



Report of the  
Associate Pastor Nominating Committee  
to the Congregation of  
Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church

JULY 26 & AUGUST 2, 2020

Associate Pastor Nominating  
Committee Members

Ben Cumming

Julie Chesnutt

Catie O'Hare

David Barclift

Stan Williams

Dear Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church Family,

Our Associate Pastor Nominating Committee (APNC) is very pleased and excited to present this final report to you in preparation for the called congregational meeting on Sunday, July 26 at 12 noon via Zoom. Please see Barrett's letter within this report for important procedures for the meeting and for voting.

On October 20, 2019, our Session affirmatively voted to "begin the process to search for an Associate Pastor of Youth and Christian Education". On November 6, at a called meeting, Session and the Congregational Nominating Committee (CNC) met with our Presbytery of Greater Atlanta consultant, Cassandra Morrow, to officially begin the process for calling this position. The CNC presented the slate of APNC nominees at a called congregational meeting on December 15. Julie Chesnutt, Catie O'Hare, Stan Williams, Ben Cumming and David Barclift were approved to serve on the committee.

The newly formed APNC had our initial meeting in mid-December followed by a meeting with Cassandra Morrow where she outlined Presbytery protocol and procedures for calling an associate pastor. Preparing our Ministry Information Form (MIF) was the first task and much of the information from the 2019 MIF (when we called Barrett) was applicable.

Just prior to the pandemic, the APNC met with the Christian Education, Children's & Youth ministries teams, met with Barrett for position review and priorities, and held other listening sessions. The youth provided input via a Zoom meeting. The APNC met weekly and sometimes twice weekly (via Zoom following the onset of the pandemic). On Sunday, April 19, the MIF and the position description for Associate Pastor for Faith Formation were presented to Session and were approved (after already being approved by Presbytery).

Within the week, the MIF was posted on the (national) Presbytery Church Leadership Connection and we immediately began receiving Personal Information Forms (PIF) from both Presbytery-matched and self-referred candidates. The APNC received and reviewed over 40 PIFs.

In early May we began the interview process of our four top-tier candidates and continued the interview process with our top two candidates, all via Zoom. At this stage, the APNC requested that Barrett be involved with further considerations. In June, we held in-person (socially distanced) interviews and both of these candidates met with Barrett and visited our campus. Following the in-person interviews, the committee and Barrett unanimously and quite enthusiastically agreed to proceed with the nomination of Isaac Toney-Schmitt.

Considering these times, we are quite pleased with the overall process and the relatively short time-frame. The power of prayer and Divine direction have certainly been felt by the APNC.

We believe that Isaac will wonderfully complement Barrett, energetically engage with our youth, be a great resource for our Christian Education and Children's ministries, and that he and Christina will be very active in the life of Mount Vernon and within our church family. The following pages highlight Isaac's life and experiences.

The Terms of Call, which have been approved by our Finance and Administration Ministry Team and by Presbytery of Greater Atlanta, are part of the approval by the congregation to call Isaac. On Thursday, July 16, Isaac was examined by Presbytery's Commission on Ministry and was accepted by the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta. Pending our congregation's affirmative vote, Isaac will be presented to Presbytery on August 15.

The APNC is pleased to present Isaac Toney-Schmitt as the nominee for our Associate Pastor for Faith Formation and is unanimous in requesting that the congregation vote affirmatively to call Isaac.

Blessings and Peace,



David Barclift

Associate Pastor Nominating Committee Chair



Dear Mount Vernon Family,

I hope you consider what follows a FAQs (frequently asked questions) sheet for how we arrived at this point as well as how you can ensure that you are able to vote in our virtual called congregational meeting beginning July 26 and concluding August 2.

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**Q: Why are we calling a new minister now?**

A: Because there is a great want and need to improve the ministry quality of Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church. From a staff perspective, I was called last August to serve as your head of staff and to work with you to imagine a future vision for Mount Vernon Presbyterian. At almost 400 active members, you are simply too large a church for one pastor to adequately minister to and build any substantial identity. I concur with the APNC that Isaac Toney-Schmitt is the best candidate to help broaden our response to God’s call and to help us formulate a sustaining ministry by weaving together our family of faith.

