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Paper for Ordination American Baptist Churches USA

Faith Journey, Christian Experience, Call into Ministry

I was born in Bogotá, Colombia, adopted at birth and raised in Peabody, MA. I grew up in the Catholic Church. I went to Catholic classes when I was younger. I was a rebellious teenager. To make a long story short, I really did not do much with my faith until I got in a car accident on New Year's Eve in 1997.

That accident was a real wake up call. It caused me to look at my priorities. In 1999, I was at Westfield State and explored what my faith meant. I ended up at the Christian Life Center, an evangelical church in Springfield. I remember hearing the call to follow my faith and surrender to Christ. I went forward and gave my life to Christ. I finished college at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst and graduated with a Hospitality and Tourism degree. I watched as God opened the doors to move down South.

My call was a gradual call during the transition from college to the working world. I started doing sales with Black and Decker in July of 2003 in Charlotte, NC. I developed a passion for sales and enjoyed sales but felt there was something else I should be selling. At that time I read [The Greatest Salesman in the World](#) by OG Mandino, lessons for being a salesman and sharing the greatest story in the world, the Gospel. God spoke to me through this book and showed me that sharing God's love is more important than the sales I was doing. After reading the book, I felt a call to preach the Good News. "Here I am Lord send me" was the tune in my head.

I was part of a college group in Davidson, NC. I was speaking with Pastor Allen Brindisi from Davidson College Church about a call into ministry. He encouraged me to go to the Davidson College seminary day. There were various booths and displays from various seminaries.

Then as I was walking around the corner, I came across the school with my same name called The M. Christopher White Divinity School at Gardner Webb University. It was an interesting coincidence. Later I visited Princeton, Duke and Gardner Webb. On my way back from a sales call in South Carolina, God confirmed my call into seminary. I asked God if this was what He wanted me to do, to be a Baptist and go to seminary. At that moment a U2 song, came on that spoke about Jesus and His mission. God has used this song before and I believe God uses similar ways to communicate with people. The lyrics are very prophetic as Bono sings “I believe in the kingdom come where all the colors bleed into one.” For me racial equality has been an important part of my calling.

Gardner Webb was where I believe the Lord was directing me. The first two people I met from Gardner Webb were Robert Canoy and Dan Goodman. It was their passion for New Testament and Theology that sparked my interest. I enrolled in the Masters of Divinity and Masters of Business program at Gardner Webb in the fall of 2004. I continued working for Black and Decker for the first year. I stayed in Charlotte for two more years. After I left Black and Decker, my focus was on finishing school. I applied for a graduate resident director position and got the position.

The next part of my calling occurred in 2005 when I was helping with a Bible study run by the North Carolina Baptist Convention. The preacher had an altar call for those who were being led to full time ministry. God spoke within my heart as I went forward and I reaffirmed my intention and am dedicated to follow His will and prepare for full time ministry. I spent summer break from classes in Los Angeles, CA. This gave me a chance to be involved with two of the vibrant churches in the area, Saddleback and Mosaic. I enjoyed those services and thought they had great ideas for bringing people into church. One idea was the using media and technology to reach people showing clips of movies and incorporating it into the message.

I returned to Gardner Webb at the beginning of August 2006 and moved into Lutz Hall. I started working at Kings Mountain Baptist church in September of 2006, with Pastor Jeff Hensley, who has been one of my mentors during my time in seminary.

Living at school allowed me to study full time and continue working as a Youth Director and Resident Advisor. A memorable experience was a civil rights trip with Dr. Adams to Memphis Tennessee and the civil rights museum. As I became aware of the history of racism in this country and the hurt it caused, it reaffirmed my commitment to racial equality. Another exciting trip that I made with one of my classmates from seminary was visiting where I was born in Bogota Colombia. It was amazing to see where I was born.

At the beginning of 2008, I was praying and trying to discern which branch of Baptists to serve. After speaking with teachers and discerning where I felt God leading me, I chose the American Baptist Churches USA for ordination. In the fall of 2008 I was ready to complete my last semester at Gardner Webb. **3.**

In March of 2008 I returned back to Boston to meet with area minister Reverend. Darlene Williams to find out what I needed to do for ordination. In the fall of 2008 I started the watch care process with American Baptist Pastor Steven Shoemaker, of Myers Park Baptist Church in NC. I completed the second part of my watch care with American Baptist Pastor, Eric Nelson in Lynn MA.

Once I knew where God was leading, I chose to follow and look for ministry positions back in Massachusetts. One area that I felt God has gifted me is working with international students. I have shared my testimony with many internationals including those from China, France, and Colombia, to name a few. I have a burden on my heart for internationals and after coming back from Colombia, I understood how hard it is to leave your home country to come and study in America. After taking some time looking for positions, God led me to a position with InterVarsity International Ministries Graduate Division. It was my hope originally to be ordained as a campus minister. I had spoken with the Reverend Darlene Williams before I took the position and she informed me a chaplain or campus minister was a position for which I could seek ordination with the American Baptists. I took the position to serve with InterVarsity. This is a major part of my calling and I hope to return in the fall and continue to reach out to Internationals.

