

**Presbytery of Baltimore Commission on Ministry (COM)**  
**Identifying and Contracting with a Temporary Pastor**  
*Interim, Transitional, Bridge, or Temporary Supply Pastor*  
Revised January 2024

The *Book of Order* of the Presbyterian Church (USA) defines two broad categories of pastoral relationships for Ministers of Word and Sacrament -- Installed Pastoral Relationships and Temporary Pastoral Relationships (G-2.0504).

The installed pastoral relationships are pastor, co-pastor, associate pastor, and designated pastor. They are selected by the vote of the congregation, in partnership with the Presbytery's Commission on Ministry, and serve for an indefinite or designated term. Information on seeking installed pastors is found on the [Presbytery's website](#).

Temporary pastoral relationships are approved by the Presbytery and do not carry a formal call or installation. Titles and terms of service for temporary relationships are determined by the Presbytery. The session invites pastors to serve in temporary relationship for a specified period not to exceed twelve months in length, which is renewable by session with COM's approval.

In the Presbytery of Baltimore, temporary pastor positions may take one of several forms, depending on the congregation's needs and staffing plans.

- Interim Pastor (or Interim Associate Pastor) – A Teaching Elder/Minister of Word and Sacrament serving under contract with a church's session during the transition between installed pastors. Ordinarily, the Interim Pastor is not eligible to be considered for the installed position. The Interim Pastor guides the congregation in assessing its current needs and envisioning its future mission. With COM's permission, the church may elect a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) to seek the congregation's next installed pastor.
- Transitional Pastor – This role is ideal for congregations in need of deep discernment for future direction and the appropriate pastoral leadership model for the long run. The Transitional Pastor is a Minister of Word and Sacrament who serves for a designated period of no more than 2-3 years, as determined in consultation with session and COM, under renewable contracts no longer than 12 months in length. The Transitional Pastor may be considered for the installed position with permission of  $\frac{3}{4}$  of COM and Presbytery.
- Bridge Pastor – While a search is underway for an Interim or Transitional Pastor, the session may contract with a Minister of Word and Sacrament for a brief period (usually 3-6 months). The Bridge Pastor preaches, moderates, and offers emergency pastoral care, usually working part-time basis at an hourly rate.
- Temporary Supply Pastor - When a church is temporarily without the services of a pastor, the session may contract with a Temporary Supply Pastor for a limited time, until the pastor has returned to the church or longer-term arrangements for pastoral leadership are made. Like the Bridge Pastor, the Supply Pastor preaches, moderates, and offers emergency pastoral care, usually working part-time at an hourly rate.

- Another temporary relationship, the Presbytery Staff Interim, is described in a separate procedures document entitled *Contracting with the Presbytery's Staff Interim*.

This document provides guidance for filling temporary pastoral relationships. The basic process is for the most part essentially the same regardless of the position title. Where differences exist, however, they are noted in this procedure. The Commission on Ministry (COM) Liaison assigned to your church can provide more detailed information as needed.

### **Session, COM, and Presbytery Staff Roles**

1. A Temporary Pastor is a Teaching Elder/Minister of Word and Sacrament serving under contract with a congregation's session. The contract cannot exceed one year but is renewable. The congregation does not vote on the Temporary Pastor.
2. In consultation with COM, session considers the appropriateness of a Temporary Pastor in general and the specific role for the congregation in its life and ministry.
3. COM appoints a Liaison to support the session in this process. The Liaison provides information on policies, procedures, and best practices and facilitates communication with COM and Presbytery staff. After the Temporary Pastor is in place, the COM Liaison maintains regular contact with Temporary Pastor and provides status reports on the relationship to COM.
4. Session determines the specific roles the Temporary Pastor will play, the scope of responsibilities, part-time or full-time status, and the compensation package, based on Presbytery compensation guidelines.
5. Session identifies a Search Committee of 3-5 persons to draft the position description for COM and session approval; advertise the position; review and interview potential candidates; and identify a finalist.
6. Session agrees to honor the confidential nature of the Search Committee's role and commits to pray for and encourage the committee in its work.
7. Presbytery staff arranges for presbytery executive checks and background checks on the finalist. The COM Credentials Team examines the finalist for the position and approves the contract.

