

Ottawa Presbytery Pastoral Relations Ministry Team

Could members of the Ministry & Personnel Committee be members of a Joint Search Committee (JSC)?

The 2007 *Handbook for Joint Search Committees* (page 11) contained numerous directions regarding the composition of the JSC. Included in the list of eight considerations were: representatives must be full members; and representatives reflect the various areas of the life and work of the pastoral charge: committees or groups, age, gender, and involvement in the pastoral charge. The *Handbook* also stated that “No incumbent ministers or other staff or their families can be appointed to the Joint Search Committee”. Finally, the *Handbook* stated that “The Ministry and Personnel Committee *cannot* replace the Joint Search Committee in the event of a change in the pastoral relationship or a vacancy”. The 2007 *Handbook* also refers to the M&P Committee during the step of negotiating the terms of the call or appointment with one applicant – “The chair of the JSC may wish to let the Finance Committee or the Ministry and Personnel Committee know that the decision and the offer will be made soon. Remember that confidentiality is essential – no names or personal details can be shared”.

The 2013 *Manual Resource – Pastoral Relations: Engaging and Supporting* is a much shorter document and does not contain a list of considerations when electing members of the JSC. It states: “The pastoral charge has the flexibility to elect the people it considers most suitable for its Joint Search Committee, whether full members, members or adherents”. The only restriction is that “The ministry personnel currently settled or appointed to the pastoral charge may not serve on the Joint Search Committee”. In a later section entitled “Best Practices for the Search Process” there are some further comments about JSC members, namely, that they should “reflect the demographics of the membership of the pastoral charge” and that lay employees of the pastoral charge and family member of ministry personnel should not be JSC members. There are no references to the Ministry & Personnel Committee.

In December 2013 and January 2014 the Pastoral Relations Ministry Team discussed whether members of the Ministry & Personnel Committee could be members of a Joint Search Committee. Those in favour noted that M&P members are likely to be more involved in the pastoral charge and more aware of what is happening. Furthermore, they have more expertise on practical matters such as salary guidelines, housing, moving expenses etc. and this knowledge is useful when the JSC negotiates terms. On the other hand, M&P members are more aware of what happened previously and may bring biases into the search process; this can be especially difficult in a multi-staff situation where the M&P Committee has on-going work with existing staff. In addition, M&P members may be too focused on the human resources aspects and not on the broader picture.

In January 2014 the Pastoral Relations Ministry Team concluded that members of the Ministry & Personnel Committee could be members of a Joint Search Committee (JSC).