

# The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers: Whitney Janzen-Pankratz (*she/her/hers*)

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## Section 1: Spiritual Autobiography

In the book of Acts, we hear about the “God in which we live and move and have our being.”<sup>1</sup> As a child I felt this immersion soaring on my swing under the dusk painted Kansas sky. God was in the wonder of dancing with fireflies. God cherished the words I poured into journals. Growing up I was surrounded by supportive extended family. I saw examples of tenacious communal transformation from the women in the generations ahead of me. I witnessed the fruit of discreet and intentional prayer lives. Wrapped in these relationships I cultivated a hunger to move the world around me. At the age most kids wanted to be a pro athlete, ballerina or superhero when they grew up I wanted to be a Pastor.

I grew up in the Anabaptist Mennonite tradition. From this community I learned a deep love for a God that meets us with invitation and consent, and a desire to find creative paths to peace. Though I celebrate many strokes of beauty in my formation in the Mennonite church, in my youth I witnessed my Mennonite Church strive to maintain “peace” in the denomination by remaining silent about the inclusion of God’s beloved LGBTQ+ community. This facade of peace allowed the institution of the church to avoid the motions of conflict, but left scars of rejection, a violent silence, on the souls of LGBTQ+ bodies I cared about.

At the same time, I began to wrestle with theological questions in my personal family life. Our family home of multiple generations burned down. My father’s Multiple Sclerosis came out of remission bringing with it battles with financial stability, physical, and mental health. Though God remained present, my awareness became guarded as I struggled to metabolize the anger and lament pressing in my unanswered “why?”

At the University of Kansas I studied Peace and Conflict Studies and Social Work. I delighted in the ways the Social Work Code of Ethics aligned with my commitments of faith. Over the course of my four years of study I became increasingly aware of the violent systems of oppression in our world. This awareness weighed me down with grief, but also served as a catalyst for my own creativity in the face of death dealing systems. Through experiences like traveling to study social services systems in India, and interning at New Roots for Refugees in Kansas City, my understanding and curiosity about the complexity and diversity of our world expanded.

Following graduation I had a twelve year career serving older adults. In this season of vocation I grew in capacity as a social worker, case manager, advocate, program coordinator, community organizer, teacher, facilitator, volunteer coordinator, and compassionate listener.

I came to seminary in response to the overwhelming dissonance of my theological questions held in tension with a flooding of God’s love returning me to an awareness of *who* I

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 17:28

am and *whose* I am. In my studies at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities I have explored how we engage conflict toward transformation. As someone raised with theologies of non-violence I continue to journey to craft a theology that holds the tension between the restorative power of self-sacrificing love, and the sacred call to honor our sacred identities as beloved children of God.

## Personal Statement of Faith - My Commitment to life in Covenant

Covenant is central to how I live my faith, and my philosophy of ministry. In my Christian walk I repetitively receive the gift of a drenching and abundant love that I understand to be the love of God. This love receives my wholeness, teaches me grace, and has no end. I frequently think of how Paul writes of a “love that surpasses all understanding.”<sup>2</sup> God invites me to meet others with the same abundance. I have committed my life to answering that invitation as fully as I am able. ***This is incarnated, embodied love. The dance of invitation and consent with my pursuing God is my commitment to covenant.***

As followers of Christ we have the gift of life in community. Despite its imperfections and challenges, this is something I feel called to. It is in the context of community that the kin-dom of God comes to fruition. Often, God’s presence in my life is revealed to me in the lives of those who journey with me, the “thin places,” where the kin-dom not yet glimmers through the veil in how we witness one another, and meet each other in truth, grace, and service. In community we move in a cycle of giving and receiving. We practice resurrection. In this way, God is foundationally relational, and co-creating. ***This is incarnated, embodied love. Acting as a collaborative artist in symphony of community is my commitment to covenant.***

I believe God is not coercive. God does not ever take our agency. In the same way, we honor the agency and choice of those around us. God invites me into creativity and becoming. God waits for my consent. As a community we are committed to honoring each others’ choice and autonomy. At times we hurt one another with our choices and behaviors. Even in this, we love unconditionally, *AND* are deeply aware that unconditional love does not mean unconditional acceptance of all behaviors without boundaries. Each of us is sacred and persistently sought out by Spirit.<sup>3</sup> I model God’s love in the way I tend to myself with intention and boundaries, mirroring God’s love for me. ***This is incarnated, embodied love. Living into my agency with intention, and honoring the autonomy of others is my commitment to covenant.***

In a complex world of choice and agency we suffer: at the hands of one another’s choices, from the grief of stolen agency, in felt isolation and separation from love, from violence upon our bodies and souls, from the natural impermanence of our bodies, world, and relationships. In raging storms, in the scorching desert, in the wilderness of pain, God is bound to us in persistent solidarity.<sup>4</sup> God loves us enough to go with us into our deepest pain. In the same way, some of our most transformative and sacred work is journeying in solidarity with one another. From this place of solidarity we move as the Body of Christ to transform oppressive and death dealing systems. ***This is incarnated, embodied love. Cultivating skills and capacity to move in solidarity with others is my commitment to covenant.***

I believe Christ is woven into the rhythms of all creation, reconciling and recreating in transformative love. We are made for turning and returning, metanoia,<sup>5</sup> a continual story of

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 3:19, Philippians 4:7.

