

Thanks to the interim leadership development committee, in particular Mary Anne Schoonover, Marge O'Reilly and Carol Brown for putting together and facilitating the Congregational forum on November 2<sup>nd</sup>. I think it was a very useful discussion. It was good to confirm the general consensus in the congregation on the need to simplify our commission structure, find ways that commissions can work together better and better use our governing council as a decision-making body. On November 8<sup>th</sup>, the coordinating council began to consider how we will move forward on this issue, so that it will be resolved by the time we call a settled pastor.

It was also great to have Wendy Vander Hart, our Associate Conference Minister in attendance at the November forum. Wendy and Reverend Debbi, our Interim Senior Pastor, **both** strongly believe -- and it was confirmed by consensus at the forum and at coordinating council -- that our most important challenge as we move forward in the search and call process is to answer the three questions that we are called upon to answer, as preliminary matters to the search process: (1) who are we now as a Church; (2) who are we being called to serve (i.e., who are our neighbors) and (3) what is God calling us to be in the future.

As we know, the Vibrant Future process has helped us. We have already done a lot of looking inward, discerning our core values. I believe we are well on our way to answering the first question – who are we now as a Church? Going forward, you will be hearing from the leaders of Vibrant Future initiative and working with them, to crystallize our answer to that question.

To help us answer Questions 2 (who are our neighbors—who are we being called upon to serve) and Question 3 (what is God calling us to be in the future), I am creating two new working groups -- a handful of volunteers from within and outside the coordinating council -- who will work with the congregation on these questions. These working groups will work together and with you all on really addressing and answering these two questions. Our work on these tasks in the next several months will make the development of our full-scale church profile, and job of the search committee, a lot more manageable.

Concerning the search committee, there has been some useful, practical, discussion about what is the appropriate size. The current bylaws call for thirteen members, but this seems a pretty large number to coordinate efficiently. The Massachusetts Conference of the UCC recommends a committee of no more than nine (9). The coordinating council is considering this issue. You will hear more about it.

This wonderful congregation has done a lot of great work already, but we have quite a bit more work to do. We are looking to change our commission structure and doing crucial work on the mission of Eliot Church. It is important to get these things squared away, so that the settled pastor we choose can lead us forward on the path that God is calling us to take.

We are in a good position, right now. Once these additional pieces are in place, we will be in a **great** position to move on to that next piece of this search and call process.

Blessings to you,  
Kevin Curtin  
Eliot Church Moderator