

1 **Faith Journey and Call to Ministry**

2 As an only child, when I expressed a desire to join the church, my parents were very happy. I
3 remember the conversation with my father, which he shared with my mother, of my expressed
4 interest. He encouraged me to be patient and pray before acting. At the age of twelve, about one
5 year later, I was baptized, and became a member of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church in Dorchester,
6 MA. The importance of education and spirituality was stressed during the early days of my faith
7 journey, under the pastoral leadership of Rev. Dr. Boykin Sanders at Pleasant Hill Baptist
8 Church. I learned the truth that if I wanted to improve my life, I must trust and have faith in
9 God, to become a person of action, in order to produce the desired results and gratification of the
10 fruits of my labor. My relationship and tutelage under Dr. Sanders promoted high standards and
11 the belief that religion is more than a feel-good experience. Education leading to a growing
12 knowledge, focused on an increased ability to transact business, is necessary to produce an
13 abundant life on earth, and not only in the aftermath of life.

14 The relationship and experience with Dr. Sanders challenged me not to take short cuts. This
15 reminds me of the wise man in Matthew 7 who built his house on the rock. Regardless of how
16 people may mistreat me or think I am “less than”, the foundation I have established has helped
17 me withstand the storms of life and provides today stability in the midst of my trials.

18 I faithfully attended Sunday school, sang in the choir and attended youth activities. A life
19 changing experience for me came when the late Deacon Henry Mann asked me to pray at a
20 Sunday morning worship service. Given that opportunity at the age of thirteen, I felt God stirring
21 in my spirit and this fire has continued to grow inside of me. Having taken this opportunity to be
22 involved and to be a part of the worship experience helped me feel connected to God and helped

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23 me to bring meaning out of attending church. This connection, and other church relationships,
24 encouraged me to want to serve God, to be a servant of God and to serve God's people at my
25 church and in my community. I wanted to model a positive behavior and a caring spirit.

26 During my formative years I sang in the junior choir under the direction of my Aunt Arrie Bugg.
27 I was a junior usher, joined the gospel choir, and participated in the young adults youth group.

28 Growing up in Roxbury, Massachusetts, I attended the William Monroe Trotter Elementary
29 School, Phyllis Wheatley Middle School, and Boston Technical High School. My faith in God
30 and involvement in church helped me with public speaking. Learning Easter speeches, praying
31 and reading scriptures in the worship services, and other programs helped me in school to have
32 confidence to speak in front of my classmates.

33 After graduating from Boston Technical High School, I matriculated to Wentworth Institute of
34 Technology for a Bachelor degree in Electronic Engineering. While pursuing my bachelor
35 degree at Wentworth Institute of Technology, I was still able to attend church services and be a
36 part of the church community where I grew up. After graduating from Wentworth in 1988, I
37 started my professional career at Central Maine Power Company in Augusta, Maine.

38 I lived in Augusta for three years, then moved to Dover, New Hampshire and started to work for
39 Liberty Mutual insurance in 1991. Before accepting the job at Liberty Mutual, I became engaged
40 to my wife Ada. We joined hands in marriage on August 22, 1992 at St. John's Missionary
41 Baptist Church in Roxbury, MA. Ada, her daughter Latasha, and I lived in Rochester, New
42 Hampshire for a year or so before moving to Peabody, Massachusetts. During this time we
43 attended Pleasant Hill Baptist Church. The Pastor, Rev. Dr. Demetrius Williams, asked me to
44 become a Deacon. Accepting the call, and after completing my time as Deacon in Training, I was

45 ordained May 21, 1995. Ada was also consecrated as a Deaconess. Our daughter Kailah was
46 born June 8, 1995.

47 My father died on Sunday, April 20, 1997. This was a trying time for me because my Dad's
48 listening ear was no longer around for me to share and discuss my thoughts and to talk and laugh
49 with anymore. Father's Day in June that same year, I was not up to celebrating. Instead of being
50 selfish, however, I needed to honor my wife and children and their love and kindness to me since
51 I am a father myself. I remember in October of that year still being upset about my Dad's death,
52 as I continued to work through the grieving process. I kept thinking to myself, the one person I
53 talked to about everything is no longer present. I reflected on the lyrics of a song Joe Ligon
54 wrote, "How can you say Jesus is the Captain of your life if you can't make it through a storm?"
55 At the age of 31, as an only child, husband, father, and servant of Christ, this major loss required
56 maturity and self-control to deal with life at a whole different level. I knew I would be the only
57 one to make sure that my mother is taken care of. For her not to worry about certain details I
58 would step up and make sure everything is in order.

