

An Overview of the Search and Call Process

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Gathering a Transition Committee

- Selected and appointed by your congregation's governing body
- A size that fits best for your congregation, perhaps as few as 5 for a small congregation or as many as 10 for a large congregation
- The best members of a Transition Committee will bring these gifts:
 - Listening thoughtfully and prayerfully
 - Leaning in to draw out comments and stories
 - Encouraging deeper discernment
 - Asking open, searching follow up questions to gather richer and fuller information for the local church profile
 - Creatively seeking many ways of listening to gather pieces for the story of the congregation's life and calling
 - Honoring different understandings
 - Honoring the holy work of your congregation
- Once gathered, the Transition Committee will be trained and supported by an Associate Conference Minister of the Conference staff, using resources prepared and provided by the MESA (Ministerial Excellence, Support, and Authorization) Team in the national setting of the UCC.

Preparing the Congregation's Local Church Profile

- If you'd like to see the form the Transition Committee will be using, follow this link: <http://www.ucc.org/ministers/search-and-call> and choose the Word or PDF link from the Churches in Transition paragraph.
- The local church profile is a 30 page document that introduces the congregation to searching pastors through a broad mix of descriptive, statistical, and visioning sections.
- Transition Committee members will solicit help from the congregation to gather historical, statistical, and community information.
- Transition Committee members will host a variety of listening and visioning sessions where members of the congregation and those who are connected to the congregation's ministries can share information, insights, and inspirations.

- The new local church profile is intended as a tool that congregations will continue to use in their ongoing processes of visioning and planning. With this practice, the core of the local church profile remains fresh and updated from year to year in the congregation's life.
- Once the congregation's profile is prepared, the Transition Committee may host a "profile review" event during which the congregation can read and offer comments on the local church profile.

Transition Committee Timeline

How long will it take to gather the Transition Committee and to complete the local church profile? This will depend on the size of your congregation and the time needed to schedule a generous number of opportunities for sharing and visioning. When completing the 2016 local church profile for the first time, six months is an estimate. Smaller congregations may move a bit more quickly, while larger congregations or congregations with more complex stories to tell will want to take more time to do this holy work well.

Gathering a Search Committee

- Most often selected and appointed by the congregation's governing body.
- Congregation's by-laws may speak to the formation of a Search Committee.
- If the composition of the Search Committee "points" in a direction, it's helpful for the composition of the Search Committee to point toward the congregation's future more than toward its past.
- The Search Committee is the presence of the congregation to searching pastors. It's helpful to gather a group that is the fullest possible presence, head, heart, spirit, voice of the congregation.
- There is no fixed number for members of a Search Committee. Around 8-10 members is a common size for a search committee, but committees that are a bit larger or a bit smaller can also fit the needs of a congregation well.
- The governing body will choose members who demonstrate gifts for this holy work:
 - The Five Commitments of Search Committees: faith, time, confidentiality, openness, and consensus
 - Understanding of and affection for the congregation and its ministries.
 - Heartfelt honor and affection for the work of ministry
 - A gift for discernment

- Members of the Search Committee may be consecrated during a Sunday morning worship service. They will be trained and supported by an Associate Conference Minister of the Conference staff, using resources prepared and provided by the MESA (Ministerial Excellence, Support, and Authorization) Team in the national setting of the UCC.

The Search Committee Receives Ministerial Profiles

- A brief description of the congregation's pastoral opening will be posted online at UCC Ministry Opportunities. Visiting this site is the way searching pastors become aware that your congregation is searching and learn a bit about you. You can look at other congregations' postings by going to the UCC Ministry Opportunities site at: <http://www.ucc.org/ministers/search-and-call/united-church-employment.html>
- A ministerial profile is a 13-15 page document that introduces a pastor to a Search Committee in much the same way as a local church profile introduces a congregation to a pastor. A sample of the UCC ministerial profile can be viewed at: <http://uccfiles.com/pdf/SERENEMDAVISsample.pdf> . Much like a local church profile, there are "resume" sections as well as short essays written by the pastors to express their vision, gifts, and experiences in ministry. The ministerial profile also includes a complete and current criminal background check.
- The Associate Conference Minister supporting your congregation's search process receives ministerial profiles from the MESA office in the national setting of the UCC. Ministerial profiles received are from searching pastors who have indicated preliminary openness to ministry in the Iowa Conference.
- The Associate Conference Minister contacts these searching pastors by email to encourage their consideration of searching congregations in the Iowa Conference and to invite searching pastors to request that their ministerial profiles be sent to searching congregations.
- The Search Committee will only receive ministerial profiles from pastors who have specifically requested that their profiles be sent to your congregation.
- The Search Committee will receive as many ministerial profiles as it needs. It is not uncommon for Search Committees to receive 25+ ministerial profiles.

- Occasionally ministers from other denominations will express interest in being considered. Your Associate Conference Minister can also help ministers in good standing from our partner denominations (Disciples of Christ, Presbyterian Church USA, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Reformed Church in America) to be introduced to the Search Committee. Your ACM can also help pastors from other denominations to be introduced to the Search Committee, with the Search Committee's permission.
- The process in which the Search Committee engages with each pastor will likely have these steps, although not always in exactly this order:
 - The Search Committee receives UCC ministerial profiles electronically from a member of the Conference staff. The chair or secretary of the Search Committee electronically sends a copy of the congregation's profile to the searching pastor.
 - The Search Committee schedules a preliminary web or phone interview with the searching pastor. If mutual interest continues, more web or phone interviews follow.
 - The Search Committee views sermons the searching pastor has preached and possibly worship services the pastor has led.
 - Members of the Search Committee speak with the three telephone references provided by the searching pastor and with additional references as needed, with the permission of the pastor.
 - If both the searching pastor and Search Committee discern a call to continued conversation, the pastor may be invited for a visit to your community for a weekend of face-to-face interviews.
 - Before the community visit takes place, a member of the Iowa Conference staff makes a reference call to a staff member from the pastor's Conference.
 - If both pastor and Search Committee discern a call to continue, a member of the Conference staff may help the Search Committee arrange a "neutral pulpit", a worship service in a nearby congregation, where they may hear the pastor preach.

The Chosen Pastor is Presented to the Congregation

- If both pastor and Search Committee discern the Holy Spirit's call, the Search Committee extends a call to the pastor, which will be confirmed by a vote of the congregation.
- The terms of the pastoral call agreement are confirmed by the congregation's governing body.
- The congregation's governing body notifies the congregation's membership in writing of a congregational meeting at which the congregation will vote on the call to the pastor. The meeting is held following a Sunday morning worship service which the pastor candidate leads.
- The Search Committee provides the congregation with a written introduction to the pastor candidate and plans occasions for members to meet the pastor candidate on the weekend of the congregational meeting.
- With a favorable vote in accordance with the congregation's by-laws, accepted by the pastor candidate, a call agreement is signed and the congregation welcomes a new pastor!

Pastoral Search Timeline

- The search and call process in the UCC is not linear. As the Search Committee schedules first phone or web interviews with pastors, they continue to receive and read new profiles. As they progress to reference checks and face-to-face interviews with a few candidates, they will continue to receive and read new profiles and to be conducting preliminary phone/web interviews with other pastors. A "hold" on receiving new profiles is placed when a pastor accepts the call of the Search Committee (prior to the congregational vote).
- 12-18 months is a common length for the pastoral search process from the time first ministerial profiles are received.
- If the congregation calls a pastor currently serving in another ministry setting, your new pastor will need to provide notice (usually 3 months) in the current ministry setting before joining you.

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