

GETTING CLOSER

“So, How does this Call Process work?” - Reverend Peter Coutts, Interim Moderator

I am so glad you asked this question! Congregations don't go through it very often, so it can be hard to imagine it. I will lay it out for you in the form of a schedule. Do mark your calendars!

November 6th: Session Meeting. We held a Session meeting that evening to hear from the Search Team. The Search Team unanimously endorsed our chosen candidate to the Session and explained why this person is a great fit for our church. After discussion, the Elders also unanimously agreed to invite this minister to “preach for the Call” (more on this term below). So be assured that our congregational leadership is united in recommending this person to you to be our minister.

November 27th (or thereabouts): You Get Mail. Every household in our congregation should receive two documents in the mail (you remember that thing with stamps and envelopes?). The first is an introduction to our candidate. It will help you get to know this person, their background as well as their approach to congregational ministry. This is always left to the end to protect the identity of the one we are considering calling. After all: our congregation might vote “no” and the candidate will continue to serve their current congregation. If news about our candidate leaks too much and too soon, it could disrupt that person's relationship with their current church. This is why we don't tell you who the candidate is until the last moment. The other thing you will receive in the mail is a complete explanation of the call process. **Please watch your mailboxes early next week for our letter.**

December 1st – 3rd: Meet and Greets. The Candidate will visit us and “preach for the call.” This is when you get to meet the candidate in person. The candidate will meet with a few specific groups and teams (such as the elders on the Session), but you will have an opportunity as well! **Please mark our Open House Gathering in your calendar: Saturday, December 2nd, from 2 – 4 PM in Trinity Hall.** This is an informal opportunity to meet and talk with the candidate. There is no program as such, so come when you wish.

December 3rd: Worship. Our candidate will be leading the worship service that day so we can get a sense of the preacher's style. Communion will not take place that day because we wish to give the candidate time to preach a normal length sermon. **We want as many St. Andrew's people as possible to be here!** It is, after all, an important moment in our congregation's history. If you can't be here in person, you will be able to view worship live online at 10 AM. Go to www.standrewscalgary.ca and click on “Join Us For Worship.” A recording of the service will remain available on our website over the weeks that follow.

December 3rd: Congregational Meeting. The meeting will start about 15 minutes after the conclusion of the worship service. We anticipate that you can join us remotely as well via ZOOM (more details on this next week). You will hear about the background of the search process, and the Search Team will share why they recommend

this person to be our next minister. There will be time for discussion and for your questions. It will not be just a business decision—it is also an important moment of spiritual discernment. What we are doing is considering a “Call” and whether this is God’s calling of a gifted person to come to us. Given the rules of our denomination, only those present (in the Sanctuary and online by Zoom), and who are actual official congregational members will be eligible to vote at the meeting. They will be asked to vote on whether this person should be our next minister, and to give approval to the “stipend and allowances” the minister will receive (that is, the pay). **Do Do Do come and participate in this meeting!** Those who are not official members (they are called adherents) still have a very important part to play, which is explained next. So please come too! You can still be a part of these important discussions.

December 3rd: Signing the Call. Everyone—Members and Adherents—can sign the call.... and we need as close to everyone to do so! After the congregational meeting you will be encouraged to sign on what looks like a petition in support of having this minister be our minister. Now, as I think about it, you are signing a petition! It will go to our candidate and two Presbyteries asking all three to let this person come be our minister. If you don’t know if you are a member or adherent, we will help you figure it out that day. **The number of signatures we get is very very important.** Our candidate and two Presbyteries will want to know how “strong” the Call is, which is indicated by the percentage of our total membership who signed the Call. They will look for a number greater than 80%, minimum. This is another reason your presence on Sunday December 3rd is so important. We are a congregation of about 600 people, and gathering that many signatures over two weeks is a bit of a tough job! You can help us immensely by being with us December 3rd and signing that day. And yes, children can sign the Call as well, as adherents.

December 4th – 17th: More signing of the Call. If you can’t be with us on December 3rd, don’t worry: you can still sign the Call either as a member or an adherent. You will be contacted by your Care Connector (probably by phone) and invited to sign. You can do this one of four ways: 1] you can ask your Connector to visit you so you can sign in person; 2] you can ask your Connector to add your name to the Call on your behalf; or 3] you can email your Connector and ask that your name be placed on the Call. Any of those ways are just fine. If there are more than one St. Andrew’s person in your household, please let your Connector know who all will be signing. 4) Call the office at 403-255-0001 and ask that your name be added. Once again, we need to get as many signatures on the Call document as we can, so please help us out. You can still sign the call even if you were not with us on December 3rd or if you didn’t watch the service online. Know that the Search Team and the Session have both endorsed this candidate unanimously, and if we got this far it means that the congregation at its meeting did so as well. So you can add your name in support of our decisions.

January 9th, 2024: The Call Goes to Presbytery. If everything goes well, the Call will be presented to our Presbytery (our area governing body) for its consideration. The Presbytery needs to approve this as well, after being assured that we made proper use of our process and we have strong congregational support for this person. If they vote “yes” it goes to our candidate’s Presbytery.... And if they say “yes” the Call is given to the minister. Legally, the minister has 10 days to think about it, but our candidate is very excited about being a part of us moving into the future. This wraps up the process.

Did I miss anything? Yes, never underestimate the ability of Presbyterians to make things complicated. But every step has its reason, as I hope you can now appreciate. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to me by phone (403.589.9081 cell) or email (pcoutts@standrewscalgary.ca).

I look forward to seeing you ALL on Saturday December 2nd at the open house and on Sunday December 3rd at worship and for the congregational meeting.

Blessings!

Rev. Peter Coutts

Interim Moderator