



**PASTORAL SEARCH MANUAL  
FOR  
TRANSITION RESPONDERS,  
LIAISONS AND SEARCH  
COMMITTEES**

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## Introduction

The process of calling a Pastor, Co-Pastor, or Associate Pastor\* is first and foremost *an act of spiritual discernment*. There are lots of instructions and paperwork that go into this process, but do not be deceived; this is a *spiritual task* not an executive search. Your task is to find the person that God is calling to fill the vacancy at your church. That will require of you and any team or committee/commission involved in this process prayer, careful listening, and reflection. Indeed, every person and group involved should make it part of their daily devotional life to pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to discern the one God is calling.

As was mentioned above, there are lots of instructions and paperwork that go with this process. You will be introduced to a whole new language with some puzzling abbreviations. Your Commission on Ministry seeks to make this task a bit easier by providing this handbook and a person, your Pastor Nominating Committee Liaison, to assist you in this task. This handbook is a work in progress. If there are places where it doesn't make sense or is difficult to understand, *please* contact the COM Task Force on Transitions in Ministry (for Installed Positions).

\*NOTE: In the case of the departure of an Associate Pastor, please refer to page 29.

### Alphabet Soup

In the process of searching for a Pastor, Co-Pastor, or Associate Pastor, you will encounter all sorts of abbreviations. Below is a list of most of them. If you do not find an abbreviation listed below, contact your Liaison or one of the Co-Moderators of the Commission on Ministry.

AAEEO	Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity Opportunity
COM	Commission on Ministry, the Presbytery commission charged with the responsibility of helping churches find ministers and ministers find churches.
CLC	Church Leadership Connection, the official name given to the General Assembly Internet process of handling leadership matching (churches and ministers).
COMTF	COM Task Force on Transitions in Ministry (for Installed Positions) - the Task Force of COM directly responsible for working with Churches in the search process; the Task Force that approves your MIF
CRS	Call Referral Services, the name for the office that manages CLC and provides help to COMs and Churches, and Ministers in the matching process.
MIF	Ministry Information Form, the form which a church fills out during the search process which describes the position they are seeking to fill and the information necessary to help match potential candidates.
PIF	Personal Information Form, the form which ministers and candidates fill out to share who they are and in what sorts of ministerial positions they would be willing to
PIN	Personal Identification Number, each church has an assigned identification number. You can generally get that number from your Clerk of Session.

AAEEO Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity Opportunity

PNC Pastor Nominating Committee, sometimes called Pulpit Nominating Committee, the search committee elected by the congregation to nominate a Pastor, Co-Pastor, or Associate Pastor for the congregation.

## **PARTNERS IN THE PROCESS**

GP: general presbyter

COM-TR: transition responder\* PNC: pastor nominating committee

PNC-L: Liaison to pastor nominating committee liaison\* (from the COM) TT: transition team

COM TF: COM Task Force on Transitions in Ministry

\* The COM TR and PNC-L could be the same person

### **Tasks of a Transition Responder**

1. The COM-TR will guide the Session of the church from the point that the pastor announces their resignation to the point that the Session is ready to begin the self-study of the congregation.
  - a. COM-TR's will be trained in transitional issues and process
  - b. Ordinarily, COM-TR's will be members of COM; other pastors and ruling elders with prior COM experience may be asked to serve.
2. The GP and a member of the COM TF will conduct an exit interview with the outgoing pastor or associate pastor; the GP and COM-TR together will conduct an exit interview with the Session as soon as practical after the pastor announces their resignation (or retirement announcements).
3. The COM-TR will orient the Session to the Transition Period, including:
  - a. Presentation of policies concerning ministers and their former congregations.
  - b. How a session functions during the transition period:
    - i. Who can moderate
      1. The COM-TR will moderate session meetings until a moderator has been appointed by the COM Task Force.
      2. See BOO G-3.0104 for rules governing who may moderate a session meeting.
    - ii. Who is responsible for securing temporary pastoral leadership, including pulpit supply.
    - iii. The role of the GP, the Session, the Transition Team, and COM-TR
  - c. Establishment of a Transition Team
  - d. The decision/desirability/affordability of a Transitional pastor
  - e. When a PNC can be elected and how
  - f. The several options of permanent and temporary pastoral relations

4. The COM-TR will assist the Session/Transition Team in securing
  - a. Temporary Supply preaching if and/or until a Transitional Pastor has been secured
  - b. Transitional Pastor for the congregation
5. The COM-TR will orient the Transition Team to its responsibilities once it has been appointed by the Session, including an explanation of the Presbytery's AAEEEO policies. (The GP may be invited to participate if that seems prudent or necessary.) The COM-TR will be knowledgeable about Mission Study resources and personnel, and in the event that no Transitional pastor has been hired, assist the Transition Team in securing qualified leadership for the self-study of the congregation. They will be available to the Transition Team for problem solving and particular questions.
6. The COM-TR will coordinate with the COM TF regarding Transitional Pastor Ministry Information Form (if used), Suitability and Fit interviews with a potential Transitional Pastor, and contracts for COM TF approval. Adopted 09.25.08 / Revised 02.2022
7. The COM-TR will send the completed Mission Study Report to the COM-TF for approval, and communicate back to the TT the results. The approval is ordinarily accompanied by permission for the congregation to form a PNC, including the assignment of a liaison of the COM PNC-L.
8. The COM-TR will communicate to the church the name of the PNC-L.
9. The COM-TR's last responsibility will be to summarize any issues or concerns that have arisen from the Transition process to the PNC Liaison.

### **Tasks of a PNC Liaison**

The COM Liaison to the PNC begins once the PNC has been elected.

1. The PNC-L will meet with the Pastor Nominating Committee at its Transitional meeting, and the PNC shall not hold its first meeting without the Liaison. If there is a transitional pastor, they shall also be present at the first meeting of the PNC. The first meeting will be an orientation to the search process and include the election of PNC officers.
2. If there is no transitional pastor in place, the PNC-L will guide the PNC through the writing of the Ministry Information Form.
3. Whether guided by a transitional pastor or the PNC-L, care shall be taken to ensure that the MIF accurately reflects the congregation, its mission study, and that there is agreement between the Session, its Personnel Committee, and the PNC regarding the position description, expectations, and qualifications of a new pastor.
4. The PNC-L will send an electronic form of the completed MIF to the COM Task Force. If changes to the MIF are required or suggested by the COM-TF, those changes shall be communicated back to the PNC through the PNC-Liaison.
5. The PNC-L will meet with the PNC when the first batch of PIF's have been delivered to the PNC; the primary focus of the Liaison's input is to review with the PNC what they have indicated is required and desired in the new pastor.
6. Ordinarily, the PNC-L will meet with the PNC at least once a month during the search process.

They will assist the PNC in the interview process and keep track of their progress. The PNC-L will update the COM TF periodically. The PNC-L should strongly encourage the Search Committees to interview Salem Presbytery persons where appropriate.

7. The PNC-L will shepherd the pastor-elect through the process of appearing before the COM TF for Suitability and Fit interviews, COM Task Force on Examinations, and the COM TF making sure that the call, in correct form, is in the Presbytery Office two weeks before the COM meeting when the candidate is examined.

### **Liaison Checklist**

Prior to scheduling a candidate's meeting with Examinations Committee and the COMTF, the Liaison should make sure the following tasks have been completed.

Has the liaison:

1. \_\_\_ Explained to the Session and the PNC the Presbytery's AAEEEO policy? (Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_)
2. \_\_\_ Assisted (if necessary) the Transitional Pastor and the Transition Team in doing the Mission Study? (Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_)
3. \_\_\_ Seen that policies regarding all [former pastors' relationships](#) have been signed (Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_)
4. \_\_\_ Seen that policies regarding [other ministers and their families](#) worshipping in their congregation have been reviewed as appropriate? (Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_)
5. \_\_\_ Brought the request to elect a PNC to the COMTF for approval? (Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_)
6. \_\_\_ Seen to it that the MIF AND financial analysis is emailed (or delivered in electronic format) to the COMTF for approval? (Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_)
7. \_\_\_ Provided the PNC Moderator and the Clerk of Session with their Login ID's and Passwords (if not done so by the Presbytery staff)? (Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_)
8. \_\_\_ Assisted the PNC in the interview process and kept track of their progress, reporting it to the COMTF periodically? (Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_)
9. \_\_\_ Made sure candidates who initiate contact with the PNC receive a timely response? (Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_)
10. \_\_\_ Strongly encouraged PNC to interview Salem Presbytery persons where appropriate? (Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_)
11. \_\_\_ Done appropriate background checks (by the Presbytery staff) on final candidates to check for 'red flags'? (Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_)
12. \_\_\_ Arranged [suitability interviews](#) between COMTF, Presbyter and final 2 or 3 candidates, making sure to provide PIF to COMTF? (Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_)
13. \_\_\_ Made available to the PNC the Presbytery's [policy on sabbaticals](#)? (Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_)
14. \_\_\_ With the COMTF, shepherded the pastor-elect through the process of appearing before Examinations Committee? (Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_)

15. \_\_\_\_ Made sure that the terms of call, in correct form, get to the Presbytery office a week prior to the COM meeting to approve the terms of call? (Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_)
16. \_\_\_\_ Made clear to the PNBC that, once dissolved, they should re-emerge as a team to help the pastor acclimate to his/her new surroundings? (Date completed: \_\_\_\_\_)

## Tasks of Transition Team

1. The Transition Team is usually selected by the Session as soon as possible after the Session is informed of the Pastor's intention to leave. It is strongly recommended that the Session select a Transition Team to select a Transitional Minister for Session approval, and on-board and partner with the Transitional Minister to complete the Mission Study for Session approval. This only applies to the Pastor, not the Associate Pastor.
2. The size of the normal Transition Team is 5 to 7 persons. It usually contains members who are family with the Worship and Personnel Committees and with the Church's finances. It is a committee of the Session, therefore does not require the congregation to act to elect.
3. Transition Team's Financial Responsibilities:
  - A. If the pastor has been disabled, suggesting financial arrangements for the pastor and family during the 90-day waiting period.

