

Bob Wieggers' Ordination Paper

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Christian Experience and Biographical Sketch

I was born in 1976 in northern New Jersey, the second of two children in my family, and grew up in South Florida for my entire childhood. My family was active in the same mid-sized Presbyterian church for my entire childhood. Nearly every summer we would visit family in Vermont, which was always home-away-from-home.

I was raised in a devout Christian home, baptized as an infant in the Christian Reformed Church (the church in which my parents grew up), and I grew up in the Presbyterian Church of America. We regularly attended Sunday services, Sunday school, as well as Wednesday evening activities. I attended a small Christian school from grades K-12, and then Christian college, where I majored in English and minored in Biblical studies. Throughout my young life I was given excellent Biblical instruction in my church, my school, and at home. I have long been interested in the things of God, and remember trusting God for my salvation in Jesus at a young age. In middle school I became a member of our church and began to take on my faith for myself. I was often in confusion as I navigated the murky waters of adolescence, and yet I longed take on more ownership of my faith and to do more beyond just learning.

My parents were, and remain, faithful Christians, who are generous with their time and their money, although they were not particularly active in social causes, etc. We were a relatively happy family with very few conflicts or major issues. I was, and remain, a quiet person, taking after my mother especially. I never had a particular phase of rebellion. While my growing up experience was in many ways ideal, I was eager to spread my wings during my college years, so I went off to Covenant College in Lookout Mountain (the college of the Presbyterian Church in America), where I earned a BA in English, with a minor in Biblical Studies.

25 I grew significantly in college, understanding for the first time that I could be a sensitive,
26 listening person as I gained various relationships. I was also a cynical, prideful person in my
27 college years, but the Lord showed me this in some painful ways and I strive to fight against that
28 spirit. In college I grew significantly in my thought life, and discovered a passion for writing and
29 communication, and I grew spiritually under our local pastor and church family. I met my wife in
30 college and we quickly grew close, and have a spiritually encouraging relationship. I did, and
31 still do, look up to my wife for her strength of faith.

32 Soon after college, we were married and settled in nearby Chattanooga, TN. We joined
33 our small neighborhood church and quickly became involved, and grew under the ministry of our
34 pastor, and made good friendships in our church and neighborhood. While in Chattanooga we
35 had 4 children (2 boys and 2 girls, who are now ages 6, 8, 11 and 12) and I had a career in
36 computer programing.

37 **Call to Ministry**

38 I was elected as elder in our local church in Chattanooga, after some years of
39 involvement and various aspects of leadership. I was on the leadership council and had
40 responsibility to oversee the spiritual well-being of the church at large, as well as specific
41 families. I grew significantly in my spiritual walk as I stepped into roles of leadership and caring
42 for others, and I learned a good deal from my pastor and the other elders.

43 Growing from this, I began to preach the gospel occasionally during Sunday morning
44 worship. This was a significant step, as I subsequently felt called to vocational ministry, and I
45 was encouraged by friends and mentors to explore the possibility. I also had a change of heart
46 that changed my orientation from being generally inward-focused in my faith to growing toward
47 being outward-focused. This was facilitated by a mentor who was a former missionary. My wife

48 and I began to pray that God’s kingdom would come, and speak more boldly toward others about
49 the hope we have in Jesus, and the Lord blessed our relationships and efforts to help others grow
50 spiritually.

51 I eventually felt called to ministry training, and we also felt strongly called to ministry in
52 New England. The Lord directed our path to move to Portland, Maine, where I transferred my
53 day job and started a ministry internship at a local church in our denomination (PCA), working
54 with the denominational board to be trained up in alternative ways in lieu of traditional seminary.
55 We fell in love with Portland, feeling specifically called there for ministry, and saw spiritual fruit
56 for our labors. But soon the ministry internship fell apart, as the church leadership was in
57 disarray. My hopes and dreams for ministry training and calling came unraveled, and I entered
58 into a difficult period. After a period of recovery, I felt the Lord calling me back to pastoral
59 training, this time at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, where I studied in the Master of
60 Divinity program and graduated in October of 2016. We often struggled in the crucible of
61 seminary life, as major health issues arose (my wife was in the hospital for 9 days in 2014 with
62 an unknown respiratory issue), but the Lord has grown our faith through various trials. Along the
63 way I thoroughly enjoyed my studies, and did my best to maintain a balance of family life.

