

Discerning God's Call

The Morningside Presbyterian Church
Pastor Nominating Committee
Is Privileged To Introduce
And Unanimously Recommend

THE REVEREND DR. BARON A. MULLIS



CANDIDATE FOR SENIOR PASTOR

November 28, 2010



“This is the **Lord's doing**; it is marvelous in our eyes. **This is the day** that the Lord has made; let us **rejoice** and be **glad** in it.”

Psalm 118:23-24

A Word From Your Pastor Nominating Committee

Thank you for your prayers which we have felt throughout this search process! We believe that it is because of your prayers, and the guidance of our Sovereign God, that we stand before you today with the person God has called to lead MPC in its next exciting chapter.

Thank you as well for your input at the beginning of this process — it was invaluable. As you will recall, the process of selecting a new pastor began late last year when the Transition Team led a series of listening sessions where we heard from over 250 members and friends of MPC. Your thoughts and vision for the future of MPC were at the forefront of our minds throughout this process. Some of the consistent themes we heard from you included:

- continued excellence in the worship service, including thought-provoking, theologically sound preaching;
- a focus and vision for programming for our growing number of children and their families;
- a commitment to diversity and the inclusion of all persons into the MPC community;
- a continued focus and expansion of our mission work; and
- a demonstrated administrator capable of providing stellar leadership.

You will see in the following pages why we believe that God has led us to the person who will lead MPC forward. As we embark on the newest chapter in the life of MPC, we humbly ask that you allow this exciting time of transition to be an opportunity for you to examine and explore your individual roles as members of the MPC family. This starts with a commitment to participate in the service of worship with energy, joy, hope and praise. Second, we ask you to pray for Baron as he follows God's call to this wonderful community. Your prayers and support for Baron will be so important as we begin this new chapter. Finally, we challenge each of you to join in celebrating this Advent season in true MPC style! We have so much to be grateful for — a wonderful church family, a blessed neighborhood and community and a new Senior Pastor who will empower all of us to grow in our faith and to serve the Lord in our community and in the world at large. We hope that each of you shares our excitement for this day, and the days that are yet to come in the life and ministry of MPC.

Sincerely,

Martin Dunlap, Chair
Ellen Brown
Jenny Guy
Michael Perez

Anne Barnette
Sarah Brownlee
Greg Morton



Introducing Baron

“Like Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisee born of Pharisees, I am a cradle Presbyterian, born of Presbyterians.” Baron grew up in Charlotte, North Carolina, and graduated *cum laude* from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte with a degree in history. Baron received his Master of Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary, and in May of this year, received his Doctorate in Ministry from Princeton. At Princeton, he was the recipient of the prestigious Grier-Davies Prize in Preaching. His doctoral dissertation focused on stewardship and was entitled, *What Do They Believe About Giving? An Analysis of the Practices and Beliefs of Members of Trinity Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, NC.*

Ordained in 2000, Baron began his ministry as a participant in the Lake Fellowship in Parish Ministry. Applicants who hold particular promise as pastors and who wish to develop their ministerial skills under expert supervision in a large church setting are selected for this program. Baron’s residency was completed at Second Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis, under the supervision of Dr. William G. Enright.

Upon completion of his residency in 2002, Baron was called as an Associate Pastor to Trinity Presbyterian Church in Charlotte, NC. During his tenure at Trinity he has served two significant terms as Acting Head of Staff, a position he currently holds. Baron spent the summer of 2008 in Scotland as part of a pulpit exchange program.



Baron at the Kildrum Parish Church in Cumbernauld, Scotland.

Baron In His Own Words

On Worship & Preaching: “I take worship seriously. I take preaching seriously. Christ really is present in the breaking of the bread and sharing of the cup. Preaching really is the Word of God. Music really is the prayers of the congregation, both sung and offered in worship. I bring a love and knowledge of liturgy and music and a belief that it matters how we use it to the planning of worship, knowing how the seasons of the church carry us through our lives. A congregation I would want to serve would understand how important it is for the pastor and choirmaster to work together to create worship that, to borrow a phrase from Calvin’s understanding of the Eucharist, carries us to the feast of the Lord.”

On Mission: “The congregation that turns its attention inward will soon cease to be God’s people and become simply a group of nice people. God has not stopped calling us to be a light to all the people of the world. A congregation I would serve would know that we need to be with those who need us, bringing food and comfort, shelter and warmth.”



On the Future of the Church: “The church must extend its welcome as widely as God’s love if we are to have a mission in the 21st century. The larger church is in an identity crisis. For a generation now, our denomination has foolishly year after year pitted doctrinal purity against inclusive welcome — these two concepts should have never been placed at war with each other. We need to understand that faith, hope and love abide together. One of the great joys of serving Trinity has been to see a school born in the Sunday School classrooms that would otherwise sit empty during the week. This school serves students who suffer from severe learning disabilities. The school was born because one family, not wanting their son and others like him to fall through the cracks worked with the congregation to make it happen. Each day, through my office window, I see students coming and going and I am reminded what we are here for. As the boy’s mother was ordained to our session, she said that she had come to see the blessing in what her family has been through and, that ‘all her child needed was the same thing we all need: to be

loved, to be valued, and to be respected.’ That is the identity the church must embrace if we are to carry the good news of Jesus Christ into this century, because at the end of the day, it’s not about whether we got our doctrine right or wrapped our heads around Trinitarian theology. It is about whether we express love, respect and value for God’s creations. I think the disciples understood that Jesus came preaching with a message of healing and wholeness, a message that expressed the value, love and respect we all need. That is the message we must preach. The church must be the place of faith, hope and love. In that, we will find our identity.”

