

Committee on Preparation for Ministry
Report to Presbytery, Art Blegen Statement of Faith and Biography
April 14, 2020

Blackhawk Presbytery

Committee on Preparation for Ministry

April 3, 2020

Present: Rev. Jan Chandler, Moderator; Elder Tim Beattie, Elder Ron Barkby, Rev. Susan Presley, Rev. David Jones, Joel Stevenor Rev. Dale Ambler
Guest: Candidate Art Blegen

The Rev. Jan Chandler opened the meeting in prayer.

The committee held a special meeting on Friday, April 3, 2020 via teleconferencing in response to the self-quarantine from covid-19.

The purpose of the meeting was to meet with Art Blegen to meet him, hear a sermon, and answer questions for the committee in order for him to be examined on the floor of Blackhawk Presbytery during the April meeting. He is under the care of East Iowa Presbytery and has fulfilled the requirements for receiving a call at Kewanee/Elmira churches. He preached on John 1 and answered questions that were asked on his Statement of Faith. He will be serving in this presbytery. The motion was made and seconded to recommend that Art Blegen ready to be examined on the floor of Blackhawk Presbytery in order to be certified ready for ordination in Blackhawk Presbytery. The motion passed unanimously. Rev. Chandler closed the meeting with prayer.

The meeting was adjourned until May 1, 2020 at the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Dekalb at 10:00AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

The Rev. Janet M. Chandler, Moderator CPM Presbytery of Blackhawk

Recommendation: Art Blegen be examined and certified ready for ordination in Blackhawk Presbytery.

Art Blegen: Statement of Faith

God created us in God's image to enjoy God's company in perfect relationship, but through sin, we live outside of this life-giving relationship and suffer the agony of separation from God.

Grieving this separation, God sent his son Jesus Christ into this world so that through his suffering, death, and resurrection all of creation can be restored to right relationship to God. By believing in Jesus Christ, our sins will be forgiven, and we will be given the right to become children of God.

By becoming fully human in Jesus Christ, God entered into the suffering of humanity. God experienced pain, humiliation, and death. Through his humanity, Jesus took our sins and guilt upon himself and by his death banished their power along with the power of death itself, on the cross of Calvary. Three days later Jesus, was raised from the dead and became the first fruit of the promise of eternal life. Through Jesus' resurrection, we are transformed into new creations and raised to eternal life. This salvation is completely undeserved, we are simply called to accept this wonderful gift in a spirit of humility, love, and service.

The Holy Spirit enters into us grants us a saving faith. The Holy Spirit takes our broken lives and binds them up with the love of Jesus Christ so that in the resurrection we can become perfect and complete.

Prayer is the chief exercise of our faith. We praise God, thank God, offer ourselves fully to God and ask God to meet our wants and needs. Even though God knows before we do what our needs and wants are, God desires that we make our needs known.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit we are called into Jesus's church. The church that is the body of Christ with Jesus himself as the head. We are called to share the gospel, speak the truth in love, and share with others the forgiveness, peace, reconciliation, and hope that are the gifts of God. In so doing we can work towards making disciples of all nations. This is the responsibility of all followers of Christ regardless of their vocation inside or outside of the church.

True authority rests in the scriptures alone, inspired by and interpreted through the Holy Spirit. We are also guided by the creeds, confessions, and catechisms included in the Book of Confessions. These documents were written by and for a specific people at a specific time and are chosen to represent a diversity of viewpoints. They serve to inform our interpretation of scripture, but their authority is secondary to the Word of God as found in scripture.

The ordered ministry is called upon to serve in a spirit of humble service, rather than one of power. All authority granted to elders of the church is derived authority. It is responsible for the proper proclamation of the Word of God both written and proclaimed, the administration of the sacraments, and the nurture of the members of Christ's church. Of these only the sacraments are restricted to corporate worship. As visible signs of an invisible grace, the sacraments serve to instill in our hearts and spirits the wonder of God's grace in a tangible way and must be partaken together with the body of Christ which is the church.

Worship of God, and the proclamation of God's word should not be limited to corporate worship. All members of the church should seek to constantly increase our awareness of God's word, witness to God's grace, and share this wonderful gift with our neighbors, both known and unknown.

While we affirm that the kingdom of God is here, and our salvation is assured, we recognize that it is not fully consummated in the present world. It will only be seen in its fullness when Jesus returns to judge both the saints and the sinners. All creation will be transformed into that perfection that is God's will for us. We have solace in knowing that the same Judge that will judge us has already died for our sins so that we may have an eternal place by his side in heaven. Until that day we are to exhibit the future kingdom by seeking justice, caring for our neighbors, and promoting social righteousness.

Art Blegen: Brief Biography

Art Blegen was born on December 9, 1968 in Mobridge SD and was baptized two days later by his paternal grandfather Rev. Howard M Blegen, a Lutheran Minister. The family spent the next six years moving about the country before settling in a suburb of St Louis Missouri.

In 1979 they uprooted and moved to Iowa City, Iowa. A move that filled him with confusion, anxiety, and a sense of abandonment. He sought refuge in the church and participated in as many activities with the youth group as he could.

In the summer of 1983, on a youth group trip to Minnesota he first felt the call to become a minister. It was a call that confused and frightened him. Like Jonah before him, he immediately boarded a ship bound for Tarsus and ran as far and as fast away from God's call as he could. It was almost thirty years before he would begin to attend church again on anything that could be considered a regular basis.

After careers in Music, Theatrical Lighting, and as an infantryman in the United States Army, he settled into a civilian position as a computer technician providing support to the largest hospital in the Department of Defense.

In 2005 a fellow musician who was also a Pastor convinced him to attend a service at Reilly Road Presbyterian Church in Fayetteville, NC. God touched his heart again and he began to attend services with the devotion he had forgotten since his teenage years. Once again, he felt the call to ministry, and once again he stepped out of the church.

This time it didn't take 30 years for him to return. In 2013 he returned to Reilly Rd Church with his soon to be wife Annabell. Shortly after returning to the church, God's call claimed him once more. This time Pastor Rogers Randall sat him down and left him little or no room to argue. In March of 2015 he resigned from his position, married his wife, and by June had moved back to Iowa where Seminary classes would begin in August at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary.

The call to ministry was a joint call and both he and Annabell followed the call, though it took different forms. The call to participate in joint ministry has not yet been fully realized, but they can both see the progress towards that goal as they travel along the path God has set before them.

The twisting path that Art has followed through life, a path that only in retrospect he can see the hand of God controlling, has led to a collection of surprisingly complementary skill sets all of which are now used to serve the Church. He is an accomplished musician that can worship not only with words, but with song. He is an experienced computer technician that helps him design communication networks and websites for Christian groups. Even the self-induced tragedies of his late teens and twenties lend him an understanding of others and the ability to bring guidance and comfort.

Art and Annabell live in a home they have purchased in Moline, IL, where in their free time they enjoy a view of the Mississippi River, and watching deer play in their front yard. Both are pastors but have yet to realize their dream of team ministry. They pray that God will soon provide them with that opportunity.