

***Reflections of the candidate who will preach for a call as lead minister at S. Andrew's Brampton.***

***Write brief statements reflecting on the purpose and nature of your practice of:***

**WORSHIP AND PREACHING:**

Worship is not a performance – it is a sacred conversation between humanity and God: God deserves our best efforts and our devotion. But this does not mean that worship should only be conducted in hushed reverential tones; worship can also be joyful and filled with many different voices, sounds, and experiences. I see worship as being a tapestry woven of many different parts; voices raised in prayer, music and song; silence, reading, and preaching. Worship should stimulate both the mind and the senses. Prayers should be both poetic and conversational – written and spoken in the intimate language of the heart and in the everyday language heard between friends. Music rightly plays a big role in the experience of worship. It uniquely offers a form of expression of joy and celebration that reaches people in different ways than the spoken word can. In regards to the debate between “classical” and “contemporary” worship music, I do not believe that the Holy Spirit ceased to inspire musicians at the turn of the last Century. I have known a solo classical cello piece, played on Good Friday, to move a congregation to tears, I have heard a Gospel song sung on World Communion Sunday lift the roof off a Church, I have taken part in a chaotic – yet joyful – Hallelujah Chorus that expressed the celebration that is Easter Sunday morning: just as there are many languages and accents, there are as many ways to worship God with music. Silence, when intentional, also plays an important function and role in the context of worship for it is often out of silence that we hear the voice of God. For me preaching should always strive to preach and communicate the Gospel of God's grace. Using accessible language in both a challenging and reassuring way, I have tried to do this by preaching on relevant topics and themes that speak to how we as a people of faith are called to respond to issues and concerns such as the environment, discipleship, and the challenges faced by families. I have been known to use props, flip charts, film clips, images and dramatic monologues to help illustrate my sermons in ways that add to what is a rather didactic process. And, finally, the Sacraments of Baptism and Communion are to be administered joyfully as a sign of the full extent of God's saving love for us, and of our hope in God's grace as offered to us through Jesus Christ.

**PASTORAL CARE:**

Pastoral care is what happens when we show our love for God by our loving our neighbours. It is my belief that a community is made up of a web of relationships that provide us with a sense of security, identity, and meaning that are developed through a series of what I call "shared common experiences." These can be built up in and through small groups – which I believe is the primary pastoral care model that the Church was founded on (Acts 2:42-47), through affinity based groups such as a women's or men's group, by sharing an experience serving at an outreach event, or when neighbours help neighbours. I believe that Pastoral Care is the intentional maintenance of these relationships: without Pastoral Care people fade from view and fall away from the community. As a result I do not see Pastoral Care as being the task of a few gifted people but is the responsibility of the entire community: the Great Commission is for every

Christian. When one person phones a friend in need of comfort, another visits a shut-in, or yet another takes a casserole to someone unable to cook for themselves; this is Pastoral Care. When this happens we share with that other person an experience of Christ's love and the sense of belonging to the Body of Christ that is the Church. God calls us to seek out and serve our neighbours as Christ sought out and served us; Pastoral Care is our response.

### **EVANGELISM:**

I believe that Evangelism is our reaching out to others as God reaches out to us: it is to offer God's amazing grace and love to our neighbours as freely as we received it. Therefore, Evangelism is not an element we can isolate and divorce from our faith or from what we do when we are at work, where we play, or during our 'down-time' at home. Sadly Evangelism has become something that we have come to view as a complicated and onerous task; but it's really pretty simple. I see Evangelists as being everyday people who live their faith in what they do and say, who, by doing so, witness to the world the grace and love of God and the joy of forgiveness known through Christ. God has given each of us our own gifts that we can use to make every day events and actions into opportunities for Evangelism. As such Evangelism is when we put our faith into action. Evangelism happens when we open a door, when we listen to someone's story, and reach out neighbour to neighbour. Evangelism happens when we gather at funerals, weddings, and baptisms. Evangelism happens when we commit acts of grace, when we take part in building up our neighbours through an outreach activity, or seek to better the communities in which we live. Evangelism happens when we invest ethically, or speak out against injustice. Simply put, Evangelism has many guises. It is sometimes loud and in your face but I believe that Evangelism is more relevant and effective if it comes looking like an open hand, a warm smile, and is as natural as breathing.