[If the Transition Team is selected in time, they also make:]
  - B. Recommendations for special honoraria, gifts, etc. to the departing pastor.
  - C. Recommendations for occasions for the congregation and the pastor to "say goodbye" through formal remembering events and a "closure" worship service.
4. The Transition Team will make provisions for regular worship services and pastoral care of the congregation during the transition period, and ordinarily serve as the Transitional Pastor Search Committee (see below). It also provides an on-boarding process that includes a formal opportunity to be received and welcomed by the Session and Congregation.
5. The team will make sure that the congregation, as a whole, is informed that the Transitional Pastor ordinarily **cannot** become the next installed pastor of the congregation, but under extraordinary circumstances may be permitted under provisions of the Book of Order.
6. The team will provide the communication link with Presbytery to establish the relationship with the Commission on Ministry Transition Responder, Presbytery's appointed Session Moderator and other Presbytery resources until the pastoral search committee is elected (Pastor Nominating Committee - PNC).
7. The team shall partner with the Transitional Pastor in completing the Mission Study. Session may assigned a different group of people to work with the Transitional Pastor on the Mission Study. The Transitional Pastor shall serve as an ex-officio, non-voting member of the Committee.
8. The team provides communication with the congregation through:
  - A. Regular information about progress during the Transition period. [PNC will give updates on Search Process.]
  - B. Clarification regarding the responsibilities of remaining staff professionals.
9. Organize and carry out a proper farewell for the Transitional Pastor. Ordinarily this farewell will be (at the latest) two weeks before the new pastor arrives.

# TRANSITION TIME

## Transitional Pastoral Leadership

Salem Presbytery is committed to a lively partnership with its congregations during the transition time between installed pastors. With appropriate pastoral leadership, this is a particularly fertile time for a congregation to experience and become more aware of the theological significance of its life as community of faith. During this period, when a church is without an installed pastor, the services of a trained Transitional Pastor are highly recommended. It is not the policy of the Commission on Ministry **to require** the services of an appropriate Transitional Pastor; however our experience tells us that this can be a very productive relationship.

1. The Commission on Ministry recognizes that the time between installed pastors presents a congregation with a prime opportunity for renewal. This transition time is most likely to be constructive when the church addresses the following **Five Focus Points**:
  1. Heritage: Recognize and name our past history, work through grief/adjustment process that usually follows the loss of a minister, find meaning in this history.
  2. Mission: Who are we now? Who are our neighbors now? What is God calling this congregation to do now? Help the congregation to focus on and articulate its guiding identity and mission in the present.
  3. Connections: Celebrating, creating, or renewing denominational, geographical, and technological connections.
  4. Leadership: Review the membership needs and the membership's way of organizing and developing new and effective leadership within the congregation, seek ways to empower new ideas and leadership to emerge in constructive ways.
  5. Future: Naming a possible future for the congregation.

Research has demonstrated that congregations in which particular attention has been given to the transition between installed pastors tend to be healthier than others. The healthier congregations view the transition as a time of focus and renewal, whereas other congregations tend to view it as a time of maintenance. When a congregation in transition takes care of only the basic needs, the larger tasks and deeper questions are left hanging until the arrival of the new pastor. This practice often results in less productive and shorter pastorates for the new pastor. This is especially true in those congregations where the previous pastor had been on the scene for over ten years or there had been conflict in the congregation. A healthy transition is most likely to occur when congregations are served by ministers who are **intentionally** exercising their call as Transitional Pastors and have received special training for this specialized form of ministry.

## THE SEARCH FOR THE TRANSITIONAL PASTOR

In order to accomplish the important tasks of ministering to churches between installed pastors, the presbytery strongly encourages churches adhere to the following guidelines:

Requirements:

1. Consult with the COM Task Force on Transitions in Ministry before making any decision to secure the services of any temporary pastor. This COM Task Force will recommend an appropriate temporary pastoral leadership and will assist the church in obtaining the services of such a pastor. In some cases, a full search through the PCUSA Church Leadership Connection may be the recommended process.
2. Compensate Transitional Pastors in a way that reflects awareness of presbytery minimum standards and the peculiar nature of this type of ministry, i.e. special qualifications, transitory nature of occupation, etc.
  - a) Prior to searching for Transitional Pastor it is recommended that a financial inventory be done to determine sustainability of most recent terms of call. (This is not an opportunity to seek a discount pastor)
3. Once the top candidate(s) has/have been identified, their name must be submitted to the General Presbyter who will conduct a Presbyter-Presbyter reference check.
4. Arrange a Suitability and Fit Interview with the COM Task Force prior to the formalization of any contract.
5. The church's transition team submits the proposed contract with the Transitional Pastor to the Session for approval. This information is to be kept confidential within the Session until steps 6 and 7 are complete.
6. Arrange to meet with the Examinations Task Force.
7. Meet with COM Task Force on Transitions in Ministry who will approve the contract, and welcome the Transitional Pastor on behalf of the Presbytery.
8. The COM Task Force will also need to approve renewals of contracts.

The *Book of Order* At G-2.0504b says that "A person serving in a temporary pastoral relationship is invited for a specified period not to exceed twelve months in length, which is renewable with the approval of the presbytery. The Commission on Ministry expects that the first contract with the Transitional Pastor will be for one year. Contracts can be renewed when necessary. The required contract is available for download on Presbytery's website.

The Commission on Ministry expects that the Transitional Pastor or Transitional Associate Pastor shall:

1. Ordinarily\* be a member of Salem Presbytery.
2. Attend quarterly meetings of Salem Presbytery.
3. Transitional Pastors to required to pursue Continuing Education in the field of Transitional Ministry if they have not complete both weeks of Transitional Ministry Training.

4. Attend the monthly Transitional Pastors Network meetings of Salem Presbytery.
5. Submit progress reports of their Transitional work to the COM Task Force on Transitions in Ministry.

## **TEMPORARY PASTOR ELIGIBILITY FOR INSTALLED POSITIONS**

Salem's full policy with rationale and process for exception can be found [HERE](#).

## THE PRE-SEARCH PROCESS

Generally, by the time the PNC is elected, the Transition Team, with the assistance of the Transitional Pastor has completed the Mission Study which will have addressed the vision of the congregation for ministry, including identifying the leadership qualities desired in your next pastor. The Mission study directly informs the writing of the MIF.

### **Organizing the Team**

The work of the PNC will be greatly facilitated by electing leaders. Typically, a Chair and Vice-Chair, or Co-Chairs are elected. This allows for the work of the committee to continue even if the designated convener/leader is not able to attend.

The committee should have a clerk to keep a record of conversations, considerations and actions by the committee. This might not be appreciated early on, but as time goes by and memories start getting fuzzy, it is good to have a clear record of why you have proceeded in a given way.

In addition, the committee might want to elect a corresponding secretary. It is of the greatest importance that this person be **computer-literate!** This entire process depends on using a computer and the internet. The responsibility here will be to serve as the official communicator with the candidates. This will be a very busy position during the middle part of the process, and requires someone who will be diligent in initiating, maintaining, and closing communications in a timely manner with candidates. The ability to create and maintain a basic spreadsheet is helpful.

Your COM Liaison will attend your first meeting to help explain these positions and help train you. Further, your Liaison will be a regular part of your search process to advise and answer questions.

### **Ministry Information Form (MIF)**

#### ***Obtaining a MIF***

To begin writing your MIF, you'll need to get a copy of the blank form. To do that you need to download it from the General Assembly Internet web site at <<http://www.pcusa.org/clc/>>. You can download a MIF in either PDF or MS Word format. At that same site, you will have access to the CLC Handbook, as well as detailed instructions for entering your MIF.

