



SPECIAL SITUATIONS – COM LIAISON REFERENCE MATERIALS

This Section contains:

- A description of congregations who face special situations in times of transition. Congregations that have experienced conflict, had a pastoral relationship end badly, have just ended an unusually long pastorate, or have other difficulties may need to look at the time of transition in different ways.

Appendix 6-1

- A timeline for shorter versus longer Interim times – **Appendix 6-2**
- Temporary and Designated Pastor Quick Guide – **Appendix 6-3**
- Our policies and procedures for temporary supply pastors and designated pastors, including the process for the transition to called pastor. Appendices **6-4, 6-5, 6-6, 6-7, and 6-8**
- Is This the Same Church I Interviewed For? Guidance for avoiding some of the pitfalls pastors new to a church may face. – **Appendix 6-9**
- A sample shared equity agreement – **Appendix 6-10**

Appendix 6-1
Overview of Special Situations

It is important to remember that each church is unique and that COM liaisons/representatives will need to be flexible, supportive, and open to different options as the process moves along. It is always wise and appropriate to seek the guidance of the General Presbyter as well as the Transition Team as a whole in determining which options to recommend to a particular congregation.

1. Churches with long-term pastorates

- a. It is hoped that the first meeting of the COM liaison/representative will occur prior to the departure of the pastor. The items in Phase 1 will be discussed.
- b. Depending upon the amount of time between the announcement of the departure and the actual departure, part of Phase 2 (information about pulpit supply and Interims) may be shared at this first meeting or may be shared at a second meeting.
- c. Interim options are given to the Session; the COM liaison/rep and the COM Transitions team are consulted, and a plan for an Interim process is agreed.
- d. The Interim is called by Session. COM rep, Session and Interim (with input from General Presbyter and COM) determine assessment and adjustment process. In some cases a different longer process of assessment may be needed. In some cases, the expedited process will be used. Occasionally it may be appropriate for the New Beginnings program to be used at this time.
- e. When the Transitions Team and the Session (including the Interim) decide it is appropriate, the Ministry Assessment is conducted. If expedited process is appropriate, see the timeline under Churches with shorter pastorates and without conflict situations.
- f. Part of the assessment process may be to consider what is the most appropriate form of pastorate for this congregation in the immediate future
- g. After the Ministry Assessment is completed, the PNC is elected (the nominating committee may be asked by Session to begin working on the slate for the PNC prior to the completion of the Ministry Assessment, but the election and beginning of the work should be after the studies are completed and after COM has given its approval to proceed to elect a PNC).
- h. PNC works on the CIF
- i. Search process begins as described in Phase 3 and Phase 4
- j. Once the new installed pastor arrives, there should be a major joint visioning/planning process that includes the Ruling Elders, the Teaching Elder, and other church leadership (generally starting a year

to eighteen months after the new pastor is installed). *New Beginnings* or *Holy Cow!* may be such a process, but may not be for every congregation. In some cases, there may be an explicit understanding between the congregation and the new pastor that the pastor will see the congregation through this study and then both the pastor and the congregation will re-evaluate the relationship, especially if the process yields a radically new direction for the congregation.

2. Churches with conflict situations involving the departing pastor

- a. Conflict situations seldom allow for much time Phase 1 to be handled by the Transitions team. The Ministerial Parish Relations team will more likely handle this phase.
- b. COM Transitions liaison/rep goes in to talk about pulpit supply and Interim possibilities, when appropriate as indicated by the Ministerial Parish Relations team.
- c. Once the Interim is selected, the Session (Ruling Elders and Interim) and the COM liaison/rep and the Transitions team develop a process for addressing the conflict and helping the congregation to move forward.
- d. When the Transitions Team and the Session (including the Interim) decide it is appropriate, Ministry Assessment is conducted.
- e. Part of this process may be to consider what is the most appropriate form of pastorate for this congregation in the immediate future.
- f. After the Ministry Assessment is completed, the PNC is elected (the nominating committee may be asked by Session to begin working on the slate for the PNC prior to the completion of the Ministry Assessment, but the election and beginning of the work should be after the studies are completed and after COM has given its approval to proceed to elect a PNC).
- g. PNC works on the CIF
- h. Search process begins as described in Phase 3 and Phase 4
- i. Once the new installed pastor arrives, there should be a major joint visioning/planning process that includes the Ruling Elders, the Teaching Elder, and other church leadership (generally starting a year to eighteen months after the new pastor is installed). *New Beginnings* may be such a process, but may not be for every congregation. In some cases, there may be an explicit understanding between the congregation and the new pastor that the pastor will see the congregation through this study and then both the pastor and the congregation will re-evaluate the relationship, especially if the process yields a radically new direction for the congregation.

