

Faith Journey:

My Christian journey began as a young child when I prayed to ask Jesus into my heart with my parents at 6 years old. I was baptized at Christ’s American Baptist Church (CABC) at 13 years old and grew up learning about the Bible from amazing Sunday School teachers as well as the influence in my home by both of my believing parents. I have had people influence my faith journey through every season of my life. Early on it was my parents and Sunday School teacher, Mrs. “C”, as well as volunteers with a ministry called Pioneer Club. Those influences launched me into my teen years with much anticipation about youth group and all I would experience there. My youth pastor, Adin Herndon, knew how to make everything engaging. We had a choir that traveled around the region performing and enjoyed time away on retreats that impacted and grew my faith to become more my own. I was experiencing the true power of the Holy Spirit as I felt a change in my heart’s desire to be close to the Lord. I also watched as dear friends turned their hearts to Jesus, and on one retreat I personally prayed with a friend, Beth, to accept Jesus and begin a journey of following Him. Beth was an exuberant follower of Christ from the moment I was able to pray with her. She died tragically in an accident at 19 years old, but her death had a strong impact on my spiritual life.

CABC Youth Group affected my spiritual walk through the years. I had incredible youth leaders who poured into my spiritual journey not just by teaching me, but by walking with me through the good and bad times and challenging me in my faith. They also called out my God-given gifts to use for His kingdom work. Some of these men and women took time to disciple me. Whether it was meeting for a small group in their home or meeting me for coffee and

24 sending me an encouraging note after, these individuals encouraged my relationship with the
25 Lord. I believe this discipleship helped me avoid some pain in my teenage and young adult years.
26 I knew I had God-fearing adults praying and contending for me as a child of God.

27 There was a season in college where I did not have many Christian influences around me,
28 and although I attended church and tried to keep close to Jesus, there was a distance in my
29 relationship with Him. After college, my husband and I were married and intended to put Jesus
30 more at the center of our marriage and our life. A good friend at my work, Kelly, invited us to a
31 home group. She and her husband were doing a Home Builders curriculum with a few couples
32 from our church in Maryland. This curriculum and the days spent with those couples changed the
33 trajectory of our life in marriage and family. We began to see God's design for relationship and
34 family.

35 One of our family's largest spiritual influences has been our service in the Dominican
36 Republic with the Haitian community living there in the sugar cane fields. Over the past 5 years
37 our family (my husband, Mike and our children, Jack, Molly and Mark) has committed to
38 serving there yearly, grown to the role of leading the team, and oversees (with the leadership
39 hired in the DR) the education of 70+ students each year through our church-supported school in
40 one of the Bateys. This work has been spiritually fulfilling for me and has given me vision to see
41 how God can provide all we "need according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus," (Philippians
42 4:19).

43 **Call to Ministry:**

44 My call to ministry came in midlife. Looking back on my spiritual formation in my faith
45 journey, I see God's hand preparing me for this time. I have a master's degree in social work, and
46 music has always been a passion of mine. When my husband and I returned to the York, PA area,

47 we searched for a church and ended right back at my home church, CABC. About 5 years later,
48 the church needed a part-time worship director, and I got the job. Through this job, I received a
49 staff relations person (much like HR in the business world but with more spiritual support). My
50 “person,” Mary, and I began our every-6-month check-ins. This relationship grew, and as she
51 continued to ask me the same developmental questions each meeting, I began to have a stirring
52 in my heart to pursue more Biblical education. I joined the Bible Project app and followed their
53 plan at the beginning of 2022. I found I was loving to learn the context of the scripture, the
54 Hebrew words that expanded my knowledge and understanding of the text, and their
55 explanations of different Biblical stories. It left me wanting more. While Mary and I would
56 discuss certificate programs or online Bible education programs, I kept finding myself leaning
57 toward a more comprehensive approach.

58 About four years ago I was leading worship on our stage at CABC, and the Holy Spirit
59 met me there. I believe this was my clear call into ministry. At this time my relationship with the
60 Lord had grown to an understanding that all of life is mission. This change in mindset has
61 propelled me to a fervent commitment to a fluid life in service to Christ Jesus. That Sunday
62 morning in worship together as a church family, God revealed, through the Holy Spirit, His heart
63 for caring for His people and what it means to feed His sheep. My eyes were opened to the hurt
64 and pain and difficulty that people in our congregation were having, and the compassion that
65 poured out of me in those moments was only that which could be from the Holy Spirit. I think
66 this was a moment of calling on my life. Missions, discipleship, caring for and counseling
67 people, and speaking the truth of the grace and mercy extended by Jesus Christ have become a
68 passion.

