

CM Job Description Process

Attached is the Board-approved job description for our settled Conference Minister. The following is an explanation of the process the Board followed to affirm this job description.

Last fall after conversations with Mary and the national staff person who supports Conference searches, the Personnel Committee of the Board proposed we establish a Discernment Committee whose role was to discern the needs of the Conference and the work of a settled Conference Minister. The Board established a six-person Committee, as announced at CAG in 2023. The Committee researched other Conference Minister job descriptions, interviewed current Conference staff members, and held 7 listening sessions over the course of about 6 weeks, with a total of 42 people participating in those sessions. The Discernment Committee then put together a draft settled Conference Minister's job description and sent this job description to the Personnel Committee for review. The Personnel Committee shared the draft with Mary. As stated in Mary's contract, she had the first right to review and discern if the proposed job description aligned with her sense of call. After review and discussion between the Personnel Committee and Mary, the draft was then sent to the Board for consideration at our July 27 Board meeting. After review and discussion, the Board then sent it back to the Personnel Committee to make a few edits.

The Board's engagement with the job description has been robust. They built on the foundation provided by the Discernment Committee, incorporating input from other committees and conversations with Conference members. They also sought resourcing from the national setting of the UCC, gleaning wisdom from wider church experience of other recent Conference Minister searches. Each element of input influenced the Board's approach to the final document you see here.

As you can see in the final document, the Board identified the intentional need for covenant between the Conference Minister and members of the Conference and added a note to make this intention more clear. The ministry of the Conference cannot be accomplished by one person, no matter how much authority that person is given. The work outlined in the job description cannot be accomplished alone, but only by working together with others, and those others must take responsibility for their part of the covenant.

Also, the Board values the input from the listening sessions, and wants you to know that you have been heard. A consistent theme that emerged in the sessions was the desire for the Conference Minister to live in the Conference. The Board had lengthy discussions regarding this item in particular, weighing the historical, financial, justice, practical, and emotional concerns raised in these conversations. Sometimes these concerns were in

clear opposition to one another. The Personnel Committee, in completing Mary's annual evaluation, intentionally asked this question, and not one person who works closely with Mary felt that her living outside of the Conference was a barrier to her performance in this role. That insight from our current experience was valuable for the Board's consideration as well.

Personnel again reached out to Rev. Diane Weible, national staff support for Conference searches, for insight into wider-church conversations regarding this issue. She responded that, since Covid, there are several Conference Ministers that do not live full-time in their Conference, and residency requirements are significantly limiting candidate pools. Increasingly across the UCC, the Conference Minister's residence in the Conference is regarded as a "nice to have" but not a "need to have" for the role.

Diane shared that the matter should not be the location of a Conference Minister's residence, but rather the perception of their presence. She shared that other Conferences considered setting a number of days they felt were deemed necessary for a CM to be physically present, recognizing that Zoom and other modern workplace tools allow the business of the Conference to be done more efficiently in any location.

No matter who the candidate may be, the Board recognized that there is a distinction between how Conference members perceive the availability of the Conference Minister, and the Conference Minister's need or ability to perform their job duties in any particular location. The Conference Minister's ability to perform the job functions effectively is not dependent on the location of the Conference Minister's physical residence.

This realization brought the Board back to the centrality of covenant in the relationship between Conference Minister and Conference members. The quality of that relationship develops over time, based on shared experience and mutual trust, and this development is as much the responsibility of our members as it is the responsibility of the Conference Minister. Current reports within Missouri Mid-South affirm that we are able to develop a positive working relationship with our Conference Minister, regardless of the Conference Minister's *and members'* locations.

Please feel free to contact any of the Board members if you have any questions.

For the Personnel Committee,

Joyce Bathke, Chair