<sup>3</sup> I think of the parable of the lost sheep, Matthew 18:1-14, Luke 15:1-7.

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 139

<sup>5</sup> The greek word metanoia (μετάνοια) is found in the story of the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3. It is often translated as repentance, but in the greek means something more similar to turning, re-turning,

becoming in love toward more wholeness. In my own journey of faith this path is marked equally by a shedding in brave surrender, and an unfolding in generative growth. We practice resurrection in continual death and birth. It is terrifying and exhilarating. It is collaborative with Spirit, and demands a release of control. This process is the balm of repair to harm in community, it is the tonic of courage to walk into love of enemies and prophetic voice. To me, this flow is what it is to be fully alive. Spirit invites us into this journey, continually. ***This is incarnated, embodied love. My continual surrender to transformation is my commitment to covenant.***

I am a follower of Christ: incarnated and embodied love. I have consented to this invitation of brave love. I seek ordination to mark my life as committed, surrendered, submitted to the journey of turning and returning God in metanoia. ***This is incarnated, embodied love. My life is not mine alone. This is my commitment to covenant.***

## Section 2: Understanding Your Call to Authorized Ministry

How God moves in community has been one of the powerful threads of my formation, curiosities in my education, and defining aspects of where I feel called. Though I do not exclude the possibility of other ministerial settings, I believe my initial call is to the community of a congregation. In our society, congregations are one of the only places where we bring so much of our wholeness to one another. In community we share our individual journeys, and the sacred complexity of our families to walk together over years, sometimes lifespans, and generations. Emanuel Lartey points out that in community we find ways that we are “like all others, like some others, and like no other.”<sup>6</sup> In this tangled web of complexity, we try to do the impossible task of unconditional love. It is a delicate dance of self awareness, empathy, persistence, patience, and boundaries. It is crucial that we cultivate ways to do the hard work of conflict well, that we create cultures of growth and repair as we confront abuses of power like racism, sexism, homophobia, and ableism. In spiritual communities we are a counter cultural movement, a reversal of societal norms, a beautiful example of what could be, and the embodiment of hope.

I seek ordination to mark the reverence and awe I feel for the responsibility of ministry. I know that theology can be used to inflict profound harm. Its power can also be used to create spaces of wholeness, disrupt injustice, transform conflict, and cultivate community. Good theology creates communities where all feel seen, safe, brave, and connected. I am searching for ways to hold the title of Reverend while collaboratively sharing its power. Creating space that is safe and also brave for leadership to be shared requires cautious and loving intention. In this process I prayerfully invite others into my journey trusting that their witness and collaboration will fold into our becoming together.

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changing your knowing/mind/understanding/being, conversion, or transformation. To me, this pivot is the perennial narrative of Christ. Jesus's life, death, resurrection are highlighting this uniting story in all of creation. Spirit continually invites us into this universal and continual movement.

<sup>6</sup> Emmanuel Y. Lartey, In Living Color (An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counseling) 2nd Edition (London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2003) 34.

## Section 3: Reflection and Demonstration of the Marks

### Category 1: Exhibiting a Spiritual Foundation and Ongoing Spiritual Practices

Loving God, following Jesus Christ, and being guided by the Holy Spirit; living a life of discipleship.

I find the trinitarian relationship between God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit to be a part of my faith that makes me distinctly Christian. These aspects of the divine are deeply relational, while simultaneously uniquely differentiated. God is my *source*, the place I rest to reorient to who I am and whose I am. Jesus is *with us* in the grit and miracle of a body with its bliss and suffering. Jesus showed up in solidarity, and in his authentic loving presence became a guide of how to do the same. The Holy Spirit is *movement*, inspiration, creativity, and courage. The Holy Spirit is the driver of transformation. Relationship with all of these aspects of the divine pull me into my wholeness, and are my goal in life.

**Demonstrated in Praxis:** I make it a priority to embody these relational ways of being taught by God in my life. For example I schedule quarterly solo retreat days to connect with God/source. I connect to my own body in practices like my yoga, weight lifting, and hiking. I practice Jesus's solidarity with others in intentional pastoral care. I meet the Holy Spirit in wonder, awe, creativity, and play. This shows up for me most vividly these days when I am crafting ritual and worship spaces for others.

Praying actively and nurturing spiritual practices.

