



PHASE 2 – THE SESSION’S LEADERSHIP DURING TRANSITION

During the period of time following the pastor’s departure until a new pastor is called, the session assumes primary leadership of the church.

- Ordinarily, COM encourages a move to interim ministry, which is meant for a church without a pastor but actively engaged in seeking a new pastor. The session and the COM liaison should have a discussion, probably at their second meeting, to decide if this is the best path to take. Other possibilities include a Temporary Supply Pastor, a Designated Pastor, a Commissioned Ruling Elder, or continuing Pulpit Supply.
- If you are not looking for an interim pastor, to be followed by an installed or designated pastor, then most of the rest of these documents do not apply. You should talk with your COM liaison and look at Appendix 2-3. Note that “temporary” in this context does not necessarily refer to how long the pastor may serve, it just means this is not the usual installed pastor.
- Until an Interim Pastor is hired, the session arranges for pulpit supply preachers. They may be chosen from a current Pulpit Supply List available from the Presbytery office and available on the Presbytery website, or they may be elders of the church, candidates for ordination or those in the inquirer phase of considering ministry.
- COM appoints a moderator for session

The Session

- Begins the Presbytery Partnership with the GP and/or COM member meeting with the session as soon as the Pastor announces to the session that the pastor is leaving.
- Decides on the type of temporary leadership that is appropriate. For churches seeking to call another installed pastor, an interim pastor is usually the appropriate choice. See **Appendix 2-3** for descriptions of the types of temporary leadership.
- Assesses the church’s finances in preparation for an interim pastor and calling a new pastor
- Plans a budget for the PNC.
- Takes care of Board of Pension Vacancy Dues. See **Phase 1, Appendix 1- 2**.
- Appoints an Interim Search Committee, if not already done.
- Reads **Appendices 2-4 and 2-5** to get a sense of interim ministry.

The Interim Search Committee

- Prepares an interim contract, consulting with the session on the compensation package. Note that Interims are ordinarily to be paid at the same rate as the last called pastor. The factor for the position, which sets the pay range, ordinarily cannot be changed for the interim period. The Interim must be paid at least the minimum for the factor range. See the sample contract in **Appendix 2-6**. Questions about the factor system and the pay range may be answered by “Factoring FAQs” on the COM forms page of the Presbytery website, or by the COM liaison or by the Presbytery office staff.

- Reads **Appendix 2-4**, Interim Ministry Guidelines, and **Appendix 2-5**, Five Developmental Tasks.
- May get names of potential Interims from the GP or may choose to search using the Church Leadership Connection or other networking possibilities.
- Selects an Interim Pastor and negotiate the terms of the contract. **Appendix 2-6** has a link to a sample contract.
- Presents selection and contract to the session and the COM liaison for approval and signing of the contract.
- Requests the COM liaison to take the contract to the Presbytery office. The Presbytery office will make copies, then keep one in the Presbytery office for Commission on Ministry use, mail one to the Interim Pastor, and mail one to the Clerk of Session.

Once the Interim Leadership is in place...

- Session reads about its responsibilities in the process in ON CALLING A PASTOR. A helpful chart is on page 14.
- The session consults with the COM liaison to determine what type of mission study or assessment will be required.
- Session carries out the study OR appoints a committee to carry out the study.
- The session or committee consults **Appendices 2-8** for more information about mission studies. The session or committee consults with the COM liaison or appropriate presbytery staff member regarding mission study models.
- COM reviews and concurs with the study and statement.
- COM gives clearance for election of the Pastor Nominating Committee.

