

**PRESBYTERY OF NEW COVENANT  
ROLE OF THE PASTOR NOMINATING COMMITTEE (PNC)**

The Pastor Nominating Committee, a committee elected by the Congregation, is probably the most important committee that ever serves in a particular church. The action of the PNC, in nominating a Pastor, Co-Pastor or Associate Pastor to a congregation, is critical in the life of a church for many years. Notice what the Book of Order states about the PNC:

**G-2.0801      PASTORAL VACANCY**

When a congregation has a vacancy in a pastoral position, or after the presbytery approves the effective date of the dissolution on an existing pastoral relationship, the congregation shall, with the guidance and permission\* of the presbytery, proceed to fill the vacancy in the following manner.

**G-2.0802      ELECTION OF A PASTOR NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

The session shall call a congregational meeting to elect a pastor nominating committee that shall be representative of the whole congregation. The committee's duty shall be to nominate a pastor for the election by the congregation.

**G-2.0803      CALL PROCESS**

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. When the way is clear for the committee to report to the congregation, the committee shall notify the session, which shall call a congregational meeting.

**G-2.0804      TERMS OF CALL**

The terms of call shall always meet or exceed any minimum requirements of the presbytery in effect when the call is made. The session shall annually review the minister's terms of call and shall propose for congregational action (G-1.0501) such changes as the session deems appropriate, provided that they meet the presbytery's minimum requirements. The call shall include participation in the benefits plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), including both pension and medical coverage, or any successor plan approved by the General Assembly.

**G-2.0805      INSTALLATION SERVICE**

When the congregation, the presbytery, and the teaching elder (or candidate) have all concurred in a call to a permanent or designated pastoral position, the presbytery shall complete the call process by organizing and conducting a service of installation. Installation is an act of the presbytery establishing the pastoral relationship. A service of installation occurs in the context of worship. The order for that service of worship in the Directory for Worship (W-4.4000) shall be followed.

*\*The policy of the Presbytery of New Covenant is that the PNC must seek such guidance and permission through the Committee on Ministry (COM). The COM is represented by a Transition Team, the members who are appointed by the COM. The Transition Team is the primary resource to the PNC and will provide guidance through a Liaison to the PNC throughout the process of the pastor search.*

## CALLING A PASTOR CHECKLIST

1. Contact the COM to notify the end of a pastoral relationship to begin planning for the transition, COM approves dissolution of pastoral relationship.
2. Request permission from COM to form PNC and request liaison
3. Session authorizes a congregational meeting to elect a PNC.
4. Conduct a Mission Study Plan.
5. Plan criteria for the new call process (position name, salary, employment type, job description, and mission statement) with presbytery liaison
6. PNC prepares the MDP and submits to COM for review and approval.
7. COM invites Clerk of Session to access CLC database, PNC uploads the MDP to the CLC system.
8. Advertise position, review and receive PDP matches and referrals.
9. Request serious contact approval from presbytery
10. Schedule and Conduct interviews
11. Request from presbytery any reference and background checks.
12. Select a Nominee, schedule neutral pulpit
13. Extend a Call.
14. Negotiate terms of Call.
15. Approval of the terms of Call by COM
16. Candidate meets with COE (if necessary)
17. COM sustains the examination (if necessary)
18. Call a congregational meeting to elect the pastor.
19. PNC presents the nominee to the congregation, who votes to accept
20. Sign the call. (PNC and COM)
21. Installation
22. Fast Trac Assessment

# **PRESBYTERY OF NEW COVENANT GUIDELINES FOR CALLING A PASTOR**

## **I. GETTING ORGANIZED**

The newly-elected members of the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) should meet as soon as possible. The purpose of this meeting is to:

### **A. Create a Timetable**

Allow the Transition Team to map out what is needed, what the PNC does, and the timetable the PNC can aim for. The Liaison (appointed by the presbytery Committee on Ministry (COM)) will help the PNC know what is realistic, based upon COM experience with other churches. A time period of 12 to 20 months is considered a reasonable length of time from PNC election to new pastor installation.

