

The Search for a New Pastor

And what is a “Designated Pastor,” anyway?

By now, if you’ve been reading the Session recaps in past issues of *The SPIRE*, you know that our church is searching for a designated pastor—but just what does that mean? Here are the answers to some of the questions the church staff has been asked lately:

What is a designated pastor?

A designated pastor is hired by a church for a set period of two years. At the beginning of the two years, the church and the pastor jointly set goals to be achieved during that time frame. Progress toward the goals is periodically assessed.

How is that different than an interim pastor?

The time frame for an interim pastor is fluid. He or she leaves whenever the church, the pastor, or the Presbytery thinks the needed work there is done. Also, traditionally an interim could not become the called pastor at a church where he or she served as interim, whereas after the two-year period served by a designated pastor, the pastor and the church jointly decide whether he or she should become the called pastor.

So why not just call the pastor to start with?

There are some real advantages to hiring a designated pastor rather than a called pastor:

1. The process is faster (more on that later).
2. The guaranteed two-year term provides more stability for the church, with the promise of conversion to a called ministry at the end of that time if both parties are pleased with each other.
3. Normally a called pastor is not expected to work on any specific goals with the church. In our case, the Session wishes to continue working on the growth and financial stability goals set during the interim session.

For these reasons, the Rev. Dr. David Hodgson (our outgoing interim pastor) suggested hiring a designated pastor as his successor, and the Session agreed.

So, how is the process of hiring a designated pastor different than the process of hiring a called pastor?

1. The Search Committee is appointed by the Session rather than elected by the congregation. Our diverse search committee consists of Fred Stainbrook (chair), Wanda Morrill, Diane Nestlebush, John Ohm, and Bill Wentling. Wanda and Bill are currently

serving on the Session; the others are not. John Ohm is actually a Friend of the Church instead of a member.

2. At least some of the candidates are referred by Presbytery, almost as if this were an interim session.
3. The candidate chosen by the search committee is hired or rejected by the Session, not the congregation. For this reason, he or she is not required to preach a “trial” sermon for the congregation.

The Session and the Designated Pastoral Search Committee have found an amazing candidate for the position of our designated pastor, but they have not yet offered him the job. In David’s words, we are still in the “courting” stage. To help both sides make the best decision possible, the committee has invited the candidate and his wife to visit us in early April, and the congregation is invited to meet them at an open house on Friday, April 6, at 10:30 am in Swain Hall. Brunch will be served, and David and our Presbytery Pastor, Brad Munroe, will be special guests.

Please plan to come to the open house to meet the Rev. Tom Tripp and his wife Debbie! (Just let us know if you plan to attend so we can be sure to make enough food.)

In the meantime, to learn more about Tom and his ministry, check out his blog at <https://tomtrippblog.wordpress.com/>. You won’t need to read more than a post or two to share the search committee’s excitement!