



MISSION & MINISTRY STUDY

Procedures adopted by Commission on Transitional Ministries

March 15, 2022

The Presbytery of Milwaukee requires completion of a Mission & Ministry Study prior to the search for a full-time installed Pastor or Associate Pastor and, where feasible, prior to the search for a part-time installed or contracted Pastor or Associate Pastor. Approval of the Mission & Ministry Study report is delegated to the Commission on Transitional Ministries (CTM) and is a prerequisite to forming a Pastor Nominating Committee.

WHY do we need a Mission & Ministry Study?

The process of a Mission & Ministry Study and preparation of the report presents a real opportunity for church growth, discovery, mourning of pastors who've left, and in some case, healing. Although transitional times in congregational life can frequently be characterized by high anxiety, it is important during the transition for the congregation to engage in a time of self-reflection and to articulate clearly its sense of identity and calling as a particular community of faith before it moves on in its journey. As the church, we should always examine ourselves and our actions in light of Scripture as disciples of Jesus Christ, and we should prayerfully ask the Spirit's guidance as we try to discern the work that God wants us to do in a certain time and place, including a pastoral transition. Too often, congregations want to rush over this step and end up calling pastors who are not good fits for their congregations or who do not share their vision for the future. This mismatch of pastor and congregation can then result in another transition and further instability.

The Mission & Ministry Study process and report will be critical steps in the search that happen before the formation of the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) is authorized. The Mission & Ministry Study report is an important instrument that guides the work of the PNC. It will be imperative for the PNC to use the results of the study in the Ministry Information Form or Ministry Discernment Profile, used (1) by the denomination to match pastors with congregations; and (2) by pastors who might wish to refer themselves for consideration by the PNC.

HOW do we do a Mission & Ministry Study?

The preparation of a Mission & Ministry Study report is a spiritual discernment process that provides the congregation with an opportunity for self-reflection, which can be enlivening and encouraging. It requires conducting a study of congregational life that will solicit responses to critical questions about identity and vision. This study can be extensive and explicit or modest and informal, and the Commission on Transitional Ministries and your interim pastor (if applicable) can help you decide on the best format. In any case, it should be intentionally designed to gather information from a wide variety of people who comprise the membership and others connected to your ministry and congregational life.

The conclusions that will go into the Mission & Ministry Study report come from many sources, such as a congregational self-study through focus groups, a formal assessment (like Holy Cow!



surveys), and a community survey with demographics and input from mission partners. Congregations often use written questionnaires to conduct church-wide surveys, hold small group gatherings, or conduct individual interviews. Some have used all these techniques. Whatever means are used for the study, it is important to let people know that they have input into the future of their congregational life. The broader the sense of involvement and investment the more representative the study is likely to be and the better match you'll find with your new pastor.

WHAT is included in a Mission & Ministry Study report?

A Mission & Ministry Study report should answer these or similar key questions which might intersect:

- **Heritage:** What about our history are we carrying forward, either intentionally or unintentionally? How are we unique as a community of faith? How are we living into our Reformed/Presbyterian faith? How does our setting affect who we are? What are our gifts?
- **Leadership:** Who leads and how do we govern ourselves? What have been the past roles of pastors, leaders, and members? How inclusive and broad is our leadership? What kind of leadership does our congregation need in this time and place?
- **Connection:** How can we be better connected in our ministries and mission through our denominational ties and relationships with the community? How do we take advantage of all that our denominational connections offer? What specifically will we do to strengthen those connections in the next few years? Is the congregation exercising its privilege of voice and vote at Presbytery meetings? If not, why not?
- **Mission:** What are the needs of our community that match our gifts? How is God calling us to meet those needs and be in relationship with our community? With whom should we be in partnership? Is your congregation a Matthew 25 church and are you familiar with this initiative?
- **Future:** Going forward, what should change about the congregation and what should never change? How is God preparing us for the next phase in ministry? What is the vision for the congregation? What values will guide us in discovering God's future for the congregation? How is our faith being called into action?

With data from the study in hand and the answers to these key questions, the congregation can then **proceed to answer questions about the skills, experience, and qualities needed in the next pastor.** The Mission & Ministry Study report will explore any changes in the roles of the future pastor, church leaders, and members in moving toward their shared vision for the future.

The report needs to be specific enough to identify the particularity and peculiarity of the local congregation and yet broad enough to outline effective objectives or goals for the next few years. Although an abundance of information and data may emerge during the study process, it is not wise to include all that information in the report (except perhaps as appendices for the PNC). Rather the challenge is to summarize and synthesize that data in ways that are helpful for your



leadership, for prospective pastors, and for the congregation.

Ask the CTM Interim Ministry liaison about resources or examples to help you.

WHEN can we begin?

The process begins after the departing pastor has left and, where financially feasible, under the guidance of a trained interim pastor and with assistance from the congregation. Because data will need to be gathered from multiple internal and external sources, the actual drafting of the Mission & Ministry Study report will probably not start until after the first six months of the transition period.

