

**Presbytery of Eastern Virginia**  
**COMMISSION ON MINISTRY**



**2014**  
**Handbook**  
**For**  
**Pastor Nominating Committees**

**Adopted October 7, 2014**

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## **I. SO YOU'VE BEEN ELECTED TO THE PASTOR NOMINATING COMMITTEE (PNC)**

The process of calling a pastor, co-pastor or associate pastor is first and foremost an act of spiritual discernment. There are lots of instructions and paperwork that go into this process, but do not be deceived; this is a spiritual task, not an executive search. Your task is to find the person that God is calling to fill the vacancy at your church. That will require of you and of the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) prayer, careful listening, and reflection. Indeed, every member of the committee should make it part of his or her daily devotional life to pray for the work of the committee and for the discernment to discover the one God is calling.

Presbyterians don't have bishops. And we don't appoint pastors to serve congregations. Instead, we work from the classically Reformed understanding that "the studied wisdom of the few is more profound than the ignorance of the many, or the prejudice of the one." This is why we use nominating committees.

As was mentioned above, there are lots of instructions and paperwork that go with this process. You will be introduced to a whole new language with some puzzling abbreviations. Your Commission on Ministry seeks to make this task a bit easier by providing this handbook and a person, your COM liaison, to assist you in this task. At your first meeting, your COM liaison will orient you to the process and give a brief overview of this handbook.

This handbook is a work in progress. If there are places where it doesn't make sense or is difficult to understand, please contact your COM liaison.

## **II. ALPHABET SOUP**

In the process of searching for a pastor (senior pastor/head of staff, co-pastor or associate pastor), you will encounter all sorts of abbreviations. Below is a list of most of them. If you do not find an abbreviation listed below, contact either your liaison, the Vice Moderator for Vacancies, or the Moderator of the Commission on Ministry.

**AA/EEO** – Affirmative Action, Equal Employment Opportunity.

**COM** – Commission on Ministry, the presbytery entity charged with the responsibility of helping churches find teaching elders and teaching elders find churches.

**MIF** – Ministry Information Form, the form that a church fills out during the search process, which describes the position they are seeking to fill and the information necessary to help match potential candidates.

**CLC** – Church Leadership Connection, the official name given to the General Assembly Internet process of handling leadership matching (churches and teaching elders).

**PIF** – Personal Information Form, the form that teaching elders and candidates fill out to share who they are and in what sorts of ministerial positions they would be willing to serve.

**PIN** – Personal Identification Number. Each church has an assigned identification number. You can generally get that number from your Clerk of Session.

**PNC** – Pastor Nominating Committee, sometimes called Pulpit Nominating Committee, is the search committee elected by the congregation to nominate a pastor (senior pastor/head of staff, co-pastor or associate pastor) for the congregation.

**TE** – Teaching Elder, formerly “Minister” or “Minister of the Word and Sacrament.”

### **III. SHHHH!!!.... A WORD ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY**

It is vitally important that you as a committee be able to speak openly and honestly to each other about any candidates who come before you for consideration. You must be able to share your thoughts, insights and intuitions. BUT...these must be shared only in committee. Confidentiality is an absolute must.

Remember that your work is **confidential**. As a committee of the congregation, you officially report only to the congregation and the COM. Therefore, do not speak to individuals or groups inside or outside the congregation about your activities. HOWEVER, this does not mean you tell the congregation nothing. You represent them, and must periodically inform them of the progress being made in the search. Do not mention names, location, gender, etc., but let them know the process is moving along and where you are in the process.

You must also honor the candidates' confidentiality. Just because you have a teaching elder's Personal Information Form, even if it was self-referred, it is almost certain that his/her congregation does NOT know that he/she is considering moving. Please, do nothing to break that confidentiality.

Therefore, when communicating with candidates, do not leave messages with baby-sitters, children, or answering machines, except your name and phone number. Baby-sitters can be church members. Children may not know that the parent is considering moving. You do not know who may overhear your message on an answering machine. And never leave a message on an answering machine at the teaching elder's office. The work of leading a congregation as a pastor is difficult work. When a congregation finds that its pastor is in conversation with a PNC, it will often times assume that this pastorate's days are numbered and the pastor is now a lame duck. Should the conversation not end in extending a call, what might have been a good ministerial relationship is damaged, often beyond repair. Therefore, to honor the health of sister churches, it is essential that both names AND places of candidates not be shared beyond the PNC – not even with your spouses.

## IV. FINDING THE ONE

The PNC works as a team within its members and with the COM. Always work in consultation with the COM—through your liaison—never independent of it.

Strive for consensus in your actions. One person should not exercise undue sway over the entire committee.

There are three distinct stages to calling a pastor: The Pre-Search, The Search, and The Call. Your tasks are different in each stage. This handbook is divided into those three stages. We shall explain what is going on in each stage and offer information and explanations that will be helpful in that stage.

### 1) THE PRE-SEARCH

During this stage of the search, the session secures interim pastoral leadership for your congregation. If your session has secured an Intentional Interim Pastor, they will be assisting you in the preparation of your Ministry Information Form (MIF). Generally, by the time the PNC has been elected, the Interim Pastor has helped complete the Mission Study, and the church is on the process of developing a Vision/Mission Statement about the future direction of the church. This will be a helpful part of your MIF writing.

