

Tuesday, June 14, 2022

Dear Members and Friends of Providence,

We have had the privilege of Jeff's leadership and Susan's dedicated support for over twenty-two years, but the time has come for their departure from our fellowship. Jeff's retirement, effective July 31st, marks the beginning of a huge transition in the life of our church, and the Session would like to share with each of you the actions currently being taken and the process and milestones that mark our journey into a new era of pastoral leadership. As you can imagine, in the Presbyterian Church, the process is clearly delineated and follows a progression of steps.

1. On the Sunday following Jeff's departure (August 7th) our guest preacher will be the Rev. Liza Hendricks, the Presbytery's General Presbyter. Rev. Hendricks will declare the pulpit as "vacant" and the process officially begins.
2. The Worship Committee has begun arranging for "pulpit supply" preachers to lead worship for the next several weeks and will continue to do so until we have called an Interim Pastor.
3. The Session has elected a "Transition Team" and it has begun the process of identifying and calling an Interim Pastor. The Interim Pastor will serve until we call our installed pastor.
4. The congregation will participate in the development of a Mission Study. The key elements of the Mission Study include 1) a review of the church's history, 2) a mission statement, 3) the church's statistics (demographics), 4) the church's financial history and projections, and 5) the church's vision for the future.
5. The Mission Study will lead to a Mission Overview. Once the Mission Overview is approved by the Presbytery, we can elect a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC).


The PNC conducts its work in secrecy. This group of dedicated Christians will prepare a Mission Information Form, which combines the information provided in the Mission Study with a description of the attributes we seek in our future pastor. This will be shared throughout the PC (USA) pastoral community, introducing Providence to pastors seeking a church home. The PNC will then review Pastor Information Forms (PIFs), seeking a pastor whom they believe will best serve Providence. The PNC will interview and observe candidate pastors (much of which can now be conducted virtually), and God willing, place before the congregation their nominee to serve as our installed pastor! Presbytery will be with us throughout this process and must approve many of the above actions, including approving the Interim Pastor and our Pastor-nominee.

This will be a slow process, as it should be. We will be seeking God's will in choosing the pastor who will serve our congregation for the next twenty years! Successful pastor searches take, on average, eighteen to twenty-four months. It will be a challenging time for Providence and a time for us to work together as never before to sustain the many important ministries that make Providence such a wonderful church in our community. The Session will endeavor to provide leadership in all aspects of church life to ensure we continue to thrive and grow. If you have been considering stepping up to further serve the church, now is an excellent time to take that step.

Finally, it is important that we consider how our relationship with Jeff must change during this transition. The Presbytery provides specific guidance to congregations in this matter: "Church members should not request or expect any pastoral functions from the former pastor. It is embarrassing for the former pastor and is not ethically proper for members of the congregation to make requests of their former pastor. It is best for all concerned that the Interim Pastor or the newly installed pastor be the person to whom members of the congregation turn to for their pastoral needs."

As we come to the end of our faith journey under Jeff's leadership, we begin a new and exciting phase in the life of Providence. With hope, prayers, and the Grace of God, the future is bright.

In His service and on behalf of the Session,



Gary Reese
Clerk of Session
Providence Presbyterian Church