



HOUSE OF HOPE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Report of the Pastor Nominating Committee



2020



The House of Hope Pastor Nominating Committee

Sue Haigh (Chair)
Sherwood Pomeroy
Charley Stewart
Elly Verhagen
Amber Winkelman
Steve Yetter
Lisa Yost (Vice-Chair)
John Zwier



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Request for Strict Confidentiality and Social Media Embargo

Lynn and Mark will not inform their current congregation about HOH's call until after our May 17 Congregational Meeting. We want their congregation to learn about this change from them, and not through social media, Facebook or conversation chains. Information on new calls flows quickly through the PC(USA) community. Please help Lynn and Mark by strictly limiting discussion of HOH's call until Tuesday, May 19.

PNC Nomination

The Pastor Nominating Committee unanimously and enthusiastically recommends that the **Reverend Lynn Barger Elliott** and the **Reverend Doctor Mark Barger Elliott** be called to the position of Co-Pastor Head of Staff at The House of Hope Presbyterian Church.



Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC), thank you for the privilege of serving our congregation to bring new leadership to House of Hope. We are grateful to God and to you for your prayerful support during this past year.

We joyfully present to you the **Reverend Lynn Barger Elliott** and the **Reverend Doctor Mark Barger Elliott** to serve as our Co-Pastor Head of Staff. Lynn and Mark will each hold full-time positions and share all aspects of the leadership of our congregation. Co-Pastor leadership will be a new approach to ministry at House of Hope. We are excited to be calling both a woman and a man to serve as our Co-Pastor Head of Staff and how this will provide complementary voices, perspectives, and gifts in preaching and worship leadership. We are confident that Lynn and Mark's deep empathy and radiant warmth are just what we need. And, we are grateful that they are energetically embracing the opportunity to move here and lead us during this challenging time of the COVID-19 pandemic, Stay-at-Home orders, and online-only worship.

The PNC met weekly for the past year and met many exceptional candidates with outstanding ministries from all over the country. We felt God leading us in Lynn and Mark's direction as we moved forward in our journey. Each is a brilliant preacher, wise leader, and creative thinker. They have served together in three different congregations and will bring a passion for mission, the arts, and youth and family ministry to House of Hope. We admire how they model teamwork as a couple along with their intellect, calmness, and humility.

Please take the time to read our report to learn more about Lynn and Mark and their ministry. We are eager for you to meet them virtually and eventually in person.

If the congregation decides to call Lynn and Mark, they will begin their ministry at House of Hope on **Sunday, August 3**.

I give thanks to the enormously talented and steadfast PNC members who worked tirelessly this past year and who join me in this recommendation.

Gratefully and to the Glory of God,

Sue Haigh
PNC Chair

Letter from the Barger Elliotts

The first impression a church makes on a potential candidate is its Ministry Information Form (MIF) published on the Presbyterian Church (USA) website. Last fall, with our youngest child soon heading to college and the church we serve celebrating one of its best years in our 15-year tenure, we recognized it was time to explore the possibility of a new call. While reading the House of Hope MIF we immediately underlined the sentence “Founded on hope, and charged by faith and Christ’s example, we feel called to think deeply, act justly, and live wholeheartedly as agents of renewal in our uncertain world.” We starred the box checked “Yes” for Clergy Couples. “Could this be a fit?” we wondered.

The second impression a congregation makes is through its Pastor Nominating Committee. We first met your wonderful “PNC” on a Zoom meeting in 2019 and were impressed with the love they exhibited for House of Hope, the thoughtful questions regarding our life and ministry, and the way they could articulate the challenges and opportunities facing a traditional church in the coming decade. We left that call thinking, “This could be a fit!” During our second Zoom conversation in January, we took note of the flow of our conversation and how it often resulted in heads nodding and faces smiling—ours as well as of those of your PNC.

