

Presbytery of Baltimore Commission on Ministry (COM)

The Role of the COM Liaison

March 2023

The Transitions Team of the Commission on Ministry (COM) supports congregations during times of change in pastoral leadership. The transition period begins with the announcement of a pending pastoral vacancy, continues through the search for new leadership, and ends with the completion of the first year “check-in” with the new pastor and session.

COM appoints and trains COM Liaisons to be the prime point of contact for a church during the transition period. The Liaison is the face of the Presbytery for the session, pastors, moderators, and search committees; a source of information on transition policy, procedures, and best practices; and a source of encouragement and prayer for all involved.

Transitions are as unique as the congregations involved, and unique situations and questions will arise. The Liaison keeps COM informed of major milestones, consults COM for assistance as needed, and responds to questions from sessions, pastors, and search committees in a timely manner.

The Liaison’s tasks and time commitment vary depending on the phase of the transition timeline and the complexity of the situation. With COM’s support, the Liaison will:

- Get to know the congregation
 - check the church website and PCUSA statistical data
 - consult with Stated Clerk for relevant information in church files
 - contact the departing pastor for context and background information
 - conduct the exit interview with the departing pastor
- Work with the Session early in the transition to:
 - share important considerations and resources on the search process
 - review ethics guidelines for departing pastor and congregation
 - determine near-term pastoral needs (e.g., pulpit supply, bridge pastor, session moderator)
 - help assess the financial capability and future leadership needs of the congregation
 - determine the appropriate pastoral relationship model (Interim to Installed, Transitional, Designated, Commissioned Ruling Elder, etc.)
- Meet with and maintain regular contact with the search committee to:
 - orient the search committee on the overall search process
 - brief the committee at critical stages of the search process
 - offer encouragement, answer questions in a timely fashion, and resolve issues in consultation with COM
- Maintain regular contact with the pastoral leadership of the congregation during the transition and the search committee, checking in at least monthly.
- Submit regular status reports to the COM Transitions Team Chair.