

Transition process

It greatly helps this transition process from one pastor to another if the steps can all be taken in order. Below is a suggested timeline for the various steps necessary to dismiss one pastor and obtain another.

- I. The departing pastor notifies the General Presbyter that he or she is going to resign. In the times that there is no General Presbyter the pastor should notify the COM chair or the COM consultant. That person should find out when this will be announced to the Session in order to facilitate having someone from COM at that meeting.

- II. The COM liaison attends the Session meeting at which notice of the resignation is given. That person should be prepared to offer assurance of COM assistance in the process going forward to the members of Session as they receive this information (typically it will come as a complete surprise.) He/she should also be prepared to answer immediate questions about what happens next.
 - A. Set a date for the congregational meeting to vote on dissolution. Notice must be given on two successive Sundays. The meeting may be convened following notice on the second Sunday.
 - B. Decide how to notify the congregation. Typically a letter from the pastor is sent immediately after the announcement to the Session. It includes information about what the departing pastor will be doing as well as appreciation of the people and ministries carried on during the pastor's tenure. This is also an opportunity to inform the congregation of ethics involved with the pastor's separation from the congregation.
 - C. Begin planning for a departure event to express appreciation for the departing pastor's ministry
 - D. The COM liaison should offer preliminary information about options for ongoing pastoral leadership, including Stated Supply, Temporary Supply, CLP and Interim pastor. This is not the time to make a decision.
 - E. The COM liaison should make a preliminary explanation about how to create a PNC. Remind the Session that they must have COM's permission to proceed with this step. The time required to receive this permission varies with the circumstances of the church in question. If there are issues to resolve, the time may be longer than the Session would expect. The request can be communicated to the COM through the COM liaison. Encourage the congregation's nominating committee to prepare a slate of nominees to be presented to the congregation for election to the PNC. This step is critical to

the success of the PNC so it would be good for the general presbyter or the COM liaison to meet with the nominating committee as they begin their work.

III. COM liaison should be present for the congregational meeting to vote for dissolution in order to answer questions from the congregation and assure them that presbytery will be helping with the process to find future pastoral leadership. Also give the congregation a short description of the process that will be followed and a general time line.

IV. Exit interviews

- A. COM liaison and another person from COM should conduct an exit interview with the departing pastor. The suggested questions are available in the COM Operations Manual.
- B. The COM liaison and another person from COM should attend the next meeting of the Session to conduct an exit interview with the Session. The suggested questions are available in the COM Operations Manual.

V. Between pastoral tenures

- A. Provide the approved pulpit supply list to the Session
- B. Resource the Session in conversations leading to a decision about what kind of pastoral leadership is needed for the church and the development of a position description for the temporary pastor. Considerations include whether it will be full or part time, whether a temporary supply, CLP or interim is preferred.
 - 1. Interim pastor – At this juncture consideration should be given to having an interim pastor prior to seeking a permanent pastor. It is preferable that an interim pastor has had intentional training for the tasks required of a Session and congregation between pastors and to prepare the way for calling and installing a permanent pastor. The rule of thumb for compensation is that the interim would be paid the same as the departing pastor was. Be aware that often interim pastors want to negotiate for higher compensation because of the tenuous nature of their ministries and the frequent need for times of unemployment between contracts. An interim pastor ordinarily would not be called as the new permanent pastor, but that is possible if the pastor enters their name for consideration by the PNC and the call is approved by a supermajority of the presbytery assembly. An interim pastor is a particularly good choice in a conflict situation. An interim is contracted with the Session for a one year period. This contract may be extended.

2. Stated Supply – primarily used in the case where a PNC will not be elected. This is a position contracted with the Session for a year at a time and may be extended indefinitely.
3. Temporary Supply – may be called as the new permanent pastor with a super-majority vote of the Presbytery assembly
4. Commissioned Lay Pastor – A CLP can be commissioned for any of the above pastoral relationships.