Organizing for the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC)

- Session reviews Part Three, ON CALLING A PASTOR and **Appendix 2-9**.
- The session and the COM liaisons discuss the best way to select nominees for the PNC. In many congregations, the Congregational Nominating Committee is asked to do this. In other congregations, nominees are chosen to represent significant constituencies within the congregation.
- Session suggests the number of persons on the PNC (5 to 9 members, although the congregation may determine the actual number).
- Session prepares the budget for the PNC.
- Nominations to the PNC are made. The PNC must be representative of the entire church. See **Appendix 2-9**.
- Session calls a congregational meeting to elect the PNC.
- Congregation selects the members for the PNC. If possible, the COM liaison should be present for the election.
- COM liaison calls the first meeting of the PNC and serves as its moderator as PNC leadership is elected and meeting dates and times are selected. The COM liaison shares resources with the PNC. See **Appendix 2-10**.

Appendix 2-1
Resources For Sessions And Pastor Nominating Committees

Order the basic references for everyone on the session and PNC. They will educate you and save you endless hours.

The Presbyterian Church USA has rules that have been used to build the church from its very foundation. Put them into use. Now is a good time to strengthen your knowledge of the connexional church.

BASIC REFERENCES FOR SESSION AND PNC

These references may be ordered via the PCUSA website or downloaded from that website. <http://www.pcusa.org>.

- **On Calling A Pastor**
(https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/clc/pdfs/the_revised_on_calling_a_pastor_manual_march_2015.pdf) or go to the PCUSA website and search for this. This is a manual to help participants in the pastoral call process understand their responsibilities and tasks from the time a pastor has announced his or her departure until a new pastor is called and installed. This manual can assist session members, interim pastors, pastor nominating committee members, and presbytery Commission on Ministry members.
- **Book Of Order**
This can be downloaded or ordered from the PCUSA web site. Go to <https://www.pcusa.org> and search for the Book of Order
- **Searching For A Pastor The Presbyterian Way: A Roadmap For Pastor Nominating Committees** by Dean E. Foose (Paperback - Nov 2000), may be purchased from Amazon.com or Cokesbury.
- **Mission Yearbook Of Prayer**
(<http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/missionyearbook/>)
Listen to the podcast or subscribe to the email version.
- **Presbyterian Planning Calendar**
(<http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/planning-calendar/>)
This 19-month calendar contains many aids for pastors and other church leaders.

INTERIM PERIOD

These are additional resources that sessions and interim pastors may find useful during the interim period. Those listed here are available from bookstores and from Amazon.com. Check with the Presbytery Resource Center to see if there are copies that might be borrowed.

- Roger Nicholson, **Temporary Shepherds: A Congregational Handbook For Interim Ministry**, Alban Institute, 1998
- Alan G. Gripe, **The Interim Pastor’s Manual**, Geneva Press; Revised edition

(June 1997)

- Loren B. Mead, **A Change Of Pastors: ... And How It Affects Change In The Congregation**. Alban Institute (April 30, 2005)

CONGREGATIONAL MISSION AND MINISTRY STUDIES

These are resources that sessions and interim pastors may find useful as they proceed with a mission study or assessment. Those listed here are available from bookstores and from Amazon.com.

- This is a guideline to the way Baltimore Presbytery conducts a ministry assessment: <https://baltimorepresbytery.org/wp-content/uploads/Ministry-Assessment-for-a-Transitioning-Church.pdf>
- Carl S. Dudley and Nancy T. Ammerman, **Congregations In Transition: A Guide For Analyzing, Assessing, And Adapting In Changing Communities** (Paperback), Jossey-Bass; 1 edition (February 20, 2002)
- Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, ed. **Studying Congregations: A New Handbook**, Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN, 1998

Appendix 2-2
Roles During The Search

In the Presbytery of Baltimore, the Commission on Ministry shall”... counsel with churches regarding calls for permanent pastoral relations...”. [Presbytery Manual 11.7.5.5] It shall also approve calls for pastoral services and invitations for temporary pastoral services and provide oversight of congregations without pastoral services. (Book of Order G-3.0307)

The Commission on Ministry

The calling process is a primary responsibility of the COM. The COM provides resources, guidelines, compensation requirements, and other services to help PNCs identify the leadership that will serve their congregation in the foreseeable future. The COM is involved at key points and must concur in the PNC’s final decision before a call is issued.