### **B. Elect Officers**

1. Chair -the role of the Chair is:
  - a. To encourage discussion of various viewpoints
  - b. To delegate responsibility and see that tasks are carried out
  - c. To ensure that decisions reached are the consensus of the group
  - d. To correspond with the presbytery, with the Church Leadership Connection (CLC) and potential candidates for the position
2. Vice Chair - the role of the Vice Chair is:
  - a. To chair the PNC in the absence of the Chair
  - b. To perform other duties as determined by the PNC
3. Secretary - the role of the Secretary is:
  - a. To generate correspondence
  - b. Keep committee minutes and other records
  - c. To perform other duties as determined by the PNC or the Chair

### **C. Planning, Communications and Resources**

1. Identify the role of the COM liaison in the PNC's work. Plan the materials to be used to help the PNC in the task and to help understand the pastoral call process. The COM liaison is the primary resource for a PNC and will provide resources as needed.
2. Identify those key points at which the session must be involved in the PNC's work.
3. Understand how essential it is to maintain confidentiality on all matters discussed.
4. Decide how the PNC will keep the congregation informed. Many PNCs find it helpful to post a chart of the pastoral search stages and then mark their progress.

**D. Schedule PNC Meetings**

Set the date and time for regular meetings, making certain that all PNC members will be available and that it is convenient for the COM liaison to attend or be available by telephone. Calling a pastor requires wisdom, spiritual guidance and hard work. Prayer should surround each meeting of the PNC. In addition, congregational prayers not only support the work of the PNC but also encourage unity within the congregation at a time when divisiveness could occur.

**E. PNC Search Expenses**

Determine and secure Session approval for a budget for PNC expenses incurred during the search process. There is no one-size-fits-all budget recommended. For example, a smaller church with more limited resources will have a more constrained budget than a larger church might have. Experience has shown that the largest search expense items are:

- 1) travel for PNC members and for candidates, and
- 2) moving expenses for the called pastor. For a nationwide search, total expenses can run between \$20,000- \$30,000. Churches with more limited means may want to consider a geographical limitation on their search to help in controlling search costs.

**II. THE SEARCH**

**A. General Information about MDPs (Ministry Discernment Profile)**

1. A MDP provides information about the position you are seeking to fill, your church, and community. It is used to match your needs against those of pastors who are seeking churches, and to upload your position on the Church Leadership Connection computer database ([clc.pcusa.org](http://clc.pcusa.org)) .
2. The PNC Chair or the Clerk of Session can contact the Coordinator of COM at Presbytery offices ([dbwilson@pbyofnewcovenant.org](mailto:dbwilson@pbyofnewcovenant.org)) to get login IDs and passwords for accessing Church Leadership Connection, the denomination's computer system for submitting and matching MDPs
3. Blank copies of MDP forms are available from the presbytery web site resources section ([click here for blank MDP](#)), where they may be printed or downloaded as Word documents. Find the online guide to [completing the MDP here](#).
4. The PNC will decide together how to tackle the job of completing the MDP. Most PNCs divide up the responsibility for composing the document and refine it as a whole for consistency in style and substance.
5. Sources of information for completing the MDP
  - a. Active MDPs from other churches. You can find these by searching the database on Church Leadership Connection ([www.pcusa.org/clc](http://www.pcusa.org/clc)).
  - b. An old MDP (or MIF) for your church, if one exists.
  - c. Church mission studies or long-range plans.
  - d. Surveys of the congregation about the needs and preferences for pastoral leadership and the direction of the church. If there is no recent survey (within last 3-4 years) you might consider taking a new one.
  - e. Input from church officers and other knowledgeable people in the congregation.