#### a) Organizing the Team

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

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

In addition, the committee might want to elect a **Corresponding Secretary**. The responsibility here will be to serve as the official communicator with the candidates. This will be a very busy position during the middle part of the process, and requires someone who will be diligent in initiating, maintaining, and closing communications in a timely manner with candidates.

**Find someone who is computer literate.** It is of the greatest importance that someone on your committee be computer-literate, able to use a word processor, know how to “cut-and-paste,” know how to send and receive email and able to use Skype. This process depends on using a computer, and using the Internet. If you don’t have someone on your committee, you may want to find a “computerist” to serve with your PNC.

### **b) Establishing a Budget**

In coordination with session, establish a budget for the search process, including travel for both committee members and visiting candidates. Most importantly, session must give you guidelines for compensating your new pastor, including benefits and moving expenses.

### **c) Finding your Vision for the Search**

As you begin your thinking about preparing your MIF, you will need to think seriously about the vision of the congregation for ministry. What is your mission as a congregation at this point? What kind of leadership do we need in service of that mission? What kinds of skills and personal qualities are desired? Answering these questions will help you determine the type of leader for whom you are going to be searching.

An excellent resource in this task is the work of your Interim Pastor (that is, if you have one). Prior to allowing the election of a PNC, the session will have undertaken a mission study and the development of a new vision for your congregation. The results of this study and visioning process will help define the vision for your MIF.

### **d) Obtaining a Ministry Information Form (MIF)**

In order to begin writing your MIF, you'll need to download a blank copy from the General Assembly's Church Leadership Connection (CLC) Internet Web site at <http://www.pcusa.org/clc/>. You can download a MIF in either PDF or MS Word format. MS Word format is recommended as most computers can work with Word documents. You only need MIF (Part II), because Part I will automatically be filled out by the computer based on last year's annual statistical report for your church. The CLC Handbook is online and available at the same Web site. As a part of the MIF, you will have to indicate the "required" and "desired" skills you desire in the new pastor. The Skills Definition List needs to be downloaded from the same site so that you know exactly how the particular skills are defined.

### **e) Preparing a MIF**

In conversation with your session and with your COM liaison, assemble the information needed to complete your MIF. Your session will give direction about the position and about the compensation package you can offer a new teaching elder (your Clerk of Session and your liaison have a copy of the current Presbytery Minimum Compensation Package). Your COM liaison has knowledge about pastor searches and will be able to help you present your church in the best way.

#### **i) Fill out the MIF form on a Computer**

This is so that when you come to put it "online" (see below), you will be able to "cut and paste" it onto the form online, rather than having to retype all of the entries. This is possible using the Word version, but typically not possible using the PDF version of the form.

**ii) Comments about separate lines on your MIF**

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

“Experience desired” is the minimum amount of experience you want to see in the PIFs you receive from matching. (**HINT:** In order to receive the broadest number of matches, use a lower number of years of experience.)

On the narrative questions, the boxes will only hold 1500 characters so count the letters, numbers, punctuation, and spaces to be sure you stay within that limit and still say what is most important. (**HINT:** Most word processing programs contain a tool to give you this information.)

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

When you come to skill choices, you will want to have discussed this thoroughly before filling out the form. Include your liaison in that discussion; he or she can assist you. You may select up to 4 skills that you want in all the PIFs you receive (required) and 6 more skills you would like to have (desired). Your pastor candidates will select 10 skills on their PIFs.

Effective Salary – effective salary is cash salary plus housing allowance – both minimum and maximum that your session feels it can offer. There is no published maximum effective salary. The presbytery has published minimum effective salary guidelines which are posted on the web site.

Geographic choices - unless you have some strong reason to limit your search, you will be wise to select “unlimited” to get the most “good” candidates in your referral list. (That is Louisville’s advice.) BUT, consider also whether you can afford to fly a candidate from Oregon here, or whether you can afford to fly your committee to Oregon to hear a person. Also consider how much the moving expenses will be. The new pastor will expect the church to cover those also.

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

#### **f) MIF Approval**

Once your MIF is complete, print it out so that your session can read and approve it. After the session has approved the MIF, e-mail it to your COM liaison. Your liaison will review it and certify it as being a fair representation of the congregation, making sure it meets the minimums for compensation as established by the presbytery. The liaison will then recommend its approval to the COM.

#### **g) Entering the MIF Online**

##### **i) IDs and Passwords**

After the COM has approved your MIF, get your PNC Chairperson's login ID and password from the PEVA Administrator. The login ID will look something like: P0023456. The Clerk of Session of your church will also be given a login ID number. It will look like COS23456 (C, O, S, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6). Both login ID's will be assigned an initial password. The password is case sensitive and it will look something like this: 1stpres.

##### **ii) Log in to the CLC and Enter Your MIF**

Go to <http://www.pcusa.org/clc/> and then click "User Login" (Do not go to "Enter a New MIF"). Enter your login ID in the first box and your password in the second box.

The computer already knows about your church from your login ID. After you have completed Part II, it automatically fills in Part I of the MIF based on the Annual Statistical Report your Clerk of Session submitted in January. You can review Part I and edit it if necessary (after you fill in Part II) by clicking on the task list "View/Update MIF (Part I)".

