

HERE I AM: HOLDING NEW PASTORS IN OUR HEARTS

For Sessions

A Presbytery of Great Rivers Program for New Pastors

Adapted from a document prepared for the General Assembly Council and its entities for use by the Presbytery of Great Rivers, Spring, 2009



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BRIEF OVERVIEW

The search for new pastoral leadership is a challenging time for any congregation. For many smaller congregations - particularly those in small towns or rural settings - the search can be doubly hard. Yet, many of these same congregations have gifts of wisdom, experience, and support that can be used by God to help in the spiritual growth and leadership development of a first-time pastor.

The Here I Am - Holding New Pastors In Our Hearts program is designed to match selected congregations and pastoral candidates in an initial 2-year designated position. The program allows recent seminary graduates to begin their ministry as a fully qualified pastor, serving a congregation and community, while giving them extra support during the sometimes tough transition from seminary to parish.

Creating A Special “Community of Practice” for First-time Pastor

A “community of practice” is a vital learning environment for a new professional. Congregations in the Here I Am program play a role in providing this richer, more supportive environment for their new pastor. The “community of practice” will include other new pastors, experienced ministers, seminary support, and a congregational parish – pastor support committee.

Bringing Pastors & Congregations Together

The **Here I Am** program seeks to call excellent, well-qualified seminary graduates, whose presbyteries have deemed “ready to receive a call”, to form a pool of potential pastors for a **Here I Am** congregation. The process follows appropriate practice for designated pastors with the presbytery sharing a defined role in seeking, interviewing, and selecting the pastor candidate for the particular congregation.

For many congregations the benefit will be a significant reduction in the uncertainty of a regular search process.

1. Samuel faced real danger in following God's plan for anointing David. Calling a new pastor will bring change to your congregation. Using the **Here I Am - Holding New Pastors In Our Hearts** process adds another new dimension. Reflecting on what you have learned about the program, name the risks and challenges your congregation will need to address in order to work well with your new, first-time pastor:
2. Young David wasn't planning to be a king. He had no experience of the world, no identified skills. Listening deeply to God's voice, name the risks and challenges for a new pastor coming to your church and community:
3. What “good news” do you hear in this story about David? What hopes or possibilities might come from calling a first-time, possibly younger, pastor to serve your congregation?
4. A commitment to the **Here I Am** program will be important for you and your congregation. We suggest a time of prayer - at least a week or two - for PNC/session members to be in personal daily prayer on the matter before making a final decision.



⁷ But GOD told Samuel, "Looks aren't everything. Don't be impressed with his looks and stature. I've already eliminated him. GOD judges persons differently than humans do. Men and women look at the face; GOD looks into the heart."

⁸ Jesse then called up Abinadab and presented him to Samuel. Samuel said, "This man isn't GOD's choice either."

⁹ Next Jesse presented Shammah. Samuel said, "No, this man isn't either."

¹⁰ Jesse presented his seven sons to Samuel. Samuel was blunt with Jesse, "GOD hasn't chosen any of these."

¹¹ Then he asked Jesse, "Is this it? Are there no more sons?" "Well, yes, there's the runt. But he's out tending the sheep." Samuel ordered Jesse, "Go get him. We're not moving from this spot until he's here."

¹² Jesse sent for him. He was brought in, the very picture of health— bright-eyed, good-looking. GOD said, "Up on your feet! Anoint him! This is the one."

¹³ Samuel took his flask of oil and anointed him, with his brothers standing around watching. The Spirit of GOD entered David like a rush of wind; God vitally empowering him for the rest of his life.

(*The Message*, Eugene Peterson,)

FOR REFLECTION & PRAYER

1. In verse 1 Samuel is moping over the search process for a new leader for God's people. What are some of the emotions you or your congregation are feeling as you search for a new pastor? Describe a preconception that God might be asking you to leave behind:

BENEFITS / REQUIREMENTS FOR CONGREGATIONS

Benefits For Congregations in the Here I Am Program

- Quicker process for securing pastoral leadership
- 2-year designated pastoral position offers flexibility
- Option is open for designated pastor to become installed pastor after 2 years
- Expenses covered for training, meetings, and events related to the Here I Am program
- Additional incentives provided by the presbytery will help attract excellent candidates

Requirements For Participation in the Here I Am Program

- Pastoral position is full-time
- Terms of Call meet or exceed presbytery's minimum
- Application Form for the Here I Am program has been approved by session and submitted to presbytery

FAQ, APPLICATION FORMS, CONTACT INFO

How did the Here I Am - Holding New Pastors In Our Hearts program get started?

The program began with the idea that many smaller congregations have trouble attracting pastoral leadership. From there, it made sense to focus on what might draw candidates to give a second, deeper look at the rich opportunities offered by many of these congregations. To help candidates past fears about isolation, loss of seminary friendships, and financial concerns, the program offers extra support - including collegial gatherings to build friendships after seminary, mentoring from experienced pastors, return visits to seminary for skill development and spiritual reflection, and extra funding from presbytery for continuing education and debt relief.

Q: What happens after 2 years? Won't we just be looking again for another pastor?

The Here I Am program is based on a 2-year designated pastoral position. This gives flexibility to both the church and the pastor. We expect some congregations and pastors to choose to continue in relationship, which is an option that is open. If the pastor or congregation discern God's direction to conclude the relationship, then the congregation will be eligible for further Here I Am participation.

Q: What steps do we need to take to become eligible for the Here I Am program?

Prayerfully discuss - session and PNC -- whether God is calling you to this intentional ministry with first-time pastoral leadership.

Session approves applying for participation in the Here I Am program

Session and/or PNC fills out Here I Am - Holding New Pastors In Our Hearts Application Form For Congregations

Application is approved by the program advisory group, which is a subcommittee of the Committee on Ministry of the presbytery.

Session makes a request to the Committee On Ministry to change position type from installed pastor to designated pastor.

Session calls a congregational meeting for congregation to consider and approve change of position type from installed pastor to designated pastor.

Q: Where can we get an application form?

Go to the Presbytery of Great Rivers website at www.greatriverspbv.org

Click the link for the Here I Am - Holding New Pastors In Our Hearts program

Then find the link for the Application Form for congregations.

For more information contact

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SCRIPTURE STUDY / REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1 Samuel 16:1-13

¹ GOD addressed Samuel: "So, how long are you going to mope over Saul? You know I've rejected him as king over Israel. Fill your flask with anointing oil and get going. I'm sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I've spotted the very king I want among his sons."

²⁻³ "I can't do that," said Samuel. "Saul will hear about it and kill me." GOD said, "Take a heifer with you and announce, 'I've come to lead you in worship of GOD, with this heifer as a sacrifice.' Make sure Jesse gets invited. I'll let you know what to do next. I'll point out the one you are to anoint."

⁴ Samuel did what GOD told him. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the town fathers greeted him, but apprehensively. "Is there something wrong?"

⁵ "Nothing's wrong. I've come to sacrifice this heifer and lead you in the worship of GOD. Prepare yourselves, be consecrated, and join me in worship." He made sure Jesse and his sons were also consecrated and called to worship.

⁶ When they arrived, Samuel took one look at Eliab and thought, "Here he is! GOD's anointed!"