



Good News for the Pews

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“Now What?”

It didn't take very long after the Special Congregational Meeting on October 29, where the members of the English Worshipping Community voted to call me as the Designated Solo Pastor before someone asked me, in a rather blunt and direct manner, “What is the first thing you are going to do now that you've been elected?” At the moment my first thought was “finish my lunch?” because I was sitting at a table at the R&G Lounge, and I had only been elected about an hour before. I looked thoughtfully into my tea and considered more carefully what I was about to say.

This question is not uncommon between church members and newly called pastors. In my long experience on the Committee on Ministry, as well as my personal experience of starting new interim pastorates, I know that church members look toward pastors as the chief executive of the church society, much as people look towards a president or a CEO. While it is true that installed pastors take on a leading role, and that designated pastors are installed, it is important to remember that our understanding of church leadership is not based on the concertation of power within the hands of one person, be they in the pulpit or not. I'm not going to suddenly move us in a new direction based on ideas in my own imagination. My work as an installed pastor is to work *with the* ruling elders to review and implement the goals laid out in the Mission Study Report.

The Mission Study Team wrote “The EWC is committed to ... evolving to meet the needs of PCC members and the surrounding community towards spiritual formation and growth, and a just and loving world. In this extraordinary historical moment, we move forward into transformation. We shall allow ourselves to adapt, equip, and take risks, while being grounded in God's grace, united in spiritual fellowship, and faithful to our call to discipleship. We strive to be the visible and active body of Christ that brings hope to those in need. “Behold, I am doing a new thing. Can you perceive it?” (Isaiah 65:16-17)” They went on to elucidate four goals, *in no particular order*, for the next season of ministry.

These goals are: to strengthen the EWC's identity and work as a Matthew 25 community; build stronger relationships with the PCC Cantonese and Mandarin communities; continuing to engage in missional action, beginning in Chinatown and extending out into the world; and building and investing in a hybrid model of church which is both in-person and online. Each one of those ideas

“The Call Process”

By the Designated Pastor Nominating Committee

Presbyterians like to do things by committee. We like to do things “decently and in order.” The national PCUSA has a long and circuitous process which congregations must follow when hiring a new pastor. One of the first steps is to form a Pastor Nominating Committee. Earlier this year in April, you elected the members of the Designated Pastor Nominating Committee, to work its way through the process of discerning and calling a pastor nominee.

Our committee members included Heidi Wong, elder representative; Jeanine Lim, deacon representative; Nancy Chee, from the Mission Study Report team; Clinton Huey and Whittney Tom, at large; Eleanor Wong, representative from the Cantonese Worshiping Community; and Amy Feng, from the Mandarin Worshiping Community, until resigning in August.

To choose a designated pastor, our committee began meeting in May, and we had a standing meeting every single Thursday night through September, except for two Thursdays.

At our first meeting, we were guided by Rev. InHo Kim, staff at the San Francisco Presbytery. He gave us the online handbook entitled *On Calling a Pastor*, all 45 pages of it. We were also assigned a liaison from the Presbytery’s Committee on Ministry (COM), the Rev. Janet Bower, who attended many of our meetings and provided valuable guidance and advice throughout our process.

First, a note about confidentiality. We were guided by policy set forth in the handbook, *On Calling a Pastor*:

Maintaining confidentiality within the PNC is of the utmost importance. Maintaining confidentiality ensures that the identities of the prospective pastors your PNC is considering are protected. Maintaining confidentiality within the PNC is an issue of integrity, trusting God in the process, and spiritual leadership...This means that information about prospective pastors and all conversations, deliberations, and perceptions should not go beyond the members of the PNC, your presbytery liaison, and the EP/GP (Executive Presbyter).

The PCUSA *On Calling a Pastor* handbook sets forth a 21-step hiring, discernment and call process. In our deliberations, we were also guided by the 2022 EWC Mission Study Report and our status as a Matthew 25 church. Please note that the fact that we were looking for a designated pastor did not streamline the 21-step process, except to lessen the time that the position would be publicized. We still had to complete every single step of the process. The position was advertised from July 1- August 15, 2023.

Our first step was to write the Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP). What’s an MDP? The Ministry Discernment Profile provides a narrative picture of the mission and ministry of the congregation and its sense of call. Prospective pastors read the form to help them discern whether God is calling them to serve our church. The MDP is used to express our ministry context,

demographics, history, theology, values, leadership needs, and expectations. If you are interested, you can view our MDP on your own, by going to the website at clc.pcusa.org

We fortunately had 3 members of the Mission Study Team on our committee. It only took us a couple of weeks to write the MDP, in which we were asked to respond in writing to questions such as:

How would you describe the congregation's specific vision for ministry?

What is the nature and context of the community in which your congregation lives out its mission?

How will you address the emerging needs that are impacting your community?

Provide a description of the skills, gifts and training the person you hope will become a part of your ministry must have.

What specific areas of ministry do you expect the person called to be responsible for?

When we finished writing the MDP, it then had to be reviewed and approved by the English Commission and the Committee on Ministry. After approval, we entered the MDP online with the Church Leadership Connection (CLC). What's the CLC?

The CLC is a national online system of the Presbyterian Church USA. It has a search feature which identifies and matches church professionals who meet the position type, experience level, salary requirements and geographical choice that congregations are seeking. Interested candidates file a PDP, or a Personal Discernment Profile, which includes responses to several in-depth questions and serves as a narrative resume of sorts within the CLC system.

In addition to the national CLC system, we also wrote a detailed job announcement, and publicized the open position on our PCC website and on the SF Presbytery website and newsletter.

We received and considered a total of 9 matches and referrals.

Based on our Mission Study Report, we established and were guided by certain criteria, which included:

Nature of work experience (urban, congregation size, etc.)

Experience with intergenerational groups

Alignment with Matthew 25 principles

Sensitivity/experience with BIPOC

Through the CLC online system, we reviewed and considered matched and self-referred individuals through their Personal Discernment Profiles (PDP). We invited those individuals who passed our consideration criteria to apply. For those who did apply, in addition to the above PDP responses, we saw and considered their personal information, Statement of Faith, and we checked references. In addition, SF Presbytery has its own parallel reference-checking process. Finally, we invited candidates of interest to a Zoom interview. *(continued on page 5)*