64 During our time in seminary, God shifted my mindset of the context of ministry I felt led
65 to. I once thought I was called to help establish a new church (church planting), but God made it
66 clear that was not for me. So the Lord clearly led both me and my wife to be attracted to pastoral
67 ministry in historic churches, primarily through the ministry of Overseed, whose mission is to
68 “revitalize historic New England churches.” It is an amazing privilege to serve as Pastor here at
69 First Baptist of Bennington, VT since December of 2015.

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71 **Academic and Field Preparation**

72 My primary academic preparation was at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in
73 Hamilton, MA, where I completed the Master of Divinity degree with a 3.8 GPA, receiving my
74 diploma in October of 2016. I took as many courses in practical ministry as possible, while also
75 gaining much from the excellent teaching in language study, Biblical exegesis, theology, history,
76 and especially homiletics. While at seminary I was also involved with the Spiritual Formation
77 program, which was a significant blessing to me and my wife as well.

78 I also received some academic preparation for ministry at Covenant College (1999),
79 where I majored in English and minored in Biblical Studies.

80 My primary formal field preparation was during one unit of CPE at Beverly (MA)
81 Hospital, completed in December of 2015. I also received preparation from the Mentored
82 Ministry program at Gordon-Conwell, where I did varying ministry internships at my local
83 church. Prior to seminary, I was an elder in my local church, and eventually a ministry intern.

84 **Statement of Theological Beliefs**

85 **1. Doctrine of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit**

86 God is one God¹ and three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.² God is the only living and true
 87 almighty, who alone is “most holy, most wise, most free, most absolute...most loving, gracious,
 88 merciful, long suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression and
 89 sin, the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and most just, and terrible in his judgements,
 90 hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.”³ God is the creator of all things⁴, and
 91 is sovereign over all, including all of humankind. God is a spirit. God is transcendent.⁵ God is
 92 eternal.⁶ God is self-existent.⁷ God is omnipotent⁸ omnipresent⁹ and omniscient.¹⁰ God is holy¹¹
 93 and God is love.¹²

94 God the Father is merciful and gracious, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.¹³
 95 He is just, and he forgives. He keeps his covenants, and he redeems his people. He is the father
 96 of the nation of Israel¹⁴ the father of Jesus Christ¹⁵ and the father of his redeemed people.¹⁶

97 Jesus Christ, God the Son, was sent into the world by God the Father.¹⁷ Jesus is fully God
 98 and fully man, born of a virgin, conceived by God the Holy Spirit. He was sent into the world to

¹ Deut. 6:4

² Matt. 28:19

³ The Second London Baptist Confession, II.1

⁴ Genesis 1:1

⁵ Matt 11:27

⁶ Psalm 90:2

⁷ John 5:26

⁸ Daniel 4:35

⁹ Psalm 139:7-10

¹⁰ Deut. 29:29

¹¹ 1 Peter 1:16

¹² 1 John 4:8

¹³ Exodus 34:6

¹⁴ Isaiah 63:16

¹⁵ John 1:18

¹⁶ 1 John 3:1

¹⁷ John 3:16

99 redeem his people from their sins.¹⁸ He completed his work on the cross, saving all who look to
 100 him in faith from their sins and granting us forgiveness and adoption as sons and daughters into
 101 God's kingdom. Jesus Christ holds the offices of prophet, priest, and king. As prophet he reveals
 102 God's will to us.¹⁹ As priest he reconciles us to God, as our redeemer, mediator and intercessor.
 103 As king he reigns over us as the sovereign of his heavenly kingdom. He protects us, provides for
 104 us and delivers us from darkness. He will return to unite us with himself forever.

105 God the Holy Spirit is co-equal with God the Father and God the Son. He worked in
 106 creation.²⁰ He worked in revelation, inspiring the scriptures.²¹ In the Old Testament he came
 107 upon people in special times for special work.²² The Spirit came upon Mary for the conception of
 108 Jesus, and anointed Jesus at his baptism. He works in all who are saved, first convicting them of
 109 sin, regenerating them, and illuminating them. He comes upon all believers, and grants us
 110 spiritual gifts, and he also helps believers in prayer.²³ The Spirit empowers believers to live the
 111 Christian life and follow Jesus, to the glory of the Father.

