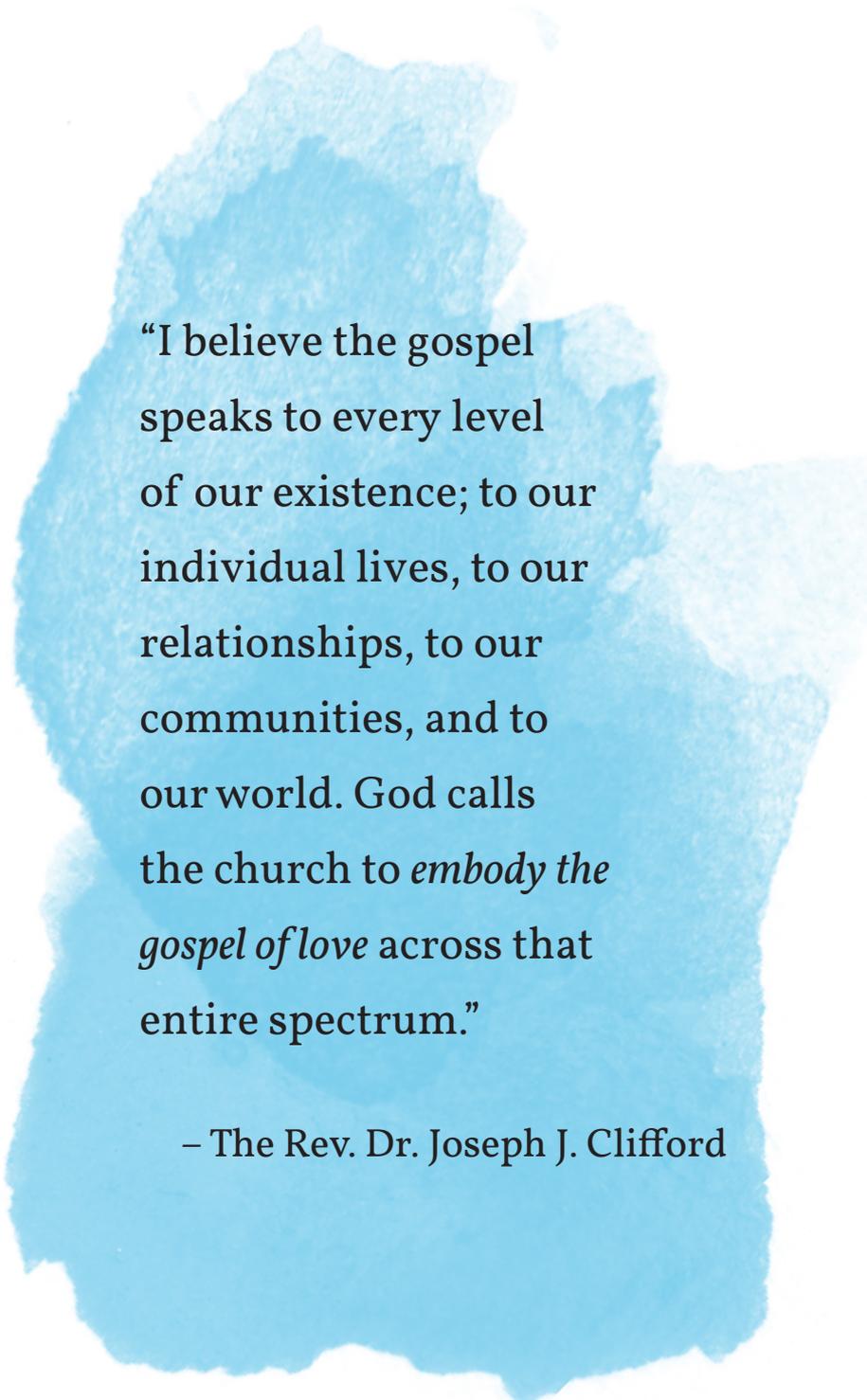


The Pastor Nominating Committee  
of Myers Park Presbyterian Church,  
with gratitude to God, nominates



The Rev. Dr. Joseph J. Clifford  
for Senior Pastor

Myers Park  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH



“I believe the gospel speaks to every level of our existence; to our individual lives, to our relationships, to our communities, and to our world. God calls the church to *embody the gospel of love* across that entire spectrum.”