In conversation with your Session and with your COM Liaison, you will then complete your MIF. Your Session will give direction about the compensation package you can offer a new minister. The current Presbytery Minimum Compensation Package, including benefits and leave times, can be found [here](#). Your Liaison can help explain these. Your COM has experience with pastor searches and will be able to help you present your church in the best way.

#### ***Fill out the MIF form on a computer***

This is so that when you come to put it “online” (see below), you will be able to “cut and

paste” it onto the form online, rather than having to retype all the entries.

### ***Comments about separate lines on your MIF***

When the form asks for Church/Organization ID, type in your church PIN number (your Clerk of Session will have the number).

“Experience desired” is the minimum amount of experience you want to see in the PIF’s you receive from matching.

On the narrative questions, the boxes will only hold 1500 characters so be sure you stay within that limit as you compose your draft.

For references for your church, you may want to consider listing your COM liaison, the General Presbyter, a neighboring pastor, your Interim/Transitional Pastor, or others who have worked with you recently. **Do not** list current church members.

When you come to **skill choices**, you will want to have discussed this thoroughly before filling out the form. Include your Liaison in that discussion. You will be listing your top 10 skills. Your pastor candidates will select 10 skills.

***Compensation and housing*** - enter “effective salary” (salary + housing) in the boxes. Enter the minimum but be clear what the maximum is your Session feels it can offer. Indicate with an “X” whether you have a manse, or provide a housing allowance, or whether you are open to either. ***Geographic choices*** - unless you have some strong reason to limit your search, you will be wise to select “unlimited” to get the most good candidates in your referral list. (**That is Louisville’s advice.**) **BUT**, consider also whether you can afford to fly a candidate from Oregon here, or whether you afford to move a person from such a distance.

PNC Chair Details - It is **very important** to enter an email address for your PNC. This may be the PNC Chair, or another member of the committee. Since you will be receiving PIF’s through this email, it should be a personal, secure email (not the church inbox or someone who is not an elected member of your PNC). You may want to create a new email address specifically for the Search Committee. You can do that at places like Gmail or Yahoo (and they are generally free). ***If all else fails, ask your COM Liaison if you may use theirs.***

### **MIF Approval**

Once your MIF is complete, print it out so that your Session can read and approve it. After the Session has approved it, email it to the Presbytery’s Administrative Assistant ([cratledge@salempresbytery.org](mailto:cratledge@salempresbytery.org)) so that the COMTF can approve it at its monthly meeting. Once that has happened, you are ready to put your MIF “online.” After it is “online,” your Clerk of Session and one of the COM’s Co-Moderator will “sign” your form electronically.

### ***To enter the MIF “online:”***

The COMTF will assist you in getting your MIF on-line and will send you detailed instructions.

The instructions will include login and password information. Once you are logged in, much of what you will do will be copying and pasting what you have previously composed.

When your form is received, the computer will confirm it and generate a MIF ID. It is made up of your church PIN and some other digits that will identify that particular MIF. It will look like **23456.AA0**. Write it down and keep it. You will need it to edit your MIF.

### ***MIF Identification Numbers***

Search Committee Chairperson's login ID looks something like this: **P0023456** (P, zero, zero, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6). The Clerk of Session of that church will also be given a login ID number. It will look like **COS23456** (C, O, S, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6). Both login ID's will be assigned an initial password. The password is case sensitive and it will look something like this **W6ytI9p**.

The church's PIN in this example is **23456**

When you submit the MIF, it will give them a MIF ID which will look like this - **23456.AA0** (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, period, A, A, zero).

## THE SEARCH PROCESS

### ***Shhhhh!!!....A Word About Confidentiality***

Presbyterians don't have bishops. And we don't appoint pastors to serve congregations. Instead, we work from the classically Reformed understanding that "the studied wisdom of the few, is more profound than the ignorance of the many, or the prejudice of the one." This is why we use nominating committees. Toward this end, it is vitally important that you as a committee be able to speak openly and honestly to each other about any candidates who come before you for consideration. You must be able to share your thoughts, insights and intuitions. **BUT**...these must be shared **only** in committee. Confidentiality is an absolute must.

The work of leading a congregation as a pastor is difficult work. When a congregation finds that its pastor is in conversation with a PNC, it will often times assume that this pastorate's days are numbered and the pastor is now a lame duck. Should the conversation not end in extending a call, what might have been a good ministerial relationship is damaged, often beyond repair. Therefore, to honor the health of sister churches, it is essential that both names AND places of candidates not be shared beyond the PNC – not even with spouses.

### ***Is Anybody Out There?***

Once your MIF has been approved, put online, and signed off by the Clerk of Session from your congregation, and the COM representative, you move into the next stage, the Search Process. During this stage, you will receive and process PIF's, solicit suggestions, evaluate potential candidates, check references, and interview persons who may become your next pastor.

### ***Receiving PIF'S***

There are several ways in which you will receive the Personal Information Forms of potential candidates for your position. By far the largest number will come via the Internet; both from CLC and also self-referral. The CLC referrals will come via an email note to the PNC Chairperson that matches have occurred. (These matches are "triggered" by an automated request of the PNC to either CLC Staff or the General Presbyter. The Chairperson will log onto the CLC website ([www.pcusa.org/clc](http://www.pcusa.org/clc)), and when the "Task List For PNC Chairperson" appears on the screen, the chairperson will select "View Referral List." There you will find the names of all those whom the computer has matched to your MIF. The number to the left of their name is the PIF ID number. By double clicking on the number, you will see their PIF. You may download any or all these PIF's. You can print them out and copy them so that all persons on the PNC have a copy, you can also download the PIF's and email to your other PNC members. When you need more PIF's to review, you may initiate another request.

Another way you will receive PIF's via email is by self-referral. Ministers and Candidates for Ordination will send their PIF's to the email address of the PNC Chairperson as it is listed on your MIF. You will need to handle these as you did the ones that were referred by CLC.

The fewest number of MIF's will come in hardcopy format. These will either be self- referrals

that you receive via the USPS or from your Liaison who may offer some referrals from Presbytery's file of ministers looking to relocate.

Another way of soliciting PIF's is by placing an ad in our denomination's magazine "Presbyterians Today," and/or a denominationally related publication, such as "Presbyterian Outlook".

### ***Sources of PIF's***

Again, by far the largest source of PIF's will be CLC matches. However, as suggested above there are other sources: self-referral, Presbytery referral, and suggestions from the congregation and friends of the congregation. **You will want** to seek the suggestions of members and friends of your congregation. New members from out of town may suggest their former pastor, folks who know your congregation will want to offer suggestions of persons to consider. In these cases, you will not have a PIF; you will need to get one. Presbytery **is not** able to access these for you; you will have to contact the person and ask if they are interested in being considered, and if so, would they please send a PIF?

### ***Processing the PIF's***

The first thing that you will want to do with the PIF's that come from computer matching is contact each one (probably by email) and indicate that the computer matched you with the person and then find out whether the person is still available to be considered. Sometimes ministers and churches are slow in informing the CLC of a new position, and therefore some persons will be matched when they are no longer available.

In the case of self-referred PIF's, it is important to acknowledge that you have received the self-referral. In addition, it is important that you indicate where you are in the process, and when the person might expect to hear from you again.

Indeed, it is very important to keep people up-to-date in your process. For instance, "We have just gotten organized and are now receiving PIF's. It will probably be at least four weeks until you hear from us again." When you have received a requested PIF from a particular minister, it is also important to let that person know when they can expect to hear from you again.

Keep a running log of these correspondence details and honor the dates you have given for communication. A spreadsheet template is available for you to download for use in this tracking. It is appropriate to go no longer than a month without letting a candidate know where you are in process and whether they are still under consideration. Remember, you are being evaluated not only by what you say, but in your courtesy toward your possible new pastor.

### ***Sorting PIF's***

Once you start the process of reading PIF's, you will want to sort them into different groups. You might well want to try the "ABC" system. Group "A" contains those PIF's that sound exactly like what you are searching for. "Group "B" PIF's sound quite interesting but don't seem to match exactly. Group "C" is composed of those PIF's that are not a match you would consider. By this process, you can get folks into all three piles to be discussed at PNC meetings.

However you sort the PIF's, you will want to release the Group "C" from the search. A sample letter can be found in the Reference Section at the end of this Manual.

As you begin this process, you may wish to ask the persons to send you copies of bulletins, newsletters, recordings of sermons, etc. so that you might get to know them better. After you have received this information and after you have re-read the PIF, you may want to re-rank the candidates, and proceed to interviewing them.