After losing the opportunity at a full-time job in my school community to which I thought the Lord was calling me, Mike and I sat down to grieve that loss, and God turned it into a dreaming session. We sat up late discussing how our church had been searching for two years for a Youth Pastor with no correct fit. We talked about my growing passion for Jesus and for people to know and have a relationship with Him. We talked about what it could look like for our family of 5 to have me move into full-time ministry. Within a week's time, I was applying for the position. I submitted to the process of discernment with the search committee for that position, and in May 2023 I was called as the Director of Youth, Young Adults, and Music at CABC. This role at CABC has given me a place and space to grow as a minister of the gospel.

Gifts for Ministry:

God continues to refine and define the gifts that I bring to ministry. In the *domata* gifts (gifts of people given to the church) of Ephesians 4, I first identify to the pastor. With my training in social work, it is natural for me to sit with people in hard times, whether death and loss, personal struggles, or even spiritual questions. I offer and provide a supportive presence, active listening, and spiritual direction. What I believe God is growing in me through this call to ministry with youth, young adults, and music, are the gifts of teacher and prophet. As the main teacher at our youth group, I am concerned about teaching the spiritual development of this current generation. With so much clamoring for their attention, I am passionate about directing them into a relationship with Jesus Christ as they grow up into him who is the head (Ephesians 4:15). The Spirit is leading me in teaching them to discern right and wrong and to grow step by step in their relationship with Jesus. This has also birthed mentorship relationships with young ladies in the church as well as studies that guide young women to a firm understanding of what they believe and a depth of Bible Study many have not experienced. Lastly, I am growing in my

92 gift of prophet. The Spirit has prompted me in my heart to ask often, “What does the church need
93 to hear from God today?” and to seek that answer from the Word. My confidence to speak truth
94 with a heart full of love and compassion has grown out of the initial call to ministry I mentioned
95 above where the Spirit expanded my compassion and love for God’s people and grew the gift of
96 preaching and forthtelling of the scriptures for today.

97 For the *charisma* gifts (or gifts of the Spirit) in 1 Corinthians 12, I’ve found that in
98 personal interpretation of these gifts, I possess mercy and discernment. My youth leaders, Karen
99 and Christine, called these out in me and confirmed these gifts in my high school years. My
100 created nature has always been empathic, but discernment grew in my teen years. The most
101 important growth area for me in my call to ministry coming right out of 1 Corinthians 12, but
102 being applied to the gifts of Ephesians 4, is the unity of the body of Christ. I do not see this call
103 into ministry as one of elevation, but as one of submission and of servant leadership. My value is
104 not found in a position or title. It is found in my creator, God.

105 **Academic and Field Preparation:**

106 I have completed my Master of Divinity degree through Palmer Theological Seminary
107 effective August 23, 2026. I also have a Master of Social Work degree from the University of
108 Pennsylvania and am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW).

109 My field preparation is unique as I believe that my 20 years of social work experience
110 impacts my field work in ministry. I have worked in hospice organizations, rehab hospital
111 settings, and owned and operated my own business caring for older adults and their families at
112 transitional times in their need for case management. My ministry field preparation is primarily
113 in worship ministry as the music director at CABC for the past 10 years (2 of those years in a
114 voluntary role). Since May 2023, I have served as the Director of Youth, Young Adults, and

115 Music. My ministry involves weekly youth group, retreats, choirs, worship team coordination,
116 young ladies Bible Study, and coordinating our yearly mission trip to the Dominican Republic as
117 well as our yearly support of the School at Batey 35, the mission project of CABC. I continue to
118 pray and discern the direction of our ministry with my family.

119 **Reasons for Seeking Ordination within ABCUSA:**

120 My desire to seek ordination is twofold. First, I believe it is the next step in faithfully
121 submitting to God's call and direction on my life. Secondly, I view ordination as a process in
122 which I am not elevated in service to God, but taking the role of a servant, actively giving my
123 life to the ministry in which God will direct my path. Ordination is a step in assuming leadership
124 and care of a group of people that God has entrusted within and beyond the walls of this specific
125 community. This leadership is not a personal promotion, but a role to equip the Saints for the
126 good work that has already been prepared for them to do in advance (Ephesians 2:10).

127 ABCUSA provides a supportive, quality environment for my continued journey of
128 submission. I am willing to submit to the polity that empowers local churches to call their pastors
129 while maintaining autonomy in governance. The practice of communion and baptism aligns with
130 my beliefs while allowing each church to express these ordinances creatively and meaningfully
131 within its context. ABC also supports my belief that each person has the opportunity to choose to
132 follow Jesus Christ. As part of the priesthood of all believers, each person can approach God
133 individually and experience freedom in their relationship with Jesus. This priesthood also calls us
134 to rely interdependently on one another's gifts within the local church.

