

Pastor Jessie Lowry



Accepts COA Terms of Call

Dear
Christ
Our
Anchor
friends-
to-be,

Words cannot express my joy at being called by your PNC to be your future Pastor. I am humbled, but also confident because I truly feel that God has brought our paths together. My first order of business is simple: to set up visits with you and get to know as many of you as possible. I believe that all the rest of my work will flow from knowing you well: what you care about, what you've been through, and what your dreams are for the future of COA. So you'll be hearing from me!

But in the meantime, allow me to tell you a bit about myself. I grew up in Prince Georges County so I am a Maryland native. I have an identical twin sister named Sarah, and she lives in Los Angeles right by Venice Beach. It is just she and

I, and we have two of the best parents in the world: married 39 years this summer. My parents raised us secular, and we came to faith through the community and affirmation of an amazing youth group (something that I think resonates with this church). Sadly, my sister is no longer a believer or a church-goer. Like so many people, churches that rejected her because of her questions and because of her care for people who they might consider to be outsiders hurt her. Her journey fueled my desire to be a faith leader and to revitalize the church from the inside out; to make it a place where people like her might find hope, meaning and a place to belong again.

I originally went to college to study elementary education because I absolutely love children—still do!—but quickly realized a passion inside myself for social justice. The very conservative and simplistic faith of my adolescence began to grow and stretch to engage real

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problems in the world like poverty, racism and war. After college, I pursued advocacy work by interning for Sojourners in Washington, DC (www.sojo.net) in the Marketing and Development departments. I learned a lot, and I loved their message: that progressive ideas of what the world could be had a place in the life of faith, yet I was dissatisfied. I wanted more direct interaction with the people I was serving.

Luckily, a fellow intern had just graduated from Duke Divinity School—and she was nothing like any minister I had ever met! We fasted and prayed together during that Lenten season and it was then that I decided to take the chance and apply to seminary. I was accepted to Princeton Theological Seminary in NJ, which was a good place for me because it exposed me to brilliant people from all areas on the spectrum. I think no matter what one believes it is important to be surrounded by a variety of opinions and to learn from them all.

During seminary, the most formative experience I had was my Clinical Pastoral Education. I worked for a medical hospital in their Women's Health and NICU my first summer, and then in the state psychiatric hospital during my last year. That work of practical pastoral care of people from all faith (or no faith) backgrounds lit a fire inside of me. I grew in my conviction that every person everywhere has spiritual needs, whether they are religiously inclined or not. I loved hearing people's stories and shining a light on God's presence even in the darkest of situations.

I worked for my first five years out of seminary in the field of chaplaincy, and was blessed to start a pastoral care program from the ground up. I began to consider

congregational work for two reasons. The first is that I was asked to preach pulpit supply nearly every weekend at churches of different denominations, and the affirmation I heard from all of them was that I was a passionate and engaging preacher and belonged in the church. The second reason is that as much as I love working with people, I grew weary of the high turnover in the hospital and wanted to dig my heels in with one group of people for a while. I put this new call to the test in my last Interim and found it abundantly confirmed. The church is the place for me!

A few other things to know about me just for fun:

- ❑ I have been skydiving—with my dad! I am not necessarily a thrill seeker, but I love to try new things!
- ❑ There is almost nothing better to me than good conversation over a hot cup of coffee or a glass of red wine.
- ❑ Something I really enjoy is bikram yoga, or yoga of any kind!
- ❑ I am a voracious reader (I'm on Goodreads!) and welcome any recommendations you have.
- ❑ My husband of nearly 4 years is Jason Lowry. We met on Match.com (a 21st century romance!), we are an interracial couple, and we learn from each other every day.

I cannot wait to meet you and to hear more about each of you. Until then, I wish you blessings and peace!

Rev. Jessie Lowry

PNC Decision Announcement

Dear Christ Our Anchor,

The Pastoral Nominating Committee ("PNC") is thrilled to share some exciting news - we have found our new pastor! The process has been long and involved, with the review of well over 200 applications and interviewing many potential candidates. As we initially shared, the PNC committed to ensuring our decision was unanimous and we are thrilled to share that we have honored our commitment and strongly believe we have found the pastor whom God has called to Christ Our Anchor ("COA"). The Reverend Jessica Lowry has accepted our terms of call and the Baltimore Presbytery has approved her position as our new permanent pastor, pending our final congregational vote of approval.

