

# Marie Mainard O'Connell



**T**he Reverend Marie Mainard O'Connell was born in Springdale, Arkansas, and grew up in Carrollton, Texas. She holds a Bachelor of Arts (BA) from Hendrix College where she graduated with an interdisciplinary major in Holistic Health and a minor in Religion. She later received a Master's Degree in College Administration from the University of Central Arkansas. While in Conway, she joined First Presbyterian Church of Conway, AR, and was baptized as an adult at the tender age of 23.

After serving as Program Coordinator for the Office of Student Engagement at Mary Baldwin College in Staunton, Virginia, and the birth of their first child, Katie, Marie answered the call to ministry. She graduated Summa Cum Laude with a Master's in Divinity from New Brunswick

Theological Seminary in New Jersey in 2012 with a senior project in Human Trafficking, and highest honors in preaching and academics. While in seminary, she interned as a hospital chaplain and gave birth to her second child, Kevin, which she finds to be an important point in her story, because there is always a child somewhere nearby.

She returned to Arkansas; where she found herself the co-moderator and chaplain for the Occupy Little Rock Encampment. She moved to First Presbyterian Church of Little Rock, where she was ordained and pastored for three years. She has enjoyed advocacy work with the state legislature on issues of gun rights in churches and LGBTQ rights.

Following the birth of her third, and, hopefully, final child, Jon, Marie served as the Young Adult Volunteer Coordinator at Ferncliff Camp and Conference Center, and then as the Interim Minister for Congregational Care and Fellowship at Second Presbyterian Church in Little Rock. Eventually the Spirit led her to the congregation of Park Hill Presbyterian Church in North Little Rock in 2018; where she currently heads a small but mighty staff and

leads a congregation just over 100 persons.

Marie has been honored to serve on the Board of the Center for Artistic Revolution, an LGBTQ resource and activist advocacy group, as well as a brief stint as the Interim Director of the Industrial Areas Foundation organization of the Greater Little Rock Organizing Committee in 2016. She is grateful to serve on the leadership team of the Mosaic Church Diversity Circle Discussion Group and she co-founded the Bridge Builders Reading Group, a community book club on issues of race and class. Marie also assisted in founding Mercy Church of Little Rock, a worshipping community of those experiencing homelessness.

She has served on the Presbytery of Arkansas's Committee for the Future of the Church, assisting in the closure of two congregations, and currently moderates the Committee on Representation. Marie is grateful to serve as a commissioner from Arkansas Presbytery and to stand as Co-Moderator for the 224<sup>th</sup> General Assembly.

*"I feel called to serve as Co-Moderator because of the swift impact of the Coronavirus on the church and families, and the overwhelming sense that ministry is changing rapidly and permanently. The future is now; and we are the hands and feet of Christ for today; let us act like it."*

**Co-Moderators Marie Mainard O'Connell and Arthur King Fullerton** <https://arthurkfullerton.wixsite.com/futurechurch>

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# Arthur King Fullerton



A lifelong Presbyterian, Arthur King Fullerton was born in 1962 in Little Rock to Sam and Fufa Fullerton and grew up in Warren, Arkansas. Both of his parents and his nephew, Walker Fair, are Presbyterian Ruling Elders; and his sister, The Reverend Dr. Fairfax Fullerton Fair, is a Presbyterian Teaching Elder.

Arthur currently serves as a Ruling Elder at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Albany, NY. Within Albany Presbytery, Arthur is past chair of the Board of Trustees and past chair of the ad hoc Budget Committee. He was the first openly gay person to serve as Vice Moderator and Moderator of Albany Presbytery and is currently serving on the Presbytery's Permanent Judicial Commission. He also served as an Overture Advocate on LGBTQ issues for Albany Presbytery to the GA in Detroit and the GA in Pittsburgh.

Arthur has also served as a member and Ruling Elder in other churches including serving as a Ruling Elder and Trustee of West Hollywood Presbyterian Church in West Hollywood, CA (2003-09); where he also worked with the Lazarus Project. In nine months in South Florida

(2003), he worshipped regularly at Second Presbyterian in Fort Lauderdale and at Riviera Church in South Miami. Before that Arthur served as Building Chair and Stewardship Chair at Jan Hus Presbyterian Church in NYC (1999-2002) and was active in Presbyterian Welcome (now Parity).

