

SUCCESSION PLANNING INFORMATION
For posting on the MVPC website
5/18/10

Purpose of this link

To provide spiritual leadership, keep the congregation informed, and enlist the MVPC family to participation in the Succession Planning process through fervent prayer, personal faithfulness and availability to serve as God calls in nurturing the church's life and ministry as a prelude to the future God has in store for MVPC. This information will be updated as we move through the Succession Planning process.

Special Note: Because the election of the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) and the beginning of the search process for a new senior pastor will not begin until summer 2011 information on this process is only general at this point.

Personal Word from Pastor Jim

During my sabbatical last summer I was blessed with time and space to prayerfully reflect on the life and ministry of MVPC and my call as its pastor. In that process some succession planning thoughts regarding my anticipated retirement sometime in 2011 came more clearly into view.

Two things particularly stand out in my thinking: the need for (1) implementing a thoughtful succession plan with a goal to spiritually strengthen and galvanize the congregation during the transition and (2) setting an optimal time frame in which succession planning and a smooth transition may take place.

In light of my role as "founder," the development of MVPC under my leadership over many years, and the accumulated trust by a large majority of the congregation, I consider active participation in the succession planning process as one of the most important elements in fulfilling my calling as pastor.

I therefore enter this process as I did when I first arrived in fall 1982, with deep confidence in God and in what He has in store for MVPC. Not only during the transition but through and beyond the emergence of new things God wants to do in and through MVPC.

Pastor Jim's Letter to the Congregation

Dear MVPC Family,

Twenty-eight years ago God led Joy and me by the heart to accept the call to become MVPC's pastor. In his unmistakable providence and amazing grace God has confirmed that call time and time again through an absolutely incredible journey. MVPC today is nothing less than a testimony to God's faithfulness and the loving commitment of God's people!

Last night at a joint meeting of Session, Deacons and Staff I shared that in seeking the kind of guidance that originally led us to MVPC and sustained us over the years it has become clear that we should now begin a season of Succession Planning in anticipation of my retirement next summer, 2011.

I say we because I believe God wants to include each and every one of us in preparing for MVPC's future. And I say we because I also believe Succession Planning, which considers many Christ-honoring spiritual and practical elements including strengthening faith in us all, is an important part of my call as your Pastor.

A Succession Planning Team comprising Donny Bergen, Bob Holt, Ron Fadelli, Terry Sylvester, Jim Watkinson and Nat Weber has begun meeting with me. This team's purpose is to work with Session to help provide guidance, identify the many and various dimensions of Succession Planning, keep the congregation informed, and eventually include everyone in the process.

As we take these next steps in our journey together I'm looking forward to seeing the amazing future God has in store for us, building on our solid foundation in Christ. As his Word says in 1 Corinthians 2:9, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him."

*For His Glory and in His Love,
Pastor Jim Rueb*

What is Succession Planning?

Succession planning is the orderly implementation of a transition in pastoral leadership which strengthens the church spiritually, prepares the church organizationally, nurtures the church relationally, and invites the church to participate prayerfully in anticipation of God's work in and through MVPC under the leadership of a new senior pastor.

Our Succession Planning Objectives

1. **Spiritual Nurture.** The most important element in a church's life is the nature and quality of its spiritual life, both at the corporate as well as the individual level. A church's spiritual life is not so much measured by its theological and biblical acknowledgements but by the quality of its life as the Body of Christ. This quality is explicitly described in such passages as Galatians 5:22-26, Ephesians 4-5, Philippians 2:1-16, Colossians 3, and in Jesus' description of his will for the communal life of his followers in John 13:34-35. Spiritual nurture toward these visible results of Christ's presence and work in our midst is thus the *single most important objective in our succession planning.*
2. **Smooth Transition.** Most pastoral transitions are like light switches. One pastor leaves and the light is turned off. The new pastor arrives and the switch is turned on. Regardless of the time frame the transition feels abrupt and is often unsettling to the congregation. While no pastoral transition is without some inevitable and unforeseen insecurity, thoughtful succession planning, transparent process and concerted prayer can sustain, prepare and inspire anticipation in a congregation for its future. We therefore want to think of our transition more as lights on a dimmer switch. As one light is dimming down, the other is brightening up. The ambience in the room, or the culture of the church, doesn't noticeably change. Another image is that of an airliner whose captain announces well ahead of its approach, "we are beginning our descent." He thereby gives passengers a sense of anticipation of not only a safe landing but what's to follow. For MVPC it's a planned "touch and go" before the next leg of the exciting journey towards God's ultimate destination.
3. **Thoughtful Planning.** Conventional wisdom is that planning ahead is important, especially for congregations with lead pastors with long tenure. Giving plenty of time to Session, Staff and Congregation, a well-constructed succession plan can guide the church through a challenging but energizing season of prayer and action steps. Those action steps include providing opportunity for the congregation to (a) reinforce its

