

I'm happy for the chance to share a few thoughts with you and excited by the idea of joining you all for a while. So let me begin with a word about my connection to St. Simons.

My family has been connected to the Island since the early '80s, when my mother fell in love with it while she was completing a Masters in Theological Studies at Emory in her 50s. I visited the Island with her and quickly experienced what drew her there. It wasn't long before she bought her "stake," a little beach house about three blocks inland from the Lighthouse on May Joe St. that for many years she rented to a local school teacher named Wanda. When I was finishing my PhD in the late '80s I lived on the Island for a few weeks to write—running on the beach and feeding the seagulls. When my mother's renter retired and left the Island in the late '90s my mother and her husband moved there, took down the old house and built new. It was her labor of love. My wife Lynne and I visited with our sons when we could. They remember biking, boogie boarding, playing on the whale sculpture (before it was moved), kayaking, running wild, and exploring the area.

My mother joined St. Simons Presbyterian not long after moving there and was blessed by your ministry for over 20 years. I would often hear about your services and the sermons of the day when we talked on Sunday afternoons. She'd tell me about Sunday School classes, the Esther Circle, and conversations with staff and members. I would attend with her when there. My family was grateful for the ministries of SSPC as we faced transitions as my mother aged, and then as we tended to her eventual death. Her cremains are in your Memorial Garden. Yet even with her passing, our connection to the Island remains strong as my sister and I have inherited the house and my oldest son, Andrew, is now living there—making life on the Island for now and helping coordinate repairs and updates for us.

I've known and respected your pastors and came to feel the same for Dr. Goyer during our memorial service preparation. He knew of my plans to retire from Pinnacle Presbyterian, in Scottsdale, this past January. Yet I was surprised to hear from him a few weeks ago, when he sent word about his plans to complete his time as Interim Pastor at the end of June and asked if I'd be open to talking to your search committee about filling the pastoral gap between his time and the completion of your search. I haven't been looking to do interim ministry. I've instead been tending to things in Phoenix (and there, with the house) and accepting a few project commitments (writing, engagement with the Middle East concerns, conferences). So I was equally surprised at how immediately open I was to the idea. That openness has grown into enthusiasm, and into gratitude that the search committee felt the same way after our conversations.

I've appreciated the committee's openness to me, interest in my experience, and fascination with my family's connection to the Island. I'm grateful that they've also been supportive of my desire to still pursue those other commitments I've taken on while I'd be doing this interim ministry, even as I will surely moderate those commitments a bit to keep time free to give all the attention needed to do faithful ministry there.

I'd see my responsibilities to include seeking the Spirit to be a faithful steward of SSPC's ministry for these months—sustaining and growing the ministry as able, asking questions, joining staff as we share ministry, leading worship, leading leadership, representing the congregation in the community, being available to the PNC as needed, keeping you all ready for your next Senior Pastor, praying for you all and enjoying you all. It's a gift to be invited to do all of that, should you agree.

Your committee has information about me and their own observations. But so you know the bullet points of my professional experience, here's a brief summary:

- Retired in January after 15 years as **Senior Pastor and Head of Staff of Pinnacle Presbyterian Church** in Scottsdale, AZ (1400 members, multiple-staff, large campus). Though it's in the Southwest, Pinnacle is a congregation not unlike SSPC.
- 3 years as **Senior Pastor and Head of Staff of Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church**, Bryn Mawr, PA (3000 members).
- 6 years as **Clement-Muehl Assistant Professor of Communication at Yale Divinity School**, with a second appointment in Yale's **Institute for Sacred Music**. I taught preaching, communication, interpretation of scripture, faith and science, and religion and the arts.
- 4 years as **Senior Pastor and Head of Staff at First Presbyterian Church**, Wilmette, IL (500 members).
- 1 year as a Research Fellow at **Yale Divinity School**.
- 6 years as **College Chaplain and Lecturer at Bates College**, in Lewiston, ME.
- **PhD in Communication**, Northwestern University.
- **Interim Director, University Christian Ministry (part-time)**, Northwestern.
- **Pastoral Fellowship for Parish Ministry from Princeton Seminary**, spent at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and the Interfaith Academy of Peace at the Tantur Ecumenical Institute, Israel/Palestine.
- **Ordained** in the Ministry of Word and Sacrament by the Philadelphia Presbytery, September, 1984.
- **MDiv**, Princeton Seminary (awards in preaching and the pastoral fellowship)

I also have a bachelor's degree from Northwestern and have studied at the University of Sussex in England, the University of Chicago, and Yale.

I'm the author of **Where the Light Shines Through: Discerning God in Everyday Life** (Brazos Press, 2006), one other book, and a few other things here and there. Over the years I've been blessed from Lilly Endowment support for exploring topics in ministry, support from the Templeton Foundation for convening dialogue between faith and science, and other opportunities. In 2016 I used a sabbatical grant from Lilly to return to Jerusalem for three months, which led to leading a congregational pilgrimage and accepting a role in support of Dar al Kalima University of Arts and Culture (begun from the Lutheran ministry in Bethlehem) in Bethlehem. I'm now part of a Lilly Endowment funded four-year project with other pastors looking at how some of the massive changes in our culture impact ministry. For many years I've also been a part of "The Community of Pastors," which is a cohort group of 25 Senior Pastors of multi-staff PCUSA congregations who meet together twice each year for education, support, and discussion of best practices. I look forward to sharing thoughts from these things with you all.

About family. I mentioned that our son Andrew (28) is living on the Island. You might see him if you go to *Jittery Joe's* for some coffee, are looking to hire a personal trainer at *Anytime Fitness*, or if you have a child on one of the soccer teams he coaches for a local club. Andrew is an athlete, having played soccer at Luther College (where he finished a BA in psychology), Valparaiso University, and on a couple of semi-professional teams. After college he took a year as a Presbyterian Young Adult Volunteer in Peru, which was sadly cut short by the pandemic. Andrew's younger brother, Paul (26), lives in Nashville, where he's a musician working as lead guitar for a number of young country musicians. He's on the road a lot. Paul graduated from Berklee College of Music in Boston before moving to Nashville. My wife of 33 years, Lynne, is an RN and has worked in many settings. For the last few years she's been focusing on adolescents as a high school nurse. I'm often stunned, and inspired, by the work she does with the 30-40 teens who come to her office on any given day. Lynne grew up in her father's family home in Swarthmore, PA, though her mother was from Anderson, South Carolina. She graduated from Brown University in Rhode Island before eventually getting her nursing degree from Rush University in Chicago. She's the Presbyterian in the family, with generations of Presbyterians on her father's side. For my part, my upbringing was in Southeastern Michigan and included years as a Presbyterian, Episcopalian, and Methodist. My professional ministry has been both inside and outside the PCUSA—and it's been rich, challenging, delightful, and humbling.