

United Church of Christ

SEARCH AND CALL

**A Pilgrimage
through
Transitions and New Beginnings**

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- 6 - Sample Letter to Candidate in Whom You Have Particular Interest
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INTRODUCTION

Date: August 2007

To: Members of Local Church Search Committees in the Discernment Process
United Church of Christ

Re: A Pilgrimage Through Transitions and New Beginnings

Greetings!

You are beginning a vital, challenging, and exciting journey. On this journey you will examine your local church's history and ministry, its leadership needs and hopes for the future, and enter into a time of intentional discernment which will result in extending a call to your next pastoral leader. A Pilgrimage Through Transitions and New Beginnings has been developed to assist you as you navigate the journey.

While we hope this resource will inform your work and answer many of the questions you will encounter, it is important to remember that your Conference/Association staff will be companions on the journey. Their knowledge and experience will be helpful as you prepare your Local Church Profile and as you receive Ministerial Profiles from individuals who may have the gifts, skills, and interests to be your next pastoral leader. The Search and Call Process in the United Church of Christ depends upon cooperative and appropriate sharing of information among national staff, Conference/Association staff, your Search Committee, and those seeking new settings for their pastoral ministry.

A Pilgrimage Through Transitions and New Beginnings has been developed to be as comprehensive as possible and will help your congregation say good-bye to your current pastor, identify transition leadership, and finally welcome a new pastoral leader. In crafting this resource, we have incorporated opportunities for biblical reflection and intentional discernment as you move through the process. There are Bible Studies for you to consider and wrestle with as your Search Committee is elected and begins its work, as you develop your Local Church Profile, and as you prayerfully consider each candidate. We hope that these reflections will assist in your discernment as you seek to identify the one God is sending to you.

A Pilgrimage Through Transitions and New Beginnings is divided into six distinct sections. Each section contains narrative material as well as relevant resources. The resources for each section are also available in Rich Text format in order to make them accessible and easy to use or adapt as needed. Each section is addressed to a specific audience:

SECTION ONE: A Pastoral Vacancy

(for the departing pastor and Governing Board)

Part One is addressed to the pastor considering resignation and/or retirement. The contents include ethical issues involved in pastoral departures and suggestions for resignation letters.

Part Two is addressed to the Governing Board of the church and describes essential actions lay leaders should take when faced with a pastoral resignation. The resources in Section One include The Ordained Minister's Code, Exit Interview examples, and a Liturgy of Farewell.

SECTION TWO: Transition Time

(for the Governing Board and the Interim/Transition Selection Committee)

This section addresses a congregation's emotional response to a pastoral vacancy and describes the actions needed to secure pastoral leadership for the interim time. Resources in the section are designed to assist in identifying the skills needed/desired by your congregation in the interim time, the Interim Ministry Profile, and The United Church of Christ's Expectations of its Interim Ministers.

SECTION THREE: The Search and Call Process

(for the Governing Board and the Search Committee)

This section opens with suggestions for the Governing Board to consider when the church leaders begin to select members of a Search Committee. The remainder of Section Three contains informative material about each of the steps involved in the United Church of Christ Search and Call Process. You will find resources for Commissioning a Pastoral Search Committee, Biblical Resources for Search Committees, help with checking references, and sample interview questions.

SECTION FOUR: The United Church of Christ Local Church Profile

(for the Search Committee, the Governing Board, and other groups/boards involved in the preparation of a Local Church Profile)

This section contains a variety of suggestions for gathering data and involving members of the church in the development of the Local Church Profile. A copy of the profile is included in this section along with Congregational Survey and Research resources.

SECTION FIVE: Assessing Finances

(for the Search Committee, the Governing Board, and financial boards involved in the process of developing a call agreement and compensation package)

This section contains introductory material for the Search Committee along with the revised and updated "Compensation Guidelines for Authorized Ordained Ministers in the United Church of Christ." Your Conference/Association will also have compensation guidelines to help inform your work in developing the specifics of a Call Agreement and Compensation Package.

SECTION SIX: The United Church of Christ Ministerial Profile

(for the Search Committee)

This section includes suggestions for prayerful reading and decision-making as the Search Committee begins to receive, read, and evaluate Ministerial Profiles. The section includes a Sample UCC Ministerial Profile and resources for reading profiles, communicating with candidates, and interpreting their background forms.

A Word for Small Churches

This material has been prepared with a focus on churches that seek to call a full-time, ordained, United Church of Christ minister. If you employ a part-time pastor, a seminary student, or a licensed minister, you may find that some of the financial and organizational material will not apply to your situation. However, the Search and Call Process described in A Pilgrimage through Transitions to New Beginnings is intentionally designed to assist churches of all sizes, historic backgrounds, and geographic locations.

Finally, this resource is designed to be used in conjunction with other resources offered by Parish Life and Leadership. They include Biblical Resources for Search Committees and the DVD *Sailing on Faith* which tells the story of one local church Search Committee's journey through the Search and Call Process. A Progress Poster is also available to assist the Search Committee in keeping the congregation informed about its progress.

We offer recognition and sincere gratitude to the Rev. Carole Carlson. Her experience as a local church pastor, Conference Minister, resource person to Search Committees and Committees on Ministry has informed the extensive and comprehensive information contained in this resource. Carole has invested many months authoring A Pilgrimage Through Transitions to New Beginnings and has been tireless in her determination to make this resource one that is accessible and helpful to local church leaders and pastors.

As you embark on the journey of transitioning to new pastoral leadership, you are in our prayers. We value the partnership we share with local churches and Conferences/Associations in the ministry of Jesus Christ through the Search and Call Process in the United Church of Christ.

Blessings in your search and in your discernment.

Parish Life and Leadership Ministry Team
Local Church Ministries