

Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley

GUIDE FOR TRANSITIONS IN PASTORAL LEADERSHIP (9-2017)

Pastoral calls are three-way covenants between the pastor, the congregation, and the Presbytery through the Commission on Ministry.

This Policy pertains to calls for teaching elders to be ordained/installed to a particular church or churches and to those in temporary non-installed relationships. (G-2.0504a,b,c) of the Book of Order.

Other pastoral relationships are defined in G-2.1001, G-2.0505 and G-2.0506 of the Book of Order and are approved by the Commission on Ministry. (SR-6.0302g,h,k,o)

A call to a teaching elder is confirmed through action of the Presbytery. The teaching elder is accountable to Presbytery and therefore no pastoral relationship may be established, changed, or dissolved without approval of the Presbytery.

When a congregation has a vacancy in a pastoral position, or after the Presbytery approves the effective date of the dissolution of an existing pastoral relationship, the congregation shall, with the guidance and permission of the presbytery, proceed to fill the vacancy by election of a Pastoral Nominating Committee. (G-2.0801, G-2.0802) In accordance with this guidance through the COM, the work of the PNC should not begin until after the effective date of the dissolution except in the case of retirement.

According to the process of the Presbytery and prior to making its report to the congregation, the pastor nominating committee shall receive and consider the Presbytery's counsel on the merits, suitability, and availability of those considered for the call. (G-2.0803)

According to SR-6.060302f,g, the Commission on Ministry is to "Counsel with churches regarding calls for permanent and temporary pastoral relations." In this connection, the call process as outlined below is to be followed by each Church Session and Pastor Nominating Committee.

1. A departing pastor should notify the chair of the COM and the General Presbyter before making an announcement to the session. After notification, the COM Chair will assign a trained liaison if one is not already designated. If the dissolution is an associate pastor, the pastor should be notified prior to notifying the session and the congregation. If the departing pastor is a temporary supply, the Moderator of the COM should be notified as to the circumstances of his/her leaving.
2. The liaison will meet with the session to:
 - a. Schedule a congregational meeting to dissolve the pastoral relationship;
 - b. Schedule exit interviews with the departing pastor and the session, and provide each with copies of the COM's Separation Ethics Policy;
 - c. Determine the congregation's immediate need for temporary pastoral leadership, and provide the pulpit supply list approved by COM;
 - d. Inform the session on payment of vacancy dues to the Board of Pensions;
 - e. Request the COM appoint a session moderator;
 - f. Give guidance on the election of the Pastor Nominating Committee ("PNC").

3. A congregational meeting is held to dissolve the pastoral relationship. The moderator for this meeting shall be someone other than the person whose relationship is being dissolved. This could be any minister member of this Presbytery or a person authorized by the COM (G-1.0504). In any case, a liaison should be present. The COM approves the dissolution and dismisses the pastor to new work or approves a request for honorably retired status, etc., with all necessary information provided at the next stated meeting of Presbytery.
4. If the decision is made to use a temporary pastor, the session creates and approves a position description, which includes the compensation range. A copy is provided to the liaison, who forwards the information to the Moderator of COM and Stated Clerk. The session elects a search committee for the temporary pastor.
5. The Temporary Pastor Search Committee conducts an open search for at least 30 days with notice made through the Presbytery newsletter and other media. The committee presents the name of the candidate and the contract to the session for approval and with a copy to the liaison.
6. If the candidate is not a member of the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley, the following occur:
 - a. A Presbytery to Presbytery check is made by the General Presbyter;
 - b. A background check is run by the Stated Clerk;
 - c. If the candidate is not a member of the Presbyterian Church (USA), a letter from the ordaining body indicating the person is in good standing shall be delivered to the Stated Clerk and the COM.
7. The candidate, including those who are members of PSL, will:
 - a. Participate in a “goodness of fit” interview with members of COM to assess suitability for ministry in this setting;
 - b. Approve the terms of the temporary contract;
 - c. Be approved by the COM to be the moderator of the session.
8. The liaison notifies the session of the action of the COM regarding the contract and suitability of the candidate.
9. The temporary pastor begins ministry with the congregation.
10. If applicable to the vacancy, the session calls a congregational meeting to elect a Pastor Nominating Committee (“PNC”) in a manner similar to election of elders. The liaison shall be present. Names and contact information of the PNC are given to the liaison and reported at the next COM meeting.
11. The first meeting of the Pastor Nominating Committee shall include the liaison to:
 - a. Discuss the partnership between the church, the Presbytery, and the liaison, including the need to report to the liaison on a regular basis;

