

The Search

Many of you have been wondering about the search process for finding a new minister. Paula Northwood has stated her desire to retire in late 2020 and that will leave a necessary space to fill on the ministerial team. I'm glad to tell you this search is getting underway this month. We have been working with our Interim Minister, Dan Wolpert, since May and, along with our ministerial staff, have undergone a critical period of discernment about who we are as a church, the transition toward our future and our spiritual growth. While Dan's work will continue into May of this year, the Deacons have decided it was the right time to begin our search for our next Minister.

Our first step is to identify a strong chair for the search committee, then involve that person in selecting the other members of the committee and refining the search charter. We want broad and varied representation from the congregation, while at the same time including people with a mixture of human resources, strategic and organizational skills. We also want to insure that we choose people who are active in the life of the church in order to effectively represent the church to our candidates and to determine which candidates are the best fit. Once the committee members are selected, we will go to the congregation for approval in April.

What have we learned that will be valuable to us in this ministerial search? First is that we truly benefit from the collaborative team approach that has been implemented by our current ministerial staff, which tells us that our next minister should be someone who has proven ability to work effectively within a team environment. This seems to be the way the church world is moving and also is the kind of position that many ministers are seeking. While we are still using the title of Senior Minister in our governing documents, this position will not look like the hierarchical Senior Minister of years past. While many of us have strong attachment to the Plymouth of the past twenty years, we are hiring for the next twenty years and beyond.

Our discernment work over the past months has taught us that we need someone competent in what we are calling "spiritual administration," which is the process of building energy around the wakefulness and deep listening of what God wants for us and how the Spirit moves within us. While we expect this person to have strong preaching skills, the work of spiritual administration goes well beyond that to inspire us to live up to our stated desire, as we spoke of in our 2010 strategic plan, "to embody the radical love and justice found in the life, spirit and teachings of Jesus," or, as we alternately state it in our current Purposes of the Church, to: "humbly seek and serve God within, among and beyond ourselves."

The search committee, once fully formed and active, will address the long-term strategic and spiritual needs of Plymouth Church while seeking to fill this position. Much work has already taken place in defining the future we seek to live out together, but more is yet to be done, and this work will continue in strong partnership with the Ministers, Deacons, Boards and you, the members of the church.

I invite you to the first of several discussions about this search with the church leadership on Sunday, January 20 during the 10 o'clock hour, in the Theater.

Brian Siska
Moderator