To begin filling in your MIF, click on "Fill a New MIF". If you used Word when doing your MIF, "cut and paste" the data from your MIF that you filled out on your computer into the online form. When you have completed the task, click "Submit MIF".

After your MIF is "online," ask your Clerk of Session and the Vice Moderator for Vacancies or the COM Moderator to "sign" your form electronically.

##### **iii) MIF Identification Number**

When your signed form is received, the CLC system will confirm it and generate a MIF ID. It is made up of your church PIN and some other digits that will identify that particular MIF. It will look like: 23456.AA0. Write it down and keep it. You will need it to edit your MIF. This is also the number that candidates will see to identify your MIF.

*Once you receive your MIF ID you will be able to login and request computer matches.*

For more specific help, call the Call System Support Representative at 1-888-728-7228 – (ext. 5730).

## **2) THE SEARCH**

### **a) Is Anybody Out There?**

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

### **b) Receiving Personal Information Forms (PIFs)**

There are several ways in which you will receive the PIFs of potential candidates for your position. By far the largest number will come via the Internet; both from CLC and also self-referral.

#### **i) CLC Referrals**

The CLC referrals will come via an e-mail note to the PNC Chairperson who will get an email indicating that matches have occurred. The Chairperson will log onto the CLC website ([www.pcusa.org/clc](http://www.pcusa.org/clc)) as done earlier, and when the “Task List for PNC Chairperson” appears on the screen, the chairperson will select “View Referral List.” There you will find the names of all those whom the computer has matched to your MIF. The number to the left of their name is the PIF ID number. By double clicking on the number, you will see their PIF. You may download any or all of these PIFs. You can print them out and copy them so that all persons on the PNC have a copy, you can also download the PIFs and email to your other PNC members. When you need more PIFs to review, you may send a request by double clicking “Request New CLC Matching” on the “Task List for PNC Chairperson.”

#### **ii) Self Referral**

Another way you will receive PIFs is by self-referral. Teaching elders and Candidates for Ordination may send their PIFs to the e-mail address of the PNC Chairperson as it is listed on your MIF. You will need to handle these as you did the ones that were referred by CLC. Candidates may also hand-deliver or mail hard copies of their PIFs.

#### **iii) Presbytery**

Your COM liaison may offer some referrals from presbytery’s file of teaching elders looking for a new call.

#### **iv) Word of Mouth**

You will want to seek the suggestions of members and friends of your congregation. New members from out of town may suggest their former pastor;

folks who know your congregation will want to offer suggestions of persons to consider. In these cases, you will not have a PIF; you will need to get one. Presbytery is not able to access these for you; you will have to contact the person, ask if they are interested in being considered, and if so, ask them to send a PIF. When sending letters of this type, it is a good idea to include a copy of the church MIF.

#### **v) Advertising**

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

### **c) Processing the PIFs**

#### **i) Acknowledge and Communicate**

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

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

Indeed it is very important to keep people up-to-date in your process. For instance, "We have just gotten organized and are now receiving PIFs. It will probably be at least four weeks until you hear from us again."

When you have received a requested PIF from a particular teaching elder, it is also important to let that person know when they can expect to hear from you again.

Keep a running log of these correspondence details and honor the dates you have given for communication. You should go no longer than one month without letting a candidate know where you are in the process, and whether they are still under consideration. Remember, you are being evaluated not only by what you say, but in your courtesy toward your possible new pastor.

#### **ii) Sorting the PIFs**

Once you start the process of reading PIFs, you will want to sort them into different groups. You might well want to try the "ABC" system. Group "A" contains those PIFs that sound exactly like what you are searching for. "Group "B" PIFs sound quite interesting but don't seem to match exactly. Group "C" is composed of those PIFs that are not a match you would consider.

Some tips for reading PIFs are found in **Appendix A**. One way to go about the sorting is to have two members of the PNC read each PIF and on a sticky note put their suggested pile assignment on the PIF (if you all have email copies, they could email the chairperson the name and pile). If there is not agreement on a PIF, have a third person read it. By this process, you can get folks into all three piles. Of course, you may want all members of the PNC to read each PIF, and discuss each PIF's pile assignment at a PNC meeting.

### **iii) EEO and AA Requirements**

As you review PIFs, you must not discriminate against any candidate on the basis of race, ethnicity, age, sex, disability, geography or theological conviction. **Appendix B** provides more guidance on this responsibility.

### **iv) Sending Rejection Letters**

However you sort the PIFs, you will want to release those who do not meet your criteria (Group "C") from the search. Therefore, **if you have had some sort of contact with the candidate**, you will send them a note that is something like this:

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

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

Signed \_\_\_\_\_.

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

## **d) Narrowing the Field**

### **i) Asking for Additional Information**

After you have communicated with Group "C" you will also want to communicate with Groups "A" and "B." You want them to know that they are still under consideration. You may say that the process of reading and evaluating PIFs is taking longer than you expected. In addition you may want to ask those in Group A to provide some additional materials.

For instance you may ask them to send you **sermons** on electronic media or a link to online sermons or videos, bulletins, newsletters, etc. so that you might get to know them better. You can also see if their current congregation has a website

with information and/or sermons that can be helpful. After you have reviewed sermons and additional information, you may want to re-rank the candidates. **Appendix C** gives tips for listening to sermons.

