

## **Scott Szabo - Supplemental Follow Up Question Responses**

### **1. Why are you interested in Oxford Presbyterian Church? What intrigues you the most, and what questions do you have?**

The things that first attracted me to Oxford Presbyterian Church nearly a year ago continue to command my interest. I value its history, and am eager to honor that story by supporting the congregation's archival efforts, as well as by furthering partnerships with Shiloh Presbyterian and Lincoln University. Further, I appreciate OPC's physical location in town. I often dream of how OPC might utilize its location to creatively engage a growing community, be it through a conference on the arts and Christian spirituality happening concurrently with the Connective Festival, or as a hub for liturgical celebrations designed to elicit participation from the whole neighborhood. Beyond being downtown, OPC is also blessed by its proximity to Ware Presbyterian, offering it near limitless opportunities to engage that community in the life of the congregation, be it through offering a transport service, hosting grief support groups, or by developing a more robust congregational care team capable of sustained engagement with those unable to attend worship. On the other end of the age spectrum, I am amazed by the number of young families that OPC serves, and I am interested in exploring how the congregation might minister to people as they raise children, plan for their financial futures, and pursue vocations of marriage or singleness.

Your MIF speaks of a continuing need for discernment, inspiration, and a strategic visioning process as you determine God's call for Oxford Presbyterian in its next chapter of ministry. As members of the PNC, in what concrete ways do you expect to aid the next installed pastor in realizing the aspirations articulated in the Ministry Information Form?

### **2. What is the purpose of leadership in the church? What is your style of leadership and what resources do you use for training officers and staff?**

Assuming Christ's Great Commission (Mt 28:19,20) as the primary reason for the Church's existence, the purpose of leadership in the Church is to raise up a new generation of Christians who can in-turn take upon themselves the mantle of disciple-making leadership. In this regard, leadership in the Church should be self-perpetuating, and ideally, the scope and character of a pastor's position should change to accommodate this reality. Obviously, this is a process that takes time. Accordingly, one of my first principles of leadership is constancy in call, with an intention to "stay the course" until God makes clear my work in one place has concluded. A parallel principle is that while I serve a congregation I desire to share with its people not only the gospel of God, but my life as well (1 Thes 2:8). For me, that means doing life together in community, being present for people, and aiding them in discerning the way God has uniquely gifted and called them into service. My hope is that those I minister to become both valuable partners in the gospel and cherished friends.

In regards to formal resources for training of officers and staff, I have found Gallup Strengthsfinder, as well as materials produced by the Alban Institute, the Leadership Network, and Theocademy to be of significant benefit to those with whom I have worked.

### **3. How do you help a congregation honor diversity of opinion?**

In recent years I have seen a lot of talk about ministering to “purple churches,” which are those that askew simple labels of liberal or conservative. I do not find this typology compelling, for to me it suggests an attempt to meet in the center, an objective that while admirable in many instances, also threatens to quell the prophetic voice of the Church. Rather than meeting in the center, I am interested in gathering around the Word, experienced in the life of a congregation through engagement with the Scripture and celebration of the Sacraments. To me, the task of helping a people of diverse opinions to be the Church is one as old as the spread of the Gospel from Jew to Gentile. And it has been accomplished through the ages by insisting that people’s perspectives on all manner of social issues must become subject to their identity as members of the one body of Christ. As such, I help congregations to honor diversity of opinion by doing all in my power to root members in their baptismal identity, reminding them of the grace they have received, and reasoning with them through the language of the Scripture. I believe the most potent witness the Church can offer the world is that of a community of diverse people living together honestly and peacefully, but that this can only be accomplished through the constant and intentional rehearsal of the Christian story, which defines us not by political or social persuasion, but by our identity as God’s beloved.

### **4. What are your personal and professional goals for the next phase of your ministry?**

In the midst of a near endless number of obligations and opportunities, my primary goal, both personally and professionally, is to be a good husband and a good dad. I count this as both personal and professional given the strange nature of the pastoral vocation. For indeed, the “always on call,” and deeply personal nature of ministry can frequently result in a pastor’s emotional energy being divided. I want my wife and kids to love the Church, and to be lifelong members of Christ’s family. For me, a key to ensuring that that will be the case is to never make them feel as though they come second to my call. Further, I want those in the congregations I serve to see a healthy model of family life, one that is protective of time spent together and always growing in trust and love. In this day and age, I consider this one of the most important ministries that I can lead. Beyond this, I am eager to continue my research in liturgical theology at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. I seek to grow evermore familiar with the cycles of the lectionary and church year in order to enrich and deepen the experience of God’s people in corporate worship. On a strictly personal level, as my children enter more formal schooling, I am eager to return to such hobbies as kayaking and home-brewing, as well as to explore new pursuits, including fly fishing.