

SEARCHING FOR A PASTOR IN THE PRESBYTERY OF SCIOTO VALLEY

PHASE 1 Saying Goodbye	PHASE 2 What's Next?	PHASE 3 The Search Begins!	PHASE 4 A Warm Welcome
The pastor announces his/her decision to leave the church to session and to congregation.	Session and a rep from CCL discern what's next for the congregation in terms of pastoral leadership.	A Ministry Information Form is created and posted in the "Church Leadership Connection" to be matched with pastors seeking a new call.	After hearing a candidating sermon, the congregation elects and calls the new pastor at a special congregational meeting that same day. .
Session calls a congregational meeting to approve the dissolution of the pastor's call.	If an interim pastor is desired, a search team is appointed and begins to look. The interim pastor will lead the search for the next pastor in conjunction with CCL.	The PNC begins prayerfully to screen potential candidates through phone, Skype, and in-person interviews.	The pastor and congregation set an effective date for the new call to begin. Arrangements are made for moving the new pastor into town.
Session plans a time to express appreciation for and to say goodbye to the pastor.	If some other kind of leadership is desired, Session works with CCL rep to choose a suitable process.	When the Session is ready, the Presbytery will provide additional background and reference checks on top candidates.	The new pastor will work with the Presbytery moderator to schedule the Installation (and/or Ordination) service.
Presbytery concurs with the session and pastor's decision to end the call.	Either the Pastor Nominating Committee or a task force of session will explore a Mission Study, reflecting on the gifts of the congregation and the needs of the community.	Final steps: 1. Schedule neutral pulpit for PNC 2. CCL clearance interview with top candidate 3. PNC extends a call 4. CCL approves the call	A welcome reception/party is planned by the congregation to introduce the new pastor to the community.

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Introduction

Called to Serve

⁷But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people."...

*¹¹The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, **some pastors and teachers**, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ." (Ephesians 4:7, 11-13)*

As members of the Body of Christ, we are each gifted for ministry in our own way. Some are up front leaders, while others prefer to serve behind-the-scenes. Some serve faithfully by singing in the choir or standing over a hot stove preparing a meal for a grieving family or climbing onto the roof to fix a leak. And still others are called to pastor a church. However it is we are called to serve, whatever we do, in word or deed, we do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit, giving thanks to God.

This guide, written by members of the Presbyter's Commission for Congregational Life, is intended to steer the search process a congregation undertakes when it is time to find a new pastor.

This is not a one-size fits all kind of process. Churches have different needs based on the mission and ministry of the church, and so the process may look different from one congregation to another. The chart on the first page of this document provides a general overview of the 4 phases of searching for a new pastor. Using this as a template, your liaison from the Commission for Congregational Life will help determine the specifics for your search.

Learning the Acronyms

To navigate your way through this document, you need to know how to speak the lingo. Use this list as a handy reference chart!

BoP	Board of Pensions
CCL	Commission for Congregational Life
CLC	Church Leadership Connection
CPC	Commission for Church Professionals
EP	Executive Presbyter
MIF	Mission Information Form
PIF	Pastor Information Form
PNC	Pastor Nominating Committee

Phase 1: Saying Goodbye

Saying goodbye begins when a pastor decides to leave his/her current call. This is the beginning of the grieving process for both the pastor (and pastor's family) and the congregation. Normally a pastor will have an end date in mind and will announce the departure 4-6 weeks prior.

This announcement generally is made to the session at a meeting. It is helpful to have a CCL rep or the EP present at this meeting to answer any questions the session may have. The pastor then shares the news with the congregation in a letter and announces it from the pulpit the following Sunday.

At this time, the session has several important responsibilities:

1. Setting the congregational meeting to approve officially the dissolution of the call. This is normally the last Sunday the pastor preaches. (If the pastor has unused vacation days, he /she may choose to add those on after the final Sunday.) At this meeting the appropriate form should be completed and returned to the Presbytery Office.
2. The session should also begin to plan, through the appropriate group or committee, to provide for a time for the congregation to express appreciation for and say goodbye to the pastor. This often occurs on the pastor's last Sunday, following worship. Individuals may present the pastor with cards and the congregation as a whole may present a parting gift if that is their desire. This is also the appropriate time for the pastor to hand over all the keys and any other property to the church.
3. The dissolution of the call between the pastor and the congregation is official once it is approved by the Presbytery. The church's treasurer should support the appropriate forms to the Board of Pensions.
4. The CCL will assign a person to moderate future session meetings. The appropriate committee or person within the church should begin to arrange for 2-3 months of pulpit supply and pastoral care in case of an emergency.

