

Rev. Elizabeth B. Johnson

brief biography



Elizabeth Johnson is a native of Greensboro, North Carolina. She is married to David, who is a minister in the United Church of Christ. She has two children: McClaren, a therapist in Cary, North Carolina, and Stafford, a sound engineer for a Chicago law office. Ready to experience with them the joys of life in South Carolina are their rescue pup, Loiza, and two feline friends, Buster and Mr. Squeakers.

Elizabeth is a graduate of Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina, where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Education and was selected student teacher of the year. She subsequently earned a Master of Education from Elon University in Elon, North Carolina. While parenting two children and teaching in

the public schools, Elizabeth continued to feel God's call to ministry. She served as youth director in two different churches before accepting a position at the Community Church of Vero Beach in Vero Beach, Florida and earned a Master of Divinity at the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa in 2019.

She was ordained in the PC(USA) in 2019 and was loaned to the Vero Beach church, a United Church of Christ church, serving as Minister for Family and Community Life. There she serves the church and community in various facets. She works with families to deepen their faith, develop spiritual practices at home, and discover inter-generational fellowship opportunities within the congregation. She coordinates events and activities with the Sunday School Director and leads a chapel for the Community Preschool children. Elizabeth teaches a weekly Woman's Bible Study and shares in the worship life of the church, as well as congregational care, including overseeing the Prayer Ministry, Caring and Sharing Group, and Healing After Loss Group. She organizes Women's Retreats and Family Retreats, officiates funeral and memorial services, and weddings. Elizabeth also serves on the Treasure Coast Interfaith Council and the Vero Beach Be Kind Board, working in her community to build connections and relationships with those seeking to make the world a better place for all of God's children.

Elizabeth is excited to return to her Presbyterian roots. She believes God is calling her to serve others who love God and love their neighbors as they love themselves. She is seeking a congregation that is open to creativity in worship, courageous in their love of others, and seeks to build up the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. The APNC has worked diligently to represent the faith and energy of the congregation and believe that she has found all of these things in First Presbyterian, Hilton Head Island. She is very much looking forward to working with Will, Diane, our church staff, and our members to create disciples of Christ together.

Elizabeth and David are eager to discover all that Hilton Head and the area has to offer and to develop new relationships with the folks of FPC. In her spare time, Elizabeth enjoys keeping up with Stafford and McClaren, cooking, gardening, and sailing with David.

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faith journey

“God doesn’t want you to talk during communion,” my mom said to me after church one Sunday. I think I was about 4 years old and was somewhat surprised to hear that God had that opinion. Some of my earliest childhood memories are of sitting in church with my brother, Tommy, while our parents led worship. My Mom played the organ and directed the choir and my father was the pastor, so Tommy and I often sat in church by ourselves or with an adult church member, who hopefully had candy. Although I was raised in a church and am a preacher’s kid, I never imagined myself in ministry. Ever.

While I enjoyed being brought up in the church, I saw the difficult sides of church ministry, as well. I can remember my father getting an emergency call from a parishioner just as we were sitting down to enjoy dinner. I remember him quickly leaving for the hospital and us eating without him. One Thanksgiving someone called in a bomb threat for the church and the police came to our house to get my Dad. I felt sorry for my parents whenever that kind of thing happened. My Dad told me once that God promises us daily bread, not daily cake. I learned at a young age that church ministry isn’t for wimps.

In my teenage years, I wasn’t always interested in being the recipient of God’s promises. There was a time in my life when I became disenchanted with God, even angry with God’s plot twist for my life. In Donald Miller’s book, *A Million Miles in a Thousand Years*, he describes an inciting incident as, “a doorway through which you can’t return.” For me, that doorway was my father’s death. My father; a servant of God, a loving parent, a mentor to juvenile delinquents, the life of any party, such a handsome man that my friends had crushes on him, was killed in a car accident the day after Easter. I was 14 years old and my life was forever changed. For a few years, my story was a wilderness of fulfilling school obligations and just getting by socially. I was hurt and felt God had betrayed me by taking my father away from me. I was not living a very good story. With my mom’s encouragement, God’s grace and healing slowly changed my heart, softened my resentment, and filled my sadness with peace.

After college, I got married and began a career in teaching. Life was full and rich. I loved my work, my youth group kids, and my husband. We had two children, Stafford and McClaren, and life continued to be a blessing. I had no idea at the time, but God was preparing me for something more. My teaching skills, parenting abilities, and my volunteer experiences all led to an employment opportunity at a church. A peace settled in me as I began my new position and my love for ministry blossomed. My fears melted away as I learned to trust God more and more to provide guidance as I ministered to teenagers.

My call into seminary was a surprise. I really did not see it coming and had never even considered attending seminary. Ever. Again, true to my form, I said no to this call for over a year. Once more, God did not give up on me and again sent family and friends with messages for me. After various attempts to encourage me into seminary, my mom sat me down for a serious conversation which she ended with, “God has moved you down to the ocean, Elizabeth. Do you want God to send a whale?”

This is not the story I had scripted for my life. I never planned on following in my father’s footsteps. Now, through my experiences as an ordained minister, I see that God can use me. It amazes me how far God has pulled me out of my Comfort Zone!

When I reflect on my life, my story, I can see several Biblical themes laced into the threads of my tapestry. I grew up in an affluent home with parents who loved me and gave me everything I could possibly need. My elementary years were stitched with the theme of blessing and generosity. Hospitality was also sewn into my younger years, as my parents opened our home to church members and friends. Now, as an adult, I enjoy entertaining and cooking for family and friends. Prayer and servanthood were also key elements that I was taught at an early age and have carried with me all of my adult life. But the theme that seems to resonate with me currently is the theme of covenant, of God making a promise to walk with me through life and guiding me with grace.