

Pastoral Transition Support Team/Liaison Presbytery of New Covenant

A COM Liaison serves as a presbytery resource to the Pastor Nominating Committee, session and congregation in churches seeking a pastoral call. This person is appointed by and accountable to the Commission on Ministry (COM) of the Presbytery of New Covenant.

Purpose of the Team

To accommodate the unique needs of each congregation and its ministry, offer consistency of support throughout the transition period, and build the relationship between the congregation and presbytery.

Members of the Team

The Transition Team is generally made up of at least one Ruling Elder and one Teaching Elder, with additional members as appropriate, assigned by the Committee on Ministry. Special care to the unique needs of the congregation will be considered when assigning team members, including size of the congregation, cultural sensitivity and language/translation concerns.

Responsibilities of the Liaison/Transition Team

When the pastor leaves

Upon the announcement of the pastor's request for dissolution of the call, the COM- appointed Liaison/Team will meet with the session to explain the transition process, as well as the role and responsibilities of the PNC and liaison. The Liaison/Team will assure the session that the presbytery is there to support their ministry and guide the process to move as timely, smoothly, and faithfully as possible. The liaison will distribute relevant information to the Pastor and Session ([e.g. Termination Agreement forms, Separation Ethics information both can be found here](#))

If possible, the Liaison or other member of the Transition Team should be present at the congregational meeting called for action on the dissolution of the pastoral relationship. A Teaching Elder team member may moderate the meeting. Minutes of this meeting should be sent to the Coordinator of COM/CPM immediately following the meeting. COM is authorized to act on behalf of the presbytery, and will vote to dissolve the pastoral relationship.

The Liaison/Team will meet with the pastor before she/he leaves and conduct an exit interview. Separation ethics, blessings and challenges of the congregation, and other pastoral concerns should be discussed. The Transition Team will also remind the pastor to notify the PCUSA and Board of Pensions of the transition.

Conduct an exit interview with the Session after the Pastor departs. Separation Ethics, blessings of the previous pastor and challenges for the future should be discussed.

During the Transition Period

Moderator

Ordinarily a Teaching Elder member of the team will serve as moderator of the session until an interim pastor is in place or until an installed/designated pastor begins his/her call. If the Liaison is not able to moderate, a moderator will be appointed by COM. The Moderator will work with the session to develop the mission study.

Congregational Assessment

The Liaison/Team may guide the session and/or congregation through a period of self-assessment in order to 1) discern the type of pastoral leadership which would best serve the congregation, and 2) prepare the

background material the PNC and Session can use in preparing and approving the Ministry Discernment Profile on the [Church Leadership Connection \(CLC\)](#) website. A consultant from the presbytery may be called in for this task if desired.

The Team will resource the Session as it decides among the options for on-going pastoral leadership: pulpit supply, temporary supply, interim pastor/associate pastor, designated pastor/associate pastor, called pastor/associate pastor, commissioned lay pastor, Christian Educator or other church professional.

The Liaison will keep the COM informed of the PNC's progress

Pastor Nominating Committee

If the session decides to proceed with a called pastor position, the Liaison/Transition Team will instruct the Session to submit a request in writing to COM for permission for the congregation to elect a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC)

If possible, at least one member of the Team may attend the meeting of the congregation when the PNC is elected. The Team member may speak briefly to the process, the responsibilities of the PNC, the relationship of the PNC to the congregation, and secure the commitment of the congregation to instruct the PNC to follow AA/EEO process (a vote of the congregation to be recorded in the minutes)

The Liaison will provide support, advice and counsel to the Pastor Nominating Committee as outlined in the PNC Packet, including the following:

- Training the committee in procedures,
- Using the Church Leadership Connection ([find CLC training video here](#))
- Writing the Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP) using the mission study as a guide
- Assisting the PNC and session to establish a budget (including postage, paper supplies, travel for the committee, travel for candidates, interviewing expenses, advertising expenses, moving expenses for pastor-elect and family).
- Reviewing Personal Discernment Profiles (PDP)
- Checking references
- Interviewing candidates
- Assisting the PNC to establish procedures and expectations for the committee regarding meeting dates and frequency, communication, confidentiality, voting and decision making, and the need for prayerful discernment.
- Assisting the PNC to follow presbytery and constitutional requirements in the search process by explaining and interpreting the requirements and reminding them to get presbytery approval at the appropriate times.
- If possible, attend the congregational meeting at which the candidate is called to the congregation.