## **ii) Conference Calls and Skype**

Committees may use the electronic media that fits them best as a next step before deciding upon candidates to invite for a face to face interview; Skype (or equivalent), group telephone interviews, or conference calls are all acceptable.

**However, these are the only contacts allowed until the designated presbytery staff member (usually the General Presbyter) conducts a reference check (known as an exec check) with counterparts in the candidate's presbytery and grants approval to proceed.**

## **e) Executive Checks**

When you are ready to invite 2-3 candidates to interview in person you **MUST** contact your liaison to request an "exec check" and provide the name and PIF of the person and the presbytery in which he/she is a member. The purpose of these checks is to make sure there are no problems (or alternatively, there is nothing known by the other presbytery about a candidate that would prevent or make it inadvisable for him/her to be considered further.) In most cases the reference check provides confirmation or lifts up additional questions the PNC should ask the candidate or references suggested by the candidate.

**ABSOLUTELY NO IN-PERSON, FACE-TO-FACE CONVERSATION OR INTERVIEW IS ALLOWED UNTIL THE "EXEC CHECK" IS COMPLETED, AND APPROVAL IS GRANTED!**

## **f) Reference Checks**

For every candidate to be interviewed, call each of the references listed and ask both general questions and questions that the PNC has developed about this particular person. A list of sample questions for references is included in **Appendix D** of this handbook. **DO NOT CONTACT ANYONE OTHER THAN THOSE LISTED AS REFERENCES ON THE CANDIDATE'S PIF.** You may put the candidate in a tight spot in the current pastorate if you ultimately decide God is not leading you to him/her.

## **g) Face To Face Interviews**

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

## **i) Prepare for the interview.**

What information do you want and need in order to evaluate this person as your future leader? What questions will be asked and who will ask them? It is a good idea to develop a list of standard questions in order to evaluate the candidates

equally. What information will the candidate want to know about your church and community? Gather this information before the interview.

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

Be clear about your process for decision-making - what are the steps you will go through? What is your approximate time line?

Before you meet with any candidate, every member of the PNC should read the candidate's PIF thoroughly, compare it with your MIF, and score the candidate on the basis of criteria your committee has set for its future leader. For example,

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

Also review any other materials the candidate may send you: Video or audio tapes of sermons, bulletins, newsletters, etc.

#### **ii) Prepare for the Candidate's Visit**

If the candidate is new to your community, you may invite him or her and his/her family to the area. Arrange a tour that gives a good picture of your church and community, but be careful to protect confidentiality. Do not include non-PNC members in the visit or introduce the candidate around town. This is a small world and many stories are told about pastors who became "lame ducks" because congregations back home heard that they were out interviewing.

#### **iii) During the Interview**

You will want to develop general questions for all candidates as well as specific questions for each one. Some hints and sample questions for interviewing candidates are included in **Appendix E** of this handbook. The specific questions will come out of things you read in the PIF and things you hear from references.

#### **iv) Associate Pastor and Christian Educator Interviews**

When the PNC is searching for other than a senior pastor, the PNC should give their senior pastor/head of staff an opportunity to meet each candidate who is interviewed face to face.

#### **h) Neutral Pulpit—Listening to Sermons**

Never invite a prospective minister to preach in your church. You may ask your COM liaison to help you identify possible churches to contact about setting up a neutral pulpit.

Be sparse in your use of neutral pulpits. If the teaching elder is talking to you, they probably are talking to others. They have only a limited number of Sundays when they can be away from their home pulpit [generally 6 per year]. They are using their vacation to preach in a neutral pulpit.

If you go to listen to a teaching elder in their current pulpit, either let them know that you are coming, and arrange (if you wish) a time to meet with the person after the service, or if you choose to appear unannounced, contact the teaching elder by the middle of that week and identify yourself as having visited, and tell them when they can expect to hear from you further. When you visit a teaching elder's congregation do not have more than two or possibly three people arrive and sit together or it may cause members of the congregation to guess at why you are there. Confidentiality also means that you should not be asking members questions about their pastor but at most only those a first time visitor might ask. For more on etiquette for neutral pulpits please speak with your COM liaison.

Some tips for listening to sermons are included in **Appendix C** of this handbook.

#### **i) General Words and Observations**

Remember that the interview is a two way street: the teaching elder is also interviewing you. The teaching elder will have questions to ask, so please leave time in the interview for this.

Do not hide problems. All ministers know there are bound to be problems; be honest, and turn them into challenges. Seriously discuss the goals of your church and your expectations of the pastor or associate, and listen to their expectations.

The PNC is responsible for the travel and accommodation costs for the candidate and family to visit the area, interview and to preach in a neutral pulpit, as well as the honorarium for preaching.

Unless you are searching for a clergy couple, you are not normally interviewing the spouse of your candidate. While that statement is true, *after you have had your first visit/interview* with the candidate, you should consider including the spouse in your interviews. This is especially true when you invite the candidate to visit your church.

### 3) THE CALL

#### a) Selecting the Finalist

As a committee, decide whether or not to issue a call to one of the prospects.

- i) If you, as a committee, are interested in proceeding with the prospective minister, be clear on the Terms of Call. Negotiate the terms, as well as the Covenant, listing specific goals, expectations, and responsibilities for the work of the minister, the session, and the congregation.
- ii) If you, as a committee, decide **NOT** to proceed further with a prospect, be sure to communicate this to the minister in a **kind** and **timely** manner.
- iii) In the case of an associate pastor or Christian educator, it is essential that the senior pastor/head of staff be in full agreement with the person to be nominated.