Before that he served as a Stephen Minister at First United Presbyterian in Fayetteville, AR (1994-1999), and served on the Evangelism and New Member Committee. In his gap year before college, Arthur taught Sunday school to middle school (4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade) and helped with the youth group for the First Presbyterian Church of Warren. He also served as Head Chapel Usher for several years as a student at the Lawrenceville School in Lawrenceville, NJ.

Arthur holds a Bachelor of Arts (BA) Magna Cum Laude with Departmental Honors in History and Classics (Latin & Ancient Greek) from Tulane University, and is a graduate of the Harvard Business School with a Master of Business Administration (MBA), and the University of Pennsylvania with a Master in Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP).

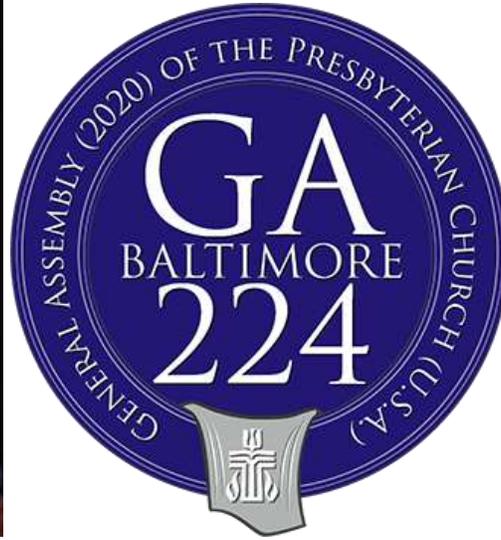
He has served on numerous business, nonprofit and professional boards and committees, and has taught at The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, Henderson State University, and The University of Pennsylvania. Recently he helped create the U Penn Coursera Module in Positive Psychology which has had nearly 50,000 different online learners.

Arthur created the University of Pennsylvania MAPP Fete which has brought over 30% of the total program alumni back to campus each fall for seven straight years. He currently serves as Class Rep on the MAPP alumni Board. From 2012 to 2018 Arthur participated as a volunteer fundraiser for the Harvard University Capital Campaign. In 2019 Arthur again volunteered as Class Rep for his HBS class which raised a \$61 million 30<sup>th</sup> reunion class gift.

In addition to church and alumni efforts, Arthur has served on the Board of the Friends of The New York State Library, and as State Development Director for Covenant House where he led teams that raised over \$50 million to get homeless kids off the streets in California and Florida. He also raised more funds through his planned giving efforts for Covenant House.

Professionally Arthur works as a consultant and investor celebrating God's blessings by tithing (20 years), living debt free (20 years), and living clean and sober one day at a time by the grace of God and the 12 Steps (25 years). In addition, Arthur is active in the Harvard Business School Alumni Angels of NYC providing venture capital and advice to startups and entrepreneurs. He is proud to represent Albany Presbytery as a Ruling Elder Commissioner to the 224<sup>th</sup> General Assembly.

*"I am standing for Co-Moderator not because I have all the answers, but because I have skills in fundraising, communication, strength spotting, and problem solving which our church needs in this transition."*



**The theme of the 224<sup>th</sup> General Assembly (2020) was set to be “Called to a Movement Beyond Institution,” based upon Romans 12:2. In light of the pandemic, the Stated Clerk has now called for the theme to be “From Lament to Hope.” How do we help the church both lament our recent losses while also living into new hope?**

Before the virus struck, the PCUSA was like the ancient Israelites wandering in the Wilderness, pining for Egypt. Egypt was the post WWII era of full pews, bouncing children, and overflowing budgets; a reality long past, but still preferred. Of course, that Egypt also oppressed with segregation, marginalized women, and criminalized LGBTQ folks. As a gay man born in 1962 in the segregated South, and a Xennial minister-mom, we’re glad we left Egypt behind. Thinking back, we know God has been with us through many joys and perils, as God is with us now.

Since the virus struck, we ARE lamenting this movement beyond institutions—forced out of our

comfortable traditions and into the hearts of those who wish to gather in Spirit where we cannot gather in Body. Many churches won’t give up their buildings or favorite style of worship without a great deal of grumbling and murmuring. Many are even now merely waiting for “when things get back to normal” rather than adapting to the ground rippling under our feet. Part of being the Pandemic Generation is placing our hope in God, that this wilderness is crafting us to trust in our Savior instead of our own power, to feel the wind of the Spirit draw us out of our isolation. God will provide manna and servant leaders along the way—if we follow.

