

## Instructions for Congregational Search Committee Transitions Packet

**Your pastor has resigned or anticipates retirement. Now your congregation faces the experience of pastoral search and transition. How do you begin this process? Be assured that the denominational office of Ministerial Leadership and your area conference minister want to work with you!**

1. Begin by making contact with your area conference minister. Resource materials for a search committee can be found at [www.commonword.ca/go/1272](http://www.commonword.ca/go/1272). Because this process takes time, you should plan to be intentional about each step. Invite the area conference minister to your first search committee meeting to orient the committee to its task and the resources available to you. The area conference has experience in working a number of congregational search process. Remember, it is the area conference that holds the credentials for ministers. Therefore, it is important to include area conference leadership in the search for new pastoral leadership.
2. The resource materials for search committees found on the link above are intended to be of help to you in the process of making pastor-congregational connections. Read and study them carefully. Because of the extensive information and interpretation requested, this can feel like an overwhelming task. Remember, however, that this decision will result in one of the most important life commitments your congregation will make. Self-understanding by both candidates and congregations may also result from the process of completing the requested materials. We invite you to work at this task with a sense of discovery and hope.
3. Prepare an accurate and balanced portrait of your congregation by completing the **congregational Information Form (CIF)**. **The CIF can be found in the Ministerial Transitions-Committee Packet at [www.commonword.ca/go/1273](http://www.commonword.ca/go/1273) in Word and PDF.** Furnish all answers to the best of your ability keeping in mind that long answers are not always the best answers. This form will help introduce you to potential candidates as well as give your congregation opportunity to review who you are as a congregation.
4. There are several questions related to the theological perspective of your congregation. We suggest that you answer these in response to *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, 1995. It is available through CommonWord – [www.commonword.ca/go/14](http://www.commonword.ca/go/14).

A companion document with which it is important for ministers and other leaders in your congregation to become familiar is *A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership*. This book describes the theological background for ministry, the call by God and the church to ministry, ethics for ministry, and credentialing understandings and procedures – [www.commonword.ca/go/124](http://www.commonword.ca/go/124).

5. When you have completed the **Congregational Information Form**, you should forward a

copy to your area conference minister. This signals your readiness to begin looking at candidate Ministerial Leadership Information forms (MLI). Remember to retain a copy of your completed form for your own use and reference.

6. Your area conference minister has access to a list of people looking for a ministry assignment managed by the denomination office of Ministry Leadership. That office will supply the area conference ministers with request **Ministerial Leadership Information** files on persons your search committee would have potential interest in considering for your pastor opening. This is a 12 to 14 page “application” document that introduces a person’s theology, spiritual life, understanding of leadership, skills and gifts along with a reference composite from four individuals. Due to the confidential nature of this information, this material should be returned to the area conference minister when it is no longer needed or copies should be shredded. There is a small donation suggested to the denomination office of Ministry Leadership for each file your congregation requests.
7. Try to follow carefully the suggested procedures but avoid becoming legalistic and literalistic about them. When in doubt, consult your area conference minister. Remember your area conference minister is familiar with these procedures and is your congregation’s best consultant.
8. Nondiscrimination laws appropriately require that we do not ask questions of candidates regarding age, gender, family, health or disabilities. Information needed to plan for a pastor and family regarding housing, etc., may be given during oral interviews.
9. The Pastoral Salary Guidelines – [www.commonword.ca/go/1271](http://www.commonword.ca/go/1271) - will help you as you work on a covenant of understanding. See the sample covenant of understanding found on the link above listed in number 1.
10. Sometimes your best efforts will not result in making the sought for pastor-congregation connection as quickly as hoped. Sometimes pastoral search committees act too slowly; at other times they seem too hasty and impatient. Trust God to lead you to the right person. Spend time in prayer as a search committee.
11. A note to remember: The registration of a person with the denominational office of ministerial leadership and the appearance of the person’s name on the registry of persons looking for ministry assignments does not constitute an official endorsement of the individual. Neither does it promise the person any ministry position. The basis for evaluation of any given person or congregation includes the information given on their respective forms, the information given by references both written and verbal, and the interviewing process between a candidate and a congregation.

The denominational office of ministerial leadership reserves the right to exclude persons from the list: a) if one or more references raises serious negative issues, or b) if a reference refuses to submit a reference, or c) if an area conference minister or field education supervisor cannot provide a positive recommendation for ministry, d) if the candidate shows theological incompatibility with *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* or e) *if the background check report is negative or if the person’s credentials have been placed on probation, suspension or are terminated for ethical misconduct according to “A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership” which establishes polity for Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA.*