An opportunity to meet the PNC occurred in February, and we were blessed to join you in worship, converse with members of your amazing staff—Julia, Aaron, David, and Michelle—and enjoy more in-depth conversations and meals at the M Street Café and Pazzaluna. As we boarded a plane home, we said to each other, “I think we found the people with whom we could imagine engaging in the work of ministry.”

When the invitation came to candidate at House of Hope as your Co-Pastor Head of Staff, it felt in many ways as if God had led us to this moment. We began our ministry in a Big Ten university city and are excited for the opportunity to serve in a similar setting, one where we can joyfully imagine fulfilling our ordination vows to serve Jesus Christ and a church with “energy, intelligence, imagination and love.”

We look forward to worshipping with you on May 17, and to that day when we can meet each of you, get to know you, and join you in the ministry “of thinking deeply, acting justly, living wholeheartedly, and serving as agents of renewal in our uncertain world.”

Faithfully,
Lynn and Mark

About Lynn and Mark

Lynn and Mark have a long-standing fondness for Minnesota. While Mark grew up in Boston, he was a childhood Vikings fan and cheered for players such as Alan Page and Fran Tarkenton. Lynn enjoyed childhood vacations at a summer home on Lake Winnipeg, which included visiting beloved family friends in the Twin Cities.

Mark and Lynn met on the steps of the Princeton Theological Seminary chapel and quickly imagined a future in ministry together. In 1994, they were ordained and answered a call to serve as full-time Associate Pastors at the First Presbyterian Church in Ann Arbor, Michigan. A congregation of 2,100 at the time, they served members who enthusiastically embraced social justice, the arts, and as St. Anselm once put it, “faith seeking understanding.” In Ann Arbor, they fell in love with the culture and vibrancy of a Big Ten university city.

After six years, Lynn and Mark left to serve Riverside Presbyterian Church, a 500-member congregation in the western suburbs of Chicago. There Mark was called as the Head of Staff and Lynn was later asked to serve as Director of Youth and Family Ministries. In 2005, Mark was called as the fourth Senior Pastor of the Mayflower Congregational Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In his 15-year tenure, the congregation has experienced substantial stewardship and membership growth, and currently has 1,100 members. He has led the congregation through two capital campaigns, which included funding the replacement of HVAC equipment, renovating an atrium, and adding a new entrance and roof garden. In 2009, the Associate Pastor retired and Lynn was asked to first serve as interim and was later installed to that position. She



has significantly grown the congregation’s work in mission and programs for youth and families. Lynn also serves as Affiliate Faculty in the Ministry Leadership Department at Calvin University.

Mark and Lynn have three children. Brendan graduated from Cornell University and works for Facebook in San Francisco. Auden is a junior at Brown University where she studies Behavioral Decision Sciences. Halley, a high school senior, has been accepted to the University of Michigan. Lynn and Mark enjoy watching old movies, growing beefsteak tomatoes, and taking long walks around a nearby lake.



Lynn

Lynn is a fourth-generation Presbyterian pastor, who grew up in the Pittsburgh and Philadelphia areas. As a daughter of the church, her cloud of witnesses included Sunday School teachers, youth group leaders, and the many faithful adults who surrounded her and shaped her faith. As she heard a call to ministry, she was mentored by several ministry leaders, who inspired her to serve as a mentor and professor of Ministry Leadership at Calvin University. Her joy in ministry comes from creating a place of belonging and connections in a broad range of generations—from the children’s sermon to the nursing home visit, the Moms Night Out to the 69UP gatherings, the communion workshop for tweens to the high school mission trip.



For more on Lynn visit:
mayflowerchurch.org and
lynnbargerelliott.com.

In Lynn’s Words

“I place my hope in a God who created, recreates, and sustains Life. In the flight of a blue heron, the fleeting blossom of a hibiscus, the delicate design of ecosystems and galaxies, I glimpse God’s magnificent artistry. In a parent displacing a family in search of a safer life, the regenerated nerves of a stroke survivor who I visit in the hospital, and the joy of watching my children run on a lacrosse field, I marvel at the courage, vitality, and joy of human life created in the image of God.”

