MINNESOTA CONFERENCE

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Review of Conference Minister Selection Process

The Conference Minister Search Committee began its work after the 2024 Annual Meeting. The committee has been supported along the way by Rev. Dr. Diane Weible, the Conference Minister Search Coordinator for the UCC national setting, and by Rev. Franz Rigert, Conference Minister for the Wisconsin Conference UCC.

The first task was to put together a Conference Profile. We spent fall 2024 gathering the input of nearly 200 Conference members. We then wrote the profile, gathered photos, and had the Conference communications consultant help us put together the final, polished document.

The profile was posted the end of February. Over the next few months, the Search Committee received eight total profiles from candidates who were demographically and geographically diverse. There were six distinct phases in our ongoing discernment process:
1) initial review of candidate profile
2) initial interview
3) reference checks and writing sample
4) final interview
5) prophetic witness talk
6) final discernment

Initial review of profiles. Each member of the search committee thoroughly read every profile and rated each one on six categories drawn from the job description:

1. Leadership and management
2. Vision and Innovation
3. Social justice and prophetic witness
4. Faith and spirituality
5. Communication and relationship building
6. Financial and organizational management

After this review, we discussed our collective evaluation for each candidate. There was clear consensus that four of the eight candidates had the necessary skills in each area to perform the essential tasks of the Conference Minister job.

Initial interview. These four candidates were invited for a 60-minute initial interview conducted over Zoom. During the initial interview we asked questions from each of the six

areas used during the initial review of profiles. We also provided time for candidates to ask questions of us.

Reference checks and writing sample. All four candidates were moved to this step after their initial interview. We divided into pairs and called two of the three references listed in each candidate's profile. At least four members (two pairs) of the search committee talked with references for each candidate. Diane Weible conducted judicatory reviews on our behalf in which she solicited feedback from each candidate's local conference leadership. While we were checking references, we asked each candidate to submit an article as an example of one that might be published in the COMMAntary. We reviewed the materials from the references, judicatory checks, and the COMMAntary articles in addition to considering our Zoom interview to select our final candidates.

Final Candidate interviews. We selected three candidates for final in-person interviews. Each final interview day included three 45-minute interviews with panels of Conference members grouped into categories of Diversity, Greater Minnesota, and Youth and Young Adults; a 90-minute interview with staff; and a 2-hour interview with the search committee. There were between 11 and 15 people total among the three panels. Additionally, all staff members (including Kevin Brown who was on sabbatical) participated in the interviews. Every member of the search committee was present for all their committee's time with each candidate.

During each panel, there was one question from each of the three areas identified in the profile for where God is calling us: Deepening Connections, Inclusivity and Social Justice, and Reimagining Church. Each committee also added a question unique for their panel. Each member of the panels and the staff completed a feedback form that ranked each candidate on a scale of 1 – 5 in each of those three areas, as well as solicited narrative feedback.

As part of the search committee interview, we asked each candidate to prepare a short prophetic witness talk as if they were speaking at a rally responding to the messages of white nationalism coming from Washington, DC.

Final discernment. We reviewed all the numerical and narrative feedback that was submitted (95% of feedback forms). We then deliberated on all the information we had on each candidate – profile, initial interview, references, judicatory check, writing sample, prophetic witness talk, and final interview feedback. We listened, prayed, talked to additional references and took the time needed to allow for the movement of Spirt and consensus building in this final discernment phase. In the end, the committee reached a consensus to forward our recommended candidate on a 6 – 1 vote.

Once the search committee finished its final discernment we worked collaboratively with the board on several additional steps.

Negotiation of Call Agreement. Co-chairs of the search committee met with the Executive Committee of the Board to present our recommended candidate and review the terms of the call agreement. Per the bylaws, the search committee co-chairs negotiated with the

candidate on behalf of the conference. The Executive Committee was consulted twice regarding financial matters. On Monday, July 14, the Executive Committee and the candidate mutually agreed to the terms of the call agreement.

Board meeting. On July 23, the co-chairs of the search committee met with the full board to present our recommended candidate. The board reviewed the call agreement and a summary of the candidate's qualifications. The board voted unanimously with one abstention to forward the recommended candidate to the members for a vote at a special meeting on August 12.