Phase 2: What's Next?

In this phase of the search process, the session begins to direct their gaze from the present to the future of the church.

The CCL rep will help the session discern the next steps of the search process. For some congregations, that is forming a transitional search team to find a transitional pastor to guide them through the search process for their next pastor.

A **transitional (or interim) pastor** is helpful in situations where the congregation is particularly grieving the pastor's loss, if the pastor dies while serving the congregation, if the previous pastoral relationship was conflicted, or if the pastor had a long tenure in the congregation. Congregations in these situations particularly benefit from an experienced hand at the wheel as one who understand the dynamics of a congregation in transition.

In other cases, a transitional pastor is not needed. If a congregation is relatively healthy, the leadership is willing, and the parting with the pastor was gracious and loving, the CCL rep can walk the session through the search process. Session should note this choice will probably slow the process down. A dedicated transitional pastor's job is to provide continuity within the church as well as to facilitate the search process. A CCL rep can assist with that but because he or she is theoretically otherwise employed, not as much time can be dedicated to the process.

Finding a Transitional Minister

1. Session appoints a transitional search team to work with the CCL rep and EP by creating a position description and financial package.
2. The search team will conduct all interviews, present a final candidate to CCL for background and reference checks, and will present the candidate to session.
3. The rest of this search process is lead by the transitional pastor in consultation with the CC.

Discerning What's Next

1. Separately or as a group with the CCL rep, the session is highly encouraged to watch the introductory videos on the search process produced by the Presbyterian Church. <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/clc/revised-calling-pastor/>
2. A vital step in this process is to create a **Mission Study**. Mission studies come in all shapes and sizes but they all have the same goal: to help a church look out the window at the community in which God has planted them and to look in the mirror to see the ways God has gifted them to serve. The better a congregation's understanding of who God is making them to be and how God is calling them to serve, the better match they will make with their next pastor.
3. The mission study may be the responsibility of a special task force (comprised of a few session members and members of the congregation) or of the PNC, whichever is best for the congregation.

4. Any mission study should include the formulation of a **mission statement** (which should sound similar to other church's mission statements since we all share the same mission) and a **vision statement** (which speaks to how the church plans to specifically live out its mission). It may also be helpful to meditate on a Scriptural metaphor that describes the congregation's story.
5. The CCL will review the mission study and make suggestions before it is submitted to the session for approval. (The session may also make suggestions.)

Selecting the Pastoral Nominating Committee

The church's Nominating Committee is given the task of finding 5-9 active members to serve as the PNC. At least 1 or 2 members should be currently serving on session. Other major groups or demographics in the church should also be represented if possible.

Once the Nominating Committee has a slate of names for the PNC, they should notify session who will then call a congregational meeting to approve the names. At that meeting, it is appropriate to open up the floor for nomination before the final vote. This meeting will be moderated by the moderator of session, the CCL rep, or his/her designee.

Phase 3: The Search Begins

The Work of the PNC

Once the congregation elects the PNC, they will meet with the CCL rep for additional training and consultation as often as needed. The PNC and CCL rep should exchange contact information for future reference.

The first step is to select a PNC Chair early on. This person is responsible for the organization and running of the PNC meetings. It's also wise to select someone to take minutes for the meetings. In addition, once the PNC is ready to receive emails and matches, someone will need to set up an email address and monitor the inbox. This can be the same person who takes the minutes or someone else.

The second step is to watch the remaining modules of "On Calling a Pastor" (<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/clc/revised-calling-pastor/>).

The third step is for the PNC to meet with the session to determine the budget for the work of the PNC. It's recommended to set aside \$10,000 to cover costs (for travel expenses for candidate interviews, neutral pulpit weekend, and candidating weekend as well as moving costs, particularly if he/she is coming from a distance). The session must provide the PNC with a maximum amount of effective salary the church can afford as the PNC must have this figure in order to complete the MIF.

The PNC then uses the Mission Study (in consultation with the finance committee of the congregation) to complete the MIF and submit it to the CCL rep and the session for review and approval. Once the MIF has been approved by both parties, it's ready to be uploaded to the Church Leadership Connection. The PNC chair should contact the CCL chair and EP to receive a user name and password.

