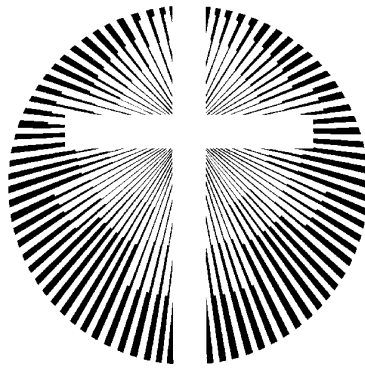


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# The Transition Team Report

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**THE UNITED  
CHURCHES**

**Janet Anderson  
Brian Hovis  
Bob McMullen  
Mike Segawa**

**February 6, 2009**

## Introduction

The church is on the cusp of change. A hypothetical timeline (see Appendix 1) shows that the church is entering a transition period where there will likely be an interim pastor and new senior pastor within the next five years.

In order to be prepared, the Council chartered the Transition Team. The following church members were asked to serve:

- ◇ Brian Hovis
- ◇ Mike Segawa
- ◇ Janet Anderson
- ◇ Bob McMullen

The Council's motion was to:

1. Charter a very small team to gather more information about the interim process, including a meeting with both the Olympia Presbytery Executive and UCC Pacific Northwest Conference Minister.
2. Depending upon the outcome of the findings of the small team, and subsequent council review, develop a charter and recruit a planning committee. The planning committee will be announced around the time Mark makes his announcement and will operate through the interim pastor's tenure.

[Please note: This report ends with a recommendation that Council authorize the Transition Team to proceed with this second item.]

The Transition Team was to report back to Council by March 2009 or earlier and to answer specific questions, which will be discussed later in this report. The team accepted its charge and completed the following tasks in preparation for this report:

- ❖ Reviewed educational materials about the interim process and planning in a church. These resources are available to the Council and described in Appendix 4.
- ❖ Met with Reverend Lynn Longfield, Presbytery Executive and Reverend Mike Denton, UCC Conference minister, to discuss the interim process and how it and the Council should coordinate.
- ❖ Met with Reverend Van Pelt, an experienced interim minister serving in the Olympia area, to discuss the interim process.

In this report, the Transition Team offers the following:

**Answers to the Council's questions.**  
**Recommendations for transition steps and assignments.**

## Answers to the Council's questions

1. **Q: What is the process to hire an interim pastor?**

A: Both denominations look at hiring an interim pastor differently than for the senior pastor. Both strongly suggest that there be a four to six week period after the senior pastor leaves before placing the interim. The main reason is that the time lag helps the congregation separate its feelings of pastoral loss from having an interim pastor leader.

The Interim Seeking Committee can be small and need not representatively reflect membership balance. It is more important that the interim committee be able to get the work done. There is a small difference between the Presbyterian and UCC processes, in that the Presbytery chooses the Interim Search Committee.

It would help if the Interim Seeking Committee writes a brief description of what the church wants in an interim pastor. Both denominations may provide pulpit supply and temporary help until an interim arrives.

Either denomination may provide interim pastor candidates. The Interim Seeking Committee should coordinate early with either the UCC Conference Minister or the Presbytery Executive. They should both be kept informed throughout the transition period.

2. **Q: Should the interim be Presbyterian or UCC, or does it matter?**

A: To some extent it makes sense for the interim pastor to be UCC. It does not matter by regulation that the interim pastor be either UCC or Presbyterian, in fact the interim may be from another denomination entirely. The important thing is to find the right person. One thing to note is the UCC denomination looks for an interim specialty, even though actual training is not needed. The Presbyterian USA denomination does require a trained interim.

3. **Q: How will we know what kind of interim pastor we need?**

A: Sometimes the perception of needed skills for an interim pastor change after the settled pastor leaves. The Interim Pastor Seeking Committee needs to be able to describe the attributes it is looking for in an interim pastor and pick the best available person.

It is important in choosing an interim pastor to be thorough. The Interim Search Committee should be clear about looking for an "intentional interim pastor." The committee must interview and check references.

4. **Q: What kind of congregational communication plan is needed?**

A: The handling of communications is important and there are some particular steps that should be followed as far as the timing of the senior pastor's announcement. Some of those communications are discussed in Appendix 2.

Both Reverends Longfield and Denton would like to attend congregational discussions to explain the reasons for the procedural rules for filling vacated pastoral positions. This congregational discussion could take place in a worship service.

