

# TRANSITION PROCESS

## Committee on Ministry (COM) - New Harmony Presbytery (NHP)

Approved by NHP's COM: September 8, 2020

(\* denotes when the COM Liaison should be present.)

### STAGE I: DISSOLUTION OF PASTORAL RELATIONSHIP (Book of Order, G-2.09)

1. Pastor notifies Executive Presbyter/Stated Clerk (EP) or COM moderator of pending retirement, call or other change in status in order for there to be consultation and collaboration on the transition steps and dates as early as possible. (It would be very helpful for the congregation's transition if a retiring Pastor gave the EP and COM moderator a six-month notice in order to have the Session begin the process of finding an Interim Pastor. No on-site, face-to-face interviews or meetings may take place until the former pastor has left.):
  - The EP and/or COM Moderator also coach the Pastor about his/her communication to the Session and congregation.
- 2\* Both the EP and COM liaison are present when the Pastor informs the Session.

(If possible, the COM liaison will remain as liaison throughout the interim time and pastoral search as well as participate in the End of First Year Review – see appendix for position description of the COM liaison. <http://www.newharmonypres.org/nhpresources>)

  - Pastor requests dissolution for a particular date, asking the Session to call a congregational meeting for that purpose; this called meeting requires a notice of at least ten days and two consecutive Sundays. After conversation with the Session about the transition, the Pastor should be excused with the EP moderating the remainder of the meeting in order for the EP and COM liaison to confer about next steps with the Session including the following: the transition process; the goals of the transition time (Heritage, Connections, Leadership, Mission, Future); the list of Supply Preachers/Honoraria; inviting the EP to preach and lead worship the Sunday after, or a Sunday soon after, the departure of the Pastor.
  - The next day the Pastor notifies the congregation, by email and postal mail, about the pending dissolution and the upcoming congregational meeting.
- 3\* Congregation meets to dissolve the pastoral relationship and the Pastor and Session complete and sign respective dissolution forms (see NHP website, Resource tab, NHP Resources, under COM <http://www.newharmonypres.org/nhpresources>).
4. On behalf of the Presbytery, the COM acts to dissolve the pastoral relationship and appoints a moderator.
5. If the pastor is retiring and/or leaving the bounds of the presbytery, the pastor is recognized by COM at a Presbytery meeting.
- 6\* COM liaison and EP sets up exit interviews (see NHP website, Resource tab, NHP Resources, under COM <http://www.newharmonypres.org/nhpresources>) with the Pastor and Session during which the Policy for Pastors and Churches Following the Conclusion of a Pastoral Relationship (<http://www.newharmonypres.org/nhpresources>) is reviewed.

