

# MINISTER'S PROFILE FORM

## Reformed Church in America



### Section A. Background Information

1. **Date Submitted:**
2. **Please check which one of the following choices best applies:**
  - First Call**
  - Experienced Pastor**
3. **Name:** Suzanne Vogel
4. **Home Address:**
5. **Home Telephone (Include Area Code):** N/A
6. **Mobile/Cell Phone:**
7. **E-Mail:** ministrymom@gmail.com **Website:**
8. **Office Address:**
9. **Office Telephone:**
10. **Year of Ordination:**
11. **Denomination of Ordination:** RCA
12. **If not RCA, what classis or supervising body from the ordaining denomination recognizes your ordination?**
13. **Present denomination:**
14. **Present classis or judicatory:** Classis of Central Iowa
15. **If you are not now a member of the Reformed Church in America, can you, in good conscience, agree with the doctrine, discipline and government of the RCA?**
  - Yes  No (If no, explain briefly)



**16. Do you support the mission and vision of the Reformed Church in America?**

Yes  No (If no, explain briefly)

**17. Citizen of what country?** If not USA, do you have permit to live and work in the USA?  Yes  No (If no, explain briefly)

**18. Previous Experience:** List all full-time or major positions beginning with current position (include dates, position, church/employer, location).

Date	Position Description	Church/Employer and Location
08/2014-present	Interim Lead Pastor	MDRC, Des Moines
11/2011–11/2014	Marketplace Chaplain (PT)	Vermeer Mfg, Pella
08/2011-1/2013	Outreach consultant (PT)	Second Reformed, Pella
2012-2013	Co-Chair Steering Committee (PT)	Otley Reformed, Otley
2010 - present	Clerk (PT)	Classis of Central IA
2008-2011	Interim Pastor (FT)	Celebrate Church, Knoxville
2003-2009	Associate Pastor (FT)	Third Reformed Church, Pella
2002-2008	Co-owner	Pella Health & Fitness, Pella
1996-2002	Area Director (FT)	InterVarsity Christian
1991-1994	Campus Staff (FT)	Fellowship, IA/NE
1994-1996	Associate Director of Admissions	Wichita State, Wichita, KS

**19. Formal Education:** List in chronological order beginning with the most recent (include school name, dates, degree earned).

School Name	Dates	Degree
Drake University	1987-1991	BSBE, Secondary Education & English
University of Dubuque Theological Seminary	2011 – 2015	MDiv

**20. Continuing Education:** List in chronological order beginning with the most recent (including organization/school, dates, program).

Organization	Dates	Program
Critical Incident Training	2012	
RCA, Classis of Central Iowa	2004-2006	Commissioned Pastor
McNutt School of Prayer	2006-2008	Certified level 3 prayer minister

**21. Languages:** List any languages, other than English, in which you can preach or converse fluently:



## **Section B. Reflection**

Please answer the following questions, adding your own experiences where appropriate.

### **1. Describe your strengths, the best of who you are, and what you bring in service to the church.**

First and foremost, I consider myself a disciple of Jesus and one who loves the local church. My deepest desire is to be a pastor who loves the church sacrificially and prepares her to love God and love others. I want to lead out of union with Christ through the Spirit, drawing on a well of prayer and Scripture. Second, I love to lead, but I love to lead pastorally and collaboratively. While I don't mind making the tough, "buck-stops-here" decisions, I enjoy bringing teams together to leverage gifts and creativity. I'm happiest when people thrive and excel under my leadership.

In addition, I think my blend of leadership experiences brings some unique understanding to the church. I have worked in the church, parachurch, and the marketplace. I have management experience and consulting experiences. I have walked with large congregations and small congregations. Because of this, not too many situations throw me. I may not know exactly what to do, but I have seen God's faithfulness to His people and have learned to lean into His trustworthiness in times of uncertainty.

Finally, I have a blend of organizational and relational skills. I enjoy thinking about processes and big picture – but then about how people fit into those. A good vision means nothing if you can't get people on board, but happy people go nowhere if you can't articulate vision and mission. Both are critical in my mind.

### **2. Name two or three mentors who have significantly contributed to your ministry, and explain why these people are important to you.**

Lindsay Olesberg was my supervisor when I worked on staff with Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship. She was relentlessly committed to my growth and taught me the art of giving feedback. I didn't have a picture then of effective women in ministry and she was the first to embody it in ways I found attractive and theologically grounded. Her style in leadership was relational, personal, and compelling – and she called me into my leadership.

Kevin Korver hired me into the church and gave me a picture of what it meant to be a pastor. He both modeled and intentionally taught me what it meant to love and lead a congregation. Kevin also was patient with my learning curve and took heat to create space for a woman to preach at Third. From co-leading my first funeral to coaching me on serving communion to buying essential books for my library, Kevin showed me a humble, servant-hearted model of being a pastor.

Paul Hietbrink, a lawyer and elder at Third Reformed, was my sparring partner theologically. He is a bright and systematic thinker and challenged me intellectually. He introduced me to issues around church government and often slowed down my impulses to make fast changes. Paul urged me to steward my intellect for the sake of the church.