59 Our son Justin was born March 29, 1998. Yes, joy! I thought about my Dad saying having a son
60 adds another generation to carry the Riggins name. I remember my Mom and me talking and
61 saying how happy father would be to see Justin, how he would be smiling and laughing. I agreed,
62 remembering how happy he was when Kailah was born.

63 Through the diaconate ministry, I grew to understand more how to connect my faith to social
64 justice and to advocate for the underserved and voiceless in my community. As a deacon, my
65 role and responsibility was to encourage and to be compassionate to my fellow brothers and
66 sisters in times of sadness, joy and challenging times. The continued growth and ever-evolving

67 transformation of my thinking and approach to life through being a deacon is humbling and
68 gratifying.

69 In June, 2003 we moved our membership to Messiah Baptist Church in Brockton, Massachusetts
70 because we knew of the preaching, teaching and leadership of Rev. Michael Wayne Walker. This
71 change and transition were positive for me and my family. The preaching and teaching of Rev.
72 Walker is electrifying to me. I appreciate how Rev. Walker interprets the Bible, stretches all who
73 hear to find a new way in approaching life, and being a positive advocate for others. This is
74 beneficial to me and my family as well. For me, Rev. Walker walks the talk and models the
75 behavior that God requires from a pastor.

76 After Ada and I completed our five Assurance classes with Deacon Calvin Harris 2003, we
77 received the right hand of fellowship as new members of Messiah Baptist Church. Our
78 participation and fellowship at Messiah grew as we deepened our involvement. I served on the
79 Diaconate and had the opportunity to serve as a liaison to the youth minister and the pastor,
80 attended a Harvard University supervisory course, and was a supervisor to our intern minister
81 Shaundra Cunningham.

82 My growing inner sense drew me toward pastoral ministry as I embraced the opportunities to
83 live the gospel and to advocate for people that have no voice and who are under-represented. My
84 approach to ministry is about connecting the scriptures for the congregants to understand that the
85 word of God applies to their daily lives, and that God's words prepare us to navigate the
86 challenges and circumstances we face, to be alert and to watch the power of God take place in
87 our lives.

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88 My faith journey over the years has continually refocused how I view my personal life. This has
89 enabled me to readjust my lens personally, spiritually, and professionally. I have asked God to
90 give me insight, discernment, and wisdom each day and in every aspect of my life and to help me
91 to continue to refresh and to change my thought process as a servant of God. I am able to stay
92 strong and content with who I am, knowing that God is the way, the truth, and the life. Knowing
93 that fruitfulness comes from having Christ in me helps me to have peace, perspective, and
94 purpose. The ability to have inner peace helps me stay grounded and focused. The Christian
95 perspective really helps me to look at a situation with positive expectations not frustration. This
96 has helped me in many areas of my life to keep self-control in circumstances when I know
97 people are intentionally being unjust, unfair or just plain rude. At those times I am able to see
98 how God is helping me get through painful moments and learn how to handle situations as they
99 arise.

100 In the summer of 2009 I felt my call to pastoral ministry to preach the gospel. Rev. Walker
101 advised me to continue to pray and share with Ada and be open to God's leading. After my year
102 of discernment, November 8, 2010, I accepted my call to pastoral ministry and received
103 confirmation from Pastor Walker. My next step included applying to Andover Newton
104 Theological School. Affirmed by Rev. Walker and the diaconate to move forward, on April 10,
105 2011, I preached my sermon and received my Pre-ordination License. I enrolled in the Master of
106 Divinity program at Andover Newton Theological School September, 2011. Along with my
107 seminary education, I have completed a Professional Ethics course that is offered by TABCOM,
108 and been active as a pulpit supply minister. My expected graduation date from Andover Newton
109 Theological School is May, 2016.

110 My theology is about encouraging, educating and motivating all people to put their faith and trust
111 in God. I believe the word of God should be communicated and explained to help humanity to
112 apply and practice God's words in their everyday lives to sustain them through the ups and
113 downs in life. My ministry is to put God first and listen, and I strive to model and teach, heed the
114 voice of God and be guided by the Holy Spirit. My ministry is to encourage human beings to
115 seek knowledge, read, and research the bible and other biblical resources for them to grow and
116 mature as Christians and as people.