3. Churches where there is conflict that, while it may or may not have resulted in the departure of the pastor, is not directly related to the departing pastor

- a. The Ministerial Parish Relations Team may or may not have been working with congregations of this situation. If not, then Transitions will handle Phase 1, and may need to do a lot of listening in that initial meeting.
- b. Early Phase 2 (Session responsibilities and Interim selection) may need a separate meeting
- c. Once the Interim is selected, the Session (Ruling Elders and Interim) and the COM liaison/rep and the Transitions team develop a process for addressing the conflict and helping the congregation to move forward.
- d. When the Transitions Team and the Session (including the Interim) decide it is appropriate, Ministry Assessment is conducted.
- e. Part of this process may be to consider what is the most appropriate form of pastorate for this congregation in the immediate future
- f. After the Ministry Assessment is completed, the PNC is elected (the nominating committee may be asked by Session to begin working on the slate for the PNC prior to the completion of the Ministry Assessment, but the election and beginning of the work should be after the studies are completed, and after COM has given its approval to proceed to elect a PNC).
- g. PNC works on the CIF
- h. Search process begins as described in Phase 3 and Phase 4
- i. Once the new installed pastor arrives, there should be a major joint visioning/planning process that includes the Ruling Elders, the Teaching Elder, and other church leadership (generally starting a year to eighteen months after the new pastor is installed). New Beginnings may be such a process, but may not be for every congregation. In some cases, there may be an explicit understanding between the congregation and the new pastor that the pastor will see the congregation through this study and then both the pastor and the congregation will re-evaluate the relationship, especially if the process yields a radically new direction for the congregation.

4. Churches of a shorter term pastorate (less than 12 years), without conflict situations

- a. COM Transitions team liaison/rep meets with Session and departing pastor to present Phase 1 and some of Phase 2 (Session responsibilities including pulpit supply).
- b. COM Transitions team liaison/rep meets with Session to discuss Phase 2, especially Interim selection, and the decision is made

- between shorter vs. longer Interim process; with shorter being the preferred path.
- c. If the longer process is determined to be preferable, church follows process as outlined above.
 - d. Interim is called.
 - e. If the shorter process is selected, the Session (Ruling elders and Interim) will determine dates for the Ministry Assessment to occur (will require 3 Saturdays and should be completed within three months of the completion of step d.)
 - f. Ordinarily the Session will ask the Nominating Committee to begin to form a Pastor Nominating Committee in the second month after step d is completed and to set a date for its election following the third session of the Mini Mission Study.
 - g. PNC elected
 - h. PNC works on the CIF
 - i. Search process begins as described in Phase 3 and Phase 4
 - j. Once the new installed pastor arrives, there should be a major joint visioning/planning process that includes the Ruling Elders, the Teaching Elder, and other church leadership (generally starting a year to eighteen months after the new pastor is installed). New Beginnings may be such a process, but may not be for every congregation. In some cases, there may be an explicit understanding between the congregation and the new pastor that the pastor will see the congregation through this study and then both the pastor and the congregation will re-evaluate the relationship, especially if the process yields a radically new direction for the congregation.

5. Churches facing financial or membership difficulties

- a. COM Transitions team liaison/rep meets with Session and departing pastor to present Phase 1 and some of Phase 2 (Session responsibilities including pulpit supply)
- b. COM Transition team liaison/rep consults with General Presbyter and Transitions team regarding options to recommend to Session. These options may include Temporary Supply, Part time Interim, as well as Interim.
- c. COM Transition team liaison/rep presents options as recommended by General Presbytery and COM Transitions team (sometimes also involving COM as whole), to Session, and listens carefully to their discussion.
- d. Process proceeds according to one or several of the above processes.

Appendix 6-2
Timeline for Interim Periods

COM Representative meets with Session and Departing Pastor (Phase 1)



COM Rep meets with Session to determine short or long Interim process;
Interim Search Committee formed



Interim Search Committee receives names from General Presbyter;
interviews candidates, submits name to Session for approval



Shorter Interim



Within two months of Interim arrival -
Ministry Assessment (3 Saturdays over
three month period) and Nominating
Committee works on slate for PNC



Election of PNC following 3rd Ministry
Assessment meeting



PNC works on CIF; CIF ready to submit
to Session and COM and post online by
7th month of Interim



Search process as described in Phases
3 and 4



New Pastor arrives (goal is to have
installed new pastor within 12 months)



