**Meeting Summary**

Debby Brincivalli, Executive Presbyter of West Jersey Presbytery, provided two papers for our reference.

* One paper tells the Statement of Ethics for Presbyterian Pastors.
  + What they can and cannot do; what we cannot ask Pastor Bill to do after retired.
  + Signed by Pastor Bill, Presbytery and our Session.
  + These rules can be difficult, but they are necessary.
  + If you love him, let him go. He is trying to move on. We need to love him enough to let him go.
  + For retired Pastors who stay local, it is really difficult for them.
  + Please respect the terms. It’s what Pastor Bill wants.
* The other paper gives the condensed version of what will happen during the next chapter for our church.
  + Don’t talk outside the sanctity of the church/congregation.
  + Session Clerk – Bert Halecki – will compile all questions and be the liaison with the Presbytery.
  + Typically, a Pastor of a neighboring church will moderate a church’s Session meeting when their Pastor has left. Our new moderator from the Commission of Ministry is

already assigned. He is Pastor Don from Audubon.

Debby asked the group in attendance: “How many of have been through this transition before?”

* We have a good number of people who have.
* Then she said, “Things are different!”
  + Today, it costs less.
* Today, long distance telephone costs associated with interviewing no longer exist.
* Electronic interviews face-to-face without travel costs.

In our next chapter, we need to be open and looking for new things, not Bill Gaskill 2.0.

* Debby told a story about a woman who asked her mom, “When cooking, why do we cut off the ends of the roast?”
  + Mom answered, “It’s how I was taught. Ask Grandmom.”
  + Grandmom answered, “We did it to make it fit in the pan”
  + The moral is not to do things the same way just because that’s how they’ve always been done. Now is a good time for our church to challenge/re-evaluate the status quo.

We need to continue as a church family. We all need each other. Keep coming.

* We need to watch out for folks who fade away and become disenfranchised. Re-engage them.

Financial people should keep planning the same numbers as when paying the Pastor’s salary and benefits. We should put aside anything that is left because of Pastor’s leaving. We’ll need it later for moving expenses. It attracts new Pastors.

**What Happens Now?**

Since we now don’t have a Pastor, Presbytery’s Pulpit Supply personnel – and some of our lay-person congregants -- will lead worship each week.

* We need to have a church connection with anyone who preaches.
  + In response to a congregant’s question: Ray Weigle a former Pastor – could be ok as pulpit supply for a one-time thing if he’s had boundary training – again, that’s comfortable. It’s not be sticklers. It’s to be safe.

Looking for a pulpit supply in fall and spring is easier. Over summer they’re gone. Some who have taken time off are becoming available again in January.

Presbytery has a two-week-in-a-row limit for use of Pulpit Supply – so we don’t fall into being comfortable again.

Everyone in Pulpit Supply has gone through boundary training (e.g., sexual misconduct, etc.). Presbytery has vetted and certified them.

Worship Committee is on point for scheduling preachers (chair is Jo Elynn Cook) -- Kim Tomlin has scheduled pulpit supply for each week through end of December.

* During Johnsonburg will be Dr. Johnathan Miller
* Then Frank Helecki
* Urban Promise/Camden Forward School principal
* Gregg Meister in November
* Johnathan Miller is coming back in December

Different preachers give us exposure to different styles and approaches. Be open to see the various options to expand out of our comfort level.

* We will have Sundays where we say, “never again!” and others where we say, “wow!”

Worship Committee will continue to stay on top of this. We are all concerned.

Congregants question: Who performs weddings and funerals?

* Need to discuss with Session. Can use Pastors we know. Janet may be available. Johnathan Miller might. But, once we have the Interim, he will serve in all Pastor roles.
* One congregant’s comment: My son was married in this church by a Pastor from another congregation.
* Similar requests need to go before Session. The moderator helps the Session appropriately consider these things. Session should have a wedding policy.

**Interim Pastor**

First, we will get an Interim Pastor – who will not be our next Pastor – even if we really, really, really, really love him/her.

* Our Interims don’t want to be assigned Pastors. They enjoy shepherding through the transition process.
* They have special life skills and training.