The period when a congregation is looking for new leadership is a good time to strengthen the partnership between Presbytery and the congregation. Pastors are the primary interpreters of Presbytery to the congregation although the COM interprets the Presbytery to a congregation in transition. It is a good time for healing or strengthening and also the time when a congregation is most open to change. An experienced member of the COM should be assigned to work with each PNC as “liaison” throughout the entire vacancy.

- COM appoints a moderator of session and provides names of potential pulpit supplies and/or interim pastors.
- The COM will provide the PNC chairperson with a login ID and password to use with the on-line matching service, Church Leadership Connection.
- COM staff (often the General Presbyter) checks references with the presbytery of the minister or candidates being seriously considered.
- The COM assures that the PNC considers candidates without regard to race, ethnic origin, gender, or marital status, according to the presbytery’s plan for inclusiveness in employment.
- Representatives from the COM may meet with “finalists” who visit the congregation during the interviewing stage of the search.
- After a PNC has selected a candidate to present to the congregation for election as pastor, the COM examines the person and makes recommendations to the presbytery.
- Presbytery receives pastors as members and appoints a commission to install her/him upon recommendation of the COM.

The Session

The session meets regularly with the moderator appointed by presbytery. Its primary job is to keep the ministry of the church moving forward, such as worship, Christian education, budget planning, etc. The session should set a positive and reassuring tone for the vacancy time, helping the congregation to deal with the loss of its pastor, carry on the ministry, and look forward to the next stage of its life together. The session is to be involved at key points in the calling process.

The session will plan for and participate in any congregational mission study. It will provide a process for the congregation to elect a Pastor Nominating Committee. It supports the PNC with prayer and funding. The session provides funds for search expenses such as travel, telephone, postage, and other incidentals and determines the amount of money available for financial compensation for the new pastor. The session is to carefully review and approve the completed Ministry Information Form. The Clerk of Session attests to this approval with his or her signature.

The Moderator of Session

The session moderator moderates session meetings or arranges for another minister of presbytery to do so. In unusual circumstances, the moderator may appoint an elder to lead a meeting for particular and non-controversial business. The moderator helps session provide for new member and officer training, budget preparation, and statistical report preparation.

The Interim Pastor

The interim (if one is employed) is the temporary pastor and the moderator of session, carrying on the ministry of the church during the search for a permanent pastor. The interim may assist with a mission study (some have special expertise in this area). An interim pastor supports the PNC but is not directly involved with its work. According to our *Book of Order*, an interim pastor cannot be called as an installed pastor under any circumstances.

The Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC)

The PNC completes the Ministry Information Form (MIF) with the help of Clerk of Session and Treasurer and submits it to Session and the COM team for approval, then to **Church Leadership Connection** for matching with potential pastors. Once the MIF has been matched and PIFs are received, each PNC member reads and evaluates PIFs for further consideration. A member of the PNC is appointed to do reference checking on candidates of interest and share that information with the rest of the committee. Once it has narrowed the field of prospective pastors, the PNC will interview potential candidates away from the church. Candidates are often interviewed during visits to the church community.

The PNC selects a candidate to place in nomination before the congregation, works out details of the terms of call, and plans with the presbytery for the appropriate examination and approvals.

General Assembly – Church Leadership Connection (CLC)

<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/clc/>

Church Leadership Connection (CLC) is the Internet-based matching and referral system of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). PNCs post their Ministry Discernment Profiles (MDPs) on the CLC system and pastors and other church professionals post their Personal Discernment Profiles (PDPs) there.

CLC connects congregations, presbyteries, synods, educational institutions and other Presbyterian entities seeking leaders for ministry positions with pastors, Christian educators, administrators, executives and other church professionals seeking a call to service within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). A system of login IDs and passwords helps guarantee security and confidentiality within CLC.

CLC staff members ensure that information is entered accurately into the CLC system and that preliminary connections are made between parties. They also provide support over the phone and by email to presbytery staff, committee chairs, pastor nominating committees and stated clerks as well as to persons seeking a call to ministry.