We are not going back to Egypt. We may still be wandering in the Wilderness, but the coronavirus has given us a glimpse of a potential Promised Land. A future Church focused more on relationships than right beliefs; a Church beyond four walls; a Church that seeks to Love God and Love our Neighbor in more than words. A Church that hears Jesus call us to be fishers of people, not building preservationists. A Church unafraid to try and fail and

try again at new technologies and practices to reach seekers old and new. *We can feel the new church birthing in 1001 New Worshiping Communities, in Earth Care congregations, through Matthew 25 churches, in Young Adult Volunteers, in called seminarians, in Certified Ruling Elders and in renewing CREDO experiences.*

We lament by naming our challenges plainly, we cry to God with our grief, we cease to pretend that everything is okay. We lament by feeling the tears of the overworked, the tensions of the anxious, the fears of the powerless, and reminding each other, “We are not alone. Our God goes with us.” And we do not look backwards.

We live into hope when we try something new; when we redistribute resources to those most in need, we train leaders of all kinds to be resilient, we delegate power away from the center, we trust our polity for discernment, and build a sense of responsibility and ownership and purpose for our children, youth and visitors. Our task is to prepare the way for the generations to follow, who have never known Egypt.

**Co-Moderators Marie Mainard O’Connell and Arthur King Fullerton** <https://arthurfullerton.wixsite.com/futurechurch>

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**The Standing Rules state that “During the period between assemblies, the Moderator [or Moderators] serves as an ambassador of the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, telling the story of the church’s life and upholding the people of God through prayer” (Manual of the General Assembly, Standing Rule H.1.a.(5). Reflect on the importance of that role to the church and how you would live that out as a Moderator or Co-moderator.**

What a time to serve as Moderator! Our churches mirror a society stressed and politically divided. Scripture tells us “There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” By inference, scripture reminds us God is neither a Democrat nor a Republican, neither an Apple nor Android user, and our job as co-moderators is to tell that truth in ways our people and the world can understand.

We view these two years of service as a call to help the Church recognize our unity in the Spirit as one strengthened by our diversity, capable of overcoming the divisions of the world. We look forward to sharing stories of courage in our congregations, praying publicly and privately for the challenges we face, offering encouragement to be God’s people in difficult times, and reminding each other that the only way out of our troubles is through them. We will use our platform to assess challenges to our ministry, advocating with the Office of the General Assembly and the Board of

Pensions for change, and seek out younger and broader-based talent. Our goals are to lift up the next generation into leadership during their time of optimism and passion. We want to encourage those with energy to move out front and follow their joy. We give thanks for all who have gone before us, and look with open eyes for the new people God is bringing forth.

*“These outsiders are desperate to have their uniqueness acknowledged as a blessing, not a fault; their questions and doubts honored as seeds of faith.”*

“When I was in my 30’s, I was teaching business at a historically black university, and carrying a 12 Step meeting into the county jail. Many of my students were the first in their families to attend college, but the young men in the jail were school dropouts. The contrast lay heavy on my heart. After exploring this sense of call, I moved to NYC to join the Covenant House Faith Community where I worked full time with homeless youth aged 18 to 21. In



Faith Community we lived together, took vows of simple living, chaste living, got room and board and \$15 a week. I traded a big home for an 8x10 room with a toilet down the hall. After a little over a year, I moved into fundraising and for seven years raised millions of dollars to help get homeless kids off the street. I did this work as an openly gay progressive Presbyterian working primarily with straight conservative Catholic donors. My secret? I focused on what we had in common: wanting to help save homeless kids.”  
– Arthur Fullerton



“I wasn’t raised in church—always an outsider in youth groups and worship, my desire for

deeper discussions about scripture often led to the dreaded phrase, “I’ll pray for you.”

