

## Pastor hiring procedures for Assembly Mennonite Church

The task of a pastoral search committee is to seek a candidate that meets the needs of the congregation and works well with the existing pastoral team. This is a difficult undertaking in that it requires getting to know applicants through the Ministerial Leadership Information form, references and interviews; and negotiating with people who are often considering a variety of employment options.

Assembly Mennonite Church generally follows the hiring guidelines for pastors set by the Mennonite Church USA in ways that are in keeping with AMC commitments and principles. See especially: <http://mennoniteusa.org/resource/ministerial-transitions-committee-packet/> and [https://www.mennoniteusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/WhenYourChurchSeeks\\_SearchComm\\_M inTransitionSC.pdf](https://www.mennoniteusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/WhenYourChurchSeeks_SearchComm_M inTransitionSC.pdf)

Each search process is different and best practices may change. These procedures should be re-evaluated before a new search process begins.

### Preliminary steps

**A. Conference minister.** Leadership Group chair contacts the conference minister and invites their guidance.

**B. Congregational Assessment.** Leadership Group reviews the needs of the congregation using conference guidelines or another process.

**C. Job Description.** Leadership Group develops a job description to fill the needs identified by the congregation. The congregation approves the job description.

**D. Congregational Information Form.** Leadership Group coordinates the completion of *Congregational Information Form*, forwards it to the Conference Minister and shares it with the Search Committee.

**E. Search Committee.** The Leadership Group forms a Search Committee to find and recommend a candidate for the position. The Search Committee shall include one member of the Pastoral Team, who shall not serve as chair. The rest of the pastoral team shall be included in the “circle of confidentiality” as necessary, for input at the committee’s discretion. The goal is to allow meaningful but not inordinate involvement of the pastors in the selection of their colleague. The Search Committee reports to the Leadership Group through the Leadership Group chair. The committee conducts its work in strict confidentiality. It will collaborate as needed with the Conference Minister. Co-chairs are recommended.

**F. Advertising.** The Conference Minister posts the job opening on the “Pastoral Opening List” on the Mennonite Church USA website. The Leadership Group chair posts the opening on the *Assemblyline* and anywhere else deemed appropriate.

**G. Orientation.** The Search Committee will invite the pastor(s) and LG chair to participate in an orientation facilitated by the conference minister. Pastors will be asked to discuss the job descriptions to help the Search Committee better understand the multi-dimensional, dynamic aspects of a team ministry.

## Confidential steps

**H. Updates on the search process.** Since this process may take several months, the Search Committee should consider how to give regular updates to the Leadership Group and the congregation without violating confidentiality. This might include reminders that a search is underway, what position is being filled, who is on the search committee and requesting prayers for the committee when they meet.

**I. A pool of applicants.** The Search Committee chooses applicants from the Ministerial Leadership Information forms (MLI) as provided by the Conference Minister, checks references and ranks the applicants.

Internal applicants need to contact the Conference Minister and fill out the MLI. The Search Committee will only consider internal applicants through the Conference Minister and the completed MLI. Internal candidates may find it useful to talk with the AMC Spiritual Director (our outside consultant) as they consider applying.

Search Committee members will share their personal and professional connections to applicants with their Search Committee colleagues. If a connection between a Search Committee member and an applicant is particularly close, discernment with LG chair or conference minister is called for. Where a strong perception of bias likely exists, recusal should be considered.

The LG chair and/or conference minister may be consulted on any process questions or applicants' eligibility questions. The chair of the Search Committee shall provide periodic confidential reports to the LG chair concerning the progress of the committee's work.

The Search Committee may include the LG chair in the "circle of confidentiality" as needed for additional input at the committee's discretion. For instance, if two applicants for the same position are equally and yet also very differently qualified, the search committee could ask for additional input on which one might be the better fit for the congregation.

**J. Interviews.** The Search Committee arranges applicant interviews and shares AMC's compensation policies with them. All internal candidates should be interviewed. If the Search Committee contacted other applicants or their references and did not interview them, those applicants will be notified by the Conference Minister that they are not being considered. There may be several applicants or only one at this point.

**K. Pastor input.** After the applicant(s) has been interviewed, the Search Committee will solicit input from the pastors before choosing the Search Committee's candidate of choice. At this point there should be direct interaction between the pastors and the applicant(s) as appropriate under the guidance of the Search Committee.

**L. Selection.** The Search Committee unanimously chooses a candidate.

**M. Notification.** Before the candidate is presented to the Leadership Group, the Search Committee will notify the pastors and the Leadership Group chair of their choice.

## Final steps

**N. Leadership Group actions.** The Leadership Group is asked to approve the candidate in a joint meeting with the Search Committee chairs. If approved, the Conference Minister will notify any remaining applicants before any announcement to the congregation. The Leadership Group, in consultation with the candidate, the Search Committee and the Worship Committee, schedules a candidate weekend and a congregational meeting at least one week after the candidate weekend. The Leadership Group chair, in consultation with the treasurer, prepares an initial compensation package to be shared with the candidate. The Leadership Group with the help of the Search Committee introduces the candidate to the congregation. During the candidate weekend a Search Committee member shall accompany the candidate to all events.

Activities for the candidate weekend should be planned in consultation with the candidate. Activities may include a meal or meeting with the Leadership Group, meeting with relevant committees, a drop-in social event, a sermon by the candidate, and a question/answer session during second hour.

**O. Congregational actions.** A modified consensus approach (no second reading) will be used to approve a candidate at a congregational meeting. (A second hour meeting could be an option to involve more members.) The congregational facilitator should not be a pastor. Members should be encouraged to share affirmations and concerns with the Leadership Group chair or Search Committee chairs before the congregational discernment meeting so that any concerns can be addressed during the meeting. If consensus is not reached, Leadership Group will decide next steps.

**P. Notification.** The Leadership Group chair and a Search Committee chair notifies the candidate of the outcome as soon as possible. If the candidate accepts the invitation, the Leadership Group chair informs the congregation and the conference minister.

Internal applicants might feel particularly vulnerable and find it very painful not to be chosen by one's community. In order to give attention to these realities and to maintain positive relationships within the Assembly community, internal applicants who are not chosen will be offered up to three sessions with a counselor of their own choosing paid for by AMC.

**Q. Memo of Understanding.** The candidate and the Leadership Group chair sign a memo of understanding.

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