**Q: How will we integrate Isaac into MVPC during the pandemic?**

A: We are planning a series of Zoom “get-to-know-you” events for which we will encourage you to sign-up. One of Isaac’s passions is pastoral care and, like me, he will begin reaching out to you via phone calls, emails, and other mediums. I think you will find, as I did, that Isaac is a thoughtful, engaging, and easy-going person who will immediately display a pastoral sensitivity. Isaac will also be involved in worship. You can expect him to preach and lead worship once a month and what most excites me is that he will bring a different voice to the pulpit of MVPC.

**Q: How exactly will this Zoom Congregational Meeting work on July 26?**

A: We will send you a Zoom link that will first be in our weekly “This Week at MVPC” e-mail sent out every Thursday. This will take place on July 23. We will then e-mail the link again the morning of the meeting, Sunday July 26. The meeting itself will start promptly at noon. When you enter the Zoom meeting, you will see Clerk of Session, David Hill, APNC Chair David Barclift, and myself. Following a prayer, David Barclift will present the work of the APNC and offer Isaac’s name for a formal vote.

The congregation will then be invited to ask questions of David Barclift, and once that discussion has concluded we will instruct you to your chat feature on Zoom. We will ask you to submit your vote to me (I will serve as Host of the meeting), that way we can maintain the integrity of the secret ballot. We will record this meeting and thus have an account of the vote for our files and to further ensure the integrity of the vote. Once the vote has concluded we will suspend the meeting until August 2 and close with prayer.

**Q: What if I do not have access to Zoom or cannot be at my computer on Sunday, July 26?**

A: You may request a mail-in ballot that the church will send you. You can do this by contacting the church Office Administrator, Debbie Nysewander, at [debbie@mvpchurch.org](mailto:debbie@mvpchurch.org) or by calling the church office 404-255-2211. We ask that you request a ballot by July 22, but will do our best to accommodate anyone who requests a ballot after that date.

**Q: What will happen at the August 2 Congregational Meeting?**

A: We will resume the suspended meeting from July 26 and will tabulate the votes that we recorded on July 26 along with the mail-in ballots that we will accept until August 2.

We will then share the final vote tally. In order for the vote to be valid, 10% of the congregation must vote, or roughly 40 people (we submitted 394 members on the church rolls this past year).

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We hope you find this helpful. I want to thank you for your support of the staff of MVPC. This has been a season that has extended us all far beyond our job descriptions and we have had to reimagine what church is and how we celebrate fellowship with God. I can assure you that Isaac Toney-Schmitt will be a catalyst of this continued reimagining. That’s why even before this pandemic we titled this position Associate Pastor for Faith Formation. As we continue to venture down this unknown path, we will need people who dream and inspire. I believe Isaac will do that. I believe he will impart that to our youth, give hope to our mature members, and lead us all to be a more connected community of Christ.