Parker Palmer writes, "The soul is like a wild animal—tough, resilient, savvy, self-sufficient and yet exceedingly shy. If we want to see a wild animal, the last thing we should do is to go crashing through the woods, shouting for the creature to come out. But if we are willing to walk quietly into the woods and sit silently for an hour or two at the base of a tree, the creature we are waiting for may well emerge, and out of the corner of an eye we will catch a glimpse of the precious wildness we seek."<sup>7</sup> In my life, prayer unfolds when I open to awareness of the wild divine light at the core of my being. When I find my way to that intuition, God meets me there and reminds me who and whose I am. This experience frequently changes the way I see. This is where expansive love and creativity invite me into new ways of being that are more relational with those around me. It is characterized by a feeling of my awareness dropping from my busy mind to an expansiveness in my heart. I have found several ways to this embodied state of being.

**These are some examples:** Centering Prayer, swinging, yoga, hiking, meditative writing, sitting on a forest or desert floor, standing in rivers, floating.

**Demonstrated In Praxis:** For my Leadership and Administration course we were tasked to develop a plan to create a spiritual community. My desire to ground the work of social

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<sup>7</sup> Palmer, Parker, *A Hidden Wholeness : The Journey toward an Undivided Life*, San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

transformation in contemplative practices shows up in my vision for the Ruach Collective. You can view a slide deck of the concept [HERE](#).

Being called to ordained ministry by God and the Church.

As I was finding my way to seminary several people in my life cautioned me to not walk away from my current career unless it felt like the absolute right thing. I was told cautionary tales of the shrinking church, ministers having to piece together multiple streams of income. Among that caution, I repetitively returned to my prayer life and felt a flooding love accompanying God's invitation. Through my time in seminary I have come home to my voice, I have wrestled with my own shadows, and fell in love with the little girl who hid in the corner of my subconscious. I have deconstructed and reconstructed my theological house. I have learned awe in the unease of mystery. And I still feel a stubborn joy about God's invitation to cultivate community. I continue to feel like I am growing into a deeper reflection of who I am.

**Demonstrated in Praxis:** I have experienced that it is uncomfortable and causes conflict to not live into a call. God sees us. For me, my sense of call liberates me from trying to be what I am not. You can hear a sermon I did this summer at First Congregational on Moses's call [HERE](#).

Continuing discernment of one's call in community/Exhibiting a commitment to lifelong spiritual development and faithful personal stewardship.

Our faith is not static. Thank God! With God and community I am continually becoming. One of my professors repetitively says, "God is in the transformation." In community we find a mirror that shows us our blind spots. They have a capacity to reflect both strengths and struggles in a way we will never be able to do alone. I have received a gift from the community at First Congregational Church in Greeley in their commitment to witness my becoming, and speak the truth to me in love.

**Demonstrated in Praxis:** I preached a sermon on the complexity of community at First Congregational Greeley. You can read that reflection [HERE](#).

Understanding the power of the Holy Spirit at work through the elements of Christian worship to nurture faith.

As I have moved through seminary journey, and reflected on my upbringing in the church, I have found I value ritual held in community. From the collective embodiment of singing together, to sharing the sacred meal of communion, spirit moves in worship in a way that weaves together the individual and communal, the past and the present, our lament and joy. At its best, this web of interconnection reminds us that we are never alone in our journey's, celebrates transformation, and generates our capacity to be the Body of Christ throughout our week.

## Category 2: Nurturing UCC Identity

Acknowledging Jesus Christ as the sole Head of the Church.

The United Church of Christ is a community, a group of people, that have committed to life together living as Jesus lived. The leadership demonstrated in Jesus and our commitment to

follow the path of Jesus is not only what united us as a church, but is continually uniting and animating our lives. Jesus is our common movement in a diverse denomination. Jesus is the embodiment of God's unshakable love for us, Immanuel, God with us.

### Communicating passion for the oneness of the Body of Christ (John 17:21)

As a church we live as the body of Christ moving in the world today. Our unity as the United Church of Christ is not marked by uniformity. In both our congregations and our broader denomination we are simultaneously "like all others, like some others, and like no other."<sup>8</sup> In our differences we hold a broader and deeper capacity to collectively meet the world with the love of God.

**Demonstrated in Praxis:** As Community Coordinator at First Congregational Church in Greeley I preached a sermon about the Body of Christ. You can read it [HERE](#).

### Holding active membership in a Local Church of the United Church of Christ.

**Demonstrated in Praxis:** My family and I are active members at First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ in Greeley Colorado. We joined this community as members in October of 2014. Throughout my time in this community I served as the Chair of the Outreach Ministry Group for many years, represented that group on Cabinet, served on the Search Committee for our Minister Head of Programs, and worked as Community Coordinator on the Church Staff. I am currently a Member in Discernment with this congregation and have deep gratitude for the guidance and support they provide through my Local Church Discernment Committee and the pastoral care of Rev. Ben Konecney.

At the end of January of 2025 I accepted a call to UCC Longmont as their Director of Community Faith Formation. Upon ordination that position will be a called role as Minister of Community Faith Formation. I am currently and joyfully a member of the church community there.