Joint visioning/planning process (12-18
months after new pastor is installed)



Longer Interim



Com Rep, Session, and Interim (with
input from GP and COM) determine
strategy and anticipated time length for
assessment/adjustment period (3-7
months)



Toward end of assessment/adjustment
period, Ministry Assessment held (3
Saturdays over three month period);
Nominating Committee works on slate for
PNC



Election of PNC following 3rd Ministry
Assessment meeting



PNC works on CIF; CIF ready to submit
to Session and COM and post online
within two months of PNC election



Search process as described in Phases
3 and 4



New Pastor arrives (goal is to have
installed new pastor within 18-24
months)



Joint visioning/planning process (12-18
months after new pastor is installed)

Appendix 6-3
A Quick Guide to Temporary and Designated Pastors

Thanks to Peace River Presbytery!

	Interim Pastor Interim Assoc. Pastor	Temporary Supply Assoc. Temporary Supply	Designated Pastor
Can be next called and installed pastor	No	Yes, with approval of $\frac{3}{4}$ of the members of Presbytery present and voting	Yes
Length of Service	1 year; renewable on a yearly basis	1 year; renewable on a yearly basis	Maximum of 4 years; determined in advance, but can be called as pastor by COM approval and congregational vote
Congregation Extends Call (Elects PNC)	No	No	Yes
Session Extends Call	Yes	Yes	No
Normally used when pastor leaves	Yes	Short term measure	No
Requires COM approval	Yes	Yes	Yes
Moderates Session	Yes; Associate at invitation of pastor	Yes, with COM approval; Associate at invitation of pastor	Yes
When Used	When a pastor or associate pastor has left. The position is used to prepare the church for the next called pastor or associate.	For a short term to fill the pulpit, possibly moderate session, and meet the immediate needs of the church when there is no pastor or while the pastor is unable to perform his or her duties	Ordinarily used when the church is in significant conflict or in significant economic distress and needs 2 to 4 years to address the conflict or economic problems

Appendix 6-4
Temporary and Designated Pastors

Definitions:

Title	Definition (from the COM Handbook, PCUSA)	Book of Order reference
Designated Pastor	An installed pastoral position approved by the presbytery for a designated term. Term is no longer used in the Book of Order.	G-2.0805
Installed Pastoral Relationship	Installed pastoral relationships are pastor, co-pastor, and associate pastor. A teaching elder may be installed for an indefinite period or for a designated term determined by the presbytery.	G-2.0504a
Interim Pastor	A temporary pastor who has special training for the unique ministry of serving churches in the midst of pastoral transitions.	
Temporary Pastoral Relationship	A pastor approved by the presbytery to serve in a position that does not carry a formal call or installation. Titles and terms of service are determined by the presbytery, but may not exceed twelve months though it can be renewed. Ordinarily a person serving in a temporary pastoral relationship may not be eligible to serve as the next installed pastor.	G-2.0504b

In November 2011, “COM approved a motion that there be two categories of temporary pastoral service: (1) Interim pastor, with the intention to prepare the church for the next called pastor, not to be the next installed pastor, and (2) temporary supply.” These definitions were reported to the Presbytery at the November 2011 meeting.

Book of Order 2013-2015 references (with most relevant passages underlined):

G-2.0504 Pastoral Relationships

When teaching elders are called as pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor of a congregation, they are to be responsible for a quality of life and relationships that commends the gospel to all persons and that communicates its joy and justice. They are responsible for studying, teaching, and preaching the Word, for celebrating Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and for praying with and for the congregation. With the ruling elders, they are to encourage people in the worship and service of God; to equip and enable them for their tasks within the church and their mission in the world; to exercise pastoral care, devoting special attention to the poor, the sick, the troubled, and the dying; to participate in governing responsibilities, including leadership of the congregation in

implementing the principles of participation and inclusiveness in the decision-making life of the congregation, and its task of reaching out in concern and service to the life of the human community as a whole. With the deacons they are to share in the ministries of compassion, witness, and service. In addition to these pastoral duties, they are responsible for sharing in the ministry of the church in councils higher than the session and in ecumenical relationships.

a. Installed Pastoral Relationships

The installed pastoral relationships are pastor, co-pastor, and associate pastor. A teaching elder may be installed in a pastoral relationship for an indefinite period or for a designated term determined by the presbytery in consultation with the congregation and specified in the call. When a congregation determines that its strategy for mission under the Word so requires, the congregation may call additional pastors. Such additional pastors shall be called co-pastors or associate pastors, and the duties of each pastor and the relationship between the pastors of the congregation shall be determined by the session with the approval of the presbytery. When a congregation has two pastors serving as co-pastors, and the relationship of one of them is dissolved, the other remains as pastor. The relationship of an associate pastor to a congregation is not dependent upon that of a pastor. An associate pastor is ordinarily not eligible to be the next installed pastor of that congregation.

