

TO: The Committee on Ministers and Congregations
FROM: The Validated/Specialized Ministry Committee
Date: August 1, 2020

Motion: The Committee recommends to the COMC that New Castle Presbytery examine Certified Ready to Receive a Call Candidate Shannon Hanson, and if the way be clear,

- 1. Ordain her to the position of Minister of Word and Sacrament, and,**
- 2. Validate her specialized Ministry of Reconciliation.**

Job Description: The Minister for Reconciliation will serve as a Presbytery resource, initiating outreach to under-resourced congregations and the Presbytery at large (1) to forge bonds of solidarity between and among NCP churches, their members, and our neighbors in the face of increased societal polarization; (2) to equip Christ-followers to be ambassadors for reconciliation in our communities; and (3) to spark opportunities to move in solidarity with those leaving prison and reentering society.

The minister will be accountable to *the Session of First & Central Presbyterian Church*, and will enact reconciliation through ministry in three key ways:

(1) Preaching the Word and Administering the Sacraments: God's Word, as proclaimed and received in a community of faith, changes lives. Preaching sermons focused on our common heritage as children of a loving God, the minister will share the Word as a guest preacher throughout NCP at least 1 Sunday/month. By proclaiming the reconciling love of Jesus Christ, the minister seeks to expand Christ-followers' perspectives about what constitutes community and who are "our neighbors."

Communion is the beating heart of ministry seeking to bring people together. We are nowhere more reconciled than when partaking at God's table of grace, warmly welcoming without barrier all those who wish to share God's feast. Likewise, through the gift of baptism, we welcome others to share the inclusiveness of God's family. We make personal and corporate commitments to walk together with God, caring for one another through the generations in a powerful demonstration of the transforming power of God's love for all.

(2) Teaching: The minister will actively initiate contact with NCP congregations (particularly less-resourced, smaller churches), offering to serve those congregations by teaching congregants. A key component of this teaching involves training people to use Christ-centered dialogue to bridge rampant societal polarization. Among other possibilities, the minister will begin by leading an adult education course entitled: Listen In Such A Way That Others Love To Talk, which uses biblical precepts to improve communication between those who disagree.

The minister will join with NCP churches, teaching an average of two Sundays each month and, if available, during weekday evening meetings. The minister will likewise provide training at Presbytery-wide events, including annual retreats.

This schedule permits the minister to continue participation in the life of First and Central Presbyterian Church.

(3) Evangelizing through Mission Engagement: The minister will coordinate with existing community and NCP resources and spark new partnerships to assist citizens reentering society after a period of incarceration, through a proposed NCP church initiative called “Just-Us.” With a focus on Jesus’ call to all believers to “do unto the least of these,” the minister will educate NCP church members about the difficulties faced by reentering citizens and their families by offering adult educational opportunities on the intersection between our legal system, social justice and faith. Opportunities to share God’s grace through reconciliation could include organized reentry simulations, academic and/or policy discussions, and face-to-face interactions with those who have experienced the redemptive dignity of reentering society as productive citizens. The minister’s goal is active social ministry, joining NCP families with those who have experienced physical and spiritual fracture in “beloved community.” The minister will work with NCP congregations to break down barriers, including prison walls, taking interested people throughout NCP inside our state’s penal institutions when possible.

Should there be interest, “Just-Us” could be expanded to include sponsorship of felons or children of reentering felons, a new gloss on traditional church Adopt-a-Family programs.

NCP Agreed Upon Results/Activities:

Supervision through quarterly reports to the Session of First & Central Presbyterian Church and yearly reporting to COMC.

Time Commitment and Compensation: Minimum of 20 hours/month, on a fee-for-service basis, as per existing COMC guidelines. The minister will not be an employee of NCP or First & Central Presbyterian Church.

Goal: Active outreach to and participation in the life and worship of 10 NCP churches within year 1.

On July 13, 2020 the Session of First & Central Presbyterian Church in Wilmington took the following action in this matter:

- **A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously recommending Shannon Thee Hanson be ordained to Validated Ministry as Minister for Reconciliation for New Castle Presbytery according to the terms of the job description.**