

# **Getting from “Here” to “There”**

## **(A Letter from Pastor Meyer, Intentional Interim Pastor)**

To all members and friends of Mount Olive,

May 8, 2020

Your Parish Planning Council asked me to outline steps that are desirable (and, in some cases required) to actually issue a Divine Call to your new pastor. Much of this information has been shared earlier, but this is an update that we hope you will find informative and helpful. Here is what I see as having been accomplished and the path forward:

### **1. “Round His Feet” Group Meetings (Completed)**

These meetings were completed on November 11, 2019. Their purpose was to gather and record insights from as many members as possible about the answers to five questions:

- What is Mount Olive supposed to be doing?
- What is our congregation already doing well?
- What are we doing poorly or not at all?
- What are the top three or four ministries our congregation should focus on going forward?
- Where should *each* of us as members of Mt. Olive, and as members of the body of Christ (with our future pastor) *serve* within our congregation’s ministries in service to Christ?

### **2. Interim Task Force’s Report on Group Meeting Conclusions (Nearly Complete)**

The Interim Task Force (ITF) is to (i) review and prepare a written report of their findings based on the input received from the “Round His Feet” group meetings (and other sources), and (ii) present this report in a “Town Hall” meeting.

We began regular weekly meetings on January 30, 2020. The process has been hindered by COVID-19 restrictions, but the ITF has done a great job carrying out its work remotely. The report will be finished soon, but how and when we present it to the congregation will depend on what options are available to us in the next several weeks. Ideally, we want to meet, in one Town Hall meeting, with as many members and friends of Mount Olive present as possible. Target date is no later than May 31, 2020. Regardless of whether we are able to have a large group meeting, we plan to present the ITF report to the congregation by this date in the best available means!

In my personal view, the ITF should continue to serve as a congregational resource until your new resident pastor is in place to:

- maintain connections with the various neighborhoods and communities and to assure them Mount Olive is still here and striving to be a good neighbor and doing God’s work,
- continue to assist with work and planning being done to address some of the actionable items related with ministry needs and opportunities identified during this interim process,
- act *prophetically* to call on Mount Olive’s leadership and members to continue to focus on and enhance the Ministry of Jesus Christ and His people,
- develop and promote greater inclusion of members in the work the Lord has given Mount Olive, and
- assist the Call Committee by identifying characteristics of and a job description for the next pastor.

### **3. Call (Nominating) Committee**

Under your congregation's Bylaws, the Board of Lay Ministry (BLM) serves as the Call (Nominating) Committee. However, there is nothing to prevent the BLM from adding others and seeking input from the Interim Task Force.

In my view, the BLM should start immediately to (i) recruit and enlist the Call Committee, (ii) assign someone to gather the general and statistical information required for the current District *Congregational Self Study* report, (iii) gather the info required to complete District's Call Document (much of which can be completed now), and (iv) commence Call Committee work outlined below as and when possible.

As soon as the Call Committee is formed, it should lay out a plan and a time-line for the entire remaining call process using input from the Interim Task Force as required, Pastor Meyer, your Circuit Visitor, and President Snow. The Call Committee can work in parallel with next steps.

### **4. Town Hall Meeting and ITF Presentation – Target Date: May 31, 2020**

This meeting should be called as soon as we can gather together as a group. During the meeting, the Interim Task Force intends to summarize what they believe to be:

- the strengths and weaknesses of Mount Olive as a congregation, (and list some of the things that have been done or are being planned in some of these identified areas),
- the opportunities for growth, expanded and new ministries that are before us,
- the 3-4 main ministry priorities of Mount Olive moving forward.

As mentioned earlier, we plan to present the ITF report to the congregation by this date in the best available means! This information is meant to be helpful to all of us as we move forward, together, in the work and ministry that we believe God has set before us. Also, this is meant to inform us all as to what qualities, gifts, skills, etc., we are looking for in our next resident pastor as he is called to join us in God's ministry at Mt. Olive. Just as importantly, the Call Committee should use this report and Town Hall participants' reactions to inform its work.

### **5. District Self-Study Surveys (finished 10-14 days after Town Hall meeting)**

Two self-studies are required by the District to assist President Snow in creating a candidate list:

- A survey offered to the entire membership seeking answers to questions about:
  - ✓ congregational purposes and opportunities and
  - ✓ pastoral expectations
- The member survey results are summarized by the Call Committee and incorporated into a Congregational Self-Study along with considerable data and statistics.

### **6. Pre-Call Meeting with President Reverend Snow (date to be determined)**

This important meeting will be scheduled by me (as your Intentional Interim Pastor in contact with the district office) and occur promptly after the Town Hall meeting AND the Congregational Self Study report has been compiled. All members and friends of Mount Olive should attend. During this meeting President Snow will:

- update us about what is happening with calls, etc. in the LC-MS at this time;
- share the picture that he has of Mount Olive from his past contacts and from the material that we will have sent him:

- ✓ report of the Interim Task Force,
- ✓ Member survey completed by the members and summarized in report form by the Call Committee (Step 5), and
- ✓ Congregational Self-Study report prepared by the Call Committee (Step 5);
- share his picture of what we need and are looking for in a pastor, qualities, gifts, talents, experiences, etc.

