

Presbytery of Wabash Valley

Standards for Congregational Self Studies

Introduction

On the Committee on Ministry it is our goal to help congregation assess who God is calling them to be in any given moment of their life as a community of faith, and especially as they move through a transition in their pastoral leadership. Good pastoral calls are fed by clear communication of vision, expectations and history between a church and their new pastor. A congregational self study is one of the most important tools in helping to create healthy pastor/congregational relationships.

Starting in 2007, the Committee on Ministry has been looking to our interim pastors to take on leadership within their congregations in the area of the self study. It is our hope that by working on a daily basis with a particular church, that the interim will have an accurate understanding of how to best approach the self study process.

Interim pastors are asked to put together, with the input of the Session, a plan for the self study that can be approved and supported by the Committee on Ministry.

This is the intended timeline for this process

- Interim determines the best time to start the self-study based upon the following factors: their ability to establish trust within the congregation, their ability to assess the issues and dynamics within the congregation; the rhythms of the church year and congregational life.
- Interim pastor designs and presents a plan for self-study to the COM for approval.
- Self study is led by the interim
- A Report from the self study is presented to the COM for approval
- COM grants approval for the election of the PNC.
- The PNC drafts the Church information form, takes it to the session and then the COM for approval.

Below is some helpful information about what elements in particular the COM will look for when considering a plan for self study.

Participation Levels

- It is the expectation of the COM that the self study process engage at least 30% of the church's worshipping community.
- The COM will be looking for reflection/study sessions that are planned to occur at multiple events
- The study should allow for all members of the congregation to give information/feedback towards the study.

Information that should be reflected upon and interpreted in a report to the COM

- Demographics of congregation and surrounding zip codes using a resource such as MISSIONINSIGHT (*We have just made the switch to this company from Percept. Information about how to use this tool will be forthcoming*)
- Historical information making use of the following: annual reports, previous CIF's, session minutes, any reports from outside consultants, and previous mission studies. There should also be information regarding past pastoral leadership, significant staff changes, and conflict within the congregation.
- Congregational wide surveys on the state of the membership and congregational life.

Goals for the Self Study

Certainly, in and of itself the study should help the members of the congregation better understand themselves and to move toward new pastoral leadership including:

- Consensus on a vision for future ministry
- Simple mission statement
- Expectations and hopes related to future pastoral leadership

Additionally though, the self study should in particular become a primary resource for the Pastor Nominating Committee in their work to create the Church Information Form and to inform their conversations with potential candidates. The self study will specifically need to help answer the following questions/complete the following statements:

- Brief Church Mission Statement
- A brief description of your church/organization programs or accomplishments.
- What gifts, skills and experiences your congregation possesses to fulfill its mission.
- What are the key theological issues of our church and society that are reflected in the ministry of your congregation/organization?
- For what specific tasks, assignments, and program areas will the future pastor have responsibility?
- Description of characteristics and qualifications needed in a person who would fill this position beyond typical pastoral duties.

Completion of the Church Information Form

In as much as it is helpful to the process, the interim pastor may be a resource for the PNC in the writing of the CIF in two ways. First the interim will provide insight to the PNC about how they might best appeal to a pastor considering serving their congregation. Second the interim can help to ensure that the results of the study are accurately conveyed in the church information form.