

Biography - Jenny Lee

I am a native North Carolinian, born in Goldsboro but raised in the mountains in Hendersonville. Growing up, my parents, sisters, and I were very active at First Baptist Church of East Flat Rock. My mother was the director of the childcare center at the church and also served as the Children's Ministry Director. My father frequently served on the deacon board and was the chair of the deacons at times. Church, both as a spiritual home and an opportunity to serve, was woven into the fabric of our family life.

As a middle and high school student, I was well loved and disciplined by adults in my life. My youth minister encouraged us to explore their spiritual gifts, and upon taking an inventory, I learned that I might have the gift of prophecy. I sensed God calling me into vocational ministry but struggled with the tension between this sense of call and the messages I had received restricting the role of women in ministry. I planned instead to become a teacher and enrolled at Campbell University in fall 2004.

While in a religion class taught by an ordained woman who is also an Old Testament scholar, I stumbled upon the words in 1 Corinthians 14:4, "those who prophesy build up the church." In that moment, it felt as if everyone else in the room disappeared, and I heard the words "you will speak for the edification of the church." After class, I hurried back to my dorm, where in a panic I picked up my Bible again. This time, I landed on Job 42:2, "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted." I left my dorm room and walked to the Registrar's office to change my major to Religion.

Throughout college and Divinity School, I worked in Baptist churches. At Trinity Baptist Church in Raleigh, NC I developed my skills and was licensed for ministry. In 2010 I was called to First Baptist Church of Asheville, NC as the Minister of Students and Recreation. The next year I finished my Master of Divinity degree from Campbell University. After serving for just over four years in Asheville, I was married in August 2014 and moved to live with my husband in Kingsport, TN. That same month I started a Doctor of Education degree at East Tennessee State University and I graduated with that degree in December 2018.

In 2015, my husband and I moved to Sanford, NC and the next year I accepted a job offer at First Presbyterian Church. At the time, I had no intention of becoming a Presbyterian, but I was ecstatic to have an opportunity to serve in a local church context again. Over the next four years, it became increasingly clear to me that moving forward in ministry and being faithful to my call to speak for the edification of the church was leading me to be part of the PC(USA). Late this past winter, I made that decision official and have been taking steps towards becoming ordained as a Presbyterian Minister of Word and Sacrament.

In addition to being a minister and wife, I am the mother of two: Zada (13) and Ashe (3). I enjoy reading, writing, baking, taking walks and being creative. For the past four semesters I have taught Introduction to Ethics at Central Carolina Community College. I have been on the Board of Directors for United Way of Lee County for four years and will serve as the Board chairperson in 2021.

Faith Statement- Jenny Lee

From the emptiness of nothing, the Creator God spoke and something emerged. The Creator delighted in the creation, proclaiming each part of it to be good. In the beginning with the Creator was Jesus, the Word, the one through whom all things came into being and in whom all life is sparked. The Breath of the Creator, the Holy Spirit, hovered over the nothingness, calling forth something in the name of the Creator. This three-in-one mystery, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, the Holy Trinity still acts and calls forth something from nothing.

People were created, crafted in love from the humble dust of the earth. Bearing the image of God, all people are beloved and sacred. Our first glimpse of God's grace is that where there was nothing, God breathed life into us. God created us so we could glorify and enjoy God forever. God also created us with freedom through which it was and is revealed that we are frail and prone to sin. When given the freedom to return God's love, we choose selfishness. Instead of reflecting the creative magnanimity of the Creator, we choose to be small, fearful, and closed to the possibilities of a life with God. Slaves to the primal fears of not having enough and not being enough, we are left broken and in need of reconciliation.

In the fullness of time, Jesus embodied God's grace, emptied himself and was born in human likeness. In Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, we find a corrective for human frailty. In exchange for our fears, Jesus offers love- perfect love that casts out fear. In exchange for despair, Jesus offers hope. In exchange for loneliness, Jesus offers community. Through Jesus we are reconciled and saved. The mystery of salvation is this- while we were lost and alone in sin, God's grace broke through enabling and empowering us to live as the people of God.

