

Responses to CoM Pre Interview Questions

Rev. Kristin Willett

Who do you believe to be head of the church?

I believe Jesus Christ is the head of the church.

In what ways does the one who you believe to be the head of the church function in that capacity?

In his life and ministry Jesus revealed the truth and a new way of life. He taught his followers this way and then called them to spread the good news to others. In so doing he called the church into being, and his teachings and life still are the standard for which the church strives. The church aims to live under the rule of Jesus and reveal to the world what Jesus first revealed.

How are the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal and God's Word to you?

The Old Testament reveals the Triune God's character and deep desire to be in relationship with humanity. The Old Testament shares low and high points of that relationship and conveys that over time humanity became more and more estranged from their God.

The New Testament testifies to the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, how God redeemed humanity from that estrangement. Jesus is God's self revelation to the world. The New Testament shares through the eyes of Jesus' followers, who Jesus was and is. The scriptures relate the teachings of Jesus and the new way of life that he introduced.

In so doing they help followers separated by thousands of years from the earthly life of Jesus still feel as if they too were witnesses, hearing his teachings and seeing his ministry in action. Through the words of scripture, both the Old and New Testaments, God still speaks to humanity. God uses the witnesses that have gone before us to continue a conversation with all of us and continue to reveal God's self to us as individuals and as communities gathered in His name.

Discuss how the essential tenets of the Reformed faith, as expressed in the confessions of the church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, have meaning for the church and for you.

A brief explanation and significance of the tenets of the Reformed faith follows:

AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

There is no better source than the Bible for understanding who Jesus is and what

his life on earth accomplished, especially God's self revelation to us, so scripture always guides and informs our lives and work.

ONCE REFORMED, ALWAYS BEING REFORMED

Common ground is required for us to succeed in our work and ministry together but we should be careful that it doesn't become set in stone. The ideals that guide us are always subordinate to scripture and the work of God's Spirit. In our history sometimes our ideals have failed to align with the truth revealed to us in scripture or to glorify God. Should this happen today the ideal must be realigned according to scripture as God continues to reveal God's self to us.

GOD ALONE IS LORD OF THE CONSCIENCE

We know God because God wants and seeks to be known by us. God comes to us in community and in private. We believe God is the highest authority so in the end we answer to God alone. We trust that God will guide our consciences as we work towards the fulfillment of the great ends of the church and live in ways that honor God's calling.

PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

God gives abilities and talents to all people and calls everyone to use them to glorify God and serve our neighbors. Every person and every ability is a valuable and intentional part of God's plan.

JUSTIFICATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

We are not saved (brought in a right relationship with God) by good deeds or our own work. Our salvation is a free gift from God that is received through faith.

SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

God's character is defined by unlimited freedom. Everything is in God's hands.

WE ARE A CONNECTIONAL CHURCH

God didn't create us to be alone, and we need each other. By working together towards the great ends of the church we will achieve more than we would on our own and we will help ensure that our efforts serve the will of God rather than the will of people.

How will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?

The confessions of our church show how Christians that have gone before us have struggled to maintain faithfulness and to discern God's voice in the midst of the voices of society. The confessions are testaments to their conclusions of where God was calling the church at that time, but even more they are testaments that God is active and living, that God is moving in and among us to enliven the church and to make a positive difference in the world. The

confessions reveal to us how earlier Christians were able to effectively live in community together and still seek the will of God. Through their life together and their shared desire to follow God's will, the tenets emerged and continue to guide the church.

As an individual and as a pastor, I humbly attempt to learn from those who have come before me. I am grateful for the faithful pursuit of God's will of those who have shared their witness within the confessions. I aim to follow in their footsteps and continue to seek God's will in my daily life, in the life of the church, and in the world. As I guide others to live out these tenets, I help them to feel God's love in their lives, to sense God's activity all around them, and to encourage them to listen. Through listening hopefully they will encounter that love and make it their own. In so doing, they will desire to contribute their gifts to the ministry of the church and to share with the world the good news they have come to know. As I help to nurture believers, I hope to kindle in them confidence that God wants to be in relationship with them and that means to communicate with them. Through their study, prayer, and other faith practices they will learn more about God's history and as they do they will begin to see God more and more in their lives, not because God wasn't there before, but because they will become more in tune with that. I encourage them to listen and hear God.

Are there aspects of PC(USA) theology and polity as contained in the constitution of the church with which you are in disagreement in belief or nonconformity in practice?

There are not.

With regard to your answer in question 5, will you be governed by the PC(USA)'s Polity and Discipline?

I will be.

In your own life, how will you seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ?

I aim to live into the words of Micah 6:8- to seek justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with my God. I believe that I love God with all my heart, soul, and mind and I aim to love my neighbor more as God desires every day.

How will you seek the Lord Jesus Christ in loving your neighbors?

I believe that our interactions with others testifies more to our love of God than our words do, so I try earnestly to treat other people with respect and genuine love. I believe that God wants all people's basic human needs of food, water, and shelter to be met and thus I have worked with organizations to help meet those needs. I believe that we are called to be our brother's keeper and thus

have spent much of my ministry helping people see the needs of others and how we can meet those needs.

In working for the reconciliation of the world?

Humanity still falls short of God's glory. I hope for a day when God's kingdom will truly come, and the life that was revealed in Jesus will be the life that is shared here on earth. I aim to live into God's commandment to go into the world and share the good news and baptizing people. I want people to realize the reality that God IS and that God is essential to who they are. Once that is owned (baptism), I want them to begin to treat others as if they too are important to God and therefore worthy. This reconciliation looks different in each situation and I seek God's guidance as to where I will serve and how I will help reconcile the world in my corner of the planet.

How do you stay energized in order to serve with intelligence, imagination and love?

I have been blessed to marry a man who is passionate about serving God and thinking about what God is doing in the world. We feed off of each other and energize each other. I have been amazed at what God has revealed to us over dinner or while playing with our kids in the backyard. I am grateful for this partner in ministry and discovery.

I also love reading, particularly theology. I love hearing how other people have encountered God and what they have learned in so doing. It excites me to see similarities and differences within my own life.

I love to hear the experiences and ideas of people I serve. Some of the most amazing parts of my ministry have begun from ideas that were happened upon while sitting in a circle of people willing to explore and share without concern for being criticized.

What are your beliefs and practice regarding fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, and chastity in singleness based on the following references.

As for my own practice, I am blessed to have married my best friend 9 years ago. I believe strongly in fidelity in marriage and that is our practice.

In regards to my beliefs about fidelity within the covenant of marriage and chastity in singleness, I believe strongly that human sexuality is a gift from God. God created human beings to be sexual creatures and has also called us to be in relationship with each other. Throughout scripture, it is clear that sexuality has been misused, and that such abuses go against God's plan. God desires for human beings to respect each other and themselves, that was disregarded as

the abuses continued. God desires for people to be cared for and that is difficult to do when wives are being abandoned and promiscuity is widely practiced.

I believe that scripture attests to the truth that God values human life and that one of the greatest gifts that God gives to us is each other. Scripture reveals how to live in community with each other, how true community can exist. That is only possibility when sexual abuses are not allowed and individuals honor and respect each other. The confessions share that issues of sexuality are not new for the church, that the church has struggled to determine where God's voice is on this subject and that the church aims to live under God will. Fidelity and chastity are ways in which our sexual nature can be honored, celebrated, embraced and not abused.