117 I want to impart that all of us have a vocation in the body of Christ. All believers are invited to
118 seek a specific call, to give of their time and talent to the work of God and therefore to help our
119 sisters and brothers in Christ. In our Christian walk, we must exercise the diversity of our gifts.
120 Whatever our individual talents and gifts in the world, our mutual vocation is to serve God
121 through them.

122 My leadership style is a combination of collaborative and transformational. I include others in
123 decision making and gather input throughout a shared process. I approach leadership in ministry
124 with energy and confidence. I seek continued growth and development. Further, I have
125 developed skills and qualities which include an ability to listen, encourage others, keeping my
126 humor and focused decision-making.

127 **God**

128 I believe that God is the supreme power over heaven and earth. The Old and New Testaments
129 present God as a spiritual being. Yet we see the theme throughout scripture which presents the
130 Divine as being three different modes. I understand Creator (God), Redeemer (Jesus), and
131 Sustainer (Holy Spirit) are three different modes but are one. I believe God created the heavens

132 and the earth, and every living creature that exists today. God said “Let there be” and God made
133 the sun, moon and the stars in the sky. The God I believe in is the God written about in Scripture,
134 the God that hears our cries, feels our pains, and heal our wounds. I believe God is gender
135 neutral. The concept of God as a loving parent is as both mother and father. I believe we need a
136 positive image of God in language that is equal and balanced so we can recapture a God who is
137 beyond gender, a creator God who offers an affectionate relationship with God’s people. I
138 believe God is enriched in relationship with Creation, is not limited by it, and that God is beyond
139 full human understanding.

140 **Jesus**

141 I believe that the Books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John contain the truth about Jesus Christ.
142 The core message, I believe, is that Jesus of Nazareth, a roaming healer and preacher, was the
143 Word of God made flesh: the living representation of God’s love for humanity, and the call to
144 deeper relationship with the sacred source.

145 I believe Jesus is the Savior and Redeemer of the souls of humankind. Born of the Virgin Mary,
146 Jesus came into the world not to condemn but give it everlasting life restoring the relationship
147 between God and humanity. Jesus is the redeemer to bridge the gap between God and
148 humankind. Adam’s sin separated humanity from God. Jesus is the restorer and brought
149 humanity back into right relation with God. Jesus, who had no sin, took on sin so humanity
150 would have the right to life. I believe Christ died for us. Rather than condemning human beings
151 to eternal spiritual death, God presented Christ, the sinless one, as a sacrifice to die in our place,
152 that through Jesus’ blood we might be forgiven and freed from condemnation.

153 God created Jesus, who had no sin, yet he took on our sin, so that Jesus became the righteousness
154 of God. Jesus lived on earth in divine human flesh and suffered greatly to reconcile the sins of
155 humankind.

156 Jesus was crucified, died and rose again on the third day. I believe Jesus ascended to the right
157 hand of God, and that same Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead.

158 **Holy Spirit**

159 The Holy Spirit, the third mode of the Godhead, understands all, has all power, and is eternal.
160 The Holy Spirit empowers believers to do God's work on earth through spiritual gifts (Acts 1:8).
161 And the Holy Spirit is a guide to help us deal with difficult situations that we face in life. The
162 Holy Spirit helps us with our actions and decisions we make in life to have grace in the face of
163 adversity. "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper (Comforter,
164 Advocate, Intercessor-Counselor, Strengtheners, Standby), to be with you forever." (John 14:16
165 AMP) The Holy Spirit points us to Jesus to do God's work on Earth through spiritual gifts. The
166 Holy Spirit is relevant in the life of the seekers and believers in God. The Holy Spirit helps us to
167 accept grace and extend grace.

168 The Holy Spirit is an active participant in calling a person to follow Christ, and also in serving to
169 guide a life bearing spiritual fruit. The Holy Spirit distinctively gifts each person with particular
170 gifts, which are to be used for the glory of God.

171 The Holy Spirit also serves to judge the world and the church both of sin and righteousness.

172

173

174 **Humanity**

175 God created humankind in the Creator's image, both female and male, and allowed humanity to
176 have dominion over every living creature and the material infrastructure that exists upon the
177 earth. God, who created everything including humans, was pleased that is done for God's glory.
178 That gave God pleasure and God created female and male to help God with taking care of this
179 earth.

180 Humanity fell short of God's desires, seeking to follow its own wishes instead of worshipping
181 God. All of humanity is responsible for breaking away from God's grace. Sin is a result of
182 humanity's disobedience against God. All people share a common yearning for meaning, hope,
183 answers, love and justice.