Church Leadership Connection (CLC) is your per capita dollars at work.

Appendix 2-3
Temporary Leadership

Temporary leadership is usually the primary concern of a session when faced with a pastoral vacancy. Providing information about the types of leadership and the names of persons that might provide temporary leadership will help build a strong partnership between the COM and the session of the congregation. Most presbyteries maintain a list of persons that will provide this leadership. A refresher description of the types of temporary leadership is included below.

The type of leadership needed depends on the size and needs of the congregation and the transition work it needs to accomplish. A conversation with your COM liaison is in order if you are not following the path of interim pastor to installed pastor.

A temporary pastor is not installed and is not a member of the session [G-2.0504b]. The policy of the Commission on Ministry of the Presbytery of Baltimore is to appoint the temporary pastor (Interim, Commissioned Ruling Elder, or Temporary Supply) as the moderator of the session, if the temporary pastor is a member of the Presbytery.

The Book of Order does not define the various types of temporary pastoral relations. The definitions given here are those commonly understood in Baltimore Presbytery. Most quotations are from the latest edition (2005) of *The Book of Order* that included such definitions, and the specific paragraphs are not cited.

Interim Pastor, Co-Pastor, or Associate Pastor: A pastor, ordinarily with specialized training, who serves during the period between the departure of one installed pastor and the installation of the next installed pastor. An Interim Pastor is ordinarily expected to address the five developmental tasks of the interim period (**Appendix 2-5**).

Designated Pastor or Co-Pastor(s): [*Book of Order* G-2.0504a] Although the *Book of Order* no longer spells out the terms for a designated pastor, Baltimore Presbytery tends to follow the prior rules. Thus, a designated pastor is a minister elected for a term of not less than two nor more than four years by the vote of the congregation. A designated pastor is chosen by the congregation’s PNC only from among those designated by the COM of the presbytery. A designated pastor is installed by the presbytery for the agreed term and then, if the congregation and pastor both desire, is eligible to be installed as pastor after two or more years have elapsed. Designated Pastors are installed, and, thus, are automatically the moderators of their sessions.

Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE): An elder who has received extensive special training from the presbytery in order to prepare her or him to serve as a pastoral leader and is granted a local commission by the presbytery. This commission is valid only in specified congregations, new church development, or in other ministries designated by the presbytery. [*Book of Order* G-2.10] CREs lead worship and may be authorized by presbytery to administer the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, perform marriages, administer the Sacrament of Baptism, or moderate session or congregational meetings. They can also officiate at funerals, lead Bible Study, visit the sick, etc., if time allows (many have secular employment). An ordained minister is appointed to supervise the ministry of the CRE.

Temporary Supply: “[A] minister, a candidate, a commissioned ruling elder, or an elder secured by the session to conduct services when there is no pastor, or the pastor is unable to perform pastoral duties. The session shall seek the counsel of presbytery through its Commission on Ministry before securing a temporary supply.” The 2011-2013 edition of *The Book of Order* states in G-2.0504c: “A presbytery may determine that ...a teaching elder employed in a temporary pastoral relationship to be eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor. Presbyteries that permit this eligibility shall establish such relationships only by a three-fourths vote of the members of presbytery present and voting.”

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 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.

Student Supply: When a church is without a pastor or when the pastor is unable to perform pastoral duties, the session, after obtaining the approval of the presbytery having jurisdiction over the church through its Commission on Ministry, may secure the services of an inquirer or candidate to serve as temporary supply. Appropriate guidance and supervision for such an inquirer or candidate serving as temporary supply must be assured by the presbytery having jurisdiction over the church and approved by the inquirer’s or candidate’s committee on preparation for ministry.

See *New Times, New Call: A Manual of Pastoral Options for Small Churches*, available for downloading at <http://www.pcusa.org/resource/new-times-new-call/>, for more information about pastoral options for small churches.