b. Temporary Pastoral Relationships

Temporary pastoral relationships are approved by the presbytery and do not carry a formal call or installation. When a congregation does not have a pastor, or while the pastor is unable to perform her or his duties, the session, with the approval of presbytery, may obtain the services of a teaching elder, candidate, or ruling elder in a temporary pastoral relationship. No formal call shall be issued and no formal installation shall take place.

The presbytery shall determine titles and terms of service for temporary relationships. 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. A teaching elder employed in a temporary pastoral relationship is ordinarily not eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor.

c. Exceptions

A presbytery may determine that its mission strategy permits a teaching elder currently called as an Associate Pastor to be eligible to serve as the next installed pastor or co-pastor, or 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.

Pastor Installed for a Designated Term

From 2011-2013 Advisory Handbook for Ministry Committees/Commissions

With the adoption of the New Form of Government, “Designated Pastor” is no longer defined in the Book of Order. **G-2.0504** indicates that a presbyteries and congregations may work together to call and install a pastor for a designated term. The specific process by which they do that and the length of the term is to be determined.

Congregations that find benefit from having a pastor for a designated term

Congregations go through life cycles and critical events. There are times when a pastor installed for a designated term may be able to provide the kind of leadership needed:

- When a congregation is engaged in transformation and is redirecting its ministry
- When a congregation wants to test a new direction or new model of leadership
- When a congregation has been wounded by conflict or by a “revolving door” in the pastor’s office through which a number of pastors have come and gone in a relatively few years.
- When congregations are considering engaging in shared ministry.
- When a congregation needs a different pastoral leadership style.
- During a transition time, as when a founding pastor has left a new church development.

Teaching Elders who might consider becoming a designated pastor

- Persons who enjoy a challenge.
- Persons who have skills and interest in congregational transformation.
- Persons who are healthy - spiritually, physically and mentally.

Questions for Consideration:

1. In what situations will you recommend the use of a pastor installed for a designated term?
2. What will be your process of working with pastor nominating committees for the call of such a pastor?
3. How will you determine the term to be specified in the call?
4. At what point in the term will you require review in order to allow the pastor and congregation to move forward together or have appropriate time to move in other directions?
5. How will you work with the pastor and the congregation to discern what will occur at the end of the designated term?

Process for calling a designated pastor:

We have been following the rules set out in the Book of Order 2009-2011, the last edition that described the designated pastor. The rules are:

- The session, congregation, and the COM determine that, due to past or present circumstances, the best way forward is for the congregation to call a pastor for a designated term. Since 2011, we have continued to use the two-year term, that is “a term of not less than two nor more than four years.”
- The steps for calling an installed pastor are followed, with the exception of the way the MIF is placed on the Church Leadership Connection and the processing PIFs from prospective pastors. The COM appoints a committee of three people, usually members of COM, to receive and review PIFs. This committee recommends those ministers to be considered by the congregation’s PNC.
- That Book of Order also sets out the rules for renewing the call or for calling the designated pastor as pastor:
 - “The call approved by the presbytery is renewable anytime during the last six months of the term, and cannot be changed or dissolved except by consent of the presbytery, at the request of the pastor or at the request of the church by action of the congregation, when the presbytery, after consultation with the minister and the congregation finds that the church’s mission under the Word imperatively demands it, or when the term specified in the call expires without action having been taken to renew the call.
 - If there has been an open search process conducted by the committee on ministry and after at least two years of the designated pastor relationship, upon the concurrence of the committee on ministry, the designated pastor, and the session, acting in place of the pastor nominating committee for the single purpose of calling the designated pastor as pastor, a congregational meeting may be held to call the designated pastor as pastor. The session, with the concurrence of the committee on ministry, may call a congregational meeting to elect a pastor nominating committee to conduct a full pastoral search or to prosecute the call to the designated pastor to become pastor. The action of the congregation shall be reported to the presbytery. If the congregational action is affirmative, the presbytery, after voting to approve the new pastoral relationship, shall install the designated pastor as pastor.