The session may choose to advertise the position however they desire. Often churches set up a separate page on their website with information that would be particularly interesting to potential candidates.

At this point, confidentiality is crucial in the PNC process. Candidates and their qualifications should not be discussed outside of PNC meetings. Most pastors who are searching for a new call are currently serving congregations; protecting that relationship is imperative. It is important to give updates to the session on the PROCESS and how it's going, but no details of who is being interviewed should be given.

This is an anxious time for the congregation who don't see all the work going on behind the closed-door meetings of the PNC. Updating the congregation once a month during worship or including a blurb in the newsletter about the PROCESS is a way of letting them know work is happening even if they aren't privy to the inner workings.

Once the PNC is ready to begin receiving Pastoral Information Forms from potential candidates, the committee will need to develop a process for ranking the forms. Usually bulk batches of will be distributed at one time. A simple initial filtering process includes individuals categorizing PIFs as YES, NO, and MAYBE and comparing their groupings with the rest of the PNC members.

The PNC should select the top 3-5 candidates at a time to interview by phone or Skype. References can be checked now or wait until after the first interview. PNCs can also request additional materials from pastors, such as audio or video sermon recordings.

If no satisfactory candidates are found in a particular batch of PIFs, another match can be requested. This should result in additional PIFs.

After a thorough search of a significant number of PIFs and multiple first interviews, the PNC should move on to second interviews. When the PNC finds 2-3 candidates who seem to be an excellent match, contact the EP who will conduct reference checks with the candidate's EP. Once they pass that check, the PNC should begin to talk about setting up a neutral pulpit weekend with the candidate(s).

A neutral pulpit is a chance for the PNC to hear the candidate preach in someone else's church preferably in some other town. Generally, the day before is an excellent time for a face to face meeting with the candidate. When setting up a neutral pulpit, be clear about whether a pastor's spouse is invited or not.

If possible, the PNC should try to arrange an interview for the candidate with a Presbytery clearance committee comprised of the EP and members of the CCP, especially if the candidate is coming from a distance.

Once the PNC picks a final candidate and is ready to extend a call:

1. Should begin initial terms of call conversations with the candidate.
2. Make sure the candidate has interviewed with CCP and request that a full background check be completed.
3. Schedule a candidating weekend (where the candidate comes to the church to preach during worship) and notify session of the need to call a congregational meeting that day for the purpose of voting on the candidate.
4. The candidate will lead worship and preaching during the service, then the PNC will present him/her and the terms of call for discussion and vote which shall be counted by written ballot.
5. In the event there is a high number of negative votes (anything less than 80-85% is cause for concern), the PNC, the CCL rep, and the candidate should discuss whether it's advisable to accept the call.
6. If approved, the pastor is recommended for presbytery approval at its next stated meeting though the pastor may begin in the position before that day.
7. At the end of the meeting, the PNC is officially dismissed with great thanks at the conclusion of the meeting, but it's strongly encouraged that the members specifically continue to provide support and encouragement to the new pastor as he/she gets oriented and acclimated in a new position and place.
8. If it hasn't already happened, someone from the PNC needs to contact any remaining candidates and let them know they have selected someone else and thank them for their interest.
9. The candidate should begin to plan a start date with the new congregation and, if appropriate, announcing to his/her departure to the current position
10. The PNC should contact the CLC to remove the MIF from the system.

Phase 4: A Warm Welcome

1. At the next stated meeting of presbytery, CCP presents the candidate and their recommendation, with the pastor's statement of faith, biographical information and terms of call.
2. If the pastor is coming from another church or position where he/she presently serves, the pastor gives notice of the conclusion of service there. If from another presbytery, then that presbytery also must act to dissolve that call before transferring the pastor to this presbytery.
3. The pastor arrives at the new call and is welcomed. Often a luncheon or special celebration is held after worship on the pastor's first Sunday. Another option is to create a public event in order to introduce the pastor to the wider community.
4. Thoughtful acts of hospitality in the first weeks of a new pastoral go a long way to ensure the pastor starts to get to know the congregation members.
5. An Administrative Committee of the Presbytery is approved by the CCP for the purpose of installing the pastor at a date approved by the pastor and the moderator of Presbytery who presides at the ordination/installation service.
6. The Pastoral Call Process is concluded upon the installation of the pastor.