Grace and Peace,



Barrett

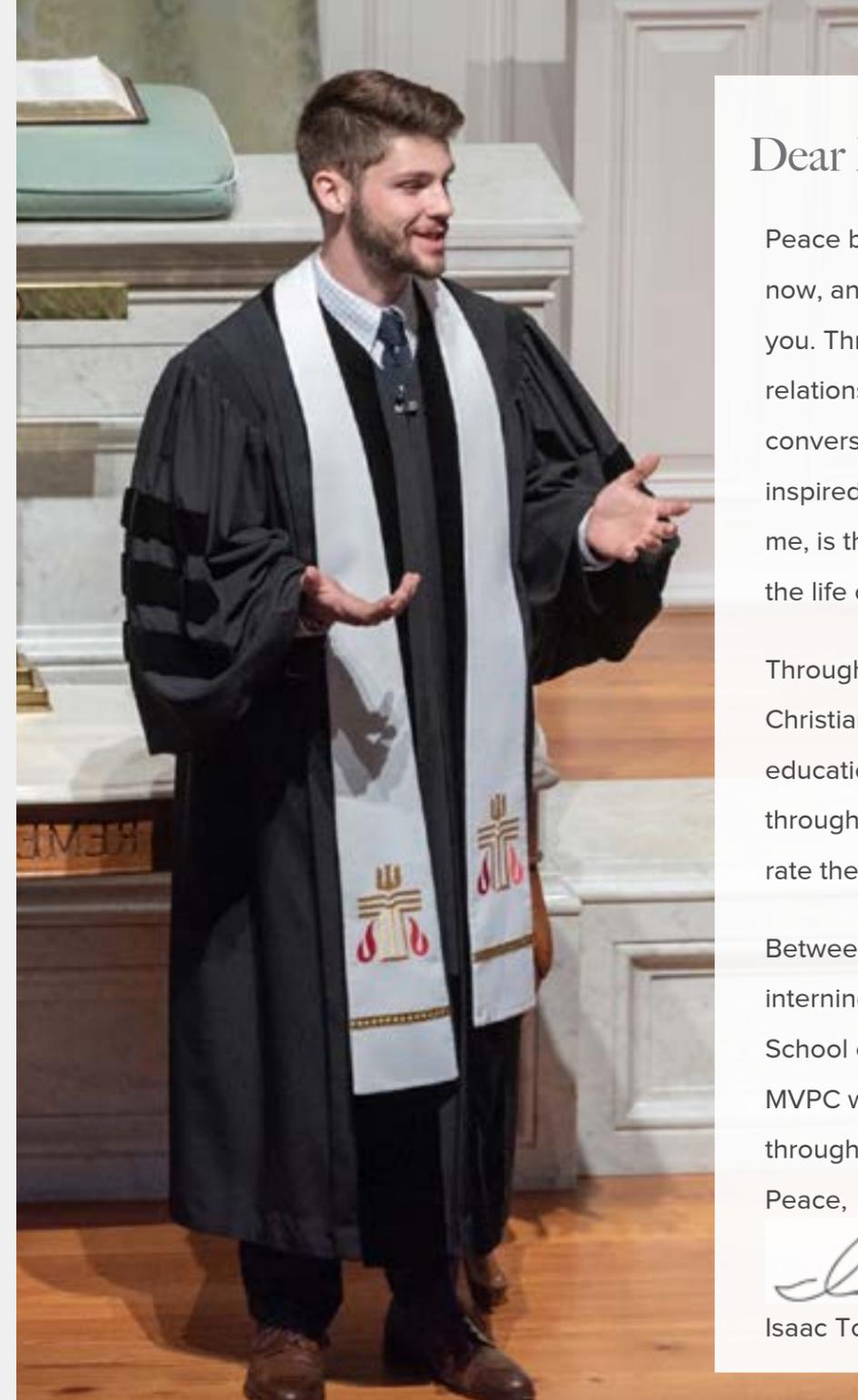
# About Isaac

Isaac grew up in Northeast Georgia, mostly in Athens. He was carried into a PC(USA) church from the start and grew up in First Presbyterian Church of Athens. His family still lives in Athens. He received his undergraduate degree from Centre College in Danville, Kentucky, where he studied History and Religion, as well as pole vaulting. He received his M.Div. from the Candler School of Theology while also interning as a Youth and Seminary intern at Shallowford Presbyterian Church in Atlanta.



Isaac graduated Candler in the spring of 2019 and spent the summer of 2019 discerning God's call for the beginning of his ministry. This led him to Independent Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama where he serves as Director of Youth Ministries from August 2019 to the present. He focuses on incorporating youth in the worshipping life of the church and developing meaningful curriculum. He also takes advantage of the many opportunities to preach and write creative worship liturgy.

Isaac met Christina at seminary, and they were recently married in May! Christina is an Atlanta native, candidate for ministry in the United Methodist Church, and predominately works with non-profits. Isaac and Christina are avid rock climbers, aspiring bird watchers, and huge fans of Atlanta United. Both Christina and Isaac's family are spread throughout Atlanta and Athens.



Dear Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church,

Peace be with you! I have joined your church family in prayer for many months now, and I am so excited by the opportunity to be in ministry with each one of you. Throughout my conversations with your APNC, the abundance of authentic relationships and passion for following Christ at MVPC is clear. I left every conversation humbled by God's love working through your church family and inspired to respond to God's call to be with you. My hope, should you receive me, is that I would offer my experiences as a young minister in the PC(USA) to the life of MVPC.