When we started this process, we agreed we were searching for a pastor whose sermons spoke to us. We knew members of the congregation wanted the pastor's sermons to leave them feeling inspired and that they were looking for energy and excitement in our new pastor. COA also needed a pastor who was kind, humble, compassionate and tolerant. We are confident Pastor Jessie's preaching and personality have definitely met those criteria. We have truly enjoyed reading and listening to her sermons, even using her favorite bible verse (discovered during one of several interviews) during our discernment and discussions.

Philippians 4: 6-7

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the

peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

This verse became a theme and our continual prayer throughout our search. Much like Philippians 4:7 tells us, our hearts and minds truly have been guided by Jesus Christ through this search.

While we could go on and on sharing our own personal thoughts about the journey and Pastor Jessie, we would encourage you to read her letter to the congregation (attached), review the timeline below, and be sure to mark your calendars for the weekend of February 5, 2016, for the opportunities that will be available for you to meet Pastor Jessie and talk with her yourself prior to the congregational meeting on February 7th. We can assure you she is very much looking forward to the weekend and the opportunity to meet each and every one of you! We hope that once you meet Pastor Jessie you will feel as strongly about her calling to COA as we do!

2016 indeed promises to be a beautiful year of new beginnings here at COA.

Blessings from your Pastoral Nominating Committee,

Molly Fullerton, Jeanne Burton Fryer, Brandon Jerome, Keith Maynard,
John Moorehead, Jen Urlock, Noel Wagner, and Rob Werntz

P.S. If you would like to discuss the process, the choice, or our decision, you may certainly ask any member of the PNC directly. We are happy to share!



COA's PNC

From left: John Moorehead, Noel Wagner, Jen Urlock (Chairman), Rob Werntz, Keith Maynard, Brandon Jerome, and Molly Fullerton. Not pictured: Jeanne Burton Fryer (photographer)

Thank You To the PNC

We have been in a very long season of transition in which Christ Our Anchor (COA) has been re-assessing who we are, and where the church will be heading. It has felt confusing and difficult to understand at times. In this time, God has brought us to the place of complete surrender. We have given Him all of our dreams and plans; we have laid them at His feet.

The Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) took those dreams and plans (provided by COA members) and distilled them into the final requirements for the position of Pastor. This was no easy task, given the high expectations we have for the leader of COA.

Next the PNC diligently reviewed over 200 resumes, conducted countless interviews, and prayerfully considered if the final candidate was the right fit for COA. I am sure during this process countless personal events were missed, lives re-arranged, and sleep lost to ensure that the right Pastor was selected for COA.

On February 7, the PNC presented Pastor Jessica Lowry to the COA congregation as our new Pastor. The vote to extend COA's call to her was unanimous and loud.

On behalf of the COA Session and the members of COA, I would like to thank all the members of the PNC for their outstanding efforts.

It is now up to each of us to make those dreams and plans a reality together with Pastor Jessie.

Tom McNeal,
Clerk
Christ Our Anchor



Lenten Worship At COA

I know that you have finally put those Christmas decorations away and there is still a poinsettia sitting in the narthex at COA, but this is your “wake-up call”! Lent is here whether we are ready or not! The Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper and Ash Wednesday are already behind us.

Easter lilies are part of our tradition and you will have an opportunity to order a lily using the forms that will appear in the Sunday bulletin. Please place your order and have payments in to the church office by March 18 with checks made out to COA. Lilies may be designated “In Memory Of”, “In Celebration Of”, or “In Honor Of”.

As Easter approaches, the Worship committee will remind you of upcoming services and events planned for Holy Week. Typically, we offer a service on Palm Sunday with distribution of palms and an Easter Egg Hunt sponsored by the Youth Group between services. Later in the week, we have a Tennebrae service with communion on Maundy Thursday, and an opportunity for prayer and meditation in the sanctuary from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Good Friday.