## STAGE II: SEARCH FOR THE INTERIM PASTOR

1. If possible, the EP and COM liaison will provide an overview of the entire transition process for the congregation or, at minimum, the Session including the following: the stages in the Transition Process found in this document; the goals/Focus Points of the transition time (Heritage, Connections, Leadership, Mission, Future); and the search process for the Interim Pastor and then the Pastor.
- 2\* The Session elects an Interim Pastor Nominating Committee (IPNC) of ordinarily 3-5 persons (2-3 from the Session and 1-2 at-large members not on Session) that reflects the diversity of the congregation and who all have internet access and capabilities. Only those who do email should be considered for the IPNC as so much of the process is done electronically and no two should be from the same immediate family nor should a nominee be a member of the paid church staff.
- 3\* Both the EP and COM liaison meets with the IPNC initially to do the following:
  - Train the IPNC in the transition process, in particular the interim search process.
  - Have the IPNC determine the leadership of the IPNC, ordinarily a chair and secretary.
  - Assist IPNC with the development a Ministry Information Form (see NHP website, Resource tab, NHP Resources, under COM <http://www.newharmonypres.org/nhpresources>), which will be approved by the EP and COM and then the Session. The MIF will include the Focus Points of the transition time (Heritage, Connections, Leadership, Mission, Future) and any other important transition goals/issues. (This MIF is not typically as “polished” as a MIF for the Pastor search process as it will not follow a mission study.)
  - Set IPNC meeting dates, ordinarily weekly or bi-monthly, as this process goes quickly; meetings can be by videoconference.
4. An open search for the Interim Pastor is then conducted using all available resources: Church Leadership Connection (CLC), interim networks, EP recommendations, referrals, etc.
5. Once a Personal Information Form (PIF) is received through CLC or self-referral, the IPNC works a process of evaluation that ordinarily looks like this:
  - The chair or secretary electronically distributes a PIF to the members of the IPNC who promptly review it, placing it in one of three categories, YES, MAYBE, or NO. The committee as a whole then expeditiously determines the IPNC’s YES candidates.
  - Immediately calls the YES candidate/s to discover interest. If yes, asks for a sermon video and dates for a conference/video call with the IPNC. If the PNC is not interested in a candidate that self-referred, out of curtesy, that candidate shall be immediately informed, ordinarily by email. (Anytime the IPNC is no longer interested in a candidate where contact was made due to initial interest, that candidate shall be immediately informed, ordinarily by email, sharing thanks but that the IPNC is discerning in a different direction.)
6. IPNC promptly reviews sermon video/s and if still interested, arranges for a conference/video interview.
  - Ordinarily the interview is at least an hour long with the candidate having 15-20 minutes to ask questions, as that is respectful for their discernment.

Good questions to ask:

- Share with us your call to ministry and in particular interim ministry.
  - What you enjoy about this specialized ministry?
  - What are your particular gifts for interim ministry?
  - What are your accomplishments?
- If the candidate is still being considered, the IPNC contacts the candidates references found in the PIF.

Good questions to ask references. (Hopefully some of the references are persons who have been leaders in churches in which they have done an interim.):

- How did the interim process/time go?
  - Was she/he a good, effective interim and what made them good and effective?
  - What were the accomplishments?
  - What are her/his particular gifts for interim ministry?
  - Did she/he help you transition from your previous pastor to your current pastor?
  - Were there any disappointments?
  - Did she/he stay committed to the congregation throughout the interim time?
7. If the candidate is still being considered, the IPNC contacts the COM liaison who will contact the EP to conduct a confidential reference check with the candidate's EP. This is done **BEFORE** the IPNC indicates to a candidate that the IPNC wants to move forward with the candidate by having a face-to-face interview. After the reference check, the EP will inform the COM liaison if the IPNC can continue to consider the candidate.
- 8\* IPNC selects a final candidate, informing their COM liaison of their decision, and often arranges for an on-site visit in order to give a tour of the church (and manse if there is one) and have an in-person interview. (It is strongly recommended that the IPNC hears the candidate preach in a neutral pulpit, although that is not required; the COM liaison will arrange a "neutral" pulpit with a congregation close but not too close.) The IPNC could visit the candidate's congregation and conduct the in-person interview there IF the candidate is currently serving as an Interim Pastor and with permission of the candidate.
- 9\* IPNC and candidate negotiate the Interim Pastor Agreement which shall include the Terms of Call and start date (see NHP website, Resource tab, NHP Resources, under COM <http://www.newharmonypres.org/nhpresources> for an approved template agreement).
- 10\* The COM liaison and EP review the Interim Pastor Agreement prior to its submission to Session.
- 11\* COM liaison or NHP office will contact the candidate in order to obtain the information needed to conduct a Criminal Background Check. Then, if that comes up clear...
- 12\* The Session acts on the IPNC's recommendation of a candidate and the Interim Pastor Agreement that include the Terms of Call and start date.

13. The COM conducts an interview/examination of the candidate to act on fitness of call, membership in NHP and the Interim Pastor Agreement which includes the Terms of Call and start date.
14. During worship, ideally the Interim Pastor will be commissioned with the COM liaison participating on one of the first Sunday's after the Interim Pastor arrives.
15. The COM will introduce the Interim Pastor to NHP at its next Stated Meeting.