### **Further evaluation of PIF's**

After you have communicated with Group "C" you will also want to communicate with Groups "A" and "B." You will need to say that the process of reading and evaluating PIF is taking longer than you expected. You wanted them to know that they are still under consideration. Again, sample letters can be found in the Reference Section at the end of this Manual.

## THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

### PNC Etiquette

In the process of searching for a Pastor (Co-Pastor or Associate Pastor), there are certain ways of treating the candidates which could be understood as an issue of proper etiquette.

1. Keep all candidates informed of where they are in your process. That means a regular update, or at the very least an indication of when they will hear from you.
2. When you receive a PIF referred from a General Assembly match, you do not need to contact them unless you are interested in them. If you are, contact the person to let them know that you have received their PIF and ask whether they are still available for consideration.
3. When you receive a self-referred PIF, always contact the person to let them know that you have received the PIF and give them a date when you will let them know something about your intentions regarding more consideration.
4. Since recordings and videos of worship services are readily available, a personal visit by a group to a worship service is not advisable unless the person has been identified as a top candidate. Even then, if you go to listen to a minister in their pulpit, either let them know that you are coming, and arrange (if you wish) a time to meet with the person after the service, or if you choose to appear unannounced, contact the minister by the middle of that week and identify yourself as having visited, and tell them when they can expect to hear from you further.
5. Remember that the interview is a two-way street: the minister is also interviewing you. The minister will have questions to ask, so please leave time in the interview for this.
6. Unless you are searching for a clergy couple, you are not normally interviewing the spouse of your candidate.” While that dictum is true, after you have had your first visit/interview with the candidate, you **should** consider including the spouse in your interviews. This is **especially** true **when you invite** the candidate to **visit your church**.
7. **Remember:** just because you have the minister’s PIF, even if it was self-referred, it is almost certain, that their congregation does **NOT** know that they are considering moving. Please, do nothing to break that confidentiality.
8. **Do not** leave messages with baby-sitters, children, or answering machines, except your name and phone number. Baby-sitters can be church members. Children may not know that the parent is considering moving. You do not know who may overhear your message on an answering machine. And **never** leave a message on an answering machine at the minister’s office.
9. Be sparse in your use of neutral pulpits. If the minister is talking to you, they probably are talking to others. They have only a limited number of Sundays when they can be away from their home pulpit [generally 6 per year]. They are using their vacation to

preach in a neutral pulpit.

10. Regarding telephone interviews, this is better than communicating by mail (email or otherwise) **but not much!** A Skype, Zoom, FaceTime or other such visual conferencing is highly preferable to telephone. Once you have done that sort of interview, you will want to communicate face to face as well.

### *Preparation for Interviewing*

Because PNC's recognize that much about the call process is experiential -- "the chemistry between people", "the movement of the Holy Spirit"-- they often move quickly to meet with potential candidates. This is a good time to remember the Presbyterian balance between "ardor and order" or "heart and head".

Before you meet with any candidate:

Every member of the PNC should read the PIF thoroughly and score the candidate on the basis of criteria your committee has set for its future leader.

Compare the PIF with your MIF.

Do this person's experience and skills match what you are seeking?

- Have they lived and worked in a setting like yours?
- Do they have the years of experience you are seeking?
- Do they exhibit skills that you need?
- Do the pastoral activities ratings match yours closely?

Review other materials the candidate may send you. Recordings of sermons, bulletins, newsletters, etc.

Prepare for the interview. What information do you want and need in order to evaluate this person as your future leader? What questions will be asked and who will ask them? What information will the candidate want to know about your church and community? Gather this information before the interview.

Come to consensus as a committee so that you convey clarity and harmony. Be clear about the job you are asking your new leader to do and the type of person you are seeking. Interviews are not the time for the committee to sort out their differences over the body of an unsuspecting candidate!

Be clear about your process for decision-making - what are the steps you will go through?

What is your approximate timeline?

If the candidate is coming to your community, arrange a tour that gives a good picture of your church and community, but be careful to protect confidentiality. Do not include non-PNC members in the visit or introduce the candidate around town. This is a small world and many stories are told about pastors who became "lame ducks" because congregations back home

heard that they were out interviewing.

When interviewing a candidate, it is helpful to begin with acknowledging where you are in the process. Let the candidate know that there are other candidates being interviewed and your conversations are one step in the discernment process. This acknowledgement can be freeing for the times when you slip and say “when you are our pastor....” instead of “if you were our pastor....”

***During the Interview with the Candidate -***

Some Questions You Might Ask:

Tell us about your faith journey.

What are the things you feel best about in your present ministry? What have been the challenges there?

What interests you about this position? What do you bring to our ministry?

What are your greatest strengths in ministry? ...your greatest weaknesses?

One of our goals is to strengthen our\_\_\_\_\_. How would you envision doing that?

Describe a typical week in your ministry.

Share your perspective on the Presbyterian Church (USA).

One of the issues our Session has debated in the past few years is\_\_\_\_\_. Tell us how you might address that topic.

If we selected you as our pastor (or other role), when could you start and what would be your start-up plan?

How do you balance your personal/family life with your ministry?

What will you need from us, the members of this church, in order to be effective as our pastor?

What questions or concerns do you have?

You will also want to develop questions related to the specific candidate. These will come out of things you read in the PIF and things you hear from references.

### *A few words about appropriate questions*

Neither civil nor church law mandate prohibited questions. Many Presbyterians who serve on PNC's are familiar with secular employment practices where it is illegal to ask certain questions of a prospective employee. Because the ministries of the Church belong to the Church, the rules are different for search committees interviewing church professionals. Search committees and presbyteries have the right and responsibility to ask questions that will help them determine "fitness for office".

Pursuant to Salem Presbytery's AAEEEO policy: "no one, either negligently or deliberately, will be excluded from consideration because of their race, ethnic origin, sex, age, marital status, or disabilities." Also, according to this policy, the PNC will need to provide documentation at the end of the process that these requirements have been fulfilled.

From Fred Jenkins, Director - Office of Constitutional Services, excerpt from PCUSA Polity Reflection #19, July 1998

"6. Q. What may those who examine church officers do?"

A. Each examining body, a CPM, COM, PNC, Nominating Committee, Session, or Presbytery decides its own procedures, as it does now. They may ask what is necessary to satisfy themselves of the fitness, or lack of fitness, of the person for the church office under consideration. The committee may not discriminate solely on the basis of sexual orientation. Each examining body decides when it is satisfied, but may be subject to administrative review or judicial review. For example, see the judicial decision in Bedford-Central Church v. Presbytery of New York City, Minutes 1987 page 119 in which the decision of the candidates committee received administrative review on the floor of presbytery and the presbytery's decision subsequently received judicial review.

Applicants, especially candidates, need to understand that religious institutions are permitted to discriminate on the basis of religious belief and may enforce standards of n's performance of ministry? character that apply to a person's private life to a degree that is not legally permitted in secular occupations and professions."

Given this legal environment, COM's and PNC's should, above all, exercise Christianity, common sense, and Presbyterian decency and order as they seek to discern the call to a leader for God's people.

## Reference Checking Information

### **When is the best time for reference checking to be done in a search process?**

It is wise for a PNC to do basic reference checks as soon as they know that the candidate is available and interested in being considered. When a PNC has narrowed its search to 3-5 finalists it shall request the General Presbyterian to conduct a Presbyterian-Presbyterian reference check before anyone is brought in for a face-to-face interview. If difficulties are found, it is easier for everyone if that is known early in the process.

### **On what grounds do COM's or PNC's have the right to screen out candidates?**

Employment as a Presbyterian minister is not a right. Courts have established that the ministries of the Church of Jesus Christ belong to the Church and tasks are assigned to particular persons for the service of its members and the world. The Church must make such assignment responsibly.

### **What questions should a Pastor Nominating Committee ask of a reference?**

It is appropriate and important to ask questions related to the candidate's skills and experience that relate to the position being filled. Such questions might be: "Tell me about John Doe's worship leadership" or "How does Jane deal with conflict?" It is important to ask references to respond only on the basis of first-hand knowledge. It is usually helpful to tell the reference a bit about the congregation, community, and position for which the candidate is being considered.

### **Are there other questions that a COM member should ask?**

"Why is John Doe leaving his present position?"

"Are there any things about Jane that negatively affect her ability to do ministry?"

"Would you welcome this person to serve in a similar position in your presbytery?"

### **What do you do when a PIF does not contain the sexual misconduct sign-off section or Stated Clerk's signature?**

Ask the candidate for a complete PIF or do not consider them further.

What do you do when a candidate is not able to sign the sexual misconduct statement (see below) in the affirmative?

\_\_\_\_\_ I certify by the signature below that no civil, criminal, ecclesiastical complaint has ever been sustained\* or is pending\* against me for sexual misconduct; and that I have never resigned or been terminated from a position for reasons related to sexual misconduct.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am unable to make the above certification. I offer, instead, the following description of the complaint, termination, or the outcome of the situation with explanatory comments.