Some history:

Definitions from the 1983 Book of Order:

G-14.0513: ... Temporary pastoral relations are those of stated supply, Interim supply or temporary supply:

- a. A stated supply is a minister appointed by the presbytery, after consultation with the session, to perform the functions of a pastor in a church. The relation shall be established only by the presbytery and shall extend for a period not to exceed twelve months at a time. A stated supply shall not be reappointed until the presbytery, through its committee

- on ministry, has reviewed her or his effectiveness. The congregation shall issue no formal call and no formal installation shall take place. A stated supply who is a member of the presbytery may, with presbytery's approval, serve as moderator of the session.
- b. An Interim supply is a minister invited by the session to preach the Word, administer the Sacraments, and fulfill pastoral duties for a specified period not to exceed twelve months at a time, while the church is seeking a pastor. The session may not secure an Interim supply without seeking the counsel of presbytery through its committee on ministry. A minister may not be called to be a pastor or associate pastor of a church served as Interim supply, unless six months have elapsed since the end of the temporary relationship.
 - c. A temporary supply may be a minister a candidate, or an elder secured by the session to conduct services when the pastor is unable to perform pastoral duties. The session shall seek the counsel of presbytery through its committee on ministry before securing a temporary supply.

Appendix 6-5
A Sample Approach to Interim vs. Temporary Supply

Pastoral Leadership at _____ Church
 In 10 years, where are we headed?
 Installed pastor?
 Redevelopment?
 Continued decline of energy, people, and \$\$\$?

Interim Pastor	vs.	Temporary Supply
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 year contract, can extend 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 year contract, can renew indefinitely
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not eligible for permanent installed position 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could potentially become installed pastor, upon request of the session, $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of the presbytery
GOAL: To prepare congregation for next pastor		GOAL: To provide pastoral leadership while the congregation works on future plans or while the congregation declines
To discover a new identity		
To think carefully about the future (mission, finances, community connections, growth)		
Church and pastor are only committed for short terms – at most 1 year at a time		
Cost to the church is the same for either Interim or temporary supply – salary plus benefits		

Appendix 6-6
Guidelines for Selecting a Designated Pastor

Presbytery of Baltimore

1. COM representative meets with Session to discuss advisability of calling a Designated Pastor to the church. Session enters thorough discussion and votes to request permission to seek a Designated Pastor.
2. COM hears request from Session and recommendation from COM liaison to church; if in agreement with recommendation, approves request.
3. If Session has not already done so, they will order or undertake a Mission study, the process to be approved by COM, through its regional team.
4. After the Mission Study is complete and approved by COM, the Session will follow BOO procedures for naming a Designated Pastor Nominating Committee (DPNC) for the church.
5. The DPNC will fill out the Church Information Form; it is posted on the CLC website, with COM representative named as contact person (rather than the PNC chair, as is the customary process). They may also place ads in periodicals such as Presbyterian Outlook, or Christianity Today.
6. COM names a three-member team to read PIFs submitted through CLC searches or via self-referrals. This team may be the Regional Team, or another group named by COM.
7. COM reading team goes through PIFs; they select 9-12 candidates to be interviewed by phone (20 minute phone interview is a good model).
8. After the phone interviews are completed and the reading team is clear about the willingness of the candidates to serve in this position, the team will request the General Presbyter to complete reference checks for 5-7 possible candidates.
9. Eventually the DPNC is presented with 5 to 6 names, whom they should interview by phone. Then the DPNC will create a “short list” of 2 to 3 candidates, whom they will hear preach and do reference checks.

10. From here, the process moves toward conclusion as it normally would, including candidates visits, neutral pulpit sermons, in depth interviews, reference checks, negotiating terms of call, COM and General Presbyter interviews.

N.B. It is assumed that the DPNC will “exhaust” the short list of 5-6 candidates presented to it by the COM before the COM would request further CLC searches.

Appendix 6-7
Procedures for the Transition of Designated Pastor to Installed Pastor

Approximately six months before the end of the term of a Designated Pastor, the session, with the help of a representative from the Transitions Team of COM, conducts a COM-approved review with the Session and Pastor.

Using information from the review, as well as other input, the Session and the Designated Pastor come to an agreement concerning whether they will (1) recommend that the Designated Pastor become the Installed Pastor, (2) recommend that the relationship between the pastor and congregation be dissolved at the end of the designated period, or (3) extend the Designated Pastor's position as it is for a second term.

1. Become Installed Pastor

- a. If the agreement is to recommend that the Designated Pastor become the Installed Pastor, the Clerk of Session sends a letter stating that decision to the Committee on Ministry for approval.
- b. A new Terms of Call is created and reviewed, along with a possible interview of the Pastor by the Credentials Team of COM.
- c. The COM approves the request and a congregational meeting is held to call the Designated Pastor to be the Installed Pastor.
- d. COM reports the call to the Presbytery and the Pastor forms an Installation Commission in cooperation with the Presbytery Moderator.
- e. The Installation service is held.