I longed for a place where my questions were welcomed as a sign of curiosity, and not proof of my inadequacy. In college I found belonging among the agnostics and heretics. Imagine my surprise to learn one day that I really believed in the Resurrection of Christ! My sense persists that people on the edge of church want in. These outsiders are desperate to have their uniqueness acknowledged as a blessing, not a fault; their questions and doubts honored as seeds of faith.”  
– Rev. Marie Mainard O’Connell

**The COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating to individuals, families, communities, and economies and has challenged the church in numerous ways. What changes have you seen in the church during the pandemic, and what lessons might we learn? How can the church's witness be strengthened as a result of COVID-19?**

On the plus side the Church is connecting with shut-ins more effectively than ever before. Zoom committee meetings and worship have a near zero carbon footprint. We are learning to be grateful for our many blessings and rediscovering that the Church is not the building, but our relationship with God and neighbors.

The reality of the COVID-19 pandemic is that poor people, immigrants, and people of color are much more likely to catch it and die. This is the truth of our unequal society laid out in body bags. COVID-19 also highlights the dignity and value of all work. Low-income people hold most of those customer-facing positions with long hours and few benefits. Immigrants pick our fruit and process our meat in conditions that are, at best, unhealthy and, at worst, deadly. The poor put their lives on the line every day. We often treat our fellow human beings as disposable rather than as equally beloved children of God. COVID-19 has revealed the stark disparities in our communities, and calls the Church to acknowledge and work against the oppressions of our time. COVID-19 also means our churches must endure in an economy battered by mass unemployment, rising

bankruptcies, hunger, homelessness, and the social byproducts of despair: addiction, abuse, and depression, stretching current support networks thin.

The pandemic has revealed many challenges in the home. Parents with children are overwhelmed by the tasks of caregiving, teaching online learning, working from home, and trying to maintain social networks. Some families struggle without the routine of going to church; and need as-yet revealed spiritual supports to fit this new lifestyle. Other families have rediscovered joy and gratitude in a less busy way of being, valuing the ability to worship on their own schedules and may be reluctant to

*“Provide 2,000 of our smaller churches with \$2,500 grants to build their online capacity”*

return to earlier ways. The way families engage with church has changed almost overnight, online technology emerged to reconnect some...and leave others in the dark of the digital divide. A new space for justice advocacy has become clear: access to technology and internet as a right and necessity, not a luxury. Our



witness can be strengthened by leaning into our challenges.

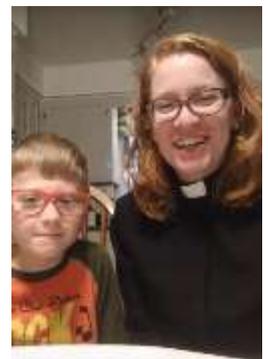
To help our smaller churches adapt

to the changed environment, Arthur would like to raise \$5 million in new funds to provide 2,000 of our smaller churches with \$2,500 grants to build their online capacity, enabling purchases of good equipment, upgrade Wi-Fi, and purchase subscriptions as needed. Funds might also be spent to connect low income and isolated members who need tech help to participate with our congregations in the virtual world.



To help families, Marie would like to see an emphasis on family ministries based in the home rather

than in the church building or by focusing on age-ranges. Looking to the knowledge of our church educators, how can we better empower parents to find comfort and joy with the home as the first classroom of faith? In addition, many pastors refer members to mental health providers when appropriate, but how good might it be to expand this practice as a ministry of the larger Church, providing funding and opportunity? The Presbytery of Arkansas has contracted with a Teaching Elder who is also a licensed counselor to provide access to mental health for pastors, their families, and their church members when possible. Can this model be replicated elsewhere?



**How can the church community make room for all people to share their stories of faith? How can we listen to the stories of people who are not in the church?**

Two keys to following Christ are to follow his example and let people know - “I see you” and “You are welcome here.” The Gospels are full of stories of Jesus meeting strangers, seeing them for who they truly are, and letting these outsiders know he welcomes them – usually by making a request of them. “Draw me a pitcher of water so I may drink.”



Jesus isn't meeting them “in church.” He's meeting them out in the street, going about their everyday business, before they are his disciples. This would suggest the church building isn't the best place to meet new people. Now we're faced with social distancing as well,

and it's difficult to get close enough to talk! This means that making room for storytelling becomes an intentional choice, and not a happy accident.

