

Staffing for Better Ministry

Our Next Chapter Begins to Emerge

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2020

Greetings from Pastor Jeremy!

Last Tuesday, January 14, 2020, the Session heard the first reading of a new staffing plan for our church. The staffing task force confirms that a three-pastor model is the best way for our church to ensure that all our members have their needs met. Along the way we kept finding that the Mission Study conducted a few years ago holds true; we value worship, learning, fellowship, and service. Helping our members live out their faith through these pillars guided the work of the task force.

But it does not stop there.

While a three-pastor model seems to work best for us, the task force also uncovered ways of creating positions that would: (1) prevent gaps in support and care for our members; and (2) be more attractive to the most talented candidates. The positions would include:

A Senior Pastor who serves the leadership and staff of the church, and who has a specific focus on the supportive ministries of the church that allow our programmatic ministries to thrive, along with worship leadership and preaching, vision-setting, and stewardship of our resources and core values.

A Pastor to serve our children and youth and their families from cradle into young adulthood and serve as a connection with families in our larger community.

A Pastor to serve life-long engagement with a particular focus on learning, fellowship, and the care of our adult members, from singles and empty-nesters to our senior members.

These proposals will be heard by the Session on **Sunday, January 26th at 11:30** during a specially called meeting for this specific purpose.

Next Steps

If the Session agrees with the staffing model designed by the task force, the congregation will be asked to approve two Associate Pastor Nominating Committees to help us find the next pastors God is preparing to join us in ministry to our neighbors in Westfield and beyond. The timing of this vote will be determined as we begin to work closely with leadership at the Presbytery of Elizabeth and will be reported to the congregation as soon as something is known.

If you would like to share your thoughts on this structure, please contact StaffingPlan@westfieldpc.org.

Background

Beginning in the spring of 2019 I asked to the Personnel Commission to begin studying the best way to serve the needs of the congregation. While it was clear that having a vacancy and an interim/temporary pastor was an opportune time to rethink how the staff was organized, Personnel and I were interested in how the opportunity could be used to create a model where *no one* would slip through the cracks in care, where all members could find meaningful worship, deepen faith through different learning opportunities, and learn to follow Christ into the world in service to others.

Howard Adams, a member of Personnel Commission and an elder, led the initial team in bringing this to our Session. The Session nominated several individuals to be considered for membership on this task force. Our church leaders wanted to ensure that all the major constituent groups of the church would be represented on this team and that leadership from the Mission Study would be included – to maintain continuity and connection to this formative document. The final team, or Organizational Structure Task Force, includes:

Howard Adams	Audrey Chen
Gregg Gorman	Martha Kieczkowski, Co-Chair
Deborah Lorenzetti	Brooke May
Charlie Monzella	Alan Smith, Co-Chair

Once formed, the team began to meet roughly weekly from October through January in order to study, pray, listen, and explore how God may be working in new ways to lead our congregation.

How We Got Here

The process took shape in four phases: (1) Organizing; (2) Study; (3) Testing; & (4) Reporting.

1. The Organizing Phase began with recruiting and naming members for this task force and culminated in the writing of a team charter. Along the way the team worked through an orientation packet that introduced members to the task and gave them material to consider in beginning the journey.

2. The Study Phase was by far the longest period in terms of time and energy, this phase included a shared reading of the Mission Study and naming the values that stand as pillars for the work of this church: worship, learning, fellowship, and service. These formed the bedrock of common needs for the congregation as the task force began the next step of the study phase. The themes – or core values – of mission and outreach also proved formative from the Mission Study to the task force in its work. During the Mission Study a vision was set to have a church whose members would Invite, Grow, and Serve. The desire to invite was driven by a value the congregation has in reaching out to friends and neighbors by how we live our lives, while the focus on service erupts from a deep commitment to offering the love of Christ to neighbors in need. The desire to grow can be seen in all facets of the life this congregation shares together across all ages and stages and the unique groups of the church; it's everywhere!

The task force really wanted to make sure that everyone got the support they need. During this phase of study the task force members met with various small groups, ministry commissions, and other affinity groups in order to let people in the church know what was going on, but also to hear of any concerns people had; sometimes this was done in a planned and intentional way, and in other times the conversation came organically. During this step a common theme was the concern that individuals would have a pastor for their age, or stage of life. In addition, I learned during the meet & greets last spring that members often fell away or felt distance during times of major life transition.

The next step was really important. Task force members began contacting over twenty peer churches around the country to learn how other churches have worked to best care for their members. 19 interviews were successfully conducted and the team learned that other churches are finding many, many different ways to help their members grow and reach their local community. We found inspiration in having a much broader array of staffing and pastoral options to serve our members and really valued getting insights into church life from experienced pastors outside of our particular church. This naturally led to the next phase as task force members were asked to begin testing some of what had been learned.

3. The Testing Phase began with each member of the task force writing his or her own staffing model. Each was asked to synthesize their learning and attempt to come up with the answer that made the most sense to them. Then the members shared their thoughts with each other, and the team began to study what similarities rose along with distinctions. During this step a few common models emerged, which drove later conversation.

At this point the team had already begun to notice that their collective work had repeatedly supported the findings of the Mission Study and tended to attempt to bridge known gaps in support experienced in our current staffing model. As they returned to explore the common models from the previous step, the task force members began to discuss which of the models best “solved” for supporting:

- the pillars of how our church expresses its faith;
- the core values that drive why we do what we do; and
- the constituent groups that define who makes our church the community we are.

This is when a three-pastor model really began to make the most sense. It is also the point at which the task force began to understand that we would need to have flexibility in how we search for these pastors to find the best candidates and carry out the ministry.

4. Reporting Phase

This phase began in earnest during the second week of January as the Organizational Structure Task Force introduced the high-level plan to the Session. A final report will be made on **January 26th** at a specially called Session meeting to hear, discuss, and, it is anticipated, vote on a new staffing plan that will include three pastors and affirm other programmatic and support positions to help carry out the ministry and mission of The Presbyterian Church in Westfield.