Appendix 2-4
Interim Ministry Guidelines

DEFINITION OF INTERIM MINISTRY:

“Interim” means the period of time between two events. For a congregation it is the period of time between the leaving of one installed pastor and the installation of the next pastor.

A congregation is particularly vulnerable during the interim period. They have said farewell to a minister whom they may have loved. They are hoping to find a new pastor who will meet their dreams for spiritual growth. They are feeling a lack of leadership. It is hoped these guidelines will help a congregation during this interim period.

The interim period is crucial for remembering who we are as a church. Our life together is never itself “interim” or “temporary”. During the interim period the church goes on being the church. The call to be God’s people on the move in the world never changes. What does change is the opportunity to begin a new era in the life of the church after an examination of who we are as a congregation and where we have been.

An interim pastor is equipped to be aware of the changes facing a church and to lead the church in a constructive use of the time between.

CRITERIA FOR INTERIM PASTORS

Baltimore Presbytery has prepared criteria for approval of persons as Interim Pastors as follows:

It is essential that they be persons who are ordained and in good standing in the Presbyterian Church (USA), persons who have experience in interim ministry and/or an understanding of Interim Ministry, and persons who will be involved with Presbytery’s programs. The interim will be an advocate for the Presbytery and its mission. Interim Pastors are persons who have chosen Interim Ministry as their specialty or are intentional about Interim Ministry. They have had Interim Ministry training or will avail themselves of such training. Names of approved interims can be obtained through the General Presbyter, the Associate for Thriving Congregations, and/or the Commission on Ministry.

The Interim Pastorate is more than “pulpit supply”, as important as that is to a congregation. The life of a congregation does not suddenly become limited to Sunday morning but continues in its complex and varied dimensions throughout the week. The need for effective and sustained leadership is urgent.

An Interim Pastor is to provide the kind of leadership that enables a congregation to continue its ministry, to rediscover and renew its resources, and prepare for a new pastor. The Interim Pastor provides the opportunity for a congregation to move through the interim period freed from a sense of panic and crisis, so that the search for and call

of the next pastor can occur in a climate of exploring, healing, dreaming, building, and most of all, continuing to be the Body of Christ.

SELECTING AN INTERIM PASTOR

A trained and certified Interim Pastor can be a valuable asset to a congregation in transition. Securing the services of an interim pastor for a congregation following a long pastorate or following a difficult separation between a pastor and congregation is vital to the future mission of the congregation. They help the congregation continue its ministry during the search process. Interims also provide specialized help to a congregation by:

- Helping the congregation deal with all the feelings that accompany the departure of a pastor, such as grief, anger, relief, confusion, and anxiety.
- Helping the congregation think about its ministry in the past, present, and future.
- Helping the congregation deal with problems before a new minister is called.
- Helping the congregation prepare for a new minister.

THE ISSUE OF CANDIDACY

The Commission on Ministry of Baltimore Presbytery is clear on this issue. “A Minister may not be called to be the next installed pastor or Associate Pastor of a church served as Interim Pastor.” If there is some expectation that the congregation may want to call a temporary pastor as the next installed pastor, this possibility should be discussed with the Commission on Ministry before the temporary pastor is hired.

The COM liaison should be prepared to help the session assess the congregation’s needs for an interim pastor and provide names of interims that may be available to serve. Most Presbytery Executives are aware of persons willing to serve as Interim Ministers. The COM liaison should contact the presbytery office for the names of potential interims before meeting with the session. There is a lot of variety in the training and experience of persons willing to serve as Interim Pastors. Some Interim Pastors are certified by the Presbyterian Interim Ministry Certification Board (PIMCB) and are highly skilled at helping congregations with special needs. Others, though not certified, are experienced and provide excellent ministry during the In-Between-Time. Be sure to include the General Presbyter in checking references of potential interims. The session might have to be continually reminded “An interim pastor, interim co-pastor, or interim associate pastor is not eligible to serve that church as the next permanent or designated pastor.”

