

The Process of Securing an Interim Minister

Good morning. The purpose of my talk is to tell you about the process of securing an interim minister. The search process for an interim minister is one that is built for speed. By the end of August, we will be working with a new minister.

Please understand that the work of the Ministerial Search Committee is merely suspended, not finished. The Committee remains intact but inactive for a time. The job of the congregation is to stand at the ready. So pay attention, I will explain this later.

The shift to an interim minister has resulted in the establishment of an Interim Search Committee by the Board of Trustees. This 3 member committee is drawn from three sectors of the church: A lay member of the congregation, a member of the BoT, and a member of the MSC. Therefore, the BoT has selected Jackie Vines, Rita Pettys and Dan Stegink as member of the Interim Search Committee.

By April 15, the BoT will submit an application to the UUA for an Interim Minister. This is done electronically. Our church will then be listed on the UUA website as a congregation seeking an interim.

The Interim Search Committee compiles an informational church packet which contains among other items, bylaws, any current long and short range plans, the departing minister's resignation statement and the proposed interim contract. The contents of this packet is similar to what the MSC has already compiled for its search for a called minister.

At the same time, prospective interim ministers are compiling their own informational packets. The minister's packet will include items such as sermon texts, sample newsletter articles, their reflection on the role of an interim minister, and the names of church leaders as references.

By the end of April, the Transitions Director of the UUA will make available to our Interim Search Committee the ministerial records of appropriate candidates.

These candidates are contacted by the search committee to determine if interest is reciprocated. Informational packets between selected parties are then shared.

Once the Search Committee receives the minister's informational packets, references are called, and interviews are arranged. These interviews are either face-to face or by conference call.

The Search Committee decides on its favorite candidate and is able to make an offer no earlier than May 7. This date is in place to ensure time for adequate deliberation.

If desired, the minister is brought into town. The visit can include a search for housing, and presentation to the board.

If the BoT accepts the recommendation of the Interim Search Committee, the minister's contract is approved and the BoT emails a copy of the contract to the UUA.

If the BoT rejects the recommendation, The BoT directs the Interim Search Committee to either seek agreement with its second choice or to ask the Transitions Director for additional prospective candidates.

A very important team will be assembled to provide the new minister with insight, organizational and facilitative talent, and willing hands as the ministry proceeds. This seven member team is called the Transition Team. Because the Transition Team is an interim minister's "brain trust" it would be inappropriate for any member of the team to have served on the Committee of Ministry during the previous ministry or to be in relationship with a current member of the governing board.

Do you remember when I said the job of the congregation was to stand at the ready? Successful work with our interim minister will be both a function and reflection of congregational participation. Like a democracy requires participation of an educated citizenry, so does the success of our church during the time of an interim minister. Please consider your role on the Transition Team should you be asked.

The Transition Teams first duty is to set up early meetings between the interim minister and important congregational leaders.

The interim minister is a contracted minister hired by the BoT. Initially, the interim minister is contracted for one year. At mid term, around February 15, the Transitions Office requests that the BoT and the interim minister independently appraise the congregation's progress toward the goals set for the interim period. Another set of appraisals are completed around September 30. These appraisals are the basis of extending an interim minister's contract to two years.

In short, the process of securing an interim minister is quick. Once the BoT makes application with the UUA by April 15, the Transitions Director releases information to our Interim Search Committee regarding prospective interim ministers at the end of April. The Interim Search Committee can make an offer to a candidate on May 7.

I am excited about our future. Our work with an interim minister is as important for us now as it will be for our continuing search for a called minister. The success of both will be ensured by your participation. Please consider your role in this process as we strive to become a voice of liberal religion in West Michigan.