

PRESBYTERY OF THE TWIN CITIES AREA
Committee on Preparation for Ministry
Report to Presbytery
01-08-11

REPORTS TO THE PRESBYTERY

Permission to take Ordination Exams:

- Jeff Foels:
 - Exegesis
 - Theology
 - Worship
 - Polity

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE PRESBYTERY

Enroll as Inquirer: Hanna Kim

Church of All Nations Presbyterian Church, Columbia Heights, MN.

Hanna Kim having fulfilled the constitutional requirements of G-14.0303 (active member of a particular church for at least six months; endorsement by the session; interview with the committee of presbytery to consider the application to be enrolled as an inquirer) is now presented to the presbytery to be enrolled as an inquirer: Church See Attachment A for her statement of what it means to be an inquirer.

The committee **recommends** that **Hanna Kim** be enrolled as an inquirer by the Presbytery

Enroll as a Candidate: John Nelson

John Nelson, who is on the Roll of Inquirers of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area, having satisfactorily "demonstrated adequate promise for ministry by presenting" the statements specified in the presbytery's policy (G-14.0402), met with the session of the Presbyterian Church of All Nations, Columbia Heights, MN and with the Presbytery's committee, is presented to the Presbytery to be examined "with respect to his Christian faith, forms of Christian service undertaken and motives for seeking the ministry," and to be received as a candidate for the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament.

(See Attachment B)

The committee **recommends** that **John Nelson** be enrolled as a candidate for the ministry of the Word and Sacrament and that the moderator ask him the questions specified in the presbytery's policy.

Enroll as a Candidate: Jeff Foels

Jeff Foels, who is on the roll of Inquirers of the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area, having satisfactorily demonstrated adequate promise for ministry by presenting the statements specified in the Presbytery's policy (G-14.0402), met with the session of First Presbyterian Church, Stillwater, MN and with the Presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry, is presented to the Presbytery to be examined "with respect to his Christian faith, forms of Christian service undertaken and motives for seeking the ministry," and to be received as a candidate for the ministry of the Word and Sacrament.

(See Attachment C)

The committee **recommends** that Jeff Foels be enrolled as a candidate for the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament and that the moderator ask him the questions specified in the Presbytery's policy.

Attachment A

Statement of What it Means to be an Inquirer

Hanna Kim

I believe by moving forward in becoming an inquirer, I am asking for communal discernment from and with the Committee on Preparation for Ministry. I believe the purpose of the CPM is to be committed to investing, guiding and directing future leaders of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and I believe in this. This process of communal discernment is important to me because it is the only way I know and have been taught to do vocational discernment. Every decision I have made toward ministry, including seminary, has not solely been made by my own sense of calling and conviction, but by God's leading and speaking in trustworthy people around me. I have been blessed with a community of people at Church of All Nations, that have rallied around me with a trusting faith in God and a deep advocating love for me. They have called out love and passion for the gospel within me, and have charged me to be courageous and bold. This community has included my pastor, the staff I serve with, the session, spiritual mentors and good friends around me. They have taught me to trust in God alone, but not to be alone in trusting God. Their wisdom has taught me the importance of being part of a larger community of believers for further discernment and accountability, both of which have led me to seek inquiry within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Attachment B

Statement of Motivation

John Nelson

I first began to explore the possibility of pastoral ministry because of the central role church had played in my life. I was nurtured in the Christian faith in a small Norwegian Lutheran country church of farm families. My immediate family, along with my grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins were all members of this church—and church was at the center of our time together as a family. I found another local church family while attending Bethel University, where I got involved in the worship team and also started a young adult ministry. I felt drawn to ministry, and the community around me confirmed it by setting me aside for ministry. So I was sent to seminary. I did not have a clear sense of what that meant, but was eager nevertheless to learn more and serve God.

My naïveté was shattered in seminary. I got married during my first semester to a young woman with a similar Christian background, and we began to struggle from the very beginning. As an escape, I shifted my focus to academic theology, and began to ask difficult questions about the faith I was raised with. I realized that even as I experienced church as family growing up, it was also a dysfunctional family that led me to internalize an understanding of God as a harsh judge, watching my every move and misstep. This resulted in a deep anxiety about pleasing God and others, and I became an overachiever and perfectionist in the process. So I slowly distanced

myself from the flesh and blood local church, and instead related to God through the life of the mind. I grew distant from Christian community, and instead judged it from afar, theorizing about how the church should be, while criticizing it for what it was.