On Caring: “Whether it is remembering what is going on in the lives of the children of the congregation or visiting the dying in the hospital, pastoral care represents a calling to which minister and congregant alike bring responsibilities. There are times when a minister is called for. Likewise there are times when a friend is called for. A congregation I would serve would care deeply for each other, sharing joys and burdens with each other and with me.”

On Leadership: “I lead people to work together. I don’t know any other way to lead. I do not micromanage. God is not best served by ministers doing the work of the church as a proxy on behalf of the congregation. I like to work alongside the congregation. I serve God too, and I know my place is in the vineyard with God’s servants. Whether it is staying with guests at Room in the Inn, our outreach to persons experiencing homelessness, or working alongside Youth on a mission trip, my heart is where the congregation is. But I do expect them to be there with me.”

What Friends Of MPC Are Saying About Baron

“Baron Mullis is a wonderful choice to be the pastor of Morningside Presbyterian Church. Everything I know about him and your church would indicate that this is a wonderful match, a mutual calling of God. Baron is a thoughtful and passionate preacher, faithful to the Biblical witness and always relates the text to people's lives. He is a splendid administrator, well organized and a good planner. I have found him to be a warm-hearted pastor, a good listener and empathetic to the hurts of others. He has a healthy level of self confidence and humility. He relates well to all ages and types of people, even those who disagree with him. He handles conflict with poise and grace. You will be richly blessed by having him as your pastor.”

The Reverend Dr. Douglas W. Oldenburg, Past President of Columbia Theological Seminary, Moderator of the 210th General Assembly and Member of the Board of Advisors of the Covenant Network of Presbyterians.

“Baron Mullis was one of the best students that I taught during my 15 years at Princeton Seminary. He was clearly one of the top preachers among the student body. I still remember the sermons he did for the Preaching Mark class that I taught with Professor Nora Tubbs Tisdale. Both Professor Tisdale and I marveled at Baron's gifts for weaving the skills of storytelling and biblical exegesis. Not only a wonderful student, Baron was and remains a wonderful person and a dedicated, caring, and excellent pastor who knows how to build consensus as he moves a community faithfully to seek and follow God's call. I am excited for him and for Morningside Presbyterian Church!”

The Reverend Dr. Brian K. Blount, President of Union Presbyterian Seminary and former Richard J. Dearborn Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Princeton.



“Baron is what I call a practademic. He has the brains of an academic and is blessed with an uncommon capacity to reflect on life and the world in which we live with theological insight and cultural sensitivity. At the same time he is a practitioner of the faith; a savvy pastor with a love for people and superb social and interpersonal skills as he both proclaims and in his personal being mirrors the good news of Jesus Christ.”

The Reverend Dr. William G. Enright, Director of the Lake Institute on Faith & Giving at The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, Senior Pastor Emeritus of Second Presbyterian Church, Indianapolis and developer of the Lake Fellowship program.

“In the person of Baron Mullis, nature and nurture have conspired to create a pastor who is acutely sensitive to the possibilities for music to empower worship. During four decades of music ministry I have seldom encountered clergy with such an ear - and heart - for this. His years in the choir of Princeton Seminary gave him both a knowledge of the music of worship and the powerful experience of participating in it. I cherish a long list of professional experiences that I can describe as ‘rewarding.’ But planning and leading worship with Baron head a different and much shorter list that I would label, simply, ‘fun’!”

Jane Bostian Arant, Minister of Music at Trinity Presbyterian Church, Charlotte, NC.

Baron's Faith Statement

I believe in God. The Bible tells us the story of creation, where God made the world and all that is in it and called it good. In sin, we shattered God's shalom: God's peaceable vision of creation. Even so, God remained faithful to what God had made, making covenant with us to be our God, giving the law for the formation of a community to show by their living who God is. Knowing the depth of our sin, God made covenant for us, and when we strayed from God's vision of peace, justice and love, God raised up prophets for us to show us God's way.

I believe in Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us the story of redemption, wherein God remained faithful to God's covenant and was incarnate in Jesus Christ. Our confessions give language to the mystery of the incarnation: "eternally begotten," "light of light," "prophet, priest and king." Regardless of what language we use to describe the mystery of the incarnation, Jesus Christ is *God with us*. He ministered among us, taught us, loved us, died for us, and was raised in power for us. He is the incarnation of the covenantal God.

I believe in the Holy Spirit. The Bible tells us the story of God's sustaining care, of the Spirit brooding over the waters of creation. Through the ages, the Spirit has given voice to prophets to speak God's word. In the Spirit's power, we are bold to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. We are sustained in the Spirit's power, upheld in love, and nurtured for our life together. Giving witness to Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, the Spirit inspired the writers of the Bible and inspires us still as we see God's Word in its pages. I believe, with the reformers, that the Spirit leads us as we interpret scripture with scripture, context and history.

In the sacraments, God's Word is demonstrated by the Spirit. In Baptism God claims us and seals us as God's own. In the Lord's Supper, the Spirit nourishes us in faith as Christ is uniquely present with us in the breaking of bread and sharing of cup.



I believe in the triune God, the holy one of Israel, who calls us into community made in the image of God, who self-defines in community: Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Created in the image of God, we are made for genuine community with God and with neighbor. I believe in the God of redemption who reaches across the abyss of our sin to bring us into loving embrace, and sends us then to embrace those in need of Grace.

We, the church called into community by God, are called to live into the image of God, to embrace our full humanity and to live as God has called us to live, so that we, as God's covenant community, may indeed be a light to all people.

Finally, because language must ultimately fail to describe the transcendent God, I cast my trust, with the earliest Christians in the simplest creed: Christ is Lord. Amen