

The Pastor Search Process

Everything you wanted to know about
calling a new pastor,
but were afraid to ask.



The Pastor Search Process

*“Isn’t this just
church language
for a personnel search?”*

The Pastor Search Process

No.

*Calling a Pastor involves a
spiritual discernment process.*

The Pastor Search Process

*There is no need for the
congregation to panic.*

*This can be the most exciting
spiritual journey a church can
embark upon.*

The Pastor Search Process

PNC - Pastor Nominating Commission

COM - Committee on Ministry

MIF - Ministry Information Form

PIF - Personal Information Form

How it Begins

- ***FIRST***

When the session of a congregation learns of an upcoming vacancy in a pastoral position, that news must be communicated to the Executive Presbyter or the moderator of the COM.

How it Begins

- ***NEXT***

The Presbytery, through the COM, will appoint a moderator of session and will guide the congregation in filling the vacancy.

How it Begins

- ***THEN***

Member(s) of the COM are appointed to serve as Liaison(s) to work with the Session, and the congregation, but especially the PNC.

How it Begins

- *The Liaisons will conduct an exit interview with the departing pastor*

How it Begins

- A COM Liaison, or a representative of the COM, should attend the last worship service of the outgoing pastor and declare the pastoral relationship dissolved.

The liturgy can be found in the Book of Occasional Services

The PRM liaison, working with session will:

**1. Identify the presbytery
appointed moderator**

**2. Explain the process and the
role of the session, PNC and COM**

**3. Explain nomination and
election of PNC**

How it Begins

Discuss the hiring of an interim minister for the transitional period



The need to pay vacancy dues



The potential need to do a mission study



Discuss setting a budget for PNC



Discuss compensation and range of terms of call for new pastoral leadership

How it Begins

Other things for the session to consider



Repair/Remodel
the Manse



Repair/Remodel
the Office



Changes in
Church Staff

How it Begins

When the COM grants permission



A congregational meeting is called.



Nominations Committee process.



A PNC is elected

Pastor Nominating Committee

- Elects Chairperson and Clerk
- Determines how often they will meet
- Decides how their decisions will be made
- By simple Majority or Unanimous Vote

Pastor Nominating Committee

Begins work on the

MINISTRY INFORMATION FORM

MIF

It is like a job description plus a church's theological identity, plans and hopes for the future in Jesus Christ.

Writing the MIF

- Be frank, open and genuine
- Consider how your MIF will be read by potential candidates
- This is an opportunity to brag on the church
- MIF must be approved by the COM
- MIF must be approved by the session

Posting the MIF Online

- Once approved, the COM will provide a login and password for online access for the:
 - PNC Chairperson
 - Clerk of Session
- Once the MIF is on-line, the Executive Presbyter will schedule an initial match.

Receiving Personal Information Forms

PIF

Personal Information Forms may be received

- It is like a resume plus a faith statement
- Through the computerized matching process from Church Leadership Connection (CLC)
- Potential candidates may self-refer

Receiving Personal Information Forms

And Remember,

CONFIDENTIALITY!

Receiving Personal Information Forms

- After the MIF is online and the initial match is made, PIFs will show up in moderators' email to be distributed to the PNC
- Every member of the PNC should read each PIF carefully
- A process of prioritization or a ranking system needs to be determined in order to narrow the list
- Decide how you will respond to applicants

Contacting the Candidate

- The PNC may call the prospective candidate and ask
 - If they are still seeking a call
 - Would they be interested in receiving further information and a copy of your MIF
 - Would they send you a tape or video of a sermon
- The members of the PNC should then begin calling ALL references listed on the PIF under review

Contacting References

- Call at a convenient time
- Have your questions prepared
- Introduce yourself and explain what the call is about
- Ask if this is a good time to talk. If not, then when would be a good time?
- Take notes
- Thank them for taking the time to talk

Contacting References

You may not ask the reference to suggest names of any Secondary References without the candidate's permission!

Under no circumstances are you to contact members of a pastor's present congregation without her/his permission to do so!

Contacting References

After CHECKING REFERENCES the PNC may continue to communicate with the candidate in a variety of ways:

- Telephone conversations
- Conference Calls/Zoom/FaceTime
- Letters or Email

Contacting the Candidate

Conversations will continue with potential candidates, as the list of those you are interested in is narrowed down.

