



On behalf of the Session of SAPC, we invite you to SAPC's annual stated Congregational Meeting on Sunday, February 25th immediately following worship. *Childcare and snacks will be provided!*

The annual meeting is a time to reflect, learn, and act together. In preparation an agenda, congregational report, and an FAQ are attached. For the last three years, SAPC has been 'getting our house in order.' We hope the [congregational report](#) serves as evidence of the many ways God's Spirit is moving among our congregation as it draws us to serve Christ beyond our walls. As you read, remember our strategic priorities: 1) stabilize the administrative scaffolding of our church (finances, property, personnel) and 2) fully engage members in the life of the church. In 2024 these priorities remain front and center, as the Session also prepares for a vibrant future; a future hinged on the Gospel. As context for our meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> we offer a summary of the substantial progress our leaders have made.

In 2021 SAPC and nine other churches were invited to join a two-year innovative planning process led by the Black Mountain School of Theology. A task force of the Session (Thriving Congregations) received training in community organizing, qualitative observation and research, theological inquiry, and action-oriented discernment. Rooted in prayer, more than 60 one on one meetings and six listening sessions have been held. Without an agenda, members were asked to share their passions and hopes for Selwyn. Along with historical research, six planning retreats, and regular meetings, learnings from those relational meetings affirmed a clear understanding of SAPC's identity.

- Selwyn is not afraid to leap when called by the Holy Spirit.
- Selwyn has always had a desire to make a difference.
- Selwyn values intergenerational community and authentic relationships.
- SAPC's long standing commitment to children is essential to our identity and purpose.
- Selwyn hopes to engage our mission in deeper and 'messier' ways.
- Selwyn feels called to lead.

In most organizations, a leader casts a vision and tells folks what to do. This isn't how we do things in the Presbyterian Church. Yes, I am encouraged and excited by what might be possible if we harness our passion and love for God's glory! However, Christ alone is the Head of the Church. With trust and joy, we, a *Priesthood of All Believers*, must discern God's call together. Because our identity should guide our mission, Selwyn began asking deeper internal questions, and listening to community leaders and mission partners.

- *In what ways will Selwyn embody and live out our identity?*
- *What will Selwyn do to bear witness to the Gospel in Charlotte?*
- *What are the true hopes and needs of those we hope to welcome and serve?*

Last spring the Session affirmed *Selwyn now seeks deeper and more transformative care for children and youth within the areas of early childhood development and youth mental health, especially those underserved, as we seek to relationally engage neighbors within south Charlotte.* With this vision the Session endorsed a feasibility study on SAPC's existing properties to assess how we might plan for the future. Operating in a basement built in 1955, SAPC's 5-star CDC cares for more than 100 children and carries a wait list of more than 300 children. It remains an expression of Selwyn's commitment to the promises of baptism, and many dedicated members find their way to SAPC through the CDC.

Affordable, high-quality early childhood care and education continues to be a critical need for families in Charlotte. *In years to come, will we need to address Selwyn's infrastructure to maintain our commitment to young families seeking a community in which to belong and receive care?*

Although landlocked, Selwyn's proximity to CMS schools is essential to our identity. Committed to our longstanding partnership with Montclair Elementary School, SAPC continues to focus on the well-being and education of children who are often underserved, underhoused, and food insecure. Also, our community has recently been devastated by the impact of a youth mental health epidemic. *How might Selwyn deepen and expand our care for children and youth who attend one of the many schools nearby?*

While we do not yet have answers to these questions, the Session was confident in choosing to sell the 3019 Selwyn Ave lot for a substantial profit. Developing it would be far too expensive and difficult. As a result, the decision was affirmed by congregational vote, SAPC's debt was retired, immediate priorities were attended to, and SAPC continues to thrive as we move in the future. This work of discernment stems from a position of abundance and hope. We know WHO we are, and we know WHAT we are called to do. *Now we are asking, HOW? How will we live out our identity as people committed to Christian discipleship? Knowing our strengths of community and love for children, how will God call Selwyn to share the love of Christ within our city?*

Charlotte is the third fastest growing city in the country with projections for metro Charlotte indicating a 47% surge in population in just 20 years. To thrive thirty or forty years from now, our purpose must be clear and our footholds in the community strong. While SAPC is thriving, research indicates a majority of congregations in America are declining. Cities like Charlotte are growing, and culture is changing at a rate beyond 'the Church's' ability to respond. Although faithful and committed, this has been the case for Quail Hollow Presbyterian Church with whom SAPC entered a temporary partnership last fall.

In response to an unplanned departure of their pastor, SAPC's staff has been providing QHPC part-time pastoral care and worship leadership. Also, we have occasionally joined together for joyful worship and fellowship. In December, the Session of Quail Hollow invited SAPC to consider a formal partnership. There are many reasons this opportunity could enhance the long-term stability and growth of SAPC, while aligning with Selwyn's mission and purpose in Charlotte. *However, there are many more questions than answers.*

The Session is gathering all the questions they would need to answer before a faithful decision could be made. In March, the Planning Committee, as part of the Session's Administration Group, will seek *permission* from the Session to continue their research over the summer. Their goal will be to equip the Session to make an informed decision next fall. A merger would then require a congregational vote.

The opportunity with Quail Hollow has been unexpected but intriguing. Much of what we are learning about the good people of Quail Hollow aligns with Selwyn's identity and vision. We look forward to sharing as much as possible as we learn more. Alongside our siblings at Quail Hollow, Selwyn is beginning a process of mutual prayer and discernment. We value your trust, faithful prayers, ideas, and questions! During SAPC's congregational meeting, members of the Planning Committee and Thriving Congregations teams will offer an overview of their process and findings. This [FAO](#) may answer a few of your immediate questions.

With Lenten Hope,

Lori