As Desmond Tutu shares in his book “The Fourfold Path to Forgiveness,” a necessary step towards healing and forgiveness is to tell one's story to a safe person, one who will not judge or interrupt with questions, but listen attentively and intentionally to the story's meaning and impact. One way a church community can make room for the faith stories of others is simply to ask, and listen. Marie notices that people shed hurt feelings all over the place—Facebook or Twitter are favorite places to complain—and a private message, “Tell me more” can open up a story that needs an audience. Of course that means we need to cultivate a mission of listening as a spiritual practice—and avoid the temptation for judgment and fixing until and if the bearer of the story reveals whether they need to be heard or helped. Often, what the teller needs is for their listener to be *safe*, to know that they will not be harmed in the telling, and Christians have largely lost the reputation of being safe—we need to earn that reputation back.

*The Fourfold Path to Forgiveness*

*Telling the Story*

*Naming the Hurt*

*Granting Forgiveness*

*Renewing or Releasing the Relationship*

Part of making room for storytelling is asking people to walk with us in mission, as a place outside of church where such storytelling is natural. As demonstrated in the Hands and Feet Initiative, mission is something we do “with” not “to” or “for.” Arthur tells this story,



“When I was working in California, I met Don Simmons. At that time he was doing great work with the homeless in San Francisco. One day a bus full of church people on a “mission trip” from another state drove up and stopped by a large homeless encampment under the freeway next door to the church he served. He could see the folks gawking through the window and taking pictures of the homeless. Don knocked on the bus door, climbed on board, introduced himself and asked what they were doing in the neighborhood. The church folks told him they had come to see all the mission points: the prostitutes' alley, the gay district, the homeless camp -- and the folks said “This is terrible. What can we do?”

I'll never forget Don's response: “Get off the damn bus.” How do we make room to hear faith stories of others not in the church?

*We get off the bus.*  
*We get out of the building.*

**What suggestions do you have for identifying new directions for the development of faithful leadership for the mission of Christ?**

“I worshipped at Jan Hus Presbyterian Church on the Upper East Side of Manhattan from 2000 to 2002. As the Millennium arrived the church had about a dozen members in Sunday worship, a rundown building with a leaky roof and falling plaster, and almost no endowment. By any conventional standard of success, Jan Hus was ready to be closed, but look closer -- Jan Hus



served over 5,000 people in the community every month. Think about that. *A dozen disciples serving over 5,000 people. We have heard this story before, just not in this way.* The lesson I draw from Jan Hus is that Jesus’ miracles of service aren’t just stories, but real-life models for how to do ministry today.” – Arthur Fullerton

“I’ve been in ordained ministry for about eight years. During that time, and before seminary, I experienced the challenges of trying to do

*“As far as I can see, the PCUSA has not fully embraced the reality of the Gig Economy”*



ministry early in one’s career, with kids, without a paycheck, without benefits, on a shoestring budget, as well as interim and full time. And what has struck me has been the refrain, “the future of the Church is in part time ministry.” I believe this reality is accelerated by Coronatide (the season of Coronavirus).

I struggle with the name “Tentmaking,” because no one outside the Church gets the reference; most of the world understands this work as part of the “Gig Economy,” though I remain uncomfortable diminishing this ministry model as a mere “gig,” because it is a specific and particular call deserving of more intensive support. As far as I can see, the PCUSA has not fully embraced the reality of the Gig Economy as it impacts our part-time pastors, seminarians, ostensibly retired-but-still-working clergy, innumerable 1001 Worshiping leaders and so many more. I see the most important development of faithful leadership for this time being a deliberate

investment into supporting the reality of part-time ministers as *“Making Ministers” —folks intentionally called to making ministries of relationship building that cannot fully fiscally support them, and we wouldn’t want it to, because that would mess it up.* I would like to see more resources leveraged into developing means to provide Making Ministers with the support they cannot get from gigs—benefits, healthcare, vested in the pension plan—because with these supports, they can fulfill their calls with confidence, and find the other work that supports their ministry, rather than cram their call between other gigs.”

I remember the painful decision to look for yet another part-time job while a nursing mom and Young Adult Volunteer coordinator *because* I couldn’t get other gigs to cover health insurance. The Church didn’t have a way to put all my salary into the one useful benefit needed at the time. If the future is indeed in part-time ministry, we need to find ways to offer the justice and dignity of fully vested benefits to even our lowest paid part time ministry workers. I believe this will do more to free the Spirit and empower called people than any other new initiative.”  
– Marie Mainard O’Connell

