Pastoral Transition Support Team

Committee on Ministry, Presbytery of New Covenant

Purpose of the Team

The purpose of the COM Transition Team is to provide guidance and support to a congregation during a time of pastoral transition from the moment we learn of a pastor leaving through the arrival of new pastoral leadership and Fast-Trac. The primary foci of the team are: 1) accommodating the unique needs of each congregation and its ministry, 2) offering consistency of support throughout the transition period, and 3) building the relationship between the congregation and presbytery. The Transition Team will help the congregation through the process of discerning new pastoral leadership in a timely manner, and will recommend other resources the presbytery offers as needed.

Members of the Team

The Transition Team will be made up of at least one Ruling Elder and one Teaching Elder, with additional members as appropriate, assigned by the Congregational Life Committee of the Committee on Ministry. All members of the transition team will have been trained by the COM on matters pertaining to transition, resources available through the presbytery and the denomination, and their role and responsibilities to the other team members, congregation, and presbytery. 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.

Transition Team members will be recruited and trained regularly, so there is an on-going pool of trained volunteers ready to be assigned to a congregation as soon as the presbytery is aware of a pastoral transition. Members of COM, former members of COM, as well as elders with experience on Pastoral Nominating Committees could be excellent transition team members.

Responsibilities of the Team

When the Pastor Leaves

- Upon the announcement of the pastor's request for dissolution of the call, the team will meet with the session to explain the transition process, as well as the role and responsibilities of the Transition Team. The 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 Transition Team will distribute relevant information to the Pastor and Session (e.g. Termination Agreement forms, Separation Ethics information, etc.)
- At least one member of the team should be present at the congregational meeting called for action on the dissolution of the pastoral relationship. The Teaching Elder team member could moderate the meeting. The TE or RE would be present to assure the congregation that the presbytery is there to walk with them, encourage them, and support them through the transition process. Minutes of this meeting must 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 Transition 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 the TE 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.

Communication

- The team will remain in communication with the session and congregation throughout the transition period, attending session meetings and visiting worship at least quarterly.
- If the congregation opts for an interim pastor, the transition team will be in regular communication with the interim pastor, receiving written reports from her/him on the progress of interim tasks at least quarterly.

Congregational Assessment

- The 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 Church Information Form. A consultant from the presbytery or other organization 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. If appropriate, the team may offer the congregation support from COM, the Evangelism/Renewal committee, or other consultants in discerning long term strategies for the congregation.

Pastor Nominating Committee[1]

- If the session decides to proceed with a called pastor position, the 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)

[1] Or Associate Pastor Nominating Committee or Designated Pastor Nominating Committee. All future references to PNC refer, as well, to APNC or DPNC

- At least one member of the team will provide support, advice and counsel to the Pastor Nominating Committee as outlined in the PNC Guidelines. Including the following:
  - Training the committee in procedures, using the Church Leadership Connection, writing a Church Information Form (CIF), reviewing Personal Information forms (PIF's), checking references, and interviewing
  - Assisting the PNC 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). The budget needs to be approved by the session.
  - 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 during the second quarter of the new call. Ordinarily Fast-Trac will be conducted by the transition team.
- The Transition Team's work is done when Fast-Trac is completed.

Accountability of the Team

The work of the Transition Team is overseen and supported by the Congregational Life Committee of the Committee on Ministry. The transition team shall email regular reports to the subcommittee including the challenges and joys of the congregation in transition as well as requests for any further help from the presbytery, presbytery staff, or others. A brief verbal report may also be necessary.

The transition team members will also attend ongoing training/peer support meetings.

Training of the Team

The Congregational Life Committee of the Committee on Ministry will provide initial training for all transition team members on the following topics:

- Responsibilities and Expectations of the Transition Team members
- 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
- Resources available through the presbytery
- Board of Pensions requirements for congregations in transition

On-going training and peer support meetings will also be conducted for all trained transition team members. These meetings are mandatory for teams that are actively involved with a congregation.