

First Baptist Church
The Discernment Team
August 27, 2018

Members present: Richard Bishop (Public Member), Paul Chotlos (Board of Trustees), Carolyn Cross (Board of Education), Wynn Davies (Board of Outreach), Bill Fiore (Moderator), Beth Gunshor (Public Member), Tom Kersten (Vice Moderator), and Jill Thomas (Public Member)
Absent: Carla Eakins (Church Clerk), Nancy Emmert (Pastoral Relations Committee), and Brooke Siddell (Pastoral Relations Committee)

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Moderator Bill Fiore.

1. Opening Prayer

The meeting opened with prayer.

2. Discussion of Use of Consultants

Initial discussion centered on using consultants: a) what would the church gain from hiring any consultants? and b) the specific proposal from Design Group International (DGI).

It was generally agreed that the current proposal from DGI did not match the current needs of our church. Further discussion led the committee members to an understanding that part of the discernment process needs to be identifying and prioritizing challenges while also identifying God's plan for our church. It was shared that a member of the congregation with experience as an interim minister has said that one of the first questions he asks a congregation is what they have done to prepare themselves for the work they will do together. The committee feels that having an outside facilitator would make the process of identifying challenges and opportunities more effective and efficient. References for DGI were reviewed.

3. Discussion of Interim/Transitional Minister

The committee also explored the role of an interim/transitional minister (hereafter referred to as a transitional minister). Questions were asked about why we might benefit from both the consultants AND a transitional minister. Previous practices of hiring transitional ministers and the specific training transitional ministers receive to help them guide a congregation to a place of readiness for a new pastor were discussed. The committee has previously agreed that it will ask the congregation to vote to move forward with hiring an interim minister. Timelines were discussed and it was agreed that the committee needs to start gathering information about potential candidates from the state and national organizations. It was noted that having our church's challenges/opportunities identified (whether that be with the assistance of outside consultants or through an internal process) would assist the committee, and, by extension, the congregation, hire the best-suited transitional minister. As part of this conversation, questions were raised as to the purpose of this committee and whether it followed the church bylaws. The bylaws state in section 2.1 that the Church Council shall *Engage in long-term planning consistent with its understanding of Christ's purposes, and recommend policies and direction to the membership*. The council originally partnered with the Pastoral Relations Committee to engage in long-term planning regarding Mark's retirement. At a recent meeting, the committee decided, as the bylaws allow in section 4.1, to appoint additional members of the congregation. This committee is not intended to function as a pulpit committee; it is discerning the steps prior to forming a pulpit committee.

The committee met with DGI and asked for a new proposal to focus more specifically on identifying challenges and opportunities. Once this proposal has been submitted, the committee will meet again and determine whether it is appropriate to bring the proposal to the congregation with a positive recommendation. Further questions the committee will explore include funding for the consultant fees.

4. Action items

Collect names & relevant information about transitional minister candidates: Bill Fiore
Write letters to the congregation to clarify the committee role & purpose, as well as a letter outlining the why of using consultants (if consultants are recommended in the future): Beth Gunshor

5. Next meeting

The next meeting will be September 5th at 7 pm, unless the DGI proposal has not been received.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Gunshor