Easter morning (on March 27 this year) includes special music at both services and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. These are important dates in our church calendar and we hope that you will join us for as many of these worship opportunities as possible. — *Susan Storm,* Elder for Administration

Quite a Week

By Alton Fryer

Sunday, February 7 capped a week of celebration for the Christ Our Anchor family as we said goodbye to our interim pastor and enthusiastically greeted our new pastor.

On Wednesday, we bade a fond and sad farewell to Alison Halsey, our interim pastor for the last two years. Cards, a memory book, cake and our very best wishes for her future were all part of our collective goodbye. Hugs, tears, group pictures, great memories, and heartfelt gratitude for her caring, thoughtful, and loving service to our congregation were part of her send-off. She will be sorely missed.

Our new pastor, Jessie Lowry, and her husband Jason were greeted by the Session Friday night. On Saturday morning she had brunch with the Deacons and staff. Afterwards she met briefly with the youth group. Saturday evening brought a well-attended dinner in our sanctuary with the entire congregation.

Pastor Jessie preached at both worship services on Sunday, served communion, and was formally called to be the pastor of Christ Our Anchor by a loud, unanimous vote at the annual meeting at noon. Pastor Jessie was selected by our Pastor Nominating Committee after a comprehensive search that lasted more than 18 months, and considered more than 200 applicants. Her energy, smile, humility, and grace, along with her religious training and experience made her an enthusiastic choice by every member of the PNC. We are all eagerly anticipating her pastoral leadership as Christ Our Anchor moves into the next phase of our Christian lives together.



*Farewell
Alison*



*Greetings
Jessie and Jason*

Tea and Theology

Tea and Theology is starting a new session on Tuesday March 8! If you would like to combine fellowship and faith with some good old-fashioned tea, join us on Tuesday, March 8, from 2:30 to 4:00 p.m. in the COA library.

This amazing group started by Pastor Alison will reorganize and resume and we want to invite you to join us. We prepare hot tea or iced tea depending on the season, offer a simple sweet treat, and have some wonderful and faithful discussions. Join us Tuesday, March 8, for our spring session! If you have questions or need more information, contact Marion Wear.

PLEASE COLLECT AND BRING IN POP TOPS

Ronald McDonald house is such a wonderful concept. Families can stay in a homelike setting for reasonable cost where food, a place to sleep and areas to relax and recoup are available for sick children and their families. It is one less thing to worry about when life changing illness occurs.

The Ronald McDonald House of Baltimore is thankful for the aluminum pull tabs that we collect and give them. What a simple way to make a difference! Please make a habit of saving aluminum pull tops and bringing them in to COA. The collection container is on the credenza in the office hallway. There are so many pull tabs you can gather



to do your part in helping COA to pass it forward, (ex: soda, beer, pet food, soup and many other cans can easily have the tabs pulled off). This Ronald McDonald House uses the proceeds to buy gas for their shuttle buses. This is important because the house serves several hospitals that are a distance from it and transportation is a necessity.

DRINK UP! Thanks to a generous donation from one of our members, we were able to replace the double drinking fountains near the meeting room that had recently developed a leak and the porcelain drinking fountain near the kitchen which hasn't worked in many years. As it says in John 4:14, "*whosoever drinketh of the water that I give him shall never thirst...*" Our new fountains may not be able to make that claim, but we hope they will serve us well for years to come. Feel free to wet your whistle whenever



you feel the need.

The Property committee is planning on using some or all of the remainder of the donation to dress up the



exterior of the church during our Spring Work Day tentatively scheduled for April 23. Please plan to come and join us.



PITS STOP has finished out its third year. The opening group, REMNANT, packed the church with people and the Holy Spirit. The following week was

Epiphany Lite, which gave a slightly more intimate concert with some of our favorite contemporary songs. Last was Aaron Long, a solo artist from Baltimore who gave a more ethereal and textured concert. This year was a great success with the COA youth earning over \$200 towards their mission trips this year.