At the start of February 2009, I heard a guest preacher give a sermon through which God spoke to me. In my heart a common tune was playing “Here I am Lord send me” to preach to your people. I went to the altar and received an anointing. In my heart I responded as I have in the past, “Lord I am ready to fulfill your call to preach the Good News and reach people for Christ; I am ready to respond to your call to be ordained to full time ministry.”

In 2009, I moved back to Massachusetts and completed the courses necessary for me to be ordained at Andover Newton. Upon graduation, the marketing position became open at Grotonwood. This seemed to be a position designed for me as I have degrees in theology, tourism and hospitality and business. The calling of God seemed clear and I interviewed and was accepted for the position as Marketing Director for our Baptist camps. I was led to seminary for this purpose and becoming ordained is the completion of the process. I travel to many different churches with my role as the marketing minister. As part of my calling, I fill in for Pastors and serve in many pastoral functions such as leading in worship, preaching and counseling. My passion is to preach about Christ's love for us and how He would die for just one of us. I was able to preach the Good News to the hundreds of youth and adults that attended camp.

I also want to be prepared for the time when God will call me to other ministries, such as pastoral ministry and working with multi ethnic congregations which will require ordination. I want to be ordained as a minister as I serve with the American Baptists as a representative of our denomination to our 274 churches and continue serving with Intervarsity in my new role as a chapter planter at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology multi ethnic group.

Theology

God the Father I believe there is one God that is the maker of heaven and earth.

(Genesis 1:1) God is Love. (Romans 8:38) God wants to be loved. (Deuteronomy 6:5)

God keeps His promises. God is sovereign. He has absolute power in heaven and earth.

God is our heavenly Father who He had one Son that he gave to all to be reconciled with Him. (John 3:16)

Jesus Christ

Jesus is my Savior. Jesus saved us from our sins when he was nailed to cross and died. Jesus was with God from the beginning. (John 1:2) Jesus lived among us as Emmanuel “God with us”. Jesus performed miracles and healed many. Jesus taught me to love my enemies and pray for those who harm me. (Luke 6:27) Jesus suffered and died for us. Jesus knew that he was the only one who could fulfill this mission. (John 18:11)

Jesus is our example for how we can live a devout life as a Christian. Jesus instructed his disciples as he instructs me in prayer. We pray for our Father’s will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6)

I believe in Jesus Christ, as God’s only Son, being resurrected from the dead who will come again to judge the living and the dead. (2 Timothy 4:1) I believe that Jesus was fully human and also fully divine. (Matthew 16:15-18)

I believe that Jesus Christ gave us the gift of grace. (John 1:17) It is the gift of grace that helps us when we fall flat on our face. Every person has their own struggles including me. Jesus is a friend as well and cares for us in the difficult times.

Jesus ultimate purpose was for us to be reconciled with God. (Romans 5:10) When I accepted Christ into my heart I accepted forgiveness from my sins. This forgiveness could be offered because of Jesus, who suffered died and was buried for all of us. On the third day, he rose again in fulfillment of the scriptures and gave us eternal life. “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here he is risen! (Luke 24:5-6)

Holy Spirit

The next topic that I would like to discuss is the issue of the Spirit and the Trinity. The Trinity is an important element of our faith. We understand that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit exist as one.

I believe God is the Heavenly Father that created this world and sent His Son Jesus the Christ to redeem the world. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit as our guide in this world. (John 14:15) We are in fellowship with the Holy Spirit that helps us worship and glorify God to serve him faithfully. (2 Corinthians 13:14)

I believe the Spirit helps us proclaim the Gospel. “So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God’s Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, “Abba, Father.” God put a Spirit in us not of fear but of hope.” (Romans 1:9)

Humanity

As humans, we are sinners. We say the wrongs things, do the wrong things. Sin entered into this world with Adam and Eve in the garden. The Lord banished Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden after eating from the tree and sin entered the world through disobedience of God. (Genesis 3:23)

As a result of sin, God did not let his children live forever. God made us from the ground and gave us bodies that would grow old and some day we will return to Him. Sin is our human condition. Even though we are sinners, we have a choice to follow God or go our own way. Our decisions are based on free will. God does not coerce humans into following His laws.

My identity is in Christ. He is the one that has answered the questions I ask as a human:
Who am I? I am child of God loved by my Lord. What is my purpose?

My purpose is to fulfill Christ's mission no matter how big or how small. I am glad to be a part of this. What is God's plan for us? For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD to give you hope and a future. (Jeremiah 29:11) What happens when we die? I am united with our Savior, my love in heaven. (John 3:16)

As part of human life, we experience many things from excitement, suffering, joy, and love. Jesus had experienced them as well and is there when we laugh and there when we cry. We are able to better understand our humanity through a relationship with Christ.