– The Rev. Dr. Joseph J. Clifford

# INTRODUCING JOE CLIFFORD

The Pastor Nominating Committee is pleased to introduce the Rev. Dr. Joseph J. Clifford as their candidate to become the eighth senior pastor of Myers Park Presbyterian Church.

A graduate of Auburn University, Dr. Clifford spent six years in the banking and finance industry before being called to ministry.

Since 2006, Dr. Clifford has served as Senior Pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Dallas, a dynamic urban congregation known for its outreach ministry, "The Stewpot," which serves the homeless community of Dallas. During his tenure there, he led efforts to transform the church campus, completing a \$14 million capital renovation project in 2011.

Joe and Jennifer have been married since 1990. Together, they have two children, John (18) and Kate (16).



Jennifer and Joe Clifford

## Formal Education:

Bachelor of Science in Economics  
*Auburn University; 1988*

Master of Divinity  
*Columbia Theological Seminary; 1997*

Doctor of Ministry in Preaching  
*McCormick Theological Seminary; 2006*

## Calls to Ministry:

Pastor, Stockbridge Presbyterian Church  
*Stockbridge, GA; 1997-2000*

Pastor, Alpharetta Presbyterian Church  
*Alpharetta, GA; 2000-2006*

Pastor, First Presbyterian Church  
*Dallas, TX; 2006-present*

# A CONVERSATION WITH JOE

## On his family

The greatest gift of my life is the relationship I share with my family. Jennifer, my wife, is an amazing partner on this journey. She infuses our family with positive energy. Her smile lights up a room and her laugh warms every heart that hears it. Not only is she an incredible mom, she is an accomplished professional. In the early years of our marriage, she was a successful sales manager for Nortel Networks, receiving their Circle of Excellence Award three times. She took those professional skills and put them to work in the non-profit world, most recently serving Communities Foundation of Texas as a philanthropy officer.



John is our eldest child. He shares his mom's irrepressible positive nature. He's blessed with a great deal of charisma combined with a capacity for empathy and unfailing loyalty that has filled his life with wonderful friendships. He is a natural leader, most recently serving as drum major of his high school band, and earning the rank of Eagle Scout. In the fall he is heading to Sewanee to begin his college adventure.

Kate is our incredible daughter. She is beautiful in every way. Behind that beauty lies an unparalleled strength of spirit. When she sets her mind to something, you better believe it will get done. She is relentless in reaching her goals. She possesses a courage beyond measure and a confidence that has served her well throughout her life. Her courage informs her outgoing personality and her love for adventure. Growing up she played softball, and was a cheerleader. Her freshmen year she decided to set down her glove and pom-poms to pick up the rowing oars. She's enjoyed three seasons with the White Rock Rowing Club and looks forward to finding a club in Charlotte. She'll be a junior at Myers Park High School.

I could go on about our faithful Lab, Knox (15), and our precocious Maltese, Poppy (4), but I've probably bragged enough!

## On Preaching

My favorite aspect of ministry is preaching. It never ceases to amaze me how relevant God's word is to our world and to our lives. Opening a biblical text, seeking the Spirit's guidance in where it calls me to go, discerning what the passage tells us about who we are, who God is, how that shapes the relationship we share, and finally putting that together in a sermon is the spiritual discipline that defines my life week in and week out. And I love it. I can't wait to share that moment with you in the sanctuary and in *Celebrate*.

## On Teaching

I also love teaching. As the son of two teachers, it's in my blood. Early in my faith journey, I remember the excitement I felt when new insights were gained in a Bible study, a Sunday School class, a lecture, or a seminary class. Being part of those Spirit-filled moments as a teacher is thrilling. Serving a congregation that takes Christian education as seriously as Myers Park will be a joy.

## On Pastoral Ministry

Perhaps the most fulfilling aspect of ministry is found in those moments when I am invited into the most sacred space of people's lives; not because I'm a family member or a lifelong friend, but because I'm a pastor. From being among the first to hold a newborn baby in the hospital to offering a prayer of commendation in the final moments of someone's life; from counseling couples preparing for marriage to listening to the pain of a marriage coming apart; from the joy of leading a wedding service to the profound privilege of officiating a funeral, the pastoral aspect of ministry is incredibly fulfilling. In a congregation the size of Myers Park, I will have to learn what that looks like, but I look forward to the discovery with you.