—From *Lynn’s Statement of Faith*

“Research tells us that the generations that are increasingly absent from the church have a deep desire to find community and to rediscover a sense of belonging.... As the church, we are uniquely poised to offer what so many are seeking.”

—From *Signposts in a Strange Land: Mapping the Way Towards Church Growth*

“As we stand in the shadow of Easter, we can’t help but ask Jesus: ‘Now What? When will we see you again? How will we know you are alive’
As we go out into this new week, let us discover that we are in the presence of the living Christ—
we are **blessed**
when we love enough to become **poor** in spirit,
when we care enough to **mourn** for the world around us,
and when we **trust** enough to boldly work alongside of a meek Jesus.
For in this blessing,
comes the knowledge that in a unique and profound way,
Christ is near to us...and indeed he is.”

—From *Lynn’s sermon on the Beatitudes, April 19, 2020*

Mark

Mark was baptized in John Calvin's Church in Geneva, Switzerland and 18 years later made a profession of faith while attending Cornell University. Ten years later, he was ordained in the Presbyterian Church (USA). "God works in mysterious and wonderful ways!" shares Mark. A lifelong learner, he cherishes opportunities to discover new ways to serve the church from taking classes on strategic planning at the Harvard Business School to attending the European Society for Study of Science and Theology Conference. On his website he notes that he enjoys "discovering where imagination, innovation, and faith intersect" and thinks of himself as a "creative splicer, theoretical theologian, and a spiritual journalist."



For more on Mark visit:
mayflowerchurch.org and
markbargerelliott.com.

In Mark's Words

"I believe God created the universe and intended it to exist in harmony and peace. Planets observed through a telescope, atoms measured through a microscope, mountains climbed at sunset and the rustle of trees in autumn, all testify to the majesty and wonder of God. Made in God's image, human beings are called to learn how to love their Creator and their neighbor as themselves."

— From *Mark's Statement of Faith*

"A risk of serving as Senior Pastor to a large congregation is becoming a 'preacher/teacher,' instead of a 'pastor.' I intentionally set aside time to call on members of all ages and treasure a lunch conversation with a new father that spills into the afternoon, standing watch with a family in a hospital waiting room, and discussing family photographs hung on walls in retirement homes."

— From *Mark's Personal Information Form*

"Scripture teaches how the Word became flesh and that we were created in the image of God. Word and image are ensconced in our historical lexicon of faith, but it is time to learn how to speak these words and concepts in a new language, visually speaking in a digital age."

—From *Visually Speaking: Proclamation in a Digital Age*

"Resurrection, in some respects, is
God's second miracle.

Life, in all its complexity

And wonder, is the first.

So let us dance, sing,

And bring our praise

Into every day, wasting not

A moment of God's precious gift.

Let life, I pray, always Easter in us."

– From *Easter: 21 stations*

PNC Discernment

In our conversations with Lynn and Mark, we were struck by how strongly they possess leadership competencies we had identified as integral for our next Head of Staff.

A Passion for Preaching

Lynn and Mark both have a passion for the craft of preaching. Lynn is the recipient of the David H.C. Read Preacher/Scholar of the Year Award designated to one seminary graduate within the United States who demonstrates the strongest potential of benefiting the greater church with his/her skills of scholarship and preaching. While at Princeton, Mark won the John T. Galloway preaching award and later published *Creative Styles of Preaching*, taught preaching at McCormick Theological Seminary, and received a Doctor of Ministry degree in preaching from San Francisco Theological Seminary. They recently co-led a seminar at Princeton Theological Seminary on “Visually Speaking: Proclamation in a Digital Age.”

A Conviction That a Creative Church Is a Growing Church

Mark loves the visual arts and is a documentary filmmaker. Both of his films, *Lost Boy Home*, narrated by Sam Waterston, and *The Last Songwriter*, starring Garth Brooks and Emmylou Harris, won awards. He recently published a book of poems and photographs called *Easter: 21 stations*. Together Lynn and Mark recently curated a Lenten art exhibit which included pieces and presentations from local and international artists.

