Commissioned by the Conference Council on January 11, 2014, the Designated Conference Minister Search Team is made up of nine individuals, three from each Association, with intentionality to represent as much diversity as possible. Having met three times since our commissioning, and communicating via email in between meetings, our Team has developed (and continues to further develop) a pretty fantastic sense of collegiality, respect, and openness. We have a spirit of creativity, grace, and excitement about what could yet be moving among us, and, while taking very seriously the immense task before us, laughter and joy are not foreign concepts to us.

Since January, we have been gathering documents and information to familiarize ourselves with the process of searching for and calling a DCM. We have been in communication with the Vision Team, with Conference staff, and with National staff as we discern, together, what the future of our Conference will look like. We have begun to construct our Conference Profile and will soon be creating a job description. Once those documents are finalized, they will be carefully discussed and approved by the Conference Council and then sent to our National Office, where the position opening will be posted. Once posted, candidates may submit applications and ministerial profiles to a box at the National Office for an initial vetting process. All applications will remain open to our Team’s review for the duration of our search. Our Team will review profiles, conduct interviews, and, by consensus, recommend a candidate to the Conference Council, who, upon approval, will bring that candidate to a Conference-wide gathering for a vote. We are unsure, as in the search process of a local church, what exactly our timeline will be, but we are committed to serve on the Conference’s behalf until the best candidate for this position is found. As we serve as pioneers into this uncharted territory (the future of our Conference), with a map that’s still being created (we’re among the first to search for a DCM), we are excited about the possibilities ahead of us, and hope you are too!

Our next conference minister will not be your "mother's conference minister." In other words we will be looking for someone with a set of skills to take us into the future. As you know from listening meetings and visioning meetings, we are trying to figure out just how we are going to be a conference. So the new Designated Conference Minister (DCM) will need to be someone who can live into our new ideas for the conference.

Since the Visioning Team has not completed its work yet, we are going to be looking for a person who is flexible and will be able join with the Missouri Mid South Conference team whatever it looks like. This person needs to be a convener, collaborator and visionary consensus-builder who can bring together all the diverse aspects of our conference. The new DCM needs to be dynamic with the ability to encourage other people in their endeavors, and share our excitement in creating a new open-ended story for our conference. Since we have not been through this process before, we have a great task before us. The search team is excited about the new process of selecting our DCM, and the possibilities it brings to our conference.

Our greatest resources in this search process are already present in this Conference – ***you!***

We are richly blessed in human and natural resources – capable and faithful lay leaders and pastors, many of whom are already networked in clusters, circles and working groups, quietly carrying out examples of boots-on-the-ground gospel-tending; lush, fiscally-strengthened camps in MoVal and Shannondale; local churches in open country settings, living examples of resilient, joyful laboratories of love; urban congregations reinventing themselves for the *umteenth* time with clinics, food pantries, advocacy efforts and ecumenical/interfaith networking; suburban locations with an eye for new ways to open doors and re-imagine buildings and weekly schedules that breathe new life into congregational imaginations; institutional champions across the conference who serve to educate, empower, shelter and equip – colleges and a theological seminary, senior residential facilities, urban-centered agencies like Neighborhood Houses, complex, compassion-driven historic entities like ECH, Emmaus; the Deaconess Foundation which straddles the Mississippi, living strategically and innovatively into Jesus’ invitation to “let the children come unto me…..” What an incredibly deep, sprawling, exasperating, wounded still and yet wondrous, yearning-for-next-steps network we are in the Missouri Mid-South Conference! Come on, DCM, let’s go forward together!

C-16

Designated Conference Minister …….maybe we’ve already met you. Perhaps you’re just waiting for this profile to be submitted to Cleveland so you can toss your hat into the ring. Or possibly you don’t yet even know you’re looking to move – but something of the Holy Spirit will touch your heart, or you’ll get a quiet phone call or text message from someone in this room who will urge you to give us a look-see later this year. We’ll get our stuff together, stay at the hip of the Vision Team, keep listening to our friends and colleagues across the Conference and then interview you and, we hope, a host of other intriguing people.

You’ll need to come among us as a work-in-progress with our hearts on our sleeves and our imaginations stoked! You’ll need to be a transformative person, who helps us shine and doesn’t need to be center stage. You’ll have to coax us to let go of our mother’s conference models and plan for our grandchildren’s -- the pieces of which are already here and need tending, training and authorizing. We can’t go back to the staff-dependent models of the past, so you’ve got to be a networker, a vision implementer, a cheerleader and change agent, a listener, synthesizer and a lover of us as we are – and for who we can become on your watch.

We really want to be loved. If you, DCM, do that from your storehouse of resilient, deep faith, commitment to Jesus, love of the United Church Christ, your keen interest in transformative models and regional inclinations of a 21st century witness, a kind of nerdy knowledge of new technologies as necessary tools to cut down on windshield time, all the while, being a peer among us even as you lead - then we’ll be ready to welcome and work with you.

So come, Holy Spirit. This beloved, heartland people has the porch light on and the door ajar.

 *~prepared and delivered at CAG by Laura Mignerone, Linda Stenger and David Mehl*

**DCM Search Team Email:** **MMSDCMSearchTeam@gmail.com**

C-17