

October 16, 2023

To: Grace Covenant
From: Interim Pastor Nominating Committee (IPNC)

In an effort to keep the Congregation informed, I wanted to provide an update on our progress as well as address some recent concerns/recommendations that were brought to the attention of the committee and Session.

The IPNC has completed the Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP) and it has been approved by the Committee on Ministry (COM) of the Presbytery. This is the first critical step of creating a document for potential candidates to review. It is constructed so as to identify our church, the community in which we live, and the strengths and job attributes we believe to be important for our candidates. The MDP will be posted on the Presbyterian web site within the next day or two. We fully expect to start receiving applications shortly thereafter.

One of the questions that has been posed to the IPNC and to Session was, “Is it really necessary to go through the process of hiring an interim (or transitional) pastor, or could we/should we use the Bridge Pastor to carry us directly to the process of seeking a permanent pastor?”

I’d like to take a moment to address that question specifically.

1. While there are those who may believe the Interim to Permanent Model is a requirement from COM, that is not entirely true. There are, in fact, churches within our Presbytery who have chosen to bypass the interim process and have moved directly to hiring a permanent Pastor.

COM does prefer that churches follow the Interim/Transition Process rather than move directly to hiring a permanent Pastor, but have been known to grant exceptions.

If GCPC wanted to change the Interim process that has already been started, it would require taking our case to COM and having that revised process approved, then launching a Pastor Nominating Committee. At a minimum, this would set us back in the current process 2-3 months.

2. COM is also the entity that is responsible for posting job openings within the Presbytery and matching the attributes of the applicants to the attributes identified in the MDP provided by the church seeking candidates. There really isn’t another widely viewed mechanism for posting the job, or having the final job and candidate matched and approved.
3. COM is also the governing body that ultimately must approve any recommended hire for GCPC, whether that is the Interim or Permanent Pastor.
4. There are some fundamental differences in the candidates that are seeking interim/transitional posts from candidates seeking a permanent post.

- a. Interim candidates have typically had specific training in directing a church through a transition process. In the MDP submitted by GCPC, we specifically included that training as a requirement for candidates we would speak to.
- b. The job applicant pool of Interim/Transitional ministers is larger. Many, if not most, of the candidates that make themselves available for this job are retired ministers who have gone through the transitional training and are seeking a relatively short-term posting to assist churches once there has been pastor turnover.

Hiring an experienced pastor as a permanent replacement comes about by matching our needs with a pastor looking to make a change in their current situation. COM has indicated that there are currently more openings in the Presbytery than candidates seeking new opportunities.

As the concerns were brought to Session this week, there was serious debate and discussion about what approach we (Session) believe is best for Grace Covenant. At the conclusion of our discussions, we believe the best course to meet the long-term needs of GCPC is to stay the course of utilizing a Bridge Pastor (Karen Wright, beginning on Sunday, November 5th) and proceeding with the Interim Pastor Review process that is already in motion.

I would like to assure GCPC that every effort will be made to move quickly into the process of posting a position for the permanent Pastor, once an Interim Pastor is in place. (The last time GCPCP utilized an Interim Pastor, we waited nearly a year before forming a Pastor Nominating Committee, partly because GCPC had embarked on, but hadn't completed the process of defining its long-term Vision as a church.)

Much of the work that Mitch & Sue Trigger completed while they were here helped GCPC evaluate and identify its current church Vision before they left. We truly don't feel like we will need to spend an inordinate amount of time revisiting that vision perspective to move forward.

I was selected to lead the IPNC process and plan on having my team address the church on a regular basis to let everyone know how we are progressing as we continue through this process. I would welcome any and all questions that any member has about our processes or our decisions. My contact information is provided below.

Sincerely,

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