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D&E and Davis Health System Call Dr. Franklin Tanner Capps as Chaplain



Elkins – Dr. Franklin Tanner Capps, Th.D. has accepted the historic and unique call as Benfield-Vick Chaplain in a shared role with Davis & Elkins College and Davis Health System/Vandalia Health. In this innovative approach, Dr. Capps will share his time in a 60/40 split of his time as chaplain at the College (60%) and Davis Health System (40%). “It isn’t unusual for a College to share pastoral leadership with a church, as we’ve very successfully done before with Davis Memorial Presbyterian Church. So, when we learned that

the hospital was in need of chaplain services, it felt like a natural next step to explore that possibility both from a ministry perspective and to share the cost of providing services to students and patients,” said President Chris Wood. “We are thrilled to have a chaplain coming back on campus to serve our campus community.”

Mike Bell, Executive Director of the Davis Health System Foundation, said, “We are confident that Dr. Capps will greatly advance our efforts to meet the spiritual care needs of our Davis Health System patients, families, staff, and volunteers, as well as enhance our community care and outreach as we introduce new programs and events.”

Originally from Westminster, SC, Tanner comes to this position from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, where he directed the Miller Youth Institute, an institute dedicated to theological formation, justice work, and vocational discernment among undergraduates, and taught in the Doctor of Ministry Program. Prior to this, he served as Bruce Scholars Lecturer in the Honors College at the University of North Carolina Wilmington and as Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at St. Andrews Presbyterian College. At St. Andrews, he directed the Honors Program and was faculty coordinator for the Gambrell Fellows in Social Justice Program at Caldwell Memorial Presbyterian Church (Charlotte, NC). In addition to regularly teaching adult education classes and serving as pulpit supply in Coastal Carolina, he worked as coordinator of community care and outreach during the height of the pandemic at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Laurinburg, NC.

Tanner is a graduate of Duke University (ThD, Theology), Westminster Theological Seminary (MA, Religion), and Anderson College (BA, English and Visual Art). An avid writer, his work in the areas of theology, ethics, and aesthetics has appeared in the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, the *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, the *Journal of Reformed Theology*, *Political Theology* and beyond. With SueJeanne Koh, he is working on a book project that examines religious nationalism, informed by blood discourses and legal proceedings significant for Asian American racial formation.

“I’m thrilled to be working with President Wood and the incredible people at Davis & Elkins College and the Davis Health System in this new role,” Tanner writes. “What drew me to the position was the collaboration between D&E and the medical campus, with their commitment to integrating ministry with undergraduate learning, community care, and congregational

outreach. I have a passion for nurturing Reformed liberal arts education and see things like my work with Dr. C. Brantley Craig at the Morrison-Novakovic Center for Faith & Public Policy being one among many creative avenues for doing this important work at D&E and in the Elkins community.”

The search committee launched a nationwide search, and when Dr. Capps submitted his name for consideration, the committee was intrigued by the background he will bring to the position. “With Dr. Capps’ depth of education in theology and religion, his strong Presbyterian connections, and commitment to the duality of this particular call, we know without a doubt that this is the match God has had in mind for us from the start,” said Tina Vial, coordinator of foundation and church relations, and chair of the Chaplain Search Committee. “Tanner is already in the process of pursuing ordination as Minister of the Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA) through his home Presbytery of Coastal Carolina, and we look forward to supporting him in that journey.”

Tanner is married to Hannah Swiger Capps. They have three children: Ruthie (10), Benjamin (6), and Amos (4), who will all be starting school at Third Ward Elementary in Elkins this fall. His installation service as chaplain is scheduled for August 25 in the Robbins Memorial Chapel at Davis & Elkins College.

Related to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Davis & Elkins College is located in Elkins, 2 hours east of Charleston, 3 hours south of Pittsburgh and 4 hours west of Washington, D.C. For more information, please visit the College website at www.dewv.edu or call 304-637-1243.

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