6. The PNC should take ample time and prayerful consideration crafting the MDP. It should give a realistic portrayal of the church including strengths and weaknesses, what is unique about the congregation and community, the goals and possibilities. Include not only factual information but also something of the “feel” of the church. Be advised: The MDP imposes a 1500 character limit on each narrative question and position description which must be adhered to, to avoid technical difficulties. Although the character limit is annoying, it does encourage clear thinking and succinct writing.
7. The Clerk of Session of your church can give you the Church/Organization ID (your church's "pin number"), and can help you gather the current statistical information. Under *Clerk of Session Details* provide an email address, if at all possible. This will speed the online approval of the document by the Clerk.
8. The Brief Church Mission Statement may be based on an existing mission statement for your church, or one that the PNC drafts with help from the Session. Consider questions like these: What are the core values of your congregation? What principles shape your programs and ministries? What impact does the congregation wish to have in the community and beyond?
9. In Compensation and Housing enter both the maximum and minimum effective salary (note: “*Effective salary*” is *salary plus housing*) that your session feels it can offer. The Session is responsible for providing this information, and it must be in compliance with [New Covenant Presbytery Minimum Terms of Call and Compensation Guidelines\(click here\)](#). Your church treasurer, personnel committee or COM liaison can help you with this section. Only the minimum salary will be seen online.
10. The session will give direction about the mission statement and the compensation package that can be offered to a new minister. The rest is up to the PNC, drawing from resources within and without your congregation.

#### **B. Approval of the MDP**

1. The PNC completes the MDP and submits it to the Session and the COM for approval before it can be submitted online via the Church Leadership Connection(CLC).
2. The Clerk of Session will be invited to create a profile on CLC and submit the completed MDP.
3. Once approvals are made, the MDP is released to the "Opportunity Search" database. The PNC is notified by email to log in to the system to retrieve the matched PIFs. It will take CLC a day or two before the MDP is up.

#### **D. Advertising the Position**

The PNC will receive PDPs (personal discernment profiles) through the matching system on Church Leadership Connection and through self-referrals (pastors who have learned about your position and send a PDP to your PNC). Your church's vacancy will also be listed in the weekly Tuesday Connect email. To generate more interest in your position you may wish to consider:

1. Contacting seminaries. Most have placement offices that will post information about pastoral vacancies. An increasing number have web sites for posting vacancies and graduates' resumes. [Click here for a list of Presbyterian seminaries.](#)
3. Enhancing your church's web site to attract candidates. Your MDP contains your web site's address, as should any advertisements you publish. Place additional information about your congregation and community there.
4. Networking. Talk to friends and relatives, pastors, other presbytery executives about your vacancy and your church. Ask if they know of pastors who might be a good fit. Encourage your congregation to do the same. Never underestimate the power of word-of-mouth advertising.
5. Social Media. Advertise on the church website, newsletter, Facebook page, Instagram and/or other platforms.

#### **E. Receiving and Reviewing PDPs**

1. After submitting the MDP, take time to consider how the committee will organize themselves to receive, distribute, track and evaluate candidates. Establish a simple recording system to keep track of when PDPs were received and their status. There is a "notes" section on the CLC website, which is a helpful tool to keep track of the submissions. Establish ranking, screening, and selection criteria based on the requirements set out in the MDP
2. Assure fairness for EEO/AA in ranking, screening and selecting process.
3. Prepare a package of materials you will send to interested candidates to tell them more about your church, such as sample bulletins, links to your website, newsletters, brochures, etc. Additionally, you might include information on your community, such as links to the Chamber of Commerce, and other visitor attractions that describe your area.
4. Promptly acknowledge receipt of all self-referred PDPs in a brief email to the pastor. You don't need to acknowledge PDPs received through computer matching.  
*Note: Candidates can find out with whom their PDPs have been matched. Just like the candidate's names appear on the church list, the church's name also appears on the candidates list. If you are not interested in a matched candidate you do not have to contact them, they are aware of this.*
5. Review each one thoroughly, comparing the PDP with your MDP.
  - a. Does the minister have the years of experience you are seeking?
  - b. Do they exhibit skills that you need? Do the pastoral activities ratings match yours?
  - c. Have they lived and worked in a setting like yours?
6. Make clear "yes" and "no" decisions about which ministers you'd like to consider more closely. Avoid trying to maintain a "maybe" list.