2. Dissolve the relationship

- a. If the joint decision is to dissolve the relationship between the congregation and the Designated Pastor the Presbytery's policy for Dissolution is followed.

3. Extend the Designated Position

- a. If the agreement is to extend the Designated Position up to another full term, a new Terms of Call is written to take effect at the end of the first designated period.
- b. At the end of two terms as a Designated Pastor, a joint decision must be made either to install the Pastor or dissolve the relationship between the congregation and the Designated Pastor.
- c. Six months before the end of the second term, the Session and the Pastor should begin consideration as to whether the Pastorate should move to

Who needs this? COM Liaison

permanent installed or should be dissolved at the end of the term. The same procedure should be used as noted above for the end of the first term except that the term as Designated Pastor cannot be extended further. [The Session and pastor may explore entering into an Installed relationship at any time during the second term agreement by following the same procedure as in 1.]

Appendix 6-8
Procedures for the Transition from Temporary Supply to Installed Pastor

According to the *Book of Order, 2013-2015*, G-2.0504b, “A teaching elder employed in a temporary pastoral relationship is ordinarily not eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor.” However, G-2.0504c allows each Presbytery to make exceptions to that if its mission strategy permits “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.”

Should the Congregation and the Temporary Supply feel that they are led by the Holy Spirit to make the pastoral relationship more permanent and want to explore the possibility that the Temporary Supply become the Installed Pastor, the following procedures should be followed:

1. The session should bring the desire to move the Temporary Supply to the Installed Pastor position to the attention of the Committee on Ministry.
2. The Temporary Supply and members of the Session, with the help of a representative from the Transitions Team of COM, should participate in a COM-approved review to examine more closely what is working well in the current relationship and where changes should be made if the new relationship were to be implemented.
3. Following the review, if both parties still want to move to the Installed Pastor relationship, the Clerk will send a letter to COM for approval.
4. A new Terms of Call is written for the Installed Pastor position and sent to the Credentials Team of COM for review at the time of their interview with the Temporary Supply.
5. Upon approval by $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Committee on Ministry, the COM recommends that the Presbytery approve the request to consider the transition.
6. If $\frac{3}{4}$ of the members of the presbytery present and voting at the time the request is made vote to approve, then the Session may call a congregational meeting to approve calling the Temporary Supply as the Installed Pastor.
7. The congregational meeting is held, and, if approved by the congregation, the Temporary Supply is called to become the Installed Pastor.
8. Depending on the timing, either the Presbytery or the COM, acting on behalf of the Presbytery, then approves the call.

Appendix 6-9
Avoiding Some Pitfalls

Is This the Same Church I Interviewed For?

The PresbyterianLeader.com, November 3, 2010

By Bob Harris

Introduction

The Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) tells the new pastor, Joe, that the church wants to start using contemporary worship forms. He tries some that worked well in his previous church. After two months there's an uproar!

Susan, a new associate pastor, is assigned to work with the youth and a liberal young couples group. Her "liberal" ideas outrage some powerful conservative leaders.

Alex is confused by the session's inability to reach decisions on anything potentially controversial. What's happening?

Has something like this happened to you or a friend? From conversations with the PNC, you thought that you had a really good understanding of the church. You had great ideas for fulfilling their dreams. But things fell apart! Did the PNC lie or intentionally misrepresent the situation?

Many pastors have found themselves in all kinds of difficulty because they didn't take time to understand the inner dynamics, "the system," of their new church. They didn't know who the real leaders were, what the untouchable practices or rooms or furniture were, or what landmines to avoid. Unexpectedly, they had to seek a new call.

Avoiding Some Hazards

Following is a simple questionnaire that has really helped me understand a new church. Several clients—pastors new to a church as pastor, associate, or Interim—have found it helpful. A candidate could use it to interview a PNC in the final stages of discussion.

Interview twenty-five to thirty-five leaders using these questions. Note that I say *interview* them—don't just send this as a questionnaire. Use this as a springboard for conversation and then analyze your results. Share your insights with leaders. Describe reality as you see it. Explore questions and confusions. What are the norms of the congregation? What landmines have you uncovered?

Here are the questions with some reflections about what you might discover.

A Form for Interviewing Leaders Early in a Pastorate

Date:

Person; (Or group and its members)

(Assure them that their answers will be confidential.)

Tell me about a time...