APPENDIX 2-5
Five Developmental Tasks Of The Interim Period

Five developmental tasks² have been identified and need to be understood and carried out by a congregation during the interim period.

1. **COMING TO TERMS WITH HISTORY:** During the interim period, a congregation needs to get in touch with its history, where they have come from and where they are now. A congregation may need to deal with an event that hinders them from moving into the future. There may be unresolved feeling over the loss of a previous pastor.
2. **DISCOVERING A NEW IDENTITY:** The interim period gives a congregation the opportunity to look at itself in terms of how they are perceived by the community. Are they identified with the style of a previous pastor? The interim period gives the time and process for a congregation to find out who they really are and how they can relate in a positive way to the community in which they serve.
3. **DEALING WITH SHIFTS IN LEADERSHIP:** When a pastor leaves, new patterns of involvement develop, and often feelings of uncertainty and anxiety about change arise. The Interim Pastorate can help provide the environment in which change can occur in a creative and positive way.
4. **RETHINKING DENOMINATIONAL LINKAGES:** During the interim period the congregation comes into contact with the Commission on Ministry, which works closely with the church during the search process. The interim period is a prime opportunity for the local church to remember its connection to the larger church, and in particular for utilizing the resources of the Presbytery and the General Assembly Vocation Agency.
5. **COMMITMENT TO NEW LEADERSHIP AND TO A NEW FUTURE:** As well as looking for a new pastor, the church also needs to be preparing to make a commitment to that new leadership. The interim period is an opportunity for the congregation to strengthen its ability to be forward-looking as it seeks to understand its identity, needs, and goals, and to affirm the possibility for meeting those goals in the context of the arrival of a new pastor.

² “The Developmental Tasks of the Congregation in Search of Pastor” by Loren Meade, Alban Institute, 1977

Appendix 2-6
Interim Minister Contract
Temporary Supply Contract

The most recent versions of these sample contracts may be downloaded from the Presbytery web site. Choose Resources from the menu bar near the top of the page, then Commission on Ministry Resources. There are various contract templates in the section entitled *Seeking a Temporary Pastor*.

Copies to: Original signed copy to Interim Pastor
 Original signed copy to Clerk of Session
 Original signed copy to Presbytery office
 Photocopy to COM Representative

Appendix 2-7
Taxes and the Housing Allowance

Q. Why do we need to separate the housing allowance from the base pay in the interim contract?

A. (From <http://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc417.html>):

“A minister who is furnished a parsonage may exclude from income the fair rental value of the parsonage, including utilities. However, the amount excluded cannot be more than the reasonable pay for the minister's services.

A minister who receives a housing allowance may exclude the allowance from gross income to the extent it is used to pay expenses in providing a home. Generally, those expenses include rent, mortgage interest, utilities, repairs, and other expenses directly relating to providing a home. The amount excluded cannot be more than the reasonable pay for the minister's services.

The minister's employing organization must officially designate the allowance as a housing allowance before paying it to the minister.” (Our underline added for emphasis.)

Q. How do we determine the amount for the housing allowance?

A. Ask the interim how he or she wants to split the total effective salary being offered into base pay (or cash salary) and housing allowance. The interim probably has a pretty good idea from past experience. In any case, the officially designated amount is the upper limit of the exclusion, since the taxpayer must document the actual expenses to exclude them.

Appendix 2-8
Ministry Assessment or Mission Study

The Presbytery of Baltimore requires a ministry assessment or a mission study prior to the search for a Pastor or Associate Pastor. Someone from the Presbytery staff will work with you as needed. The best assessments involve everyone who wishes to be involved and will ask these or similar questions:

- What are we doing as a congregation? What is God calling us to do in the next phase of our ministry?
- What are the needs of our community? What is God calling us to do to meet those needs?
- What specifically will we do to strengthen our congregational and community ministry in the next year?
- What must pastor and lay leaders do to help that to happen (for a congregation seeking a pastor)?
- What kind of skills, experience, and person do we need as our pastor?