112 **2. Doctrine of Humanity**

113 God created humans, male and female, in his own image²⁴, and all human beings are
 114 made in the image of God, and retain that distinction. Therefore all people are valued by God
 115 and ought to be valued by all other people, and all people belong to God, no matter what their

¹⁸ John 17:3

¹⁹ Hebrews 1:1-3

²⁰ Genesis 1:2

²¹ 2 Peter 1:21

²² Genesis 41:38

²³ Romans 8:26

²⁴ Genesis 1:26

116 age or condition. Jesus Christ is the one true image of God²⁵, as he is the one person who has not
117 been marred by sin.²⁶

118 God created human beings to be perfect, and he gave us the ability to love him in return.
119 Yet our first parents sinned against God and introduced sin into the world and into humanity.²⁷
120 Therefore human beings not only bear the image of God, but also bear the consequences of sin,
121 and remain in a fallen state. This fallen state does not remove the image of God, but it has bent or
122 twisted it beyond our own ability to recover it and recover our communion with God. Therefore
123 God sent Jesus Christ, the one true image of God, to redeem humanity out of its sinful state and
124 return us to the true image of God. This redemption of humanity began soon after the fall,
125 continued through the history of the nation of Israel especially, and came to its culmination in the
126 life and work of Jesus Christ, and ultimately in his sacrificial death on the cross.

127 Jesus Christ therefore shows us what humanity truly is. As the one true image of God,
128 and the one who lived as fully human yet without sin, Jesus brings us into communion with God,
129 as our true prophet, true priest and true king. So we look not only to his redemption but also to
130 his example.

131 Human beings are embodied spirits and spirits in bodies. Only death separates our bodies
132 from our spirits,²⁸ yet when Christ returns we will be resurrected, with renewed bodies and
133 renewed spirits.

²⁵ Colossians 1:15

²⁶ Hebrews 4:15

²⁷ Genesis 3

²⁸ Romans 8:10

134 3. The Bible

135 The Bible is the inspired, inerrant and infallible Word of God.²⁹ We trust that the Bible is
136 true and it is trustworthy. God reveals himself through general revelation in the works of his
137 creation, but he reveals his redemptive work only through the Bible.

138 The Bible is the 66 books that are collected in the Old Testament (39 books) and New
139 Testament (27 books). God appointed and inspired, by the Holy Spirit, chosen people to write the
140 scriptures.

141 We trust that the scriptures as originally given are without error. Yet as the scriptures
142 were copied over the ages, certain minor errors were introduced. Therefore we study the
143 manuscripts to discern as best as we're able the original writings. We also study the original
144 languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek) to best discern the original meaning and intent of the
145 authors of the scripture, and then look to the Spirit to guide us to understand the meaning for us
146 today.

147 No other books are divinely inspired by God, therefore we study, teach and preach only
148 from the Bible. Other materials may be helpful, as they may help explain, illustrate, apply, or
149 illumine the Bible, but only the Bible has authority over our lives and over the church. When
150 there is a matter of dispute, we look to the Bible as its own authority and its own interpreter. We
151 trust that we are illumined by the Holy Spirit as we read the scriptures, and seek to be lead by
152 him as we do so.

153 2 Timothy 3:16-17 summarizes and encapsulates this: "All Scripture is breathed out by
154 God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that
155 the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." This is why we study, teach,

²⁹ 2 Timothy 3:16-17

156 preach, meditate and pray through the Scriptures, so we can be complete and equipped as
 157 followers of Christ.

158 **4. The Ordinances**

159 The ordinances that have been given to us by God as means of his grace are baptism and
 160 the Lord's supper.

161 **Baptism**

162 Jesus commanded the church to "make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the
 163 Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."³⁰ When the believer goes under the waters of baptism, the church
 164 declares that he or she is indeed a Christian: "buried with [Jesus] in baptism,"³¹ and when the
 165 believer rises up out of the waters of baptism he or she proclaims "you were also raised with him
 166 through faith in the powerful working of God."³² The scriptures make clear that baptism itself
 167 doesn't save: we are saved only by faith in Jesus.³³ Yet it is through baptism that we affirm our
 168 faith, obey our Lord's command, and identify with our Savior.