For PNC's - Turn this matter over to the General Presbyter and trust their advice.

**What are secondary references?**

These are persons who are not listed by the candidate, but are suggested by others or contacted because they are thought to have knowledge of the candidate. Executive Presbyters, Stated Clerks, COM Moderators, and CPM Moderators do **NOT** fall in this category. They are automatically used as references because of their roles and no authorization is needed from the candidate to consult with them.

**Under what circumstances is it appropriate for PNC members to contact secondary references?**

Secondary references 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 the candidate's permission to do so.

**What happens when a presbytery check reveals negative information?**

If the information leads the General Presbyter to have serious doubts about the candidate's ability to do effective ministry in the particular church, the Presbyter will advise the PNC to not move forward with this candidate. The PNC should not expect the General Presbyter to share specific details as they have likely been shared in confidence.

**What are background checks?**

Background checks are assessments of a candidate's character and fitness for employment. They may include checks of employment, credit, criminal, and motor vehicle records.

**Should they be done on candidates for pastoral positions? On every minister transferring presbytery membership?**

Yes! The Presbytery office will do this background check on the final candidate.

## Sample Questions for References

(This has been provided as an aid to PNC's as they interview the References listed on a particular PIF. Questions particular to the situation should be added and asked of all references.)

Candidate \_\_\_\_\_

Reference \_\_\_\_\_

Person checking reference \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Purpose of the call and thanks for willingness to help us. Introduce self and tell name of church and position.

Statement of intent: We are looking for that person whose natural gifts, training and prior experience is a "fit" with what we believe our church needs, given the opportunities God has placed before us.

How do you know this person?

How would you describe this person's work habits?

Tell me what you know about their past and present ministry and highlight your sense of their greatest strengths.

Since none of us are perfect at everything, are there some areas where the candidate has noticeable weaknesses?

How have you seen this person demonstrate administrative skills?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate this person's preaching ability? \_\_\_\_\_

How often have you heard them preach? How would you describe their style?

On the following four questions, if the rating is low, ask “May I ask why you say that?”)

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate this person’s teaching ability? \_\_\_\_\_

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate this person’s spiritual development skills?\_\_\_\_\_

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate this person’s administrative leadership? \_\_\_\_\_

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate this person’s pastoral care abilities? \_\_\_\_\_

How well does this person work with other staff members, and lay leaders?

Besides being professionally competent, we are looking for someone who fits well in our community. What can you tell me about his/her non-work activities, e.g. hobbies, community involvement, family, etc.?

To put you on the spot, if you were in my shoes, would you be enthusiastic about calling him/her?

Is there anything else I haven’t asked or you think I should know?

When the top 2-3 candidates have been identified by the PNC and before they are invited for on-site interviews, their names and Presbytery affiliation are given to the General Presbyter (GP) who will contact the candidates' presbytery to perform a Presbyter-Presbyter executive check. Assuming the way be clear, the GP will give the PNC permission to invite top candidates for in- person interviews. Under no circumstances should there be further conversation with candidates until the Presbyter-Presbyter check is complete.

### ***Dealing with Candidates for Ordination***

When the person being considered by the PNC is a Candidate for Ordination as a Minister of Word and Sacrament, there are special issues. The candidate must have been certified ready to receive a call from their presbytery of care and have had a Form 6 completed. That certification means that the candidate has passed all of their standard ordination examinations; that the candidate has received a degree from an ATS (the Association of Theological Schools) accredited theological school; and that they have shown a proficiency in Greek and Hebrew. You can obtain a Form 6 from the Committee on Preparation for Ministry that has oversight of the candidate.

If the candidate does not have a Form 6, STOP CONSIDERATION IMMEDIATELY and contact the General Presbyter (336-766-3393). If the Form 6 indicates that there are exceptions (i.e. the candidate did not take Hebrew in Seminary, or the school granting the degree is not accredited by ATS), contact the General Presbyter immediately to see whether the consideration should go forward.

If the candidate becomes the first choice of the committee there are some other considerations: the candidate may move onto the field and begin work (after having been approved by the Examination Committee and the COMTF). In the case of working prior to ordination/installation a contract between the Session and the candidate should be made covering the start date to the date of anticipated ordination & installation. This contract can mirror the approved terms of call.

The candidate will not be able to moderate the Session meeting, administer the Sacraments, or perform a wedding until after having been received at a Presbytery meeting, and ordained. So while a candidate for ordination can begin work, say in November, the person will not be able to moderate a Session meeting, baptize or serve the Lord's Supper, or perform a wedding until after they been received and duly ordained at the next meeting of Presbytery. This is not to discourage a PNC from considering a candidate; it is only to inform them of the limitations they will face.

The Book of Order prevails in the language that states that the calling presbytery shall ordinarily handle the examination and ordination/installation.

## ***Explanation of Terms of Call***

Early in the call process, the Session will need to determine the financial compensation available for a new pastor, including moving costs. This is also a good time to confirm with the church personnel committee (if there is one) as well as the Session all of the compensation responsibilities. The Presbytery determines minimum compensation guidelines annually as required by the Book of Order (G-3.0303c) and may be found on the Salem Presbytery website ([www.salempresbytery.org](http://www.salempresbytery.org)).

The Salem Presbytery minimums include financial compensation (salary, housing, social security offset, continuing education); vacation, study, and maternity/paternity leaves days; and guidelines for sabbatical leave. Annually, the Board of Pensions determines the cost of benefits. ([www.pensions.org](http://www.pensions.org))

As a PNC is led to a particular candidate, there are often further conversations with the Session as well as the candidate about the terms of call. The terms must meet all the minimums set by the Presbytery and some will likely exceed them. The Session recommends the terms of call to the congregation and must be approved by the COM before being presented to the congregation. The terms of call must be approved by Salem Presbytery as recommended by the COM.

## ***Offering the Call***

Before a call may be issued, indeed before your congregational meeting may be called to issue the call to your candidate, your candidate must undergo a Suitability and Fit Interview. That process can be found [here](#).

When you have reached a decision on your first choice, it is appropriate to offer the position to the candidate. If the candidate says that they will accept the call, the PNC informs the COM Liaison. The process for the interview with the COM Task Force on Examinations can be found [here](#). It is the responsibility of the Task Force on Examinations to determine whether the candidate is theologically sound and appropriate for membership in the presbytery. The candidate will then meet with the COMTF.

Prior to the candidate's meeting with the COMTF, the PNC Liaison makes sure that the [call form](#) is filled out properly and meets presbytery's minimum compensation, and that they are in compliance with the Presbytery's [Equal Employment Opportunity Policy](#). At the meeting of the COMTF, the terms of call will be approved and permission will be granted for the PNC to request the Session to call a congregational meeting to issue the call. In addition, the COMTF has the authority to allow a previously ordained person to move onto the field and begin work on the effective date of the call. That means, that we do not have to rush to get something done just to fit the schedule of a Presbytery meeting.

## **PROCESS FOR WHEN AN ASSOCIATE PASTOR ANNOUNCES HIS/HER DEPARTURE**

While it is definitely a time of transition when an Associate Pastor announces his/her departure, the process may not be as involved. The only differences are:

1. A Transition Team is usually selected by the Session as soon as possible after the Session is informed of the Associate Pastor's intention to leave IF it is within the ministry plan of the congregation to fill that position.
2. A Transitional Associate Pastor may or may not be engaged. If the services of a Transitional Associate Pastor are desired, the search process set forth for a Pastor will be undertaken.
3. Unless the church has gone through a Mission Study process within the last five (5) years, a Mission Study will be required. The Pastor may participate in this process.

## THE CALL PROCESS

The Call Process involves the time from the moment your top choice says, “Yes!” until the end of the Installation Service. Once your candidate says yes, and the requisite examinations are successfully completed, there are several constitutional hoops to jump through.

1. At the next Session Meeting (Called or Stated) request that the Session issue a call for a Congregational Meeting **“for the purpose of hearing and acting upon the report of the Pastor (Associate Pastor or Co-Pastor,) Nominating Committee, and taking any other actions pertaining thereto.”** The name of the candidate is NOT given to the Session at this time or any time prior to the congregational meeting.
2. Adequate public notice of the congregational meeting shall be given, according to the congregation’s rule for minimum notification. (Book of Order, G-1.052) This is usually two Sundays. The announcement can be made by a letter and should include public announcement to the congregation gathered in worship.
3. At the Congregational meeting, the Search Committee will announce **for the first time** the name of the candidate along with the complete terms of call. It is appropriate to have the entire committee speak, sharing information about the candidate and the candidate’s family. It is quite alright to prepare a brochure with pictures and information for distribution at the congregational meeting. None of this information should be shared in any form with anyone outside the Search Committee, including the Session **prior to the congregational meeting!**
4. The motion which the Moderator of the Search Committee makes at the congregational meeting is:  
**“I move that the (name of congregation) issues the call, presented previously, to (name of candidate) to serve as our (Pastor/Associate Pastor/Co-Pastor).”**

The vote may be voice vote, show of hands, division of the house, or ballot. If a ballot is used, the counting is normally done by the members of the current session. The results of the balloting are then reported to the congregational meeting and the COM.