#### b) Background Check

When you have selected the finalist—the candidate to whom you wish to offer a call—ask the Stated Clerk of the presbytery to perform a professional background check. This must be done before you offer the call.

#### c) Offering the Call

When the PNC offers the call, it is contingent on examination and approval by the COM and the vote of the congregation. When the candidate accepts the call, notify the COM liaison of the candidate's willingness to accept the call if approved.

#### d) Preparing the Covenant and Terms of Call

The Covenant details the expectations of both the pastor and the church, while the Terms of Call specify the pastor's compensation and benefits. Templates and instructions for the "Pastoral Covenant" and "Pastoral Call Form" are available on the PEVA Web site, along with the current year's required minimum "Compensation Guidelines." Instructions for completing the Pastoral Call form are given in **Appendix F**.

Other PEVA forms, guidelines and templates available on the presbytery's Web site include:

- Terms of Call Addendum, Clergy Housing Loan
- Minister & Educator Parental Leave, Sabbath, Holiday Policies
- Sabbatical Guidelines.

Your COM liaison can assist in preparing these documents. Your liaison is responsible for making sure that the call form is filled out properly and meets presbytery's minimum compensation, and that the AA/EEO compliance line is filled out.

### **e) Meeting with the COM**

The COM will examine your candidate and review the Covenant and Terms of Call. If the candidate is not already a member of the presbytery, the PNC is responsible for paying his or her expenses to the examination.

The deadline for getting a candidate's name before the COM is ordinarily 10 days before the meeting. COM typically meets on the first Tuesday of each month. The COM will need all of the following prior to the meeting:

- The candidate's PIF
- Statement of Faith
- Faith Journey
- Covenant
- Terms of Call.

Even if the teaching elder is a member of our presbytery, they still need to appear before the COM. If you are ready to act before the deadline, we will, if possible, set a time and date for your candidate to meet with representatives of COM.

A member of the PNC should accompany the candidate to the examination, but will not be present during the examination.

It is the COM's responsibility to determine whether or not the candidate is theologically sound and appropriate for membership in the presbytery. It is also the COM's responsibility to determine the suitability of the match between the candidate and the church, and to approve the Terms of Call and The Covenant based on recommendations from the COM liaison and the Vice Moderator for Vacancies.

Your liaison will notify the PNC of the results of the examination. If the way be clear, the liaison will advise you to meet with your session to inform them of your nominee and ask them to call a congregational meeting.

The candidate must be received at a presbytery meeting prior to installation. However, the Commission on Ministry has the authority to allow a person to move onto the field and begin work on the effective date of the call. That means that we do not have to rush to get something done just to fit the schedule of a presbytery meeting.

### **f) Informing the Session**

When you are ready to make a nomination, the PNC may choose to share information about the person with the session, such as background, experience and family. It is also wise to share the Covenant and Terms of Call. Whether to give the actual name to the session is discretionary with the PNC.

### **g) The Congregational Meeting**

- i) The session calls the Congregational Meeting in accordance with the rule established by the church for calling the meeting.

- ii) **Appendix G** contains procedures for a congregational meeting to call a pastor.
- iii) The Chair of the Pastor Nominating Committee is responsible for ensuring the Call Form is appropriately filled out and returned to the Stated Clerk at presbytery's office, as soon after the congregational meeting as possible.

## **V. IF YOUR NOMINEE IS A CANDIDATE FOR ORDINATION**

In addition to examination by COM, a candidate for ordination must be examined on the presbytery floor. Presbytery will then appoint an ordination commission. This commission may also serve as an installation commission, as described below.

## **VI. INSTALLING YOUR NEW PASTOR**

While it is the responsibility of presbytery to ordain and/or install all of the pastors who are members, it is impractical for all of presbytery to gather to do this. So presbytery appoints a commission to do this task on behalf of the whole of presbytery. It is the practice of the Presbytery of Eastern Virginia to allow the teaching elder to be ordained and/or installed to nominate their commission.

A form is provided for this purpose to the teaching elder by the Stated Clerk. It is requested that the form be returned to the Stated Clerk prior to the prosecution of the call if time permits. Please assist the candidate in getting the people for the commission. The form comes with directions about the requirements of the commission. If there are any questions, call the presbytery office.

After your candidate is received at a presbytery meeting, the commission mentioned above is appointed by the Presbytery of Eastern Virginia to ordain and/or install your new pastor. The time of meeting and the appropriate dress for the teaching elder members of the commission are decisions worked out between the teaching elder-elect and the moderator of the commission (that is the person presbytery appoints "to preside and propound.") On the appointed day, at the time suggested by the commission moderator, the commission convenes, prepares for the service and conducts the Service of Ordination and/or Installation. Following the service the minutes of the commission are sent to the presbytery office.

## **VI. THE FIRST SIX MONTHS**

If not dissolved at the congregational meeting, the PNC typically remains in place through the first six months of the new pastor's term, to support and advise him or her through the pastor's six month evaluation. This can include:

- 1) Assisting the pastor with relocation.
- 2) Encouraging members of your congregation to attend the meeting of presbytery when the person is to be examined (in the case of ordination) and received.
- 3) Assisting with the Installation service.
- 4) Discussing installation expenses (e.g., out-of-town participants, who pays for what, etc.), and petitioning session for funds, if appropriate or necessary.
- 5) Assisting in the initial six-month evaluation of the Covenant by the minister and session.