On the issue of Pastor Dowdy's involvement in the life of the church after his retirement, it is very important that he separate himself from the church. This is a congregational mourning experience and an ending of a long relationship. There may even be anger about the vacated pastoral position. Members may want the vacating pastor to do funerals, weddings and other services. This must not be allowed to happen, as it will hurt the healing of the separation process for the church.

There is an analogy: If you are in a new relationship following a divorce and your new wife's ex-husband is still in regular contact with her, how would that make you feel? The old pastor must not retard the new pastor as he or she develops this important relationship.

5. **Q: What are the pitfalls to the process and how best to avoid them?**

A: The important thing is to allow time for grieving. It is important to allow the congregation time and space for grief. Acknowledge the emotional impact of losing the pastor. When the Council officially notifies the congregation that Mark is leaving, it should be assured that the Council is working with both the Olympia Presbytery and Northwest UCC Conference and that there is a plan in place which includes congregational discussions.

It is important not to establish timelines at this time. Doing so, will short circuit the grieving process.

**6. Q: What role does Pastor Amy Roon want in the transition?**

A: It is very important to understand the role of the associate pastor during this transition period. It is clear after some preliminary discussions with Pastor Roon that she wants to help the church through its transition period.

There are written materials that will guide the church on this issue. Please refer to Appendix 3, the section of the Church Profile used during the search process that led to hiring Pastor Roon. Appendix 3 also includes the TUCO by-laws associated with the calling of pastors.

We believe these to be the options:

- ◇ Pastor Roon has the option of applying for the senior pastor position. If she does, then she will need to take a leave of absence during the application process.
- ◇ Pastor Roon has the option of NOT applying for the senior pastor position. In that case she may continue her associate pastor role during the tenure of the interim pastor. However, at the time a new senior pastor is called, the Council will determine when to call a new Presbyterian associate pastor.

**7. Q: How will the Planning Committee and Interim Pastor work together?**

A: There are some clearly defined tasks for an interim pastor that involve planning. The primary ones are underlined below.

- ◇ Coming to term with history: Grieving, working through conflict, acknowledging and learning from the past, deciding what is important and worthwhile to carry into future.
- ◇ Facilitating shifts in leadership: Honoring past leadership, keeping them involved; encouraging and equipping new leadership.
- ◇ Clarifying identity and purpose: Determining whether the congregation's image is realistic; discovering a realistic and promising identity for the future.

Note: There is normally some planning around the time the senior pastor leaves. It is important, however, not to make drastic changes during the tenure of the interim pastor. The focus should be on clarifying identity and purpose.

- ◇ Creating a healthy partnership with the denomination.
- ◇ Commitment to new leadership and the future: Consensus and excitement about a shared vision for future.
- ◇ Coming to terms with history: Grieving, working through conflict, acknowledging and learning from the past, deciding what is important and worthwhile to carry into future.

Note: The interim pastor is not a pastoral candidate. It is important that the congregation understand that the interim pastor is employed for a set period of time in a bridging role between vacating and new pastors.

8. **Q: Was there an interim when Mark Dowdy was hired? How did that work?**

A: Yes, there was an interim when Pastor Dowdy was called. Her name was Muriel Brown, a Presbyterian, and she was employed by TUCO for 20 months. A member of the search committee for the interim pastor recalls the interim did a fine job and everybody liked her. She was a pastor whose specialty was interim work.

Please note that when Pastor McCann retired, the associate pastor was released, probably because of how the by-laws were written at that time. Both left the church at the same time, which resulted in stability issues for the church.

Miscellaneous Questions:

9. **Q: Is the interim pastor head of staff?**

A: Yes.

10. **Q: How long does an interim usually stay and how much is the salary ?**

A: The period seems to be 12 to 16 months. There can be extensions, which are negotiable. Interims have annual contracts, and towards their end may be renegotiated to add or remove contract days.

The salary and benefits for an interim should be the same as the departing senior pastor. It is inappropriate and unfair to look at the interim as a time to save money.

Note: Council should research an appropriate salary range for the new senior pastor, as the current salary may be below a competitive scale.

