



Hanover Presbyterian Church Wilmington, Delaware

August 2021

Dear Hanover Saints,

I write with the joyous news that earlier this evening the commissioners of New Castle Presbytery voted unanimously to approve the ordination of Brooke A. Scott. As you hopefully know by now, Brooke's two-point call is to serve as the (part time) Pastor of Church on Main in Middletown, and as the Presbytery's Organizing Pastor based in and around at Hanover.

The terms of call are to work part time (20 hours/week) for 18 months. The plan is to spend that time getting to know, and bringing together, people in and around our community who are interested in a non-traditional church and worship experience. The goal is that by the end of 18 months we would know whether proceeding with the formation of a new worshiping community is viable. Given this plan and goal, one of the great challenges is to enter this process with no specific sense of where it will end up: the result will be defined by the process.

I imagine – and hope – there are many questions. Tonight, let me respond to three.

The first: *What does this mean for the current Hanover congregation?*

If you hear/remember nothing else in this letter, let it be this: it is not the intent, nor have there been any conversations or discussions about a new worshiping community replacing the existing congregation. As we anticipate recognizing our 250th anniversary next year, one of the things we will be celebrating is Hanover's history of planting seeds that have led to new congregations. In our history we have had a direct influence in the founding of seven new Presbyterian congregations. If our current plans are blessed to succeed, this will be number eight. If and when a new worshiping community emerges, it will be in addition to the current one – not in place of it.

The second question: *How will this be financed?*

More than three years ago conversations began about how we might pursue a new worshiping community. A place to host such an effort was a part of the plan for the renovation of the Gathering Place when we held the "This Is Our Time" campaign. Long before covid-19 we met with representatives from the Presbytery to share our vision, and had anticipated the possibility of applying for funds to get started last January.

In March, aware of our vision, the Presbytery came to us and asked where we were with our vision because a dynamic young seminarian was in conversation with another congregation about becoming their pastor, but they could only hire her part time.

Long story short: on July 7 the proposal from the Presbytery's Ignite committee that the Presbytery hire Brooke Scott as an Organizing Pastor and have Hanover be the place she serves was approved. It was approved for an 18-month discernment period, during which the Presbytery will pay her salary and benefits. And should the project proceed beyond 18 months, the Ignite committee approved continuing to pay her salary and benefits for the following 2-3 years.

The Presbytery was not able to commit to funds for the program costs (events, supplies, expenses for programs and meetings, etc.). This is where Hanover comes in. We committed to provide \$7500 for the 18-month period for those expenses. The Finance Committee met, and, with my full agreement and support, decided the funds would not come from either the budget or our reserves. We would seek to raise the funds in some other fashion.

Right here you would logically expect a profound invitation and moving exhortation to prayerfully consider an offering for this effort. And so, I offer just that. But if you do so, know this: your contribution is deeply appreciated, will be used for this purpose...*and*...it will put us over the top of our \$7500 goal. I am deeply moved to report that, by the grace of God, we have received a contribution for the full amount from one who has been inspired by this vision and its possibilities. So, let me amend my prayer of petition for your financial support to include a rousing prayer of gratitude for the endless generosity and passion of the Hanover saints.

The third question: *Why?*

Why spend 18 months working for something that might not even happen? With all the things that need our attention right now, why would we distract ourselves with this? Given our declining membership, why wouldn't we focus on inviting more people to the current congregation and services?

Let me begin by offering a larger perspective.

In a study released in March, Gallup Poll, Inc. reported this: *Americans' membership in houses of worship continued to decline last year, dropping below 50% for the first time in Gallup's eight-decade trend. In 2020, 47% of Americans said they belonged to a church, synagogue or mosque, down from 50% in 2018 and 70% in 1999.* ([CLICK HERE](#) to read the full article.)

The report offers three reasons for this trend:

the large increase of people who express no religious affiliation: from 8% in 2000 to 21% in 2020;

generational differences: church membership is strongly correlated with age, as 66% of traditionalists -- U.S. adults born before 1946 -- belong to a church, compared with 58% of baby boomers (1946-1964), 50% of those in Generation X (1965-1980) and 36% of millennials (1991 – 1996);

we're all in the same boat: every major religious tradition has been steadily losing adherents over the last 22 years: Protestants 9% and Catholics 18%.

Even if we don't know these numbers, we know these trends all too well. The membership and worship attendance trends at Hanover are completely consistent with those across the country, in every religious tradition, and in every generation. The question is not what we're up against, the question is: how will we respond?

These factors need not define our future; they will only do so if we allow it. With God as our partner, and working together, our destiny is up to us.