## F. Interviewing Promising Candidates

Our presbytery has instituted a 2-step process for PNC contacts with prospective candidates after much trial-and-error. This process has worked the best for all our churches and their potential pastors, and saved churches and pastors much heartache:

**Casual Contact** - Allows non face-to-face contacts (telephone, e-mails, mail, etc.) and exploratory face-to-face contacts for the exchange of information without any commitments

**Serious Contact** - Only after approval of the candidate by COM may the PNC have in-person meeting and interview with a candidate that could directly lead to discussion of specific terms of call for pastor position

1. Casual Contact (Information exchange with no commitment)
  - a. Contact the candidate to determine if they are indeed interested in your position (for candidates whose PIF you received through the matching process) or continued interest (for self-referrals).
  - b. Discuss availability
  - c. Request audio/video of sermons.
  - d. Refer candidate to your church website
  - e. Consider sending packets about your church (bulletins, newsletters, brochures, etc.) to candidate if that information is not available on the church website.
  - f. Have a phone or online interview with all or most of the PNC. Discuss both PDP and MDP to secure a 2-way dialogue on the needs and desires of both parties.
  - g. Have no more than three members of PNC hear candidate preach (without contact).
2. Serious Contact - Only after approval of the candidate by COM
  - a. In-person interview by all or most of the PNC
  - b. Hear candidate in a neutral pulpit (contact the Coordinator for COM to help with this)
  - c. Discuss the candidate's status in the search
  - d. Negotiate specific terms of call for pastor ([see Minimum Terms of Compensation](#) and [Terms of Compensation Worksheet](#))

*Helpful TIP: If the PNC budget allows, it is always preferable to invite the candidate's spouse (if married) to an on-site visit however, it is not appropriate to ask a candidate's marital status, only if self-proclaimed.*

3. Reference Checks
  - a. After the PNC determines that the minister is interested in the position, contact the references listed in the PDP. Prepare questions in advance, reviewing them with the COM, questions should focus on the ability of the candidate to do effective ministry and not be unnecessarily intrusive.
  - b. Executive Presbyters, Stated Clerks and COM chairs that are not listed as primary references may be contacted.

- c. Secondary References are persons who are not listed by the candidate but are suggested by others because they are thought to have knowledge of the candidate. They should only be contacted when the candidate has given permission. *Under no circumstances should a PNC contact members of a pastor's present congregation without her or his permission to do so.*
  - d. In addition, the Stated Clerk and General Presbyter of New Covenant will be contacting the candidate's previous presbytery to check references and background and will inform the PNC if any issues are raised.
- 4. Narrowing the Field
 

The PNC does its own evaluation following reference checks and a possible brief phone call to a candidate for clarification. The PNC selects a short list (not to exceed five names) of ministers with whom they desire to interview personally and possibly Issue a call. Names, along with the candidate's PDPs, are submitted to the Committee on Ministry for approval before face-to-face interviews can take place.
- 5. Conducting the Interview
 

The PDP is designed to introduce ministers and PNCs and help them begin to get acquainted. In order for a PNC to evaluate a person fully, it is necessary to meet the person face-to-face, engage in conversation, and participate in worship with the minister at a neutral pulpit.

  - a. Check with liaison to be sure the candidate has been approved for the interview
  - b. Contact candidate regarding mutually convenient date for candidate's visit for interview and neutral pulpit preaching. *Note: This is a 3-way effort since Presbytery is responsible for setting up the neutral pulpit site.*
  - c. Determine questions to ask in order to evaluate candidate
  - d. Come to a consensus as a committee so that clarity and harmony are conveyed
  - e. If candidate is coming to your community, arrange a tour that gives a good picture of the community and church. Be careful to protect confidentiality.
  - f. Take notes, not only of the information, but of impressions gained during the interview.
  - g. Come to a consensus with the candidate as to what the next step is.
- 6. After the Interview
  - a. A full committee review should be held as soon as possible after the interview.
  - b. If several interviews are conducted, the PNC should rank candidates.
  - c. Keep candidates informed regarding their status.

