

Committee on Discernment

October 15, 2020

Meeting via Zoom at 10 a.m.

Present: Donna-Marie Lane, Anissa Glaser-Bacon, Brent Gundlah, Allison Gallaher, Ruth Garwood, Bill Smith, Bentley deBardelaben-Phillips, Sue Ferbrache, Nayiri Karjian, and Luke Lindon

Absent: Nanette Pitt and Amy Gopp

Check in and prayer

Matthew Hogue-Smith: Second draft of ordination paper

Luke is Matthew's advisor, admires his growth, communication, and engagement with the process. He's more vulnerable and growing that way. He's going to a D.Min with PSR in social justice and spiritual practice. Brent wondered about his feelings of being taken advantage of. Anissa stated he mentioned that in the MID group.

Thoughts on the paper: Anissa sees looking at the paper, he's a mystic. Wants to see more of a practical element and why does he need to be ordained for his call. Needs to see passion around ordination. Allison still feels like the paper has distance and striving to be competent. Needs more about ordination, other people have told him to be called, but no call story perse. More about CPE and the experience there. Brent says he's got the theological chops but not enough on the call. Westboro encounter felt performative. Communion is the most important sacrament, and it is given 7 lines. Needs more about it. Nayiri wonders about anxiety, which he talks about it very openly. Ruth has a challenge with the Westboro part as well, hard to believe it. Bill wonders about the connection about the nature of God and his experience on the border. Donna-Marie felt the same. Like he would start something, but then it would drop and left them wondering. Donna-Marie lifts up about the 3 topics but they aren't explained later. Bentley states that there's movement, but he hasn't landed yet. We have to help him connect the dots both in the paper and for his call.

Matthew arrived. Introductions. Bentley prayed.

Matthew stated that he was accepted into PSR's DMin. He's been on a journey. CPE at Main Campus and it was fully virtual. Technology is not a hinderance to faith. Lots of learning about self and feeling more enough-ness. Husband was able to land a good job and he's been able to focus on his ministry and put things into action.

Nayiri asked after core learning of CPE. Matthew learned that he can't meet people where they are if he can't be where he is. His listening skills vastly improved, focus on the other. Allison asked after one encounter to show the impact of CPE, as she didn't see it in the paper. He thought of a mother dying from COVID, able to pray with the family and to the end of life rites for the prayer. After ritual, everyone exhaled at the same time, as if it were practiced, he saw how beautiful and holy it was. Bentley asked, "Spiritual and mystical makes sense, but what about pain or anger... feels like something is missing in that story? Where's the human part of that?" Matthew stated that it wasn't all rosy and all good. Hurt his heart in that moment. He wanted to cry but he was able to hold the

space and be present with the family even within that extremely hard time. CPE was a struggle every single day to feel enough and adequacy.

Bentley wants more of that. More talk about that struggle as it makes you more human.

Nayiri asked what do you do with that grief? Shared the light but not the grief. We need both. Matthew spoke about how he was able to join in with the family in that moment was hard, and it hurt his heart.

Brent talked about the paper. Prefaced it with: We're tasked with helping you craft a paper that will enable you to go in front of the rest of the committee with your best, honest self. Anissa stated how there's a clear development of the paper with the things we reflected in the past. Ruth was looking for more of a sense of call to ordination. What are you called to and what does ordination mean to you? Matthew knows that his call is to build a transformative community. Contemplative spiritual practice along with a prophetic mission with the sacraments. Invite the congregation into the holiness of the sacraments, break open bread and heart and bring humanity into the church. Bill pointed out how communion is the most important sacrament but only has 7 lines. Matthew tried to keep it clear and concise as he tends to ramble.

Nayiri asked, what does communion mean? Matthew says that it's the fuel of our ministry. Brent states that it's a provocative claim with the introduction, but it doesn't land, needs more real estate.

Nayiri wanted the next paper to put clarity around the call, just not hearing it in the paper. We get it when you talk, but not in the paper. Call and then importance of sacraments.

His call came at the Pride Parade in San Antonio and how he felt for his people and he was able to move his people away from the anger. Bring the human element and story into church, and felt like he built community there. Brent reflected that the vignette is the Hollywood version, needs more struggle and pain. Feels too intellectual. Matthew stated he's a better speaker than writer. Anissa suggests recording thoughts and then write off of those. Looking for practicality of the call as well, not just the theology. Allison never had a moment where she realized the power within herself in a moment, she wonders about the call within that story. Where's the call, as you don't need to be ordained, how does it connect to the sacraments and call and community?

Ruth wanted some fallow period to develop self and ministry outside of paper. Grow without goal in mind. Luke concurred to try to not meet the task, to just be and breathe and then we help connect the dots for the wider committee that we know are present within you.

Bentley wants to hear more about the struggle with God. Too clean of a story. Missing the struggle. When we first met Matthew, he resisted CPE and job and all this, where's the risk and God providing within the risk that he took to get here. It has been struggle, and yet Matthew has come through it. Doesn't want to feel like he's trying to prove, Bentley says to let it flow through you like it does when we speak in these meetings. Allison states that the struggle is implied, but the struggle never stops. Talk more about struggle and less about destination.

Matthew prayed us out.

Committee parking lot discussion. There's growth, but needs to take a break. Too task focused.

Submitted by Luke Lindon