### Participating in the various settings of the United Church of Christ, including Local Churches, Associations, Conferences, General Synod, and global ministries.

In addition to my participation in my local church, I participated in the work of the Platte Valley Association in September of 2024 by holding space as a facilitator for a visioning session on the future of the Association in transition. I have been involved in the work of spiritual care for the Rocky Mountain Conference in my 400 hour internship under the supervision of Rev. Logan Bennett at The Refuge at La Foret. As a part of my UCC History and Polity course I have connected with the [Contemplatives in Action](#) movement that resulted from a resolution at the 33rd General Synod in July of 2021.

**Demonstrated in Praxis:** You can view my final field education evaluation from Rev. Logan [HERE](#).

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<sup>8</sup> Emmanuel Y. Lartey, *In Living Color (An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counseling)* 2nd Edition (London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2003) 34.

Knowing and appreciating UCC history, polity, and theology.

Rev. Tara from our UCC National MESA Team talks about the UCC living in, “tension between autonomy and accountability within the context of covenant.” Through my UCC History and Polity course I have gained an appreciation for the journey of our five strands of the UCC, and our continual journey of *uniting* as the body of Christ in our world.

Exhibiting a commitment to the core values of the United Church of Christ: continuing testament, extravagant welcome, and changing lives.

The continuing testament of “God is still speaking,” the extravagant welcome of “No matter who you are, no matter who you are on life’s journey you are welcome here,” and commitment to changing lives through social justice are what brought my partner and I back to church at all, and to the UCC specifically almost 15 years ago. These values continue to be what keeps me in the UCC, and gave me the hope to pursue my childhood dream of being a pastor when I grew up.

### Category 3: Building Transformational Leadership Skills

Empowering the Church to be faithful to God’s call, reflective of Christ’s mission, and open to the surprises of the Holy Spirit.

One of my favorite ways to hold space is as a facilitator. Community Organizer, adrienne maree brown encourages facilitators to remember how in any room, “there is a conversation only these people can have, find it.”<sup>9</sup> In group facilitation I cultivate brave space for groups to define God’s call for their next steps in alignment with their shared sense of Christ’s mission. Facilitating spaces for us to show up in our authentic wholeness, and allow spirit to move in creative and transformative ways is my deep delight.

**Demonstrated in praxis:** I had the privilege of facilitating a Meeting of the Platte Valley Association in September of 2024. At this session, participants revisioned their identity, function, and purpose as a group following the movement of the Conference on Ministry to the Rocky Mountain Conference.

Strategically creating the future of God’s Church.

It is common knowledge in our society that spiritual communities are shrinking. Though I understand why people are anxious about this, I also find this reality slightly hopeful. I am not one that carries much attachment to “church” looking and acting the way it always has. I believe we are all spiritual beings wired for connection. People are searching for community and depth in new ways. We are awkwardly seeking something authentic. Personally, I’m so excited to be a part of the creative work of finding it. In the Christian community we say we are people of resurrection. This means we need to have the courage to let some things die, so new meaning woven from threads of ancient truth can be born. I have faith that what will come will not disregard all tradition. Rather, God’s Church of the future will cherish the truths that have

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<sup>9</sup> adrienne maree brown, *Emergent Strategy, Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (Chico CA: AK Press, 2017).

reverberated in the souls of our ancestors, and collect a symphony of hope to inspire our children.

**Demonstrated in Praxis:** One of the ways I am strategically embodying the future of God's church is creating containers in the gatherings I facilitate where we can be brave together. To that end I have developed a [River Covenant Ritual](#).

Witnessing in the public square to God's redeeming power.

In addition to preaching and teaching I take great joy in sharing God's transformative work in the world in writing. At the beginning of lent in 2023 I started a public blog called The Sway. This blog has evolved into a space of co-creation with a God who continually meets us in the liminal space of being held, floating, falling, and caught. I post every week or two and have a subscribed audience of more than 50 people with an average of 100-110 views on each post.

**Demonstrated in Praxis:** Read The Sway [HERE](#).

Performing necessary and appropriate administrative tasks.

Throughout my career as a social worker and Wellness Coordinator I demonstrated ample proficiency in performing administrative tasks, from managing complex calendars of classes, facilities, and volunteer instructors, to tracking budgets and grant outcomes. In my time serving as Community Coordinator at First Congregational Church in Greeley I demonstrated capacity to navigate church software, maintain our WIX website, create slides for worship, coordinate our AV team, and send out consistently timely newsletters.

Working collaboratively with intercultural awareness and sensitivity.

Throughout my social work career and on my journey toward ordained ministry I have had an ongoing realization of my privilege and awareness of power dynamics it generates. This awareness is a continual priority in my collaboration with others. Our relationships with one another in community are ever changing. This means the work of awareness and curiosity about one another is never complete. I will always be seeking to further understand and grow.