### STAGE III: THE INTERIM PASTOR AND MISSION STUDY PROCESS

1. The Interim Pastor works with the Session to form, ordinarily after a few months, a Mission Study Task Force which will lead the congregation-wide envisioning process, resourced by and in collaboration with the Interim Pastor.
  - The **Mission Study process** will result in the following:
    - LEARNING... about the congregation for the Session, congregation, presbytery, and candidates
    - AND
    - DIRECTING... the congregation's mission and ministry and the PNC's search.
  - The **Mission Study process** will ordinarily consist of the following:
    - 2-3 page history of the **congregation** that highlights important events, both positive and negative, in the life of the congregation;
    - A summary page, front and back, of the **community's demographics** in which the church resides, including (five/ten year) trends and how, it is believed, those trends will affect the church's life, mission and outreach.
    - One sentence **Vision Statement** of what the congregation is striving to be – what God desires it to be;
    - One sentence **Mission Statement** of what the congregation needs to do, in broad strokes, in order to get closer to its Vision;
    - 3-5 **Ministry Goals** and **Ministry Activities** under each Ministry Goal that are identified, focused, measurable and evaluative which puts the mission into action and are usually executed over the next three years.
    - A **list of skills, abilities, qualities and characteristics** needed and desired in the **next installed Pastor** in order for the congregation to accomplish its Ministry Goals, do its Mission and get closer to be its Vision.
- 2\* When the Mission Study is completed, it will be reviewed and approved by a COM team that would include their liaison and the EP, prior to consideration and action by the Session. Following that, the Session may begin the process of forming a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) as outlined in the next Stage.
3. If a manse is part of the Terms, the Session must complete the Manse Inspection Form prior to the election of the PNC (see NHP website, Resource tab, NHP Resources, under COM <http://www.newharmonypres.org/nhpresources>).

#### **STAGE IV: ELECTION OF PASTOR NOMINATING COMMITTEE (PNC) AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE MINISTRY INFORMATION FORM (MIF) (G-2.0802)**

1. The Nominating Committee of the congregation or the Session ordinarily prepares a slate of five (5) to seven (7) nominees from the Active membership for the PNC. The slate shall be representative of the congregation as a whole, as required by the Constitution (F-1.0403 and G-3.0103). It is strongly encouraged that at least one current Session member and at least one member from the Mission Study team serve on the PNC. Also, only those members who have been involved in the mission study process (attended gathering, participated in discussions, completed a survey, etc.) should be considered for the PNC as well as those who do email as so much of the process is done electronically. No two should be from the same immediate family nor should a nominee be a member of the paid church staff. (**No** alternates shall be nominated or elected; if additional members are needed due to a person not being able to fulfill their responsibilities, they can be nominated and elected at a later date. Resignation shall be made in writing to the Session.)
2. Session allocates funds to cover expenses of the PNC (travel, meals and lodging expenses of candidates brought in to interview, reasonable moving expenses for the pastor-elect, etc.).
3. Session calls a congregational meeting to elect the PNC (see NHP website, Resource tab, NHP Resources, under COM <http://www.newharmonypres.org/nhpresources>):
  - Slate of nominees is shared with congregation as part of the call for the congregational meeting, possibly a brief bio of each nominee along with a picture;
  - Congregation first votes on size of PNC as recommended by Session (the number that is being nominated by either the Nominating Committee or by the Session) and then, after the slate is put into nomination, the vote of the nominees;
  - Nominations shall be allowed from the floor and if there are any, then a written ballot is utilized with the nominees from the floor added to the ballot – otherwise, the vote is by voice; and
  - Congregation votes on PNC.
4. Clerk of Session immediately emails the congregational minutes along with the names and contact information of PNC to the COM liaison and EP.
- 5\* The Interim Pastor calls the first meeting of the PNC, conferring with the PNC, COM liaison and EP to find an available date for all, so that the liaison and EP does the following:
  - Helps the PNC to get to know each other and come together as a group.
  - Reviews the roles of the COM liaison, COM, EP, and Interim Pastor.
  - Acknowledges receipt of *On Calling a Pastor*, emailed to the entire PNC which introduces the PNC to the overall process and all the resources on Church Leadership Connection (CLC).
  - Reviews entire search process, providing a complete written search process (The typical duration of a search, from election of the PNC until the call averages 9-15 months; however this can vary widely depending on the church, type of call, how often the PNC meets and particular circumstances);