In the midst of this marital and ecclesial alienation, I stumbled across Church of All Nations. I was challenged to invest in the life of the community and risk relating deeply again. I was hesitant at first, especially because this was a family where everything was put out on the table—fears and desires, weaknesses, failures, hurt and pain. I slowly let down my guard, shared my brokenness, and began to get more involved in ministry again. During this time I came back to life and was drawn back to my original sense of call—service to the local church. The community around me at CAN affirmed it, and I entered the ordination process in the PC(USA).

While I have returned to exploring a pastoral call, the reason for and underlying foundation of this has changed. This past year has been difficult as my marriage finally ended in divorce. The church has surrounded me and loved me through this painful time of grief, loss, and failure. I now know my own brokenness and capacity for hurting other people in a very deep way, especially those closest to me. And I have experienced the grace of God in the midst of it all through a local congregation. I believe in the church as family where we bear one another's burdens, and take responsibility for one another in the midst of the messiness of life. I know I have gifts for ministry, but that's not the reason I desire to serve in this way—I no longer judge the church, but understand my broken self as the church, and feel called to love others in the way God has first loved me through the church. God is no longer a harsh judge to me, but a loving parent with outstretched arms welcoming me home. Because of this, I desire to enter into, suffer with, and take responsibility for the lives of others, nurturing them to grow and flourish, rather than simply living for my own accomplishments and advancement. I feel called to serve as a minister out of humility, gratitude, and love.

Attachment C

Statement of Motivation

Jeff Foels

My awareness of my journey toward ordained ministry began just after I'd graduated college, still unsure about my next steps. Into that time of transition, my pastor spoke a prophetic word: Would I like to be the senior high youth program director for my home church? This question launched a fun ride for me. It had its ups and downs, and certainly time has worn the edges of the downs, but it also re-claimed me for the church. I had been late in declaring a religion major, still felt I had a lot to learn about when it came to religion, and divinity school was already on my radar. A year in the church exposed me to the faithful work of my colleagues and mentors, and to the realities of life working in a congregation.

Upon visiting McCormick, I encountered a beloved community in which I could explore broader cultural issues, learn about the life of the church, and be nurtured in a community of others undergoing such exploration – it was an immediate connection. I ended up struggling my first year, grappling with vocation and what it meant to live a good life. And there was a definite learning curve, a growth that accompanied a new living arrangement, new friends, new city. I was ready to leave, but kept finding reasons to stay: a week at a monastery in Dubuque that awoke new dimensions in my faith life; a course in Reformed Worship and Sacraments that whispered a quiet call; Reformed Tradition, Greek 3, and the Greek teaching assistant position.

Before I knew it, I was returning for my senior year, equipped with a sense of present call: to be a seminary student. With that call felt and known, I went a little overboard. Board of Trustees, TA positions, the Seminary Support Network, a full course load, and a part-time internship at a church combined for a full year, a “good” year in which I did a lot of good, but a too-taxing year that often left me depleted. While I wasn’t watching, I found myself looking forward to days at the once-dreaded internship, eagerly anticipating worship, staff meetings, and pastoral calls that had first met with trepidation. CPE this fall has continued the journey. I’ve begun to accept my perpetual partiality, and that through even so unfinished a creation, God’s grace enables sufficiency for ministry. I’ve found my gifts of communication and intelligence to be well applied to pastoral care, buttressed by finding new depths of empathy. New sources of spiritual sustenance and lived theology have given me paths to renewal, and owning my limits.

Throughout these experiences, I’ve grown in faith. And I’ve grown in my sense of vocation and discernment. The CPM has been a tremendous resource throughout, asking me difficult questions that prompted new thinking, supporting my exploration, celebrating my joys and giving me encouragement for new challenges. And at this point, I’d like that relationship to continue, and to take another step. Despite my growth over these past few years, I still have struggles and questions and growing edges. What’s changed though, is a base line. My challenges do not preclude my ability to serve, but offer the particular fragments I add to the mélange of the church. I feel called to ordained ministry, emboldened to recognize that though my gifts will never be perfect, God’s call is to redeem that imperfection, and to use those gifts in excellent ministry.