**Demonstrated in Praxis:** Social work internship/AmeriCorp Volunteer with [New Roots for Refugees](#), University of Kansas School of Social Welfare Study Abroad in India, coordinating Weld Aging Well program Tomando Control de su Salud, requested access to and completed doctorate level [Advancing Intercultural Diversity](#) Course at United Theological Seminary, volunteer partnerships as Outreach Ministry Group Chair with [IRCNoCO](#), [Centennial BOCES Migrant Reading Festival](#).

Encouraging leadership development of self and others through continuing education and lifelong learning.

One of the most significant gifts in my development during my time as the Wellness Program Coordinator at the Area Agency on Aging was my development as a volunteer coordinator. There I learned the generative, and inspiring potential, of becoming a leader that fosters the celebration and development of skills of others. As a Master Trainer for evidence based programs I was required to continually grow and change as curriculums were updated, and my lay leader team grew. In leading my volunteer team I valued the phrase, "Wow, I don't know. Let



me find out for you.” This same spirit of curiosity and exploration has led me to seminary. I look forward to collaborating with a broader community again in my future ministry.

## Category 4: Engaging Sacred Stories and Traditions

### Exhibiting knowledge, understanding, and continuing study of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament.

Exploring the Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament is a practice that is life giving for me. I appreciate the work of scholars and commentators who provide nuance to my presuppositions through historical and cultural context, source texts, translation, and other areas of study. I view our sacred text as a library of the stories of God held by the people of God. Through study of our sacred text I get the privilege of connecting the stories of God with the lives of the people of God here and now. May the scriptures give us the humility and courage to live our own journeys of co-creation with God.

As I have cultivated my understanding of God through my personal spiritual practices, the study of scripture, and other theological voices my curiosity about and love for the Bible has expanded. I meet the text through an epistemology of God’s commitment to love us in a way that is deeply relational, continually present, consensual, grace soaked, and co-creative. This understanding has breathed new life into the biblical narrative for me in a way that leads me to feel the echoes of this love from the people of antiquity, to the generations before me, and our lives now.

### Maturing in effective proclamation and preaching.

Though writing has always been a Spiritual Practice for me, and I thrived in public speaking activities like forensics and debate growing up, cultivating my voice of proclamation and preaching has been a source of Spirit led growth, curiosity, and empowerment throughout my seminary journey. I have wrestled with the complexity of silence and voice, realizing both have been paradoxically violent and liberative at different moments in my spiritual journey. I have wrestled with the power dynamics of robes and pulpits perched high on a chancel among my commitment to a priesthood of all believers.

What I have found to be true for me in this season is that my voice for preaching is laced in the mystery and wonder of theopoetics. I am most comfortable speaking from the floor in front of a chancel without a pulpit between me and my beloved community. My process of crafting sermons is prayerful and spiritually open handed. I spend time resting in text and scholarly commentaries. I wait, and trust that the words will come. I view myself as conduit for God, surrender my agenda, and any ego attachment to performative excellence. For me in this season, preaching is an act of worship that I cherish.



**Demonstrated in praxis:** As a Member in Discernment I have been given the opportunity to preach 1-2 times per year as pulpit supply for First Congregational Church in Greeley. I was also given the opportunity to plan and lead [worship and the closing ceremony at the 2024 Fall Youth Retreat](#) at The Refuge at La Foret. In my first few months of my call at UCC Longmont we have focused my time on connecting with our congregation in worship planning and preaching. This opportunity to live into this aspect of my call consistently has facilitated my connection to Spirit feeling more expansive, and deeply grounded my sense of call in a way that feels simultaneously humbling and expansive. (You can watch some examples from UCC Longmont [HERE](#) and [HERE](#).)

Understanding the history of the Christian Church, from biblical times forward.

One of the gifts of my seminary education has been an understanding and appreciation for the multifaceted journey we have been on as a people seeking to be followers of Christ. In every generation theologians have wrestled with what it means to be the church from their situatedness. We must learn history to understand this journey and inform our own. Though we later see ways they have missed the mark, their construction and deconstruction is a gift. Through the study of history we gain understanding of the faithful questions of those who have gone before us and gain wisdom for the construction of our own theology.

**Demonstrated in Praxis:** Throughout my seminary journey I have explored the development of the non-violent theology I inherited, deconstructed it, and reconstructed it in light of my wrestling. You can read some of that work [HERE](#). May someone in the future deconstruct my theology to add new layers of depth and truth.

Leading faith formation effectively across generations/Bringing life to sacred stories and traditions in worship, proclamation, and witness.

In my formation as a spiritual leader I have had the opportunity to hold sacred space for community across the lifespan. I believe that we are intuitively spiritual and in relationship with God at any point in our lifespan, and I take great delight in connecting our communities to that awareness in intergenerational ways. One example of embodying this is through a parachute breath prayer pictured here at UCC Longmont as a responsive prayer to Jesus calming the storm. In this prayer the congregation yelled out sources of internal storms and stress in their lives while those at the parachute were as stormy and turbulent as possible. Then, reflecting on the presence of God being as close as our breath we calmed our internal storms, lifting the parachute on our inhales and lowering on our exhales. Together we held awareness that

grounding our bodies in the way we are held in God's love helps us meet the storms in our life with creativity, calm, and the love of God.

