

## Reverend Andrew Nagy-Benson -- Autobiography



I was born on Mother's Day, 1970 – an unseasonably hot day – in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I grew up in Simsbury, Connecticut with my parents, two brothers and sister. I attended Colby College (B.A., English), where I enjoyed opportunities to study abroad in London and Vienna, to develop my interest in poetry, and to lead the men's lacrosse team. After graduating from Colby in 1992, I worked the summer in a salmon cannery in southeast Alaska. At season's end, I traveled to southeast Costa Rica, where I spent a year teaching English and Environmental Education to elementary and high school students in a remote valley of Dole bananas. Upon returning to the States, I taught English and coached lacrosse at Millbrook School, an independent high school in Millbrook, New York. I met my partner/wife there. Gwen and I married on an unseasonably cold day in Williamstown, MA in the wake of Mother's Day, 1997.

I entered Yale Divinity School (M.Div., '98) with the intent to study Religion and Literature and to eventually earn a Ph.D. in that field. By the end of the first semester, I changed degree programs – from M.A. to M.Div. – and began a grace-filled walk toward ordained pastoral ministry. To my surprise, I received a prize at graduation given to the graduating student "with promise for excellence in pastoral leadership."

I'm still mining the meaning of pastoral "excellence" and am ever grateful for the opportunities I have had to serve Christ and God's people in the United Church of Christ. During my final year at Yale, I was called to be the licensed pastor of Pilgrim Congregational Church, UCC in New Haven. After graduation, I served for three years as the sole pastor of First Congregational Church of Swanzey (NH), UCC. Weeks after 9/11, I began my pastorate at Spring Glen Church, UCC in Hamden, Connecticut. During my time at Spring Glen, I have also been a Lecturer of Homiletics at Yale Divinity, have contributed articles to a lectionary

commentary series, *Feasting on the Word*, and have served as chair of the New Haven Association's Committee on Ministry.

In the span of twelve years, my love for pastoral ministry has grown. I am committed to the work of reconciliation, unconditional welcome and service in Christ's name. I am, at once, a son of a Sunday school teacher, a prodigal teen, and a quickly graying man who celebrates the unmerited love of God. When I sing "Amazing Grace" I sing of something I know and am always learning.

At the end of day, I return home to be with my favorite reminders of God's love. Gwen and I are blessed with three daughters: Ella (9), Mary (7) and Rachael (1). In a real way, my calling is bi-vocational – pastor *and* parent. When I am not in the middle of pastoral work or parenting, I try to find time to follow the Red Sox, to exercise, to read, and to write. At home and at church, I am compelled by God's goodness and by my need to say in word and deed: *Thank you.*

### From Statement of Ministry: Andy Nagy-Benson

The unconditional love of God, revealed profoundly in Jesus, is the foundation of my faith and ministry. As a pastor, my response to God's love includes a desire to offer the people I serve an unhurried presence of companionship. Indeed, if I could choose one word to describe my ministry it would be "with." It is an awesome privilege to accompany people in times of crisis and a pleasure to laugh long with those whose lives are wound around mine. When I consider what I enjoy most about parish ministry, the names of people in my congregations come quickly to mind. These and many other saints have enriched my life in countless ways. Simply put, my admiration and affection for the people I have served are deep.

Over these years of ministry, I have tried to nurture the spiritual lives of people of all ages. Through preaching and teaching, I aim to connect the ancient words of Scripture with the lives of those gathered. Celebrating the sacraments of baptism and Holy Communion, I give thanks for the promise of Christ's abiding presence. Working with church leaders, lay and ordained, I seek to share the joy and responsibility of covenantal ministry. Leading service trips for youth and adults, I hope to grow in others the other-centered love (*agape* in Greek) that is essential to Christian living. As a leader of leaders, I take seriously the work of peace and justice and am firmly committed to a ministry of hospitality to all people. In our care for others, we see clearly the image of God in each person. In our outreach to those whose needs are great, we express clearly the good news that God is with us; God's love is alive and on the loose in the world.

On my office wall, beside the door, there is a framed verse of Scripture that offers me a daily reminder. The words are Christ's as remembered in the Gospel of Luke: "From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required" (12:48). As I recall the hills and valleys of my life's path, my eyes

fill with appreciation for the way God's grace has invited me to share my vision, passion, and abilities with the people of Christ's church. I have been given so much more than I could possibly give away. With praise, the lump in my throat says, "Thank you, God." With faith, my prayer remains: "Christ, show me the way and grant me the courage to follow."