Throughout my ministry experiences in Georgia and Alabama, I have developed Christian education and fellowship programs for youth, coordinated with Christian education committees to link children, youth, and adult education, and led worship through writing liturgy and preaching. I love these ministries. I am eager to incorporate them into the life of MVPC so that we all find space to listen for God together.

Between growing up in Athens, marrying an Atlanta-native (just two months ago), interning at Shallowford Presbyterian Church, and graduating from the Candler School of Theology, I've found a lot of community in Atlanta. It is my prayer that MVPC will be a new chapter in that growing community of love and relationship through Christ. Christina and I look forward to walking alongside you!

Peace,

Isaac Toney-Schmitt

# What others have said...



“Isaac is very well spoken and comfortable with groups. He is bright, compassionate, responsible and very thoughtful. A very good preacher.”

Rev. Dr. Carol Strickland, Associate Pastor  
Athens First Presbyterian Church

“He’s Christ-centered in whatever he does, that helps him being genuine. He has a genuine care for individuals and he listens. He exhibits a great deal of insight of when to be supportive with words, when to be supportive with prayer, and when to listen.”

Jerris Hayes, Session Liaison  
Athens First Presbyterian Church

“Isaac has led worship as a preacher and is an excellent liturgist. He connects with our youngest members and gained the respect of our older members. Our young people look to Isaac for counseling as well as faith leadership. One of my favorite qualities is his willingness to constantly self-assess his own strengths and weaknesses, take feedback from others, and then directly implement it in his actions; this is a rare gift for someone in ministry and life.”

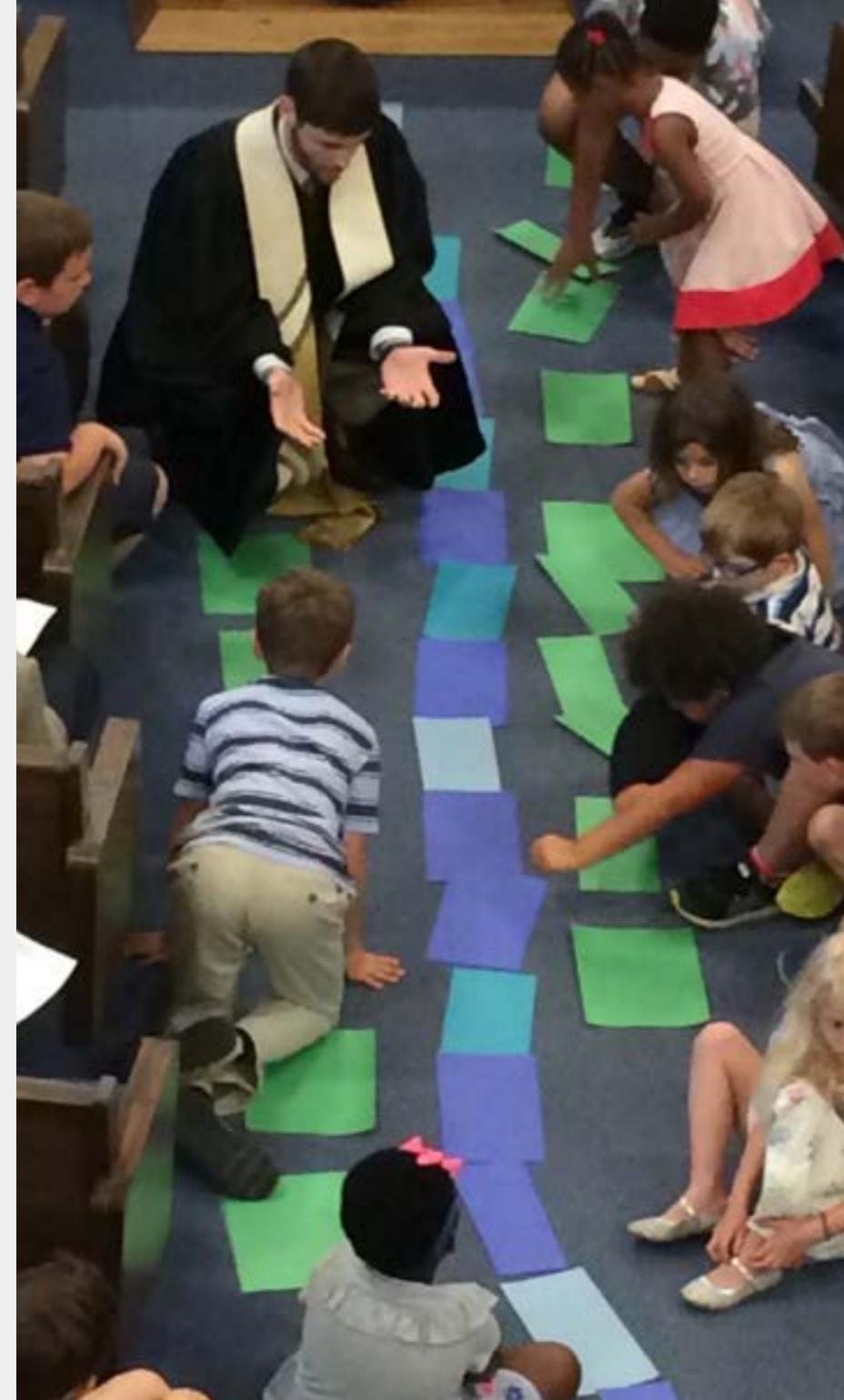
Rev. Bradley Kibler, Associate Pastor for Youth & Programs  
Shallowford Presbyterian Church