**Demonstrated in Praxis:** Fall Youth Retreat at La Foret, Adult mini-series book study at First Cong Greeley, workshop facilitation at First Cong Greeley's women's retreat, Godly Play style story of Moses and the Burning Bush at Grandparent Camp.



Holding the Holy with integrity especially as represented in the Sacraments.

The way we connect with the divine marking transitions in our lives, and inviting connection holds power. Rituals in our faith journey like communion, baptisms, funerals and weddings are powerful ways we connect to God's movement in our lives, the life of those who have gone before us, and those yet to come. It is a privilege and honor to hold space and spiritual leadership in these sacred moments.

**Demonstrated in Praxis:** Though I have assisted in serving communion and the planning of other sacraments this is something I look forward to engaging as the one holding the sacred space more consistently after ordination.

## Category 5: Caring For All Creation

Nurturing care and compassion for God's creation.

Over a decade ago our mountains and forests became the place where I feel connected with the divine. Season after season, there is a pocket of forest I return to that mothers me, and holds me as I sleep on her floor and wade in her water. This place is sacred, and yet, when I have connected to places like this the line between sacred and profane falls away as I return to community. Spending time with God changes the way I see. Being held in love turns me into conduit for love.



Maintaining a basic understanding of mental health and wellness/Practicing self-care and life balance.

In my first social work job I embodied my faith as a servant leader with a blind spot to self-care. This resulted in depression and depletion. After the birth of my first child I realized that the way I cared for him as a part of my body in pregnancy continued to be a gift to him as I was nursing, and then as I developed my strength and endurance to climb mountains at his side. My self-care

is a gift to all of those around me who love me. I too am God's beloved. I teach others what the care of God looks like in how I accept, seek, and receive care.

**Demonstrated in practice:** I routinely seek out care through therapy, spiritual direction, exercise, time in nature, writing, and prayer.



#### Providing hope and healing to a hurting world.

Our society and the inherited theology of many disconnect us from our bodies. One way that I have provided hope and healing to a hurting world is inviting people into connection with God through acceptance, care, and love of their bodies. I believe that one way to build capacity for awareness of the interconnection of us all is through connection to our own embodiment. After all, we follow a God who powerfully demonstrated love through incarnation.

I held space as a spiritual leader for opening and closing ceremonies for La Foret's annual retreat, [Wholeness and Wellness: Sense & Sensuality](#). In the opening ritual I invited participants to move into the forest as the day drew to a close. Among the trees they found untrue narratives

society often hands us about our bodies and strips of fabric. As they found or thought of untrue messages that have bound them, I invited participants to tangibly acknowledge the presence and pressure that story has placed on their body by binding themselves with that narrative. Following contemplative reflection and grounding participants were invited to liberate themselves from these narratives by cutting them off and offering them to the fire of their divine light. At the close of the weekend we revisited our divine light by rolling candles, sharing gratitudes, and passing light of truth and sacred belovedness to one another.

**Demonstrated in praxis:** You can read the text for these ceremonies [HERE](#). In acknowledgement of my integration of the arts within Christian community as demonstrated within the crafting of ritual and worship services I was a recipient of the 2025 Susan Noble Blons Scholar in Theology and the Arts award upon graduating from United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities.

Attending one's own spiritual and pastoral care, including engagement in supervision as appropriate.

I know that I am not meant to do ministry in isolation. Spiritual care is not a task that I take on lightly. Seeking supervision, pastoral care, and guidance of other professionals is a way that I care for others ethically, with compassion, and intention. I intentionally seek, cultivate, and tend relationships with ministry partners, mentors, and those who are able to provide pastoral care to me as I care for others.



### Stewarding the resources of the Church.

In the same way that our choices and actions reflect our moral convictions, our budgets are moral documents. I believe that God moves in creative and counter-cultural ways. Through this lens of creative abundance I see the resources of the church as not only financial or structural buildings, but also in the time, passion, and talents of those moving as the Body of Christ. In ministry I am committed not only to stewarding our financial resources responsibly, but to nurturing, empowering, and celebrating the gifts and of those in the community. This means knowing when to take space of leadership, and when to make space and celebrate the voice and vision of lay leaders. My local church discernment committee has reminded me of the wisdom of Gandhi when he said, "There goes my people. I must follow them, for I am their leader."

**Demonstrated in Praxis:** In my time as a Wellness Coordinator I empowered, and resourced a broad team of 28 volunteers to lead evidence based programs across Weld County. (See Program Guide [HERE](#))

### Category 6: Participating in Theological Praxis

Practicing theological reflection and engagement as part of one's sense of ministerial identity.

