

COM Report
Presbytery Meeting
7 December 2020

For Information

1. COM approved the transfer of membership to the Presbytery of Boston of Rev. Amy Fowler, HR. We welcome Amy to our presbytery!
2. COM received a report from the Pastoral Care Team (Deacons). We are grateful for the team and their work, especially during this difficult year, in support of members of this presbytery.
3. COM approved the extension of the contract between the Rev. Pamela Spence Bakker and Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church until 28 December 2020 at three-quarters time. As Rev. Spence Bakker is retired, Good Shepherd will pay 12% of her effective salary to the Board of Pensions. The terms of her contract are as follows:

Reimbursable expenses			
Cash Salary:	\$26,758.70	Travel and Mileage	\$5,000.00
Housing Allowance:	24,000.00	Study Leave	1,500.00
SECA Offset [7.65%]	3,883.04	Professional Expenses	600.00

In addition, Rev. Spence Bakker will receive

- five weeks of vacation, including five Sundays,;
- two weeks of study leave, including two Sundays;
- one week of sick leave and one week of family leave, each of which include one Sunday, with additional weeks of un-paid sick leave or family leave available.

For Action:

1. Motion: Presbytery approve the 2021 Minimum Compensation Standards for clergy.
2. Motion: Presbytery approve as validated ministry the position of Associate Director of the Miller Center for Interreligious Learning and Leadership, Hebrew College, Newton, MA.
3. Motion: Presbytery examine of Tom Reid, Candidate under care of the Presbytery of Boston, certified ready to receive a call and approve her for ordination to Minister of Word and Sacrament.
4. Motion: Presbytery ordain Tom Reid to Minister of Word and Sacrament at a date, time, and place to be determined by Mr. Reid and the Administrative Commission to be appointed by the Stated Clerk and the Moderator.

My Faith Journey – Tom Reid

My faith journey began in Indianapolis, Indiana, where I was born and baptized in the Methodist church where my family had been members. We moved to Kansas City when I was one year old. My parents could not find a Methodist church that fit and we ended up joining Southminster Presbyterian Church where my parents are still active members today. That church continues to be an important part of my life. I love to visit whenever I am home. Although many from my childhood have passed on, there are still many who have influenced me as a young Christian. Those faces, spaces, and memories continue to anchor me personally and as an aspiring pastor.

Music has been an important part of my life as far back as I can remember. It is important to my family and my family history. It has played an important role in my religious practice and how I experience my Christian faith. Hymns, particularly the Welsh ones, and pipe organ music speak to my core and can send shivers up my spine. For a long time, I have associated these sensations with holy space and time. Welsh hymns also help me feel connected to part of my ethnic heritage. They remind me of my maternal grandmother, who was an important spiritual and musical influence in my life. I love the beauty of the many hymn lyrics and choral anthems I have experienced in a wide variety of churches. Thanks to my seminary training, I have a deeper appreciation for the theological work being done in, by, and through church music. I got my start singing as a young child at Southminster with “Wee Choir”, directed by Ms. Liz and Ms. Anne as they were known to us—two very special people who had a tremendous impact on all the children who had the opportunity to be a part of that choir.

I stayed active in Southminster all through high school and toyed with the idea of seminary or attending a Presbyterian college at that time. In the end, however, I chose to pursue environmental studies at the University of Kansas. From the time I moved away from home I did not actively seek out a new church community. I remained a member at Southminster but only attended church when I was home in Kansas City. After college I moved abroad and only sporadically attended church. My relationship with God and Jesus remained intact throughout my life, but my sense of belonging in church waned during this period. I experienced this time as one of not being able to find a church that fit me like my home church. But I recognize now that I was not actually trying to find a new church community. I wonder if this was a form of self-preservation in light of my emerging understanding of my sexual orientation and identity. The messaging from the Church at large was that who I am was irreconcilable with the teachings of the Bible and that those like me could not rightfully accept the invitation to Jesus’ table. I did not and could not believe that in my heart. I lived my connection to God in my own way. Only later did I finally find the courage and resolve to push back against these marginalizing understandings of Jesus, God, the Bible, the Church, and Christianity.