135 **GENERAL COMPREHENSION OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE**

136 Throughout this Comprehension of Christian Doctrine and Practice, I will return to the
137 theme of mutual submission, servanthood, and the motivations that these doctrines bring to

138 living a life on mission partnering with God in what He is doing in the world today. Rather than
139 attempt to encompass the unending facets of God and His mission, I will view each doctrine and
140 practice through the lens of humble servanthood modeled by God to us for the purpose of
141 advancing His kingdom here “on earth as it is in heaven,” (Matthew 6:10).

142 **The Person of God**

143 I believe in one true, living, Triune (one God in three persons: The Father, the Son and
144 the Spirit) God. The person of God is Father. God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent.
145 God desires to be with us and is *ontologically* (in His own being) community within himself.
146 Mutual submission within the Triune God models the mystery of the freedom that we as *Imago*
147 *Dei* (image bearers of God) gain when we submit to the Father’s will as God’s son modeled in
148 the mutuality of the Trinity.

149 God the Father is creator: “Let us make mankind in our image,” (Genesis 1:26). As
150 creator, God the Father is always doing something new. God remains himself eternally, but we
151 see scripture pointing to the creativeness of God. “Create in me a clean heart,” (Psalms 51:10).
152 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here,”
153 (2 Corinthians 5:17).

154 God is able to make all things new, and God’s redemptive power is a large part of God’s
155 character. This in turn allows us as *Imago Dei* to be free in creating as God has given us freedom.
156 Like our God, we are relational, free, creative, and intelligent. Together, something new is
157 created in us, through us, or even around us as we look to God to continue the work of creating
158 even today.

159 God the Father models servanthood for me. His desire to dwell with and relate to His
160 people gives me the posture of Samuel: “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening,” (1 Samuel

161 3:10). Samuel humbles himself to hear God as he is called into ministry. The Old Testament
162 servants of God listened for His superior voice and direction.

163 Yet, even in His superiority, God hears His people's desires. He heard Israel's cries in
164 Egypt and delivered them from oppression. Later, when Israel asked for a king like other nations,
165 God allowed it, though it was not His desired leadership. To me, this shows that God is relational
166 and accessible.

167 **The Person of Jesus Christ**

168 The person of Jesus Christ is the Word and the Son of God. "The Word became flesh and
169 made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who
170 came from the Father, full of grace and truth," (John 1:14). Jesus is man, and Jesus is God. As
171 the scripture above alludes, He holds both grace and truth, and these are in tension with each
172 other.

173 The person of Jesus is equal to God the Father and God the Spirit, but in submission to
174 Godself, offers himself as a sacrifice for the salvation of all. Philippians 2:6-8 references that
175 Jesus did not use or exploit His divine status to elevate himself, but being in very nature God, He
176 emptied himself out for our salvation from sin. Being fully God, He submitted himself to the life
177 of a mere mortal where He would experience both birth and death and empty himself for the
178 eternal life of all.

179 Jesus Christ is looked to as an example of how to live our lives. In His own words, Jesus
180 calls His followers to shed the ways of humanity not in lording power and authority over each
181 other, but to become a servant to all. "For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to
182 serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many," (Mark 10:45).

Jesus' servant leadership culminated in washing His disciples' feet, including the one He knew would betray him. "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you," (John 13:15). Theologians often wrestle with whether this means literally washing feet, but what is clear is that Jesus took a task reserved for servants and made it His own. He humbly met needs, welcomed outsiders and the lowly, and served those who would ultimately reject and crucify him. Jesus' ultimate act of servant leadership was willingly laying down His life, like a lamb led to slaughter, to reconcile the world to God.

Jesus accomplished our redemption through His life, death, resurrection, and ascension, each revealing a distinct facet of His person and work. Like a diamond, Jesus is whole, yet each facet reveals something unique about Him. His work cannot be separated from the power and presence of the entire Trinity. The Spirit was with Jesus in the wilderness when He experienced temptation, and throughout John's Gospel, Jesus repeatedly calls upon and points to the Father.

The life and ministry of Jesus—expressed through His solidarity with the oppressed, His crucifixion and resurrection, and the inclusive offer of salvation—reveal the Trinity as the liberating presence of God among the poor and marginalized, embodying divine justice and hope. Jesus' incarnation, God with us, enters fully into the mess of our humanity. He joined our poverty, our oppression, and our human suffering. Our God came to live with His people, experiencing all that humans go through in bodily form.