Salvation

We need to be saved from our sins. Sin separates us from God. Salvation is being saved from your sin and being reconciled with God through Jesus Christ. We receive salvation by faith through grace in Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 2:8) Christ died for me so I can be forgiven of my sins. (1Corinthians 15:3) It is through our faith in Jesus and our hope in Him that we are saved. Scripture tells us that man cannot save themselves for this is impossible. With God and hope in Jesus Christ it is possible. (Mark 10:26-28)

We can have a personal relationship with God when we ask Christ into our heart and accept Him as our own personal Savior and then turn away from our sins. As the Gospel of John tells us, whosoever believes in him shall be saved and have eternal life. (John 3:16) Jesus is the way the truth and the life. We can know God through His Son. (John 14:6)

Scripture

Scripture is the Word of God. Scripture is how we grow with God. Scripture teaches us how to understand who God is and what our purpose is in this world. God's Word is living and breathing. The Holy Spirit is our aid to help interpret Scripture in our life.

We hear God through reading scripture. As a Baptist I understand that Scripture is central to worship. There are many books written to but only God's Word is everlasting. God's word is the same today as it was in the past. We hold Scripture as authority in how we live our lives and govern our actions.

The Church and its Role in Society and the World

The church is the bride of Christ. (Revelation 19:7) As the church it has a role to play in the redemption of the world. Churches are the places where people can come and learn about God and grow in their mission. The churches' purpose is to serve people. The Church is to be, "A royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. (1 Peter 2:9)

A church must teach Christ as Lord, to be a body of believers that include many different denominations, and be an outward witness to the community of Christ's love to the world. (Romans 12:5)

I believe we are to tithe to the church. (Proverbs 3:9) I believe our talents are part of tithing. The scripture story that relates most to this is the parable of talents. God gives each person talents to use, not to be buried away. (Matthew 25). The talents that we are given is our gift back to God. The church needs to work together to be ecumenical. It cannot be one church that reaches out to people.

The church as whole does not need to be black or white or brown or yellow. The church can practice for God's kingdom, where all the colors bleed into one. The church can be the example to break down the racial barriers that separate groups. There is no room for racism, bigotry or condemnation. As the bride of Christ, the church needs to be able to love their neighbors of all denominations and reach out to the sick, the poor and the lost.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Baptism is one of the primary ordinances of Baptist life. When we are baptized we make a public declaration of Christ, that we have accepted him as Lord and Savior. After we have confessed our faith we are baptized through immersion.

My baptism was on Easter, a common time for baptism. Baptism tells the community of believers publicly "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. (Romans 6:4) We have died and risen again and we are a new creation in Christ. Baptism is symbolic to me and to the church it declares that I am ready to commit my life to Christ and following His ways. (Proverbs 16:3)

The Lord's Supper is another ordinance of the church. We partake in the celebration of the Lord's Supper with other believers. The Lord's Supper is done as Christ did with his disciples at the Last supper. We give thanks take the bread and we break it. We remember that Christ gave his body for us. "Take and eat this is my body". (Matthew 26:26). We give thanks for the wine and drink it. We remember that Christ poured out his blood for us. "Drink from it this is the blood of the new covenant which is poured out for the forgiveness of sin." (Matt 26:27) These are all symbolic actions but what is important is the faith we have in taking the action.

American Baptist Churches

I am a Baptist because I believe in the personal relationship with Jesus, believer's baptism, and priesthood of believer. I am a loyal American Baptist because of their diversity, racial reconciliation, call to be an ecumenical witness, evangelism, and their life changing camping programs at Grotonwood and Oceanwood.

One of the things I understand about being part of the American Baptists Churches USA is its celebration of diversity. The diversity includes women in ministry, the many different multicultural parts of the body and their theological differences.

. American Baptists have taken a stand for racial equality and reconciliation. Martin Luther King Jr. was one American Baptist preacher who led that charge. His hope was one day that his children would not be judged on the color of their skin but on the content of their character. The American Baptist churches have a call to mission and outreach. American Baptists have missionaries that serve in different parts of the world. We work together with other denominations and local churches in building God's kingdom.

American Baptists share in call to spread the love of Jesus by evangelism. An important part of evangelism I believe very strongly in is offering a personal invitation to accept Christ. Last as an American Baptist minister we have a Code of Ethics. I have read through the Code of Ethics and will abide by it and faithfully support it.

Other Issues (Gifts in Ministry)

The last area I wish to discuss is my gifts for ministry. God made me a leader. God has chosen leaders not based on looks or height but based on their heart. Jesus Christ is my leader and has been my best friend during this journey. His leadership and presence in my heart has helped me to lead.

The second gift is encouragement. As a minister we can lift people up. I think that is our responsibility. We have all had someone say something negative to us. We need to be encouraged in our walk with Christ. I can encourage people in their God given dreams. Dreaming is one way I can encourage people by living for God's dream and dreaming out loud. We all can be encouraged, to dream on, dream until our dream comes true.

I believe two of the things that define a person are their life experiences and interactions. I believe being able to relate to a diversity of people is important in our world. We live in country that is diverse and it is that diversity that I have grown to love.

My hope is to do God's will and fulfill his purpose, no matter how big or small it might be. I hope to remember and live by what the Psalmist wrote. I have paraphrased for myself, "What can I give back to God for the blessings he's poured out on me? I will lift high the cup of salvation as a toast to God! I'll pray in the name of Jesus that I will complete what I promised I would do, here together with all of you." (Psalm 116:12-14)