## ON HIS SENSE OF CALL

“A lovely Taize service one night quieted my mind enough to hear God’s call. It was a moment of deep love, and I finally felt heard in a church. I switched my major to religion, read the Bible for the first time, and soaked up my professors’ habits.”



“God is calling me to a ministry that lifts up a diversity of voices. My vision of church centers on everyone feeling heard, whether they agree on particulars or not. Following this call to lift up diverse voices has led me to come alongside youth groups for the last three years, developing curriculum that creates room for honest dialogue, training youth to lead worship as and set a vision for their group, training adults to guide, and nurturing fellowship that leads us all toward God’s love and one another.”



“As I reflect on my experience as a youth in church, it was unremarkable. Even though my seminary courses were not youth focused, I fell in love with youth hearing how much they had to say in the face of all the modern challenges of being a teenager. They are creative, inventive, and particularly discerning of God around us all. And, I’ve seen how vibrant church becomes when youth and church take ownership of one another. I believe the entire church flourishes when we hear God in youth voices.”

## On his sense of call...

“My biggest growing edge has come in discerning God every day. Especially since I graduated seminary and began balancing my commitment as a Youth Director and my call to be ordained, the list of ‘ordinary’ tasks piles up. I used to think all the ordinary tasks were distractions from vulnerable moments with God, but I’m growing to see just the opposite. God reaches out through the ordinary, not just the extraordinary experiences of life.”

**Click on the links below to view videos of Isaac:**

[July 4, 2020 IPC Service & Sermon](#)

Isaac’s portion of the service 12:45 - 28:30 and benediction 48:00 - 48:30

[Isaac & Christina in the April 26, 2020 IPC Vespers service](#)

Isaac & Christina’s portion 16:00 - 18:20

[Digital Daily Devotional](#)

[Digital Sunday School](#)

## On managing conflict...

“All twenty people on staff trusted me to plan and lead the retreat. In the morning I organized small groups around dialogue tools that opened up space for every person to describe the last year in their own language. Others listened, and it went on for three hours. In the afternoon I led brainstorming in a large group collaboration to cast a vision for the next year. As a result, the staff discovered a common hope for intergenerational ministry and cross-departmental programming over the next year.”



# Blessed to be a Blessing

We are a Presbyterian church filled with love and energy—an inclusive congregation committed to spiritual growth through **worship, study, fellowship, and service.**

**As children of God,** we seek to praise God in worship and in all that we say and do.

**As disciples of Jesus Christ,** we listen to scripture, tradition, one another, and the world in order to understand God's will for us as individuals and as a community.

**As members of a family of faith,** we strive to love one another unconditionally, sharing our joys and standing beside one another in our struggles.

**As moved by the Spirit,** we serve our gracious God by taking that with which we have been blessed and turning it into blessing for others.