184 **Salvation**

185 Salvation is freely given as a gift from God by way of repentance as we confess with our lips
186 that Jesus is God who will deliver us from our sins. The total work of God's salvation is to save
187 humanity from ruin and power of sin and bestow God's grace of abundant life and eternal life. I
188 affirm that Jesus Christ, through the Jesus's death on the cross, took complete victory over sin
189 and death. Through Christ's resurrection on the third day, we are justified by our faith in Jesus
190 Christ.

191 The good news of salvation is that Jesus life, death, and resurrection provided a means by which
192 humanity may receive a new life in Christ. Humanity does not find its merit before God upon its
193 own work, but entirely upon the work of Christ.

194 New life that is found in Christ will bear witness to the work of the Holy Spirit. This new life
195 that comes with Christ requires death of old self and a determination to live for God. The gift of
196 salvation is ultimately a gracious act of the Godhead.

197 **The Church**

198 The Bible affirms that the church is the body of Jesus Christ and the community of believers.

199 The church is made up of a fellowship of seekers and believers who are connected by faith in

200 Jesus Christ. From my perspective, the purpose of the church is to help individuals connect with

201 God and to assist with their spiritual care. An opportune time to learn about God, and the

202 teachings of God, is as the church helps people to work out their soul salvation while making

203 meaning out of life. As a church, we teach all to love God, self, family, and other human beings.

204 The church is a place to educate people and to advocate for social justice and human rights. The

205 church is an environment for meditation, community, and a safe place where all are welcome to

206 build a relationship with God and humanity. "All creation is called to glorify God. All humanity

207 is called to work for justice. The church participates in both of these general vocations: to glorify

208 God and to see justice." (Bush, 2006, p.149)

209 The Church as the Body of Christ must suffer with the suffering. It must proclaim the kerygma

210 of liberation to Blacks and other oppressed people, and it must join in the struggle for liberation

211 against political, economic and social systems that contradict the Good News of Jesus liberating

212 activity.

213 The church is described as a body with many parts. Christ as the head of the body, individuals

214 form parts of the body, parts comprised of distinct functions but equal importance. Each person

215 should desire the building up of the church. When the body is working well together, the church
216 is doing its job effectively.

217 **Ordinances**

218 The Baptist Church has two ordinances - baptism and communion.

219 **Baptism** – The mission of the church is commissioned by Jesus that the church should “Go
220 therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Creator, and the
221 Redeemer, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and
222 lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.” I believe Baptism is an outward expression of
223 an inward belief. When baptized the person identifies with Jesus’ birth, death, and resurrection,
224 so that through an act of obedience one bears witness to their faith in Jesus to all those who
225 witness the baptism. Baptism is to be done by full immersion in the manner of Jesus and in the
226 same manner used by the early church.

227 Baptism is a public declaration of one’s desire to embrace the forgiveness offered in Christ. The
228 waters of baptism represent cleansing of sins. The act of going into the water and coming back
229 up can be viewed as a picture of Christ’s death (old self) and resurrection (new self).

230 Baptism represents the way in which an individual is personally proclaiming his or her
231 acceptance of the forgiveness, which God offers in Christ.

232 **Communion** - “Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it
233 to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body.", And he took a cup, and when he had
234 given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the
235 covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

236 These words are symbolic and the act of a unified meal. Communion ordinance bread and wine
237 is consecrated and shared. Communion symbolizes the death of Christ. The bread represents

238 Jesus' body and the cup the new covenant of Jesus blood. Participating in the Lord's Supper
239 with the community of seekers and believers fosters unity. It is to be observed regularly until
240 Christ returns.

241 **American Baptist Churches, USA**

242 I believe in the American Baptist Churches, USA faith tradition, as manifested from the
243 beginning of my Christian life. Baptists insist that faith in God is personal. We have soul
244 freedom to engage in a direct personal relationship with God without interference from
245 government, creed, or clergy. I believe the mission of the American Baptist Church is to make
246 disciples, seek social justice for the disadvantaged, excluded, "less than", marginalized citizens
247 with no voice, advocating for a better standard of living for all persons as it relates to education,
248 socioeconomic status, healthcare, housing, and a safe environment.

249 **Ministerial Ethics**

250 The Code of Ethics is an important instrument in holding accountable the sacred responsibility of
251 clergy. I have read and signed The Covenant and Code of Ethics for Ministerial Leaders of
252 American Baptist Churches and I am in full agreement with the ethical tenets expressed therein.