### **EDUCATION IN THE CHURCH:**

The 'teaching' of Christian Education is not the domain of one person – or even a few people in a classroom: everyone is gifted and called to be both 'teacher' and 'student.' All too often, Christian Education is a program planned and operated by the Church to instruct its members in the principles of Christian living by telling the story of Christ – often children in Sunday School: but it shouldn't end there. Christian Education – as God calls us to practice it in Deuteronomy 6 – should be our primary task: it tells us who we are by reminding of our past and who we are called to be as a people of faith. As such, Christian Education occurs in and through all aspects of life – and Church life – since learning never stops. I believe that Christian Education should never be forced but should be natural and as relevant as today's newspaper, current pop song, or the latest movie. Theology – the study of God and God's ways – is all around us. It's vital. It's exciting. And it's very, very important.

### **LEADERSHIP IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE CHURCH:**

I view congregations in organic terms where every element contributes to the health and well being of the whole community, and every member has a role to play. For the first two years of my Ministry I practiced team ministry and I believe in that model. I believe in the court system of our Church and see it as a way for the congregation to take an

active and responsible role in its own governance and future: as I have said often to each Session I served as Moderator on, “this is your Church, not mine.” As a result, I believe in Lay leadership, in team building, and in partnerships. The best manager – or Moderator – is someone who instills confidence in those around them and encourages them to use their gifts as best as they can – and then gets out of their way. Personally, I see the "Superman" concept of the minister as not being a healthy one for either the minister or the congregation: it creates an imbalance of power, sets up unrealistic expectations, and is ultimately an abdication by the congregation of its responsibility to participate and share in leadership. Over the past five years on my Ministry I have stressed the importance of Team Ministry: I am not a “turf warrior” who jealously guards his domain, rather I have freely sought to share the leadership and management of the Church with others. I welcome Lay participation in worship through Liturgists and Lay Readers, I’ve frequently welcomed other Ministers – retired, students, guests – to take part in preaching series, and I have worked collaboratively with every Musical Director I have worked with. I have also worked hard to establish a collaborative atmosphere at the Session table at which every member of the team is encouraged to participate and is allowed to work from their strengths rather from their weaknesses.

***Write a brief paragraph on how you view your role in the Church.***

It is my view that ministry is something to which every Christian is called and commissioned to do by Christ: it takes a community to raise and nurture a Christian – as I have become fond of saying; as a people of faith we are called to gather to worship and know God together. Within this more holistic vision of the community that is the Church, in my practice and in my theology, I see the Minister as being more of a facilitator than the focal point of the congregation: more partner than High Priest.

Trusting in the Holy Spirit, and my belief that we are each gifted by God with skills, talents, and abilities, my role, as a Minister, is to enable and encourage others to use their gifts as an offering and response to God whether it is at the Session table, on a committee, serving during fellowship, assisting in worship, or partaking in an outreach event. The first Church was a community that put its faith into practice – everyone had a role to play: this is what the Church of today needs to return to! Having said this, while I believe whole-heartedly that Ministry is a partnership, and in the Priesthood of All Believers – that the more voices and people involved in the life, work, and worship of the Church the better, I recognize that as a Minister of Word and Sacrament, I have special responsibilities and roles conferred upon me by our Church. The Minister is called to be the Teaching Elder for a congregation of persons who are seeking for God's Word and His plan for their lives. As the Teaching Elder I feel strongly that the Minister should always strive to preach and communicate the Gospel of God’s grace in order to encourage and empower people to be what God created and calls them to be. And as the Moderator of the Session, I see my role as being ultimately that of a partner, someone who, like Christ walking with the despondent disciples on the road to Emmaus, listens, teaches, encourages, and challenges those around the table to live out their lives and faith as God created and called them to.

***Describe what you would like to accomplish in ministry in the future.***

It is my theology that God calls us to live in relationships; relationships between human

and divine, and relationships between each other. Ministry is putting this into practice by building up a community of people into a community of faith that models these relationships: one that is open, affirming, inclusive, loving, and accepting. The Acts 2 Church – the First Century Church – was a community of believers who lived up to the Great Commission and put their faith into action as they sought to know God together: it was a Church that changed lives as it changed the world. My hope is that any ministry that I participate in – (I say participate because I believe that ministry is a community covenant experienced through all parties working together) – lives up to this aspiration. Personally, though, I would count my Ministry as successful if I were to be blessed by being the Minister of a Church that I would want to be a member of.