### III.

### THE PROCESS OF CALL



The PNC should strive to make its decision both unanimous and enthusiastic. Experience has shown that where there is a serious division in a committee regarding a candidate, the same division may appear in the congregation. Bear in mind that each member's integrity and individuality is to be respected and that any reservations he or she has about the candidate selected should be brought to the committee's attention and discussed with candor. If the PNC is not unanimous and enthusiastic regarding the selection, your COM liaison should be consulted as to the advisability of presenting the candidate to the congregation.

**A. Extending the Call**

When the PNC has reached a final decision and has conferred with the COM liaison about its choice, the PNC chair or other PNC member should contact the selected candidate and extend the call. Although you will be eager to get an affirmative response from the chosen person, she or he may want some time to respond. Except for unusual circumstances, two weeks should be sufficient time in which to expect a response.

**B. Negotiating the Terms of Call**

A subcommittee might be named to work out the final terms of call with the candidate in preparation for the meeting of the entire PNC. The PNC is not authorized to negotiate beyond the total amount allotted by the session. If there is a need to do so, session approval must be obtained. Presbytery of New Covenant has established minimum Terms of Call.

**C. Examination of the Nominee by COM\***

1. As a third partner in the call, the presbytery, through the COM Examinations Committee, must examine each minister or candidate who seeks membership on his or her Christian faith and views on theology, sacraments, and worship, the bible and polity. Candidates called by a PNC who are also candidates for ordination must submit all required paperwork (as set forth in the letter to the candidate) to the presbytery office with sufficient time for the committee to review
2. The COM Coordinator in the presbytery office will work with the nominee in establishing a time for the nominee to be examined by the COM's Examinations Subcommittee.

*\*Pastors in New Presbytery Covenant, who receive a call within the presbytery, do not have to be reexamined.*

**D. Election of the Nominee and Congregational Meeting**

1. Following the approval of the COM's Examinations Subcommittee, and COM as a whole sustaining the examination at their next meeting; the PNC asks the session to call a congregational meeting to hear the report of the PNC. Sufficient public notice of the meeting must be given. The election is by written ballot. This meeting usually takes place after a worship service and must be moderated by the session moderator, another minister, or a member of the COM. Depending on the historical tradition and preferences of the PNC and the candidate, the new pastor under consideration may preach and conduct all or part of the service prior to the congregational vote, or the PNC may report and the congregational vote be taken with results relayed to the pastor.

2. The PNC has the responsibility to share what it has learned about the minister with the congregation. Prepare a report to the congregation, which should include something of the process the PNC followed, including the number of PIFs reviewed, the number of candidates interviewed, and the reasons for selecting the nominee.  
A biographical sketch of the minister will help the congregation to know the new pastor more intimately. The congregation will need to approve the Terms of Call at the time the congregation elects the new pastor. [The "New Pastoral Call" form \(click here\)](#) should be completed following the adjournment of the congregational meeting.
3. If there is a significant minority of the congregation opposed to this pastoral candidate the person under consideration would be wise to reconsider prayerfully the call, and the PNC should consult immediately with the COM liaison. In such a case, the PNC should not be dismissed at this time.

#### **IV. WRAPPING UP**

- A. Following the congregational meeting, the PNC must sign the call and return the signed contract to the COM Coordinator.
- B. Destroy or delete all PDP materials, including references, except for the materials related to the person the PNC has called. Others cannot be reused and should not be passed on to other PNCs. Information and references regarding the incoming pastor should be sealed and kept.
- C. It is important that the PNC or the session make an intentional plan for effective entry and support of the new pastor. The relationship that the PNC has built with the pastor must now be extended to the session and to the congregation and community.
- D. The PNC is formally dismissed after installation has occurred