Learning to live as people of God, we are given the gifts of grace, the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. In Baptism we are washed in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and receive the benefits of adoption into the God's family. The sign of Baptism seals God's covenant of grace. As a seal of God's covenant of grace, Baptism is open to all who call upon the name of the Lord, including those who choose to do so on behalf of their children. In the Lord's Supper, we follow Jesus' directive to "remember me." We do so in community, remembering the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and taking into our bodies the elements through which we are spiritually nourished and are able to grow in grace. We respond to both of these sacraments, the presence of God's grace, with gratitude.

Our local congregations are our spiritual homes and our communities of practice. Our local churches are called to be communities who practice the regular worship of God. They are also refuges of hope, spaces for learning and discipleship, and storehouses of justice and mercy in a broken world. The stories and teachings of scripture shape our community and we value the authority of the Bible. We also work together to interpret the Bible and affirm the priesthood of all believers, knowing that the Holy Spirit continues to inspire those who read and study scripture. For those of us in the Reformed tradition, we are also guided by the Confessions, documents created and accepted by the church that help us to understand who we are, what we do, and what we believe.

While there are many things we do not yet know, we celebrate the holy mysteries of our faith while also seeking understanding. We believe that in the end, all will be made well. Every tear will be wiped away, death and pain will pass away, and all things will be made new as we are united with our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer and are made whole.

Ordination Questions

Will you fulfill your ministry in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions?

Yes, by the grace of God. As I minister to God's people, and specifically in the context of Pocket Presbyterian Church, I will do so continually seeking the Holy Spirit's guidance. Led by the Spirit, I interpret obedience to Jesus as following his examples in teaching, healing, living, dying, and being resurrected. More specifically, I believe this looks like prophetic and compassionate teachings from the pulpit and in other settings, offering learning opportunities that simultaneously meet people where they are and also encourage them towards a deeper life in Christ. I believe obedience to Jesus means sharing hope and healing to people by providing opportunities for wholeness, forgiveness, and restoration to community. Obedience to Jesus means living in such a way that invites people into relationships, offering second chances, and seeing everyone I encounter as a child of God. Dying like Jesus is to live with humility, a commitment to service, and being faithful even when it seems impossible. Finally, being obedient to Jesus is to live each day resurrected- rising again and again to continue the hard and holy work of seeking God's Kingdom.

Again, led by the Holy Spirit, I will seek to live under the authority of Scripture remembering that the Bible is the means by which my ministry will be measured. Each sermon, lesson, pastoral care visit, meeting, etc. should be guided by and accountable to the eternal truths found in the Bible. The faithful interpretation of Scripture in community is required for fulfilling ministry that is rooted in the authority of Scripture.

The confessions of the church speak both to the church and wider world of who we are, what we believe, and what we do in the world. In moments when we, as individuals or as a church, are unsure of our identity or purpose, the Holy Spirit uses the confessions to redirect us, calling us back to ourselves and to God. I will be guided by these confessions that have instructed, sustained, and convicted so many in the Reformed tradition across space and time.

Will you pray for and seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?

In my years of ministry experience, I have come to learn that God will always give you what you need for the task at hand. Remembering dark, hard days of ministry I am aware that those were also the days that God gave me enough energy, intelligence, imagination, and love to show up for people in some of the worst moments of their lives. In the middle-of-the-night crises, the deep joys, the moments of questioning, in personal and collective worship, through grace we find within ourselves the resources to fulfill our callings. One must simply show up faithfully and allow oneself to be of service to God's people. We offer our full selves to God's people- the energies of our body, mind, and spirit, our intellectual and emotional intelligences, our prophetic imagination and the willingness to offer new ways to do and be the church, and the love "which binds everything together in perfect harmony" (Col. 3:14).

"To pray for and seek to serve the people" is fundamentally a call to care for the people. In giving everything I have for the wellbeing of God's people and for the edification of the church, I promise to never allow apathy, cynicism, or disdain to rule in my heart and mind. Implicit in this vow is the promise to find times of spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental rejuvenation that will renew my reserves and allow me to carry on, praying for and serving the people as I have been called to do. I promise to care. Every single day, I will show up and care.