One of the things I know about myself is that I am reflexively reflective. Since my childhood reflective writing has been a modality of self discovery, prayer, ethical wrestling, discernment, and finding my prophetic voice. Like all aspects of my spiritual journey, my writing does not exist in a vacuum. It is inspired by theological voices surrounding me in what I am reading, and my community.

Integrating theological reflection in teaching, preaching, and ecclesial and community leadership.

I aim to lead in the way I understand and experience the relational and loving leadership of God.

**Demonstration in praxis:** See Personal Statement of Faith - My Commitment to life in Covenant on page 2.

Articulating a theology and practice of ministry consistent with the UCC Manual on Ministry.

Our Manual on Ministry begins with reflection on our Theological Grounding stating "God "calls the worlds into being," giving life and purpose to creation, to persons, and to communities. Throughout the biblical stories and across generations, God calls us to belong to God and to respond to God's grace by belonging to one another."<sup>10</sup> It is my honor and privilege to live in covenant as articulated in the Manual on Ministry.

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<sup>10</sup> Manual on Ministry, pg 5.

Demonstrating an appreciation for and participation in the ecumenical and interfaith partnerships of the UCC.

The mystery, depth, and complexity of God is expansive. I believe that if I begin professing that we know the absolute truth about the divine I will be missing the mark. Collaborative ecumenical and interfaith partnerships facilitate the movement of Spirit in creative ways beyond the limitations of our lens of our tradition.

**Demonstrated in praxis:** In October of 2023 I was honored to attend Valarie Kaur's Revolutionary Love event at La Foret. In Fall of 2024 I was able to provide coverage to make it possible for Rev. Logan Benett to take sabbatical as a part of the Revolutionary Love bus tour.

Experiencing and appreciating a variety of theological perspectives.

**Demonstrated in praxis:** At United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, the student body is theologically diverse. I have grown in curiosity and theological understanding by having classmates representing multiple Christian denominations, Unitarian, Pagan, Buddhist, Heathen, and Muslim walks of faith.

## Category 7: Embodying the UCC Ministerial Code.

Drawing on the ministry of Jesus Christ to confront injustice and oppression.

While pursuing my MDiv with a concentration in Social Transformation I wrote a Constructive Theology of non-violence to acknowledge imbalances in power dynamics in how we are called to engage non-violence. This was generated through wrestling with questions of theodicy, holding my own inherited experience of patriarchal domestic violence, and womanist theological perspectives confronting non-violence in systems of significant power imbalance.

**Demonstrated in Praxis:** You can read my paper, *From Resilience to Resurrection: A Nonviolent Theology of Embodied Belovedness, Covenant, Co-Creation & Consent*, [HERE](#).

Practicing the radical hospitality of God.

One of the most powerful moments in my journey of faith has been accepting my own identity as a beloved child of God. It is my deep joy to invite others into this deep well of love: the radical hospitality of God. In my time at the Refuge at La Foret I was able to invite participants into this radical acceptance through opening and closing rituals for the [Wholeness & Wellness](#) weekend retreat.

**Demonstrated in Praxis:** You can read the text for those rituals [HERE](#).

Identifying and working to overcome explicit and implicit bias in the life of the Church.

In the case of implicit bias in the life of the Church, I believe that the work begins with cultivating my own awareness of my privilege, modeling a culture where hurt or micro-aggressions can be named by inviting feedback and receiving it with humility. From this posture of seeking my own

growth I can educate others from a place of transformation and humility that challenges both explicit and implicit bias.

Understanding community context and navigating change with a community/Building relationships of mutual trust and interdependence.

In work of social transformation adrienne maree brown writes about moving at the speed of trust.<sup>11</sup> As humans we are wired for connection. I believe this leads to relationships and shared ownership being our greatest resource for sustainable and lasting change. This can be seen in the decentralization of leadership in movements like Black Lives Matter.<sup>12</sup> In life, change is a constant. As a leader I feel called to hold a container for community with a steady non-anxious presence where folks feel seen, known, loved, and heard. At the same time, I aim to prophetically speak the truth in love as we confront unjust systems. It is often said that the church at its best comforts the afflicted and afflicts the comfortable. So many places in my faith journey are paradoxical practices of nondualism where I am called to walk an expansive third way of both and, this is one of them.

#### Engaging in mission and outreach/Work together for justice and mercy

**Demonstrated in Praxis:** During my time as Chair of the Outreach Ministry Group at First Congregational Church in Greeley, social service providers in our community embarked on a housing first initiative called [Weld's Way Home](#). As a result, the Housing Navigation Center was opened and it provided an overnight Cold Weather Shelter through the winter months. To make this project sustainable the Cold Weather Shelter needed meals prepared and served each night by community volunteers. As a group we determined this opportunity to serve our community was theologically aligned with our call to move as the body of Christ. We then organized five lay-led meal teams that collaboratively prepared, and served meals every Friday night. You can see a video made by Kate Norris to share this project with the congregation [HERE](#).

