

**Pastor Nominating Committee Presentation to the Congregation
Nominating John Hagmann for Senior Pastor/Head of Staff
December 16, 2018**

Presented by John Wilson:

The writer of Ecclesiastes famously tells us that “To everything there is a season.” To the Pastor Nominating Committee, there are four seasons----and counting! This committee was formed by action of a congregational mtg. on Oct. 22, 2017, so we’ve been working for just over a year. We quickly found out that our time is not the same as God’s time. We strongly feel that we have been led by the Spirit to this person whom God had selected before we even began. We sincerely thank you for your gracious patience. Thank you for words of encouragement, for cards & notes, and most of all for your prayers. There have been times when we could palpably feel your prayers uplifting us.

I want to personally thank all the members of this committee: Chris, Greg, Linda Mason and Jean. Molly could not be here today, but I want to thank her and acknowledge what a thoughtful and hard-working member of the PNC she has been. The PNC has been a solid, hard-working team. What we have done, we have done together. On behalf of the PNC, I thank Rev. Dr. Wanda Neely, our wonderful Transitional Pastor, and Rev. Bobbi White, our Executive Presbyterian, for all of their guidance and support. Most of all, thanks be to God for bringing us to this day.

“This is the Lord’s doing, it is marvelous in our eyes.

This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!”

Presented by Jean VanNoppen:

I would like to speak briefly about the process that brought us to this day. It has been over a year since our group assembled for the first time. We are grateful for your patience. I assure you we have been working very hard. In our Presbytery training sessions, we were told by Bobbi White that “you will just know when you meet the right person.” Frankly, none of us believed her. None of us are what you would call love-at-first-sight kind of people. In the last 14 months we have read 100s of PIFs and listened to almost as many sermons, we have visited churches, heard candidates speak at neutral pulpits and even entertained a few of them in Morganton. In all that time, we never came across a candidate that we all felt sure about until we found John Hagmann. Turns out, Bobbi was right!

As Presbyterians, we believe that every governing committee of our church is led by the Holy Spirit and none more so than a PNC. I have never attended a church meeting that didn’t open with prayer asking for that guidance. And yet when we experience the working of the Holy Spirit we are startled and awe-struck. Our PNC, a group of reasonably intelligent, efficient, hard working people tackled our task methodically and with great dedication. And yet, because John’s path to ministry did not conform to the usual model we would have missed him entirely following our own logic. John reached out to us. His PIF was interesting enough and his sermons good enough that we decided to interview him even though we would not have normally considered him because he was not yet ordained. When we ended our first Face Time conversation, there was a stunned silence as we looked around the table at each other realizing that we had found the person we had been looking for in a place we had not expected. We give

thanks to God for the abiding love and guidance of the Holy Spirit in this process and in all the moments of our lives.

Before I turn the meeting over to Chris, who will tell you more about John and his family, I want to make one personal comment. If you are ever asked to be on a nominating committee, think hard before you say no. I think I speak for our entire PNC when I say that this has been a process of spiritual growth and deepening friendships for all of us. I wouldn't have missed it for the world!

Presented by Chris Bergelin:

We on your PNC are excited today to be telling you about our man John. After analyzing hundreds of pastors the PNC had a perspective that none of us had as we started down this path. What we quickly saw with John was the whole package. He is above all a deeply spiritual man. He is a high-energy person who loves people and relationships. He is a dedicated family man and his kids show the time he and LeAnn have committed to raising them. His innovative thinking is what the mainline church needs to navigate the future. He is a visionary and a planner. He was looking for a congregation that does not take themselves too seriously, and I think we fill the bill there. He recently spent 3 days at the house with Ann & me, and each day he impressed us with his wisdom, clarity of expressing himself & his down-to-earth personality.

Now, as you look at the ballot, you will see that the terms of call are printed on the back side. The total is well within budget and less than the last senior pastor was receiving. Also be aware that the housing allowance can be adjusted to fit his needs once he finds a home. In any case, the total of salary and housing will remain the same.