- b. Discuss the need for a congregational mission study and decide if the session needs to approve such; models for mission study are available from the General Presbyter.
 - c. Election of the PNC chair and secretary;
 - d. Discuss confidentiality and the independence of the PNC as it relates to the session, to the interim, and to the congregation;
 - e. Train the PNC regarding the Ministry Information Form ("MIF"), interviews, record-keeping, guidelines for pastoral compensation, and the PC(USA) policy on equal employment policy. A packet of information shall be provided to the PNC.
- 12. Should the PNC make the decision not to follow the Church Leadership matching process of posting their Church Information Form on line, or candidates are secured from other sources, the name of any candidate being considered should be provided to their PNC liaison to secure a Presbytery Executive check prior to any interview with the proposed candidate.
 - a. This is to insure that the candidate is available for release, there are no charges pending, or other prohibitive issues involved.
 - b. This first step is not necessary for candidates in the CLC system as this is attested to on the Minister Information Form (MIP) the candidate has filed.
- 13. The MIF is prepared, approved by the PNC, and forwarded to the session for approval. The MIF is attested by the PNC chair and the clerk of session. The MIF is forwarded to the liaison for approval in a meeting by the COM. After approval by the COM, the PNC submits the MIF electronically to the PC(USA) Church Leadership Connection ("CLC") for matching with possible candidates. The COM or General Presbyter will provide the login and password information needed by the PNC chair and Clerk of Session to submit the MIF on-line.
- 14. Personal Information Forms ("PIFs") are received, organized and evaluated by the PNC. Candidates that the PNC have an interest in are contacted to see if the candidate has an interest in the congregation. These contacts may be made over the telephone or visual conferences.
- 15. When the PNC has determined the candidate(s) they wish to interview in person, the PNC submits the names of the candidate(s) and their PIFs to the liaison. The liaison contacts the General Presbyter for a Presbytery-to- Presbytery check. A copy of the PIF is required for this check. Recommendations for clearance will be answered in one of the following ways:
 - a. Proceed to contact the candidate(s).
 - b. Do not proceed to contact the candidate(s).
- 16. If the position is for an associate pastor, the pastor of the church shall be consulted during the process.
- 17. If the potential applicant lives within driving distance, then the following activities might be scheduled at different times. If they are coming from a further distance, a weekend visit is usually arranged. If this is one of the final candidates, then the visit often includes the spouse, if there is one. During this visit,
 - a. Schedule a tour of your church facility,
 - b. Arrange for interviews and social times with the PNC,

- c. Allow for ample time to explore the area and to rest.
 - d. Arrange for a neutral pulpit site, if the PNC wishes to experience how the applicant leads worship.
- 18. When the PNC indicates to the candidate a desire to extend a call, and the candidate indicates a willingness to accept, the terms of call are negotiated. A background check must be completed by the Stated Clerk. The PNC will provide the Stated Clerk with contact information (email) so that the background check forms and information can be provided to the candidate. The Stated Clerk will notify the liaison when the background check is complete.
- 19. The PNC provides the terms of call to the COM chair, and a “goodness of fit” examination with members of COM to assess suitability for ministry in this setting is scheduled if it has not already happened. The COM acts to approve / disapprove the examination and the terms of call.
- 20. Upon COM approval, the PNC requests that the session call a congregational meeting to approve the call to the candidate. A liaison shall attend the congregational meeting. The Congregational Meeting is held:
 - a. to approve the call (voting is by ballot);
 - b. persons (PNC members) are designated to sign the call; and
 - c. the PNC is dismissed with thanks
- 21. The candidate will be examined for membership by the Presbytery at the next meeting of Presbytery, and may be given permission to move on the field after being approved by the COM for membership. All four original signed copies of the call form are sent to the Stated Clerk before the Presbytery meeting.
- 22. The candidate shall plan with the Moderator of the Presbytery the date and time of an ordination/ installation service. The candidate will provide the Moderator of COM with that information and the names of persons to serve on the commission to ordain/install at least two weeks before the Presbytery meeting, so that information appears in the report of the COM Moderator to the Presbytery. The membership of the commission should be balanced between teaching elders and ruling elders, and should not all be from the same race or ethnicity or from the same church. Guests may be invited to participate in the service. Ordinarily, the service is held on a Sunday afternoon so that teaching and ruling elders from across the Presbytery may be present.
- 23. The ordination/installation service is held. The commission should elect a secretary who will record the membership of the commission, that the service was held, and send a report to the Stated Clerk for receipt at the next Presbytery meeting.