In my role at UCC Longmont I have continued to engage my passion for Housing Security by serving as the Spiritual Leader for a Home Blessing with Habitat for Humanity in Longmont. While writing the prayer and blessing for this ceremony I enjoyed channeling the family's story, love of sunflowers as a spiritual metaphor, and centering of children. This led to a beautiful bubble blessing! You are welcome to read that [HERE](#).

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<sup>11</sup> adrienne maree brown, *Emergent Strategy, Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (Chico CA: AK Press, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> Alicia Garza, *The Purpose of Power: How We Come Together When We Fall Apart*, Random House Publishing Group, 2020.

## Category 8: Strengthening Inter- and Intra- Personal Assets

Developing and maintaining a healthy sense of self as shaped by God, community, and life experiences.

I am deeply grateful for the witness, wisdom, and care of the community around me in the form of my congregation, ministry partners, mentors, immediate family, extended family, therapist, spiritual director, professors, and friends outside of my faith community. These people act as mirrors and truth tellers, compassionately reminding me of both my gifts and growth edges.

Living in relationships of covenantal accountability with God and the Church.

I resonate deeply with the concept of covenant. As reflected in my statement of faith for me covenant is a journey of transformation and a way of being in relationship with self, God, and others.

**Demonstrated in praxis:** See my Statement of Faith - A Commitment to Covenant on page 2.

### Exhibiting strong moral character and personal integrity.

I came to seminary out of a desire to live more fully into my own authenticity. I am committed to honest transparency that unfolds in what Parker Palmer calls “the undivided life.”<sup>13</sup> I am committed to continual growth, and honoring my relationships with integrity through healthy boundaries and compassion.

I have grown tremendously over the last few years. In this season of life I embody the application of this mark in taking ownership of my actions when I realize their impacts as I learn and grow. For example, last summer I read the book *The Contemplative Leader* by Patrick Boland<sup>14</sup> and discovered the potentially negative impacts of the high expectations I hold for myself and others. Carrying this expanded self awareness I returned to the relationships with those I felt may have been most affected. In apologizing for my projection of those expectations onto those I care about without their consent to that expectation I honored my integrity to valuing the ways we are interconnected in community. In my life today I am committed to consistently limit and communicate about my expectations for myself and others with clarity, and ensure they are held mutually. As I continue to journey I know I will have different growth edges in different seasons. I believe my faith calls me to continually “practice resurrection.” These places of transformation in my life, though challenging, are ones I have found to be most sacred.

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<sup>13</sup> Palmer, Parker, *A Hidden Wholeness : The Journey toward an Undivided Life*, San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

<sup>14</sup> Boland, Patrick, *The Contemplative Leader: Uncover the Power of Presence and Connection*, Dallas, Texas: Matt Holt Books, 2024.



### Respecting the dignity of all God's people.

My experience is that people are not meant to be defined by their worst day or their worst choice. Yet, we all need those that are willing to witness those moments with compassion and invite us into transition and transformation. I will never meet someone that God does not love.

One way I embody this commitment is in my approach to Pastoral Care. I aim to meet others with Pastoral Care of Presence from a posture of non-judgemental loving witness. I strongly believe I am not called to fix the lives of those I encounter. Rather I aim to engage what Rev. Dr. Jackie Lewis names fierce love that delights in the particularity of another.<sup>15</sup> I meet others in solidarity in lament or grief. I listen for glimmers of the extraordinary story and invite others to be curious about where they sense God's presence. I believe there is, and have experienced, the transformative power of feeling seen, heard, and known in your particularity from a place of love. I am open to the ways God invites me to give that gift to others.

**Demonstrated in Praxis:** Upon graduation from United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities with my MDiv in Social Transformation I was the recipient of the Clyde J. Steckel award in Pastoral Care for excellence in pastoral care and/or counseling courses, and/or Contextual Studies placement.

### Understanding and ministering to stages of human development across the lifespan.

Throughout my seminary formation I have had opportunities to minister to folks at various stages of human development across the lifespan.

**Demonstrated in praxis:** At the Refuge at La Foret I led a Godly Play style bible story for Grand Camp, and was acting director and spiritual leader for Fall Youth Retreat. At First Congregational Church I had the opportunity to apply my experience with adult learning pedagogy from my Wellness Coordinator work in leading an adult education mini-series on Marcus Borg's *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*.<sup>16</sup>

### Demonstrating excellent communication skills.

Thank you for your time and intention in getting to know me through reading this profile! I will allow you to decide if you believe I demonstrate excellent communication skills. Your witness is a sacred part of my becoming. Blessings as we continue to journey together as a united and continually uniting church of Christ.

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<sup>15</sup> Lewis, Rev. Dr. Jackie, *Fierce Love: A Bold Path to Ferocious Courage and Rule-Breaking Kindness That Can Heal the World*, New York: Harmony Books, 2021.

<sup>16</sup> Borg, Marcus J, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time : The Historical Jesus & the Heart of Contemporary Faith*, 1st ed. [San Francisco]: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994.