#### **V. INSTALLATION AND ASSESSMENT**

- A. It is customary to allow the new pastor some time to settle in before being installed. Installation is normally performed within the first three months of a pastor's start date.
- B. It is incumbent upon the pastor to fill out the [Administrative Commission for Ordination or Installation](#) and submit it to the COM for approval at least three weeks prior to the installation.
- C. On the day designated for the installation, a commission appointed by presbytery for this purpose, shall convene and shall call the congregation gathered to worship. The service shall focus on Christ and the joy and responsibility of the mission and ministry of the church, and shall include a sermon appropriate to the occasion.
- D. The pastor will meet with the Presbytery at its next meeting and be welcomed into membership. Ministers are members of presbytery and accountable to presbytery for their ministry. It is important for members of the PNC to attend the presbytery meeting as a show of support and an opportunity for celebration of their work.

- E.      Assessment: Between 6-9 months after the pastor's start date presbytery asks that the pastor, along with the session and the PNC perform a Fast Trac Guided Assessment. Materials for this assessment are sent via email to the Clerk of Session and the pastor. This assessment allows all parties to come together and make sure that the ministry is progressing in line with expectations. It takes about 2-3 hours. The pastor is responsible for contacting the COM Coordinator to begin the process, a presbytery liaison will be assigned to assist.

## **VI. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

### **A. Calling an Associate Pastor**

The process for calling an associate pastor is identical in most ways to calling a pastor. An Associate Pastor Nominating Committee (APNC) is elected by the congregation and eventually brings a name of a candidate to the congregation for election. The COM is involved with the process just as they are in the calling of a pastor.

1.      A Transition Team from the COM will be assigned to work with each APNC to assist in the process. A call cannot be extended to an associate pastor without the approval of the presbytery through the COM.
2.      Although the process is essentially the same, different dynamics exist in a congregation that is searching for an associate pastor. A question often asked of liaisons is "What should be the role of the pastor in the search process?" There is no easy answer to that question. Certainly a pastor needs to be involved in the process as a good working relationship between pastor and associate pastor is essential to the well-being of a congregation. However, if a candidate is selected by the pastor and the committee is not allowed to function, trouble can arise. It is important to remember that the associate pastor is called by the congregation, not the pastor.
3.      The COM recommends that the pastor be involved in the process, but not direct the process. It is important that the pastor work with the session to devise the job description for the position. Then it is recommended that the pastor keep a low profile during the election of the APNC and the initial phases of its work. It is appropriate for a pastor to meet with the PNC on occasion but he/she should refrain from attending every meeting of the committee. The final selection of a candidate needs to be done by the committee after consulting with the pastor.
4.      The call process is designed to help congregations and pastors discover God's will. It is important that it be allowed to proceed without undue control from any party involved.

### **B. CALLING A DESIGNATED PASTOR OR CO-PASTOR**

*G-2.0504a: The installed pastoral relationships are pastor, co-pastor, and associate pastor. A teaching elder may be installed in a pastoral relationship for an indefinite period or for a designated term determined by the presbytery in consultation with the congregation and specified in the call.*

1.      In the Presbytery of New Covenant, the recommended designated term is a minimum of two years, which is approved by a vote of the congregation

following the pastoral election process. Each pastoral candidate who has been screened by the presbytery's COM will be considered seriously for interview by the congregation's Designated Pastoral Nominating Committee (DPNC). Any materials received from another source will be sent to the COM for screening.

2. The DPNC will not set aside the plan of seeking a designated pastor without giving the process a fair opportunity, and an in-depth consultation with the COM.
3. When the search is completed, the DPNC will recommend a candidate to the congregation for election to the designated pastoral position. The presbytery will conduct a service of installation for the new pastor. If at the end of the designated term, the choice is made to continue the pastoral relationship to continue, it is not necessary to have a second installation service, although public acknowledgement of the change is encouraged.
4. The session will participate in an annual review of the ministry with the pastor and the COM. Six months prior to the ending date of the call, the session will consider with the pastor and COM whether or not to continue the relationship for another designated period, or for an indefinite term. If the session and designated Pastor determine to convert the relationship to an indefinite term, the session will submit a request to COM for approval. Upon COM approval, the congregation will vote on the election of the person as pastor.