**APPENDIX A**  
**TIPS ON READING PERSONAL INFORMATION FORMS**

**I. Establishing a Basis of Judgment**

- Decide on Criteria
  
- Each PIF read by at least 2 members who rank according to criteria: if both think it a “bomb” – discard

**II. Some Items to Consider in Arriving at Criteria:**

**A. Items of Objectivity**

- Experience
  
- Compatibility with congregation’s ranking pastoral activities
  
- Writing style: how is it written and what is communicated by the style of writing?
  
- Interplay between theology and life? Does it appear that the person has internalized the faith more than just recounting what has been read?
  
- What is the person’s view of the church?
  
- What do you learn about this person as a person from the PIF?

**B. Items of Subjectivity**

- Would you like a two-hour conversation with this person on the basis of what is said in the PIF? What would you like to talk about?
  
- How do the comments on leadership style and skills for ministry fit with the congregation’s experience and expectations?
  
- Did anything make you uneasy as you read? If so, what?
  
- Did anything cause you to pause and reflect, “Mmm ... now, that’s interesting.... I’d like to hear more about that”? If so, what?

from: Angus W. McGregor; Greensboro, NC 9/00

## **APPENDIX B EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION**

Pursuant to F-1.0403 in the Book of Order, PNCs “shall provide for the implementation of equal opportunity for teaching elders and candidates without regard to race, ethnicity, age, sex, disability, geography, or theological conviction.” It is important that PNCs and COMs examine their decision-making processes to ensure they are not making decisions based upon these categories. This allows for the very broad discretion vested in PNCs and COMs when they are making their decisions and, yet, cautions them to implement the requirements of F-1.0403.

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

### Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What may those who examine church officers do?”

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

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

--from: Angus McGregor; Greensboro, NC 9/00

## **APPENDIX C TIPS FOR LISTENING TO SERMONS**

### **1. Spirit/Attitude**

- Does the preacher's attitude direct your attention to the preacher or to what is being communicated?

### **2. Use of the Bible**

- How clear is it that the Bible is the authority for what s/he says?
- What about the balance and transitions between biblical and other material?

### **3. Witness to Faith**

- Does the preacher evidence a genuine personal faith, including struggle, or is it more of an intellectual, rhetorical exercise?

### **4. Relationship to "Everyday Life"**

- What evidence is in the sermon that the preacher is alive in today's world?

### **5. Reformed Tradition/Theology**

- What do you hear that points to our Reformed tradition?

### **6. Voice**

- Does his/her voice help or hinder him/her, i.e., quality?, projection?, audibility?

### **7. Organization**

- Did the preacher keep you focused on the direction the sermon was heading?

### **8. Balance: Intellectual Integrity – Emotional Appeal**

- What is the preacher's judgment of the congregation's ability to think?
- Where were you "touched," "stirred" as you listened to this sermon?

### **9. Use of Illustrations**

- How were illustrations used? Too many, not enough, degree to which you saw the connection to biblical/theological matters?

### **10. Images**

- What could you see as you listened to this sermon?

### **11. Delivery**

- Eye Contact: Were you comfortable with the amount of eye contact maintained with the congregation?
- Mannerisms: Were the gestures and body language appropriate to the point being made in the sermon?
- Written Text: Was the preacher sufficiently free from the written text so as to relate to the congregation?

**12. If you are visiting the minister's church, note your feelings about the entire service, not just the sermon.**

**13. Conclusion**

- After listening to the sermon, so what????

--from: Angus W. McGregor; Greensboro, NC 9/00

## APPENDIX D GUIDE FOR DOING REFERENCE CHECKS

- Call and get the correct person
- Do not leave messages with any information other than, “I am calling to do a reference check.”
- **No names** of candidates to receptionists – and not on voicemail unless you know it is confidential.

**SCRIPT:** My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am calling on behalf of the Pastor Nominating Committee for \_\_\_\_\_ Presbyterian Church. Your name was given to us as a reference by \_\_\_\_\_, who is a candidate for the position of \_\_\_\_\_. Do you have a few minutes to talk? [If not, set a convenient time to call back.]

**SAMPLE QUESTIONS:** PNCs may choose any that apply and add others if desired.

- 1) Can you tell me how long you have known \_\_\_\_\_ and in what capacity?
- 2) What do you believe are his/her greatest gifts?
- 3) How does he/she go about identifying and employing the skills and experience of members of the congregation (not just elders)?
- 4) What have been some of his/her greatest accomplishments?
- 5) What have been some of the challenges that he/she has experienced? How did he/she meet those challenges?
- 6) How does he/she handle situations involving conflict or disagreement? Can you give an example?
- 7) How would you describe his/her preaching style?
- 8) How has he/she helped the congregation’s spiritual development?
- 8) How does the congregation feel about and respond to his/her personality and leadership? Has he/she fostered enthusiasm and participation?
- 9) On a scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent), how would you rate this person’s:  
[note to interviewer: if the rating is low, ask, “May I ask why you say that?”]
  - Approach to pastoral care?
  - Administrative abilities?
  - Teaching skills?

