

The Pastor Nominating
Committee presents the
CANDIDATE for
LEAD PASTOR

DAVID PRENTICE- HYERS



MAKING GOD'S LOVE VISIBLE



DEAR FRIENDS AND SIBILINGS IN CHRIST

Greetings from seldom sunny Scotland. I am humbled and thrilled by the invitation to be your Lead Pastor. Getting to know the congregation again through the call process, I still feel the infectious dedication and strength I experienced during my previous ministry with you.

The PNC and staff clearly expressed and embodied your vision for radical hospitality, articulate creative worship, and transformative mission.

The bold and loving vision First Presbyterian seeks is grounded in those earliest of Christian expressions: worship, study, fellowship, and mission. While the shapes of ministry are born and reborn for each generation, our roots find nourishment in these ancient expressions of community. We are relational people responding to a relational God. I am keen to join you as we dig deep into that soil, even while growing new limbs and leaves.

The word liturgy translates "the

work of the people." The Celtic Church understood that all of life is holy, and our Sunday prayers intertwine with our Monday to Friday lives. I pray that our work together will take us to that confluence of expansive worship, self-emptying hospitality and self-reflective mission that pierces the false wall separating secular from sacred. As my friends at the Troon Fisherman's Mission say, "God calls us to a Christianity with its sleeves rolled up."

In complex, discordant, and divided times, may we roll up our sleeves to come alongside our neighbour and welcome the stranger. I share your priorities for ministry and delight in your aspirations of who we can be as children of God. I am eager

to serve a community embracing Christ's hospitality for all people regardless of biology, biography, genealogy, or geography. If our hearts are united in Christ, our heads don't have to be.

First Presbyterian has long held a special place in our family's life. So, while we will enjoy the cider mills, Ann Arbor culture, and visits to the Big House, we also look forward to shared ministry and community with you all. Mary Elizabeth and I hope to forge new friendships and rekindle old ones as we joyfully return home to Ann Arbor. We can't wait to introduce you to our "two braw lads," Finlay and Angus.

Grace and peace,
Dave Prentice-Hyers



Dave, Mary Elizabeth (Mel), Angus, and Finlay

**IF OUR HEARTS ARE UNITED IN CHRIST,
OUR HEADS DON'T HAVE TO BE.**

David Prentice-Hyers

"David is a passionate preacher, a compassionate leader, and an active listener. We are lucky to have him, his family, his talents, and his enthusiasm." —Charlotte Sawtell

VISION FOR MINISTRY

I look forward to partnering in ministry with a congregation who are responding passionately and joyfully to God's life-giving Spirit at work in and around them. God's grace calls us to welcome all people and seek after the welfare of those within and without the Congregation. From hands-on service to regular pastoral visitation, I feel called to and am comfortable in various ministry contexts. It is the continuity of God's Spirit at work in these varied parts of the body of Christ that continues to animate my faith and renew my sense of vocation.

Dynamic and faithful worship is the centre around which the larger ministries of the church connect, evolve, and mature. We are welcomed in by the liturgy, challenged through the proclamation of the Word, and inspired by the music.



We have to be creative in sharing the good news of Christ.

Given the opportunity, generative mission and outreach naturally enhance the hospitality and power of worship.



I would rather be loving than right.

"Dave is a very warm and engaging person, and a collaborative, supportive leader."
—Tom Brandt



DAVID PRENTICE-HYERS

"I love to tell stories in sermons. Christ understood the power of story and parable to challenge and provoke in loving and graceful ways."

ABOUT DAVE

Born in Loafers Glory, North Carolina, Dave grew up in the mountains of East Tennessee and Western North Carolina. The son of a Presbyterian minister and special education teacher, Dave was raised in a loving and multigenerational household.



At school, he enjoyed swimming, band, environmental science, and spending time in the mountains with friends. Dave was active in Holston Presbytery's Youth Council. A rebellious preacher's kid, it was not until he attended youth council retreats that he claimed the faith of his childhood as his own.

After high school, he spent his summers working at Holston Presbytery Camp in Banner Elk, North Carolina, as a counselor, coordinator, and Summer Program Director. He graduated from Presbyterian College, in Clinton, South Carolina, with a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. At PC, he was an active leader in Westminster Collegiate Fellowship, a DJ, and program manager on Radio Free PC, the campus radio station. His sense of call to ministry was clear, but the direction it was to take was "still under negotiation."

