

**Commission on Preparation for Ministry Report to Pittsburgh Presbytery
June 2023**

Regular Meeting of the Commission on Preparation for Ministry

Pittsburgh Presbytery's Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) met in a regular meeting on Monday, June 12, 2023 at 4:00 pm. With a quorum being present, Chairperson Rev. Gavin Walton opened the meeting with prayer.

Items for Information

1. Certified Ready to Receive a Call & Circulate PIF

The commission reports the following Candidate was examined and approved to be Certified Ready to receive a call and approved to circulate her Personal Information Form:

Michael Ball

Steven Singleton

Items for Action

1. Consent Motion

The Commission on Preparation for Ministry recommends that the following item be approved by consent: # 2.

***2. Approval of Candidates for Ordination, Pending Call**

The commission recommends the following Candidates be approved for ordination (biographical sketch, call statement, and Statement of Faith included in packet materials):

Michael Ball

Steven Singleton

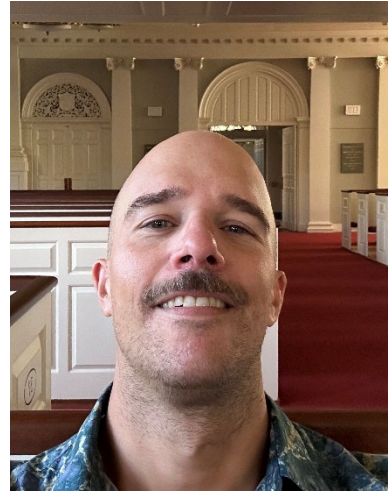
**Commission on Preparation for Ministry
Personal Profile Form for Candidates Ready for Examination**

Name: Michael Ball

Status: Certified Ready Pending Call, Pittsburgh Presbytery

Biographical Statement

I was born in Fort Wayne, Indiana, in 1986, and raised there, excepting the year 1996, when my family lived in Bangkok, Thailand. My family and I were active members of Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren. I became a member of a PC(USA) congregation in Jackson, Mississippi in 2009, after I completed a degree in religion and political science from the University of Chicago. I attribute this denominational transition to my introduction and subsequent profound admiration for the work of John Calvin. I lived for a summer in a peace and reconciliation community in Northern Ireland in 2013. In 2014, I attained my Master of Divinity degree from Harvard Divinity School. That same year I relocated to Pittsburgh, to serve as the Chaplain and Instructor of Religion at The Neighborhood Academy. In 2017 I moved to Los Angeles and served as Director of Youth Ministry at Westwood Presbyterian Church. In 2018 I made a tour in India, where I ate considerable quantities of thali. I returned to Pittsburgh in 2019, and abided the nadir of the pandemic while serving as Executive Director of The Open Door Youth Outreach program. Otherwise, I have been a classroom teacher, in grades from kindergarten to 12th, since 2009. Subject areas I taught include World Religions, the Bible as Literature, research seminars on Kant and John Rawls, the history of the Black Church, and American literature. I have an enduring adoration for the philosophical hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur. The mysteries of faith and God I have contemplated from the age of thirteen, upon first discovering Kierkegaard. In ministry, I strive to faithfully and honorably preach and teach the Gospel, and to do so with joy. I am a bachelor. I should like to learn to play piano. Among gospels my favorite is Mark, among writers, Chekhov, to whom I owe the inspiration for both the content and spirit of this biographical sketch.



Current Sense of Call

As should be evident from my biography, my vocational discernment process has been intimately connected to my love for theology and philosophy of religion. Admittedly, when I began my serious study of the intellectual traditions of Christian faith, I primarily had an academic career in mind, since it seemed clear to me that God had provided me with skills and inclinations best suited for the academy. This changed, rather suddenly, when I began my first field education placement, working as a seminarian for the university's campus ministry. When I approached the pulpit for the first time, I felt a leap

in my chest, and a deep sense of the intimate, sacred responsibility that is so integral to faithful preaching and teaching. For perhaps the first time in my life, and despite my very real anxiety and inexperience, I was confident that God had provided me with a genuine glimmer of what would most sustain my spirit and serve God's creation. Of course, a glimmer is just that. What I felt was undeniably profound, but I had yet to integrate it into a faith practice and spiritual discipline that could sustain it beyond the temporary. Since that day, over a decade ago, my journey with God has been a continual process of prayer, conversation, professional development, and rigorous self-analysis. My career has provided me with ample lessons in all of these areas, some considerably more difficult than others. It has been a journey of growth and also of loss, as I have had to learn how to navigate God's claim on my life while still remaining true to who God created me to be. Through experiences and relationships too numerous to list here, I am confident that God has brought me on this journey for such a time and such a place as this. I pray that God will continue to guide and sustain me as I continue to grow into this sacred calling.

