



# Congregational Meeting Sunday, June 6th, 2010

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*The Pastor Nominating Committee  
Presents its Nominee for Pastor*

*Introducing*  
**Dr. Nancy McIlwain Morris**

*Currently serving as  
Associate Pastor of  
Second Presbyterian Church, Roanoke, Virginia*



# **Statement of Faith**

*by Nancy Morris*

My life is claimed by God, Creator of all that is. In love, majesty and power, God spoke and our world came into being, a world of beauty and wonder. Though absolute in power, God did not desire to live in aloneness, but rather created humanity to live in joyful relationship with God and to care for God's creation. In love, God granted men and women the freedom to choose, and sin quickly entered into our world. But God did not give up on us. Seeking to reestablish relationship, God called a people to be God's own. In covenantal love, God reached out to us through patriarchs and prophets. In the fullness of God's time, God took on human form in Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God and Redeemer of humankind.

In Jesus, we see what God is like. He healed the sick, broke the chains of injustice and inhumanity, proclaimed the reign of God, and called all persons to follow him in costly, life-giving discipleship. Undeterred by the forces of sin and fear, Jesus endured death by human hands. God then raised Jesus again to life, forever defeating the powers of death and separation. In his death and resurrection, the power of redeeming love overcame the power of sin, of my sin, and reconciled humanity, myself included, to God. In the gift of his life, I find my own life: healed, whole, and abundant. This is God's gift of salvation uniquely offered through Christ for the entire world.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God's sustaining presence is made real in the world and in my life. The Spirit inspires faith and enables us to worship. The Spirit opens our eyes to new callings and understandings. The Spirit comforts us in times of doubt, despair, and bewilderment. On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit gave life to a waiting and expectant community of disciples who were empowered to become the Church. As Christians today, we are heirs of that birth and recipients of that power. The Church is God's partner in the work of re-creating the world. It exists to proclaim the reconciling and redeeming love of God, to nurture faithful, committed discipleship, and to heal broken lives and a broken world.

The Church finds its identity and strength in the faithful work of worship, especially as it proclaims the Word of God and celebrates the sacraments. In the waters of baptism, we are claimed and reborn as God's children. We are cleansed from sin and received into the covenant community of the Church, God's family. We receive a name, an identity, and a vocation. As God's children, we spend our lives living into our baptism, reclaiming its life-giving power to constantly re-create us. In the bread and cup of Communion, we come face to face with the reality of Christ's love for us. It is a moment of presence, of mercy, of celebration, and of sustenance. Even as his gift of love sought to restore hope and faith among the first disciples, his bread and cup bind all Christians together in unity until we shall all feast together at God's great banquet table.

The Church proclaims the Word, Christ raised and living among us, as it claims and teaches Scripture, the written Word, the unique record of God's on-going revelation. As Christians, we have no other source for discovering who we are in God's eyes, how we are to live our lives as God's children, and what God has done and is doing in our world. We proclaim its marvelous stories and truths because we need constant reminding that God's Word always has been and always shall be the final word no matter what our world might say.

Christ's Church, though divided on earth, embraces all who claim him as Savior and Lord. When we are faithful to our confession, the Holy Spirit governs the Church, empowering it for faithful mission and service. The government of the Church binds us together as brothers and sisters in Christ, no matter what our individual gifts and callings are. The gifts of Church order in the tradition known as Presbyterian provide for the strength of unity amidst the power of diversity. We are bound together by Spirit and tradition and cannot break that bond without breaking the heart of God.



*Nancy and her team on a mission in the Dominican Republic.*

# **Autobiographical Statement and Faith Journey**

*by Nancy Morris*

I love church; I have for as long as I can remember. In my family, I was the one who always wanted to be there whenever the doors were open. I loved Sunday school and Training Union and GAs. I loved Sunday morning worship and I really loved Sunday evening worship. If you grew up as a Southern Baptist the way I did, you'll know what I mean by Training Union and GAs. If you didn't, just ask. I would be glad to explain.

The congregation of Madison Baptist Church, Madison, NJ nurtured my faith as a child. It was a Southern Baptist Church in suburban New Jersey. My dad's business took him to Manhattan in the fifties. My mom was the Baptist; my dad was a Presbyterian (actually from South Carolina). As it usually happens, her church preferences prevailed. When they discovered a newly forming SBC congregation, my mom was immediately drawn to it. Most of those in the congregation were transplants just like her. They became quick friends.

Because we were one of only a couple of families who actually lived in Madison, we were at the building often. I remember visiting with my dad while it was under construction. My call to ministry came in that building about ten years later when I found myself in the sanctuary very early one Easter morning. It was the waning hours of a youth lock-in. As youth are prone to do, we were roaming the church. And as youth are prone to do, we were imitating the grown-ups. In a fleeting moment, while standing behind the pulpit, actually a bit in jest, a voice sounded somewhere inside my head. "This is where I want you to be," it said. It took decades for me to even remember the moment; even longer to believe it; and longer still to claim it as a call to pastoral ministry. Perhaps in this call as pastor for the saints of Seneca Presbyterian, that moment could finally be fulfilled.

