

**John Calvin Presbytery  
Transition Process  
Led by Greg Emery**

The John Calvin Presbytery offers an innovative service that is open to all churches who find themselves in a state of “transition.” That transition may be a time between pastors, or may be a time to re-envision the future of the church to adapt to a quickly changing religious environment. Installed Pastors and Sessions are most welcome to participate in the process.

Greg Emery is retained by the Presbytery to work with individual churches, tailoring his “transition process” to their particular needs and timing. The church group may be the Session, Pastor Nominating Committee, or a special group assembled to lead visioning and strategy for the congregation. Greg asks that a point-person be provided by each church to streamline the communications.

The process typically begins with a Zoom presentation by Greg to introduce the process and the global issues facing the church, and for the church to describe their particular setting and goals. The church group is given “homework” to complete, individually and collectively, which includes selected readings, videos and analysis of the local church environment and culture.

The output of the process may be the preparation to search for the next pastor. If so, articulating a clear vision and thoroughly preparing for the search process is vital, as there is today a critical shortage of pastoral candidates. Many churches now skip the search for an “interim” pastor, as the shortage of those pastors is acute. The output from the process may also result in a new strategy that could include the possibility of a church merger or cooperative ministries with other congregations, the formation of a New Worshipping Community, or a new staffing model ... the historical “solo pastor” position is not the only option.

Process Stages:

- **Understanding the seismic shifts in American culture:** Demographics, attitudes and changes that have or will affect every church, particularly attitudes among younger generations toward Christianity.
- **Identifying local trends.** What are the characteristics and changes within the church’s market? What is the Presbyterian church known for? What is the church’s sense of mission? Name the sacred cows, traditions, dominant personalities.

- **Long term goals, dreams and vision.** How and why do churches successfully progress? Read, watch, study, research and put into context of the local congregation. Generate *specific, all-encompassing, sustainable* alternative paths.
- **Execution:** Embark on a pastoral search and/or new mission. Decide where to invest, risk, and sacrifice. Articulate the new mission, describe the life of the church, including worship, and gain congregational agreement.

Greg Emery has served as pastoral staff for multiple churches and has lead revitalization, merger and new mission initiatives in the PCUSA. In addition to working with JC Presbytery, he pastor's a congregation in Somerville, TN as a half-time Commissioned Ruling Elder, as well as serving as Scholar-in-Residence for Innovation at Lane College (HBCU).

Greg earned a master's degree in Theology and Christian Leadership from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, and holds an MBA from Arizona State University. He served as a chaplain at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis and worked in an orphanage in South Africa. Greg is also a cancer survivor.

Prior to attending seminary, Greg was an executive in the technology industry starting at IBM, managing two divisions of Sony Corp. and as head of international marketing and sales for a Fortune 500 Silicon Valley company. He further served as VP of Business Development for numerous start-up and turnaround ventures, traveling to forty countries and living in Europe.

Greg is married to Rev. Anne Emery, an honorably retired PCUSA pastor, who assists Greg in his consulting work. They reside in Brownsville, TN. Greg travels to John Calvin Presbytery twice annually.

Comments from three John Calvin Presbytery churches:

"Greg Emery has been, and continues to be, a "breath of fresh air" giving us feedback, ideas, and helping us revitalize our pastoral search and mission orientation. I have personally had over a dozen calls with him; he has visited our church twice, including taking the pulpit one Sunday.

Greg has worked with us as if we were his only client. While it might have been easy to assume all small churches are the same, Greg never did anything like that. We feel like his "only child;" one that he really has learned to know, understand, and appreciate. Even when we have not taken all of his suggestions, and we have not, he listened to our thoughts and discernments and accepted those. He has not only accepted our choices, but continues to work with our ideas."

*“We are extremely grateful that the presbytery decided to provide the Greg Emery Visioning Process to our churches in the John Calvin Presbytery. We gained tremendously in knowledge, relationship, and understanding of the challenges we face in Christian ministry, and we look forward to new valuable offerings from the presbytery that help us all, to do God’s work and stay relevant in our communities!”*

“Our Session went about the business of securing an interim. We were confident that we had secured an interim in record time, but that, unfortunately, was not the outcome. The task now seemed far more daunting than before.

Thankfully, Malinda (ever the observer, listener, and advocate) was sensing our discouragement. She shared with us information about the Transitional Ministry Process and Greg Emery. What a concept! And one that makes me once again feel very blessed to be part of a forward-thinking denomination. We were truly stepping out of the box to solve a problem or challenge to assist our churches with the pastoral call.

Greg’s Transitional Ministry Process is just that, a process. Greg was thorough and patient. An analogy from one of our PNC members I believe was spot-on. He tries to do what a therapist does: he leads you to your own decisions and he does not make them for you. In closing, our PNC developed a quick and positive rapport with Greg. We became an even stronger group under his tutelage, and we would not hesitate to recommend his guidance.”

Updated: February 2023