Statement of Faith—Michael Ball

1 I put my trust in the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I believe that God is One, and
2 that the One God exists always in relational unity, in the loving embrace of all-encompassing.
3 divine union.

4
5 I believe in God, whom Jesus called Abba, Father. I believe that God spoke into creation all that
6 is, seen and unseen. I believe that God's creation is good, and that God created human beings in
7 God's image. I believe that God gave God's human creation a position of special dominion and
8 special responsibility among all creation.

9
10 I believe in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God—begotten, not made. I believe that, as the
11 Son of God, Jesus was with God and was God from the beginning of all creation. I believe that
12 Jesus is the Logos, the Word of God expressed in cosmic and human form, and through Him all
13 things were created. I believe that Jesus was born of Mary through the conception of God's
14 Spirit, and that in taking on flesh was both truly human and truly God. I believe that Jesus grew
15 into adulthood while witnessing and experiencing the dislocation and loss of exile and the
16 brutality of state violence. I believe that, upon entering his adult ministry, Jesus proclaimed
17 Good News to the poor and oppressed, called for the repentance of sins, healed the sick,
18 comforted the brokenhearted, and lived among the marginalized and despised. I believe that
19 Jesus was unjustly tried and condemned by the forces of Empire, tortured, crucified, and killed
20 by the State. I believe that in this, Jesus experienced the depth of human suffering, as the One
21 who is with us even in the most forsaken places and experiences. I believe that Jesus was raised
22 from the dead by God, and that in His death and resurrection, Jesus delivered us from the
23 power of sin, death, and despair. I believe that, after appearing before and comforting His
24 friends, Jesus ascended into Heaven, and is with God, whom He called Father.

25
26 I believe in the Holy Spirit. I believe that the Spirit animates and guides all of creation. I believe
27 that the Spirit gathers together humans from all walks of life into the Church, which is the Body
28 of Christ. I believe that the Spirit comforts us, encourages us, and guides us, everywhere
29 breathing life and renewal into us.

30
31 I believe that God created human beings in God's image. I believe that all people are made
32 equally in this image, and that God's love extends to us all as one human community. Despite
33 this, I believe that humans turn from God, rebel against God's love, and choose to violate God's
34 laws. We elect to do evil through sin, turning away from the loving relationality of God. I
35 believe that the sins that we commit, through action or inaction, cascade from our individual
36 lives into systems of oppression and evil. I believe that for our sins, we incur guilt as
37 transgressors of God's all-encompassing care and love.

38
39 Nevertheless, I believe that God chose, out of unfathomable grace, to be with us and for us. I
40 believe that we are found holy and worthy of God's love, not through our own merit or action,
41 but through the incomprehensible depth and breadth of God's grace. I believe that God has
42 gathered us into the Body of Christ, the holy and universal catholic Church, that we might live
43 into the reality of such grace and witness it to those whom we encounter. I believe that the
44 Church unites us in physical and spiritual communion with God., through the sacraments
45 instituted by Jesus of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. I believe that in Baptism we are joined to
46 the Body of Christ in the name of the Triune God, and that in the Eucharist we are lifted into
47 union with God's Spirit.

48

Statement of Faith—Michael Ball

49 I believe that the Church teaches us, supports us, and gives us both a foretaste of and model for
50 the loving community that is the Kingdom of God. I believe that God provided the Scriptures
51 for the Church, through which the Church discerns its gospel message, purpose, and
52 inspiration. I believe that the Scriptures are the first, foremost, and essential means by which
53 God's message of love is given to us. I believe that the Church is called to carry this message to
54 all people, to invite people to the call of discipleship through acts of Christian love, to celebrate
55 the sacraments, and to teach in keeping with Christ's commandment to love God and love our
56 neighbor as ourselves.

57

58 I believe that, at the end of this age, God will gather up all that belongs to God, and in doing so
59 reconcile to Godself all of creation. I believe that Jesus will come again, and that every knee that
60 is in heaven and on earth and below the earth will bend at His name. I believe that those whom
61 God has gathered to Godself will be raised, and that the world to come will see the full
62 flourishing of the Kingdom of God.

63

64 Word Count: 849

**Commission on Preparation for Ministry
Personal Profile Form for Candidates Ready for Examination**

Name: Steven Singleton

Status: Certified Ready Pending Call, Pittsburgh Presbytery

Biographical Statement

I grew up on the Northside of Pittsburgh, and currently reside in its Brighton Heights section. Throughout my life, I have attended Bidwell Church. Once I became a teenager, my church attendance was infrequent. My formal education was within the Pittsburgh Public Schools. In twelfth grade English class the person next to me said, "You need to do your work!" "This class is so interesting, how is it you can just sit there writing rhymes and not work?" I exclaimed, "It is the same content, isn't it!" Who would have thought that the girl trying to encourage me to complete classwork would become my wife? This August, Patrice and I celebrated sixteen years of marriage.



