

“Our Time in Transition”

A Congregational Conversation with Our Session
Wasatch Presbyterian Church

Presented to our Congregation September 18, 2022

The Purpose of an Interim Period

The purpose of an interim period is not simply to find a new pastor. Its primary purpose is to give us the opportunity to examine and evaluate ourselves so we can prepare for a new pastor. This transition period gives us a chance to grieve the past which cannot be repeated, and to claim our identity so that we can find a new pastor who fits with our vision of where God is leading us. It also gives us time to address any areas needing attention so that we can attract a strong candidate.

Communicating our process and progress with you, our members, is vital. An effective option is for our Session to host regular Congregational Conversations, to explore key issues during the interim period. This is our first one this fall to update you on our projected timeline and interim objectives. These meetings, combined with surveys and other written updates, will provide us all with a clear picture of where we are and how we are doing, and where do we want to go.

The Processing of Searching has Evolved

What takes most of the time is the preparation work. In our Presbyterian tradition, the transition period usually takes around two years, while the actual search for a new pastor can be accomplished in about six months. The preparation is vital: strategic visions to refine, surveys to complete, appraisals to evaluate, documents to create for both our presbytery and our candidates. This is where much time is spent in a pastoral search. Pastor Nominating Committees (PNCs) used to do this work, but our members can be more involved in the process if we do most of the preparation before electing the PNC. The more people involved will make the work faster, easier, and more transparent. This newer approach engages more people and creates opportunities for our members to express our interests and values.

The whole congregation can be part of the process. The preparation work, such as congregation-wide conversations, surveys, and pastoral search materials, can be completed prior to the election of the Pastor Nominating Committee. This allows the PNC to focus their energies on finding quality candidates.



Transitions are a Time to Prepare and Grow

We want to use our time to improve and grow. Many congregations use this “in-between” time to enhance and improve their organization and ministry. Our Session identified four areas that will get attention during our transition: (1) communication; (2) congregational care; (3) ministry support (staffing, properties, finances, etc.) to undergird our ministry and mission; and (4) reopening and rebuilding after the pandemic. Our Session has decided these four areas will help our congregation grow larger, deeper, and closer together, as well as preparing us for our next installed pastor.

Interim Objectives to Help Us Prepare

To address these four areas of growth, we have established eight interim objectives:

- 1. Develop and implement an engaging ministry and outreach model that intentionally attracts, enlists, equips, and encourages all people to fulfill their God-given ministry.**
 - God has entrusted us with grace and love, so that we can share it with others—both inside and outside the church.
 - We hope to be a complete congregation, caring for both our own members and our community. To accomplish both, we need to develop an engaging model of what our ministry looks like.
 - In order to grow our church, we want to be more visible in our community. An engaging ministry will entice current and potential members with relevant activities, helping us attract new members in order to continue our ministry.
- 2. Develop and implement an updated congregational care model (deacons, volunteer visitation teams, pastoral ministries, etc.) that will provide care for all those in our congregation.**
 - We have many caring people in our congregation. By providing a coordinated, intentional plan, we can help each of our members to experience God’s touch through God’s church. We must help members engage in expressing God’s love and care for one another and for those who will become a part of our church.
 - We want to develop a sustainable model that is not dependent on one person and that does not limit our deacons’ ability to perform their work.
- 3. Develop and implement an enhanced organizational model (committees, ministry teams, special project teams, etc.) to expand and enhance our organization and encourage more members to be involved in our shared ministry.**
 - The goal of every church is to enlist, equip, and empower people to grow in their faith and service to God. Our plan is to enhance our present structure in ways that invite even more people to engage in God’s work. We want to create opportunities for the entire congregation to leverage their skills and gifts to contribute to the church’s mission.
 - As we define our goals, we want to update our structure to support those goals. To be successful in our efforts, we also want to engage more people in contributing to and engaging in the work of the church. As the saying goes, “Many hands make light work.”
- 4. Organize and equip our church ministry staff to resource the above models, allowing time for the adjustments to be made in ways that are both financially sustainable and ministry-based.**
 - We appreciate all that our staff has done and is doing to assist our church in fulfilling our ministry. At the same time, we want to ensure that each staff member has understanding and confidence to serve both individually and as a team.
 - In order to meet the changing needs of our congregation and the world around us, we need to review what roles are really needed, and then ensure that our staff is trained and ready to meet those needs.

- As our planned goals shift, we want to update our staff responsibilities to better manage those goals and achieve the expected outcomes.
5. **Develop plans and timelines for updating our buildings and grounds to provide warm, inviting, flexible, multi-use spaces for present and future ministry.**
 - In order for our church to continue its ministry in the decades to come, we must plan now to ensure that our facilities will be in good shape when the future arrives.
 - As our buildings age, we need to continue to identify the needs in our property and create a plan to address those needs, as well as look at any cosmetic changes and additions that might make our building feel even more warm and inviting.
 - Creating and maintaining our facilities allows us to attract events from the community, increasing awareness of the church and creating the potential for growth.
 6. **Develop a comprehensive approach to funding our shared ministry, including a balanced budget, as well as initiating new teams to assist in annual, special and planned giving. This will provide financial support for our ministry, and show financial stability and sustainability.**
 - One of the greatest challenges of modern ministry is providing its funding. Available funding is the number one determining factor in prioritizing our ministry. Taking steps now to provide adequate funding will make our life together more enjoyable and fruitful.
 - People appreciate information while making stewardship decisions. By providing clear information on how the church uses our tithes and offerings—and what ministry could be accomplished with a little more—we can assist our members and grow our ministry.
 7. **Provide for a reasonable and sustainable plan to provide housing for our pastor and staff.**
 - The exploding costs of real estate in Salt Lake City (it has doubled in the last three years) has made affordable housing an illusion.
 - Our present compensation would not allow our next pastor to buy or rent a home in our community.
 - We will explore alternative approaches to housing, in order to make it appealing for our pastor and affordable for our church.
 8. **Develop and begin implementing an updated communications/marketing/growth/ outreach plan—including updated materials and new website (also instrumental in pastoral search).**
 - Communication is the most crucial—and hardest—part of being a modern church. It helps build awareness in the community and the congregation of our shared goals and purpose.
 - Many of our other objectives require consistent communications to ensure they succeed in helping grow our congregation, engage our church family, and deliver care to those who need it.
 - We need to be proactive in creating a communication plan that includes a wide variety of media.

We are Well on Our Way

The transition process has many steps. We have begun already to implement many of these objectives, and will update the congregation along the way. Please pray for this process, the people leading it, and all who will be involved at all levels along the way. Thank you for your trust and support. Pray that God will begin even now to prepare our hearts and our church for our next pastor.