- essential strengths, (b) identify its weaknesses, (c) renew its commitment to Christ and to one another, and (d) prepare spiritually and missionally for the future under new pastoral leadership.
4. **Reinforcing MVPC's strengths.** An important part of succession planning and transition strategy is to intentionally and systematically reinforce the church's spiritual and missional strengths by which MVPC developed and grew over the past 28 years. Among these are: (1) unmistakable Christ-centered proclamation, (2) consistent biblical teaching, (3) open, authentic worship, (4) an ethos of love, and (5) a passion for reaching our community.
 5. **Congregational Involvement.** Effective succession planning is related to church strategy. The key challenge is to align leadership succession with spiritual and organizational strategy. This challenge is most effectively met by implementing a process in which as many people in the congregation are involved as possible. This extension of involvement (a) creates greater transparency, (b) produces a higher level of support, (c) increases the success of transitional and interim leadership, and (d) provides general direction before the search process for the next pastor begins.
 6. **Accurate Self-Assessment.** One of the most important tasks for a PCUSA church to complete in a pastoral transition is a Mission Study. Extensive in nature, outlined in detail by standard guidance documents, endorsed by Session and finally presented to the Committee on Ministry for approval, the Mission Study becomes the definitive statement on the life, ministry and mission of the church for use by the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) in its work.
 7. **Successful Search.** Taking the necessary time to look inward through completing all or most of the Mission Study during the succession planning period can not only provide a "head start" on the search process, thereby potentially reducing the overall time between called pastors, but can also help insure the call at the end of the succession is a good fit for the congregation in terms of a candidate's spiritual focus, missional vision, cultural fit, emotional intelligence, spiritual gifting and professional skill set.

Our Succession Planning Values

1. **Communication.** Clear communication with the congregation is crucial to the effectiveness of the Succession Planning process.
2. **Involvement.** The nature and extent of congregational involvement, either on one of the Groups or as an active, praying and faithful member of the congregation is essential to Succession Planning's near and long-term success.
3. **Transparency.** The more transparent the Succession Planning process is to the congregation the more effective it will be.
4. **Prayer.** Prayer must be at the very heart and soul of the Succession Planning process and must become the basic participation of all members.

5. **Leadership.** Mature spiritual leadership committed to nurturing MVPC's peace and unity, modeled by the pastoral team, Session, Deacons, Staff, the Transition Team and all Succession Planning Groups, will be key to the effectiveness of the Succession Planning process.
6. **Confidence.** Confidence, which literally means "with faith," is the foundation for the assurance and joyful anticipation that God desires to accompany the Succession planning process at every point in the journey. Succession Planning leaders as well as all MVPC members have the responsibility and opportunity to nurture and exude godly confidence throughout the process, regardless of setbacks, surprises, changes, and unforeseen circumstances.
7. **Grace.** Grace is in many ways the first and last word of the Gospel, and is thus the "default setting" in all we attempt for Christ and His Kingdom and thus is meant to mark the Succession Planning process from beginning to end.

Our Succession Planning Groups

The following is a sample of the major task groups currently foreseen in the Succession Planning process. Other groups will be formed as necessary or appropriate.

1. **Transition Team.** Purpose: to work with Pastor Jim in providing succession planning assistance and recommendations to Session.
2. **Worship Project Group.** Purpose: to present to Session a vision for worship to be implemented beginning fall 2010. Led by Mike Loretto in consultation with Jim and the pastoral team, along with Worship elders, Alecia Larson and Ron Bass.
3. **Minister of Music Search Committee.** Purpose: to nominate to Session a candidate for the Minister of Music and Worship position. Note: Formal discussions have been initiated with Interim Minister of Music and Worship, Mike Loretto with respect to his candidacy for the permanent position. The outcome of these discussions should be known and enacted as appropriate on or before July 1, 2010, with communication to the congregation.
4. **Nominating Committee(s).** Purpose: to nominate to Session for the classes of 2013, 2014 and 2015 church officers whose spiritual maturity and commitment to the spiritual vision, mission and life of MVPC will provide strong lay leadership during the transition and in the initial stages of the new pastorate.
5. **Staff Development Advisory Committee (SDAC)** Purpose: to work closely with the Pastoral Staff and Personnel Committee to evaluate the current God-given gifts, talents and experience of the MVPC staff and volunteer ministry resources, to identify staffing needs, changes and potential gaps during the transition period and assist Session to align these resources, define the roles and responsibilities and particular skill-sets required of an Interim Pastor.
6. **Interim Pastor Committee.** Purpose: Appointed by Session to implement the Interim Pastor search process.