When the New Pastor Arrives

Assist the new pastor with the scheduling of her/his installation and the recruitment of the installation commission as needed and desired by the new pastor.

Schedule Fast-Trac to be done 6-9 months from the start of the new call. Ordinarily Fast-Trac will not be conducted by the transition team. The Transition Team's work is done when Fast-Trac is completed.

COM Support

There may be situations that arise where additional support is needed. COM might be contacted if the Liaison/Team are confronted with any of the following: Systemic issues relating to pastoral transition, identifying problems/challenges that need intervention or support or consultation beyond the transition team (conflict, sexual abuse, etc.), Options for pastoral leadership other than permanent installed Board of Pensions requirements for congregations in transition.

Chuck's Best Practices for Transition Liaisons

Chuck's Helpful Hints for Liaisons/Transition Teams

These suggestions are items compiled by long time Liaison, Chuck Johnson

Some steps are skipped depending on type of call i.e. (designated, called, associate, interim)

Things to remember:

- ALL PNC MEMBERS MUST review [“The PNC Packet” on the website](#) (Session might want to as well)
- There are NO shortcuts
- Always work with your liaison
- You are making a 12-18 month commitment (average);
- Do your own study – do not depend on hand holding – your liaison is not a member of the PNC
- Pray and study intentionally – you have been called by your church to discern God's will for the Body
- All meetings begin with a devotional and sharing
- This affects your whole family at home – tell them this – but do not break confidence
- Commit to face to face meetings of the PNC (cancel meetings if 1,2 are absent; you set the minimum)
- Meet weekly – allow zoom/conference calls as needed for quick decisions. There will be some breaks.
- Some may NOT know all the other PNC members. Schedule a mixer and include ice breaker questions.
- Session determines path/position. Note: Only the congregation can create a new position.
- Session sets budgets for PNC expenses (see New Covenant) and position being sought.
- PNC is elected by congregation and is responsible to the congregation.
- Assign duties to all members if possible... mod, clerk, data collection, communicator, letter writing, quartermaster (use of DropBox is a good idea for PNC members ONLY!)
- Session can write mission statement – it can be assigned to the PNC
- Complete MDP – it is intended to whet appetites – it is NOT comprehensive (1500 character limits apply)
- Submit MDP for session approval; then to COM for approval
- Make yourself attractive on your web site, and make sure website is up to date
- It's important for all members of PNC to be on the same page. If problems arise, work with liaison.
- Use every resource available to advertise and seek congregation referrals regularly – many calls have come from the Body!
- One member makes all non-CLC contacts, this can be the moderator – No PDP can be dangerous – ask liaison for guidelines
- Congregations, sessions, AND staff will become anxious about 10 months after position was vacated. ---
- Address all concerns immediately – may need updates more often - seek help from liaison
- Develop written guidelines for PDP reviews
- All members should rank and compare notes
- Use a ranking system based on MDP choices (no, yes, or STRONG maybe) (Note: you are NOT grading folks on their spirituality – only for suitability)
- Do not narrow choices too soon
- NON-CLC computer matches should receive an immediate/short “your PDP has been received” acknowledgement – important! Do not make any commitments at this time.
- Casual contact allowed seeking more info (phone/zoom) NO terms of call may be discussed
- Develop list of questions that EVERY candidate answers
- Follow up questions may be asked. Keep liaison informed.
- PNC knows/agrees on answers to ALL questions where appropriate
- Ready for serious contact: Submit a short list – no more than 5 for COM to make reference checks
- Schedule zoom/phone then face to face interviews, include significant others
- Negotiate the call – inform COM and session – session approves terms - session calls congregational meeting for vote
- Your job is done once the Fast Trac Assessment is completed