Before enrolling at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, he worked in college admissions at Lees McRae Presbyterian College and completed an internship in campus ministry at East Tennessee State University. After finishing his seminary course work, Dave served as a Probationary Minister at Troon Old Parish Church, Scotland. Upon his return to the United States, he enrolled in a year-long unit of Clinical Pastor Education (CPE) at Crossroads Community Ministries in Atlanta, Georgia, and worked as a counselor for the marginalized and homeless.

Dave became an avid sailor, crewing on his college roommate's boat and competing regionally and nationally, placing seventh in the National Catalina 22 Regatta during his final summer in Atlanta. Giving up the life of a student-sailor, Dave accepted

his first call to Waco, Texas.

For eight years, Dave was blessed to serve as the Associate Pastor at First Presbyterian Church of Waco. He worked with youth, young adults, outreach, university students and was the resident rodent catcher. While in Waco, his call to parish ministry was confirmed, and his heartfelt love for congregational life in a vibrant church was deepened. He is very thankful for the opportunity to minister to such a wide range of the body of Christ in Central Texas.

During his first summer in Waco, Dave met a summer program facilitator at Mo-Ranch Presbyterian Conference Center. After a summer of pursuit, Dave gained a critical first date with Mary Elizabeth (Mel) on his newly acquired sailboat. Shortly after that first date, the boat was damaged in a storm, but the relationship



**I AM INSPIRED BY DAVE'S ABILITY
TO RELATE EFFORTLESSLY TO
PEOPLE OF ALL AGES.**

—KELSEY KAERCHER

**DAVE JOINED THE PASTORAL
STAFF AS THE DIRECTOR OF
CAMPUS MINISTRY FOR THE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN.**

was not. In the summer of 2010, David and Mel were married and promptly got on another boat for their honeymoon. In 2011 Mary Elizabeth was ordained as a Resident Minister at First Presbyterian Church, Ann Arbor. Dave joined the pastoral staff as the Director of Campus Ministry for the University of Michigan. They soon felt at home in First Pres and Ann Arbor. Dave also worked with young adults, mission trips, worship development, and occasionally fixed a microphone or two.

In the summer of 2013, Dave was called to return to Scotland as the Minister of

Troon Old Parish Church. He took the field on September 11, just a few days after he and Mel learned they were expecting their first child. Finlay Scott Hyers was born in April of 2014 and quickly became the most popular member of the family. In 2017 Finlay's popularity took a hit with the birth of his younger brother, Angus Carson.

Dave enjoys good music, bad jokes, cheap movies, and cooking with the family. Days off may find him on his bike, on a boat, digging in the sand, or walking the hills. Most of all he loves being a Dad.

WHERE IS GOD CALLING YOU

Few things are as worshipful as a moment of heartfelt congregational laughter. It's not the well-timed punchline of a classic three-point sermon. I'm thinking more of the older sibling who breaks free during a baptism, rushing pell-mell down the aisle melting hearts along the way.

God calls us to embrace the full humanity of all people.

These are the moments when the humor and forgiveness of the spirit well up in the sanctuary, and we breath deeply of grace. I want to serve a congregation seeking the transcendent even in the messiest of moments. Faithful, forgiving, and expansive worship opens us to the presence of wounded, risen Christ.

The wounded risen Christ is the one who is always present to us, breaking

down the walls between sacred and secular. This image of Christ recognizes that all gorund is holy ground, and all people bear the image of the divine. Therefore, God calls us to embrace the full humanity of all people. I am eager to join a community passionate about active, sustained engagement with God's diverse and ongoing mission in the world.

AS OUR CONVERSATION UNFOLDED,

it became clear that God was calling David to First Pres for this season. He brings a wonderful array of gifts and experiences that will benefit our congregation and community , including strong theology and deep faith, a commitment to social justice, and a genuine sense of hospitality and welcome.

—Jennifer Edwards



I am so excited to welcome David and his family back to Ann Arbor and to start a brand new chapter for First Pres.

—Jennifer Edwards

1

LEADERSHIP STYLE

By nature and necessity, my default leadership style is collaborative, pastoral, and aspirational. I am delighted to see others' gifts flourish during this time of renewal and reframing. There is an elder who dreaded pastoral care but now excels as chair of the building committee. Another member is not too sure about God but keeps us right with Covid legislation ensuring the food bank remains open. Such seemingly small growth is key to holding on to the energy needed to minister in uncertain times. Over the years, it has been a blessing to see many former campers, students, and interns pursue and subsequently thrive in ordained ministry. In a season of scarcity and uncertainty, there is joy in seeing someone's gifts mesh with the community's needs. Leadership isn't about being the best; it is helping others become better.