It is advised to narrow your list down to

3 or 4 people at the

TOP OF THE LIST

and seek to discern how God is moving you toward a particular candidate.

Contacting References

Then contact the Presbytery office with the candidate's name's and home presbytery and...

if you decide to invite the candidate(s) to your community for a face-to-face visit

contact the Executive Presbyter or the COM liaison with date and time of visit.

Remember . . .

*“ . . . All things should be
done decently and in
order.”*

1 Corinthians 14:40

Reference Checks at the Presbytery Level

Once the field of names has been narrowed the Executive Presbyter will:

- Contact the COM moderator or Executive Presbyter of the candidate's presbytery for reference before any visit is planned

AND:

- Executive Presbytery, on behalf of the Presbytery addresses the PNC
 - Merit, Suitability and Availability of the Candidate

Reference Checks at the Presbytery Level

If the person being considered
is a candidate for ordination
under the care of a
Preparation for Ministry Committee
of another presbytery,
the Executive Presbyter will consult with that
committee

Face-to-Face Visit

When a candidate comes to visit with the church's PNC, **two things** will be scheduled:

Face-to-Face Visit

First, the PNC will meet with the candidate and

- **Show them the church**
- **Show them around town/community schools, homes, places of interest**
- **Have an in-depth conversation about the church and the terms of call**
(spouse may be invited)

Face-to-Face Visit

SECOND, while the candidate is in town a small group of COM members will meet with and examine the candidate in the areas of:

- Their “Fit” with the congregation
- Their sense of Call
- Their style of worship and leadership

Face-to-Face Visit

At this meeting, the candidate may also be examined for membership in the presbytery and may be asked questions in the area of their faith journey, and as well also, in the areas of:

- Theology
- Worship & Sacraments
- Presbyterian Polity

Face-to-Face Visit

If the PNC would like to hear the pastoral candidate preach, they may ask for assistance from the COM and the COM liaison can arrange for the candidate to preach at a neutral pulpit or an empty church pulpit.

Basic Call Process Flow

1. The congregation meets and votes to extend a call to the minister.
2. The presbytery of call reviews and approves call.
3. The minister's presbytery of membership releases the minister to accept the call.
4. The minister accepts the call.

Annotated Call Process Flow

Before the congregational meeting is called by the session

- the CoM's liaison to the pastor nominating committee will have worked with the executive presbyter to get the minister's background check and will have worked with the PNC and the minister regarding terms of call;
- the Area Team will have conducted the "fit" interview and the examination for presbytery membership, given its feedback and permission to the PNC to proceed with the call (note attached *Guidelines for Examination and Fit Interview* as to whether the Area Team will complete this step of the process or make a referral to the full CoM);
- the session moderator will see to it that there will be a moderator for the congregational meeting.

Annotated Call Process Flow

After the congregational meeting has issued a call

- the Area Team will present its recommendation and the signed call papers to the CoM for its action;
- the Area Team will recommend to CoM a commission for ordination and/or installation;
- the Area Team will recommend to CoM a colleague-in-ministry for the new minister;
- the stated clerk will transmit the completed call form to the appropriate parties.

Annotated Call Process Flow

This is the normative flow and sequence of events. There are probable exceptions to this flow due to timing and distance, such as:

- the CoM may have approved the call and membership in presbytery “pending the positive action of the congregation” prior to the congregational meeting;
- the minister may or may not have preached and led worship in the calling congregation, and if there is a “candidating” sermon the congregational vote may or may not occur on that same day.

Decision Time

- The PNC will request the Session to call a meeting of the congregation for the purpose of electing a Minister of Word and Sacrament
- Session will need to follow the church's requirements for calling this special meeting
- Confidentiality is still necessary at this stage. Most pastors do not announce their resignation until they have an affirmative vote from the new congregation.

Decision Time

Once the Congregation has voted and the call has been accepted plans for an Installation Service are made

Installation Service

- The PNC needs to communicate with the COM through the liaison the date and time of the installation service

AND

- A list of names of participants for the commission to install the new pastor.

Guidelines are available from the COM

**And now enjoy the ministry
together.**