After graduation from Perry Traditional Academy, I went to the University of Pittsburgh. I received a bachelor's degree in history and a master's degree in teaching. Upon completion of graduate school, I received a position from the Pittsburgh Public Schools at Frick International Studies Academy (as a Social Studies teacher). Once I started teaching, I had a new goal. I wanted to be a principal within an urban setting. After some years I was accepted to Indiana University of Pennsylvania to work dually on principal certification and the doctoral program of education. It was at this time that God called me to become a pastor and I withdrew from IUP and started at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

The Reverend James Cleveland said in his song, It's a Good Day, "There's going to be some ups and some downs, smiles and some frowns, but it's been a good day." This song is similar to life. Like everyone I have experienced both good times, as well as bad, but I know that God is with me every step of the way, therefore it is a good day.

Current Sense of Call

It was at the time when I was accepted in the IUP program for principal and superintendent certification, where I felt God calling me to become a pastor. With this strong inclination, I immediately withdrew from the program at IUP and enrolled at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

At the time, I was in my fifth year of teaching and the Middle School Coordinator at The Pittsburgh Project. I believed that I could finish my career as a teacher and become a pastor after retirement. I had a Sunday School teacher named Mr. Bryant. He taught Men's Sunday School into his nineties. He would often say, "If you want to hear God laugh, tell God your plans!"

It took me almost twenty years to finish my work at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. The reasoning is twofold. First, I had a work schedule as a teacher and a coordinator of fifty-five hours minimum per week. Secondly, after a bout of Bell's Palsy, I took a few years off from taking classes.

Now I find myself twenty-one years after that initial call from God. My Seminary course work completed, with God also moving me from inquirer to a candidate potentially ready to hear a call. The same neurological and immune deficiency that caused me to have Bell's Palsy in my thirties, has caused long term adverse aftereffects from Covid 19 infections. The side effects resulted in my retirement after twenty-six years of teaching.

Rather than confidently transitioning into God's call on my life, I am simply holding on to my call from God. It is my sense of call from God that has evolved into a revered promise. Any boldness, confidence, or self-efficacy that I possess is from the Lord. Therefore, while considering that call, I am prayerfully waiting for the next steps.

1 Steven Singleton
2 Statement of Faith (Reasons for Thanksgiving, Loving God, and One Another).
3 4/4/22
4

5 The Godhead has three persons with one divine substance and is worthy of glory, honor,
6 worship, and praise. God the Father who is the creator of everything. Jesus God's only son,
7 came to the earth fully human and fully divine for its redemption. The Holy Spirit was sent by
8 the Father and Son as an advocate to comfort God's people after Christ ascended into heaven.
9 The attributes of God are inseparable. Our God is alive and dwells within people. Humanity is
10 not alone. The trinity serves as an example that people should be relational, showing love and
11 reverence to God. Our love for God is only earnest if we show love for people. **Therefore, we**
12 **should give God thanks, loving God, and one another.**

13 Sin is missing the mark or when people act in ways that do not meet God's
14 expectations. God made humanity in God's image, yet due to the serpent's deception and
15 selfish choices, humanity became corrupt. Humanity sinned against God, resulting in its
16 depraved nature. This also gave Satan and death dominion over all individuals who are not born
17 again, who operate according to the fleshly nature, versus knowing that every good thing
18 comes from above. God has reached out to humanity by miraculous acts and raising up leaders.
19 The greatest act of God was sending his son Jesus Christ to die for humanity, making right
20 humanity's corrupt nature. People then need only to look to Jesus Christ, for in Jesus we see
21 our model. Jesus Christ is the truest form of humanity. **Therefore, we should give God thanks!**

22 God sent his only son Jesus to the earth. Jesus, being fully obedient, gave his life as a
23 ransom for humanity, reconciling humanity back to God. Consequently, Christ is the only

24 mediator for the world. I trust and know that anyone who confesses with their mouths and
25 believes in their hearts that Christ died and resurrected for their sins, shall receive life
26 everlasting. Christ calls those who are believers as friends. People can participate in God's
27 activity, letting their lives be shining examples to the world. **Therefore, we love God and one**
28 **another!**

29 I believe as a response to grace; people are to join in the saving work of Jesus Christ. The
30 Church belongs to God, and we are to live out the teachings of Christ in the Catholic Church and
31 within a body of believers. I earnestly trust that our spiritual gifts are for the edification of a
32 particular church. Consequently, God calls ruling elders, and deacons, from the midst of the
33 congregation. God calls the teaching elder to a congregation. **Therefore, we should give God**
34 **thanks!**