## On Outreach

Our faith teaches us that Christ is alive and working to fulfill the mission of God in our broken and hurting world. Through outreach ministries we join God's work in the world, standing with the Crucified Christ in the midst of the world's suffering, and embodying the presence of the Risen Christ and His transforming power. This is the church's highest calling. In relationship with the least of these we meet Jesus Christ and our lives are transformed by the encounter. I can't wait to be a part of it in Charlotte, in Grier Heights, and all the places where Myers Park Presbyterian Church is already part of God's transforming work around the world.

# THE SEARCH PROCESS

The Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) began its search for a new Head of Staff believing that God already knew who would serve as senior pastor. It was their job to listen with open hearts and minds and to discern God's plan for Myers Park Presbyterian Church. In order to listen to God, they:

- Began each weekly meeting with a devotion and centering prayer
- Prayed individually each evening at 8 p.m.
- Took turns praying in the Chapel every day during Lent
- Prayed as a committee before each candidate interview
- Prayed with each candidate at the close of their interview

## Timeline of Events

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| April 2015     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PNC elected by the congregation</li><li>• Began training with Charlotte Presbytery</li></ul>  |
| May 2015       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Began weekly meetings and started developing the Ministry Information Form (MIF) to convey the church's vision for ministry</li></ul>   |
| Summer 2015    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interviewed Steve Eason and senior staff</li><li>• Developed process for reviewing candidates</li><li>• Presented MIF to the session for approval and posted to the PC(USA) website</li></ul>                               |
| Fall 2015      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Began reviewing over 75 candidate names solicited from members and non-candidate leaders in the PC(USA)</li></ul>   |
| Winter 2015-16 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continued reviewing referrals, self-referrals, and matches from the PC(USA) website, totaling more than 175 potential candidates</li><li>• Began visiting candidates' churches and interviewing select candidates</li></ul> |
| Spring 2016    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Visited final candidate, Joe Clifford, for two days of interviews in Dallas</li><li>• Hosted Joe for two days of interviews in Charlotte</li></ul>  |
| June 2016      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Voted unanimously to extend a call to Rev. Dr. Joe Clifford from First Presbyterian Church of Dallas</li></ul>  |

# COMMENTS FROM THE PNC

Teri Boone

Involvement in the communities surrounding his churches has always been an important part of Joe's ministry. In each of his calls, he has reached out to pastors from different denominations as well as city and community leaders. He engages with his community and models one of the "best practices" of mission work: building and maintaining relationships. Joe is open, honest, smart, warm and fun to be around. He loves God and all people. . . and he will love us.

Rachel Efirid

Joe's background in family systems and his passion for others will help us rediscover ourselves as children of God and then challenge us to think about how we can use ourselves for others. I am excited to hear him in the pulpit from week to week and I am especially excited for his guidance as we chart our course in an increasingly secular world.

Bronwyn Fulton

Joe's theology and his passion for social justice first caught my attention. When I thought about what could be next for our church, Joe seemed to be someone who would fit well with our congregation and be able to challenge us. What really resonated with me was his humility despite all of his incredible accomplishments.

Betsy Gantt

In addition to serving as senior pastor of a large church, Joe is a respected leader within the Presbyterian denomination. He is hopeful for the future of the church and believes that a diverse congregation is stronger than a homogeneous one. He is deeply intellectual, authentic and his love for all of God's people is evident from the moment you meet him.

## Joe Helweg

Throughout our discernment process, I have been struck by how Joe is a very human pastor who brings courage, humor, optimism, and humility to the challenges and opportunities that come with leading a large church. He is someone with exceptional interpersonal skills, who enthusiastically embraces our reformed tradition while also honoring theological diversity and Christ-centered debate.

## Peggy McBryde

Joe is a devoted follower of Christ as reflected in every facet of his personal and corporate ministry. His love of the Bible is apparent in his teaching and extraordinary preaching. His commitment to serving the marginalized of the community and world will be a major force in leading MPPC to even deeper discipleship. Joe has a pastor's heart to feed and to nurture our congregation.

## Jamie McLawhorn (Pastor Nominating Committee Chair)

Our church has a strong history of faithfully responding to God's call when leadership challenges us and holds us accountable. Joe Clifford is that kind of leader. He leads by listening and building relationships. He will love, counsel, inspire, and challenge us. Many pastors in our denomination look to Joe as their pastor. We will certainly be proud to call him ours at Myers Park.