- Provides, from the CLC web site, a blank MIF form to be completed by the PNC (see NHP website, Resource tab, NHP Resources, under COM <http://www.newharmonypres.org/nhpresources>);
  - Facilitates the election of PNC officers (chair, vice chair, secretary, etc.)  
(The Interim Pastor also attends this first meeting to assist with training and orientation, as well as for group building, but only if they are an experienced, intentional interim and will not be considered for the installed position.)
6. PNC prepares a draft of the MIF, utilizing information from the Mission Study, and once completed, given to the Interim Pastor who will provide feedback. The MIF is then shared with the COM liaison who will forward it on to the EP and COM for suggested and/or required revisions **prior to its submission to the Session for approval**. The PNC shall also provide simultaneously the end of the year financial reports of the previous two years and the month-end of the current year's operating budget showing both income and expenses.
  7. After COM approval, the MIF is acted upon by the Session (and COM if the Session makes changes), then placed on CLC by the PNC, with assistance as needed from CLC and the NHP office, especially in order to obtain the needed passwords.
  8. PNC contacts CLC to begin receiving PIF matches.

## STAGE V: THE PNC SEARCH PROCESS

- 1\* The PNC obtains a Personal Information Forms (PIF) from CLC and decides whether or not needs advertise the position at some or all of the PC(USA) seminaries, in Outlook or Presbyterians Today.
2. Once a PIF is received, either through CLC or self-referral (a particular candidate sends their PIF directly to the PNC), the PNC works an evaluation process ordinarily as follows:
  - Electronically distributes a PIF to the entire PNC, with each PNC member individually and promptly reviewing the PIF, ranking it in one of three categories: YES, MAYBE, NO. When together, the PNC expeditiously determines the YES candidates.
  - Immediately calls the YES candidate/s to discover interest. If interested, asks for a link to a sermon video as well as dates for a possible conference/video call between the PNC and candidate.
  - If the PNC is not interested in a candidate that self-referred, out of curtesy, that candidate shall be immediately informed, ordinarily by email. (Anytime the PNC is no longer interested in a candidate where contact was made due to initial interest, that candidate shall be immediately informed, ordinarily by email, sharing thanks but that the PNC is discerning in a different direction.)
3. PNC promptly reviews sermon and if still interested, arranges for a conference/virtual interview.
  - Ordinarily the interview is at least an hour long with the candidate having at least 15-20 minutes to ask questions of the PNC, as that is respectful for their discernment. Good, general questions to ask:
    - Share with us your call to ministry and your sense of call to our particular church.
    - What do you enjoy about ministry and what are you particular gifts for it?
    - ???
4. The PNC contacts the references of the candidates still being considered; hopefully some of the references are persons who know firsthand the candidate's pastoral skills. (Additional or secondary references can be requested.) (Appendix) Good, general questions (.):
  - What are the pastoral skills and gifts of this candidate?
  - What are their growing edges?
  - What are reasons for this search?
  - ????
- 5\* When the PNC is interested in a face-to-face meeting with a candidate, the PNC first contacts the COM liaison who asks the EP to conduct a confidential reference check with the candidate's EP. (This is done ***BEFORE*** the PNC indicates to the candidate that it wants to move forward with their candidacy by having a face-to-face interview.) After the check, the EP will inform the COM liaison if the PNC is able to continue consideration of the candidate.
6. The final candidates (usually more than one and usually accompanied by the spouse if there is one), come for an on-site weekend visit to be interviewed and preach at a neutral pulpit



arranged by the COM liaison. The visit is paid for by the church and usually includes the following:

- In-person interview between the PNC and candidate.
  - Tour of the church, manse (if there is one) and community.
  - Possible in-person conversation between the candidate and/or Interim Pastor and/or Associate Pastor.
  - Preach at a neutral pulpit arranged by the COM liaison.
7. PNC selects final candidate, informing their COM liaison of their decision. OR, the PNC goes back in the process to consider other candidates.
  8. PNC contacts the candidate and extends the call, allowing the candidate several days, but rarely more than a week, to prayerfully discern.
  9. If the candidate accepts, the PNC and candidate then negotiates the Terms of Call (see templates in [COM section for Terms of Call for new Installed Pastor](#) for those with Manses or Housing Allowances).
  10. The PNC, after consultation with the COM liaison and Interim Pastor, then negotiates the start date.

