

Transition Team Q&A - Sunday 19 June 2022

Present: 32 congregation members with 6 Transition Team members (Rebecca Mast, Janell Zesinger, Kari Pitchko, Mark Thompson, Dan Byers, and John Shriver)

Rebecca opened the meeting at 9:59 am with a prayer.

Dan Byers summarized what the Transition Team is doing. We are transitioning from our old selves to our new selves. The Ministry Site Profile (MSP) will help define Messiah for pastors seeking a new call. We are to faithfully describe the views of the church. What are we wanting?

The floor was opened for comments and questions related to the Constitution and MSP.

1. Where are we in the process?

Answer: We are collecting data and input from the congregation. We have a tentative timeline, but it is flexible. We want everyone to contribute and will adjust as needed. Surveys are due by July 4. The Constitution deadlines are separate from the MSP. The Constitution deadline is set by the need to obtain ratification at a regular Congregational meeting (in November 2022 or May 2023).

2. Question about the parsonage and the need to provide housing to recruit our next pastor. Housing is expensive in Madison and the parsonage is valuable property. Would it not be to our advantage to keep it and provide it as an incentive to the incoming pastor?

Answer: That is not a decision for the Transition Team. The information is provided to demonstrate the financial status of the church which may be useful as supplementary information to be added in Part IV of the MSP.

3. Question about the checkboxes and text questions on the survey/questionnaires. The questions are very qualitative. How can the Team coordinate the answers? What kind of answers are needed? How should the answers be structured to help the Team?

Answer: The questions are essentially straight from the MSP form. We did not make up these questions. These are what we need to answer. Please write what you are thinking. Don't hold back. Give us data to use.

4. Comment about priorities. I see trends in the church that I don't like. We are getting greyer with few young people. We need to shape up and decide how to address this.

5. Question: We need people to respond. This is summer. What if you get a 15% response rate. How will you get more input?

Answer: We need to see how many members respond to the current surveys. We may need to try alternative approaches, including personal phone calls to those who are reluctant to respond.

6. Comment on the parsonage question: We are not in a position to be good landlords. We have a hard enough time taking care of the church building.
Point of clarification: There are synod guidelines for providing house equity compensation to pastors who are provided a parsonage.
7. Question: Who owns the parsonage?
Answer: The church owns the parsonage.
8. Suggestion: It would help if we could have a meeting where we walk through the survey and comment on each question individually, giving people opportunity to discuss each question.
9. Comment: Music and Fellowship are huge draws for outreach. Gatherings are also important. We need to focus on the younger generation.
10. Point of clarification: The online surveys can be amended if you would like to add additional input or change previous entries.
11. Question: Are the worship attendance numbers in the input summary provided today valid? There is concern that the in-person worship numbers are remaining low and they may not recover from the Covid precautions. In person worship is healthy and we need to get back to where we were.
Answer: The numbers are from Marc Neely, Financial Secretary.
12. Comment: Relative to concerns with attendance, Covid has affected our numbers significantly but historically when Pastor Scott took a vacation, our attendance dropped for those weeks. Currently we are in a transitional period where we do not have a called pastor. We have an interim pastor who was chosen by the synod. We need to have a called pastor.
13. Comment: The ELCA has a defined process that we must follow. Messiah needs a called pastor. We cannot let this drag out.
14. Comment: Lee Smith summarized the Call Committee's duties. They will create a Letter of Call, which is a legal document. The parsonage could be part of that.
15. Point of clarification: The Call Committee will be given the names of 3 pastors seeking a new call. This is why it is necessary that the MSP be an accurate reflection of what type of pastor we are seeking. We will not have access to the files of all pastors seeking a new call. We must go through the process of interviewing the first three names suggested. If none of them are acceptable after interviews, we can request another allotment followed by another set of interviews. This can be repeated until we find a match.

16. Question: The items on the form are limiting. What if I want something different?
What if I want to say something that is not in response to a survey question?
Answer: Please answer the questions, then give comments in the appropriate spaces.
And question 10 asks for additional comments on anything that you want. We can add information in Part IV to define Messiah beyond what is asked in the form questions.
17. Comment: The congregation encourages the Transition Team and has confidence in them.
18. Comment: We need to define where we want to be in 5 years. We need vision to thrive. It is very similar to running a business.
19. Comments: We can get together as small groups and discuss these topics. We can do this with or without the Transition Team.
20. Comment: Paper copies of the MSP surveys and questionnaires are needed by some. Let people know they are available on the table in the narthex below the Time Line (left side).
21. Point of Information: John read Pastor Chilton's comment on our draft Constitution. Pastor Chilton, Assistant to the Bishop, states that our quorum requirement of 20% is too high and needs to be lowered to 10 or 15%. This will most likely be brought up again for a vote as an amendment to the Constitution when it is considered for approval in the Fall.
22. Comment: It is possible to use personal phone calls to reach those who do not respond to the surveys.
23. Reminder: The next opportunity for congregation discussion is at 6:00 pm on Thursday, June 30. Please let us know if you plan to attend. Pizza will be served.
24. With no more questions or comments, Rebecca reminded everyone that comments and questions are welcome at any time. Rebecca closed the meeting with a prayer in time for church at 11:00 am.