



September 19th, 2024

Dear Selwyn Friends,

Since last March many leaders at Selwyn Avenue have been exploring the possibilities, risks, and logistics of a merger with Quail Hollow Presbyterian Church. The process has been approached with intention, care, mutual forbearance, pragmatism, and faith across both campuses. We have met with consultants, community leaders, academics and presbytery leaders. We have imagined, calculated, problem-solved, weighed risks, and prayed (a lot). Selwyn Avenue has been blessed by our new relationships and shared faith with the people of Quail Hollow. Now, we are in the final stages of discerning the possibility of becoming 'One Church, with One Vision, and Two Campuses.'

While this decision is significant, Selwyn should not lose sight of how God continues to bless and nurture our congregation here and now! There is so much to celebrate. Selwyn Avenue continues to thrive and grow, and after three years of rebuilding and reestablishing our lives together, the 'Selwyn Spirit' is alive and well. Thanks to the faithful leadership of our Session and your steadfast commitment to SAPC, many ministries have momentum, and members seem motivated to connect across our community. There is evidence of God's faithful abundance among us.

In the last several weeks it has been a joy to witness the spirit moving within our membership as we gather for worship, learning, fellowship, and mission together. PW Women added two new circles for younger women, a new men's small group is forming, the nursery welcomes new families every week, confirmands and their mentors are gathering on Sunday mornings, baptism classes and new member orientation classes are underway, and Selwyn youth are discovering the joys of building community together.

As we look to the fall, you can expect to hear more about exciting initiatives to repair our steeple, invigorate our music program, participate in the ongoing stewardship of SAPC, enhance our children's programming, and joyfully engage our mission partners at Montclair Elementary, Roof Above, and Habitat for Humanity.

Over the last three years, SAPC has been diligent and tenacious as we stabilized and strengthened our administrative scaffolding. At the same time, the Thriving Congregations team led us through a comprehensive process of discernment and strategic planning. These two significant efforts inform the merger decision ahead of us. If Selwyn had not attended to the administrative needs of our church and adopted a bold vision, we would not have been prepared to discern God's call toward something so significant.

Some Administrative Highlights (since 2022) include:

- Selwyn has strengthened its financial footing
 - Received a generous living legacy gift (\$250,000).
 - Sold an adjacent piece of land for a large profit (\$300,000).
 - Exceeded pledge goals and giving in 2023.
 - Celebrated the retirement of all debt.
 - Modified the annual budget to reflect the current and future needs and ministries of the church.
 - Updated the endowment policy and re-aligned SAPC's Endowment Funds with the Presbyterian Foundation.
- Selwyn has addressed (and continues to address) several deferred maintenance projects.
- Selwyn has welcomed 87 adults and 28 youth as members since 2022.
- Selwyn has stabilized its staffing model.
 - Called Associate Pastor Brian Daoust for Mission and Youth.
 - Affirmed Rev. Margo Fraga's call as Associate Pastor for Congregational Life and Christian Education.

At the same time, Selwyn's Session:

- Endorsed the Thriving Congregations team to host 70 one on one meetings and eight listening sessions.
- Adopted a bold vision focused on early childhood development and youth mental health (Spring 2023).
- Entered a relationship with QHPC, to provide pastoral leadership by SAPC's contracted pastors (Fall 2023).
- Voted to explore a merger with QHPC for the purpose of reaching our North Star Vision (Spring 2024).

Over the summer eight workgroups comprised of 50 volunteers from both congregations documented the innerworkings of our churches, reported their findings (including risks) and suggested pathways forward if a merger were to occur. Their work is informing the Planning committee's recommendation to the Session(s). The reports were overwhelmingly positive.

However, as one elder astutely summarized, "there is no reason we shouldn't merge, but we must understand why we should." If you would like to review the rationale for why SAPC is considering becoming 'One Church, with One Vision, and two Campuses,' with Quail Hollow, please visit SAPC's "vision" on website.

The Planning committee has promised to engage as many members and friends as possible with the understanding that discerning God's will requires the depth and breadth of our entire congregation's prayer, wisdom, and trust. If you would like to learn more about the process and history of this opportunity to merge, please visit SAPC's "vision" on website to access a past letter to the congregation and FAQ.

God is doing a new thing. In all earnestness, I invite you to reach out to me or a member of the Planning committee for a deeper conversation. Most of all, please pray for the leaders of SAPC and QHPC. Pray for clarity, unity, courage, and mutual forbearance as we consider both the legacy and future of our congregations.

A formal recommendation about the merger with QHPC from the Planning Team will not be presented to the Session until October 22nd. In the meantime, please mark Sunday, October 20th (11:45am Chapel) and Monday, October 21st (7:00pm ZOOM) on your calendar for SAPC's next listening sessions. SAPC's Session will vote on Tuesday, October 22nd. If the recommendation to merge passes at both Sessions, the Planning committee will begin working with the Presbytery toward congregational votes early in December.

In the Hope and Promises,



Rev. Dr. Lori Archer Raible

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel:
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine.
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old.
I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth; do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert... to give drink to my chosen people,
the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.~ Isaiah 43