2

FACING CHALLENGES

Shape and forms of ministry will continue to change, and the issues and challenges before us will increase in complexity. It is clear that we need to adapt, yet we also need to be shaped by Scripture and our Reformed heritage. In doing so, we not only find hope for the future but gain new insight into the possibilities for the present. Communities rooted in the good news must trust in the faithfulness of God, pushing us to listen, to learn, to grow, and to act.



**DAVID COMES TO
FIRST PRES WITH AN
IMPRESSIVE SKILL SET**

**HE IS UNIQUELY POISED TO LEAD OUR
CONGREGATION AT THIS CRITICAL JUNCTURE**

—James Clark



LIFELONG CONNECTIONS

The most heart-warming message that came from our conversations is what great ability Dave has to make deep, lifelong connections with people.

—Bill Upton



VALUABLE MENTOR

He will be a strong advocate, valuable mentor, and collegial partner in ministry to our young pastors.

—Dianne Santinga



STRONG ADVOCATE

It impressed me that he stepped up to take on the role of Moderator of Presbytery in order to have a voice in how the challenges facing Troon would be faced.

— Mark Lindley



COLLABORATION

BUILDING BRIDGES IN THE CONGREGATION AND COMMUNITY

A group of approximately 20 people, mostly older adults, are standing on a sandy beach. They are dressed in winter clothing like coats and scarves. In the background, there are several buildings, possibly residential or institutional, under a pale sky. The overall tone is somber yet hopeful.

**DAVID HAS A PASSION FOR
MISSION, WITH A COMMITMENT
TO BUILDING ECUMENICAL
RELATIONSHIPS AND CREATIVE
IDEAS FOR MAKING GOD'S LOVE
VISIBLE IN OUR COMMUNITY
AND BEYOND.**

—DIANNE SANTINGA

BEING RESPONSIVE RATHER THAN REACTIVE

The pandemic has brought an acute focus upon the massive shifts engulfing the Church of Scotland regarding membership, money, and ministers. Nationally the contours of the challenges are well explored. Locally, the rapid rate of change outstrips the Presbytery's or Parish's ability to predict or plan. The three large congregations in Troon will not be exempt from mandated unions due to ministerial shortages. What lies ahead will not look like what came before.

Uncharted territory requires careful attention to navigation. The Kirk session and I work with the congregation to be responsive rather than reactive. Our leadership team returns again and again to the navigating principles of communication, trust and grace as we work our way out of lockdown. Difficult conversations are ahead. We led the way in establishing a process with the Presbytery and the other Troon congregations to find a way forward together. Concurrently, I have enlisted a consulting group's assistance on conflict and change management to provide external ears and advice. Despite the challenges ahead and the pandemic's ongoing pain, we have discovered a new well of energy and talent within Troon Old.

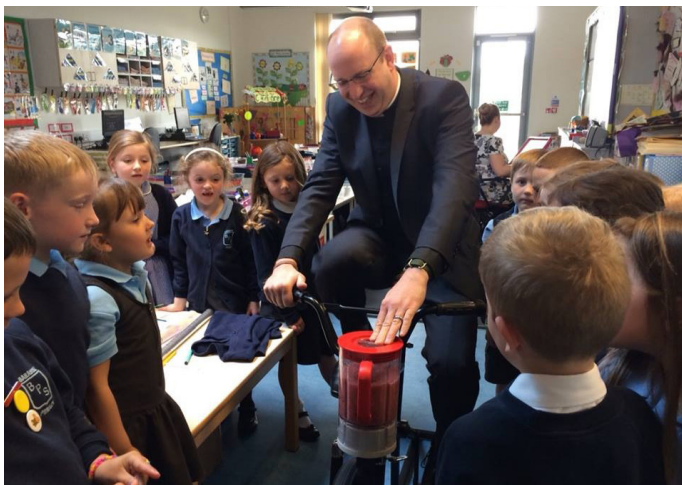
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**LOVING
AND SERVING
THE LORD**

MEETING THE CHALLENGE

My tenure in Scotland is marked by a season of profound change taking us into uncharted territory. I have learned a great deal, made plenty of mistakes, and helped build a responsive and resilient team.



However, I gained some of my most important lessons during my first call.

I took over an existing youth program from a beloved DCE. Early on, a cheeky church member asked, "We love Gail; how are you going to compete?" I responded, "I bet there is enough love in your hearts for us both." Later, a mentor later challenged me, saying, "You can

I am confident that he will meet the challenge of leading the church forward, engaging with the congregation, collaborating with staff, and bringing our faith community together with renewed energy and enthusiasm to Make God's Love Visible.