5. Following an affirmative vote the Moderator of the Search Committee shall move **“that the members of the search committee be elected by the congregation to sign the call, and to prosecute the call at the next meeting of Salem Presbytery.”**

When that motion passes, the members of the Search Committee sign the [call](#). The Moderator signs the call to certify that the person was indeed called by the congregation. That form can be found [here](#).

6. The final motion of the Moderator of the Search Committee is:  
**“that the Search Committee be dissolved by the Congregation with its thanks, upon the installation of the (Pastor/Associate Pastor/Co-Pastor).”** [The members of the PNC may continue as an advisory group to the new pastor (or Associate Pastor or Co-Pastor) especially during the first year].

7. The call form shall be transmitted to the Office Administrator, Salem Presbytery, P.O.Box 1763, Clemmons, NC 27012.

### **The Ordination and/or Installation Commission**

While it is the responsibility of Presbytery to ordain and/or install all the pastors who are members, it is impractical for all of Presbytery to gather to do this. So, Presbytery appoints an Administrative Commission to do this task on behalf of the whole of Presbytery. It is the practice of Salem Presbytery to allow the minister to be ordained and/or installed to nominate their Commission. The time of meeting and the appropriate dress for the minister members of the Commission are decisions worked out between the minister-elect and the Moderator of the Commission (that is the person Presbytery appoints “to preside and propound.”)

On the appointed day, at the time suggested by the Commission moderator, the Commission convenes and prepares for the service and conducts the Ordination and/or Installation Service. Following the service, the minutes of the Commission are sent to Salem Presbytery.

[An Ordination/Installation Commission Request Form](#) must be completed and submitted to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery for approval. The form comes with directions about the requirements of the Commission. Since *the Book of Order* requires that the elders on a Commission may not be from the same congregation, you can help your candidate by suggesting elders from other congregations who might serve on the Commission. If there are any questions, contact the Chair of the COMTF.

Following the service, the Minutes of the Commission are sent to Salem Presbytery.

## WELCOMING YOUR NEW PASTOR

When a new pastor arrives, after candidating and election and call confirmation, there is usually a big excitement and joy and celebration. It's a grand time that happens after a lot of hard work from your PNC. As a session, there are a few things that are vital to welcoming the new pastor. Often times church members sit back and expect the new pastor to initiate all relationships etc; but it's important to remember that you are welcoming this person into your family. Think about a new "in-law". You wouldn't sit back and say well it's up to you to get to know our family. My sense is everyone would go out of their way to create connections and ways to show the family to the newest member. With that in mind here are some ideas that have been successful for welcoming the new pastor.

***When they candidate:*** ~PNC or session- think of creating a welcoming package for their hotel room- this is a very nice touch- chocolates, cookies, snacks, map of the city, and a note of welcome. Most hotels let you drop this off at the desk and will give it to them when they check in.  
~PNC- After the vote- consider a pot luck or time of celebration- cake etc.  
~Session: Be sure during the congregational meeting that deep appreciation is given to the PNC and members- they have given up over a year of their lives — very important to appreciate them  
~Set up one last meeting with them to gather the following information You might have reps from the following committees or responsibilities.

***Look at the office:*** 1) Ask if they want it painted? 2) They will need new furniture- you might have ideas to offer to them or ask if they want 2 chairs, or several or a sofa etc. Please don't give them something from the youth room- American Furniture Warehouse, Overstock, etc. sells decent chairs etc. for \$60-\$100 each- or they may have their own that they are bringing.

***Show them a business card*** and capture the information they want on it- how they want their name listed, cell phone yes or no etc.

***Ask them about their computer needs-*** do they have their own to use? or do they need a laptop/desktop? or Apple or PC? All of these are things the church can be doing in anticipation of their arrival versus waiting until they are here and their having to adjust to i.e. be out of office to have it painted, or can't get onto accounts because computer not ready to go etc.

***Pictorial Directory:*** if you have one, and if it is relatively current, it is helpful for your new pastor to start to put names and faces together

***When they move to the area:*** 1) It is very nice to have someone take over a bucket of chicken or a meal- some churches have put together a package of welcome- toilet paper, paper towel, soft drinks, light bulbs- batteries— the things that that first moving day people need and can't always find— Even if only a bucket- it's a nice gesture- please don't stay and talk as they are moving- be sensitive to they have a lot to do— 2) It's nice to give them the keys to the church so they can go to their office if needed versus waiting on when the office opens etc.

***When they are moving into their office*** 1) It's nice to have on their first day a plant or flowers- again just to say welcome 2) If they need help moving boxes in- great to have a few to help— 3) Again, being sensitive to not sit and want their full attention as they are moving

***First day*** Its very nice of members of the PNC plan and schedule to take the person to lunch- or coordinate with the staff to do so. It is helpful to have meetings to get to know the staff etc- but balanced - i.e. some settling in space too

***First weeks, months*** Encourage the PNC to take the initiative to schedule 1 elder and 1 deacon once a month- Each officer schedules a time with the pastor and their loved ones, family , or a couple of friends to go to a restaurant, go to something you love doing in the area or cook a meal at their home- when scheduling ask what they have already done so as not to duplicate- and discover their likes- This is an amazing way to introduce them to the area— and to get to know you in a smaller group. As a pastor, Its very hard to get to know the people you are going to serve and this provides a small group thus the pastor gets to know the officers personally and their loved ones.

***\*\*Quarterly Mutual check in with PNC and Session-*** Some presbyteries encourage a rep from PNC to meet with the pastor and elders at session to check in how things are going, to confirm if PNC made any promises and those are being honored, and to clarify if there are any areas that the PNC and session are not on the same page. This is not an evaluation of the pastor. It is acknowledging that the PNC and Session are different people and have different expectations. What one communicated could be different than the other expectations. This is an easy way to create communication and check ins so if there are discrepancies they can be resolved. ***\*\*It's not unusual*** how many pastors were told one thing by their PNC- and then the session later says we didn't agree to that- it is a common disconnect- and this is a great way to ensure clarity and support that doesn't place the pastor in an odd place of having to decide do I listen to the PNC or to the Session.

***Love on your PNC*** Please keep them in your prayers Be mindful they have taken on responsibility of this person called- so when conflict (which will happen) or disappointment (which will also happen after the honeymoon) or feelings this person isn't the most amazing person in the world-they do personalize this.

## Sample Letters

For those in the "C" Pile

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

We have reviewed your PIF, and although you seem to us to be well qualified for ministry, it does not appear to us that your gifts match well with our direction for ministry. We wish you God's blessings in your work.

**Only** if the person **self-referred**, you will also thank them for their interest in your position. Moreover, make sure that you have had some prior contact with the person (informing them that they were on your list of potential candidates). **No one** likes to receive **a rejection letter** for a position **for which** they did **not know** they were **under consideration**.

## Thanks for the Referral

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

On behalf of the \_\_\_\_\_ Pastoral Nominating Committee, we'd like to acknowledge your recommendation of \_\_\_\_\_ for our consideration. We want to thank you for taking the time to help us peer over horizons we can't even see. And we thank you as well for your concern for our process and for the life of \_\_\_\_\_ Presbyterian Church.

As we move into this work of discernment, we would ask for your continued prayer and support. Much of the work will be confidential. It will be a burden for us not to be able to share with you what we know. And it will be a burden for you not to be informed about all the things we are doing. Having such a wall of separation between us at such a critical moment in time, we need each other more than ever. So we invite you to covenant with us to pray for each other as we take this journey. May God continue to bless us as we go.

Grace and Peace,

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Corresponding Secretary

## Thanks for your PIF

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

This is just a quick note to let you know that we have received your information. We look forward to reviewing it. Our committee meets on \_\_\_\_\_ evening of each week. It will probably be a week or two before we listen to your material together and share our responses to your written material.

We know that this can be an anxious time for you. Our prayers continue to include you and your family. And we will be in touch with you one way or another when we determine next steps.

Grace and Peace,

---

Corresponding Secretary

## Request for Further Information

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

We understand that this is an anxious time for you as you mentally "try on" a \_\_\_\_\_  
pastorate. We don't want to leave you dangling. Toward that end, it is our intent to keep  
you posted on our process. Our goal is to let no more than a month elapse without being in  
touch with you. If nothing else we will tell you we are swamped but still aware of our  
ongoing conversation.