WHO prepares the Mission & Ministry Study report?

The Session is responsible for approving the Mission & Ministry Study report. However, it is essential that the Session include the congregation in this process. The report is not a secret document produced at closed meetings. The more people who are engaged in reflecting upon the mission and ministry of the church, the broader the ownership will be of that mission and the vision cast for the future.

Where feasible, the Session delegates the work of gathering input and drafting to a sub-committee of Session (called “the Interim Committee” in this document), which usually includes active ruling elders. For congregations with a trained interim pastor, the Interim Committee will work closely with the interim pastor long before it’s time to start drafting. The Interim Committee might be responsible for holding focus groups, assisting with a formal assessment, overseeing the input of mission partners, or other processes to gather information needed to answer the key questions. As this process of gathering information draws to a close, the Interim Committee will create the draft of the Mission & Ministry Study report for the Session’s review and approval.

In smaller congregations, it is still recommended that a sub-team of Session undertake this role. Asking the Session to oversee the day-to-day functioning of the church during a pastoral transition AND to gather data and draft the study report is a lot. In smaller congregations, a less formal process can be used so long as the opportunity for input remains broad and the key questions are able to be answered for the congregation as a whole.

It is highly recommended that the report be reviewed with the CTM Interim Ministry liaison during the drafting stage and before Session’s final approval, so that suggestions can be offered to avoid large rewrites. Once approved by the Session, the report will then go to CTM for approval and authorization to form the PNC.

WHY can't we just use an old mission and ministry study or MIF?

Even if a Mission & Ministry Study report is just a couple years old, the Session should consider how it might be revised and updated to reflect current attitudes, challenges, and visions in the congregation. Congregations need to reflect upon and answer the additional question "who are we now in light of these new circumstances?" Prospective candidates will be quick to notice if



your Mission & Ministry Study report and the resulting MIF/MDP look outdated or obsolete, and that will lower their interest. By contrast, a congregation that has completed its study recently and is able to articulate its vision and leadership needs for attaining that vision will be more attractive for pastors who can see themselves as a companion in ministry.

IS the Mission & Ministry Study report the same as a mission statement?

No. The Mission & Ministry Study report will be broader than your mission statement. You might decide, as a result of the Mission & Ministry Study, that your mission statement or any vision statement needs to be updated or rewritten. You might also decide to leave the existing mission or vision statements the same until you call your new pastor.

Typically, a **vision statement** is the desired, imagined future for the context in which an organization functions. A well-crafted vision statement is a bold representation of the future that the organization (sometimes in tandem with others) has determined *must* arrive. Possessing a clear vision enables the organization to have a very clear direction for their work -- it's the 'why' of an organization, its purpose. A **mission statement** describes the organization's identity in relation to its vision. Strategic plans or goals might then be formulated to give the congregation specific action steps.

Vision and mission statements might come out of the Mission & Ministry Study process, but they will be succinct, concrete statements that can stand alone. When a church can articulate its specific vision and mission statement, it has a clear sense of the type and qualities of its next pastor. It also helps a pastor candidate discern whether they are a good fit for the congregation. A vague paragraph of religious platitudes of the "one size fits all Christian churches" sort is not helpful.

HOW do we gather statistical data?

Research Services within the Presbyterian Church (USA) offers or recommends several sources for statistical data, including:

1. [Church Trends in Your Congregation](#): Statistical summary based on the Session Annual Statistical Reports submitted to the Office of the General Assembly. See how things have been changing in your congregation for the last five-year. If you need data beyond five years, please contact research@pcusa.org and we will be happy to share that data with you.
2. [Demographic Report](#): Learn about the people who live in the community around your church. The Demographic Report can help your congregation identify mission and outreach possibilities. [MissionInsite](#) offers similar services.
3. [Congregational Surveys](#): A survey can give your congregation a picture of who worships there (including age and marital status of members, average length of church membership, etc.), information about the strengths and priorities of church programs, and tools for strategic planning. Use a congregational survey to identify and build on your congregation's unique strengths.
4. [Research Strategies for Congregations](#): A packet of easy information gathering tools designed to help you learn more about your worshipers and your local community.



5. [RCMS data \(Religious Congregations & Membership Study\)](#): Details about the number and types of congregations and their members in every state, county, and metro area in the United States. Learn more about the religious landscape where your church is located.

Research Services

800-728-7228 x2040

fax: 502-569-8736

Send email to research@pcusa.org

SHOULD we share the approved Mission & Ministry Study report?

Yes! Once the report has received all the necessary approvals, it is important to share it with the congregation. Key findings should appear regularly in newsletters and bulletins, should be posted prominently, and should be included in visitor information materials. Effective church ministry requires broad-based ownership of the church's identity, mission, and vision for the future.