### **The Search Committee's Role**

1. Expectations
  - The Search Committee allows time for prayerful discernment and trusts in God to direct the work through them.
  - The Search Committee maintains confidentiality. The committee keeps session and congregation informed of their progress but at all times protects the identity of the individuals under consideration.
  - The Search Committee agrees to consider candidates without regard to race, ethnic origin, gender, marital status, or disability according to the presbytery's plan for inclusiveness in employment.
  - The Search Committee organizes for efficient and effective work, identifying a

chairperson and other needed roles (note taking, communicating with candidates, drafting updates for session and congregation, etc.)

2. The Search Committee's responsibilities, broadly speaking, are as follows. Each is described more fully below.

- Drafts and posts a position description for advertising the position on the Presbytery's website
- Receives and reviews candidates' Personal Information Forms (PIFs)
- Interviews candidates and conducts reference checks
- Identifies a finalist and negotiates a contract
- Working with the COM Liaison, arranges for Presbytery Executive reference checks, background check, and Credentials Committee interview for the finalist

3. Advertise the position

- Draft a position description for the Temporary Pastor position, obtain COM Liaison and Session's approval of it, and send it to the Presbytery for posting on the Presbytery's website. (Contact: Frank Perelli, Communications Manager, Presbytery of Baltimore, [fperelli@baltimorepresbytery.org](mailto:fperelli@baltimorepresbytery.org))
- Contact the General Presbyter about potential candidates. Jackie Taylor, General Presbyter, Presbytery of Baltimore, [jtaylor@baltimorepresbytery.org](mailto:jtaylor@baltimorepresbytery.org)
- To broaden the search for an Interim Pastor*, the Search Committee may post a Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP) on the PCUSA's Church Leadership Connection System. In addition, the Search Committee may advertise in Presbyterian publications, such as [Presbyterian Outlook](#) and [Presbyterians Today](#). Consult with the COM Liaison for assistance on these means of outreach.
- Given the short-term nature of the role, *finding a Bridge Pastor is usually less formal*. It often involves identifying potential candidates that are suggested by COM sources and contacting them directly to determine their interest in the position.

4. Establish a process for receiving, distributing, and tracking PDPs:

- Maintain a simple spreadsheet with names, dates received, and actions taken
- Acknowledge self-referred PDPs and PDPs referred by General Presbyter with a brief thank you email to the candidate
- PDPs received through CLC matches need not be acknowledged

5. Review and discuss the PDPs, narrowing the field to prospective pastors to interview. Your COM Liaison can help you read and understand PDPs.

6. Interview promising candidates.

- Working through your Liaison, arrange for a Presbytery Executive check before scheduling interviews with your leading candidate(s).**
- Schedule the interview(s). Usually the initial interview is conducted by Zoom, and the subsequent interviews in person.
- Prepare interview questions related solely to the requirements of the position and the candidate's qualifications.

- Conduct interview(s), leaving ample time for the candidate to ask questions of the Search Committee.
- Conduct reference checks with those listed on the candidate's PDP. Secondary references (those suggested by the primary references the candidate lists) may be contacted *only* with candidate's approval.
- Take time to debrief, pray, and discern together and individually following each interview.

7. Select the finalist, offer the position, and negotiate the contract, including the hours worked, salary and benefits, estimated start date, and major expectations for the work. Contract forms for the temporary positions are found on the [Presbytery's website](#).

8. The search committee presents the selected candidate's proposed contract *terms* to Session for review and approval. The candidate's identity is *not* revealed to Session until the COM Credentials Interview is completed. Be particularly mindful of confidentiality.

9. Working with the COM Liaison, request a COM Credentials Team interview for the selected candidate. This team examines the candidate for "fit" with the congregation, explores roles the candidate wishes to play in the Presbytery, and reviews the contract for compliance with Presbytery compensation policies. If applicable, the team approves the transfer of the pastor into the Presbytery. Once the Credentials Team approves the candidate, the prospective temporary pastor can be presented to the session for its final approval.

10. The final approved contract is signed, and COM distributes copies for Presbytery and congregation files. The search committee informs candidates who were not selected that the search is complete and arranges for the church's vacancy notice on the Presbytery website and on CLC to be taken down.

11. The Temporary Pastor begins work. The session:

- Informs the congregation and shares background information on the Temporary Pastor
- Assists with housing arrangements and other means of welcoming the new pastor
- Ensures the pastor's office is ready for the new pastor
- Introduces the pastor to the congregation and arranges opportunities to get to know the new pastor
- Arranges for updating the church website and social media pages with information on the new pastor
- Dismisses the Search Committee with thanksgiving for its work.