COA To Form PAIN MANAGEMENT GROUP

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. 1 Peter 5:6

The Lord has given us amazing bodies and if we listen very carefully it will tell us what is going astray and sometimes how to fix it. We are not certified doctors but we do know our bodies and we can learn how to do our part in helping it out.

With this in mind, COA hopes to establish a Body Talk Support Group for Pain Management. This group will be focusing on sharing with others the things each of us have learned in the years of struggle to help relieve the pain that afflicts our bodies for whatever reason such as arthritis, surgery, fibromyalgia and back pain. We all live with some kind of pain and feeling alone is the worst thing that can happen to us. So let's talk to each other and stop reinventing the wheel. Sharing is key.

The group will meet every other Tuesday from 7 to 8 p.m. For more information contact Anna Wertz, e-mail werntzedu@comcast.net.

Administration Committee Stays Hard at Work

Now that the Administration Committee has finalized work on job descriptions, contracts, the stewardship program and implementation of the Icon CMO (Church Management Online) program, we are focusing our attention on other initiatives. We have been gathering information to help us better understand the working relationship between Anchors-A-Wee Pre-School and Christ Our Anchor.

Another committee initiative is a review of the existing Personnel Policy Manual. The Manual covers such topics as Equal Employment Opportunity, benefits, vacation and sick leave. The manual is currently a seven-page document. Although most topics address benefits of full-time employment, a review is needed to ensure that all employees are treated fairly and in accordance with state and federal law.

Finally, the committee will be open to suggestions from our new pastor with regard to priorities and areas in need of our attention and efforts. We look forward to working alongside Pastor Jessie and providing assistance to her wherever possible. Our thanks to Pastor Halsey for her vision and direction; she attended just about every meeting of our committee. Thanks, too, to our committee members:

Lawrie Gardner, Helen Kelley, Marion Wear and Dave Williams. — *John Kobish*, Elder for Administration

Look for More Information On Supporting STAIRS

STAIR is a reading and mentoring program designed to provide early intervention for at-risk second grade students. Throughout the year, students, identified by their reading teachers, work with an adult tutor



twice a week after school for approximately one hour on a variety of activities, all focused on increasing basic reading skills and utilizing an educator approved STAIR curriculum. A bond is forged between tutor and student, and learning occurs in a safe, nurturing environment. Children learn to read through second grade. Once they reach third grade, they read to learn. If students have poor reading skills their progress

through school becomes a downward slippery slope often culminating in and contributing to the high school dropout rate. STAIR wants more positive results for Annapolis City and Anne Arundel County second graders!

STAIR – Annapolis, Inc., a mission project of the First Presbyterian Church of Annapolis, is an outgrowth of the original STAIR program begun in New Orleans in 1985 and still continuing to effectively serve at-risk students after 30 years. STAIR begins for tutors with a required 2-hour tutor training session held on the campus of the First Presbyterian Church. Volunteer tutors are placed where the need is greatest. A volunteer can choose to tutor one or two days a week or act as a substitute. Tutors work with the same student for the entire school year.

Currently, **Beth Davis** is tutoring at Walter S. Mills–Parole Elementary, **Laurie Ondo** will be going to shadow a volunteer when her schedule permits, and **PJ and Hope Gilbert** have shadowed at a STAIR site and will be working as substitutes. If you would like to add your name to this list, please contact Alice Robeson at 410-757-6967.

COA Women's Retreat Coming in May

All COA women are invited to join me at Summit Lake in Emmitsburg, MD for this year's Women's Retreat. The retreat is scheduled for Friday, May 6 through Sunday, May 8, and includes boarding and all meals.

Our Women's Retreat is a time for us to spend in the presence of God, putting our checklist aside along with our busy schedules, to find security in our lives and come together as the women of Christ our Anchor. On Friday we will meet and greet upon arrival, Saturday will be packed full of fun, fellowship and time to bring the presence of God into our lives. Sunday we will have our own service followed by lunch prior to departing.



Dads and kids—this gives you *plenty of time* to clean the house and make a surprise dinner on Mother's day ("hint, hint"). For details on this exciting fellowship event please contact Anna Werntz at (443) 995-1580. A sign-up sheet will be posted in the Narthex.