As interested as you might be in \_\_\_\_\_, we know that you are listening in more than  
this one place. If there comes a time when it becomes clear that you are being called in  
another direction, please let us know. While it would remove you from our consideration, it  
would confirm for us the presence of God in this process and allow us to celebrate for and  
with you.

As always, we hold you in our prayers and look forward to hearing from you.

Grace and Peace,

---

Corresponding Secretary

## Request for Dialogue

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

It has been recommend to our Pastoral Nominating Committee that you be considered as a potential candidate for pastor of\_\_\_\_\_. Whenever someone who knows us is excited about a particular minister for us, we pay attention. We would like to invite you into our process. Our MIF may be found on the denominational web site. Our PIN is #\_\_\_\_\_. We'd like to request a copy of your PIF and a sermon CD/DVD (audio or video.)

As we move along similar paths of discernment, know that our prayers are with you in your journey.

Grace and Peace,

---

Corresponding Secretary

## **Declining Further Consideration**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

We have reviewed the information you have sent us. It is obvious that your gifts for ministry are significant. It is our sense, though, that your strengths and our needs are not a match.

We want to thank you for the time, energy and prayer you have given to our process. We will continue to hold you in our prayers as we both continue this work of discernment. If you are so moved, we'd love to hear from you when your process is complete so that we may celebrate with you and pray for you and your congregation.

Grace and Peace,

---

Corresponding Secretary

## Monthly Contact

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

It's been a few weeks since we last wrote to you. We wanted to let you know that we haven't forgotten about you. We are

- \* still early in the process and reviewing information
- \* in the middle part of our process and narrowing the field
- \* about to complete the middle part of our process and getting it down to a few

candidates We want you to know that your name still before us.

We're getting excited here about the coming of

- \* Easter
- \* Spring
- \* Graduation
- \* Whatever

We can't help but get excited about the possibility of sharing it next year with a new pastor. And we know that you probably have mixed emotions about it too - this possibly being the last celebration where you are and next year being in a new venue. The journey is always a roller coaster.

As always, our prayers surround you and your family.

Grace and Peace,

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Corresponding Secretary

## Go For It

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

This is a letter to confirm our recent telephone conversation. It's taken a while, a long time for both of us. But our committee has determined that we would like to take things to a deeper level if you are still open to that. While you are not the only candidate at this point, but we are very excited about you.

Our video-conference call will be at \_\_\_\_\_ time on \_\_\_\_\_ day. You may call into/link into the following number, \_\_\_\_\_. We'd like to keep it at under (30 min., 1 hour...) We'd like to spend the first part of it asking you questions and hearing your responses. The second part is an opportunity for you to ask questions, raise concerns and get to know us.

We'll see where things go from there and will continue to be intentional about staying in touch. At this point we would invite you to feel free to contact us as you need to for this process to proceed.

Know that we are thinking of you, wishing you all good things and holding you in our prayers. We look forward to talking with you soon.

Grace and Peace,

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Corresponding Secretary

## CARING FOR YOUR PASTOR

### *Some Needs Identified*

Fewer persons have entered the pastorate in recent decades than in earlier decades. There are fewer pastors in the PCUSA currently than there are churches.

We now hear from some seminary graduates who say, “Have training; not interested in working.” Fewer recent graduates have a sense of calling to our overwhelming number of small churches and few are able to accept a part-time call. Once there, pastors often leave a congregation just when it seems it’s time for some really good things to occur.

There are a number of causes that are being identified. Some of the factors include:

- lack of appreciation
- high level of expectations
- unreasonable expectations
- extremely long work hours
- weeks when it is ‘impossible’ to have a day off; or time with family, or. . .
- lack of Sabbath space when spiritual life can be nourished (since the work is constantly draining one’s reservoirs)
- rarely have two (and almost never three) days off in a row, unless using vacation
- high level of confidential information that must be carried alone leads to extremely high stress levels and health problems
- focus by so many in congregation on the little gritty matters of life - color of carpet, where the flowers were placed, why pastor didn’t speak. . . or visit x, y or z, etc. “All I seem to hear are complaints, about everything from a to z.”
- expected to act in ways that are beyond human capacity
- pastorate is no longer seen as a vocation to be sought after

### *Some Guidelines for Caring*

1. Express your caring in genuine ways:

- share appreciation for sermon, visit, meaningful prayer or worship service, etc.
- stop by just to “see how pastor is doing.” And don’t let pastor turn focus to you.

- drop off a bag of apples or a watermelon, just to say “I care.” Items like these can also express caring for the pastor’s family, who often pay a high price for claims on the parent’s time, energy, love and. . .
  - If young children are involved, share with a small group the cost of a sitter.
  - Also, ask the pastor what the best time is to call, and pass the word around.
2. Help the congregation to look seriously at how they care or don’t:
- looking at what they expect, demand and get angry about if it doesn’t happen as they expect, even to the timing.
  - find ways to work out “color of carpet,” etc. type concerns without involving the pastor. Such actions should be the result of a session’s decision.
  - explore with the Personnel Committee what type appreciation they are expressing on behalf of the congregation. One church’s committee provides a special dinner for the pastor and pastor’s family during the early days of December. What type things do yours do?
  - carefully choose members to serve on the Personnel Committee. It’s often the pastor’s major link to sanity and help.
3. Improve communication throughout the congregation:
- When negative feedback about the pastor is heard, don’t assume it’s true without checking it out. One pastor recently described his experience of going to help an older gentleman do some work in his basement and later hearing that the man said, “The pastor never visits me.”
  - Give feedback to the pastor when requested or when you have clarified that this is a time when the pastor is willing to receive it.
  - Avoid triangulation - i.e. if someone asks you to “tell the pastor this or that” (complaint), encourage person to talk directly with the pastor.
  - Avoid having the pastor be the scapegoat for the session or any other person/group
  - If some step turns out to be a goof, taken prematurely or the cause of a “blow-up,” the session should take responsibility if it resulted from their decision.
  - Be honest and stand behind what you say. Sometimes elders/members say one thing to the pastor’s face and then say nothing when the matter comes up in Session or Congregational or committee meeting.
  - Help the congregation to know that the clearer and more direct the communication is, the healthier will be the congregation and their relationship with the pastor.

4. Identify boundaries and draw up a covenant:

- A written covenant between the pastor, session and congregation can lead toward a healthier pastor, session and congregation. It should be worked out between all parties. Presbytery can provide assistance and guidance materials.
- Lack of clear boundaries are a major source of frustration, overwork and burnout. Agree on some healthy boundaries, then follow up, making sure that the pastor is abiding by them, earnestly trying to. For example:
  - + number of hours of work in a day
  - + number of evenings in which pastor is ever to work and be away from family (save for emergencies)
- Encourage the pastor to use an answering machine during meal hours, responding only to emergencies
- Train the congregation not to call during meals, unless an emergency is involved.
- Make sure the congregation knows what day the pastor does not work and avoid any interruptions except emergencies.

5. Educate the congregation to understand that:

- the pastor is a real person with downs as well as ups, and with times of questioning, confusion, grieving, etc. An unreal expectation of some church members, for example, is that after a major personal loss, the pastor will be able to carry on as though nothing has happened, especially “if his/her faith is strong enough!!” Thank God we have congregations who know how to care for their pastor and family, as well as be cared for.
- conflict will exist at times. Training can help them work with the pastor through small ones, so they’ll all be prepared for a larger one. Without change, which usually includes some conflict (i.e. difference of opinion about things that matter), growth does not occur, spiritual or any other type.
- Sabbath need and Sabbath keeping are a vital part of a Christian’s life. Help them understand the pastor’s needs, as well as their own, that can be met through Sabbath keeping.

6. Be creative with:

- meeting times, i.e. 5:30 - 7:00, so pastor can have evening at home
- ways to provide time off when emergencies have deleted regularly scheduled periods off.
- unusual ways to schedule Sabbath time ( Fri. /Sat. Or Mon/Tues)
- ways to begin planning for a sabbatical, even though it may be four, five or six years in the future. It’s a goal worth moving toward.

7. During the first few years of a pastorate:
  - Have individuals host small groups of members to meet the pastor and spouse, for fellowship and some structured sharing.
  - Invite the pastor (and family) to a meal in your home, even if the food is “picked up,” so your family can get to know them and vice versa.
8. Be open to new ideas, opportunities for change, listen, try.