If everyone agrees that the congregation (and President Snow) has a solid picture of who we need/are looking for, (as we believe God is leading us) then President Snow will tell us that it is time to start gathering names of candidates to be considered for the Call List.

## **7. Call Candidates Obtained from Congregation (if any) and President Snow**

President Snow will consider any names submitted by members of Mt. Olive and prayerfully put together a list of 10 to 20 names from the various sources, databases, etc., to which he has access. He will obtain permission from other District Presidents to add the names of men from the various districts to the call list for Mt. Olive. This entire step normally takes about two months (sometimes more) in the absence of COVID-19 restrictions.

## **8. Call Committee Vets Candidates**

With the advice of President Snow and your Circuit Visitor, here are some of the things the Call Committee will want to do:

- Review the information provided by President Snow:
  - ✓ Personal Information Form (also called the PIF: basic information about the pastor, his family, where he has served, where he went to school, special training, spoken languages, etc.);
  - ✓ Standard Evaluation Tool (also called the SET: Pastor answering various questions that congregations usually want answers to as they are considering candidates); and
  - ✓ District President descriptions of each pastor.
- After narrowing down the list, conducting phone/Skype/Facetime interviews and possibly, in person interviews, the Call Committee will prepare a presentation for the congregation summarizing the candidates and the Call Committee's recommendations.

## **9. Voters Call Meeting**

Mt. Olive's Bylaws, provide that:

*The election of a Pastor from the list of candidates chosen by the Board of Lay Ministry shall be by ballot in a special meeting of the congregation called to discuss the proposed candidates. The candidate receiving a simple majority of all votes cast shall be considered elected. It shall be the duty of the Executive Director to see that notice of his election is delivered promptly to the candidate in whatever manner the Voting Membership shall deem advisable.*

It should be noted all Voters Meetings are always open to any communicant member. Attendance is encouraged. It may also be noted that the Board of Lay Ministry/Call Committee has no obligation to present more than one candidate.

(An additional note: I would encourage you, as a congregation, to endeavor to make the call you extend, a unanimous call. Recognize that a lot of prayer will have gone into the entire process by which the Call Committee eventually presents the names for consideration, be it one or more. And trusting the Lord to guide our process, all present would then have the intent of agreeing to a unanimous call being extended to the person receiving, according to our constitution, simple majority of all votes cast. I would add, that those unable to be present for the meeting, understand that they are giving their prayerful support to those present and will wholeheartedly support the call extended on behalf of the entire membership of Mount Olive.)

## 10. Issuance of Call & Candidate's Response

As noted above, your Executive Director is charged with notifying the elected candidate and delivering the Divine Call document. The entire congregation needs to be informed and encouraged to continue to pray for the next resident pastor that God has in mind for Mount Olive: prayers for the called pastor, prayers for Mount Olive congregation, and prayers for the congregation being presently served by the pastor Mount Olive is calling.

If the Holy Spirit moves the candidate to accept the call, numerous arrangements need to be made to get him and his family moved, made welcome, and assist him in quickly becoming the accepted and appreciated spiritual leader of Mount Olive's community of saints.

If, however, the elected candidate declines, the Call Committee must go back to work – possibly even going back to step 7 above to obtain a new list of candidates. God willing, this won't happen, but it is more than a slight possibility. This is totally in God's hands and we will continue to pray that in all things, God's will is done. Let us all be determined, trusting in God, that the parts of this process given to each of us will be parts done to the best of our ability with the gifts and insights that God has given to us.

All of these steps must be carried out with much prayer, patience, and diligence. It is so easy for us to become discouraged – maybe more now in the presence of the COVID-19 virus. May God grant us grace and wisdom to know that He is in charge and always has our long-term best interests in mind – so much so that He sent His only Son to suffer, die, and rise again that we might have eternal life with Him – starting right now.

In Christ,

Pastor Meyer

Addendum: In response to additional questions about Pastor Meyer's call, timeline in all of this:

1. **Pastor Meyer's Call:** At the present time, Pastor Meyer is serving as our called pastor. He is also working with the Interim Task Force as they finish preparing the presentation for the Town Hall Meeting.
2. **Pastor Meyer's Timeline:** Pastor Meyer's call was for one year, with the possibility of an extension if all concerned believed that it would be necessary. As plans stand right now, with what we have been able to accomplish to date (yet mindful that things can change quickly), Pastor Meyer's last Sunday with us will be August 16, 2020. As stated when he arrived, as our Intentional Interim Pastor, he is not eligible or open to a call to be our next resident pastor. Pastor Meyer is working with the leadership of our church as we go forward to ensure that all will continue to go as smoothly as possible in our current environment.