

Explanation and Question/Answer Meeting
Profile/Search Committee
September 25, 2022

Carol Freeman called the meeting to order and introduced Rev. Dr. Stephani Perdew. Dr. Perdew began by telling members in attendance that UCC is resourced by Our Church's Wider Mission which helps with search and call share profiles.

Steps in the profile/search process include the following:

- The profile/search committee is formed per our constitution and by-laws and should include diversity of members. For example, the committee should consist of older members as well as younger members, long-term members and new members. A cross-section of this nature provides differing perspectives.
- When the committee is formed, they write the church profile which functions as our resume. It is a Word document that can be filled out, and it reflects on our past legacies, successes and challenges. The profile also includes who we are presently as well as statistical information that focuses on our demographic, our neighborhood, and our community along with attendance and membership trends, former pastors and with financial data. There are also questions about any past conflicts within the congregation or former pastors. We decide what to share, but it's crucial to provide a realistic picture of the church. We must also provide the names and contact information of three people who will serve as references. Those individuals will not be a member or past pastor.
- Once the profile is completed, we submit it to the Association and Dr. Perdew reviews and validates it then shares our search nationally. She will receive pastoral profiles that she will share with us and walk us through that phase of the process.
- The profiles describe strengths and weaknesses as well as self-reflection on both sides. The pastoral profiles also have three references with contact information included. Furthermore, the profiles will come to us with completed background checks.

At this point, Dr. Perdew opened the meeting to questions. The first question centered on whether or not we will be able to find a worthy candidate given our financial situation. She assured us that we are not alone in this situation and that currently candidate flow is slow.

Another member asked how long writing the profile takes and once it's active how long does the search take. The answer is once the profile is active it takes six to nine months to complete. We have to remember that the candidate will need to give 90 days notice to his/her church. She also indicated that it isn't wise to hurry through writing the profile; it needs to be thorough and honest.

There were also questions about the demographics of potential candidates and how many responses we might expect. The Association doesn't have precise statistics, but Dr. Perdew explained that the pandemic saw early retirements which has altered the number of potential candidates. On average, most churches will see 7-9 pastoral profiles.

Another member of the congregation shared that past search committees received names of potential candidates from others. Dr. Perdew said that this is perfectly fine but if we receive a name of a pastor, we have to direct it back to the conference office. Since we are insured through United Church of Christ, if a pastor does not fulfill recognition in the Association we are at risk. She also explained the steps a pastor who is not from United Church of Christ or Disciples of Christ must take in order to be recognized in the Association. Should we hire someone from outside our denomination, we pay for their course of study.

The next portion of the discussion centered on what happens when profiles come to us.

- We must acknowledge receipt of the profile.
- We make internal decisions on them and schedule a first interview. These interviews are held on Zoom and usually take an hour. The Association will provide us with a Search and Call Manual that we can use as a guide.
- Usually there are 3 rounds of interviews with the 3rd bringing in the top 2 or 3 choices for face to face interviews. Again, Dr. Perdeu will walk us through the process. Confidentiality is critical in this process because a candidate's current church may not know he or she is looking for another calling.
- The next step is a negotiating letter of call. The Association has one we can use as a guide. Dr. Perdeu stressed that our compensation package must be as competitive as possible.
- The final steps are Council approval of the candidate and scheduling a candidating Sunday, a congregational meeting and vote. We need to be looking for a high percentage consensus. Once the congregation approves the candidate, the individual returns to his/her church and gives the 90 day notice. The conference office will keep a copy of the letter of calling as a backup.
- Dr. Perdeu's last piece of advice was to strongly urge that the candidating sermon must be secure online in order to prevent someone from the other church seeing it. She closed the meeting by letting us know that we are in her prayers.