## Ernie Reigel

Our church has moved to being a discipleship church over the last few years and we need someone to lead us to an even deeper level of discipleship. Joe can do that whether it is through preaching, teaching, outreach, or other means. He has a calming and sincere presence, yet you can feel his passion for Christ and the Bible. He will connect with our members through his own set of gifts, including both his preaching and his welcoming and inclusive work style. He will be a great pastor for MPPC... he will be fun for all to get to know better. He has a wonderful family and it will very quickly seem like he has been part of our church for a long time. I cannot wait for our members to start meeting him!

## David Simas

Since our first PNC meeting our committee felt God had a plan for our community of faith. We simply needed to be patient, diligent, and prayerful in our search for the next leader of Myers Park Presbyterian Church. The Holy Spirit led us to Joe Clifford. There are countless reasons why Joe is uniquely qualified to be our spiritual leader. Joe Clifford loves the Bible and makes scripture relevant for people struggling to be faithful disciples of Christ. Joe Clifford is a leader, a congregational leader and a community leader. Finally, Joe is highly respected by his peers in the PC(USA) and the communities he has served. He is warm, authentic, sincere, and is excited about the opportunity to partner with Myers Park Presbyterian Church.

## Greg Smith

I was moved early on by Joe's inspirational preaching. As I got to know him better it became very clear that he had a real heart and passion for outreach that went far beyond what you could read about in a bio or on his church's website. He is active in all aspects of his community and he will help lead our already committed congregation to continued growth and commitment both locally and beyond. Joe embraces differences of opinion and will lead us in relationship building. He and his family will be a gift to Myers Park Presbyterian and to Charlotte at a time when we need positive and caring spiritual leadership.



# ACCOLADES FROM AROUND THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

I am so excited for Myers Park Presbyterian Church. In Joe Clifford, you are calling the very best the wider church has to offer. He is an eloquent preacher and a gifted administrator. Joe also has heart – lots of generous, embrace-the-good heart. I have no doubt that together, Myers Park and Joe will make the Good News of Jesus Christ resound in the city of Charlotte and beyond.

Dr. Scott Black Johnston, Pastor  
Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church  
New York City

I have known Joe Clifford since I was one of his seminary teachers. I am glad to count him as a friend, and regard him as among the most able of pastors in the church. He is a healthy human being with great energy and imagination. He is well grounded in the faith, has great people skills, and knows about the church that he loves in the most concrete of ways.

Dr. Walter Brueggemann  
Author, Theologian  
Professor Emeritus at Columbia Seminary

Joe Clifford is a preacher and a teacher; a leader. He brought his wisdom and deep knowledge of scripture to the pulpit in Alpharetta in a calming way. Joe helped us to think about how God fits into our lives, even in a world that can be so scary yet so beautiful. He helps people see God's kingdom on earth. His entire family brings an energy to every day living. They enjoy life to the fullest.

Christina Appen  
Ruling Elder, Alpharetta Presbyterian Church  
Alpharetta, GA

I celebrate with you, as this is a great day for MPPC and a great day for the PC(USA). Joe Clifford's spirit runs deep. He is wise, faithful, visionary, and smart. He is a friend you can trust, a preacher who believes the Gospel is actually good news, and a leader who makes you want to follow along. He will also make you laugh – often. It won't take long for you to love him, as I do.

The Rev. Tom Are, Jr.  
Senior Pastor, Village Presbyterian Church  
Prairie Village, Kansas

“It is an incredible privilege to be nominated to serve as your next Senior Pastor. Such a privilege leaves me overwhelmed; not only with deep gratitude, but also a sense of tremendous responsibility. In many ways, Myers Park knows about privilege. In a world too often defined by violence and rancor, Myers Park is a place of relative peace and tranquility. In a nation where poverty is rapidly expanding, Myers Park is blessed with great wealth. In a denomination where many congregations struggle to survive, Myers Park is blessed with vitality and life.

Considering the myriad possibilities open to this great church, I can't wait to join you in ministry as together we seek to put our gifts to work, embodying the presence of Christ in and for a broken and hurting world.”

– The Rev. Dr. Joseph J. Clifford