The "son of man must be lifted up" (John 3:14) to be raised on the third day. Jesus, King of the Jews is raised up on the cross like on a throne, with a robe and crown, and His name is placed above His head. He truly is a King, but He showed His love to us in a way that the world couldn't even recognize because it looked like shame instead of honor. This fully compassionate

205 love the Triune God has for us is expressed through the person of Jesus Christ. He now sits at the
206 right hand of the Father and continues to intercede on our behalf as Savior and friend.

207 **The Person of the Holy Spirit**

208 The Holy Spirit can also be described as a servant leader. The Holy Spirit empowers,
209 guides, supports, and comforts us as we pursue God's desires for our lives. We are compelled to
210 love and follow God's commands but only by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit within
211 us that brings us into right relationship with God.

212 Acts 1:8 says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you
213 will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

214 The early church waited to receive the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said it was good for Him
215 to go away at His ascension because the *Paraclete* (one to come alongside) can then come.

216 The Spirit is present throughout all of scripture, often noticed in the Old Testament as the
217 *ruach* (breath). This same power then came upon the early church as their mission and ministry
218 began in Jerusalem. The personal qualities of the Spirit are guiding, convicting, interceding,
219 calling, commissioning, grieving, and communicating. We can experience renewal in our faith by
220 the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 5:18 reminds us to continually "be being filled," by the Spirit.

221 Gifts of the Spirit can continue today in genuine expressions that are sought by a heart
222 that desires God to be glorified rather than bringing glory to oneself. The power of the Spirit is to
223 then give the Church power to do the work of God in the world. As the gifts of the Spirit are used
224 to edify the body, the body grows in their understanding of the power of the Holy Spirit. These
225 gifts are for the whole Church and are given to show God's power at work in our midst. The
226 Spirit is in conflict with our sinful nature, so when we walk with the Spirit and allow Him to lead

227 us, we experience freedom in our relationship with God, and our desires align with God's for our
228 life.

229 **Humanity and Sin**

230 Humanity was given life through the breath of the Spirit and made in the image of our
231 God (Genesis 2:7). The Triune God together created in union male and female as humanity. God
232 said it was good (Genesis 1:31). The fact that God calls humans "good" means that, in His
233 fullness, God saw humans as image bearers and as part of the "good" creation that includes day
234 and night, water and land, birds and fish, vegetation, and animals. Yet this account also
235 introduces original sin. Sins such as pride and ego shape our negative thoughts and behaviors,
236 diminishing the goodness we are capable of representing in the world.

237 Sin is our sickness and the bent of all humanity. Human beings are complex; each part
238 can affect the whole. We are made up of emotion, mind, and body, and the whole person of each
239 human is not summed by the wrong choices that he or she makes, but of the living soul in each
240 *Imago Dei* (image bearer). Humans are complex and alike in many of our characteristics, but
241 also different in the many complexities that are unique to each individual.

242 Sins are attitudes and behaviors that diminish life. It happens when we use our free will
243 in harmful ways, either to ourselves or to others. Sin separates us from God (Genesis 3).
244 Humanity is born into a life of sin. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"
245 (Romans 3:23).

246 From the beginning we see the damage of sin blocking up the very vessels that God was
247 using to bless the nations. Israel was to be a blessing to the nations. Israel blocked up the channel
248 of blessing through their sinful choices, and this damage affected their story through the Old

249 Testament and into the New Covenant of Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus' victory broke open
250 the dammed-up conduit and allowed the blessing to flow again.

251 **Salvation -- The Nature of the Gospel**

252 Jesus Christ made atonement for the penalty that sin caused humanity. Salvation is the
253 continued covenant that God made with His people. Jesus was victorious over sin once and for
254 all, and the separation that occurred at the fall of humanity in Genesis 3 is overcome. The ransom
255 humanity owes for their condition is now paid.

256 Like God the Father throughout the first covenant, Jesus' incarnation was the significant
257 renewal humanity needed. Yet again, God dwelt with humanity in the birth of Jesus Christ. Jesus
258 first loved us (1 John 4:19), His grace was first extended to us, and we are able to respond to that
259 *prevenient grace* (grace that comes before).

260 Humanity is justified the moment we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, acknowledge His
261 death and resurrection, confess our sins, and are willing to accept the grace given by Jesus
262 (Romans 10:9). As Christ followers, we then enter into a life of sanctification; the process in
263 which we are being made holy throughout our lives. This is what the Holy Spirit does in us. For
264 by grace we are saved, and not from the good works that we do (Ephesians 2:8).