169 Baptism is best administered to believers who profess their faith in Christ and wish to
 170 obey him and identify with him in this holy ordinance, as this is the clearest teaching of the
 171 scriptures. It is also best done by immersion in water, as this too is the clearest teaching of the
 172 scriptures.

173 **The Lord's Supper**

174 The Lord's Supper is to be celebrated regularly in the church, as Jesus commanded. We
 175 break bread together and drink the fruit of the vine together to remember and celebrate the
 176 breaking of Jesus' body as a sacrifice for our sins and the shedding of his blood to wash away

³⁰ Matthew 28:19

³¹ Colossians 2:12a

³² Colossians 2:12b

³³ Ephesians 2:8

177 our sins.³⁴ In this way we commune together as one body, and we take within ourselves the bread
 178 and the cup. The scriptures do not teach that Christ is literally present in the elements, but rather
 179 we remember Christ's sacrifice, and we trust that he is spiritually present with us as we take
 180 them together and we look forward to his return, when we will celebrate with him.

181 The scriptures do not indicate that it is fitting for unbelievers to partake in the Lord's
 182 supper³⁵, therefore we direct those present who do not claim Jesus as their Lord and Savior to
 183 refrain from taking the elements, and rather take Christ himself.

184 **5. The purpose and place of the church in today's world**

185 The purpose of the church is to make disciples of Christ, as Jesus made clear in the Great
 186 Commission passages such as in Matthew 28:18-20. The resurrected Jesus was given all
 187 authority in heaven and on earth. He therefore directed the church to go and make disciples of all
 188 nations, to baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and to teach them to observe
 189 Christ's commandments. The primary commandments that we teach "all nations" (that is,
 190 everyone everywhere) are to repent and believe in Jesus Christ alone for their salvation.³⁶ We
 191 also teach to love God with all their heart, souls, mind and strength and their neighbors as
 192 themselves,³⁷ which is also summarized in the 10 commandments.³⁸ Is therefore the purpose of
 193 the church to be a light for the world³⁹ to see Christ for their salvation and for the life-changing
 194 gospel. We do this in the power of the Holy Spirit, and also recognize that the good news of
 195 Jesus Christ is not only for the salvation of individuals, but also has necessary implications for
 196 our communities and culture.

³⁴ 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

³⁵ 1 Corinthians 11:27

³⁶ Mark 1:15

³⁷ Mark 12:30-31

³⁸ Exodus 20:1-17

³⁹ Matthew 5:14

197 As we make disciples, we do so not only for conversion, but also teaching disciples of
198 Christ how to love God and love others well. There are countless implications and situations this
199 applies to, therefore we preach and teach the whole counsel of God in the scriptures, which is all-
200 sufficient for faith and practice.

201 One necessary implication of discipleship is to be agents of God’s love for the lost and
202 broken in this world. Therefore we look to bless others with the blessings God has given us, as
203 we are lead and as we are able to by faith in Christ. God is at work in each local church and has
204 unique callings for each situation, so we pray together to discern the calling that God has for us.
205 God is always calling us to “the mission at our doorstep” and he also calls us to participate in his
206 mission elsewhere in the world as we are lead by his Spirit.

207 As we seek to fulfill the purpose God has for us as a church, we do so in the following
208 ways: we look to God in prayer both individually and corporately, we look to the Scriptures,
209 trusting the Holy Spirit will guide us, we come together as God’s people for mutual support and
210 encouragement and public worship. We are ultimately created to worship and glorify God, and
211 we can only do that as disciples of Christ.

212 As disciples of Christ we look to bless our communities and our culture, and the ministry
213 of the church equips us to do so. The church itself is not necessarily directly called to involve
214 itself in institutions such as politics, business, etc, but rather to equip disciples to do so.

215 **6. The last things**

216 When our bodies die, we “return to the dust” but our souls continue to live forever. The
217 souls of those who are in Christ are received into heaven with God. The souls of those who are
218 not in Christ are cast into hell, separated from God. When Christ returns, the bodies of those in
219 Christ will be resurrected and those who have not yet died will be made new, and there will be a

220 new heaven and a new earth, where they will live with God forever. Those who are not in Christ
221 will be cast away in the final judgment, forever separated from God in eternal damnation. This
222 much is clear enough from the scriptures. How and when the last days will unfold is less clear
223 and therefore should be held with an open hand and humble spirit.