If a study has recently been completed, or if a congregation has recently participated in a study such as New Beginnings, a full assessment may not be required. The session should consider the results of such a study carefully to understand the mission of the church and the qualities required in the person to be called. The COM liaison, the session, and the PNC should meet to study and interpret the findings and determine if they are adequate for the purposes of calling a pastor.

Transitional times in congregational life are frequently fragile and characterized by high anxiety. During such times, it is important for the congregation to engage in some time of self-reflection and to articulate clearly its sense of identity and calling as a particular community of faith before it moves on in its journey. The preparation of a mission and ministry statement presents a real opportunity for church growth.

Furthermore, the mission and ministry statement is an important instrument that helps to guide the work of the Pastor Nominating Committee. As an integral part of the Ministry Information Form, the mission and ministry statement characterizes the life and work of the congregation. The collective understanding of the statement provides PNC members with common ground.

WHEN can we begin?

Ordinarily, the mission study process begins after the departing pastor has left. This is often difficult for a congregation to understand. It is not uncommon for anxious people to want to initiate the process of finding a new pastor as soon as possible. However, it is very important that the congregation wait until the departing pastor has left for several reasons.

The dynamics of ending a relationship are more complicated than most people realize. How people say “goodbye” to their previous pastor will be a significant factor in how

they are able to say “hello” to their new pastor. It is important for congregations to take the time to say appropriate farewells in order to insure a healthy transition.

In addition, it is important to preserve the integrity of the departing pastor who, though admittedly in a “lame duck” position, continues to be responsible for ministry to and with the people until departure.

Furthermore, the congregation needs to be free to determine its future without the inappropriate influence of the departing pastor. The mission study and statement should be the result of the congregation’s independent self-reflection and vision.

Any questions about the appropriate time to begin work on the mission and ministry statement should be addressed to the Commission on Ministry liaison.

WHAT is involved in a Mission Study?

The preparation of a ministry and mission statement requires conducting a study of congregational life that will solicit the responses to critical questions about identity and vision. This study can be extensive and explicit or modest and informal. In any case, it should be intentionally designed to gather information from a wide variety of people who comprise the membership. The mission study is a spiritual discernment process that provides the congregation with an opportunity for self-reflection, which can be enlivening and encouraging.

Ask the COM liaison about possible resources, such as a Presbytery staff member who may specialize in congregational mission studies, or other resources available through the Presbytery. Some congregations use written questionnaires to conduct church-wide surveys. Some churches conduct open hearings, small group gatherings, or interviews. Some have used all these techniques.

Whatever means are used for the mission study, it is important to let the people in the pews know that they have input into the future of their congregational life. The broader the sense of involvement and investment the more representative the mission study is likely to be.

WHAT should be said in the Ministry and Mission Statement?

The statement should articulate the congregation’s strengths and uniqueness in the Body of Christ and help define directions for mission and ministry the congregation feels called to pursue.

UNIQUENESS

Not all Presbyterians are alike. Each congregation has its own set of self-images that heavily influences how it goes about its life and work. Congregational identity is affected by many circumstances including size, history, community, theological preference, age profile, and economics. The study process and resultant statement should answer such questions as: Who are we? How are we unique as a community of faith? How does our setting affect who we are?

DIRECTIONS

Although all Christians share the common calling of being a witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, each congregation chooses the ways in which it will fulfill this calling. The mission statement should answer other questions such as: Where do we want to go? What is God calling us to? What are our hopes for congregational life and outreach into the community and world? How are we going to get there? What processes will we employ to fulfill our calling? Who will be involved?

The statement needs to be specific enough to identify the particularity and peculiarity of the local congregation and yet broad enough to outline effective goals for about five years. Annual review of the mission statement should assist sessions in naming specific plans for action.

The statement itself may be as short as a few paragraphs and as long as two pages. Although an abundance of information and data may emerge during the mission statement process, it is not necessary to include all of that information in the mission statement. However, such gathered data would be helpful to a Pastor Nominating Committee as it prepares the Ministry Information form.

