



January 24, 2025

Dear Congregation,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we embark on a new chapter in the life of our church, I would like to take this opportunity to share with you an overview of the pastor appointment process within the United Methodist Church (UMC). This process reflects the deep commitment of our denomination to discern God's will for the leadership of our congregations.

The Appointment Process in the United Methodist Church

The UMC follows an "appointive system" for pastoral leadership, as outlined in the Book of Discipline. Unlike a call system where congregations independently select their pastors, our appointive system entrusts the appointment process to the bishop of the annual conference in consultation with the cabinet of conference superintendents (formerly district superintendents). This ensures that pastoral leadership is aligned with the mission of the church as a whole and that congregations are provided with gifted and trained clergy who meet their specific needs.

Key Steps in the Appointment Process:

- 1. Assessment and Consultation:** The process begins with open conversations between the pastor, the conference superintendent, and the Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) of the church. The SPRC is tasked with providing input on the church's needs, mission, and vision for ministry. Similarly, pastors share their own ministry strengths, goals, and any personal considerations.
- 2. Discernment by the Bishop and Cabinet:** The bishop and the cabinet prayerfully discern the needs of each church in the conference, as well as the gifts and graces of available pastors. This step involves thoughtful deliberation to match pastors with congregations in ways that foster fruitful ministry.
- 3. Appointment Announcement:** Once the bishop makes an appointment decision, the conference superintendent communicates this decision to both the pastor and the receiving church. An introductory meeting with the new pastor and the SPRC will take place prior to the announcement to get to know the pastor and our shared ministry. Typically, appointments are announced during the spring, with new appointments taking effect at the beginning of the conference year, often July 1.
- 4. Transition and Preparation:** After an appointment is announced, both the outgoing and incoming pastors, along with the SPRC, work together to ensure a smooth transition. This includes opportunities for farewell celebrations, orientation sessions, and relationship-building with the new pastor.

Guiding Principles

The UMC's appointment process is grounded in several core principles:

- **Itinerancy:** Pastors are committed to serving wherever they are sent, trusting in God's call through the discernment of the bishop and cabinet.
- **Connectionalism:** Appointments are made in the context of the church's broader mission, ensuring that the needs of all congregations are considered.
- **Inclusivity:** The process seeks to affirm diversity, equity, and the unique gifts that clergy bring to ministry.

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Considerations from Greensburg First

As a congregation, Greensburg First has prayerfully outlined several considerations we hope will guide the appointment process:

1. **A Strong Family Focus:** At the core of our church family, we recognize that we are a family. Many of us are deeply committed to helping our family know Christ and to making Him known.
2. **Rebuilding Trust:** We acknowledge that there is some level of distrust toward the denomination and the Annual Conference. We seek a pastor who will serve as a shepherd in rebuilding trust and strengthening our connection to the broader United Methodist Church.
3. **Membership Retention and Growth:** We desire to retain our current members, grow our congregation, and continue being a cornerstone in our community and surrounding areas through our ministries and outreach programs.
4. **Support for Established Ministries:** It is important to us that our new pastor supports, develops, and grows the programs that are central to our church's identity. These include, but are not limited to:
 - Lenten Services
 - Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
 - Creche Show
 - The Way of the Cross
 - Vacation Bible School (VBS)
 - Centering Prayer Group
 - Fella-ship Men/Boys Prayer Breakfast
 - Westmoreland County Foodbank
 - Project Happy Feet
 - Angel Tree at Christmas
 - Adult Sunday School
 - Pastor's Bible Study
 - Healing Hearts
5. Additionally, we would like to see the development of a program similar to "First Things First Daily Devotionals."
6. **Longevity and Consistency:** Over the past 18 years, the average tenure of a pastor at Greensburg First has been 3.6 years. For a pastor to be impactful and an effective tool for our congregation and ministry, we strongly desire a tenure marked by longevity and consistency.

Your Role as a Congregation

We invite you to join us in prayer as we walk through this process together. Pray for our bishop, conference superintendent, and the entire appointive cabinet as they seek God's guidance. Pray for our current and future pastor, that they may be strengthened and encouraged in their ministry. Finally, pray for our church family as we prepare our hearts to embrace the new opportunities God has in store for us.

As we reflect on the journey ahead, let us be encouraged by the promise of Romans 8:38-39: *"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* May this truth assure us of God's unwavering love and inspire us to serve Him with boldness and joy.

Remember, God is greater than the highs and lows. Let us trust in His guidance and remain steadfast in our faith as we move forward together.

In Christ's Service,

Joshua McDowell
Chairperson of SPRC
Greensburg First United Methodist Church