

Sylvania United Church of Christ
7240 Erie St., Sylvania, OH 43560
Phone: 419-882-0048

July 26, 2011

Dear Sylvania UCC Family,

On Monday, July 25, Cabinet held a special meeting to consider a proposal from the Ministry Team. This meeting was also attended by several former moderators. The proposal, which was approved after a thoughtful discussion, addressed the staffing and process of this interim time as we grieve Bill Chidester's death and move into the search for our next Senior Pastor.

As many of you are aware, during Bill's illness he formed the Ministry Team whose members are listed on the other sheet in this mailing. This Ministry Team met regularly with Bill to ensure that the pastoral needs and responsibilities of the congregation were being met. Since Bill's death in late May, the Ministry Team has continued to meet and added to its discussions the interim process.

During the transition period between senior pastors, two roles need to be filled:

1. The pastoral work of the congregation (preaching, pastoral care, staff and program leadership).
2. Leading the process by which the congregation together reflects on our key ministries, future priorities, and needed skills and characteristics in our future pastor.

Traditionally, an Interim Pastor is hired to fill both of these roles. Initially, this was the path that the Ministry Team was pursuing, as we collected information forms from potential candidates and began to form an Interim Pastor search committee.

However, at the June 19 Congregational Meeting, many comments were made regarding the interim process and questioning the need for an Interim Pastor. Most importantly, we heard that:

- Many in the congregation felt that we were already living in the interim transition between Senior Pastors.
- The current leadership offered by David Andersen as well as Luke Lindon, supported by Joycelyn Degener and Susan Rowland Miller was leadership that was valued. Many expressed at the meeting or in other conversations that David was already viewed as the Interim Pastor.
- There was concern about the years it would take to engage an Interim Pastor, move through the evaluation process, form a Search Committee, and ultimately hire a new Senior Pastor.

The Ministry Team took seriously the comments they heard and began to discuss other ways of transitioning through the interim time in a way that allowed stable leadership but that also took seriously our need to reflect and discern our future needs through the interim process.

The proposal the Ministry Team brought to Cabinet on July 25 was that we address the transition needs of the congregation in a two-fold manner:

1. The pastoral work of the congregation would continue to be addressed by the Ministerial Team ordained pastors with David Andersen serving as head of staff while remaining part-time. (Responsibilities are bolded on the enclosed page for each Ministry Team member.)
2. The interim process of evaluation of the congregation and discernment for our future would be engaged through the help of an outside consultant.

This approach will allow the congregation to experience a continuity of leadership while also taking seriously the appropriate reflections, evaluations, and preparations necessary for us to call our next Senior Pastor. This approach will also allow the congregation to move more efficiently and quickly into the search process. Rather than waiting a year or two to begin the search, pursuing this approach would possibly allow us to begin searching as early as next spring.

The Ministry Team has been in conversation with Russell Crabtree, a pastor and now full-time Professional Transition Consultant. During an hour-long conference call with Russell, we were impressed with his approach as well as the tools and experience he brings with him. After 20 years in parish ministry, Russell founded Holy Cow! Consulting in the late 1990s and since then has worked with hundreds of churches, universities and organizations in transition issues.

The formal motion that the Cabinet considered and approved was to invite Russell Crabtree, to come for an "Audit and Process Definition" on Monday, August 22. During this time, Russell will meet with pastors, staff, key leaders, and Cabinet in order to begin to understand our congregation's distinctive qualities, assets, and needs. From this time, Russell will present to Cabinet a formal proposal for a contract for how he can best meet our needs with the tools, experience, and perspectives that he offers.

Cabinet approved the \$1000 fee plus travel and expenses in order to bring Russell here on August 22. If Cabinet approves contracting with him further, we will share with you at that time the scope of the work to be done, more about Russell, and the expected costs related to engaging his services.

Knowing that there are questions and more details to be shared than can be presented in one letter, both of us as well as other members of the Ministry Team and Cabinet will be available after the 10am worship on Sunday, August 7 in the Chapel to clarify our plans and answer any questions. If you are unable to attend this open forum but have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact any Ministry Team member.

The Ministry Team and Cabinet continue to ask for prayers as we together discern our way forward into the future that God has for Sylvania UCC.

Blessings,

Sue Crescitelli
Moderator

Russ Miller
Vice-Moderator

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: So all this means we're not doing the interim process?

A: No. We're still engaging the interim process. We're just not hiring an Interim Pastor to fulfill the necessary roles. The interim process will be a two pronged approach, with the pastoral care and administrative part being filled by the Ministry Team and the long-range planning process being led by the consultant.

Q: Could we do the long-range planning process in-house?

A: We could, but the process would not be as efficient nor go as deep as Russell Crabtree's would. We know what we're getting with Russell and he has a great track record of getting meaningful and useful data.

Q: So what would be the comparable time tables here?

A: A traditional interim process with an Interim Pastor would be a longer timetable. We would first need to find an Interim Pastor, and that process could take anywhere from 3 months to a year. An interim usually signs a 2 year contract and would need time to adjust to the congregation and the congregation to him or her, before the evaluation and planning process could begin. The actual search for a new Senior Pastor would not begin, in the best case scenario, before late 2012 or the beginning of 2013.

With the current plan, the ministry team is already in place and doing its duties. The consultant can come in late August to begin the work which will be completed by the end of this year. With this approach, the search for a new Senior Pastor would begin by late winter or early spring 2012.

Q: And the consultant will find us a senior pastor?

A: No. The consultant will provide us with data on where our church is at and what we will need in our new pastor. The data will help us write a job description and provide characteristics to have in mind when the Search Committee interviews potential candidates.

Q: Does any of this go against our bylaws? Does the congregation need to vote on this?

A: No, the bylaws state that the cabinet has the power to call in a consultant. The congregation, as always, will have the opportunity to vote on whether to offer a call to the Senior Pastor whom the Senior Pastor Search Committee recommends.

Q: If I enter the hospital or have a death in my family and the office is not open, whom do I contact?

A: Pastor David Andersen. Or should he be unavailable, you may call any other clergy or member of the staff who you are familiar and comfortable with, but David is our head of staff during this period.