—James Clark



I SPENT TIME LISTENING TO TRADITIONS, HONORING THE RITUALS, AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

compete with her memory or build on her legacy."

As a result, I spent time listening to the traditions, honoring the rituals, and building relationships. When it came time to change course, we had shared experiences and a history of trust. I worked hard to highlight and maintain the core values of ministry as we developed a new focus and direction. More contemplative and progressive theology led to a pattern of youth pilgrimages, spiritual retreats, and immersive mission projects. Heavy parent involvement shifted to mentoring relationships with older members creating a safe space for youth to ask hard questions. The session vigorously supported internship opportunities for students from our growing college ministry, and in time, we produced several seminarians and many ruling elders. One former youth even became the DCE taking over my old office



as the ministry continued to move from strength to strength.

I have learned that before going into uncharted territory, you have to know how to read the map.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

I belong, body and soul, in life and death, to God. I trust and believe in one Holy and Triune God. We worship, in mystery, beyond language, on God in three persons, with faith seeking understanding. In love, God spoke into existence all that is. God created all peoples in God's image and saw that it was good.



THE SACRAMENTS ARE A VISIBLE SIGN AND SEAL OF GOD'S INVISIBLE GRACE

**In the waters of Baptism,
we are named and claimed
as God's beloved children.
Baptism calls us to nurture
one another in faith, uphold
one another in prayer, and
encourage one another in
service.**

We confess that our brokenness distorts God's image within us. We recognise the power of sin and death, which permeates all of creation.

Christ, the only one in a position to condemn, is also the one who intercedes for us. In Christ, the whole cosmos is being reconciled to God. We have the assurance that there is always more mercy in God than sin in us. Love and life in Christ extend beyond forever.

Fully human, fully God, Jesus came into creation proclaiming the Good News in Word and deed. Fulfilling God's intention

for humanity, Jesus shares our joy, laughter, hunger, and pain. Becoming weak in power to be strong in love, Christ died, descended to the depths, and was, in mystery, raised for us. Breaking the power of sin and death, Christ is our assurance that there is no place that the light of God's love does not shine. By the work of the Spirit, Christ continues to be present to us and to pray for us.

The Spirit assists us in our weakness, interceding with prayers too deep for words. The Holy Spirit enlivens and liberates, frees and strengthens, inspiring

prophets to preach, and poets to sing. In prayer, we ask for the Spirit to give light to God's Scripture and direction to our steps.

The sacraments are a visible sign and seal of God's invisible grace. In the waters of Baptism, we are named and claimed as God's beloved children. Baptism calls us to nurture one another in faith, uphold one another in prayer, and encourage one another in service.

Invited by Christ to partake of the mystery of the table, we come, not as strangers or aliens, but citizens with the saints and as members of the household of God. This

SOLI DEO GLORIA

As Presbyterians, we think in our believing and believe in our thinking. Our confessions and constitution guide the ordering of our lives according to the Word of God. The heart of this tradition makes us attentive to the unity of the church universal.

**WE TASTE BREAD THAT SATISFIES
MORE THAN HUNGER, AND
WE DRINK OF THE CUP THAT
QUENCHES MORE THAN THIRST.**

THE CHURCH IS CREATED IN LOVE AND SUSTAINED BY GRACE

We are charged to go out into the world in peace, honoring all people, loving and serving the Lord.

invitation is for all people, and in turn, we are called to welcome the full humanity of all people. With those before and yet to come, we taste bread that satisfies more than hunger, and we drink of the cup that quenches more than thirst. We receive a foretaste of the promised reign of God. We are given renewed hope and a stronger vision. We are sent into the world to serve the one who is passionate about seeing God's people fed.

As Presbyterians, we think in our believing and believe in our thinking. Our confessions and constitution guide the ordering of our lives according to the Word of God. The heart of this tradition makes us attentive to the unity of the church universal. God never began to love us. Such wondrous love is first and finally beyond human language. Our choices for God are always trumped by God's choice for us in Jesus Christ.

The Church is created in love and sustained by grace as one body in Christ. Coming together, we are called

to proclaim the good news in Word and deed. We are charged to go out into the world in peace, honouring all people, loving and serving the Lord.

Soli Deo Gloria!



SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

Some days, ministry is all about extending grace. Grace is essential when working with our ecumenical and community partners.