From the "Report of the Second Pastor Search Committee", February 2007, page 4:

**The Need to Anticipate Future Pastor Salary Requirements.** Our church must now anticipate and begin planning for, what may be the compensation level required to attract the next senior pastor called by this church. There is a belief in some quarters that this figure may produce severe "sticker shock" if not considered sufficiently in advance. Such analysis should include projections of costs related to payment of at least a portion of the clergy social security tax obligation (if such a decision is to be made) and a sabbatical allowance. In this regard and consistent with informal recommendations already made to the Council, the Church should make a meaningful effort to bring pastoral salaries within the denominations' guidelines, with such adjustments to those levels which might be based on differences of location or other factors

**11. O: Are there dual standing implications in calling either a gay or lesbian pastor (interim or settled)?**

A: If the pastor is gay or lesbian and UCC, the present Olympia Presbytery staff stated that they are willing to work with us in support of our choice, however, they will not be able to offer that person Presbyterian standing at this time. In addition, there will be a need for discussion and a resolving of differences within our own congregation

From the “Report of the Second Pastor Search Committee”, February 2007, page 5:

**The Need for Faithful Consideration of Gay and Lesbian Candidates:** The Church must come to grips with a continuing reality: The distinct likelihood that candidates interested in our senior pastor opening (and in whom we are interested) will be gay or lesbian. Will our church as a federated institution be ready to affirm unequivocally that such persons should, and will, be given full consideration without regard to their orientation?

As it moved into the latter stages of its work, the Committee identified an openly professing gay pastor as one of its final candidates. The Committee concluded there existed an impediment to further consideration of the candidate by reason of a provision in Article VIII of our church’s bylaws which provides:

“The Pastor, while called from a particular denomination [The United Church of Christ], shall obtain recognition from the other denomination [Presbyterian Church (USA)] and maintain proper relationships with both denominations” (emphasis supplied).

The current polity of the Presbyterian Church (USA) prohibits the ordination of an openly professing gay or lesbian pastor, and thus would prevent the Olympia Presbytery from according “recognition” to this candidate, if selected. Accordingly, the Committee sought to obviate this impediment by proposing a bylaw amendment, which would have removed the mandatory nature of the requirement for obtaining “recognition”. The Council declined to accept the amendment for consideration by the congregation.

From this experience, the Committee must conclude that there is work to be done by all of us in the Church, if we are fully to give fair and faithful consideration to all who may next seek the position of senior pastor for us.

## Recommendations for transition steps and assignments

Transition over the next few years will be a challenge and place demands on the staff and volunteer resources of the church. It is a significant opportunity in the life of the church that needs to be an important Council focus.

There are milestones to be anticipated in the transition process. They are provided in Appendix 2. Their schedule for completion is related to the date of Pastor Dowdy's retirement. That date has not been established. For planning purposes, the Transition Team recommends May 1, 2010 as the date Council should set as the transition start-up target.

**Assignments:** There are several groups that will need to work together over the transition duration, so in reading Appendix 2, please keep the following definitions in mind:

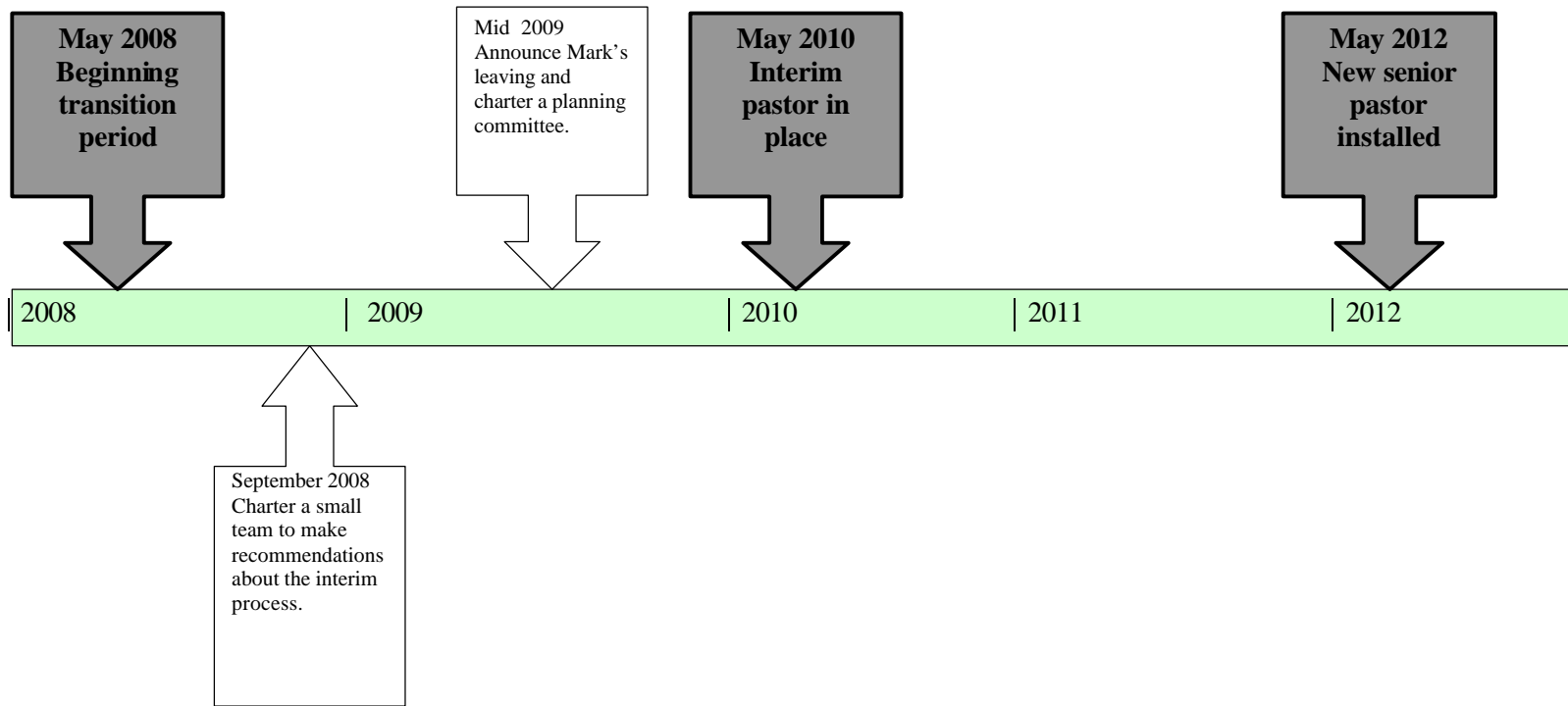
- ◇ **Transition Team:** The group providing this report and recommendations. It is made up of the following church members: Brian Hovis, Janet Anderson, Mike Segawa, and Bob McMullen.
- ◇ **Interim Pastor Seeking Committee:** This group is yet to be established. The purpose of the group is to bring the best possible "intentional interim pastor" to the church. The group will be given its authority from the Council and will make regular progress reports. It is recommended that one of the Transition Team members be included on the Interim Pastor Seeking Committee for continuity purposes.
- ◇ **Planning Committee:** This group is yet to be established. Its purpose is to compile baseline information about church identity and past performance. It will also develop a congregational planning process and coordinate its activities with the Interim Pastor when selected.
- ◇ **Senior Pastor Seeking Committee:** This group is yet to be established. The purpose of the group is to seek a new Senior Pastor. It will assimilate the work of the planning committee into a church profile that will be used in the search.

It is the Transition Team's recommendation that the Council adopt the following three motions:

**Motions:**

- 1. Council accepts the Transition Team's report and recommendations as the procedure to be used for the senior pastor transition.**
- 2. Affirm that Council understands that a successful senior pastoral transition is important church business that will be supported with sufficient resources and time by the Council and its ministries.**
- 3. Authorize the Transition Team to proceed with part two of its charge, and recruit and develop a charter for the Planning Committee. The Planning Committee will work with the ministries and church staff to:**
  - ◇ Develop a communications plan for ways to engage and gather information from the Congregation during the planning process.**
  - ◇ Gather background information about the church that will be helpful to the Senior Pastor Seeking Committee as they complete a Church Profile.**

