

Patrick James “P. J.” Southam biography

I was born and raised in the America west, in rural North Dakota. For four years during my childhood my family lived in Greensboro, North Carolina. I was blessed to have Christian parents and grandparents. Whatever kind of Christian I am is in large part because of their influence. My father claims he knew that I was called to ministry when I was about eight years old and remarked to him about the beauty of the church’s cross on Easter morning. This was at Christ Lutheran Church in Greensboro, NC.

In 1971 my family moved back to my father’s hometown of Mohall, North Dakota so that my parents could purchase and run a small-town drugstore and gift shop. I learned how to work starting at an early age. It was in high school that I started asking pastors about being a pastor.

All my life I have known that Jesus loved me and I have trusted him. When asked when I got saved I respond “Two thousand years ago when Jesus died on the cross for my sins.” I moved to Ohio to attend college. These years were a turning point for me. When I was with Christian friends I acted like a Christian. When I was with non-Christian friends I acted like a non-Christian. In my early twenties I realized that I needed to take following Christ seriously and live for my Savior Jesus full-time.

I was living and working in Ohio when I met and married Sue. We were both Lutherans, but of different denominations. While courting, a Presbyterian friend invited us to his church, the United Presbyterian Church of Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio. We joined and were married there. One year later I was ordained as a deacon and served for four years. I am grateful to Rev. Diane Kennedy for her excellent training of deacons in care ministries. During this time of service, and because of some help I was able to give two friends, my call to ministry became solidified, and off to seminary I went. I was ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament in 1998.

I have served churches in Montana, South Dakota, Missouri and Kansas. I am the author of *How to Speak Presbyterian*, *The Presbyterian Heritage Daily Devotional*, *The Nicene Creed for Trinity Sunday*, and several articles for the PPL newsletter. I have served on various presbytery committees and as an overture advocate to the 219th General Assembly. Because I have served western presbyteries where the churches are spread out I have come to deeply appreciate presbytery meetings and my colleagues in ministry, both teaching and ruling elders, whom I have come to know and serve with.

My wife and I were never able to have children despite years of trying. That is the great sorrow of our marriage. In my spare time I enjoy reading and woodworking, and a little hunting. My wife is an artist, primarily quilting and weaving.

I am a sinner saved by God’s grace. I don’t deserve that grace, or most of what I have in this life for that matter, but I sure am grateful for it. With each passing year I am both deeply aware of my foul sin, and also of God’s great love in saving me and making me clean. I cherish this beautiful verse: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.” (Ephesians 2:8 NRSV)