**Ministerial Residence Program**

A Joint Mission of First Presbyterian Church Fort Smith

and Mountainburg Presbyterian Church

We, the First Presbyterian Church of Fort Smith and the Mountainburg Presbyterian Church of Mountainburg, both located in the state and Presbytery of Arkansas, have created a position for a new seminary graduate on ordination track within the Presbyterian Church USA that would be a two year residency, allowing the resident to function as a pastor, while continuing to receive supervised experiences to enhance and broaden the training already received in seminary.

***Rationale***:

Congregations and their pastors are under deep pressure to address a new era in Christian discipleship. Newly graduating pastors typically receive excellent theological training, but their training tends to not give adequate experience or exposure to develop pastoral skills important for equipping them to enter a sustained call to ministry. Increasing the new pastor’s difficulty is the number of empty Presbyterian pulpits in nearby communities, lessening opportunities for local mentoring or support. In addition, the complex issues and the expectations often held by congregations in uncertain times can be overwhelming, particularly to new pastors, leading to burnout and leaving congregations without leadership. We believe that it is possible to create a positive, supportive environment for training newly minted ministers by giving them an opportunity to work with experienced pastors within a variety of settings, receiving training/supervision/feedback, while serving a congregation and living in their community. We believe that this residency experience, coming right out of seminary, would serve to extend the learning of the new minister, while allowing the minister to be gainfully employed, working as a respected pastor in the community. In addition to learning new skills in a variety of settings, the Ministerial Resident would have a built-in system for resource, supervision and guidance, and mentoring, allowing the Resident to gain the skill set necessary for a healthy, productive, and sustained ministerial career.

***Partnership:***

Mountainburg Presbyterian Church (MPC) and First Presbyterian Church of Fort Smith (FPFS) are entering this agreement together, following mutual discussion and collaboration to address shared needs, assets, dreams, and hopes.

Mountainburg Presbyterian Church (MPC) has experienced quite a bit of tumult in the last couple of years, including the painful resignation of their transitional pastor. They are a small congregation in a rural setting and have struggled to find pastoral leadership who are available to join them in that ministry. They fall right on the line of their ability to pay for a full-time pastor and have debated whether or not they need to consider a part-time pastor instead. They are excited about the opportunity to share costs so they can have a full-time pastor with the prospect of stabilizing and strengthening to the point that they can fully afford pastoral leadership by the end of the residency.

First Presbyterian Church, Fort Smith (FPFS) has a longstanding history within the city of Fort Smith, Arkansas, as being a church interested in mission work. They also are interested in doing the sort of work that will make the most difference to the most people over the longest period of time. Individuals within the church have endowed the church with funds, some for general purpose, but others for specific church needs. Long-term member Minnie King created a trust, which designates funds for training of seminarians and church leaders, so the Minnie King Trust is seen by FPFS as a funding source for a specific, approved joint venture.

Its pastors, the Reverends Phil and Tasha Blackburn were residents at Second Presbyterian in Indianapolis, and because of that involvement know the strengths as well as potential pitfalls in pastoral residency programs. They have seen firsthand how much a residency can positively prepare a minister for future responsibilities and challenges. Both of the Blackburns enjoy supervisory work and would look forward to mentoring a ministerial resident.

***Overview:***

The program is deemed a two year Ministerial Residency, an ordained or ordainable position, but not an installed position, that is a shared project of MPC and FPFS. The Ministerial Resident (hereafter called Resident) would be an employee of MPC and would live in the Mountainburg community and serve the MPC congregation. The Resident would be expected to be the regular Sunday minister for MPC. Supply ministry for FPFS would NOT be part of the expectation. The Resident would spend part of one day a week in Fort Smith, designated day to vary depending upon the rotation of focused study. The expectation is that the training be considered academically rigorous and effective with a focus upon acquisition of specific skills and understanding. While in Fort Smith, the Resident would participate in rotations of areas of focused study which will include, but not be limited to, pastoral care, mission, Christian education, evangelism, and preaching, with specific areas of emphasis each quarter.. FPFS will seek to facilitate conversations between the Resident and individual members of the Fort Smith congregation in order to broaden perspective, insights, and awareness of personal spiritual growth in members and the many ways churches and members interface and influence mutual growth, both positively and negatively.

