



PENN CENTRAL CONFERENCE

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

December 27, 2018

Dear Association Presidents,

As most of you know, I have been filling the role of Conference Search and Call for the past several months as we work through the process of hiring a new Associate Conference Minister (ACM) to perform this function. While I have enjoyed the opportunity to work closely with local churches, it is clear that with over 29% of our churches in transition, in some way, a different approach may be needed. Even with a fulltime ACM, the workload is demanding. After much consideration, I'd like to propose a way for Associations to participate in this process, while at the same time, strengthening the relationship between the Conference, Associations, and our local churches.

One of the findings in the 2014 self-study highlighted that many of our local churches lack a sense of connection to their Associations and Conference. In addition, congregations in transition tend to feel vulnerable and anxious about their future. This provides us with an opportunity to work together, in a meaningful way, to support the needs of these congregations, in particular.

I would like to propose that each Association consider designating one or more ***Association Search and Call Associates*** to work closely with the Conference Discernment staff. These persons could assist with the search and call process and provide timely and local support for congregations in transition. This would not be a replacement for the ACM for Search and Call, but rather a way of fostering greater teamwork at the Conference and Association level. Search and Call Associates could bring a wealth of knowledge and insight about local church needs and profiles and be local resources for churches to contact with questions or requests for assistance. A former search and call committee member, or COM committee member would be ideally suited for this role. The position description (attached) is intended to be a helpful guide for your selection process.

I know that the timing of this is not ideal, but we have an opportunity to receive training from a National Office staff in January. Rev. Malcolm Himschoot, a Ministerial Excellence, Support, and Authorization (MESA) team member, will be in the area and is available to provide initial

training on **January 23, 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.** at the Sheraton Hotel (which will coincide with our annual Mid-Winter Clergy Sabbath).

This training is open to Association leaders, Committee on Ministry (COM) members, or anyone else who might be interested. However, registration is required to plan for materials (*go to PCC website under “Register for Event” tab*). As a result, I’d like to ask that you identify and register attendees by **January 11, 2019**, if possible.

Thank you for your openness to considering this new approach, as together we seek ways to help our congregations thrive in their ministry.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Christmas Blessings,

Monica

Rev. Dr. Monica Dawkins-Smith
Conference Minister & President

(updated 1/8/19)

ASSOCIATION SEARCH AND CALL ASSOCIATE Position Description

The Search and Call Associate will work directly with congregations in transition within each Association. The Associate will be selected by the Association leadership and recommended to the Conference.

Qualifications

- Good communication and interpersonal skills
- Familiarity with the UCC search and call process (training will be provided)
- Membership in a local UCC congregation and fairly active at the Association level
- Proven leadership skills – takes initiative, self-starter and ability to work independently and as a team member
- Good computer skills and familiarity with technology
- Ability to maintain confidentiality
- Minimum high school diploma, or equivalent

Job Duties

- When a pastor announces their departure, the Search and Call Associate will be contacted by the Conference staff to attend the initial meeting with church leadership to discuss the transition process and expectations
- During the transition, the Search and Call Associate will help to facilitate the following functions:
 - Exit interview
 - Service of Release
 - Provide guidance for identifying supply pastors
 - Provide guidance for completion of the Local Church Profile (LCP)
 - Provide guidance in preparation for the search/interview process
 - Provide guidance in preparation for the candidate election (assist with salary negotiations, completion of call agreement, etc., if requested, and contact Conference office to request an election packet)
 - Participate in conversations about shared ministry
- Attend Installation of new Pastor and participate, if invited
- Work closely with the Association Committee on Ministry, Church Liaisons in the Association, and with the Penn Central Conference search and call (discernment) staff
- Other duties as may arise from time to time and as may be assigned

Termination

This position may be terminated at any time by giving at least two (2) weeks written notice to the Association President or to the Search and Call Associate. Any and all search and call related materials will be returned to the Association and/or the Conference at the time of termination.