I did sense a call to church work even as a teen. With no experience of a woman in the pulpit or even in leadership positions, that call had to be deepened – as it was during college years and seminary. The first half of my ministerial career was spent among the Baptists – but they were the moderate branch of what became the sundered Southern Baptist Convention. Remaining a faithful Baptist, I attended the Divinity School of Duke University.

I wanted a more academic and ecumenical education than what was being offered even at the excellent Southern Baptist seminaries of the seventies. That education led me to seek ordination as a Southern Baptist female in 1977 – my first “laying on of hands.”

Throughout my years in ministry, I’ve managed to obtain two theological degrees from Methodist seminaries and serve among American Baptists, Southern Baptists, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Baptists, and Presbyterians. It has been a rich life! My longest tenure (12 years) among Baptists was as minister for children and family life at St. John’s Baptist in Charlotte, NC. Our children were born in Charlotte during those years.

A mention of family seems in order here. My husband Phil and I met in college and were married before I started seminary. He has been supportive of every move along my journey of ministry. Our children are Rachel and Jeff, twins born in 1984, and Ben, born in 1989. Jeff is getting married this fall, lives in Roanoke, and works as a technician in an optical lab. Rachel is a phlebotomist working for the Red Cross in Durham, NC. Ben is a rising junior at Elon University (Elon, NC) majoring in acting.

Picking up the story, we left Charlotte for Macon, GA in 1995. I was to be an editor for children’s curriculum with Smyth & Helwys Publishing. In Macon, we discovered Northminster Presbyterian Church and the ministry of Richard Caldwell. After three grueling years as an editor, Northminster called me as their educator. It’s a long story full of details, but in yet another sanctuary, I heard a call to become a Presbyterian Minister of Word and Sacrament. That call took me through ordination exams, my second “laying on of hands,” and to Second Presbyterian Church of Roanoke, VA where I have happily served as Associate Pastor for Christian Education for nine years.

Second is a wonderful congregation with a significant love of learning, but the longing to be “the pastor” has lived in my heart for many years. How blessed I am to have that possibility among the saints of Seneca!



**Dr. Nancy M. Morris**

## **Education**

Madison High School  
*Madison, New Jersey*

The University of NC at Chapel Hill  
*AB, Secondary Education*

The Divinity School of Duke University  
*Master of Divinity*

The Theology School of Drew University  
*Doctor of Ministry*

## **Career Ministry Experience**

Second Presbyterian Church, Roanoke, VA  
*Associate Pastor*

Northminster Presbyterian Church, Macon, GA  
*Educator*

St. John's Baptist Church, Charlotte, NC  
*Minister, Childhood and Family Life Education*

Montgomery Community Baptist Church, Cincinnati, Ohio  
*Associate Pastor*

## **Other Experience and Continuing Education**

Editor, *Smyth & Helwys Publishing*; Resource Center Coordinator, *cooperative of six local churches, Orange Presbytery, Durham, NC*; Member, *Associate General Presbyter Search Committee, Presbytery of the Peaks*; Member, *Division of Christian Education and Leadership Development, Presbytery of the Peaks*; Division Chair, and Member of Presbytery's Council, *Presbytery of the Peaks*; Member, *Rehoboth Steering Committee for the Rehoboth Project of Union PSCE (Lilly Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Grant)*; (continued)

## **A Word from your Pastor Nominating Committee**

Since the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) was elected by the congregation to represent you faithfully in our pastor search, we have striven to seek the best person for Seneca Presbyterian Church at this time and for the future. We began our work as a committee in January 2009 and have continually sought God's call for our church and have prayed for God to lead the right person to join us as our pastor. We have heard God and so has our nominee, Dr. Nancy M. Morris.

The search for a pastor in any church involves a great deal of tenacity, personal strength, and prayer on the part of everyone in the congregation. We can truly affirm that prayer and thoughtful consideration by all for this important task have led Nancy to seek God's call in her life to join with us in a ministry of hope and service for Seneca Presbyterian Church and our community.

In order to arrive at this point, the PNC struggled with the proper wording of our Church Information Form so that it would indeed reflect the spirit and devotion of this congregation toward God's work in our local community, region, nation and the world. Having completed that important step, we began in earnest the job of collecting Personal Information Forms (PIF), reviewing those forms, making telephone calls, sending email messages, making personal visits, and conducting interviews.

The PNC wishes to thank the congregation for its support and continued prayers throughout this process. Also, we wish to express our gratitude to you for your faith in the PNC. It was shortly after we began our initial planning that we all became fully aware of the tremendous responsibility with which you entrusted us on your behalf. We knew the gravity of our responsibility, but, at the same time, we were lifted by God's love and guidance as we assumed the duties as your representative body. This was genuinely an awe inspiring and deeply rewarding experience for us as your PNC.

Thank you again for your trust and confidence in the PNC members.