Two Sundays a year, the Resident will preach at FPFS, with one of the Revs. Blackburn filling the MPC pulpit. The other Rev. Blackburn will remain to be present for the Resident’s sermon, which will be recorded. The Resident will receive feedback from the pastor, as well as from FPFS congregants, which will help to benefit the Resident by increasing skills in effective sermon development and delivery. Additionally, tapes and/or manuscripts of sermons delivered at MPC can be submitted to the Revs. Blackburn for further supervision opportunity. The plan will give an opportunity for the Resident to get feedback from two pastors considered very skilled and effective in preaching.

In addition to worship leadership and involvement in mission and community activities alongside FPFS staff, training will include prescribed reading, discussions with the Blackburns, and other academic and practical work seen to benefit and broaden the Resident’s experiences and understanding.

***Resident Qualification Requirements:***

Selection for the position of Ministerial Resident will require the following:

1. Successful completion of a bachelors degree from an accredited institution
2. Successful completion of a M.Div. program from an accredited institution
3. In the process for future ordination by the Presbyterian Church, USA and Arkansas Presbytery
4. Three letters of recommendation, one from the seminary setting, and one from a work or internship setting, and one personal recommendation by a non-relative
5. Completion of application form and supply of transcripts from college and seminary
6. Completion of phone or Skype interview and/or personal interview for finalists
7. Willingness to live in the Mountainburg community
8. Ability to work cooperatively with more than one institution or body, including, but not exclusive to MPC and FPFS
9. Exhibit a balance of respect for current structure versus a willingness and curiosity to work alongside MPC to build new programs and structures in their new situation
10. Demonstrate appropriate and effective social skills and personal presentation in engaging and communicating with adults, children, and youth
11. Have demonstrated good working relationships that involve honesty, trust, and appropriate humility
12. Exhibit capability in working independently
13. Exhibit reliability in keeping appointments and in organizational skills

***Job Description for Resident:***

The Resident will be considered an ordainable but uninstalled pastor and will be an employee of Mountainburg Presbyterian Church who, while functioning as a pastor, is also considered to be in training for the duration of the residency.

Expectations of the Resident are as follows:

1. Commit to a two-year Ministerial Residency Program
2. Serve the congregation of MPC as a pastor, leading Sunday worship and Holy Day worship, performing the holy sacraments once ordained as a minister of the Word and Sacrament, and providing pastoral care for the congregation
3. Be in the community, alongside MPC congregants, to further the mission in discerning the work and plan that God has for their church
4. Utilize the Residency resources, supervision, and support to develop creative, effective ways of being in the community and operating pastoral services without the benefit of a church building except for worship and Sunday School
5. Assist the congregation in developing programs, encouraging connection and spiritual growth
6. Moderate Session meetings once ordained as a minister of the Word and Sacrament, striving for effectiveness, efficiency, and cooperative spirit; Attend some FPFS Session meetings to observe the Blackburns moderating; Agree for Blackburns to attend some MPC Session meetings to observe Ministerial Resident moderating, for feedback and support
7. Work with Session to support and assure that committees of the Session, utilizing congregants, are appropriately identified and functional
8. Assist in facilitating communication among Session members, congregants, and the community using all appropriate methods, including social media, internet, electronic, and in person
9. Maintain good communication and working relationship with the Clerk of the Session, Treasurer, and Administrative Assistant, and Presbytery to assure the proper running of the business of the church
10. Engage with other ministers and religious leaders in the community to build good will, communication, and cooperation
11. Embrace the training and supervisory opportunities vital to this Residency, adjusting schedule to attend planned training experiences in Fort Smith, expecting to engage in reading and other academic and practical work
12. Be willing and able to travel to Fort Smith, Arkansas for on-site training and supervisory opportunities one day a week
13. Plan and lead Bible study or a Sunday School class, as determined by the residency rotation and needs
14. Work with congregants to plan Christian Education and choose or develop materials
15. Avail self to the committees established for oversight, feedback, and input for the purposes of Resident oversight and for training
16. Stay true to the Resident Qualification Requirements described above
17. Respect the lines demarking the responsibilities of MPC and FPFS, resolving any conflicts in accordance with the Agreement of Authority and working to support a continued and growing, positive relationship between the two congregations and their Sessions.
18. Be willing to work creatively with Residency Support Committee to address potential changing needs of congregation