Presbytery gives Session the applicants. We get 3-5 Interims for Session to select from. There is usually a 30-day out clause in case it is really not working for either party.

* Interims will travel up to an hour. They love to commute.

Session selects Interim. There are few available. If we don’t like one we pick in 30 days, you’ll have to start the mission study over from start again. It gives us a black eye to reject an Interim once we’ve selected him/her.

The Presbytery’s definition of full-time is 48 hours. The average salary works out to about $22/hour for a person with a master’s degree (usually with a lot of student debt).

* They don’t “make too much.”

Interim has a lot of admin assignments as part of that role = about 20% of the tasks

* Help us get through the process to the next Pastor
* Establish timelines
* Counsel on the process steps

Use the time with the interim to experiment with new things

* Debby suggested that we walk around our building and ask ourselves:
  + Are there empty rooms that could be put to God’s purpose?
  + If the doors closed tomorrow, would the community care?

If we experiment and fail, we can blame it on the Interim.

* One church used their $5,000 to help feed families from the school next door who were going hungry all weekend.
* What opportunities are right in front of us that we’re not seeing because we’re not looking?

Hopefully, we’ll have an Interim by end of year.

**Finding a New Pastor**

Someone from the Commission on Ministry (COM) will work with us to help us develop the job description and will bring it to presbytery to approve and use in advertising.

* Then the COM advises the PNC; no longer guiding Session.
* He/she is there for guidance, not voting.

Interim Pastor will help us put together a picture of who we want as our next Pastor.

* The Interim leads us through a mission study.
* The mission study is designed to help us identify what to look for in a new Pastor. It asks us questions and give us opportunity to give thought to things we may not have even thought of.
  + Looks at what you’ve been doing and evaluate if they are sucking energy instead of giving energy.
  + Prompts us define who God is calling us to be.
  + Has us define our blessings -- the things we do really well.
  + Will allow for the percolation of “What if?”

After mission study, then we select the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) to begin the Pastor search process.

* PNC effort dictates how long it will take to get a new Pastor. If we don’t take down-time from the task, it will move faster, but could be up to 1.5 years.
* PNC = 3-9 people; 7 is a quorum with 9. Must commit to meet every week. This has to be a priority.
  + For PNC include long-time and new members – an assortment of representation.
  + At least one person on the PNC needs to know how to scan the internet to see what candidates have posted in the past… from blogs to sermons to social media. Find out who they really are without putting their best face forward in the interviewing process.
  + Participants will need to leave other obligations (others need to pick up the slack). This is an intensive ministry.
  + Get rid of all preconceived notions. Get out of the way and let God do His thing.
* The Presbytery manages the candidate process.
* PNC selects Pastor – without input from Session.
* If the PNC isn’t working, the Presbytery will step in.
  + We need a unanimous decision.
  + We cannot have one person hold the committee hostage until they say his way.
  + In one instance where that happened, that person ended up resigning from the PNC. Then we asked the congregation if they wanted to replace him or continue with the team in place. They picked to not replace him.

Presbytery can give guidance on questions to ask during interview process.

Our agreement among all the executive presbyters is to truth tell.

Presbytery does reference checks. Debby gave examples of situations where reference checks led to surprising outcomes.

* One candidate’s reference check said, “don’t let him be around money.” So, he went to a church with no money. No problem.
* The reference check on one candidate for Associate Pastor said, “Are you kidding? He hates kids.”
* One candidate was about to go through a nasty custody battle during the interview process. He couldn’t move to NJ because he would have had to lose custody of his child.

**Our New Pastor**

The first-time congregation meets Pastor is once the PNC is done.

It’s not the Pastor’s job to grow the church. It’s the congregation’s role.

* Need to be thinking, “We do this really well; with the new Pastor, we can even go further.”
* Don’t think, “when the Pastor gets here…”
* A new Pastor doesn’t want to come into a church and be expected to do it all.
* It takes a while for the new Pastor to build relationships.

Once new Pastor is place with a call and installation, he’s in. It’s like tenure. It’s difficult to get rid of a Pastor who has been installed.