

Transition Update

by the River Terrace Church Council

Transition? Yes, River Terrace is in a transition period between separating from one pastor and calling another. As Tim Blamer wrote in the Council Update in last month's *River's Edge*, one part of our transition is the assistance of an oversight committee from Classis Lake Erie (Classis is a regional group of churches. Ours include churches in southeast Michigan and northern Ohio). Our Council delegated deacons Tim Blamer and Robert Geers and elders Susan Medendorp and Jim Nicholas to begin meeting with the oversight committee.

On April 6, we had our initial meeting with the oversight committee, represented by Rev. Ben Van Arragon, pastor of First CRC in Detroit. We had a wide-ranging discussion and are very thankful for Ben's caring and wise counsel. We made two decisions. First, we will recommend to Council that we seek a Specialized Transitional Minister (STM) to provide guidance and leadership to River Terrace Church during this transition period. Specialized Transitional Ministers "are experienced pastors trained to help congregations deal with challenging times of transition" and who are endorsed by the CRC's Office of Pastor-Church Relations. More information on STMs is available at <https://www.crcna.org/pcr/churches>. Second, we will recommend to Council that we establish a Transition Team composed of four current Council members and two congregants. The Transition Team will seek out and recommend to Council an STM and work with the STM, Council, and congregation to prepare us for searching for and calling a new pastor. Council will be meeting April 21 (after I have written this update, but before you will be receiving the newsletter) to vote on these two recommendations.

If you are like me, when you hear "transition period" some questions immediately come to mind? Why a transition period instead of beginning a search process now? How long is this going to last? How do we know when it is over and we can call a new pastor? Denominational resources, Classis Lake Erie, and our Council all recommend a transition period during which we can identify the strengths and needs of River Terrace Church, lament the loss of a pastor, and heal divisions illuminated by the suspension and separation process. We don't know how long this transition period will be and when we will form a search committee—it is too early in the process. For reference, it is common for churches that have an Article 17 separation from a pastor to wait a year before searching for and calling a pastor.

At our elder meeting last night, Laura VanDerKolk led devotions using these familiar verses from Proverbs 3: *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your paths.* Laura encouraged us, and we encourage you, to apply this verse to our present situation and this transition period. Please pray for the Council, for the Transition Team, and for River Terrace Church to grasp and apply this promise from Proverbs.

The Council intends to communicate as frequently as we can during our transition period. We still need to discuss how to do this effectively. If you have questions, we encourage you to speak with any of us.