



# St. Andrew's

## Presbyterian Church

In mid-February, Pastor Sarah Sanderson-Doughty got a new call and we ushered in Pastor Amy Delaney as Bridge Pastor. A Bridge Pastor's role is to shepherd the congregation and Session through that short period of time between the departure of the former pastor and the arrival of the next pastoral leader. Along with assistance from the Presbytery, Pastor Amy is guiding the Session's discernment of the skills and gifts they foresee being most helpful in their next pastor. That process usually takes 2-3 months and involves creating a job description, posting the vacancy, and conducting interviews.

During this time of transition, the Session and Pastor Amy have set expectations regarding the items that Pastor Sarah routinely did as Pastor – a list detailing who will handle which tasks, and which will be set aside until the next pastoral leader arrives.

On February 8<sup>th</sup> following worship, Session met with representatives from the Presbytery to discuss next steps. At the meeting were:

- Brian Craker, Transitional Executive Presbyter;
- Robin Garvin, Commission on Ministry Pastoral Transition Advisor; and
- Don Ludwig, Presbytery Commission on Ministry Liaison.

The Session learned how transitions usually work in Cascades Presbytery. The first step is to secure a bridge pastor to provide pastoral leadership and assist the Session with discerning the next type of pastoral leader that will serve the congregation well. In most cases, that will be some form of transitional pastor on contract with the Session while steps are taken, such as forming a Pastor Nominating Committee, to call or hire the next pastoral leader.

They concluded the meeting by interviewing and extending a contract offer to the Rev. Amy Delaney to serve as half-time bridge pastor for 12 weeks, with a projected end date of May 17<sup>th</sup>. She accepted and has begun her service among us. The St. Andrew's Session met as they typically do each month on February 19<sup>th</sup>, conducting the usual business of the church, taking time to respond to the Presbytery's survey of congregations, and reviewing the Separation Ethics expected of departing pastors. This document can be briefly summarized by this statement in the document, "Personal relations of friendship are to be affirmed and may continue but are not to be confused with the pastoral relationship which has ended." Pastor Sarah

may continue those friendships she made while here, but any discussion about St. Andrew's is to be discouraged.

The March 5<sup>th</sup> Session meeting was a special meeting where the Rev. Robin Garvin joined from the Presbytery to learn more about the pastoral leadership options for the next pastor and why we might choose one over another. As a result, we believe St. Andrew's would be best served by a trained Transitional Pastor. A Transitional Pastor shepherds a congregation through a short transition time (averaging 12-18 months) as the Session and, most likely, also a Pastor Nominating Committee begin the work of finding the next pastor. The Transitional Pastor is more than a placeholder – in addition to providing for worship, administration, and pastoral care – they will have a list of tasks to be accomplished during the transition with the Session's help.

You may recall that in 2025 the Session engaged A.E. Sloan Leadership to conduct a thorough interview process with the congregation. There was a congregational survey, focus groups, and a story-telling event. Each of these provided good information for the consultants' understanding of who St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church is, and what particular gifts we bring to the world around us. The goal of the consultancy process was to help us more fully understand the views of the congregation as a whole at this moment in time and identify the unique gifts we have to offer the community at large – some of which may have not yet been discovered. This would then guide us as we decide how we want to move forward.

We are aware that there has been some conversation about a future merger of the Southwest area Presbyterian churches. After speaking with the pastors of our neighboring congregations, Pastor Amy noted that any talk of merger is premature. We will hold open all future options, but the other congregations do not currently have a merger on their 10-year horizon. With that information in hand, our Session moved forward with planning for the continuing ministry for the congregation.

The Session met again on March 19<sup>th</sup>, devoting the majority of their discussion time to understanding the work that was done (reviewing and synthesizing the insights obtained from our recent self-study led by our A.E. Sloan consultants), and how that information can assist in the tasks before us as we search for the next pastoral leader, especially as we describe our congregation during the search process. Many of our findings were also discussed at the Town Hall meeting on Sunday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>. The brief summary is that our core values haven't changed as our congregation has decreased in size and increased in age. To remain viable, we need aspirational goals that fit who we are now and we have the capability to accomplish. At this point, going back to a congregation like we had decades ago is not a realistic expectation.

A subcommittee of Session proposed a position description for a Transitional pastor with the skills to assist us in identifying realistic goals and hiring a longer-term pastor to help implement those goals. Of course, both pastors will be responsible for what you might think of as "typical" pastor duties like being a faith leader, administrator,

caregiver, etc. The Session approved the position description and it has been submitted to the Presbytery's Commission on Ministry. They are scheduled to discuss it at a meeting on March 26<sup>th</sup>. Once they approve it, it will be posted in all the places that Presbyterian pastors usually look for new positions (the St. Andrew's website, our Presbytery's communications, and possibly nationally).

A Transitional Pastor may also be found via grassroots connections. We have asked our congregation and anyone who receives the weekly eNews to pass along the information of anyone they may know who might be a good candidate.