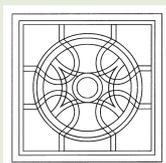


The Pastor Nominating Committee
unanimously and joyfully
recommends that

The Rev. Dr. John Wilkinson

be called to the position of
Minister and Head of Staff at

The Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill



The Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill
8855 Germantown Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19118
215.247.8855
www.chestnuthillpres.org



Why We Chose John:

As stated in our Mission Study Report we are a congregation who is proud of what we have accomplished and wishes to continue our commitment to excellence in worship, music and the arts, and our witness in the world. The critical abilities for our minister, identified by our congregation, included:

- **Preaching and worship:** John is a preacher whose Christian convictions and deep knowledge of Scripture, history, and Reformed theology come together to inspire both action and introspection. We feel that his preaching is both challenging and accessible and will help us all to enrich our faith and live it out more meaningfully. His current proximity to the Eastman School of Music has afforded John access to exceptional musical talent and he values the role of music and the arts in worship.

- **Strategic leadership and vision:** John's work in helping to found both the Covenant Network and NEXT Church demonstrates that his ministry has sought to answer God's calls to action in the church and in the world. His vision, together with his impressive organizational and relational skills, has been instrumental in advancing equality, diversity, and inclusion in our denomination.

- **Pastoral care:** John has a gift for nurturing loving relationships, and decades of experience providing pastoral care. He is a listener who has the empathy and skill needed to counsel and comfort those facing physical, emotional, and spiritual difficulties.

- **Leadership through change:** Decades of experience in ordained ministry, including more than 15 years in his current position as head of staff in a large multi-staff church, speak to John's abilities to work with and mentor associate pastors and lay leaders. Though the city of Rochester has struggled, John has maintained a vibrant urban ministry with strong and steady attendance, congregational giving, and focus on mission in the community. John was instrumental in the creation of Rochester's ROC SALT Center, a collaborative effort that repurposed a closing church into a community mission center. This is just one example of his commitment to mission and urban ministry.

- **Teaching:** John has a deep love for both lifelong learning and teaching. While he was an associate pastor with a young family in Chicago, he began his Ph.D. in American religious history at Northwestern University. His dissertation work focused on the intersection of Reformed theology as articulated in the Confession of 1967 and the American civil rights movement. This understanding of the ways in which our faith intersects with life has continuing relevance today.

About John:

Education:

B.A. (History), The College of Wooster, 1985, Phi Beta Kappa

M. Div., McCormick Theological Seminary, 1989

Ph.D. (History), Northwestern University, 2001

Dissertation: The Confession of 1967: Presbyterians and the Politics of Reconciliation

Ministry:

Third Presbyterian Church, Rochester, NY (approx. 1,100 members)

- Pastor, 2001-present

Fourth Presbyterian Church, Chicago, Ill. (approx. 5,000 members)

- Executive Associate Pastor, 1997-2001
- Associate Pastor for Mission and Communication, 1994-1997

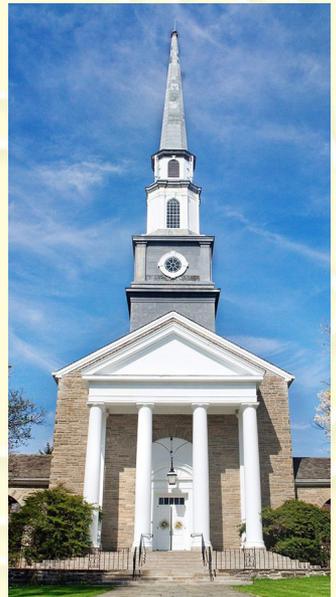
St. James Presbyterian Church, Chicago, Ill.

(approx. 100 members)

- Pastor, 1989-1994

Personal:

- Born in western Pennsylvania in 1962, the oldest of three children. His father was a Presbyterian minister and his mother was a teacher. He grew up in small towns around Ohio.
- Ordained as an elder at age 16 and felt called to ministry while in college.
- Married to Bonny Claxton since 1989. Bonny is the CFO of the Rochester Presbyterian Home.
- Two children, Kenneth (26) and Ann (23).



John on what he values in ministry:

“I find great fulfillment, and by grace, success, in being the leader of a staff team and congregation that gathers Sunday after Sunday, season after season, generation after generation to worship God and to serve God, and to connect with God through others. That happens in meetings and classroom settings. It happens in mission work in the community.

