

Motion for Action at the Congregational Meeting on December 21, 2014

Berkey friends:

In this letter we want to share information about the Pastoral Search Committee and about Marilyn Rudy-Froese's visa application, and present a motion for action *at a brief congregational meeting immediately after the worship service on Sunday, December 21*. Visa issues are extremely complex and can shift significantly over time, so we want to provide you with adequate information in the simplest terms possible.

Background

Last spring our congregation began to search for a faith formation pastor to work 33% FTE. The Search Committee (Roy Bergey, Abbe Buller, Randy Horst, Lindsay Rheinheimer, and Deb Williams) has made good progress and received multiple applications, but has not interviewed any applicants.

Marilyn says she has always had an interest in faith formation across the lifespan and this fall began to be drawn to this position as a way to more fully engage the congregation at every life stage. So she approached the Spiritual Leadership Team (SLT) and the Pastoral Search Committee about the possibility of adding the faith formation position to the other pastoral responsibilities she already has, and going from 65% to 100% FTE.

We, the SLT, met with the Search Committee on Sunday, December 7. We all agreed that Marilyn is a well-qualified applicant for this work of faith formation, and we recommend her to the congregation for full-time employment. The SLT and the Search Committee also recognize that because our congregation is experiencing significant numerical growth, we may still need to hire a third pastor in the next few years. Therefore the Search Committee's work has been suspended for the present time.

When the congregation hired Marilyn in 2012, we applied to the U.S. government for a temporary religious worker visa which was good for 2.5 years. That visa expires at the end of this month. The immigration lawyer is recommending that we apply for an extension of this same visa, which will be good for another 2.5 years.

You may be wondering why this information is coming so late in the year. The reason is that as Marilyn began to consider the open pastoral position and the renewal of her visa, she learned from the immigration lawyer that we can apply to hire her full-time on the temporary religious worker visa. The lawyer recommends that if the congregation does choose to hire her full-time, we list her as a full-time minister on this visa renewal. We originally envisioned a two-step process with the congregation: to present our proposal to hire Marilyn full-time, and then at a later time to vote on a more detailed job description for her. Because the current visa expires at the end of this month, and because we need to specify the level of employment on the application, the process admittedly feels rushed. We recognize this rushed process is not ideal, but an advantage is that we can fill our need for a faith formation pastor sooner than we could have otherwise.

Motion for Action at the Congregational Meeting on Sunday, December 21

The SLT moves that we suspend the work of the Pastoral Search Committee for a third pastor and increase Marilyn Rudy-Froese's employment from 65% to 100% FTE. This change in employment will take effect when the new visa is approved.

—The Spiritual Leadership Team (Roy Bergey, Shirley Dick, Sherm Kauffman, Elizabeth Miller, and Greg Smucker)