

Hello VPC and greetings from the Pastor Nominating Committee. We wanted to provide an update on our work in calling our next senior pastor following Pete James' retirement in February, 2021. Since the start 18 months ago, we have held over 90 meetings with each other, each being about 2 hours in length. In addition, we have spent time in conversations and meetings with candidates, and many more hours in smaller groups of shepherding teams who walked closely and discerned with candidates through our process. Throughout our time, we've been working under an extensive task list. The following are some of the responsibilities of the PNC:

- Prepare the Ministry Information Form (MIF)
- Develop criteria for review and assessment of candidates
- Read and evaluate Personal Information Forms (PIFs) from potential candidates
- Interview and conduct reference checks on candidates of interest
- Listen to the candidates preach
- Select a candidate to place in nomination before the congregation
- Provide support to new pastor during the transition period

The PNC has completed almost all of these steps. As you may remember, we completed our Ministry Information Form (which can be found at www.viennapres.org/pnc) at the end of 2019. It was approved by the VPC Session and the Committee on Ministry of Presbytery, and we began receiving PIFs. Some of these came to us via the PCUSA's computer matching system, some from self-referral, and others through extensive networking. As we expected, this was a highly sought-after position. We had contact with almost 100 pastors and evaluated over 60 formal applications in the form of PIFs. After conducting research and listening to online preaching, we then moved into interviewing a smaller number of candidates. Even in the midst of a pandemic, we found much ease in interviewing candidates via online video conferencing. In addition, access to pastors' sermons online has never been more available so we were able to review many candidates' sermons and their church's worship services without having to risk in-person visits. After completing reference checks for a final tier of candidates and establishing a thorough COVID safety plan, we held interviews with a few candidates in-person here in Vienna. Since those interviews, we have entered into a final stage of discernment with one candidate with whom we are in the process of completing next steps. Even though COVID will delay the arrival of and the way in which we are able to fully welcome our new pastor, the PNC is grateful for God's faithfulness throughout this process and enthusiastic about how God is leading VPC into the future.

You as a congregation also have some responsibilities in that you:

- Elect the PNC
- Pray for the PNC and respect the confidentiality of its work
- Vote on the call of the pastor and the terms of call (in a single vote) presented by the PNC at a Congregational Meeting called by Session

The congregation has completed almost all of its duties as well. You elected the PNC in June of 2019. And in addition to being respectful of our confidentiality, we appreciate that the congregation has been praying with and for us as well as for VPC at large. We again thank you for those prayers and feel significant gratefulness towards those on our prayer support team who have also prayed for us during our meeting times.

There are a few additional steps that involve Presbytery including:

- Our Presbytery Liaison contacts Presbytery Clearance Coordinator to schedule the Clearance Exam for the candidate the PNC plans to nominate (can take 2-4 weeks to complete).
- Presbytery's Clearance Team contacts PNC Chairs when the candidate clears the exam.

After all such processes are complete, the candidate and PNC agree upon a date and request that Session call for the congregational meeting wherein the candidate preaches, the PNC gives a thorough presentation about the candidate, and the congregation votes.

Having just celebrated the season of Advent, a time of waiting expectantly and with hope, we are excited with you about VPC's future. In our advent devotional as a PNC, we have been encouraged to ask God to build in us a joyful expectancy for His glorious arrival in the form of Jesus. As a congregation, would you also continue to join us in praying with joy and hope for our new pastor's arrival in God's perfect timing?

Gratefully yours in Christ,

John, Yvonne, Beth, Chris, Dan, Megan, Rachel, Ryan, and Teri
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