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**Balcony View OR**

**It doesn’t feel like anything is happening. What is going on with the Transition and its process?**

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We know you have questions. What is going on? When can we “just get on with it?” We thought it probably is time for an update from the “balcony view” of the arc of transition. This article will review the process of transition and give you a sense of what is going on at Knox Presbyterian Church. Things are being done and you are moving forward, prayerfully, intentionally and with the support of the Holy Spirit.

During our retreat in January, we talked about **Focal Points**, the work of leadership in transition. The Focal Points are areas of work for the congregation:

* **Heritage**: What is the congregation’s story of successes and challenges to this point?
* **Mission**: Who are our neighbors and how do we walk with them in response to God’s love for us?
* **Connections**: What relationships do we have as a congregation beyond our church community? How do we strengthen the relationships we have? What new relationships should be developed?
* **Leadership**: How are decisions made, formally and informally? Do we need to make adjustments to the way we do things?
* **Future**: Who is God calling us to be in this particular time and this particular place?

Work on Focal Points is a continuous process during the time of transition. There is no timeline or agenda. It is Spirit-led, fluid and spontaneous. The work is interrelated and overlapping.

From the day Pastor Tim retired and your Session began the process of making decisions about leadership and the journey of transition, this work has been in process. Some may think that the 18 months before Transitional Ministry Pathways joined your journey did not involve the work of transition, but it did. Your Session stepped up and has provided spiritual leadership for the congregation, ensuring there is continued quality worship and pastoral care by supporting the staff and committees that do the work of the church. In doing this work, you have discovered that while pastoral leadership is vitally important, your identity as a church is not defined by your pastor, but by the ministry you do together. You are rediscovering who you are in this new context.

Along with attention to the Focus Points, transitional leaders engage in **Process Tasks.** These tasks are also a continuous process, not a checklist. They do not have a timeline or an agenda. They are Spirit-led, fluid, spontaneous, interrelated and overlapping. The work involves:

* Entering the System
* Analyzing and Discerning the System
* Connecting with ministry partners
* Narrowing focus and responsibility
* Exiting and Evaluating

As your transitional consultants, we have been entering your system since our first phone call and have continued with interviews and conversations with individuals and small groups. Our weekend with you gave us all the chance to get to know one another more deeply–to put names, faces and stories together. It makes sense that as newcomers in your midst, we would need to enter the system.

Your Transition Team also needs to “enter the system,” despite the reality that many members on the team have long time relationships with the church. Their work is new and their task is to listen carefully and see Knox Church with open eyes and open hearts, temporarily suspending judgment and history to invite the possibility of seeing things in a new and fresh way. Their role, for this season, has changed. They are learning what that means now as they organize and make decisions about the work they will facilitate with the congregation.

In the next few months, the Transition Team will be working on the **demographics** of both the church’s neighborhood and the congregation. What has changed over time? How has the church responded to the changes? Who are our neighbors? How could the church respond in the current context? In addition, you will all be asked to complete a detailed **survey** about your view of life as a faith community. This information will be vitally important in developing small group listening session questions and analyzing where the church is right now. Finally, you will all be invited to participate in **Listening Sessions**, small group conversations about where you find yourselves and what your hopes and dreams are for the next chapter of Knox Church’s life. Right now, the Transition Team is thoughtfully and prayerfully developing a plan to ensure there is congregational participation and conversation about discerning God’s promised future for Knox. In addition, the Transition Team will be thinking about the history of the congregation, thinking through celebrations and successes, as well as disappointments and challenges.

Meanwhile, the Session, the Deacons, the staff and the Admin Team are working together to make sure ministry continues. They are attending to the needs of the congregation:  developing worship, caring for the congregation, and providing for the nurture of the people of God.

So what can you do to be a part of the Transition Process?

First and foremost, you can **pray**–pray for the congregation and its health and future, pray for the Transition Team, Session, Deacons and Admin Team as they do their work, pray for careful and intentional discernment that will lead to the right leadership choices for Knox’s next chapter of ministry and service in the name of Jesus Christ.

Beyond prayer, **participate**. Say YES as the Spirit nudges you into service. Say YES when you are asked to fill out a survey and commit the time to fill it out honestly and thoughtfully. Say YES when invited to participate in a small group listening session.

When the data is collected and the Transition Team’s work is to analyze and discern where God is calling Knox to be, pray for patience. They will be working diligently and intentionally. They will be mindful of the need for observations and conclusions, but at the same time good work takes time.

What kind of time, you might ask? The goal is for the Transition Team to work with the congregation this spring and work analyzing and writing this summer. We anticipate September will bring not only a new program year, but conversations about the report the team has written and what it means for Knox. Once a report has been shared, accepted by Session and approved by the Committee on Ministry for Heartland Presbytery, a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) can be formed. Equipped with the work of the Transition Team, the PNC can set out to write the church’s resume and begin looking at candidates.

Wondering what is going on? A lot. The Spirit is moving among Knox, inspiring, nudging, convicting, nurturing, caring and moving you forward. Thanks be to God!