The Ability to Equip a Church to Fulfill a Vision

Lynn and Mark both have a keen interest in enabling a church to discern and then realize the vision God has set before it. To further their skills in this area, Lynn earned a Certification in Non-Profit Executive Leadership through the Mendoza School of Business at Notre Dame. Mark has studied strategic planning at the Harvard Business School and has received a certificate in non-profit management from the Kellogg Business School at Northwestern University. Lynn trains future ministry leaders as Affiliate Faculty at Calvin University in the areas of Ministry Leadership and Vocational Formation. Mark recently completed a Human Resources certificate at Cornell University.

A Commitment to an Intergenerational Church

Lynn has spoken nationally on the importance of Intergenerational Ministry and her work has been published in the books *InterGenerate: Transforming Churches through Intergenerational Ministry* and *Faith Formation with the New Generation*. Both Lynn and Mark began their ministry serving youth and families and have cultivated staffs with a similar commitment to serving all generations.

What We Heard from Others

We received glowing reviews about their abilities, experience, and personalities as individuals and as a clergy couple.

“They are both highly talented preachers ... [and] **two of the most talented and accomplished ministers in the Presbyterian Church.**”

—Rev. Dr. Thomas Long, Professor Emeritus, Emory University (Former preaching professor at Princeton Theological Seminary)

“Lynn’s ministry leadership skills are just what the church needs. Whether in the college classroom or a large church pulpit, the boardroom or the hallways of a prison ministry, her **intellectual rigor coupled with pastoral sensitivity** enables her to communicate the gospel in fresh and innovative ways.”

—Todd V. Cioffi, Ph.D., Director, Calvin Prison Initiative; Associate Professor, Department of Congregational and Ministry Studies

“The prophet Ezekiel once questioned who would ‘stand in the gap.’ Mark is a uniquely gifted pastor who **seeks and finds the gaps in life**—between faith and the arts, faith and science, faith and the world.”

—Dr. Doug Learned, Sr. Pastor/Head of Staff, Moorings Presbyterian Church, Naples, FL

“Working with them has been the **best work environment** I have ever been in. Both are gracious and kind, and good leaders.”

—Lou Bardocz, Business Manager, Mayflower Congregational Church

PNC Reflections

Sherwood Pomeroy

They’re clearly the best qualified—in credentials, glowing responses from references, and personal interaction when interviewed. I give them my full support.

Charley Stewart

Lynn brings a tremendous ability to connect with the next generation, and Mark’s preaching reflects his varied and unique interests and creativity. Best of all? They are such wonderful people, and a loving caring couple!

Elly Verhagen

After our time with them when they visited Saint Paul, it was hard to imagine how another candidate could provide the combination of their breadth of experience, warmth and humility of character, and thoughtful love of the ministry.

Amber Winkelman

The Barger Elliots are creative, dynamic, and energetic as well as warm, welcoming, and inclusive. I look forward to walking with them on God’s journey for House of Hope.

Steve Yetter

Of the many candidates we considered, they stood out as solidly demonstrating all 10 leadership competencies we sought. And, they’ve created such an inclusive, welcoming atmosphere at their current church that membership has attracted 500 new members over the past decade.

Lisa Yost

Lynn and Mark are among the most energetic, creative candidates we considered. Reviews from references were truly exemplary and one after another praised their strong preaching and deep connection to community.

John Zwier

Their creativity, intellectualism, and clear ability to foster and grow genuine relationships convinced me that their call should bring them to House of Hope. I have a three year old and a newborn, both girls, and am happy they will grow up in a church with Lynn and Mark as leaders.

The Co-Pastor Model

A clergy couple serving as Co-Pastor Head of Staff is a new concept for House of Hope. The PNC looked at other churches with a Co-Pastor Head of Staff and considered the benefits to outweigh any possible challenges. Benefits include the different voices and styles of preaching, a model of collaborative decision-making, and the rich collective wisdom of having someone at home with whom to share ideas and solve problems.