VI. Formation of the PNC with permission of COM

- A. The COM liaison should make every effort to be present for the first meeting of the PNC. Be prepared to do an overview of the process for seeking a new pastor. Leadership of the PNC should be decided at this meeting. A chairperson (contact person), secretary and perhaps a computer operator should be identified. The COM liaison should explain and distribute blank and sample completed Ministry Information Forms (MIFs) for review at the next meeting.

VI. Creation of the Ministry Information Form

- A. The writing process of the MIF, particularly the narrative portions, can be expedited by dividing up the rough draft writing responsibilities of the sections among the PNC members. Then the whole committee can make revisions. The image of the church can be communicated truthfully and positively through the answers to the questions that make up the MIF. The answers to the questions should identify the essential issues that the congregation faces. The answer to each narrative question is limited to 1500 characters – any more than that will not appear in the final product when posted on the church Connection web site.
- B. Ten ministry activities are chosen for primary matching by the computer system in Louisville. These should reflect the skill sets that the new pastor will need to effectively serve this congregation.
- C. Care should be taken in choosing references for the church. Some suggestions include the former pastor, neighboring pastors of both PCUSA and other denominations, and the COM liaison.
- D. Salary figures must comply with current presbytery policy for pastoral compensation as found in the Compensation and Benefits Manual. The figure on the MIF includes both salary and housing, but not other elements of the compensation package.
- D. When the MIF is complete it must be approved by both the Session and the transition chairperson of COM.

E. After approval of the MIF input codes for uploading the MIF into the General Assembly system should be obtained from the person designated for this task by COM. There are codes for the Clerk of Session and for the person entering the MIF into the system. The person entering the MIF data must use the code to enter the system. After the MIF is entered, the Clerk of Session will be contacted to enter the clerk's code to verify that the Session has approved the document. It is suggested that the person inputting the MIF choose a time when the whole document can be entered at one time. When the inputting is complete, the Moderator of COM must be notified so he or she can enter the Moderator's code to release the MIF for circulation.

VII. Selection process

- A. While the committee is awaiting the final preparation and upload of the MIF to the Church Leadership Connection (CLC) website, they may wish to have a practice session at reading Personal Information Forms (PIFs).
- B. When notification has been given of the successful upload of the MIF, the chair of the committee should request matches from the designated COM member for this task. The PNC should be advised that they will likely receive self-referrals as well. These are not processed through the CLC website, but sent directly by potential candidates to the PNC. Those persons are requested to send a copy of their PIF to the general presbyter or COM Moderator, but sometimes do not. The COM liaison should encourage the PNC to exercise extra caution with self-referrals as they present both opportunities and potential problems. Another potential source of applicants is our corresponding denominations. The forms coming from those sources vary in content from the PCUSA PIFs, but pastors are acceptable as candidates.
- C. The first step after receiving matched PIFs is for a designated committee member to contact each candidate to ascertain his or her interest in the position. Pastors matched through the computer system are not notified of the match.
- D. The PIFs of interested parties and all self-referrals should be distributed to the PNC members. The COM liaison should reinforce the need for confidentiality of any and all candidates.
- E. Some agreed system of ranking candidates should be developed by the PNC. (see examples)
- F. Communication with the candidates is very important. Each time they move from one stage of consideration to the next, or drop off the "interested" list, this should be communicated in a timely manner. Email is

appropriate for the early stages. It is suggested that form letters be developed to send at various stages of the process. (see examples)