WHY can’t we just use an old mission and ministry statement?

If a statement has not been written within the last five years, a new one is necessary. Congregations need to reflect upon and answer the question “who are we now in light of these new circumstances?” Even if a mission and ministry statement is just a few years old, the session should consider how it might be revised and updated to reflect current attitudes, challenges, and visions in the congregation.

Appendix 2-9
Electing A Pastor Nominating Committee

Book of Order G-2.0802

When a church is without a pastor, or after the effective date of the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, the congregation shall, with the guidance and permission of the Commission on Ministry, G-3.0307, proceed to elect a pastor in the following manner. The session shall call a congregational meeting to elect a nominating committee that shall be representative of the whole congregation. The committee’s duty shall be to nominate a minister to the congregation for election as pastor. Public notice of the time, place, and purpose of the meeting shall be given at least ten days in advance, which shall include two successive Sundays.

Consider the following steps when electing a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC):

1. Session should meet to set a date and time for congregation to meet and elect a PNC.
2. **Ten** days notice must be given including two successive Sundays.
3. Session suggests size of committee and recommends the size to congregation (final authority for PNC rests with congregation).
4. Nominations for the PNC are often best made by the congregational Nominating Committee (the group that nominates the congregation’s elders and deacons). The session may designate another method, so long as the nominees are representative of the entire congregation (see item 6 below.)
5. The Nominating Committee should provide a mechanism for receiving input of names from the congregation.
6. The Nominating Committee proposes a slate that is representative of the whole congregation. Persons should be knowledgeable of the church, the community, and Presbyterian theology and government. Before nomination, persons should be contacted to determine if they would serve if elected.
7. A ballot is prepared in advance with space for nominations from the floor. Care must be taken that persons nominated from the floor are present and have agreed to serve, or that they have consented in advance.
8. If at all possible, a COM liaison should be present to advise when the PNC is elected.

Appendix 2-10 **Organizing The PNC**

When the members of the PNC have been elected, it is time to get organized and map out exactly what you will need, what you will do, and the timetable you hope for (your COM liaison will help you know what is realistic based on COM experience with other churches).

Plan the first meeting in consultation with your COM liaison. Committees on Ministry often lead the orientation meeting. It will be essential for all of your members to be present. It may also be helpful to ask the session to be present for the first 30 minutes of the meeting so that all roles can be clarified.

Selecting Officers

The role of the *chairperson* is

- To encourage discussion of various viewpoints rather than discourage them.
- To delegate responsibility and see that tasks are carried out.
- To ensure that decisions reached are the consensus of the group.
- To carry on correspondence with the presbytery, with CRS, candidates, and ministers.

The role of the *secretary* (if one is selected) is

- To do correspondence and keep records of the committee.
- To perform other duties as determined by the PNC.

If your committee wants to be able to speed its work through the use of Church Leadership Connection on the Internet, you will want to appoint one member to be the Internet contact for your PNC. This person should have confidential access to the Internet on a regular basis. Access through a church office computer is not recommended unless complete confidentiality can be assured. All mailings and e-mailings should go only to PNC members, not through others who are not PNC members; thus the church office address should not be used.

Planning Communication and Resources

- Identify those key points at which the session must be involved in your work.
- Keep confidential all matters discussed by your committee.
- Decide now how you will keep the congregation informed. Many PNCs find it helpful to post a list of the stages of a pastoral vacancy and then mark their progress. Articles in the bulletin and newsletter and reports during worship are good ways to keep the congregation informed.
- You must not disclose names or descriptions of individuals considered or places visited for the interviews, but you can tell the congregation the stage you are in (such as “receiving and evaluating PIFs”) and give general statistical information (such as “We have received résumés from 32 individuals – 18 men and 14 women”).
- Plan the materials you will use to help in your task and to help you understand the

pastor calling process; the *Church Leadership Connection Handbook* is a good resource, as well as the TIPS and other resources from CRS.

Scheduling PNC Meetings

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