265 The nature of the Gospel (good news) begins that the Triune God models a different way
266 than the world. A mutual submission to each other. This unity and mutuality are the basis of the
267 good news of Trinitarian doctrine. God models unity and comes in the form of a human to give
268 us the examples of drawing near to those in need. This nature of an incarnate God gives way for
269 the coming of our Savior through Jesus Christ. His death and resurrection are the good news of
270 the Gospel and the hope we have in Salvation through Jesus Christ alone (John 3:16).

271 **View of Scripture**

God reveals himself through the Holy Scriptures. The Bible is the inerrant and infallible Word of God, from which all instruction for the Christian life is derived. “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,” (2 Timothy 3:16) for the lifetime of a Christ follower.

The Bible is Holy Scripture. Each book in the 66 books of canonical texts were written in a genre or literary form, in a specific time, place and language, and with contextual theological assumptions. Scripture is set apart from other literature because new understanding can be taken from it depending on the specific space and time one finds oneself. The word is alive and active (Hebrews 4:12).

The Gospel truths are woven through the narratives of the early books to the expression of worship found in the poems, the books of the Gospels, and the Epistles. Our Bible is broad and encompassing. We can relate even to the difficult accounts of the prophets as a community of Christians throughout the world, living in exile from our home in heaven. We can hold on to hope because of the hardships that we endure. These prophetic words encourage us on through peril. And as we read through a new lens from the influence of the authors, we can conceptualize hope in a brand-new way. Approaching Scripture with a desire to know God more deeply helps us grow closer to Him, understand His character and ways, follow Him, and apply His truth to our lives.

The Christian Hope -- The Meaning of Death and Eternal Life

We, as believers, are offered everlasting life through a professed faith in Jesus as our personal Savior. This is a personal decision and secures our inheritance of life with God for eternity upon our earthly death. We are sealed in that inheritance by the Holy Spirit and guaranteed to be God’s possession for eternity (Ephesians 1:13-14).

295 We have been received through Jesus Christ as children and co-heirs with Christ to a
296 heavenly inheritance (1 Peter 1:3-5). He leads us home, and through death, we are brought into
297 the hope of eternal life. The lion will lay down with the lamb. Peace will reign eternal, and we
298 will worship our God forever. This life is not all there is, and we can live today knowing that
299 Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father, interceding on our behalf (Romans 8:34). Jesus
300 understands us and is with us. As the words of the hymn remind us, “Because He lives, I can face
301 tomorrow,” and all the days ahead with the hope of eternity in mind.

302 **Christian Eschatology**

303 As Christians we live in a liminality of “already and not yet.” Christ has redeemed the
304 world through His death and resurrection, and yet we wait for Christ’s return. The kingdom of
305 God is here and yet is to come. Part of our eschatology is living in this liminality and realizing
306 our mission to partner with what God is doing in the world. There is hope in the return of Christ,
307 but also a call to participate in the kingdom, “on earth as it is in heaven,” (Matthew 6:10) as
308 Jesus taught us to pray.

309 The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of our eschatology. Throughout
310 scripture God has redeemed and made desolate people and lands new. The Second Coming of
311 Jesus will make all things new. It is the fulfillment of our hope. While there are many theories
312 and views of eschatology, in Jesus’ revelation to John in the book of Revelation and other books
313 like Daniel and John’s gospel that include God’s plan for the last days of the earth, we agree that
314 Jesus Christ will return, restore all things, and bring us to himself (Revelation 21:1-3).

315 **THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH**

316 **The Theology of Mission**

317 *Diakonia* (service, ministry, and the work of the gospel) is the work of God, the *Missio*
318 *Dei* (the mission of God). When used to describe missions, *diakonia* is practical service
319 motivated from accepting the good news of Jesus Christ. As His workmanship, we are invited to
320 partner with what God is doing in the world rather than dismissing it and going our own way.
321 “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared
322 beforehand, that we should walk in them,” (Ephesians 2:10). There is peace to be found in saying
323 “yes” to God and opening our hearts to recognize the *Imago Dei* in every person.

324 Human beings, in our tendency toward *incurvatus in se* (being curved inward upon
325 ourselves) become increasingly self-focused and disconnected from God's life-giving mission.
326 Christians, however, are called to examine how this inward orientation limits meaningful
327 investment in our neighbors and communities and consider that when we submit to God's ways,
328 God's grace continually flows outward.

329 God's people have always been called to receive blessing to become a blessing to others;
330 a theme that spans both the Old and New Testaments, extends throughout the history of the
331 church, and continues to shape contemporary Christian discipleship.