7. **Strategic Financial Group.** Purpose: to identify and provide leadership for key financial components in the succession plan, such as (a) budgetary adjustments, (b) key near-term financial needs, such as (a) PNC expenses, (b) housing for new senior pastor, (c) capital debt reduction/retirement, and (d) Planned giving and estate pledging to the ministries of MVPC to assure long-term financial viability and underwrite strategic ministry initiatives determined by Session.
8. **Mission Study Group.** Purpose: to begin the Mission Study process. Note: this is the project in which congregational involvement may be most extensive. The formation and populating of the Mission Study will be one of the recommendations of the Transition Team, but appointed by Session.
9. **Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC).** Purpose: to nominate to the congregation a candidate for the position of Pastor. Note: The PNC is nominated to the congregation by Session and elected by the congregation after the departure of Pastor Jim, anticipated in early summer 2011.
10. **Farewell Committee.** Purpose: to create and implement the appropriate farewell events honoring the ministry of Jim and Joy Rueb.

Our Transition Team

Donny Bergen, Elder, Session (2005-2008) , Worship dept., Soul Mates Leadership; **Ron Fadelli** Elder, Session (2006-2009), Personnel member and Chair (2008-09); **Bob Holt**, Clerk of Session (2009-present) APNC chair (1999), Student Ministry teacher; **Terry Sylvester**, Stewardship Committee (1999-present), Building Campaign co-chair (1996-98), Children's Ministry volunteer, (1987-present); **Jim Watkinson**, Elder (several terms), former Executive Administrator (2005-2007), Job Network leadership; **Nat Weber**, Executive Administrator

Presbytery's Role

Presbyterians believe that pastors and congregations are brought together through a call from God. This call is confirmed as the pastor, the church and the presbytery each say "yes" to the relationship. This three-way partnership is acted out throughout the pastoral call process with the presbytery through the Committee on Ministry (COM), having the responsibility for oversight of the call process. Any permanent pastoral relationship of pastor, associate pastor, full-time or part-time, is established by vote of the congregation and vote of the presbytery, which approves the call to a minister of the Word and Sacrament elected by the vote of the Congregation.

The COM will be our companion in the search process through one of its members who will serve as our liaison. Our COM liaison will provide us with guidance, resources and other services as we go through the pastoral search process. The presbytery COM works closely with the PNC, which has been elected by the congregation to present a pastor nominee to the congregations and has the responsibility to guide and consult in the decision of the PNC. Ultimately however it is MVPC's Pastoral Nominating Committee who will determine the candidate it deems best suited for MVPC and will seek approval from presbytery to present that candidate to the congregation for election to the call.

Our Schedule

This schedule, containing already completed tasks, provides a picture of the many dimensions and tasks of the Succession Planning process. The times here are in general sequence but only approximate at this point.

Fall 2009

- Pastoral Team holds initial discussions
- JWR conducts initial consultations, including Executive Presbyter
- Transition Team (TT) formed

Winter 2010

- Worship Project Group begins work
- 2010 Nominating Committee begins work
- TT begins development of general Succession Plan
- TT meets with Personnel Committee to review and receive counsel on Succession Plan
- Staff Development Advisory function begins under leadership of Pastor Jim and Transition Team to mutually determine with key staff professional and personal goals with respect to their work at MVPC
- Two extensive consultations held by TT and Personnel Chair with Executive Presbyter apprising him of TT work accomplished thus far, future plans, and counsel regarding the pastoral transition, interim pastor search, and Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) process.

