

HOW TO READ A PASTORAL PROFILE

"...discern what is the will of God..." Romans 12:1-13

I The Purpose of the Pastoral Profile:

- to **begin the discernment process** between committee and candidate;
- to aid in the **listening process** for committee members;
- to identify **initial candidates** for **initial interviews**.

II Things to Remember about Pastoral Profiles:

- they offer a picture, **an incomplete picture**, of who the candidate is;
- they are an **initial screening tool** only;
- once an initial candidate has been identified through the profile process, use a variety of ways to develop a "data bank" about the candidate.

III Steps in Reading a Pastoral Profile

Discernment . . . Reflection . . . Meditation

This part of the task is a crucial component to your ability to engage in a discernment process. Take some time to

- Lift up this candidate in prayer that you might learn something from them as well as about them as you read.
- Seek God's blessing on this person and on their call to ministry.
- Ask for God's guidance in your decision-making process regarding this person.
- Listen for stirrings in your heart and mind regarding this person.

- 1.) Set aside a quiet place and a period of time for your initial read-through. Have the profile, pen and/or marker to use on the profile and paper for additional notes nearby. Keep your Candidate Rating Sheet with the 10-12 skills, experience, gifts and needs that you have identified as desirable in your next pastor nearby as well.

Note the few facts on the first page as though you are being introduced for the first time – name, place of residence and authorization for ministry.

- 2.) There are the four **Ministry Essays** which follow. Listen as they tell you about themselves. These Essays ask the Candidate to reflect on their Call, Covenant, Passion, and Faith or Pastoral Formation. Read them as if the person was sitting across from you. If something gets you excited, underline it. If a sentence troubles you, highlight it. If you want to follow up on something the candidate wrote, make a note of it. Engage in a conversation of sorts with the candidate while you read through the Ministry Essays. Note possible clues to the skills, experience, gifts and needs you have identified as desirable in your next pastor.

You will find references to The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers in the United Church of Christ. This is a tool used by UCC Committees on Ministry

when they are journeying with a Member in Discernment regarding a call to ministry. Over time, this tool marks the progress in growth, knowledge and formation in Pastoral preparation and identity. It is also a tool which seasoned ministers use in considering areas for continuing education. Where are there still growing edges?

A copy of the 'Marks' will be provided to your Search Committee for your curiosity and information!

3.) Following your 'conversation' with this candidate, you are then invited to peruse their 'resume'. Read through the information about this person's **Formal Education**, other **Educational or Formative Experiences**, **Professional Development** and **Vocational History** along with descriptions of three **Key Accomplishments**. Look at the kind and depth of experience, potential for growth and readiness to assume the opportunities and challenges present in your congregation. Remember, not having done the kind of ministry you are looking for **should or does not indicate that the candidate cannot meet the challenge**. Sometimes churches are well served to call someone who will grow into the position; at other times it is best to call someone with significant prior experience. **Do not overlook nor devalue life experience and secular employment in second and third career candidates. Age and/or gender can bring unexpected gifts to a call that may not be apparent at first glance.** Again, note any possible clues to the skills, experience, gifts and needs you have identified as desirable in your next pastor.

4.) There are three **References**. Read each Reference as if you were listening to them tell you about the candidate you have met in the Ministry Essays and the 'Resume'. There are four reflections for each Reference – areas of strength, areas of growth, description of a significant experience with this person, and any additional comments.

Again, if something gets you excited, underline it. If a sentence troubles you, highlight it. If you would want to follow up on something the Reference wrote, make a note of it. Again, note on another piece of paper possible clues to the skills, experience, gifts and needs you have identified as desirable in your next pastor.

5.) You will then find yourself returning to your visit with the candidate as the ministerial candidate shares a **Self-Appraisal** with reflections on the same questions their References answered. Again, note excitement, troubling or follow-up questions on the profile as you read. Ask yourself if there are any inconsistencies between what the person wrote in his/her essays and this self-assessment. Note any inconsistencies between that the person has written and what the references have written. As well, note when there is seamless affirmation of a particular skill, experience or gift in ministry. Again, note any possible clues to the skills, experience, gifts and needs you have identified as desirable in your next pastor.

6.) The Self-Appraisal is followed by a **Self-Disclosure**. The questions are straightforward. If the Candidate has to answer 'yes' to any of them, the Candidate is asked to provide detailed information for any affirmative answer.

- 7.) **Supplemental Material.** This includes a section which may or may not be filled in which is a place for **Interpreting the History** or **Special Factors** which need to be mentioned but weren't applicable to share elsewhere, and any **Web Presence** and **Closing Thoughts**. Consider whether this information answers any of the questions that have arisen as you read the profile.
- 8.) Finally you will find a **Criminal Background Check**.
- 9.) Make any final notes on this information to help you share your thoughts with the Search Committee when you meet next time.

Discernment . . . Reflection . . . Meditation

Now that you have met this person through their own words, the words of their references and your words and thoughts as you have underlined, exclamation-pointed, questioned-marked and taken notes – STOP - Take some time to thoughtfully and prayerfully consider the material you have just read:

- Again ask for God's guidance in your decision-making process regarding this individual.
 - Listen for stirrings in your heart and excitement in your mind regarding each person – or not.
 - Pray that God will guide this candidate to the ministry setting where their ministry will flourish in partnership with a congregation.
 - Pray that God will guide your church to the candidate whose ministry will flourish in partnership with you.
- 10.) Bring all of your notes with you to the Search Committee meeting. Be prepared to both **LISTEN AND SPEAK WITH YOUR HEART AND YOUR HEAD**. Remember to prayerfully consider each candidate and seek to listen for God's voice among the competing voices around the table and present in the congregation.

**YOU ARE SEEKING TO MAKE A DECISION THAT WILL PLEASE GOD FIRST . . .
. . . AND BY DOING SO, THE CONGREGATION CANNOT HELP BUT BE PLEASED!**

A Word on Baggage

Everyone brings a certain amount of life experience, preconceived notions, personal preferences and deeply held notions to the table of the Search Committee. **Some of those things will be of great value in the search process; some of those things will weigh you down and get in the way of discerning the will of God for the life of the congregation** as you seek new pastoral leadership. It's a lot like packing for a trip. You lay out all that you think you will need on your bed. Then, if you are really disciplined, you set aside half of it and pack half of what you think you will need. If, however, you are like most of us, you are not quite that disciplined. You pack

everything, and I mean everything! At the end of the trip, after lugging those bags around everywhere, you wished that you had left much of it at home.

Hopefully all of the “baggage” that you bring to the table of the Search Committee will be helpful, but be aware that some of your stuff might get in the way. May you have the grace to see what gets in the way, and discard it along the journey – lightening your load and making for a delightful trip. May God bless you in this exciting and challenging journey.

(This document was originally developed by Rev. Dr. Karen E. King, Penn Central Conference and greatly adapted by Rev. Pamela Y. Lucas, Vermont Conference in light of the new Ministerial Profile format.)