

## **MIPC STAFFING TASK FORCE**

### **Questions & Answers**

#### **Remind me what the Staffing Task Force is doing?**

- Short term transition plan. The STF's first goal was to work with Dale and our other pastors on a short-term plan to ensure the smoothest possible transition of responsibilities prior to Dale's retirement. That was completed before the beginning of the summer.
- Interim Staffing Plan. The STF has worked with our pastors to develop an interim staffing plan, which reflects needs and resources, and clarifies roles and responsibilities for pastoral staff through for the balance of 2010 or until a longer term plan can be developed. This resulted in an updated "organization chart" showing how areas of ministry are being reallocated for the time being among Sheri, Paul and Lindsay. While this is a helpful and important start, we know that additional changes will be needed to avoid placing too heavy a burden on our pastors. We expect this process to involve shifting some work away from pastors to staff and lay leaders, considering alternative ways of doing some of our ministry, and potentially identifying some activities that we need to suspend for the time being given our current resources.
- Long Term Staffing Plan. STF is also responsible for developing a long term staffing plan. That plan will address the issues of whether we should have three or four pastors, what their general roles and responsibilities should be, and whether to continue the co-pastor model, among other things. It will also discuss the roles of non-pastoral staff. However, it makes sense to defer this part of the planning process until after the strategic planning process has progressed sufficiently to allow us to ensure that our long term staffing plan aligns with the church's anticipated future needs, resources and priorities.

#### **How are the STF and Strategic Planning Team working together?**

The Strategic Planning Team is working closely with the STF to offer the STF useful input in determining MIPC's interim and long-term staffing plans. Karen Jones, as chairperson of the STF, is in regular contact with Jon Stafford and Jody Snodgrass, who chair the Strategic Planning Team. As the Strategic Planning Team moves forward with its work this fall through the congregational forums and surveys, we expect to stay in close communication

and to schedule joint meetings as necessary.

### **How is non-pastoral staff being involved in the STF's work?**

Staff responded to a survey in which we sought their input about a variety of issues that will help inform our planning process. Not surprisingly, they spoke resoundingly about their eagerness to support our pastors and congregation during this time of transition. The STF will continue to collect information and feedback from the staff during this process.

### **When will the STF have a staffing plan ready?**

The interim staffing plan is in place, although it will be fine-tuned as we gather more information through the fall. The longer term, or "final" plan is dependent on the work of the SPT and probably won't be finalized until sometime in 2011.

### **Why do we have to wait so long? Can't we make some decisions sooner?**

Once we are ready, we have a number of important decisions to make about our long term pastoral staffing needs and plan. However, we have been advised by Seattle Presbytery, and the STF, SPT, and our pastors all agree, that it is important not to rush into making any of these decisions, especially in a time of transition like this. We are fortunate to have a strong and committed pastoral staff in Sheri, Paul, and Lindsay, so we are in good hands and have no need to rush into making any long term decisions now. And we believe that we will gain important insights through the strategic planning process this fall that we want to be able to take into account as we consider future staffing needs and plans.

### **I'm confused about our pastoral staffing options. Can you review the key decisions that we will be making through the long term planning process you've described?**

In our long term plan we will develop a proposed staffing plan for both pastoral and non-pastoral staff. For pastoral staff, here is a summary of major decisions to be made:

- Whether to have four pastors or three. For the balance of this year, and likely next year, we expect to continue with three pastors. Whether we continue with three pastors on a longer term basis will be decided once we have more input through the

strategic planning process, both about the needs of the church and, perhaps most importantly, about the size of our budget and what we are willing and able to fund.

- Whether to continue the co-pastor model or not, regardless of whether we have three or four pastors. Whether or not we have three or four pastors, we have several options to consider regarding their specific roles. Regardless of which option we choose, Sheri will continue to serve in her role as senior pastor. One option we will consider is to continue the co-pastor role, either by calling pastor Paul Barrett to serve along with Sheri in that role, or by initiating a search process. Another option is to discontinue the co-pastor model, in which case pastor Sheri will continue to serve as our senior pastor, and Paul and Lindsay will continue to serve as associate pastors in roles that we will further define. Regardless of the specific model we choose, we expect Paul to have a role that reflects the increased leadership and responsibility that he has already begun to provide.

### **How will the congregation be involved in major decisions, such as whether to continue the co-pastor model?**

Similar to the 2005 and current strategic planning process, there will be ample opportunities for input from staff, lay leadership, and the congregation. The congregation will vote on any changes to the current co-pastor model, or if a new pastor is called to MIPC.

### **Are we planning to replace Dale's position and if so, what is the process and timing for that?**

Under Presbyterian polity, when a particular church has two pastors serving as co-pastors and the relationship of one of them is dissolved, the other remains as pastor of the church.

Therefore, Sheri Edwards Dalton is now the Senior Pastor at MIPC and technically, we have a Senior Co-Pastor position vacant. We don't know yet whether we will fill or dissolve the vacant Co-Pastor position, and we won't be able to decide that issue until after the strategic planning process is further along so that we can ensure that the decision we make about this position takes into account the vision for the church and the needs, resources and priorities that are identified in the strategic planning process.

### **How do Sheri, Paul and Lindsay feel about their roles under the interim plan?**

All three are feeling a strong call to continue in their ministry at MIPC and are excited about the opportunity to work together and with the congregation in discerning what God has in store for MIPC in the next year and beyond. Now we need to do our part to provide the support and encouragement they need.

**What assistance if any, are we receiving from the Presbytery?**

We have met with the Presbytery Committee on Ministry (COM), and are reviewing opportunities to take advantage of Presbytery resources to help ensure we identify and deal with all important issues during this transitional time. Two COM liaisons, Shelley Dahl (Elder/University PC) and Rev. Dr. Will Mason (Interim Pastor/Rose Hill PC) have been assigned to walk with MIPC through these staffing decisions. They will be available for consultation and attend Session or other pertinent meetings from time to time.

**How can I help or participate in this process?**

There are many specific ways members of the congregation can be involved in our transition planning and activities, from participating in the planning process to offering gifts of lay leadership and ministry. We will communicate frequently about these opportunities in the Window, during worship, and through other means. But whether you choose to participate or not, you can help most by attending worship regularly, praying faithfully, offering your support and appreciation to our pastors, staff and lay leaders, and listening patiently for God's wisdom and direction.

**How will the congregation be kept informed about the work the STF is doing?**

There will be regular updates on the MIPC website, and we plan to update frequently at church services as well. Input can always be given by contacting Karen Jones, Chair, or any other member of the STF: Rich Stillman, Sue Harris, Chuck Lowry, Jean Carter, Lynne Freuhling, or Irene Peters.

**Who should I contact if I have any questions about this process?**

Any of the pastors, Karen Jones, Jon Stafford or Jody Snodgrass.