- Ability to communicate with all age groups, from children to the elderly?
- Ability to work with staff members and lay leaders?

10) If you could change or improve one thing about \_\_\_\_\_ or his/her ministry, what would it be?

11) Is there anything else you think we should know about him/her?

12) To put you on the spot, if you were our PNC, would you be enthusiastic about calling him/her?

## **APPENDIX E TIPS ON INTERVIEWING A CANDIDATE**

### ***A. Before the Interview***

The PNC should think carefully about questions to be asked. Standard questions should be asked of all candidates to form a basis for comparison. Each candidate's PIF and references will suggest individual questions particular to him or her. Ask questions that encourage the candidate to give examples and tell stories about how he or she has handled situations in the past.

It is a good idea for the PNC to agree on who will take the lead in the interview, and to assign particular questions to different committee members so that no one will dominate the discussion.

### ***B. Conducting the Interview***

Open with prayer.

Your committee may want to start by introducing each of the interviewers and giving a statement regarding the nature of your church and the position to be filled, followed by questions the committee has framed in advance.

- Allow adequate opportunity for the candidate to ask questions. These may sometimes be difficult and penetrating, but they indicate interest on the part of the minister. Face the problems and weaknesses as well as the strengths and opportunities of your situation directly and openly.
- Each member should take notes, not only of the information shared but also of impressions gained in the course of the interview. Each member should also have an opportunity to ask follow-up questions that arise from the initial conversation.

### **C. Sample Standard Questions**

1. Tell us about your faith journey. Why did you become a minister? What keeps you in the ministry?
2. What are the things you feel best about in your present ministry?
3. What have been the challenges there?
4. What makes you think you may be called to leave there now?
5. What interests you about this position?
6. What do you bring to our ministry?
7. What are your greatest strengths in ministry? .... your greatest weaknesses?

8. One of our goals is to strengthen our \_\_\_\_\_. How would you do that?
9. Describe a conflict situation you have experienced in your ministry, and how you addressed it.
10. Describe a typical week in your ministry.
11. Tell us about your preaching. How do you prepare? What are your sources for topics?
12. Describe a sermon that you believe made a real difference in your congregation. Has there been one that was not well received?
13. What can you tell us about your work habits?
14. How do you foster dedication and enthusiasm in staff members? In church leaders? In members of the congregation?
15. How do you go about identifying, employing and developing the skills and experience of members of the congregation?
16. How do you integrate music into worship?
17. What have you done to move your present church members closer to God?
18. How involved are you in church activities and programs?
19. What is your approach to financial stewardship?
20. Share your perspective on the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
21. One of the issues our session has debated in the past few years is \_\_\_\_\_. Tell us how you might address that topic.
22. If we selected you as our pastor (or other role), when could you start and what would be your start-up plan?
23. How do you balance your personal/family life with your ministry?
24. What would you need from the members of this church in order to be effective as our pastor?

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

25. If we selected you as our pastor (or other role), when could you start? What would be your startup plan?
26. What questions or concerns do you have?

#### **D. Closing the Interview**

- Invite the candidate to offer a closing prayer.

- Thank the minister for meeting with you. Let him or her know that the interview is not a commitment on the part of the PNC or the candidate, and indicate a specific date by which you will contact him or her.
- Ask the minister to let you know if he/she accepts another position or decides they are no longer interested.

**E. What about questions that cannot be asked?**

A few words about appropriate questions:

Many Presbyterians who serve on PNCs are familiar with secular employment practices where it is illegal to ask certain questions of a prospective employee. Because the ministries of the Church belong to the Church, the rules are different for search committees interviewing church professionals. Search committees and presbyteries have the right and responsibility to ask questions that will help them determine “fitness for office”.

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

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

**APPENDIX F**  
**INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETION OF THE PASTORAL CALL FORM**

General. Prepare two copies of the Pastoral Call Form. One copy is to be completed and returned for presbytery use and the other is for your files.

First Section: – Fill in the official name of the church, the name of the city or post office serving the church, the full name of the minister, the office (e.g., pastor, associate pastor), and the effective date when the minister will begin serving the church.

Full time or part time – If the minister will serve full time, cross out or delete “(part time)”. If the minister will serve part time, cross out or delete “full time” and indicate the part time schedule.

Second Section (Terms of Call):

1. a. Cash Salary

If no Manse or Utilities are to be Furnished

- (1) Fill in line 1a with the Cash Salary (which includes all allowances for housing and utilities, etc.) NOTE: Be sure to check that it meets minimum requirements. Following the words “annually, of which \$” enter the amount of the Salary designated for housing, utilities, furnishings, and appurtenances. This amount should be an actual dollar figure but normally at least 40% of the Cash Salary.
- (2) Cross out or delete lines 1b and 1c.

If a Manse is furnished but no Utilities are Provided

- (1) Fill in line 1a with the Cash Salary (which is to include all allowances for utilities, etc.). NOTE: Be sure to check that it meets minimum requirements. Following the words “annually, of which \$” enter the amount of the Salary designated for utilities, furnishings, and appurtenances. This amount should be an actual dollar figure but equal to at least 25% of the Cash Salary. Cross out the word “housing” in line 1a.
- (2) Leave line 1b as it is and cross out or delete line 1c.