332 Through the power of the Spirit, Jesus truly came to give abundant life to those who
333 surrender themselves to His ways. The book of Matthew closes in chapter 28 with The Great
334 Commission, where Jesus promises to be with the disciples always. This theological truth
335 informs and empowers missionaries to go and live out this commission. Our God is with us. We
336 then see in Acts the empowerment and direction given to the apostles as Jesus is taken up. “But
337 you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in
338 Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth,” (Acts 1:8). Our mission
339 starts immediately where we live and extends to all the earth.

It is important for the global church to develop a theology to provide direction to the global missionaries that are sent and received. We are called to share the good news of Jesus Christ with the world without oppression and authoritarianism. Christian Global Mission is the work of the Christian Church around the world. It is the Christ-centered work of every Christian to be involved in global missions through prayer, giving, or being sent.

We are given the call to go out in Matthew 28:19-20 in the Great Commission, and Jesus is our model that lived His life as a suffering servant savior. As He loved us, so we love others.

Ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Baptism is an ordinance performed after professing faith in Jesus Christ and is done by submerging in water. It is a public profession of the internal change of choosing to accept salvation and follow Jesus. Jesus set the example for baptism. He chose baptism at the beginning of His ministry and was baptized by full immersion in the Jordan River. This is the model of the American Baptist Church for how believers in Jesus are to be baptized. The act of baptism by immersion symbolizes the death of Christ by going under the water, and the resurrection of Christ when you are lifted out of the water. For an individual to be baptized, they must have awareness of the profound decision to be baptized. Readiness for baptism is demonstrated by professing faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior, confessing one's sins, and conversion of the heart. In response to His own baptism, Jesus replies in Matthew 3:15, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." The candidate is baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Baptism allows the individual to integrate and be welcomed into the faith community in a new way. While this is not the purpose of baptism that has been outlined above, it is a result of

that outward profession of faith. The unity of the body is encouraged and grown as believers choose baptism and share the path they are taking toward righteousness and Christlikeness.

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance done in remembrance of Jesus' death and resurrection. As Jesus gathered His disciples together to celebrate the Passover, we gather as a church to remember and place ourselves before God, reminding ourselves of the love poured out through Jesus' body broken on the cross, symbolized in the bread, and Jesus' blood, symbolized in the cup, for us. The Lord's Supper or Communion is open to all those who profess a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Through offering a period of quiet, personal time before taking the elements together, we create space for confession and remembrance in our own hearts for the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:26-30). We continue this gathering around the Lord's Supper until the day of Jesus' return, as I Corinthians 11:23 says, "For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you." In the taking of the bread and the cup, "you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes," (I Corinthians 11:26b).

Ecumenical Aspects of the Church

The early Church is given direction regarding how to live together and share all that the community possesses while continuing the work of building up the body (Acts 4:32-33). This example is the ecumenical aspect of the Church, not divided by denominations or differing theologies.

Our worship services may look different across Christian denominations, but we can work together for the *Missio Dei* and acknowledge our value as the local church united as the worldwide Church. As Jesus Christ has taught us to love and serve across our differences, so can be the case across all local churches. Our strength comes from unity across denominations. Serving others and lifting our voices together in song are a few examples of how the Spirit unites

385 the Church, reveals the truths of Scripture, and dwells among us, bringing us together in one
386 voice and one heart. May we remember that our local congregation is part of the greater Church,
387 the body of Christ.

388 **Place of the Church in History**

389 While there is much written about many of the movements of the Church in Mission
390 History, we need to learn to think critically and to gather all the details of history before
391 considering the models or methods effective. Acknowledging the hurt and pain that the Church
392 caused in the time of its expansion as well as celebrating the moments that the Church got it right
393 is important as we expand our Church models which will someday be “the Church in Mission
394 History” to a future generation. Hearing the stories of churches, missionaries, and fellow
395 believers throughout history who have allowed their faith to motivate the way they serve and are
396 on mission in their local, national, or international opportunities inspires my own ministry and
397 desire to partner with God in what He is doing throughout the world.

398 The place of the Church in history connects to evangelism. May evangelism be taught in
399 the church not as a persuasion tactic, but as a strong personal theology that dictates our personal
400 worldview, changes our life, and can be communicated graciously with conviction while still
401 respecting the person, their culture, and their own personal experiences. The places in history
402 where the Church operated in this posture are to be the examples for us today.

403 In a day where Christian Nationalism is the theme for many evangelical Christians, we
404 can take caution in the lessons of the church in history as the twenty-first century church. The
405 first being a clear separation of church and state. When the state is doing well, the church does
406 well (as we have seen). However, when the state is at war or in conflict and the economy tanks,
407 the church also suffers the decline.