Presented by Greg Carpenter:

After reviewing hundreds of resumes and listening to countless sermons, you reach a point where recognizing the more notable candidates becomes less challenging. And over time you learn the ability to prepare and deliver a great sermon doesn't always translate to the additional skills necessary to lead a church. Simply stated, your PNC was deliberate and prayerful in reviewing the collective body of work of all candidates.

Upon reading an intriguing resume and cover letter, our first 'face-face' meeting with John Hagmann confirmed that we were on the right path. Speaking with him was like talking to an old friend whom we hadn't seen in years, yet could reconnect with ease. And having personally spent time with John and his lovely family, my initial feelings were solidified.

John has led and served in a variety of ministry settings for nearly 17 years, with each assignment coming with greater responsibility. And we believe he is ready for his next step as head of staff. As many of you know, the ordination process in the Presbyterian Church is one of the most stringent. It typically takes three years of full-time seminary study, but John attended part-time while working full-time in the church. His educational path was similar to the Union Seminary program in Charlotte, and usually takes individuals at least twice as long to complete their degree. This allowed him to remain focused on his family and full-time job, while working toward his ultimate goal of being an ordained minister. Not only did he complete his degree work, he passed all parts of the PCUSA standard ordination exam on the first time (quite an accomplishment considering not all candidates enjoy the same success).

John is firmly rooted in God's word, he is deeply spiritual, he is caring and intelligent... and he has a wonderful sense of humor. He was searching for a long-term opportunity (not a

stepping stone)... a place where he and LeAnn could raise their children in a loving and welcoming community. A place like Morganton! With God's continued guidance and support, John will bring energy, excitement and outstanding leadership to our church. And with God's grace, the congregation of First Presbyterian Morganton will embrace and welcome his leadership. Thanks be to God!

Presented by Mason Streppa:

After reading through countless resumes and personal statements, I began to find my rhythm and get quite good at it. However, when I was first asked to represent the youth on the PNC, little did I know it would be this daunting of a task.

Through this journey I have grown very close to the other members of the PNC, and learned a lot about them and myself. I had never seen people with more care and love for this congregation than with my fellow committee members. Never rushing into anything, we approached each candidate with careful prayer and deliberation. Although our journey was not short, nor was it easy, I am proud to say that I believe we have found the best person for this job.

As a proponent for the youth on this committee, I was challenged to ensure the youth's voice was heard in this selection process. After speaking with John over Facetime in our first interview, I was already very excited at the new possibilities and opportunities that John brings to the table. Once I spoke with him in-person and met his wonderful family, I was even more excited. As I spoke with him, he used words like "dude" and "homie" and asked me about my school and sports life. I never felt more comfortable around anyone I had just met.

John's energy and passion for his work is just what this congregation needs, as well as the youth. I am very excited about him and for what the future holds for this congregation.

Prayer by Linda McCrary:

Loving God,

We come before you today in Thanksgiving. Our committee came together over a year ago with the task of finding the next minister for our church. We have learned that "in Scripture and in Life, the road to deliverance nearly always takes a detour. Rarely do the people of God reach any kind of promised land without a journey or two through the wilderness."* We felt at times as though we had been wandering in the desert for, maybe not 40 years, but definitely 40 months, of praying, meeting, reading, listening, viewing, skyping, visiting, and praying some more- only to feel stuck in the wilderness. Yet we were told that we would know when the right person came along and so we persevered. We had been told that "You, God, will make a way where no way seems apparent," and that is exactly what has happened. It is with humble, grateful hearts that we gather today to offer a new journey for First Presbyterian, Morganton. We ask that our congregation welcome John, LeAnn and their family with open hearts and join in this new beginning with renewed enthusiasm. We ask your richest blessings on the Hagmanns as they complete their service in Houston and transition to Morganton. God, we also ask your blessings on Wanda Neely. We are forever grateful for her service to you and to our congregation.

May we always remember that wherever we are on our journeys that you are by our side the entire way. God, bless us all as we start anew. Thank you for that opportunity. In your Son's name we pray. Amen.