

The session of Westminster Presbyterian Church (“WPC”) convened for a called meeting on 6 March 2008 in the parlor of the Holderness Mission Center. The meeting was called at the request of Barbara Campbell Davis, Executive Presbyter of New Hope Presbytery, because the Presbytery’s Committee on Ministry (COM) requires that a vacancy counselor meet with the session when a pastor or associate pastor leaves.

Moderator Jack Walchenbach was present and called the meeting to order at 5:45 P.M. Clerk of Session Doug Wellemeyer was present.

Associate Pastors Betty Berghaus and Paul Ransford were present.

Elders Bruce Cunningham, John Dancy, Alex Denson, Claudia Draffin, John Graham, Susan Landis, Sara Pottenger and Holly Huffman Schmidt were present. Elders Kathryn Bunch and Shayne Ruffing were absent and excused. Elders June Jones and Eric Wolf were absent.

WPC staff members Barbara Fletcher, Monica Rossman and Nancy Rozak were present.

Elder Don Heagren was present at the invitation of the Moderator.

Barbara Campbell Davis was present to review with the session the process for interim pastoral leadership.

The meeting was opened with a prayer by the Moderator.

The Moderator declared a quorum present.

REVIEW OF THE PROCESS FOR INTERIM PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

The Moderator introduced Barbara Campbell Davis to the assembly, thanked her for coming and extended to her privileges of the floor.

Barbara Campbell Davis then circulated a handout entitled “When a Pastor Leaves” (copy attached) and discussed the material in some detail, answering questions as they arose.

Temporary Pastoral Relations:

Barbara Campbell Davis called attention to the 2007/2009 Book of Order provisions for Temporary Pastoral Relations, and noted that the Book of Order also includes provisions for a Parish Associate that were not included in the handout. Barbara Campbell Davis asserted that the provisions for a Parish Associate would not apply in our situation because such a person by definition would serve at the pleasure of the *installed* pastor as head of staff, and WPC has no such *installed* pastor.

After some discussion about the requirements for the position as presently known, Barbara Campbell Davis stated her opinion that we should seek to hire an “interim” associate pastor.

Vacancy dues:

Barbara Campbell Davis explained that “vacancy dues” are payments to the Board of Pensions, during the time when an ordained pastoral position is vacant, for the benefit of retired pastors coming from churches which could not afford adequate salary packages.

Churches are expected to pay vacancy dues for a 12-month period beginning when a pastor leaves. The obligation to pay vacancy dues will be suspended for any portion of that 12-month period that an interim pastor is under contract.

Vacancy dues are assessed at the rate of 12% of the former pastor's last effective salary. This would amount to approximately \$8,600 for the full period in question.

Subject to approval by the COM, the obligation to pay vacancy dues may be lifted if the vacant position is eliminated. Barbara Campbell Davis recommended that a very compelling letter should be prepared explaining the case for the COM's review if the session intends to pursue this course.

Discussion:

Barbara Campbell Davis advised that to hire an interim associate pastor would first require the formation of a search committee of the session. There was discussion about the need for the search committee to prepare a new CIF for the position, using the job description for the temporary position and perhaps some of the information from the CIF recently prepared by the PNC.

The CIF for the new search will need to be approved by the Moderator of the COM and, once approved, the CIF will not need to be posted to the PC(USA)'s Church Leadership Connection database if the search committee intends to conduct a local search. The search committee should make its preferences known to Presbytery.

The candidate selected will need to be approved by the COM. The COM meets monthly on the 2nd Wednesday; the next meeting of the COM will be on 9 April. The COM would expect 8 days' notice for any requested action. If the recommended candidate is not a member of New Hope Presbytery, (s)he will need to be examined on the Tuesday preceding the COM meeting.

The Moderator then thanked Barbara Campbell Davis on behalf of the session for providing helpful and timely guidance for the continuing work of the session in this matter. Her business with the session having been completed, Barbara Campbell Davis wished those assembled good luck, and she was excused.

The Moderator then extended privileges of the floor to Elder Don Heagren, and Don reported on the Personnel Committee's recent work in preparation for staffing the Interim Youth Director and temporary part-time Associate Pastor positions.

Motion: On a motion by John Graham, an Interim Associate Pastor Search Committee was established consisting of Bruce Cunningham, Claudia Draffin and Don Heagren, and the committee was charged to recommend an Interim Associate Pastor in accordance with the process described by Barbara Campbell Davis and the session's prior discussions and decisions.

The Moderator appointed Bruce Cunningham to be the Convenor for the Interim Associate Pastor Search Committee.

Motion: On a motion by Alex Denson, the congregational meeting to concur in Associate Pastor Paul Ransford's request of Presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relationship with WPC coincident with his retirement, which was previously approved for Sunday 9 March, was rescheduled for Sunday 30 March.

CONCERNS AND CELEBRATIONS

Sympathies were expressed for the family of WPC member Kathleen “Binky” Moore, who died on Wednesday 5 March.

Betty Berghaus reported that earlier today Tully Fletcher completed the final step of his preparation for the ministry. Tully preached before the Presbytery's Committee on Preparation for the Ministry (CPM) and submitted to their examination on the sermon, an accompanying paper and his Personal Information Form (PIF), after which the CPM unanimously certified Tully as ready to receive a call and to be ordained.

The session's current business having been completed, the Moderator declared the meeting adjourned.

The meeting was closed with a prayer by Betty Berghaus at 6:40 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Doug Wellemeyer
Clerk of Session

Jack Walchenbach
Moderator

"When a Pastor Leaves"

1. PASTOR consults with the Committee on Ministry before informing Session of any intention to resign pastorate and discuss details of announcement to Session.
2. SESSION considers when and how to inform congregation.
3. SESSION in consultation with the Committee on Ministry determines other options for leadership during the Vacancy period including calling of an Interim Pastor.
4. SESSION calls a congregational meeting to concur in pastor's request to dissolve relationship.
5. Committee on Ministry representative (Vacancy Counselor) meets with Session to determine need for Interim leadership.
6. See Book of Order - 2007-2009 (Excerpt) - **G-14.0553**.

"When a presbytery and session determine that an interim pastor, interim co-pastor, or interim associate pastor is necessary and helpful, the session may consult the committee on ministry and seek an interim minister as soon as a date certain for departure has been announced by a pastor or associate pastor planning to leave. An interim pastor, interim co-pastor, or interim associate pastor is not eligible to serve that church as the next permanent or designated pastor."

7. Committee on Ministry appoints a Session Moderator.

Temporary Pastoral Relations:

All temporary relationships of a minister of the Word and Sacrament, full-time or part-time, are established by the session or commission of the presbytery with the approval of the presbytery through its committee on ministry. These temporary relationships have titles appropriate to the ministerial tasks to which the minister is called, such as stated supply, temporary supply, organizing pastor, interim pastor, and others. A minister serving in a temporary pastoral relationship is called for a specified period not to exceed twelve months in length, which is renewable with the approval of the committee on ministry. A written agreement, covenant, or terms of call signed by the minister, the clerk of session or presbytery commission, and a representative of the committee on ministry shall specify the pastoral functions, compensation, and any special skills or training required for the ministry. A temporary pastor is not installed and is not a member of the session. The presbytery shall appoint a moderator of the session who may be the temporary pastor.

A minister serving in a temporary pastoral relationship other than organizing pastor is not eligible to serve that church in the next permanent or designated pastoral relationship. A presbytery may choose to allow a temporary supply to become the next installed pastor by a two-thirds vote of the presbytery.