

An over-view from your Interim Pastor, *TRANSITIONS AND TIMINGS*

As we reach the end of our first year together it becomes important for me and you also that I pause and reflect as well as look ahead. The next year will be much more exciting for you as a congregation and for me; God willing you will be calling a new Head of Staff.

During the last year we have seen many surprises and have responded appropriately. There have been several new employees who have joined the competent staff and are adjusting very well. We have moved smoothly, but not without some discomfort, into living with an austerity budget. I believe we will end the year with a balanced budget; indeed, we must! We are presently moving seamlessly in a transition of Clerk of Session. Worship transitions have been engaging and we offer three different types of worship experience. The congregation has faithfully exercised the muscle of love in service to community near and far. We are finding new ways of being the Church.

With those things in mind I move on to some very important thoughts.

One of the key issues for any congregation that is in a period of transition is timing. Timing covers not only the questions of when will certain things get done, but when is the right time to do them. Those two concepts are clearly in play when it comes to the calling of the next Head of Staff. While I realize you have questions about, “When are we going to elect the Pastor Nominating Committee,” it wasn’t until the Task Force on Mission reported to Session on Sept. 22nd that the question really begins to be focused in some very tangible ways.

From my perspective it is critical that as a congregation we reach a unified understanding of our mission/ministry and how we agree to support it with our gifts. When I first arrived it was clear that this central issue had been a point of contention in PPC for some time. During our (Adult Education) March examination we agreed that this issue must neither be left to simmer while we call the next Head of Staff nor should it be left for that person to have to deal with it.

The Task Force on Mission has finalized their report to Session and Session has agreed to call a special meeting to listen, discuss and understand the considerable work from the task force; they have done a very commendable job. The next steps agreed by Session and the task force will be to call a town hall meeting as soon as possible to share with the congregation the recommendations of the task force and listen to insights the congregation may have on the various subjects covered.

At the completion of your feedback, Session leadership will determine a more clearly defined concept of mission/ministry and the ways and means of how this will be carried out in the future at PPC.

Assuming that this review goes as planned, the congregation will be ready to elect the PNC, who will begin the considerable work of discernment, recommending the next Head of Staff. This summer Session asked the Permanent Nominating Committee to be working on a slate of candidates for such a committee; they are now ready to report to the Session and congregation.

On October 25th there will be a congregational meeting to elect new officers, (deacons and elders), elect the PNC, and recommend a minor change in the by-laws pertaining to more flexibility in dates for the Oct. and Jan. meetings of the congregation.

With the above in mind, it is clear that we are now at a turning point in the process of putting some things behind us and moving into the future. This will be an exciting time for us all. A time to discipline our thoughts and words, in not imagining more or less than actually exists in these fluid situations and times, is essential for our health. As your Interim Pastor, this is an important time in the life of this church. We ask that you pray for wisdom and guidance for those who have very important work to do. "If any of you lack wisdom ask of God who gives generously...wisdom from above is pure, peaceable, and gentle," James 1:5 & 3:17.

Session is committed to securing your trust and confidence during this critical period. If you have questions seek the correct source. If you do that and confidentiality does not allow a sharing of information respect the process and don't fill in the blanks. It is critical that we act in healthy ways as we wait with anticipation and excitement the arrival of the next Head of Staff. We need to prepare for a living out of the best within us as we welcome, hopefully, the best for us in the future.

Below you will see a tentative schedule of how things may well play out. Please be in prayer for all involved in the critical phases of this process.

A CHRONOLOGY OF UP-COMING EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF PPC

Oct 25-election of PNC
Training and formation of the PNC
Gathering of information needed for Church Information Form (a streamlined approach is suggested by Committee on Ministry)
Approval of CIF by Session and Presbytery (late fall)
A 3-6 month period of receiving PIFs (Personal Information Forms), reading, evaluating, phone interviews, and on sight interviews.
Extending a call to next Head of Staff sometime in summer of 2010
September beginning of next Head of Staff

Ray Larson, Interim Pastor 09/24/09