

The Rev. Mr. Thomas Abbott  
An Introduction for the First Presbyterian Church  
Salida, Colorado

After nine months of searching, reading, listening, watching, evaluating, interviewing, praying, spirited discussing, laughing, questioning, and planning the Pastoral Nominating Committee is happy to introduce our candidate for the position of senior pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Salida, the Rev. Mr. Thomas Abbott.

Tom will represent himself when he arrives in Salida. He has provided a brief personal introduction below, so that you can begin to know him and his wife, Deb. We look forward to you having the opportunity to become friends with Tom and Deb as they enter our church family and community. But now, before they arrive, the PNC would like to share with you some of the things that have drawn us to Tom as our potential pastor, brother and friend.

We did not need to tell the Abbott's where Salida is or what it is like to live among us. Tom and Deb are small town and Colorado people. They know the Arkansas Valley and even have family in the area. Life among our mountains and in Salida is a big draw for the Abbotts, as it is for many of us. By the way, the Abbotts come equipped with a big outdoorsy dog, and Tom even knows how to play pickleball.

Tom impresses us as a thoughtful and intentional person. We saw that in his path of continuing pastoral education he has focused on biblical studies, preaching, worship, congregational equipping, and spiritual growth, along with other relevant skills. He has sought out people of faith and wisdom as his teachers and mentors. Tom does not give rote answers or simplistic solutions. When you ask Tom a tough question, you will not receive a trite or "easy" response. You will sense that he takes you seriously enough to offer an insight or opinion that has resulted from thought and study.

In our conversations, Tom emphasized the importance of the Body of Christ, the Church in God's Kingdom. He wrote to us, "I particularly resonate with your desire to be a congregation offering and exploring hospitality and inclusion to a diverse range of people and beliefs and am drawn to your deep desire to help all people grow in their discipleship to the Jesus way". In his preaching, a recurring question is, "Who is Christ calling us to be?". Tom is committed to helping our faith family live boldly in God's love as Jesus' people, incarnating His compassion, justice and grace.

The nominating committee also spent significant time with Tom discussing leadership development in the First Presbyterian Church of Salida. We felt it to be significant that even

though he comes with many years of pastoral experience in previous congregations, Tom does not come hauling a prepackaged group of programs that he plans to impose upon us. We sensed Tom's commitment to discern with us what God is already doing and preparing in our lives and community, and then to work together to nurture and develop the gifts and callings that God has placed in our hearts and minds.

A strong motivating theme for Tom is God's ongoing call and invitation to us and to all people to join in the Divine work of reconciliation and re-creation. "Jesus calls us to be a missional people. The Holy Spirit goes before us... to prepare the way for our ministry of loving, healing, reconciliation, and discipleship". Ours is to follow.

By this point, you may be wondering about Deb Abbott. The nominating committee intentionally focused on Tom's gifts, experience and abilities as we considered extending an invitation to our pulpit. However, we also eagerly anticipate welcoming Deb into our fellowship and community. In our limited time with Deb, we have enjoyed beginning to know her and look forward to our continued walk together. She comes to us with experience as a licensed physical therapist and most recently as a hospital chaplain.

We think that you will discover Tom and Deb to be special gifts from God for us, our community and our world. We pray that the Lord will also use our gifts and abilities, our pain and joy to encourage and sustain the Abbotts as well. We are excited to begin this faith hike together.

With you on the journey,

The Pastor Nominating Committee

[Cassandra Franco, Phil Maes, Bonny Yeager, Barb Snyder, Nate Calderone. Cara Freeman, Mark Rowland, Katy Grether, Tim Fairman]

And lastly, a note from Rev. Mr. Thomas Abbott:

"Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. . . . But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us." 2 Corinthians 4:1&7

"The Church does not exist for itself, but for participation in God's mission of reconciliation." – Darrell Guder

It is with great joy that I anticipate joining the staff at First Presbyterian Church, and participating in your ministry in the Arkansas Valley, and around the world! It has been a blessing to begin developing relationships with the Pastor Nominating Committee and I look forward to getting to know all of you and joining you in your outreach and ministry. We live in a unique time in history that offers great challenges to being the church, and yet also offers great adventure and opportunity. It will be a blessing to see where God's Spirit leads us as we seek to participate in God's mission of mercy and reconciliation in the world. I hope the weekend of March 3<sup>rd</sup> marks a bringing together of our journeys for the purpose of serving God's Kingdom.

Joining me in Salida will be my partner of 33 years, Deb. We have two grown and married children, Samuel and Hanna. Samuel and Melissa live and work in Spokane, WA with their son, our grandson, 8 month old Luka. Hanna and Craig live, study and work in Princeton, NJ. Deb and I both call Colorado "home", although I moved around some during my early years. We both love the mountains and small-town living. We can't wait to begin life in Salida! I have had the gift of serving congregations in North Platte, NE, Leadville, CO, Paw Paw, MI, and Salt Lake City, UT. I have been blessed and challenged to grow tremendously through the ministries of each of those communities, and I can't wait to see how God uses our ministry together in the years ahead. See you at the beginning of March.

