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My time as Associate Pastor at First Presbyterian Virginia Beach has been delightful. First Pres. Ann Arbor truly prepared me for this position by giving me experience in every category of ministry. Working with Jay Sanderford, the other residents in my cohort—Daniel Ervin and Angela Ryo, the pastors and the entire staff taught me to see ministry through liturgical, sociological, practical, and compassionate lenses. The most powerful tools Ann Arbor gave me come from the areas of vocal training for preaching and worship, pastoral care, youth, and senior ministry as well as whole host of excellent administrative and communication practices. Thanks to the staff and lay people at First Pres I am able to do good work here in Virginia Beach.

The biggest benefit that my congregants have seen is probably the speech lessons and vocal I received from Doris Granum, as well as Jay Sanderford. One Sunday our electricity was out and I had to deliver the sermon in a large sanctuary. Doris will be happy to know that my voice stayed low, my articulation met with the reverb in the space, and my hands were where they needed to be! I enjoyed my time with her and thanks to her teachings my congregation can not only hear me, but they never missed a word!

Eldon Beery helped me in the area of pastoral care. From him I learned better ways to communicate compassion in a sensitive manner. He gave me professional tips on how to conduct myself with colleagues and a lens through which to see ministry as a sacred duty even when timing doesn't seem right or convenient. As an associate I am always busy, always pushing to get everything in on time, but Eldon gave me the gift of knowing how to slow myself down to truly be present with the people I see and it has already given me so much here. I feel like the skills I learned with him have helped me to know and appreciate people, to see beyond the surface and look for their hearts. The hearts I have come to know here have taken a hold of my own.

The office staff in Ann Arbor helped me immensely in learning how the church operates and communicates. Thanks to them I came to Virginia Beach knowing the steps I needed to take to do a variety of things. Lisa Haddrill and Mary Jones taught me to think about all the most efficient ways to communicate. Linda Robinson and Cindy King taught me how to work office equipment, process requests, and which channels to go through to do things decently and in good order. The Residency was my first career move and seminary simply doesn't teach these practical things, so thank goodness the office staff members at First Pres are patient, loving, and highly skilled as well as excellent teachers!

Not a day goes by that I do not think about our youth at Ann Arbor-- they gave me something very powerful, a love for ministry and a powerful hope that wakes me up each day. We had amazing times, even though sometimes things felt chaotic or didn't go as planned, but the youth taught me that it's okay to come together, care for each other and explore the world with faith. The Mids showed me that good things are going to happen and in the end we're all in this together. I learned that I am not so much a leader as I am a guide walking beside them. Youth are not to be talked to or at, but they are to be talked with and when we talk with them, we as pastors get to learn so much. They allowed me into their lives as a Resident and their parents too, and what I found there were spiritually rich individuals. Thanks to them I walk into teaching confirmation here with nothing but excitement and hope!

Glacier Hills gave me an appreciation for all the amazing and wonderful people in an older generation. I had so much fun getting to know the people who call Glacier Hills home. In them the community of people at Glacier I was able to see ageless people. No matter your abilities or your physical age, we are all just people who want to live, love, and enjoy life fully and completely. Glacier was filled with life and a glow that fed my spirit. Studying the Bible with them showed me a wide range of faith journeys and gifts those adults had to offer to all of us. The joy of working at Glacier Hills is what has led me to begin a new Bible study here at Westminster Canterbury. I do miss the people at Glacier every day, but it is because of them that I now know so many lovely people here.

My favorite thing about my new church is the people. Of course I miss everyone in Ann Arbor dearly, but I am having so much fun with the people at my new church. I get to enjoy knowing them, going to their homes and hospital rooms. I get to interact with the youth and the children as much as the adults and it brings me joy. For Christmas this year I enjoyed my time with a few families in the church. In true Virginia Beach fashion, a family showed me their Christmas tradition of shucking oysters, roasting them, and eating them with bourbon. I must say I enjoyed that tradition very much!

In my 7 months here I have begun an ecumenical Bible Study at Westminster Canterbury Senior Living Center, begun working with a team to build a new customized church website and app, set up electronic giving, begun a young adult ministry, started a care card ministry, I work with our version of Hilltoppers called Sojourners, set up a digital pastoral care system that mirrors the one used at First Pres A2, gave a Tech Savvy Parenting course, and I've taken on Confirmation class.

I'm continuing to learn in this new place and have a wonderful senior pastor to guide me as I encounter new things, but Ann Arbor will always hold a place in my heart. Jay Sanderford, Daniel Ervin, and Angela Ryo are still very much my go-to colleagues when I face new challenges and I am blessed to be able to count on them. Thank you, First Presbyterian. You have given me a foothold in this crazy calling called ministry and without you I don't know that I would have made it here.