experiences to plant in me a vision of myself as a leader in the church. I was exposed to Presbyterians with strong core theology, who reflected their Reformed beliefs in the way they treated other people. This was true of both my adult leaders and my peers. The effect was that I witnessed a clear connection between Christ and Christianity, which I had not gleaned so far in my life from any one Bible study or worship service. While I began to yearn to become a strong Christian, I was surrounded by people who convinced me this was possible *and* available to me — an adolescent. These people embraced all their uniqueness and weirdness in the light of their core identity: child of God. This included women and LGBTQIA folks, who used their gifts for ministry through active commitment to me and to my presbytery.

In college and throughout my twenties, I sensed God troubling the waters of my faith. I sought out a church community in college at the University of Virginia, but I did not ultimately find belonging in a congregation during my four years in Charlottesville. As a young adult, I navigated a longing to question what I knew already about God. I continued on that trajectory throughout the rest of my twenties, when I lived in New York City. While I found belonging at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, which is now my home congregation, I also lost my job working at a big publishing company. My fledgling career as an arts journalist, and the pain that came with losing work, transformed my idea of God as Emmanuel, or God-with-us. At age 27, I was scared for my financial well-being and vocational future, and God propelled me — by way of my home church pastor — to an administrative role at Brick Presbyterian Church in Manhattan.

This job brought my sense of call bubbling up to the surface of my mind and heart. On weekdays, I got to observe three associate pastors doing the work of pastoral care, worship planning, and everything else that goes into being a pastor. I started to covet the time that the pastors spent with seminary interns from nearby Princeton Theological Seminary, which felt like a sign that I needed to pursue seminary education. Unexpectedly, I envisioned myself moving west to pursue a burgeoning relationship with my then-boyfriend, and now-husband, Joel, and to attend Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. I realized that the church was not only a prominent tenet of my personal life, it was also my vocation.

It was hard for me to accept that this was my path. I struggled to reconcile my sense of call with how I spent my twenties, pursuing a career in arts journalism. But I also noticed that my communications skills were bearing fruit in my ministry, beginning with my preaching classes. I felt drawn to preaching right away, finding great enjoyment in exegesis and in formulating sermons, with the added factor of the movement of the Holy Spirit, which I had not previously been trained to seek in my writing. I sensed God putting pieces of my life together like a puzzle, assuring me that the time I spent working toward a career in publishing was not irrelevant to ministry.

At this juncture, I am overjoyed to begin ordained ministry with college students in Morgantown while my family grows, and to stay on the lookout for how God is working through it all.

## Samantha Coggins - Statement of Faith

The triune God, traditionally parsed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, rules my life as a Christian. God is my sovereign, as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer, three persons in one. This means I am free to glorify Jesus Christ, my Redeemer, whose life and death wash away my sins. It also means I am free to rely on God and God alone, who is ruler of my conscience, rather than people who wield power on earth (Ps. 146:3). Finally, it means I am called to see the face of Christ in everyone I meet. In the specific role of pastor, I'm called to recognize, affirm and encourage the *imago dei* in every parishioner.

I believe God the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer gives me the covenant of grace. Grace is the means by which I am called to confess and repent of sin, and to receive forgiveness. Grace is not blanket permission to continue in sin (Rom. 6:15). Rather, I receive grace through my relationship with Jesus, my Redeemer, who mediates grace as God incarnate. The reality of God reaching God's hand into the world for me, becoming fully human and fully divine in Christ, is grace. Grace propels me to praise God for dwelling with me, as Emmanuel. Grace justifies my faith, pushing me to work to experience the Kingdom of God more fully, here on earth.

Jesus Christ, my Redeemer, is central to my faith. Christ is God incarnate. Christ's life, death and resurrection show me that, with faith, death does not get the final word. I believe my salvation is lodged in Christ, and only Christ. I believe baptism and Communion are signs of Christ's promises to me. When we are baptized, and when we eat the bread and drink from the cup at Communion, we feel and taste our connection to God's covenant of grace. In this way, the sacraments remind my body of God's embodiment in Christ. Additionally, I believe Christ is actively present in the sacraments, sealing me into Christ's body. This means that through Jesus, I am incorporated into a group of believers who receive spiritual nourishment from baptism and Communion, across all times and places. Finally, the sacraments show me the nature of the mystery of God. While I will never fully know God, a glimpse of that mystery has been revealed to me in Jesus's life, death and resurrection.

I believe the Holy Spirit, my Sustainer, nurtures and transforms the body of Christ, the church. The Spirit is alive and moving in congregations, beckoning us to join in the Spirit's work. The Holy Spirit aids in unlocking our understanding of Scripture, causing the Word to fall afresh on us, in every time and place. The Spirit nudges us to participate in the saving work of Jesus. The Spirit strengthens us to follow God's commandments, namely to love our neighbors as ourselves, and to love God with all our heart, mind and strength.

# **PRESBYTERY OF WEST VIRGINIA**

## **REPORT OF THE MINISTRY COMMITTEE**

Peter Vial, Committee on Ministry Chair

January 6, 2021

### **INFORMATION:**

1. The committee approved the match between **Ms. Samantha Coggins** and the **Westminster Foundation's** UKirk campus ministry at **West Virginia University**.
2. The committee examined and approved for membership in the Presbytery of West Virginia **Ms. Coggins**, pending her successful examination for ordination by Presbytery.
3. The committee reviewed the Terms of Call between **Ms. Coggins** and the **Westminster Foundation** that were graciously shared. The presbytery does not have jurisdiction over the Westminster Foundation and therefore does not need to approve the terms. The terms of call meet presbytery minimums (see below).

The terms of call are: salary: \$33,835 per year; housing allowance: \$10,225; utilities: \$3,410 per year; SECA: \$3,931; Board of Pensions medical and pension; vacation: 4 weeks per year (including Sundays); continuing education: 2 weeks per year; auto expenses at the IRS rate; continuing education: \$1,500; 12 days of sick leave per year may accumulate up to 30 days and two months paid parental leave as applicable; moving expenses to the field.