**Appendix 1: HYPOTHETICAL TRANSITION TIME SCHEDULE:**



Reverse the order of the first two entries to keep them chronological

**Appendix 2: Transition Milestones**

Transition – Schedule		Updated: February 6, 2009	
Milestones/Task	Target Date	Responsibility	
<b>Retirement Date = RD. RD-6 months means 6 months before retirement date.</b>			
Complete the administrative checklist in <sup>1</sup> (Note: This task could be started now.)	RD-6 months	Pastor Dowdy	
Update existing profile with data that clarifies the identity of the church, gathers data about past performance, and develops a communications plan (Note: This task could be started now.)	RD-12 months	Transition Team with ministry chairs, secretary, and treasurer.	
Start Interim Pastor Seeking Committee (Note: This group should include members of the Transition Team and can start planning earlier than when it is announced. Coordination with UCC Conference Minister and Presbytery Executive is important .)	RD-5 months	Council	
Resignation letter to congregation with follow-up on Sunday (Note: Sample letter in UCC Resources, Section One. This task should be coordinated. If a letter were put in the mail on Saturday, then it would be received early in the week. People could be asked to come to the Sunday service. The letter could also be coincidental with an article in the <i>Voice</i> )	RD-3 months	Pastor Dowdy	
Follow-up about resignation with other organizations (Note: This could be a letter to many types of groups. Mark should notify organizations that call on him for weddings and funerals, other church's, etc. )	RD-3 months	Pastor Dowdy	

<sup>1</sup> UCC, Section one, “A Pastoral Vacancy”, Resources 6-1

## Transition Team Report

Transition – Schedule		Updated: February 6, 2009
Milestones/Task	Target Date	Responsibility
Letter from church leadership to congregation (Note: Sample letter in UCC Resources, Section One)	RD-3 months	Church Moderator
Planning Committee formed (Note: Some members of the Transition Team should be included.)	RD-2 months	Council
Celebration and acknowledgement events	Ongoing until RD	Congregational Life
Exit interview (Note: There may be congregational differences on how notes are shared)	RD-1 month	UCC Conference Minister and Presbytery Executive
Pastor Dowdy retires	RD	Pastor Dowdy, UCC Conference Minister and Presbytery Executive
Interim Pastor onboard	RD + 3 weeks	Interim search committee
Planning Committee completes project	RD + 12 months	Planning committee
Senior Pastor Search Committee formed	RD + 12 months	Council
Senior pastor selected	RD +22 months	Congregation
Interim Pastor leaves	RD + 22 months	Council

### **Appendix 3: Information Concerning Associate Pastor**

**Profile:** The current senior pastor, who is Presbyterian and has served this congregation well and faithfully for nearly twenty years, intends to retire within the next five years. As a federated church, The United Churches of Olympia by-laws require the next senior pastor be ordained within the United Church of Christ denomination, and the associate pastor be from the Presbyterian denomination. The incumbent United Church of Christ Associate Pastor will be eligible to apply for the senior pastor position at that time.

**Bylaws:** *ARTICLE VIII - PASTORS:*

The calling of a Pastor shall be in accordance with the rules governing such a call by the denomination of which the Pastor is a member. The Pastor, while called from a particular denomination, shall obtain recognition from the other denomination and maintain proper relationships with both denominations. In the spirit of the Federation, (s) he shall represent The United Churches through participation in and encouragement of both denominational programs.

- A. The Pastor/Head of Staff and Associate Pastor(s), if any, shall be elected by the congregation of the Federation at a meeting called for that purpose, providing full requirements regarding proper calling and notice of the meeting shall have been met. A vote of at least three-fourths of all voting members present shall be required to elect any Pastor.
- B. The Pastor/Head of Staff shall be placed in charge of all church personnel including any Associate Pastor(s) and shall have general supervision over all official church activities, subject to the authority of the Council to whom (s)he must report and from whom (s)he shall receive instructions. Recruitment and selection of all employees of The United Churches shall be in accordance with the Personnel Policy as adopted or as amended by the Council.
- C. At such time as the Pastor/Head of Staff leaves The United Churches of Olympia for any reason, (s) he must be replaced by a person from the other denomination.
- D. When searching for and calling an Associate Pastor, (s) he must be recruited from the denomination such that a balance of all pastors from both denominations is maintained.
- E. In the event the congregation chooses to elect co-pastors, they will share duties equally and both denominations must be represented.

### **Appendix 3: Helpful Websites**

“Calling a Pastor”, found on The Presbyterian USA website at ,  
<http://www.pcusa.org/clc/pdf/callingpastor.pdf> on January 18, 2009.

“A Pilgrimage Through Transitions and New Beginnings” found on the United Church of Christ website, at: <http://www.ucc.org/ministers/a-pilgrimage-through.html> on January 18, 2009.

Interim Ministry Network at: <http://www.imnedu.org/index.htm> on January 19, 2009.