My return to the U.S. ten years ago has played a crucial role in my return to active church membership and discernment of my call to ministry. It was here in Boston that I felt drawn back to church. Here in Boston I could no longer ignore the growing desire to reclaim my faith and stand up against those who would exclude any whom Jesus calls to him. The fact that my move here was unexpected and seemed complete coincidence makes my journey feel all the more special. Without that turn of events I might not have found my way back to church, nor considered seminary, nor discovered BU School of Theology, Fourth Presbyterian Church, and Church of the Covenant, all of which have profoundly impacted my life and shaped me into the aspiring Presbyterian pastor I am today. Now I can more clearly see it and claim it as God at work. And I am deeply grateful. Thanks be to God and with God’s help I look forward to continuing to discover the future path that lays before me.

Statement of Faith

I believe in God, who created all that is. Scripture gives us many images of God—as father and mother, rock and refuge, judge and comforter—to help us understand the complexities of who God is. God is one word we use to name the divine. There are many others: *Elohim*, *El Roi*, *Y-H-W-H*, *Allah*, etc. Humans and our myriad languages are limited, finite, and fallible. Human words can never capture the immensity, vastness, and ineffableness of God. My faith and my understanding of God is deeply cross cultural and interreligious, influenced not only by the church I grew up in but in the many communities and individuals I have encountered—rabbis and rabbinical students, imams, priests, nuns, “nones”, atheists, and everything in between. Our God is a relentless God always willing to meet us wherever, whoever, and however we are. I believe that God is love and that boundless, uncontainable love inspires awe in me each and every single day through countless faces, cityscapes, and landscapes.

I believe in Jesus, the anointed one of God.¹ God’s only son; truly human and truly divine. The incarnation—blending human and divine—seems impossible, yet we believe. By mysteries beyond our comprehension Jesus was born of Mary. He was loved and raised by her and Joseph, a humble craftsman in Nazareth, who trained Jesus in the family trade. Through his life and ministry Jesus taught and modeled for us how God calls us to love and serve our fellow human beings and all of creation. Jesus did not work through the powerful or the self-righteous, but through those whom society too often rejects or discounts. Jesus the Messiah provides our best and most direct access to God as God’s holy Word and through the two sacraments he taught us: baptism and the Lord’s supper. These provide tangible, embodied expressions of God’s love and grace and God’s abiding presence with us. God’s Word and Sacraments connect us and remind us of the new way of being that Jesus modeled for us, which is capable of transforming a broken world and systems. That is the work of the Church—the body of Christ constituted through his death and resurrection—to be with the marginalized and oppressed and work together to lift everyone up through the sharing in God’s love for all of God’s good creation.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the most mysterious person of the trinity, who moves among us, connecting, inspiring, and catalyzing us to action and calling us always to be and to do better. The Holy Spirit works with and through us to illuminate the Word of God through scripture, through worship, through relationships, through our day to day. God is still active and we have more yet to learn through our engagement with God’s creation and with the help of the *Ru’ah ha-kodesh*².

I believe in one holy and united Church. I believe that we are called to be an ever wider, ever more inclusive, ever more loving community. I believe that we are stronger and better—albeit messier and more complicated—together. Despite being created in the image of God, we are imperfect creatures prone to self-interest and self-preservation—the manifestation and root of sin. To reveal or point to the world God envisioned and the “kin(g)dom”³ Jesus proclaimed to be already here is an endless and possibly impossible task for finite, fallible humankind. Yet, the triune God calls us continually to long for justice and do what we can in every moment to reveal or point to that “kin(g)dom” of God—God’s New Creation—which is constantly being brought into being in a world ever in need of reform.

I acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. I look for the resurrection of the dead and believe that we cannot know what happens after death. It is yet another mystery. Whatever happens is in God’s hands and will be right and true. My task is to seek to live my life in a way that honors God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit through serving others and leaving the world a better, more whole place than that which I inherited at my birth in whatever small ways I may be able to do so with God’s help. Amen.

¹ I use this language to highlight the connection with the Hebrew (*Ha-Meshiach*) and Greek (*Ho Xristos*)

² I use the Hebrew words for “Holy Spirit” in honor of Howard Thurman who used these very words with a young Hasidic rabbi in 1955, sparking his transformation into interreligious leader and founder of Jewish Renewal.

³ I use “kin(g)dom” to recognize and lean away from the patriarchal/hierarchical language of our past.