### **3. What caused you to enter ministry and what are the core values that define your vision for ministry?**

In hindsight, I would say I experienced a call to ministry even as a child. My grandmother (who couldn't envision a woman as a pastor) said that as early as age 4, she was sure I would be a missionary. At age sixteen, I had a profound experience of reading Jeremiah 1:1-9 where I surrendered my life to God's leadership. I couldn't see myself as a pastor until my early-30's after working through both my inner health and theological underpinnings.

I have several core values which shape my ministry:

- Relational Leadership: The authority for ministry doesn't come primarily from a position, but rather has its origin from authentic, loving relationships. People follow when there is confidence, trust and clarity.
- Equipping others: Ministry belongs to everyone, not the professionals. My job as the pastor is to equip people and share ministry.
- Grace and Truth: People need both grace and truth to grow, learn and be effective in their lives. My commitment to those I lead is that they will receive both from me.
- Hospitality: Consistently through Scripture, we see the heart of God for the alien, the widow, the poor and the outsider. I want to be a person who treats others, particularly the vulnerable, in a warm, friendly and generous way.
- Contextualization: I do not believe discipleship is primarily about a set of universal rules, but rather a living relationship with the Triune God. God doesn't work in every culture and context in the same exact way and neither should we. Instead, good leadership seeks to understand the context, listen to the Spirit and the word of God, then lead out of that dialogue.
- Humility: None of us has a corner on the truth. At best, we are a jumble of dreams, gifts, brokenness and sin. Consequently, the appropriate posture for leadership and relationship is one of humility which is open to learning and growth.

### **4. Explain the strategies or ideas that most excite you for helping a church to become and remain missional.**

I believe listening is key. Congregations need help to start really listening to their neighbors. I think we have a tendency to talk to ourselves and make assumptions about others. But when we enter into a deliberate conversation with God (through prayer and Scripture) and those around us, I believe God begins to soften our heart and give us a vision for how we can engage and serve our neighbor. This is the essential DNA of Meredith Drive and we simply need to keep reconnecting to it.

Another key to remaining missional is understanding God's heart. God is, by nature, one who extends and pursues. When we glimpse the radical nature of the Kingdom of God, the invitation for us to participate in bringing the kingdom to our families, our workplace and our neighborhoods becomes compelling. As we are healed and changed, we affect others.

Finally, it is important to create an environment where people are encouraged to



experiment and take risks. Our culture is changing rapidly and what used to work in ministry is becoming less and less effective. We will need to be open to new tools, new postures, new ways of living and sharing the gospel together. Rather than being frightened and closed off, we can embrace God and try new things – understanding that some of them will work and some may not. I'm encouraged because again, this is part of MDRC's history.

**5. Name three of your most passionate hopes for the Church at large, and why they are significant to you.**

First, I want the Church to get better at building bridges for those outside the faith. I have walked with people who long to know God and experience community, but the last place they think of doing that is in a church. They have no framework for the Bible and only negative assumptions about those who go to church. They won't just stumble into our buildings and if they do, chances are they won't stay unless someone connects with them and stays with them. Instead, I believe the church needs to stop thinking about how to get people to church and start thinking about how to bring the gospel to people.

Second, I am passionate about people moving from seeing church as a piece of their busy life to defining themselves as followers of God who lay down their lives for others. I truly believe abundant life is found as we love God and love our neighbor. God's word is a source of life and hope for those who dwell in it individually and collectively.

Finally, I want to see leaders who are willing to lay down their lives for their sheep. In contrast to a culture which is marked by entitlement, hostility and desire for comfort, God's shepherds should be people who are known by their courage, commitment to truth, humility, sacrifice and love.

**7. What theologians, pastors, authors or other leaders have had the greatest influence upon your life and thought? (List up to four and explain your choices.)**

John Eldredge redefined Christianity and my relationship with God in his book *Sacred Romance*. Prior to reading it, I had thought about my faith in terms of being obedient to keep God happy. Eldredge masterfully painted a picture of a God who created humanity for relationship, adventure and purpose. William Shakespeare captured the human dilemma in ways that still speak to me and fans the flame of my passion to use words in meaningful ways. C.S. Lewis has both stimulated my intellect and given me a passion for communicating truth in story. His view of humanity, sin and God pushed against my pharisaical impulses and invited me into deeper truth.



**8. How do you hope someone influenced by your ministry would describe what s/he considers to be most important?**

I would hope people who serve with me would say that loving God and loving others is critical to a life well lived. I would hope they have discovered grace and freedom to be authentically who they are, not performing for others or catering to their false self. I would want them to live out of a deep well of intimacy with God which is cultivated through prayer, Scripture, service, community and worship.

**9. Name at least one challenge for a pastor who accepts a Call to lead a church whose culture is other than his/her own.**

The danger in leading in a new culture is assuming you know what's going on. We all intuitively overlay our experience onto the experience of others rather than taking the time to really listen, understand, and ask good questions. The challenge is to assume a posture of humility and teachability, particularly when the culture you are entering is in crisis and wants swift and competent leadership. The job of the pastor is to resist this pressure and instead focus people on trusting in God and discerning together his leadership forward.

**10. Describe your vision and hopes for the Church over the next 5-10 years.**

I would love to see MDRC make the shift to a more campus driven strategy, with effective ministry happening at all three sites, with a possibility of adding another. There would be new life and energy at the main campus, with renovations that are oriented toward ministry to the neighborhood. Overall, the staff would be healthy and unified in their philosophy of ministry and heart for the gospel.