408 We also can learn caution in calling leaders infallible. If we truly believe Romans 3:23,
409 “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” we must not elevate other flawed
410 brothers and sisters to a place of infallibility. Placing leaders in hierarchy and untouchable high
411 positions can lead the church to destruction as the leader continues to be stretched under the
412 pressure of perfection. Rather than a servant leadership mindset, Constantine was an example
413 who influenced a generation of Christ followers both to advance the gospel and to enslave and
414 conquer. He invited them to consider power and favor for a nation as God blessing all their
415 actions. They defined indigenous people not as equals, but obstacles to overcome in the name of
416 Christ. Rather than missionaries providing a role in building relationships and finding equal
417 grounds for communication and understanding, missionaries often softened resistance to pave the
418 way for imperial rule.

419 It can be blurred in the church’s history between the commission of Mark 16 to “go out
420 into the world,” and instead of making disciples, baptizing, and healing, there was enslaving,
421 dominance, and oppression. It’s important that we embrace our part in this history as the Church,
422 so we can avoid repeating the same patterns.

423 **Purpose and Place of the Church in Today's World**

424 Jesus is present today in the people that are His disciples, in the Church that lives
425 according to the ways that He taught, and in the world when we see neighbors loving and caring
426 for each other. In Jesus’ teachings, He says that when we love our neighbor as ourselves the
427 kingdom of God is near in that action (Mark 12:34).

428 As the Church grows up into their faith, we take that with us in evangelism to the world.
429 There is salvation available to all who believe, and our purpose as the Church is not solely to
430 grow up into our faith, but to share about the saving power of Jesus Christ with all who we

431 encounter. “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in
432 your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good,” (1 Peter 2:2). Peter goes on then
433 to say that by this growth, our lives will then bear the witness.

434 The Church looks different today than it did 10 years ago. We have new “Fresh
435 Expressions” of the Church going out to where people are and hosting a service in a restaurant,
436 tattoo parlor, or a dog park. Between podcasts and social media, Bible teachers are influencing a
437 new generation of believers and showing up in the culture rather than waiting for culture to come
438 to them. Churches are beginning to offer education around personal theology and discipling
439 brothers and sisters to know what they believe to a new depth, and to communicate that
440 graciously to a hostile culture.

441 As disciples, Jesus is present today through each of us. We follow His way, and when we
442 exemplify His way, we make him present today. In the Church, Jesus is present today in the life
443 lived out through the body of believers gathered around the world in local communities. The
444 ordinance of communion, the corporate worship, and the celebration of His life, death,
445 resurrection, and ascension all bring Jesus present today. Jesus is present today in the church
446 through the repentance and belief in the good news as He states in Mark 1:15.

447 We are all outcasts and sinners in varying ways in this world. Living out the practice of
448 Trinitarian faith welcomes the poor and marginalized. It makes space and place for those who are
449 stepped over like Lazarus at the home of the rich man (Luke 16:19-31), submits oneself like
450 Jesus, comforts like the Holy Spirit, and welcomes home the prodigal, oppressed, and abandoned
451 to the house of God. The poor and marginalized should not have to worry when the church,
452 *Koinonia*, the community of God, is on their side. Our Triune God is a liberator, and by the
453 power of the Spirit, we join God in our care for the poor and marginalized. We, therefore, as the

church, are to be the interconnectedness and mutuality of the Trinity for the poor and marginalized.

The Role of the Minister and the Church as Agents of Racial Reconciliation and Social Justice.

The communal nature of the Triune God represents and informs the example of unity that the church needs to follow. Therefore, the doctrine of the Trinity takes up residence wherever we live. Community happens because God is community. The poor and marginalized are cared for and part of the community. This is the implication to the Church - the body of believers around the world - that because God is unity, community, and relational, we are to be that for the poor and marginalized. It speaks to the evangelical call on the church. This good news is to be shared. God is not isolated from people and does not discriminate who is welcome in God's kingdom.

The Church's role is to serve its neighbors as it cares for the community. The Church's role can also be to open dialogue about social justice issues, whether in connecting members of the congregation to local Christian service organizations through presentations to the church, or to open forums and places to discuss these social justice issues.

Understanding the equality of the persons of the Triune God motivates a structure lacking hierarchy and challenges the Church structure today. We see a model in the Trinity of equality that minimizes headship and elevates mutual submission. For those who are marginalized, this means the banquet has arrived and all are welcomed in!