- G. A flow chart is helpful in keeping track of each candidate's progress through the selection process. (see example)
- H. The first step beyond identified interest from reading the PIF is typically a request for a recorded sermon. Many candidates now put their sermons on their personal or church websites. It may be most helpful to have a video recording.
- I. The next step is to narrow the field to those with whom a phone or Skype interview is desired. It is recommended that the PNC identify questions they wish to ask candidates before any contacts are made. A typical interview is about an hour in length. PNCs should expect questions from pastors being interviewed and be sure to allow time for that to take place. The candidate should be informed of an approximate date when the PNC will provide feedback about the interview.
- J. The next step for the PNC is to contact references of those candidates they still have an interest in. It is suggested that these contacts be divided up among PNC members and then reports be made back to the committee as a whole. It is suggested that the same questions be asked about all candidates. Questions should be tied to church goals and needs.
- K. You want to know how the references experienced the pastor and in what role. Be sensitive to answers that raise questions for you and ask those questions in a tactful way. Suggestion: Contact the reference by email first to set up a time for a phone conversation.
- L. PNC referencing should ordinarily be done first before presbytery referencing. For any serious candidate a reference must be done by the general presbyter. He or she needs to have a copy of the candidates' PIFs in order to formulate questions. Ordinarily this is the primary place the general presbyter enters the search process. That will be dependent on the preference of the general presbyter in place.
- M. In addition to the general presbyter reference a full background check must be done on any serious candidate before they come for an onsite interview. To accomplish this contact the presbytery staff person designated to this task with all contact information for any candidate to be checked. This takes from 1-3 weeks to complete. The cost of this background check is charged to the searching church (approximately \$100).
- N. Once clearance from the COM staff person has been received for the onsite interview, it may be scheduled. This visit includes an in depth interview with the candidate, a neutral pulpit, and a meeting with

representatives of the COM. This is often scheduled for a weekend but can be managed midweek with a little creative thinking. The COM liaison will arrange for a neutral pulpit at a nearby church of comparable size. This allows the PNC to hear the candidate to preach in a worship setting. It is not appropriate for the preaching to be done in the searching church or with other members of the searching church present. The searching church should expect to pay travel (either airfare or mileage) and hospitality expenses for any onsite interviews. The visit often includes the spouse of the candidate, but the spouse would not typically take part in the interviews. A PNC may expect to interview and have a neutral pulpit with three or four candidates before making a recommendation. Be sure to give the candidate an idea of when they will hear again from you before they leave the community. This is a critical step and is often the point at which candidates measure the hospitality level of a congregation. Keep your word. If you are scheduling others for onsite interviews, it is appropriate to be open about that in order to explain a delay.

- O. It is now time to identify the candidate that the PNC wishes to present to the congregation for election as pastor. It is not required for the PNC to be unanimous in its choice, but there should be a strong consensus among the members.
- P. The terms of call can then be negotiated using the COM guidelines. For a new pastor who has not previously served a congregation, be sure to discuss and check contract form for new pastor group participation. Four original copies of the terms of call for a pastor must be prepared for signature at the congregational meeting. All four copies are delivered to the Stated Clerk of the presbytery following the congregational meeting. The Clerk will distribute the copies to the appropriate parties.
- Q. Once a candidate has been named, the PNC asks the Session to schedule a congregational meeting with at least two week's notice. It is expected that the candidate will lead worship for the congregation that morning. It is also encouraged to offer different opportunities for members of the congregation and staff to meet the candidate before and after the voting. An approved person (pastor, CLP, member of COM) must moderate the congregational meeting and if at all possible the COM liaison should be present to answer questions for members of the congregation.
- R. *The terms of call/contract need to be approved by the COM following the action of the congregation. A report of how the Equal Opportunity requirements were met should also be submitted at this time to the COM.***

- S. The chair of the PNC should notify the Church Leadership Connection following the congregational meeting that the church is no longer seeking a pastor.**
- T. Shortly after the arrival of the new pastor, he/she should contact the presbytery moderator to schedule a service of ordination/installation. Members of the commission to install must be approved by the COM. The offering received at the ordination/installation service is designated to the presbytery John D. McCann fund for seminary student assistance.
- U. In the event that the incoming pastor is coming from another presbytery, a neighboring pastor should be appointed by COM to serve as a liaison to that pastor for the first months of his/her tenure to assist in orienting him/her to the presbytery culture.**

Note: Paragraphs R, S, and U are recent additions that have not been presented to COM for approval