For the next 18 months, the soon-to-be Rev. Brooke Scott will lead and guide a process that does not deny, ignore, or retreat from the reality these trends reveal. Rather, this process embraces and engages them, for they represent our shared reality. For 250 years the Hanover saints have never sought to evade the realities, or escape the challenges, presented by the world. For 250 years we have worked to overcome them.

Finally, this is who we were called to be, who we have become, and who we will always be. When people have been left out, oppressed, and marginalized, we have reached out to include, comfort, and educate them. When people have been hungry and without clothes we have been there to feed and clothe them. Right now, there are people hungering for authentic community and thirsting for a place to experience the Holy.

May God bless our efforts to create a space where people experience the tender love of God, the radical inclusion of our Christ, and the gift of community bound by the Holy Spirit.

Peace,

Andy

Looking Ahead...



We'll be having a meet and greet with Brooke soon—also, when her ordination date is set, we'll be happy to share that with you, too.

What an exciting time in the life of our church here at 18th & Baynard!



Vacation Bible School – Hanover-Style

August 9-12 | 5:30pm-8:30pm | at the home of Tim & Becky Arnold

Wells in the Bible ~ A Place of Meeting and Meaning

Water. All of God's creation is dependent on it. In biblical times access to wells and springs meant life. Jesus at a well offers living water. Join us as we piggyback on Tim Arnold's summer sermon series and dig into several stories of meeting and meaning at biblical wells.

Join us for a potluck dinner from 5:30pm-6:30pm followed by Bible study and activities for all ages. Don't forget your swimsuit!

Questions? Contact Nancy Long at nlongssg@gmail.com.

May our time together refresh us and encourage us to share the living water to others in our community and the world.

1—You can be sure that every useable item that is recyclable WILL be recycled. Often city recycling sites dispose of recycling along with their trash.

2—Products are made from it such as park benches, picnic tables, etc.

3—You are positively helping the environment!

Please bring your recyclables to the Church School Hall, and the Creation Care Team & Faith in Action will make sure to get them to Ecoplastics Collection. If you have any questions, please contact Maggie Alexander at MaggieA10@verizon.net.



Why bring my recycling to Hanover?



What's Happening



Food Pantry Update –Clients are very appreciative of the laundry detergent and personal products that have been donated. We can also use tuna fish, peanut butter, spaghetti sauce, and pasta. We thank you for all donations and for being so supportive!

JB'S Café has really expanded their menu— we've added hamburgers, veggie burgers, turkey burgers, turkey clubs, turkey reuben sandwiches, a veggie wrap and ice cream to name a few. As always, we are out on 18th St. every Tuesday from 10am-1pm. Tables are set out on the boulevard, and there is always plenty of good conversation and room for one more at our tables!



BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Evan Pulliam
- 7 Frances McFarland
- 11 Terry Gross
- 11 Brett Pulliam
- 11 Marshae Pulliam-Bibbs
- 13 Quazeem Rosa
- 15 Brittany Peterson
- 15 Karin Wilson
- 16 Susan Anderson
- 18 Norma Reid
- 18 Michael Zankowsky
- 18 Elizabeth Heiks
- 22 George Turner
- 24 Bruce Showalter
- 29 Leon Wilson
- 29 Michele Zistl
- 30 John Heiks



Sunday, August 15—we are calling for a special Congregational Meeting immediately following Worship. We will be voting on a new Session member, Stephanie Hinson, who is stepping in for Ayinde Flores. We thank Ayinde for her time of service and dedication to Hanover. Please plan on joining us.



August Weekly Happenings

Prayer Circle—Mondays, 8:30am
 JB's Café—Tuesdays, 10am-1pm
 Pickleball—Wednesdays, 10am
 High Noon at Hanover—Wednesdays, 12pm
 Coping with COVID—Wednesdays, 5:30pm
 Food Pantry—Thursdays, 8am
 Yoga—Fridays, 6:15pm

August Zoom Groups & Meetings

Invitational Team: Monday, August 9, 4:30pm
 Worship Committee: Tuesday, August 10, 1:15pm
 Faith in Action: Thursday, August 12, 5pm
 Special Congregational Meeting: Sunday, August 16
 Session: Tuesday, August 17, 7pm
 Staff Meeting: Wednesday, August 18, 12 noon

NEWSLETTER deadline for September:
 Friday, August 27

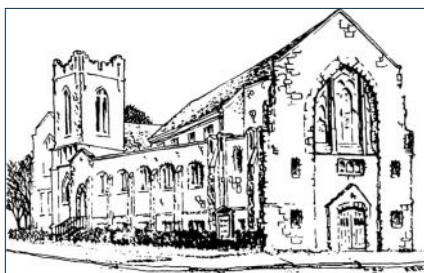
*Heavenly
 Humor*



Looking to ...



*September 12—
 Deacon's Luncheon
 (Take Out)*



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