The Role of the Ordained Minister

The role of the ordained minister begins with a call on his or her life to live sacrificially for the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. A minister needs to follow the example of serving and placing himself in the lowliest places, so that the mercy and love of Christ can be given and

477 shared with everyone. The role of the ordained minister is to practice compassion and empathy
478 while shepherding the people that God has entrusted to his/her care. In such ways we show
479 stewardship to our community of faith.

480 The minister is to preach the Word and teach the compassion, unity, and equality for all
481 people created in the image of God that Jesus Christ exemplified. Ministers are to preach about
482 the dimensions of our faith that allow for reconciliation among races and provide for those in
483 need, especially the foreigner, orphans, and widows (Deuteronomy 10:18-19).

484 To become a servant leader, the need for recognition must be placed in the rearview
485 mirror. This is the example we have in how Christ led. “In your relationships with one another,
486 have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality
487 with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking
488 the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness,” (Philippians 2:5-7). He also called
489 the disciples to this type of leadership when He recognized the marginalized in society and even
490 “let the little children come,” (Matthew 19:14) to Him. A leader cannot worry about being at the
491 top of the organization but sees the opportunity to elevate others because of his or her influence
492 from that position. Stepping into leadership in the church, I often look for this in leaders in
493 positions above me.

494 The ordained minister is a representative of a life lived in submission to Jesus, so the
495 minister needs to be consistent with his/her time spent in the Word, in prayer, and connecting and
496 listening to the presence of God. Ministers are the shepherds of the church, but the congregation
497 together makes the decisions for their local body, and the decision making does not rest solely on
498 the ministers. Although seemingly insignificant, it is important to be on time, do what you say
499 you are going to do, and deliver to those who are counting on you (Matthew 5:37).

God receives the glory when we submit our lives and our worship to Him. “But He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong,” (2 Corinthians 12:9-11).

The Ministry of the Laity

The Baptist position of the priesthood of all believers supports an active and dynamic church ministry by including all the members of the church into the works of the church. This means that all members will use their giftings to the benefit of the body of Christ. Paul addresses this in Romans 12:6-8, “We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.” These are gifts given to edify the whole body, and each member has gifts to share. New ideas can be shared across generations, cultures, and genders. This supports an active and dynamic church ministry, prevents the sin of pride and power, and supports discipleship.

This Baptist doctrine is imperative to living out our faith through our collective sharing of the priesthood. Blessing, anointing, praying over, sharing mercy, teaching, and disciplining are all ways in which each believer can minister to one another. Pride and power are pushed out of the way to make room for encouragement and building up as 1 Thessalonians 5:11 says, “encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”

RELATIONSHIPS

Ecumenical Witness to Community and World

No church stands alone as a single beacon of light, but the interconnectedness of Churches around the country and the globe unites the work of the Holy Spirit and the power they each receive personally, and then as a collective. We know that, “the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof,” (Psalm 24:1).

The interest in ecumenism should also be hallmark to a Baptist, in that the local church is not just the local Baptist church. Ecumenism gives us the opportunity to reach out into our community and partner with other Christ followers. The local church, if strengthened by being part of a larger association, can certainly be stronger through the value of ecumenism.

We need to be willing to hold fast to our belief in Jesus Christ and our theological preferences denominationally while also having the skill to communicate graciously with those who do not share our preferences. This is the work of ecumenism.

American Baptist Churches, USA; ABCOPAD; Association

American Baptist Churches, USA provides our denomination with the tools, resources, and leadership necessary to support and guide the entire American Baptist denomination.

Providing for the local church in our region through ABCOPAD, our association carries that witness of the church to the community and world, upholding the doctrines of our American Baptist polity as the foundation of our denomination.

Through the association, I have received not only seminary scholarships through an ABCOPAD grant and ABHMS scholarship, but also, unwavering support and encouragement throughout my journey. The close mentorship, meaningful relationships built through conferences, association meetings, phone calls, emails, and opportunities to develop my skills and gifts as a minister have all been invaluable. ABCOPAD and those affiliated with the association have played an important role in supporting me throughout the ordination process.

546 Above all, I am deeply grateful for the relationships that sharpen me like iron and encourage me
547 to continue the work to which Jesus Christ has called me.

548 Finally, the support of this local church, Christ's American Baptist Church, has been
549 unlike any other. From arriving here with my family in fifth grade, eager to learn and grow in my
550 faith, through the awkward and challenging teenage years, to returning with my own family to
551 raise them within this congregation, I am deeply grateful for this community of faith. This church
552 has taught me, loved me, and nurtured me throughout my journey, helping shape me into the
553 person and minister I am today and encouraging me to embrace the calling to ministry that Jesus
554 Christ has placed on my life.