## **STAGE VI: THE CALL AND COM'S EXAMINATION AND CLEARANCE (G-2.0803)**

- 1\* Once the candidate accepts the call, and the PNC and candidate agree upon the Terms of Call and start date, the PNC contacts COM liaison to:
  - Direct the NHP office to conduct a Criminal Background Check (<http://www.newharmonypres.org/nhpresources>).
  - Provide the candidate with NHP's Policy on Sexual Misconduct and Policy on Code of Ethics and acquire a signed Acknowledgement Form (<http://www.newharmonypres.org/nhpresources>).
  - Schedule the Clearance Interview for fitness of call, approval of Terms of Call, start date and membership in NHP and approve the Session to call a congregational meeting to hear the PNC's report and act on the PNC's recommendation.
  - Obtain a Statement of Faith (ordinarily on the PIF) and Faith Journey from the candidate.
- 2\* After a clear Criminal Background Check, the COM conducts the Clearance Interview to approve the candidate's fitness for call, Terms of Call, start date and membership in NHP.
- 3\* After approval by the COM, the Session meets to act on the PNC's request to call a special congregational meeting to hear the PNC's report and act on the PNC's recommendation; the call of the meeting is with a two week notice/announcements on Sunday morning or by mail ten days prior. (Ordinarily, the candidate's name is NOT shared with the Session, as the candidate maybe in a called position and doesn't want that information to be known until after the congregation votes. General information about the candidate may be shared with the Session by the PNC.)
- 4\* The PNC creates a brochure on the candidate with a bio and picture along with relevant information about the PNC process for distribution at the congregation meeting. (samples can be provided by the EP)
- 5\* At the special called congregational meeting, there are two votes, the first of which is by ballot: the recommendation of the PNC to call the pastor with effective start date and agreed upon Terms of Call and the dissolution of the PNC with thanks upon the installation of the Pastor. The Terms of Call form (<http://www.newharmonypres.org/nhpresources>), signed, is to be part of the congregational minutes and sent to the Stated Clerk.

## **STAGE VII: ENTRY AND END OF FIRST YEAR REVIEW (EFYR)**

1. The COM will assign a pastoral colleague to support the first year journey of the new Pastor. This person will check-in in monthly with the new Pastor.
2. After the pastor begins and in consultation with the EP/Stated Clerk, the pastor presents an Administrative Commission, which shall reflect the diversity of NHP, and Order of Service for Ordination/Installation including the date and time, ordinarily a Sunday, mid-afternoon, for approval by the COM. (W-4.04; <http://www.newharmonypres.org/nhpresources> for the Outline of the Installation/Ordination and Installation service and a template for the Commission) Ordinarily, the NHP moderator and the EP/Stated Clerk participate with one giving/leading the welcome and the other asking the Constitutional Questions.)
3. The new Pastor shall participate in an orientation meeting with NHP staff to cover the following:
  - Involvement in NHP
  - NHP calendar
  - NHP's Policy on Sexual Misconduct and Policy on Code of Ethics (<http://www.newharmonypres.org/nhpresources>)
  - Boundary training
  - End-of-First-Year Review (EFYR)
4. The new Pastor shall participate in a boundary training event approved by NHP.
- 5\* An EFYR shall be conducted by COM liaison and EP with the Session and Pastor (<http://www.newharmonypres.org/nhpresources>) that will inquire about the following:
  - Encourage the new pastor, the session and the COM liaison to review the Mission Study and revise as needed.
  - Other???