

I. Recommendation

The Staffing Task Force (STF) (Karen Jones, Chairperson, Rich Stillman, Irene Peters, Sue Harris, Jean Carter, Chuck Lowry, and Lynne Freuhling) unanimously recommends continuing the Co-Pastor model at Mercer Island Presbyterian Church and calling Paul Barrett to the position of Co-Pastor, joining Co-Pastor Sheri Edwards Dalton.

II. Rationale

1. **The Co-Pastor model best serves MIPC at this time.** The co-pastor model provides stability during this time of significant transition, and gives the congregation the benefit of two known and respected senior leaders who will offer different, but complementary, gifts of ministry and perspectives. It also gives the co-pastors the ability to share responsibilities in a way that should free each to devote more time and energy to those areas such as preaching, worship, and lay leadership that the Strategic Plan identifies as priorities.
2. **We are confident that Sheri and Paul will be successful sharing leadership of MIPC.** The data we have reviewed, along with our own investigation and discussions with the MIPC pastors, staff and congregation, confirms that shared leadership can be successful and, where successful, produces a partnership that is stronger than the sum of the parts and serves as a powerful testimony to how God calls us to work together and in community. The key factors to having a successful co-pastorate are: having a relationship of mutual trust and respect, communicating in an open and honest manner, and providing clarity about the roles each co-pastor will play. We believe that Paul and Sheri have a strong foundation for building a successful co-pastorate.

Throughout this process we have also worked closely with the Seattle Presbytery's Committee on Ministry (COM). If the MIPC congregation adopts this recommendation, we expect the full support of COM.

3. **Both Paul and Sheri feel called not only to MIPC but also to working in a shared leadership capacity.** Over the past eight years, and especially in the last year, Sheri and Paul have worked together closely and have collaborated well together. At our request, they have spent significant time together thinking through how a shared leadership model would work. These conversations have been fruitful and have deepened their sense of call to lead MIPC together as Co-Pastors.

III. Background

The STF was formed in February 2010 with the following charter:

- Short-term: Work with Dale and other pastors to ensure the smoothest possible transition of responsibilities prior to Dale's retirement. This was completed in May 2010.
- Long-term: Develop a staffing plan that reflects the updated Strategic Plan and is aligned with the church's anticipated future needs and priorities

The STF has gathered a wealth of information over the past several months, providing foundational input into our recommendation. We have had numerous conversations with Pastors, MIPC staff, MIPC Session, members of the congregation and representatives from COM. We have reviewed other models of leadership, with an emphasis on churches using a Co-Pastor model.

This staffing model recommendation does not conclude the work of the STF. Once a pastoral staffing model is formally recommended to and approved by the congregation, the STF will make

recommendations on adjusting Pastor responsibilities to reduce their workload. As the STF has already recommended (and Session has approved) a reduction from four pastors to three, we cannot ask our pastors to continue to perform the work of four. We will also discuss and develop a long term plan for non-pastoral staff.

IV. Pastoral staffing model alternatives

Because we are blessed with three pastors whom all feel called to MIPC and have wonderful passions and skills, we concluded that we would not consider any staffing model that involved calling new pastors to the church. We further concluded that two staffing options would be evaluated.

- Senior Pastor (Sheri) with two Associate Pastors (Paul and Lindsay)
- Co-Pastors (Paul and Sheri) with one Associate Pastor (Lindsay)

V. Criteria used in our pastoral staff model evaluation

The following lists the criteria we established to help us evaluate the staffing options:

- Pastoral sense of call to MIPC and to any particular leadership model
- The degree of trust and respect between the pastors
- The degree of trust and respect the pastors enjoy from the church community – congregation and staff
- The gifts, skills and passions of the pastors and how they complement each other
- Fit with the goals and priorities of the Strategic Plan
- Which model best meets the needs of MIPC
- Paul's readiness to serve in a senior leadership role at MIPC

VI. Further discussion of the models under evaluation

Please review the attached FAQ's (Exhibit 1) for additional information about our process and our findings.

VII. Conclusions and next steps

Session has accepted the STF's recommendation and has called a congregational meeting for April 17 at 11:45 for the purpose of calling Paul Barrett to the position of co-pastor and dissolving the associate position that he currently holds. After the congregational vote, the STF will continue to work with our pastors and staff to complete the work discussed above.