If a Manse and its Utilities are Furnished

- (1) Fill in line 1a with the Cash Salary. NOTE: Be sure to check that it meets minimum requirements. Following the words “annually, of which \$” enter the amount of the Salary designated for furnishings, and appurtenances. This amount should be an actual dollar figure but equal to at least 15% of the Cash Salary. Cross out the words “housing, utilities” in line 1a.
- (2) Leave lines 1b and 1c as they are printed.

2. Enter the **percentage** of the minister’s portion of the Social Security Tax that will be paid by the church – either 50% or 100%. NOTE: Do not enter the dollar amount.

3. Paid Vacation – enter the amount of time in weeks.

4. Reimbursement of Professional Expenses – enter the dollar amount on an annual basis.
5. Annual Study Leave – The recommended minimum is two weeks per year, accumulating up to three years (six weeks).
6. Continuing Education Allowance – Enter the annual dollar amount.
7. through 10. Leave in.
11. Enter the amount (or ceiling amount) for moving expenses.
12. Leave in.
13. Leave in.
14. Add any other terms or provisions. If a housing loan is provided, include the “Terms of Call Addendum, Clergy Housing Loan.” If there are no other terms or provisions, leave blank or cross out.

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Prior to the congregational meeting, be sure you have followed all steps in the paper, “Procedure for a Congregational Meeting to Call a Pastor or an Associate Pastor.”

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Third Section: Fill in the date of the congregational meeting and have the members of the PNC who are at the meeting sign the call.

Bottom of front page – The pastor nominating committee will have indicated that they have complied with F-1.0403) of the *Book of Order*.

REVERSE SIDE:

Fourth Section: Following the congregational meeting, the Moderator of the meeting is to sign and date.

Fifth Section – Minister being called will sign and date.

This completes your portion of the call form. Send the completed call form and the covenant to the **Stated Clerk, Presbytery of Eastern Virginia, 801 Loudoun Avenue, Portsmouth, Virginia 23707-3216.**

**APPENDIX G**  
**PROCEDURE FOR A CONGREGATIONAL MEETING**  
**TO CALL A PASTOR OR AN ASSOCIATE PASTOR**

**I. Prior to the meeting**

- A.** The Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) meets with the session:
1. Shares the Covenant that it has developed and which has been approved by the person to be called.
  2. The session goes over Covenant and approves it. If session feels there should be a change, it should recommend the change to the PNC. The change must be approved by the PNC as well as by the person to be called.
  3. The PNC shares the terms of call (without the name) with the session to be sure they agree that it is fair and manageable.
  4. The PNC requests the session to call a congregational meeting in accordance with established church rules “to hear and act on its report.”
- B.** The session will act to:
1. Call a congregational meeting.
  2. Be sure that public notice of the time, place and purpose of the meeting is given as established by church rules.

**II. The Congregational Meeting**

- A.** The moderator of the congregational meeting shall be
1. The pastor (if any).
  2. The moderator of the session as appointed by presbytery.
  3. If neither can serve, then they shall invite, with the concurrence of the session, another teaching elder of the presbytery to preside.
- B.** As with any other congregational meeting, the Clerk of Session shall serve as secretary of the congregational meeting. If unable to serve, a temporary secretary shall be elected by the congregation
- C.** The vote on the election should be by written, secret ballot. Sufficient paper ballots will be on hand to distribute to members of the congregation at the meeting. It is wise to have several session members ready to distribute and collect ballots from the congregation.
- D.** The vote on the covenant and terms of call does not have to be by secret ballot.
- E.** Typical Agenda
1. Call to Order – Moderator
  2. Election of secretary (if necessary)
  3. Determination of a Quorum (church rules)
  4. Presentation of Report of Nominating Committee – Chair

- a. Background of search process
  - b. Personal information about person to be nominated
  - c. Covenant
  - d. Terms of Call.
5. Constitutional Questions – “Are you ready to proceed to the election of a pastor (associate pastor)?”
  6. Distribution of paper ballots to congregation members. The vote on the ballot will be in response to the question, “Shall the congregation, under the will of God, call \_\_\_\_\_ (name of nominee) \_\_\_\_\_ to be its pastor (associate pastor) according to the Terms of Call presented?”
  7. Collection of ballots and counting them (The count should be done by one session member and the Chair of the Pastor (Associate Pastor) Nominating Committee. The congregation may participate in a hymn sing or other activity during this time.
  8. Announcement of Vote by the Moderator (It takes a majority of those present and voting to elect.)
  9. Approval of the Covenant and Terms of Call
  10. Vote to dissolve or extend the PNC as an advisory group (typically for six months).
  11. Approval of Minutes – Secretary
  12. Adjournment – Moderator

### **III. Following the Congregational Meeting**

- A.** Members of the Pastor Nominating Committee shall sign the Terms of Call.
- B.** The moderator shall sign the call certifying that all persons who signed it were authorized to do so and that the call was in all other aspects prepared as constitutionally required.
- C.** The Chair of the Pastor Nominating Committee will forward to the Stated Clerk of the presbytery as soon as possible after the meeting:
  1. A copy of the signed Terms of Call
  2. A copy of the signed Covenant
- D.** The moderator shall contact the nominee by telephone and inform her/him of the results of the congregational vote.