Dave brings a tremendous amount of experience to the Lead Pastor role. Besides serving as Director of Campus Ministry here at First Presbyterian, he has had an extensive tenure as Minister of Old Troon Parish in Scotland. In addition, Dave has participated in a summer pulpit exchange with First Presbyterian Church of Elizabethton, Tennessee. These deep engagements with different groups of people in different places attest to Dave's ability to think broadly and lead people.

—Jean Song

My commute takes 15 minutes by foot along the coast. One day, I was running late but stopped to look across the water to Goatfell, the highest peak on the Isle of Arran, looming large in the sky. John Muir came to mind "We all need beauty as well as bread, places to pray and play in." This was a hurried reminder not to neglect self-care and to extend myself some Grace. Lifting my eyes unto the hills, I slowed my steps and remembered not to confuse self-reflection with self-deprecation. "There are cracks in everything," sings Leonard Cohen, "and that is how the light gets in."

Some days, ministry is all about extending Grace. Grace is essential when working with our ecumenical and community partners. Our ability to bend and not break will see us further than digging in our heels and locking our knees.

I was on my way to meet a new regional youth worker about the school chaplaincy program sponsored by the local churches. At the end of a productive conversation, she said, "There's just one more thing. Before we can move forward, I need you to sign this form about biblical marriage." Some days, ministry calls us to speak the truth in Love and deal with what comes. I kindly said, "Homophobia is antithetical to the Gospel," and concluded that I would not sign the document. I stood up and thanked her for her time. I'd been sitting long enough. I prayed that in the future, I would stay standing and work through the fallout. I need grace for the times that I stayed seated and didn't speak the truth in Love.

When my boys go home, we had a conversation about Love. I said Love builds lots of different kinds of families and I showed them pictures of their cousin Lori and her wife Dana. On good days, ministry is also speaking the truth OF Love.



ON GOOD DAYS, MINISTRY IS ALSO
SPEAKING THE TRUTH OF LOVE

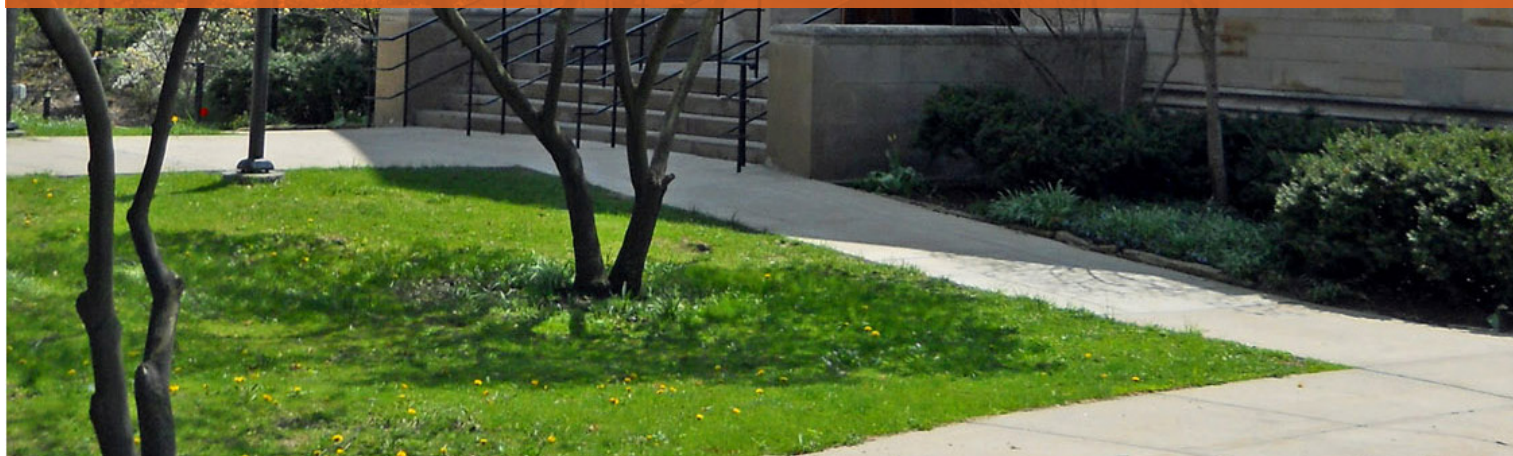






CANDIDATE FOR LEAD PASTOR **DAVID PRENTICE-HYERS**

After many months of prayerful work, the Pastor Nominating Committee, with absolute great joy and unity, is privileged to present to you the candidate for the next Lead Pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Rev. David Prentice-Hyers.



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