1. When you felt especially proud of some members or leaders of your church—you felt they were really following Christ

This will give clues about the heroes and heroines and what they did. What and who does this church honor and respect?

2. When you were disappointed with members or leaders.

Listen for stories about how your predecessors disappointed this person. What do they tell you about the church's norms and its expectations for pastors? Are people supportive or critical?

3. When the church was particularly creative and exciting, and you knew the Holy Spirit was at work.

Similar to #1, this tells about where the Spirit is working now.

4. When fellow members were especially helpful to you.

This gives an idea of the kind of mutual care that people expect and receive.

5. When being part of the church helped you deepen your faith.

Is growing in faith an important value? Who leads in this process? What is the excitement level?

6. When church members resolved a conflict or difference effectively so that they exemplified the grace of Christ.

What are norms around conflict? Do they even deal with conflict at all? How did former pastors handle differences? What do they expect of you?

Other Questions

1. Tell me why you're glad you are in this church.

This gives important clues to the church's strengths and challenges. It tells you whether leaders are close to burnout.

2. What makes people anxious?

This is really important. Again, listen to what they say about previous pastors. It also tells you about what's going on in the community.

3. Why did you join this congregation instead of another church? (Did you try other churches?)

4. How was your experience in becoming part of this church; how easy was it to move from surface conviviality to deep friendship? (Or are you to the level of deep friendship?)

These two questions tell you about whether this church has a spirit of welcome or simply a surface relationship. Vital churches demonstrate warm hospitality.

5. What have you especially valued about your pastors and other church staff? (Be specific.)

Though this elicits positive regard, inevitably people will bring up old gripes. Note them, but push people to be aware of what they have valued.

6. What chronic frustrations or differences do you hope I can help the church deal with?

This could open a big box, but listen anyway. Be clear that at this point you're listening and learning, that there is no way that you can handle everything.

7. Who are those you especially respect as leaders?

After doing twenty-five or so interviews, you'll have identified the real leaders.

8. Complete this sentence: "God is calling this church to be"

This gives an indication of their sense of the church's identity. It should correspond closely with the mission and vision study done in preparation to seeking a pastor.

9. What do you think God wants your church to emphasize in the next three to five years?

Similar to the preceding question, this gives an idea of the consensus around the church's stated priorities. This is critical to setting your priorities.

10. What else do I need to know in order to thrive in this church and community?

One friend reflected on the culture shock he experienced in moving from the D.C. metro area to a small city in the Midwest. “No matter where I am, I’m always on duty,” he mused. “I almost always run into someone who knows who I am!” He had to adjust to being much more visible.

You may get nothing from this question, but it opens the door. If something does come up, listen for parallels in responses from others.

Try using this (adapting the questions as you deem best). Listen and learn. It will help you avoid landmines, build a stronger leadership team, and thrive in your new church.

About the Writer

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Policy: Associate or Interim Pastor Succeeding a Pastor/Head of Staff

Committee on Ministry, Presbytery of Baltimore
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BACKGROUND

Until the new Form of Government was approved by a majority of presbyteries in 2011, the PC(USA) Book of Order expressly forbade associate pastors from becoming the installed pastor within the same congregation without a break in service away from that congregation. The current Book of Order (G-2.0504a) states, “An associate pastor is ordinarily not eligible to be the next installed pastor of that congregation.” Section G-2,0504b adds, “A teaching elder employed in a temporary pastoral relationship is ordinarily not eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor.” These statements reflect a longstanding belief that such transitions are usually not in the best interest of the church.

However, the Book of Order (G-2.0504c) allows for exceptions: “A presbytery may determine that its **mission strategy** permits a minister of the Word and Sacrament currently called as an Associate Pastor to be eligible to serve as the next installed pastor or co-pastor, or a minister of the Word and Sacrament 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.” Given that these possibilities are now available, the Committee on Ministry believes that it will be helpful to state how requests for such exceptions will be administered and judged.

The traditional bias against allowing immediate succession within a congregation centers on two issues: the value of the interim period and the possibility of creating division within a congregation.

The Committee on Ministry affirms that the **process of calling a pastor must be rooted in a process of spiritual discernment** - the individual church must engage in a Spirit-led listening for God’s direction. This process should be open to all possibilities and not over-shadowed by any preconditions. Even after highly successful pastorates, it is usually desirable to allow an interim pastor to conduct a time of reflection about the manner in which the church is called to its ministries. The congregation needs to be able to address its past, envision new possibilities for its identity, and prepare itself for a healthy and fruitful relationship with a new pastor. This is most easily achieved through the guidance and special talents of an interim pastor. An assumption that a current associate or the interim pastor will be considered for the position can color the process, limiting consideration of new directions for the church and new roles for its pastor(s).

