



October 17, 2021

## Announcing the Candidate for Associate Conference Minister for Search & Call Candidate, *The Rev Kevin J. McLemore*

On Saturday, September 18, Conference Consistory received from the Associate Conference Minister Search Committee a unanimous and enthusiastic recommendation of the Rev. Kevin J. McLemore for the settled position of Associate Conference Minister for Search and Call. The Consistory received a report of the search process as well as testimony of Search Committee members regarding Rev. McLemore's candidacy. After a period of introductions and questions of the candidate, the Consistory unanimously approved the Search Committee's recommendation. Rev. McLemore will be presented to the Conference at our Fall Meeting, Sunday, November 14, for a formal vote and call.

Please take advantage of the opportunities to meet Kevin before the November meeting by reading his biography and ministry statement that follows and then by joining one of the Zoom opportunities. Rev. McLemore will be present at several of our Fall Association meetings and at two Conference-wide Zoom **"Meet and Greet" gatherings on Thursday, October 21 at 7:00p and Sunday, November 7 at 3:00p.** (Click on these dates on the PSEC Calendar, psec.org, to register and receive a link to the meeting.)

### Rev. McLemore's Biography and Ministry Statement

Greetings members of the Pennsylvania Southeast Conference,

I'm grateful to the PSEC Associate Conference Minister Search Committee and the Conference Consistory for nominating me as your potential next ACM, with a focus on "Search and Call," supporting the Committees on Ministry, and other ministries of the Conference. I've been asked to give you a brief biography and ministry statement as you consider my candidacy before the November Fall Meeting.

My family is from Mississippi, though I was born in Singapore to a family whose father worked in the oil business. At age 2 we were transferred to Indonesia, and I stayed there until I was around 12 years old when we moved back to the United States.

My parents were not religious people, and I was essentially the same until I became a Christian at age 13, which transformed my life and my life journey. That encounter with the living Christ changed my world, and I became involved in various Southern Baptist churches. At a Southern Baptist youth camp in Oklahoma, I walked "the sawdust trail" and accepted a calling to pastoral ministry at age 15 or 16.



However, during my senior year of high school I came to realize that I was a gay man and I spent some time struggling with my future in the church during the first few years of college. Eventually I became involved with a local Presbyterian Church (USA) congregation near the University of Alabama campus and remained Presbyterian up until my senior year at Candler School of Theology at Emory University. Because the PC(USA) was not ordaining openly LGBTQ persons at that time, I chose to seek a path where I could be open and honest about my identity, eventually becoming a minister in the Metropolitan Community Churches. In 2005, I was granted Privilege of Call in the UCC, which was a moment of theological homecoming of sorts for me. I deeply love this collection of churches that is the United Church of Christ and am so glad to call it my denominational home. I am appreciative of our proclamation of the Gospel in both words of love, and welcome for all and in our deeds meant to bring about justice in this world.

Over 23 years of ordained ministry, I have served as a part-time pastor, while holding down 2 other jobs, a new church start pastor, an associate pastor in two different settings, one being at a large church that had 2100 attendees on Sunday, and a small church pastor in a rural setting. Currently I am in my 10th year of serving as the Lead Pastor of the good people of Epiphany UCC in Chicago, IL. I have pastored congregations that have numerically grown and numerically declined and ones where money was never an issue to congregations that told me not to cash my weekly \$300 paycheck until the plate offering was deposited a few days after my payday. One of those churches I served has even closed. Like many of you, I have seen tremendous changes in the church, and new challenges I could never have imagined 23 years ago, but I must bear witness that God has been present for me in all that change and challenge and for that I am thankful.

If you should elect me as your next ACM, I promise that I will bring my experience within different kinds of ministry settings to the work of supporting congregations in their search and call process and doing so as creatively and passionately as possible. I am aware of how difficult this work is right now, both in PSEC and elsewhere, but I am by nature a person of hope, and believe that God still has great use for us, the church, in bringing about the realm of God's grace, love and justice to this world.