

# Biography for Charles Lynn Low, Jr.

(“Chip”)

I grew up in Houston, Texas with my parents and younger sister. Upon graduation from high school, I attended Baylor University in Waco, TX where I earned a Bachelor of Arts degree, summa cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa, with majors in Religion and Greek. I then attended Princeton Theological Seminary and earned a Master of Divinity degree with an emphasis in Biblical Studies and Christian Education.

My family has strong roots in the Southern Baptist Convention. Our roots there trace back to at least the revival-circuit preachers during the Second Great Awakening of this country. My grandfather had a taste of Presbyterian life when as a child, a Presbyterian minister would preach twice a month in his church in Paris, TX. My Christian nurture as a child was mainly in Southern Baptist churches. I attended Sunday school regularly, sang in choirs, went on mission trips and was active in junior high and high school youth groups. In the midst of this nurture, I “walked the aisle” at the age of seven to profess my faith in Jesus Christ and again, at sixteen, to commit my life to full-time ministry, due in large part to my youth group experience.

Because of my academic interests, my college professors suggested that I attend Princeton Theological Seminary, and what wonderful guidance that turned out to be. Princeton introduced me in a formal way to the history, theology and rich tradition of the Reformed faith. Over my four years there, I came to feel at home in the Reformed tradition and the Presbyterian Church (USA).

At Princeton, I also met my wife, Tami Seidel. A native of Lancaster, PA, a life-long Presbyterian, and a graduate of Wellesley College (magna cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa, Religion major, Environmental Science minor), Tami is also an ordained PC(USA) minister. She has served as associate pastor at the First Presbyterian Church of Plymouth, MI, and since we’ve had children, as part-time parish associate at First Presbyterian Church, Monroe, NY and at Highland and Marlboro. We have three wonderful and energetic children – Sophie (8), Benjamin (5), and Samuel (3) – and two cats.

Along the way, I have worked in many jobs and ministry positions. I have been a substitute teacher in public schools, an examination coordinator for a community college, a teaching fellow and tutor, a student manager for a food service, and a research assistant. I have worked in a number of churches in both central and south Texas and in New Jersey, as well as in nursing homes in Houston and in prisons around Texas. I spent two years working as a chaplain at Trenton Psychiatric Hospital in Trenton, NJ and another two years as a resident in the Clinical Pastoral Education program at St. Vincent

Mercy Medical Center in Toledo, OH. After CPE, I worked as an pastoral intern at First Presbyterian Church in Ypsilanti, MI while completing the ordination process.

For the last nine years, I have been the pastor of a yoked parish which includes the First Presbyterian Churches of Highland and Marlboro, NY. They have 100 and 125 active members on their rolls, but total closer to 300 when the scope of ministry includes family members and friends of the churches and children. They are nine miles apart, far enough to be in separate communities, but not too far, so that I have had success in doing shared ministry and building fellowship between them. I have had two of everything, from worship services to committee meetings, and it has been an invaluable learning experience for me.

In my ministry at Highland and Marlboro, I have worked to encourage a new sense of belonging and to inject a fresh vitality and relevance in worship through involving more people (children and adults) in worship leadership, including a variety of musical styles, and incorporating multi-media technology. We have seen a new level of commitment through young families joining the church and increased pledges and giving each year. The churches have increased their community outreach and mission through Vacation Bible School and food pantries, starting an annual area CROP Walk, cooking and hosting a free Thanksgiving dinner for area residents, working on Habitat houses, and raising awareness and money for local and national poverty and homelessness issues. All of my pastoral work – from pastoral care to mission trips to worship to committee meetings – is grounded in my firm belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God's promise of new life and hope for all, and the Spirit's call to engage in God's healing, liberating work in the world.

In addition to my ministry with my two churches, I am the chaplain of the Highland and Marlboro Fire Departments and have been leading Bible studies for the Marist College Women's Basketball team. At the Presbytery level, I have served on the Vision Ministries team, the Stewardship team and as moderator-elect and moderator of the presbytery. For eight years I was on the planning team and a director for the Silver Bay Presbyterian Youth Conference.

Outside of church, I am a certified cycling instructor, teaching two classes a week at our local fitness center. I enjoy fishing and hiking, golf, playing with my kids and reading.

To me, God is a God of surprises. Looking at each of the different pieces of my vocational journey separately, it is hard to imagine how they all fit together. But, when I look at them as a whole picture, I am surprised and grateful for the wonderful opportunities to meet new people, live in different places, face new challenges, and see God at work in the lives of people as they celebrate the joys of life and walk through its tragedies. That whole picture has helped me discern God's call for me into parish ministry. In view of this, I am excited about the call to serve as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Yorktown. I am looking forward to this new opportunity to build a home with my family and to know and grow with the people God has gifted to FPCY.

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