224 **7. Personal Commitment to the ABC**

225 I am personally committed to serve the Lord and His church here in the ABC. My clear
226 personal calling is to pastoral ministry here in New England. My ministry convictions begin with
227 making disciples of Jesus Christ through the preaching, teaching, and living out of the gospel of
228 Jesus from the Bible. My theological convictions include believer-baptism. All of these have
229 found their home here in the ABC, and I remain committed to serving the Lord here in this place
230 and this denomination for as long as the Lord gives me, which I hope is very long indeed.

231 **8. The role of the minister**

232 The role of ministry is one of humble service to God, to the church and to the
233 community. This service is primarily preaching and teaching the scriptures on a regular basis and
234 administering the ordinances in the local church. The minister's role is to be a servant who seeks
235 to make disciples of Christ both in and out of the church. This is to be modeled after Jesus' own
236 roles of prophet, priest, and king. The minister should be the "prophet-servant" of the church,
237 opening the scriptures not only through preaching and teaching, but also through personal
238 interactions including pastoral counseling. The minister should study the scriptures carefully and
239 study the flock carefully, and seek the guidance of the Spirit in order to discern the word that
240 God has for the church each week, always pointing to Christ as our true prophet. The minister
241 should also be the "priest-servant" of the church, regularly praying for and with the people, just
242 as Christ does for us. The minister should seek to build up the faith of the people so they are

243 communing with God both individually and collectively, always pointing to Christ as our true
244 priest and mediator. Finally the minister should also be the “leader-servant” of the church,
245 leading and looking after each member and seeking to protect the flock from spiritual attack, as
246 our true shepherd-king does. As a representative of Christ, the minister should always point to
247 Christ, our true king.

248 Therefore the minister’s role should result in the regular practices of prayer, of preaching
249 and teaching, and of building community. This of course can take many different forms, and the
250 minister should seek the Spirit’s guidance, in the context of Christian community.

251 **9. The relationship of the local congregation to the ABCUSA**

252 The relationship of the local congregation to the ABCUSA should be one of mutual
253 support and fellowship. The local church should support the national communion and work of
254 the ABCUSA, and the ABCUSA should likewise support the local church in its worship and
255 work, acting as a resource. Ultimately, as is stated in the ABCUSA website, “the local church is
256 the fundamental unit of mission in denominational life.” Therefore, we recognize the importance
257 of the local mission of the local church as primary in importance, yet we also recognize that God
258 has blessed us with the fellowship of like-minded churches and believers locally, in associations,
259 in regions, and nationally. We should therefore take part in the work that God has called us to in
260 these areas as well, supporting with our time, effort, and finances as we are able. We too should
261 have a voice in the theological and ecclesiological decisions our denomination makes, in order to
262 serve the Lord and serve the church for the good of the mission both locally and otherwise.

263 **10. Ecumenical relationships and witness**

264 Ecumenical relationships are valuable in that they show to the world the love that we
265 share in common in Christ. While we gladly adhere to our convictions, we also know that each

266 tradition has its weaknesses, and in multiple perspectives we find wisdom. It is also beneficial to
267 enter into ecumenical relationships for the benefit of the local community, where we often find
268 faith communities banding together to serve those in need or help each other in various projects.
269 It is these relationships where we can find a richness of the wider community that we often
270 cannot find when we remain within our own walls. It is indeed valuable to be open-handed and
271 charitable in the non-essentials of our faith as we seek to work with others in various capacities.

272 I am pleased that the ABCUSA has a vibrant ecumenical witness and I am happy to be a
273 part of it. In fact, given my non-Baptist background, one could say that I am an embodiment of
274 the ecumenical witness of the ABCUSA, which clearly values theological, cultural and racial
275 diversity, as do I. Therefore I am committed to the ecumenical witness of the ABCUSA as I seek
276 to be a faithful minister of the gospel and humble servant of God in the context of the universal
277 church, the denomination of ABCUSA, the region of Vermont/New Hampshire, and the local
278 church here at First Baptist Church of Bennington.