Similarly, **the transition of an associate or interim pastor to the position of installed pastor/head of staff is rife with possibilities for dissension and division within a congregation.** Pastor Nominating Committees, while keeping the session and congregation generally apprised of their progress, usually conduct the actual search process in confidence. If the congregation is aware that an associate or interim pastor is among the candidates, the PNC will likely be placed in an awkward position of being subject to lobbying for and against the idea. When the PNC is ready to present a candidate, the congregation usually has little or no knowledge of the candidate before that introduction and the candidate sermon. The congregation should be ready and excited for a new beginning, and most pastors would be leery of accepting a call unless the congregational vote is nearly unanimous.

In the case of an associate or interim pastor seeking the position, both the congregation and pastor need to consider the implications of accepting a less than unanimous vote. An 80% approval rate in a political election would be considered a landslide mandate. In the case of calling a pastor, however, a 20% “no” vote places the pastor in a very difficult position from which to begin a pastorate. It also highlights a division within the church which may be difficult or impossible to overcome. An associate pastor also needs to consider the impact of declining a call that is not nearly unanimous. Even though they do not accept the call, it may be difficult to minister to a congregation which is obviously conflicted about their gifts. It seems unlikely that they will be able to remain in their position, especially once a new pastor is chosen.

PROCEDURE

Inasmuch as the Book of Order notes that associate and interim pastors are **ordinarily** not eligible to be the next installed pastor, COM will recommend such exceptions only when there are clearly demonstrated **extraordinary** circumstances. By definition, extraordinary circumstances are rare. They might include extremely fragile congregations, churches suffering from significant trauma, or pastors who possess gifts uniquely suited to the needs of a particular church.

1. **MIF completed:** In order to allow the interim assessment and discernment process to proceed with integrity, the assumption during the beginning of that process must be that the associate or interim pastor is not eligible to be installed. Indeed, the associate or interim pastor cannot reasonably discern whether they feel called to the position before the self-assessment process takes place and a new position description is created. Associate and interim pastors shall not indicate their willingness or desire to be considered until the following steps are completed in the following order:

- the church completes a COM approved self-assessment process,
- a PNC is elected by the congregation,
- the PNC completes an MIF, and
- the MIF is approved by the session and COM.

A premature announcement may, by itself, be sufficient reason for COM to recommend against the installation of an associate or interim pastor.

2. **Associate or Interim Pastor meets with COM to indicate interest:** Once the MIF is approved, an associate or interim pastor who wishes to be considered for an

installed position must first consult with the COM Leadership Team **before** indicating their desire to the PNC. The pastor and COM Leadership Team will consider the rationale for such an exception and the potential impact on the congregation and its relationship with the pastor. Upon approval by the COM Leadership Team, the associate or interim pastor may submit his or her name to the PNC.

3. **PNC selects Associate or Interim:** A PNC which proposes to call an associate or interim pastor to be installed must meet with the COM and demonstrate that a good faith effort to consider a significant number of candidates has been made **before** presenting the candidate to the congregation. They must be able to enumerate the gifts and talents possessed by the associate or interim pastor which are lacking from all other candidates. The COM may also choose to meet with the candidate and/or session. COM approval of a request to present an associate or interim pastor as the selected candidate to the congregation shall require an affirmative vote of at least three-fourths of the COM members voting.
4. **Congregational Meeting:** The candidate having been presented to the congregational meeting as a candidate, the PNC and session shall report the results of the congregational vote to the COM. If the COM determines that the vote does not constitute extremely strong support (at least 90%) for installing the associate or interim pastor, further consultations may be required before a recommendation is made to the presbytery. COM retains the right to rescind its recommendation for approval after such consultations.
5. **Presbytery approves call with exception:** Upon a finding by the COM that an exception allowing an associate or interim pastor to be installed is warranted, COM shall make that recommendation at the next Presbytery Gathering, providing a detailed explanation of the work done by the PNC and the reasoning behind the recommendation. The PNC and candidate shall be present and ready to answer any questions from the presbytery. In accordance with the Book of Order, **approval by the presbytery requires a three-fourths vote of the members of presbytery present and voting.** Individual churches retain the right to petition the presbytery for approval without an affirmative recommendation from the COM.

NOTE: Any deviation from this process by the associate or interim pastor, the PNC, the session, and/or the congregation without the concurrence of the COM may, by itself, be sufficient reason for COM to recommend against the installation of an associate or interim pastor.