35 Scripture is the word of God. God is revealed in scripture. It shares how God has reached
36 out to humanity by miraculous acts and raising up leaders. It attests to the life and teachings of
37 Jesus Christ. I accept that the congregants hear the word of God in its preached form to
38 increase faith and provide spiritual sustenance. When compared to creeds, confessions, and
39 ordinances within the church, scripture has the highest authority. Lastly, scripture enables
40 people to discern God's will and activity. The activity and will of God must align and never
41 contradict the word of God. **Therefore, we love God and one another!**

42 The sacraments (Baptism and The Lord's Supper) serve as signs of God's grace to the
43 church. Baptism is an occasion symbolizing that God calls and saves people to share in the
44 building of God's church. Our Baptism validates that Christ died for our Sin. Baptism also

45 demonstrates that the old person before knowing Christ is no longer, and those in Christ are
46 new. Christians are not bound by sin but are to live freely for advancing God's kingdom.
47 Whereas Baptism is symbolizing our union or that we are in Christ, the Eucharist represents the
48 intimacy of that relationship. Receiving the broken body and the shed blood of Christ is a way
49 to thankfully reflect on our relationship with God. Simultaneously, the believer assesses their
50 current walk with God, while realizing that through God's grace, God's compact or covenant is
51 eternal. **Therefore, we should give God thanks!**

52 I believe that when a Christian's life ends their body returns to the ground, but the soul
53 is present with the Lord. Christians should have hope in their lives because when Jesus died and
54 resurrected from the death, he conquered hell and the grave. One day Jesus will return,
55 reconciling everything until himself. No person knows this time and believers should live in
56 ways that are watchful and befitting of those redeemed. The imperfect lives of Christians,
57 redeemed by God are witnesses until Jesus Christ returns. Knowing that Christ will have the
58 final victory over evil, should elicit resilience for Christians. I believe that on the final judgement
59 day, the life, actions, and words of all people will come under judgement by the righteousness
60 of Jesus Christ. Faithfull followers will receive eternal salvation, while the unfaithful eternal
61 damnation. **Therefore, we love God and one another!**

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Commission on Preparation for Ministry Report to Pittsburgh Presbytery September 2023

Regular Meeting of the Commission on Preparation for Ministry

Pittsburgh Presbytery's Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) met in a regular meeting on Monday, August 28, 2023 at 4:00 pm. With a quorum being present, Chairperson Rev. Gavin Walton opened the meeting with prayer.

Items for Information

1. Ordination Examinations

The commission reports the following persons have been given permission to take the Senior Ordination Examinations specified:

Davis Creach - Bible Content 9/1/23, Bible Exegesis 9/23/23

Elizabeth Nicodemus - Bible Content 9/1/23, Bible Exegesis 9/23/23

2. Enrolled as Inquirer

The commission reports the following Applicant was examined and approved to be enrolled as Inquirer:

BAILEY Ronnie Bailey, a member of Oakmont Presbyterian Church since 2022, graduated from Malone University in 2010, and is enrolled in Pittsburgh Theological Seminary with a projected graduation date of 2027.

3. Certified Ready to Receive a Commission

The commission reports the following Candidate was examined and approved to be Certified Ready to be commissioned:

Peter Pross

4. Appointment of Commissions for Ordination

On the request of CPM Leadership, the Moderator appointed the following Commissions:

NGUYEN Lam Nguyen's service of Ordination was scheduled for 10:30 a.m. at the Pittsburgh Vietnamese Presbyterian Church, on Sunday, July 9, 2023, with the following commissioners: The Moderator or her designee, Drew Wilson (Forest Hills PC), Rev. Dr. Don Dawson, Rev. Sharon Stewart, George Tichi (Pittsburgh Vietnamese PC), Don Barnes (Open Door PC)

ABBOTT Rebecca Abbott's service of Ordination was scheduled for 3:00 p.m. at Unity Presbyterian Church, on Sunday, August 20, 2023, with the following commissioners: The Moderator or her designee, Rev. Sarah Robbins, Dr. Karen Claassen, Rev. Steven Werth, Pam Frost (Unity PC), Nicholas Genger-Boeldt (East Liberty PC)

CREAMER Michael Creamer's service of Ordination was scheduled for 2:00 p.m. at Sewickley Presbyterian Church, on Sunday, August 27, 2023, with the following commissioners: The Moderator, Louise Schoppe (KenMawr UPC), Rev. Jason Freyer, Rev. Brian Wallace, Jenna Stevenson (Sewickley PC), Jan Bucey (Hot Metal FC)

Items for Action

None