



## THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CHESTNUT HILL

June 13, 2019

Dear Members of the Congregation and Friends,

With joy, enthusiasm, and deep faith, the Pastor Nominating Committee presents the Reverend Dr. John Wilkinson to be the next pastor and head of staff of the Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill. John has been the pastor and head of staff of Third Presbyterian Church in Rochester, NY since 2001, and his preaching, scholarship, and work on behalf of the denomination are known nationally.

He is a preacher whose Christian convictions and deep knowledge of Scripture, history, and Reformed theology come together to inspire introspection and action. His preaching is both challenging and inspiring and will help us enrich our faith and live it out more meaningfully.

John's current church in Rochester has close ties to the Eastman School of Music, one of the pre-eminent choral music programs in the United States. His music director colleague, Peter DuBois, hosts and produces the nationally syndicated public radio program "With Heart and Voice," dedicated to sacred choral music. John is adept in using music and the arts to deepen faith.

In addition, John has been a national leader in the PC(USA), and his ministry has sought to answer God's call to action in the church and in the world.

In 1997, he co-founded the Covenant Network to fight for the inclusion of all people in the life of our faith, and in 2010 he co-founded NEXT Church to provide a forum where young clergy could discuss how the denomination should grow in the coming decades. In 2014, he was a candidate for moderator of the General Assembly, and he has served as a member of the national Theological Task Force on the Peace, Unity, and Purity of the Church. His vision, together with his organizational and relational skills, has been instrumental in advancing equality, unity, and inclusion in our denomination.

John's long experience as head of staff at Third Presbyterian, a church of more than 1,100 members, speak to his abilities to mentor both staff and lay leaders. Though Rochester has suffered significant job losses and declining population, John oversaw a capital campaign that raised \$7.5 million to restore the church's sanctuary, build its endowment, and expand its already extensive commitment to mission. He has a gift within his church and in his community for nurturing loving relationships, along with decades of experience providing pastoral care.

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A graduate of the College of Wooster, John earned his Master of Divinity degree at McCormick Theological Seminary (where he is now a trustee) and a Ph.D. in History from Northwestern University. He and his wife, Bonny Claxton, have been married for 30 years. Bonny is the chief financial officer at the Rochester Presbyterian Home. She will remain in Rochester, to work and to care for her aging mother. They have two grown children, Kenneth (26), a mechanical engineer living in Massachusetts, and Ann (23), an administrative assistant living in Washington, D.C.

Since June of last year, the 11 members of the PNC have held 39 meetings, considered more than 120 applicants and potential applicants, conducted more than a dozen video interviews, checked scores of references, traveled around the country, and listened to literally hundreds of sermons. Out of all the candidates we encountered, John Wilkinson clearly stood out.

In a brochure accompanying this letter, we tell you more about John, along with some of his own words and the opinions of others who know him. John will preach at worship on Sunday, June 23, after which a congregational meeting will be held to discuss his candidacy and vote on extending a call to him.

In order to give John the opportunity to inform his own congregation after our meeting, we ask that you do not share this news with others outside the PCCH community or post anything about it on social media until June 27.

In the firm belief that we have been guided by the Holy Spirit to this place, we heartily recommend John Wilkinson to you as the ideal person to lead our congregation into an exciting future.

Yours in Christ,

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| Mark Bernstein | Bob Fles (co-chairs) |                |
| Laura Brobyn   | Emily Camp-Landis    | Katie Connelly |
| Greg Dickinson | Lyn Huertgen         | Landon Jones   |
| Jeff Podraza   | Amy Raphael          | Harry Spaeth   |

Pastor Nominating Committee