From Lynn and Mark: Thirty years ago we gave marriage vows to each other and 26 years ago again stood side by side and affirmed our ordination vows. Over these years, as we served together in three churches, we observed our skills and interests align in complementary ways. The co-pastor model has emerged in the PC(USA) as a means to lift up and affirm a diversity of leadership styles and approaches within a congregation and the greater church. This model was adopted by the General Assembly of the PC(USA) when in 2016 it made the historic move to call Co-Moderators. What will this look like exactly? We're not quite sure! Please give us some time to meet your staff, Session, Trustees, Deacons and the opportunity to get to know you in person as together we discern God's vision for House of Hope.

Did Session approve the concept of Co-Pastor Head of Staff?

Yes. The Session discussed the benefits and challenges of a Co-Pastor leadership model and approved this concept to call this clergy couple as Co-Pastor Head of Staff to serve in two positions. Mark and Lynn will each have a full-time position.

How will they share responsibilities and divide the work?

Lynn and Mark will share the privilege of preaching and worship leadership. They have also expressed the desire to share pastoral care, communication, being the voice of House of Hope, and mission outreach. Other responsibilities will be clearly defined for one or the other based on their expertise, experience, and interest.

How will they work with our pastors and staff?

The Co-Pastor Head of Staff will work with the Session to determine the ongoing personnel needs for House of Hope.

Does the HOH budget have funds allocated to pay two full-time positions?

Yes. Chris McHugh, the HOH Treasurer, indicates that the current 2020 budget has sufficient funds to pay two full-time positions. Session and Trustees will work together with the Co-Pastor Head of Staff in identifying the church priorities for the 2021 budget.

Will they go on vacation at the same time?

Yes. As for most of us, vacations are important family time for Mark and Lynn. They may also take some of their study leave at the same time. Together with the Session they will make sure all responsibilities are covered during any absences.

How will we get to know them if we are still worshiping virtually when they arrive in August?

Lynn and Mark enthusiastically embrace the idea of making themselves available online and on the phone, and hope to meet everyone as soon as possible through Zoom meetings and "virtual coffees."

Lynn

Formal Education

Princeton Theological Seminary, M.Div., 1993
Wheaton College, B.A. in Philosophy, 1985

Continuing Education

CQ (Cultural Intelligence) Training, Cultural Intelligence Center, Spring and Fall, 2019.

University of Notre Dame, Mendoza College of Business, Non-Profit Executive Certification Program, Spring 2015.

Awards

David H.C. Read Preacher Scholar Award (1993), given to one seminary graduate within the United States who demonstrates the strongest potential of benefitting the greater church with his/her skills of scholarship and preaching.

Parish Pulpit Fellowship (1993), given to a senior committed to pulpit and parish ministry. Homiletic potential, academic performance, and strength of character are considered for this award.

For more visit lynnbargerelliott.com.

Mark

Formal Education

San Francisco Theological Seminary, D.Min., 2003

Princeton Theological Seminary, M.Div., 1993
Cornell University, B.A., 1988

Continuing Education

Cornell University: Human Resources Essentials Certificate, 2019

Zingtrain: Creating a Vision of Greatness, 2019

European Society for Study of Science and Theology Conference, 2018

Moveable Feast Lectionary Group, 2002 through 2016

TED Active – 2013; TED Global – 2011, 2010; PopTech – 2012

Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University: Certificate of Professional Achievement in Non-Profit Management, 2011

Harvard Business School: Executive Education Program in Non-Profit Strategic Management, 2007

Awards

Audience Award Nashville Film Festival, *The Last Songwriter*, 2017

Best Shorts Award, *Lost Boy Home*, 2013

John T. Galloway Preaching Award, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1993

For more visit markbargerelliott.com.



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The PNC Committee

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