



# Pastor Transition Process FAQ

March 16, 2021

Hello Kirk members,

Jody Welker has served the Kirk faithfully for 17 incredible years, but it is now time to celebrate his retirement and begin the process of finding our next Senior Pastor. This is a new endeavor for many of us, so in an attempt to provide some details as to how this process will work, we have put together this FAQ. If there are any questions that we have missed, please email Greg Barnes at [gregorybarnes22@gmail.com](mailto:gregorybarnes22@gmail.com).

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What's the first step in this process?

\* The first step has taken place! Jody has asked the congregation to request Presbytery to dissolve the Pastoral Relationship effective July 1. The congregation approved that request at our March 14<sup>th</sup> meeting. That has now been forwarded to Presbytery. Jody won't actually leave until July 1, but the dissolution vote sets in motion the next steps in the transition.

Has Session approved a transition plan?

\* Yes. The transition plan is as follows:

- 1) Establishment of a Transition team (5-7 people):** to provide management of the Transition with a focus on Congregational Communication, Staff support, Contact with Presbytery Representatives; and support for the Interim. Nominations for the team were provided by Session, Ministry Team Leaders, Staff and congregation. Clerk of Session Muriel Roberson and Personnel Committee Co-Chairs Ruth Menechella and Greg Barnes will recommend the team to the Session for their approval.
- 2) Interim/Transitional Pastor Search (7-9 people):** to be handled by the Personnel Committee, which will establish an Interim Pastor Nominating Committee (IPNC) as a subcommittee. Nominations for the IPNC were provided by Session, Ministry Team Leaders, Staff and congregation. Ruth Menechella and Greg Barnes will recommend to the Session the IPNC.
- 3) Celebration of Ministry Team:** headed by Virginia Anthony

Is the New Hope Presbytery providing guidance to our committees?

\* Yes. Jerry Slaymaker will serve as our Vacancy Counselor. Gloria Johnson will serve as the Presbytery liaison.

Why haven't we already begun the search to replace Jody?

\* We are not permitted to officially begin the search for an interim pastor until Jody departs on July 1. However, the IPNC will be able to prepare the Ministry Information Form ahead of time and then seek approval from Session and the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry (COM) immediately upon Jody's departure.

Does the Presbytery select the Kirk's interim pastor?

\* No. The IPNC will recommend a candidate to Session for approval. Once approved, the IPNC and the candidate agree on Terms of Call and Session will schedule a meeting the Presbytery Commission on Ministry for approval. If the candidate comes from outside the Presbytery, they will also need to be examined by the COM Exams Sub-Commission. The interim would then be received by the Presbytery and the congregation.

When do we begin the search for a permanent pastor?

\* A Pastor Nominating Committee will be established several months after the interim pastor is in place. The interim's responsibilities include establishing a mission study committee to help guide the Kirk in determining what it needs for a permanent pastor. The interim will inform COM when Session is ready to nominate the PNC.

Can Kirk members serve on multiple committees?

\* The transition team and the IPNC/PNC require significant work by everyone involved. Given the size and talents of the Kirk congregation, we intend to build each committee with a unique and diverse group of active church members.

\* If we like the interim pastor, can we hire him/her for our permanent position?

No. The Book of Order describes the pairing of an interim pastor and a church as a "temporary pastoral relationship." The Presbytery specifically trains pastors to serve as interims. Not only can this be a challenging time for a church, but it's also an opportunity for reflection and growth. The interim pastor will play a critical role in helping the Kirk take a positive step forward as we begin the search for a permanent pastor.

\* How long will this process take?

There is not a firm timeline. However, the hope is for the IPNC to recommend an interim pastor this fall. Interims are approved for one-year contracts with the potential for two six-month extensions, so best-case scenario for a permanent pastor to be in place is 18-24 months following Jody's departure.