Spring 2010

- Pastor Jim shares with Executive Ministry Team (EMT=lead elders on Session) his intended pastoral letter regarding Succession Planning in light his anticipated retirement in summer, 2011. (April 10)
- Pastor Jim and Transition Team present to Session the pastoral letter, along with a manual containing information regarding the MVPC Succession Planning process and information from the Book of Order on the pastoral calling process. (April 17)
- Pastor Jim and the Transition Team present to a joint meeting of Session, Deacons and Staff the pastoral letter and information regarding the Succession Planning Process. (April 20)
- Worship Project Group presents completed work to Session (April 20)
- The pastoral letter is sent to the congregation (April 21)
- Worship Dept. reviews with Session the Minister of Music and Worship staffing status
- TT reviews Succession Plan with Craig Palmer and COM liaison.
- A Succession Planning Information meeting is held for the congregation (May 16)
- TT Identifies potential leadership/members for Succession Planning Groups for presentation to Session
- The Succession Planning link with information is added to the MVPC website

Summer 2010

- Succession Planning groups are formed
- Succession Planning groups begin work

Fall 2010

- Mission Study Group begins work
- Succession Planning Groups continue work

Winter 2011

- Succession Planning Groups continue work
- Session appoints Interim Pastor Committee
- Farewell Committee finalizes plans
- 2011 Nominating Committee begins work
- Jim gives valedictory sermon series

Spring 2011

- Mission Study Group completes initial part of work, receives Session endorsement
- TT in consultation with Session identifies potential PNC members
- Farewell Committee implements farewell event(s) honoring Pastor Jim and Joy Rueb

Summer 2011

- Congregation elects PNC
- Mission Study completed
- Interim Pastor appointed by Session

A word about the Interim Pastor Role

The role of an Interim pastor, which is appointed by Session with presbytery concurrence *after* Pastor Jim's farewell, is to provide pastoral leadership during the congregation's search for the next pastor. An interim pastor has special expertise and training in working with congregations in the midst of a pastoral transition. An Interim Pastor's responsibilities may include such tasks as preaching, working with our pastoral team and staff to fulfill MVPC's ministry plan, moderating Session, providing pastoral care, administrative work, including supervision of staff, supporting the work of the PNC, but not being directly involved with their work, assisting with the congregational mission study and helping the congregation prepare to welcome the leadership of a new pastor

Spiritual Principles for our Journey

Scripture gives us spiritual principles for our journey

1. The Lord is with us

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age," (Matthew 28:16-20)

2. Love one another.

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another, (John 13:34-35).

3. Nurture the fruit of the Spirit

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law, (Galatians 5:22-23).

4. Live worthy of your call

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace... (Ephesians 4:1-3f)

5. Stay focused on Christ

¹If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ²then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. ³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in very nature^[a] God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! ⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father, (Philippians 2:1-11).

6. Set your hearts on things above

¹Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory, (Colossians 3:1-4).

Summary of the Succession Planning Information Meeting. May 16.

With approximately 50 people in attendance, Clerk of Session and Transition Team member Bob Holt opened the meeting with prayer, stating that the purpose of the meeting was to give an overview of the Succession Planning process, introduce the Transition Team, provide information on work done thus far, and answer initial questions.

Pastor Jim Rueb followed with some extended personal words about his call to MVPC, his ministry at MVPC over 29 years and God's leading regarding succession planning in light of his anticipated retirement in summer 2011.

Jim Watkinson then shared some information and perspective on the value of Succession Planning, its importance in pastoral transitions, and the gift provided by Pastor Jim of his leadership in the Succession Planning process and the lead time he has provided MVPC for the required work.

Bob Holt then made a visual presentation using a series of slides containing the information included here.

A time of Q&A followed, with questions on such topics as the Interim Pastor role, the music and worship ministry and staffing status, the calling of the permanent pastor, the make-up of the Transition Team, the process going forward, and the plans of Associate Pastors Tom Dabasinkas and Dave Ricketts, each of whom rose to speak of their on-going commitment to the life and ministry of MVPC . Each received a round of enthusiastic applause.

Donny Bergen and Terry Sylvester, members of the Transition Team, then rose to briefly affirm the Succession Planning Process and to challenge and invite the congregation to active participation in prayer and faithfulness throughout the process.

After Donny closed in prayer, Bob Holt apprised the congregation that a link on the MVPC website would be created through which MVPC members would be kept informed of the Succession Planning process going forward. A final commendation was given from an attendee regarding the transparency of the meeting and the positive prospects this kind of meeting will continue to engender within the congregation throughout this process.