And it happens on Sunday mornings, through liturgy, hymn and anthem, baptism and communion, and yes – again by God’s grace – through my preaching. Worship is the most important thing we do. It is what we do most often and it is what we do best. I take great satisfaction in working with our staff – ministers and musicians – to craft an engaging liturgy and inviting people into it. And I work hard and find deep fulfillment in preparing and preaching sermons that connect God’s word with the life of the world and the particular lives of the hearers. When that happens, I am awed and grateful. And then I pivot to the next Sunday!”



John on his ideal congregation:

“It has become almost a cliché to quote Frederick Buechner’s well-known affirmation that ‘The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.’ It is also true. . . . Worship resides at the heart of this congregation’s life, worship that is compelling and engaging, that seeks to explore God’s word in both its timeless and contemporary context, that joins liturgy and music and preaching in a joyful and hopeful offering to God and the community.

That same congregation would also embrace another timeless affirmation, from German theologian Emil Brunner, that “a church exists for mission as a fire for burning.” Mission – service beyond self whether locally or globally – would animate the congregation’s life. . . .

All of this would happen in a community where connections and relationships matter, where generations interact naturally, where guests are welcome and care is extended.”

John’s views on ministry during a time of deep national political division:

“Each of us needs to believe what he or she believes in with integrity, humility, and gentleness. One always needs to hold onto ideas gently, with a recognition that you might be wrong.”

John's Statement Of Faith:

With the church in every time and place, I confess my hope and place my trust in the Triune God. God created the universe and every atom in it, including every human on earth. I live in awe and gratitude of God's creation and creating.

With the church in every time and place, I confess my hope and place my trust in Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior, brother and friend, companion and provocateur.

With the church in every time and place, I confess my hope and place my trust in the Holy Spirit, "everywhere the giver and renewer of life."

With the Reformed church across generations, I confess particular understandings of God's sovereignty and grace, of the centrality of the Word, of the power and promise of the sacraments, of sinfulness and salvation. I find meaning and challenge in the Reformed vision, its theological framework and ethic of life.

With the Presbyterian tradition across generations and contexts and in our North American context, I confess my hope in the church, not because of who we are but because of who God is and what God is calling us to do. I affirm Presbyterian commitments to diversity of opinion and experience and to cultural engagement. "Reformed and always being reformed" is more than a motto, but a promise and a challenge, to the church, and to me in my personal life and ministry.

I have been shaped and formed by the church's mission and its theological heritage, which feed each other. I believe that the church is called in the 21st century to renew its theological commitments in order to fuel its mission of justice and hope in the world.

I trust that:

- God is our refuge and strength
- God is always doing a new thing
- Jesus gives us peace that the world cannot give
- In life and death we belong to God, and nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord

I believe that:

- We always live in the tension between Good Friday and Easter morning
- With an urgency born of hope we are called to serve the world
- In a broken and fearful world the Spirit gives us courage to pray without ceasing

I confess that:

- The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ
- We are all called to be disciples of the Lord
- We are no more strangers or guests, but like a child at home
- We are called to come and follow God, and never be the same

What Others Have Told Us About John:

"John is smart, savvy, thoughtful, theological, compassionate, kind, and articulate."

Rev. Tim Hart-Anderson, Westminster Presbyterian Church, Minneapolis, Minn.

"He's always asking, 'What does God have in store for us?' He is an active civic leader and would be excellent at mission...and he's always interested in the church making its mark in the community."

Rev. Amy Williams Fowler, Presbytery Leader, Presbytery of Genesee Valley

"I think of him as one of the the finest men in PC(USA)."

Rev. Frances Taylor Gench, Union Presbyterian Seminary, Richmond, Va.

"John Wilkinson represents the very best of Presbyterianism: a lively intellect seasoned with warm-hearted faithfulness, a deep sense of vocation and commitment to the church, and a vision of Christ's kingdom of love and justice engaged with the world. John Wilkinson and the Presbyterian Church of Chestnut Hill is a match made in heaven, literally."

John Buchanan, former editor and publisher of The Christian Century; former pastor, Fourth Presbyterian Church, Chicago, Ill.

"He is a prince. An absolutely first-rate human being."

Mark Anderson, Director of Music Ministry, Shadyside Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, Pa.

The Pastor Nominating Committee:

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

