



# ST. ANDREW PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

3604 NE 10<sup>TH</sup> COURT, RENTON, WA 98056 · 425-272-5836 · STANDREWPC.ORG

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Beloved St. Andrew:

As my sabbatical leave draws near, I thought it would be helpful to provide an overview of what I'll be up to (and what you'll be up to!) in my absence.

## Summary

In this sabbatical I am looking to puzzle together the many pieces of my life into a more coherent, unified story of self that I trust will fund my teaching, preaching, and leadership going forward. A trip backwards will, I believe, enrich my journey forward.

## Background

We began to prepare for a 2022 sabbatical (July 25-November 13, 2022) in March of 2021. St. Andrew developed and approved a [sabbatical policy](#) in 2010 and [fundraising protocols](#), in time for my first sabbatical leave in 2013, nine years into my ministry here. Pastor Julie Kae was able to draw on our policy for her sabbatical in 2019.

We developed these policies recognizing the value of sabbatical time away for *both pastor and congregation*. You can read a little about the rationale and the work I was up to for my 2013 sabbatical in a blog post [here](#). In our March 2021 meeting, the church session approved the following motion:

*Moved and passed to affirm and endorse in principle the proposed sabbatical plan for Scott Anderson and authorize the pursuit of external grant funds. Further we covenant to collaborate with him in a process of preparation, co-reflection, and learning integration.*

## Proposal

*What we have before us are some breathtaking opportunities disguised as insoluble problems.*

—John W. Gardner, 1965

Over the course of my 28 years of pastoral ministry (18 at St. Andrew) I have been drawn to multi-disciplinary learning. From my earliest memories, I have been compelled to make connections, to integrate seemingly disparate things while equally being resistant to sacrifice complexity and ambiguity. The urgency of this work has intensified in the crucible of this pandemic in which I have found myself unable and unwilling to look away from white privilege and its legacy of racism and economic inequity, particularly in the United States, and my own place within it. I have come to suspect the “insoluble” challenge of our current reality represents a “breathtaking” opportunity, a lens through which to further integrate the story of my own life that may have a parallel in the life of the St. Andrew church body birthed, like me, in the 1960s.

I was born and raised as the federal civil rights legislation of the Kennedy/Johnson administration echoed in near memory. Throughout my childhood, spent in multiple regions of the country, I somehow remained blissfully unaware of the important dynamics that have shaped our current reality and situated me as one privileged within it. Likewise, the course of my life has closely paralleled an era of rising inequality and the hollowing out of the middle class, the beginning of which can be pegged to the mid-1960s. I want to explore why. How did I remain unaware of these things until the twilight of my undergraduate education? And why was it so compelling when I did begin to learn about these broader realities? How is my story representative of many like me?

I see a parallel reality in the life of the St. Andrew congregation. I wonder if the learning, exploration, and integration I see as ripe in this moment of life for myself might also be timely for this congregation straddling a transition from one generation to the next. What do and don't we as a congregation know of our own story? What might we gain in attending to a similar line of exploration, reflection, and synthesis?

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### **Structure and Timeline**

This sabbatical is shaped around three cycles of investigation, reflection, and rest. Each cycle centers on locations that have been influential in shaping my story and perspective, moving generally from most recent to early life-experiences. These locations include:

- **July 25-August 21, 2022: Tri-Cities, WA** region in which I spent two seasons of life, a decade mid-1990s to the early 2000s and mid-1970s to mid-1980s.
- **August 22-October 9, 2022: Atlanta, GA** where I attended seminary and began my journey in the PCUSA in the early 1990s.
- **October 10-November 13, 2022: Merritt Island/Central, FL** where I spent the first 9 years of life.

The first part of each cycle is taken up by social analysis and historical research of the next location. I will attend generally to the history of the place that shaped me. With an eye toward what I missed by virtue of my social location and story, I will analyze historic and present-day policies, patterns, practices, and assumptions that shaped the reality of these formative locales and thus, shaped me. I will also spend time with my own story as it relates to these places and people.

The second period of each cycle makes space for on-location exploration, discernment, and delight that will build off the previous element. I imagine this to be primarily a creative, inductive, and unscripted process: What are those untold or unexamined truths of my story and what might I make of them in light of more prominent memories? What captures my imagination as I walk these once familiar streets and note what is new and unfamiliar? What memories come to mind and where might they take me now? Where do old friends and acquaintances, new encounters, including with my younger self, and unscheduled time lead me in the story of now?

The third portion of each cycle will provide generous space for re-creation—to breathe, reflect and be renewed with trusted companions over the years on this journey.

## **Congregational Process**

My sabbatical plan has always envisioned a parallel process for you, the congregation. In January 2022 we formed what we alternately call our *Learning Group* or *TCI Group* (an acronym for the Seattle Presbytery's [Thriving Congregation's Initiative](#) of which we—through the Learning Group—are year-one participants). At my invitation, Maggie Breen has been working with the group informally, and now, formally through her work as a core lead (specifically “Community Education & Assessment Specialist”) in the TCI process for Seattle Presbytery.

We imagine that before, during, and after my sabbatical, the Learning Group will meet on a regular basis to examine our current practices and explore new learnings. I will not meet with them during my leave-taking. They will invite speakers, explore our city, visit museums, talk with community leaders, read books and articles, listen to podcasts, and generally prepare us to engage social and cultural challenges faithfully and creatively. We expect collectively to be challenged and rejuvenated by possibilities that present themselves as we explore questions of our identity, mission, and role within the community. Upon my return, the learning cohort will share with me and I with them. Together we will build on these learnings from the congregational process.

You will hear much more from this group as they engage you in these learnings in the coming months. They are:

- Jill Jones (also a session member)
- Bob Seel (a session member beginning in July)
- Karla Kallberg
- Raiden Kallberg
- Nikki Gibson
- Jess Pace
- Lainey Sickinger
- Melet Whinston

## **Whew!**

That's a lot, I realize. But your engagement is a key in drawing on the life-giving possibilities of this sabbatical work, so I want you to be aware.

Julie Kae Sigars, who will take on additional hours and pastoral roles in my absence, and Andrea Shirey will be the primary staff contacts during my leave-taking and will work closely with the Learning Group. Pat Sharpe and Carolyn Yahoudy will be, as always, indispensable volunteers in the office.

I hope you will ask questions and offer your gifts and graces to the opportunity that this sabbatical leave presents. I can't wait to see what the Spirit has in mind!

Grace & Peace,

Scott