Name: Tom Reid

Title: Associate Director, Miller Center for Interreligious Learning & Leadership

Supervisor: Rabbi Or Rose, Director

Department: Miller Center for Interreligious Learning & Leadership

Updated: 23 Nov 2020

About the Miller Center: The mission of the Miller Center is to provide current and future religious and ethical leaders with the knowledge and skills to serve in a religiously diverse society. Our work is rooted in the cultivation of authentic personal and institutional relationships across lines of difference. It is our conviction that through study, dialogue, and joint action, we can help create a more just, compassionate, and sustainable world. The Miller Center staff works with clergy, academics, and communal leaders, as well as high school students, graduate students, and seminarians. We are involved in both local and national initiatives, using a combination of in-person and online educational tools. Additionally, we produce both scholarly and popular resources to help advance the fields of interreligious education and engagement.

Main purpose of role: The Associate Director (AD) works closely with the Director on advancing the mission of the Miller Center, and with Miller Center staff in the management of the Center's day-to-day operations. The AD engages in strategic thinking and support of all aspects of the Center's work and has a primary focus on the following programs/activities: the Boston Interfaith Leadership Initiative (BILI), State of Formation Blog, and *Journal of Interreligious Studies (JIRS)*.

Responsibilities include:

General Miller Center Administration

- In coordination with the Director, oversee the day-to-day operations of the center, including collaboration with other parts of Hebrew College
- Supervise other Miller Center staff as necessary
- Serve as externship supervisor for Boston University (BU) Office of Religious Life students serving externship placements and BU School of Theology and/or other BTI students participating in contextual/field education placements at the Miller Center, including facilitating regular theological reflection meetings with students as per program requirements

- Participate regularly and/or serve in a leadership role in the life of a religious/ethical community in the Boston area
- Speak, preach, research, and write whenever and wherever appropriate opportunities may arise
- Help plan and facilitate regularly scheduled meetings of the Miller Center Advisory Committee
- Build and maintain relationships with interreligious organizations and a broad spectrum of communities of faith/worldviews in the Boston area and beyond
- Represent the Miller Center at meetings and events in Boston and beyond
- Maintain Miller Center membership and represent the Center in professional organizations including: the Association for Chaplaincy and Spiritual Life in Higher Education (ACSLHE), Council of Centers on Jewish-Christian Relations (CCJR) and as an affiliate status member with the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), etc.
- Maintain relationship with the Association of Interreligious/Interfaith Studies (AIIS) and other professional organizations
- Provide administrative and logistical support as necessary for all other Miller Center public events and initiatives

Boston Interfaith Leadership Initiative (BILI)

- Oversee all aspects of BILI fellowship for Boston-area undergraduate students
- In collaboration with the Director, plan and refine the BILI curriculum for each year; secure guest speakers and venues as necessary
- Lead and provide programmatic support for the BILI fall orientation, monthly gatherings (virtual or in person as needed), and spring retreat, which is to be planned by the fellows
- Coordinate meetings of BILI steering committee and provide regular updates to partner institutions in order to build relationships among colleagues from Boston-area collegiate level spiritual life staff and to share best practices among peers
- Supervise undergraduate staff (e.g. BILI Alumni/ae Liaison) encouraging their growth within their role and as leaders
- Supervise all aspects of grant funding related to the program (e.g. Arthur Vining Davis Foundations) and pursue other grant opportunities as needed
- Coordinate billing of participant institutions for their participation in/support of BILI
- Coordinate payment of BILI fellows, staff, and guest speakers

Journal of Interreligious Studies

- Serve as administrative director of the Journal
- Manage the Journal's staff, including Editor-in-Chief, Senior Editor, doctoral researchers, publishers, and any students or staff supporting *JIRS*
- Schedule and facilitate monthly Journal staff calls
- Schedule and facilitate quarterly meetings of the Journal's board of advisors

- Work collaboratively with the editors of the Journal to solicit content submissions from presenters at the American Academy of Religion (AAR) annual meeting and other professional conferences
- Assist the Senior Editor in mailing books for review
- Coordinate payment of all Journal staff
- Maintain appropriate website registrations

State of Formation (online platform for emerging thought leadership)

- Supervise State of Formation editor/writing coach (bi-weekly call)
- Maintain appropriate State of Formation website registration