### ***Congregational Care for Pastor Possibilities***

1. YMCA membership or club membership (swim, racquetball, golf, other exercise options) paid for by church & expectation that pastor will use it.
2. Insist on a day off and announce and reinforce to congregation
3. If the day off falls on a holiday or is interfered with by wedding, funeral, etc., choose a substitute in next two weeks.
4. Recognize need for extra break after heavy event or season like Christmas and Easter.
5. Occasional gift certificates for night out in response to an especially good event or act.
6. A surprise weekend away with reservations and church finds substitute.
7. Personnel Committee identify and publicize some of unique stresses on ministry.
8. Encourage members to write positive notes of thank you to pastor and to family members.
9. Establish a sabbatical policy - to provide a sabbatical period after 4-6 years of service.
10. Encourage an occasional one-day retreat that is not vacation.
11. Identify a member who will offer a vacation cabin to pastor. for study leave, vacation, retreat, etc.
12. Offer to provide a monthly stress/spiritual counseling.
13. Develop specific strategies to help pastor through divorce/widowhood.
14. Hold an annual “Pastor Appreciation Day.”
15. Provide one or two weekends off annually that are not related to vacation, one tying in with an annual three-day weekend.

16. Encourage your pastor's acceptance of responsibility for self care.
17. Listen to the pastor's suggestions and ideas regarding change. Explore them together.
18. Draw up a covenant with the pastor and Session. Presbytery can provide samples.

***Congregational Care for Spouse and/or Family Ideas***

1. Offer to supply babysitting for a church event.
2. Offer to supply babysitting for an evening out.
3. Offer a surprise recognition ceremony for spouse and all he/she does to support the ministry of the clergy.
4. Support clergy attendance at children's events, parent/teacher meetings, etc as balance for all the extra evening meetings.
5. Occasionally offer gift certificate for a special night out.
6. Recognize ambiguity of spouse serving as officer and voice it for congregation.
7. Find way, (unfinished term) to enable spouse to be ordained so can serve larger church, accompany clergy in serving communion, etc.
8. Recognize spouse's gifts to church independent of being married to clergy.
9. Lift up separate identity of spouse.
10. Provide season ticket to theater or even individual tickets to special sporting event, etc.
11. If have manse, permit couple to make choices regarding color, rugs, etc.
12. When the pastor first arrives, have the PNC gather introductory material about surrounding community. (i.e. like welcome committee)
13. Provide a mother or father with young children a free morning or day off occasionally.
14. Have a frank talk with the spouse about where they want to be involved in the life of the congregation and then support the chosen level of involvement.

***Remember:***

Some clergy are their own worst enemies (some know this, others don't)

Some need control; think no one can do the job like they can, believe that their role calls them to be a servant at all times, doing whatever anyone asks or providing whatever anyone needs.

Challenge them! Especially when you ask how you can help and hear, "Oh, everything's all right. I don't need any help." A possible response - "I'd like to help you, but you seem to want to do everything yourself"

**CLERGY SELF CARE IDEAS**

1. The very first thing for clergy self-care is to develop a Sabbath mind set.
2. You aren't ultimately in charge and taking time to re-create yourself, and re-connect with God and neighbor (especially spouse and family) is a testimony to your trust in God.
3. Full vacation time should be used.
4. Study leave should be taken.
5. A definite day off should be identified, announced and taken.
6. Some sort of physical exercise program should be practiced.
7. It is useful to do this at some health club or Y program that builds in a commitment.
8. A strong prayer discipline is a spiritual lifeline.
9. A spiritual advisor is a very helpful resource and regular visits are advised.
10. A scripture reading program, which would allow scripture to speak to you personally, would be helpful.
11. Discover one or more colleagues that you feel comfortable being totally honest with and meet with them on a fairly regular basis for peer sharing/support. Hopefully, your mentor can be one of these colleagues.
12. Identify a hobby that is clearly removed from your work that can allow you to separate yourself from the work, even for a brief time.
13. Identify some friends outside the church with whom you can socialize.

**MOST IMPORTANTLY:** Pray for your pastor each and every day and encourage your congregation to do the same. More things are wrought by prayer than by all the above and many more!!

## Bible Studies for PNC

Borrowed from the Presbytery of Arkansas, Compiled by Bill Branch

1. I Samuel 16:1, 4-13 – God does not look on the outward appearance but on the heart. What are some “heart” qualities that God might want in your next pastor? Samuel had to go through the whole number of Jesse’s sons. He even had to have Jesse bring in one more. What is this saying to your PNC about patience and the time this process may take? How can you listen for God’s voice as you look at the parade of candidates for your next pastor?
2. Genesis 12:1-9 – Discuss the faith of Abram to go into the unknown with only God to guide him. God made promises to Abram at several points along the journey. What were they? What do you think are God’s promises to you and your PNC?
3. Luke 1:26-38 – What do you think of God’s unorthodox methods? How can we have the same kind of faith in God that Mary had that God will do “great things” (cf. v.49) for us? Remember that it took nine months for Mary to see the results of her “labor.”
4. I Corinthians 12:4-14 – What are some of the “gifts” that we believe this congregation needs in our next pastor? What are the “gifts” that we can and should supply from the congregation?
5. I Timothy 5:17-18 – What is fair compensation for a minister? What does this congregation (and session) have to change in order to pay your next pastor fairly?
6. Jeremiah 1:4-10 – Why was Jeremiah an unlikely prophet? What surprises might God have in store for this PNC?
7. Isaiah 6:1-8 – Where was Isaiah when he heard the voice of God? What does that say about how we ought to go about our task as a PNC? Did it matter that Isaiah was a sinner? How did God deal with Isaiah’s sin? How will God deal with our sin?
8. Philippians 2:1-11 – What does this passage say about our need for humility? Is it possible for us to look beyond our own interests and selfishness to the interests of others? What are some qualities mentioned here that we should seek in our next pastor?
9. Romans 12:1-21 – What does this say about the role of the PNC and the congregation in the leadership of the congregation: Before a pastor is called? After the next pastor is called? What does this say about the tendency of some churches to expect the pastor to be all things to all people?
10. Judges 4:1-10 – Was Deborah an unlikely leader for God’s people in her day? Why do you think that God chose her? Note that she work together with Barak. Are there ways that your congregation could work with an unlikely leader to bring glory to God and to God’s church today?
11. Exodus 3:1-12 – Note that God says that he will go with Moses. What helps you to know

that God is/will be with you as you fulfill the call of God to find a new pastor? What kind of challenges can you place before the candidates with whom you talk about being your new pastor?

12. Matthew 5:1-16 – Which of these attributes do you think it will be important for your next pastor to have? Which of them will be the most important?
13. Psalm 100 – How important is it for you and your PNC to worship God as you go through this journey? How important is it that your next pastor be a person of joy and thanksgiving? What should you look for in that person's worship leadership that speaks of joyful celebration. What in his or her life should you look for to see if s/he can "serve the Lord with gladness"?
14. Luke 15:3-7 – What qualities should you look for that tells you that a pastor cares about single individuals? What should the next pastor's attitude toward sinners be?
15. Psalm 23 – Do you feel the presence of the Lord with you? Where do you feel God's presence most: In prayer? In Bible study? In your work as a PNC? In worship? What quality of "righteousness" should you look for in a new pastor? In what way do you want the new pastor to be a shepherd?
16. Philippians 4:8-9 – Have you treated the people with whom you have dealt with grace? With justice? Have you spent time thinking about excellence in your church and have you given praise for the Presbyterian Church and its process?
17. Mark 1:1-8 – In what ways do you want your next pastor to be like John the baptizer? In what ways do you NOT want your next pastor to be like John?
18. I Timothy 3:1-7 – Remember that these were the characteristics of a church leader in the first century C.E. Which of these still apply to pastors today? Which of them do not apply?
19. Psalm 13 – The Psalmist is obviously discouraged as the Psalm begins. Do you feel discouraged in this task? What did the Psalmist do to work through his discouragement? Is it O.K. to complain to God? Note the element of faith with which the Psalm ends.
20. II Timothy 1:3-7 – When you think of the pastors (or candidates) with whom you have spoken or whose PIFs you have read, what should you be praying for them about? Have you prayed for each person whose PIF you have read? How would that change her or his life? How would it change yours?
21. John 1:29-34 – What are the ways that you would like your new pastor to witness to Jesus Christ? What are ways that you and s/he together can allow Jesus Christ to be the Head of the Church (Book of Order G-1.0100)?
22. Isaiah 40:1-5 – In what ways do you want your next pastor to bring comfort to you; to the congregation? What are some ways that YOU can bring comfort to the congregation; to the next pastor?

23. Philippians 4:4-7 – In what ways have the prayers which you have prayed during this journey brought you closer to God? What are some things that you can do to help your next pastor have time to rejoice and to spend time with God in prayer?
24. Hosea 11:1-9 – The Prophet speaks of the amazing love of God that will not turn against God's people. In what ways have you seen this love in the process of seeking a pastor? How can you show that love to others, including your next pastor?
25. I Corinthians 13:1-14:1a – What are the ways that the PNC can show love toward our new pastor? What are the ways that we would like the congregation as a whole to show that love? How can we communicate that to the congregation?
26. Psalm 133 – Is there within our congregation a spirit of love and unity? If not, what can we do to promote it? If so, what can we do to continue it?