

FAQs (“Frequently Asked Questions”) about the pastoral transition process

As we continue to gather regularly in church, hear the Word of God and receive the Sacraments, the sick are being comforted and children are being taught. During this time of pastoral transition, the following “Frequently Asked Questions” (and answers) are offered to provide additional assurance.

1. **Q:** What’s been happening since August?

A: Given Pastor Burces’s 28 years of service to Messiah, these months following his retirement have been an intentional and necessary period of transition for our congregation. This time has also been an opportunity for Pastor Seth to function as the primary pastoral leader of Messiah and head of staff. In addition, the Discernment Committee has listened to feedback from the staff and members of the congregation and reexamined information gained through the 2022 survey, focus groups and ad hoc conversations. The committee has partnered closely with Pastor Seth by engaging him in many conversations, as well as meeting separately as a committee throughout this time.

2. **Q:** Who is “the Discernment Committee”?

A: Alan Parrott (president of church council), Mike Allan and Sharon Ratvasky (council members), Cathy Zalac, and Joe King comprise the team discerning, along with Pastor Seth, the future of the pastoral office at Messiah and Pastor Seth’s role within the office. Both the committee and Pastor Seth, in their discernment, have received advice and counsel from the Bishop’s office of the Northeast Ohio Synod and from Pastor Steve, our interim pastor.

3. **Q:** Remind me again, what is Pastor Steve’s role here at Messiah?

A: Pastor Steve is our interim pastor to help support Pastor Seth in the ministry of word and sacrament; preaching, teaching, and presiding at worship along with Pastor Seth during this transition period. During the summer of 2021, Pastor Steve retired as pastor of Bethel Lutheran Church in Middleburg Heights. He is specially trained as an interim pastor to utilize his knowledge and experience of 44 years in the ministry to help guide us in discernment alongside Pastor Seth as we prepare to call a second pastor. Pastor Steve is not the “Senior Pastor,” even though his office just happens to be located in Pastor Burce’s former office space.

4. **Q:** Do we have a call committee?

A: Not yet. That step will come after the completion of the discernment phase, which is now heading towards its conclusion. You may recall the Transition Team’s report recommended that Messiah is best served by having two pastors. However, the report provides no specific recommendations for the type of pastoral skills and abilities that would be best for Messiah going forward. The past seven months have provided the opportunity for conversations that we hope enable the call committee to perform its responsibilities more efficiently. Although you will hear more about it soon, the call committee will ultimately provide a recommendation for Messiah’s new pastor, subject to a vote by the congregation.

5. **Q:** Where can I see an overview of the pastoral transition process and information that has been shared about it?

A: Check out this link on Messiah’s website:
<https://www.messiahchurchfairview.org/Transition.aspx>