On Calling a Pastor

A resource for pastor nominating committees and mid councils, prepared by Church Leadership Connection and the Office of the General Assembly
On Calling a Pastor
A Manual for Churches Seeking Pastors

This is what God says, the God who builds a road right through the ocean,
who carves a path through pounding waves,
The God who summons horses and chariots
and armies—they lie down and then can’t get up;
they’re snuffed out like so many candles:
“Forget about what’s happened; don’t keep going over old history.
Be alert, be present. I’m about to do something brand-new.
It’s bursting out! Don’t you see it? (Isaiah 43:16-19 - The Message Bible)

As you begin the journey to find new pastoral leadership, the next few months will be exciting, tedious, joyful, spiritually fulfilling, frustrating, inspiring, lengthy, and purposeful. The process is one of discernment and will challenge the congregation to listen closely for the will of God for its mission and ministry in this new stage of the congregation’s life.

This is a new step of faith that will bring your congregation together around the common goal of identifying who God is calling to serve your congregation. This manual is designed to be a resource for those who are on this journey. We suggest that you use this resource to guide you through the call process. The policies and procedures of your presbytery will always take precedence over this manual. Therefore, it is important for the session, presbytery, and the PNC to stay in regular contact with one another so that everything may be done “decently and in order” from the time of a pastor’s departure all the way through the calling and installing of a new pastor.

This resource is formatted into a PDF that may be read online or downloaded and printed. It also includes videos that expand several topics. Topics that include videos are indicated with an icon. Click on the icon to link to the video online at www.pcusa.org/clc. Web pages where appropriate are provided with helpful links for further resourcing. Leadership Competencies case studies are provided for group activity and discussions in Part Five.

Each section of the manual builds upon the next to walk you through the call process: demonstrating the denomination’s theology of call and the role of each partner in the call process, inputting your form into the CLC system, and providing words of wisdom to increase the likelihood of you making the best ministry match possible.

Those who would benefit most from having this manual are sessions, presbytery liaisons, PNCs and others who support congregations in the midst of transition.

As you embark on this journey, we pray that you will know the power of God’s presence each step of the way. When you finally find the person whom God has called to be your new pastor, we hope you will be a blessing to the world in your ministry together.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Office of the General Assembly
Church Leadership Connection (CLC)
Mid Council Ministries
PART ONE — Introduction to Calling a Pastor

Acronymns Used in This Resource ................................................................. 5

On Calling a Pastor Video Introduction ...................................................... 5

Theological Foundations of the Call Process
Spiritual Resources for the Journey
Other Resources

God Calls Women and Men to Serve as Pastors ........................................ 6

Beliefs in Practice .......................................................................................... 6

Openness, F-1.0404
Connectionalism
Teaching Elder Defined, G-2.0501
Ordination Standards, G-2.0104b

PART TWO — Teaching Elders as Pastors

Types of Pastoral Positions .......................................................................... 9

Installed Pastoral Relationships
Temporary Pastoral Relationships
Succession Restrictions (G-2.504a, b)
Exceptions to Succession Restrictions (G-2.504c)
Ministers of Other Denominations
Covenant of Agreement Partners
Ministers of Other Christian Churches
Immigrant Fellowships and Congregations

Leadership Options for Small Congregations ............................................. 11

PC(USA) Teaching Elders
Bi-Vocational/Tentmakers
Supply/Temporary Pastors
Small Church Residency Program

Videos about the program: [Video Link]

Ruling Elders Commissioned for Particular Pastoral Service (CRE)
PART THREE — The Call Process

Polity and the Call Process ................................................................. 14
Presbytery as a Participant in the Pastoral Call Process ................. 15
  Presbytery’s Role
  Key Times for Presbytery Involvement
    When Your Pastor Announces His or Her Departure
    During the Pastoral Vacancy
    Working with the Pastor Nominating Committee
    When the New Pastor Is Called
    When Your Pastor Is Ordained and/or Installed
    As Your Pastor Ministers with You

Other Participants in the Pastoral Call Process .................................. 16
  The Session
  The Moderator of Session
  The Temporary Pastor
  The Pastor Nominating Committee
  The Congregation

PART FOUR — The Transition

Dissolving the Pastoral Relationship ............................................... 19
  Resources for Congregations in Pastoral Transition

Planning for Transition ................................................................. 20

Next Steps in Ministry ................................................................... 20
  Assessing Your Finances
  Compensation Package

Electing a Pastor Nominating Committee ....................................... 23
  The Process for Electing a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC)
## PART FIVE — Searching for a Pastor

The Work of the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) .................................. 25
- Getting Organized
- Scheduling PNC Meetings
- Suggestions for Your Work
- Understanding Your Work
- Confidentiality
- Selecting Leadership

Using the Church Leadership Connection (CLC) ........................................... 27
- CLC Mission Statement
- Foundational Principles for CLC
- Who Can Use the System
  - Who May Enter a Personal Information Form (PIF)
  - Who May Enter a Ministry Information Form (MIF)

Writing the Ministry Information Form (MIF) .................................................. 28
- Your Ministry Narrative Through the MIF

Establishing Matching Criteria ......................................................................... 29
- Additional Matching Criteria
- Optional Matching Criteria Example

Leadership Competencies .................................................................................. 31
- Case Study Exercise
  - Case Study One — Twenty-First Century Presbyterian Church
  - Case Study Two — Transitioning Presbyterian Church
  - Case Study Three — Faithful Presbyterian Church
- Questions to Consider

Effective Salary .................................................................................................. 33
- Board of Pensions Definition

Special Programs to Support Pastors with Educational Debt
and Those Serving Smaller Congregations ...................................................... 33
- Transformational Leadership Debt Assistance (TLDA)
- Seminary Debt Assistance and the BOP

Ministry Information Form (MIF) Narrative Questions ...................................... 33
Choosing a Pastor

Call and Fit

Twenty-First Century Leaders

Calling Candidates for Ministry

Receiving Referrals

Self-Referrals Through CLC

Attestation Assurance

A Word About Possible PIF Differences

Acknowledging Receipt of a PIF

Ministers from Other Denominations

Reading and Screening Personal Information Forms

Evaluating PIFs

A Suggested Process

Requesting Additional Materials

Sermon Videos

Supplemental Questions

Other Material

Web Sites

Establishing an Interview Process

Appropriate Questions for Interviews

Reference Checks

Meeting Prospective Pastors Face-to-Face

Visiting Prospective Pastors in Their Ministry Setting

Hosting Prospective Pastors in Your Community

Practicing Hospitality

PART SIX — Calling a New Pastor

Choosing the Nominee and Extending the Invitation to Call

Extending the Invitation

Contacting Your Chosen Nominee

When the Nominee Accepts the Invitation

Negotiating the Terms of Call

Examination for Membership in the Presbytery

Presenting the Pastor Elect

Preparing to Present Your Nominee to the Congregation

Obtaining Presbytery Approval

Coordinating with Session

Preparing a Report for the Congregation

Presenting the Nominee to the Congregation

Finishing Your Work

Notifying CLC of a “Call Pending”

Notifying Remaining Prospective Pastors

Disposing of PNC Materials

Sharing Agreements with Session

Understanding Your New Role

Table of Contents