

## PARSON TO PERSON

### FROM TRANSITIONAL TO INSTALLED PASTOR:

Welcome to Presbyterian Speak!

Many of our members have asked, “How does this finding a new pastor work? What is the process? How do we get from ‘Transitional’ pastor to installed pastor?”

It is a pretty straightforward process. On February 5, we elected a PNC who will work with COM to create a MIF; then the PNC will begin to receive PIF’s. They will whittle down the many, many PIF’s that no doubt will be received (this is Stone Church, after all!) and invite a few semi-finalists to take part in a neutral pulpit. Once a final candidate has been found, that person will “candidate”, and the congregation will then vote to petition the Presbytery of San Jose to call the person to be our next duly installed pastor.

These are just some of the acronyms you will hear being used during worship, in the newsletter, in conversations around here for the next few months. So let’s flesh this out.

On February 5, at the Annual Meeting, we elected a PNC, Pastor Nominating Committee, composed of Janice Goertz, Alice McNelis, Julia Roberts, Fran Cole, Caryl Westerberg, Jonathan Miller, Nick Hurley, Bob Lowry and Jim Hagan and Aaron McNelis, youth advisor. These folks were nominated by the church Nominating Committee. Their task is to find the next duly installed pastor of Stone Church.

The PNC will have a liaison appointed from COM, the Committee on Ministry of the Presbytery of San Jose. The Presbytery is a partner with us in this

process as ministers are not members of the church they serve but are members of Presbytery.

The first step in this process is for the PNC to create a MIF, Ministry Information Form. This document provides a narrative picture of the mission and ministry of Stone as well as a description of our ministry context, demographics, history, theology, values, leadership needs and expectations of what strengths and competencies a successful candidate, successful minister at Stone will possess. The PNC will no doubt be calling on the congregation for input in completing this form.

Once done, the MIF is approved by the Session, then by COM. The final MIF is then sent to the CLC, Church Leadership Connection, to be put on line. This office of our denomination will find matches from all the PIF's in active process. A PIF, Personal Information Form, is the dossier, resume of ministers and candidates in search of a new call. Ministers can also send their PIF directly to the Stone PNC.

It is not unusual for a strong, vital church like Stone to receive 100 PIF's! The PNC, in conjunction with the COM liaison, will determine their own process for reviewing all these PIF's, gradually whittling them down to those the PNC wants to initially contact. The PNC will work to determine a short list of semi-finalists, some of whom they might visit in the minister's home setting for a weekend, some of whom they might invite to come to San Jose, interview here and listen to the person preach in a "Neutral Pulpit". A Neutral Pulpit is arranged by the COM liaison and is basically where the minister leads worship in a church setting other than our Sanctuary on a Sunday morning.

The use of a neutral pulpit is to avoid conflict in the church seeking a new minister. Imagine if the PNC asked three potential candidates to lead worship for us on three successive Sundays. Now imagine one third of the congregation liked the first preacher, one third the second preacher and one third the third preacher! We would never have a new minister. So the congregation will not know when the PNC is hosting a potential candidate at a neutral pulpit.

Once the PNC agrees on a final candidate, that person will be interviewed by COM to make sure there is a good fit between the candidate and the church, and the candidate and the Presbytery. Once that takes place, the final candidate will “candidate” here at Stone, usually following a week-end of various opportunities for the person to meet the Session, Deacons and other groups as well as members of the church. After that worship, there will be a congregational meeting for the purpose of hearing the report of the PNC and voting to request the Presbytery of San Jose to extend a call to this person.

The Committee on Ministry can act on behalf of the Presbytery to extend that call, approve the terms of call (salary package) and appoint a commission of Presbytery to “install” the new pastor of Stone Church, that is to make the relationship between the person and Stone, and between the person and the Presbytery, official.

This process could take up to a year. We need to be patient, understand the scope of the work of the PNC, offer our support to them and keep the members of the PNC in our prayers.

Jim Bender