

Narrative Overview: Search for Stated Supply, Interim, Installed Pastors

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6. Narrative Overview Search for Stated Supply, Interim, Installed Pastor

Step 1 Decision to conclude Ministry

- When a pastor has decided to leave, the pastor notifies the session. The pastor or clerk of session contacts the Commission on Ministry (COM) liaison, chairperson or the Stated Clerk.
- The COM liaison sets up a meeting with session to clarify the process for the transition, including a congregational meeting to dissolve the call (if the pastor is in an installed position), transitional leadership, and the search process.

Step 2 Session's Initiative.

- Session calls a congregational meeting to dissolve the pastoral relationship, explaining terms of separation (previously approved by COM) that may apply. The congregation must vote to dissolve the pastoral relations as presented.
- Ordinarily, a COM representative is present at this meeting to answer questions regarding procedure.

Step 3 Dissolution is confirmed

- COM dissolves the pastoral relationship and reports to Presbytery on the terms of dissolution.
- In cases where there is a disagreement between the pastor and the congregation, this may necessitate a special meeting of presbytery; please consult Book of Order and PNNE's Operating Manual for guidance.

Step 4 The process for a session securing leadership for the transition: Two paths!

- Leadership options include interim pastor for congregation seeking an Interim Pastor or seeking a Stated Supply Pastor (full or part-time, CRE or MWS, active or retired) or a Moderator appointed by COM. All of these are forms of "transitional ministry" with a written annual contract between the session and pastor/CRE. All contracts must be approved by COM. Likewise, if the session is handling congregational life with the assistance of a moderator appointed by COM, then a plan for providing worship, education, pastoral care and administration shall be drafted and presented to COM for annual review.
- When the session is unable to commit to calling a pastor, they may consider calling a full or part-time Stated Supply pastor (including a commissioned ruling elder) to maintain the direction of the congregation for the indefinite future. In this case, see Path 1. Summary of Search for a Stated Supply and use [Checklist Stated Supply Pastor](#).
- To search for the Interim skip ahead to Path 2. Summary of Search for Interim and Pastoral Search and use [Checklist for Interim Pastor and Pastoral Search](#).
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Path 1: Summary of Search for a Stated Supply Pastor.

- The session or Stated Supply Search Committee writes a position description. The COM liaison provides examples of job descriptions and covenants, available on the PNNE website under Committees/COM/Resources; the session/search committee consults with the current pastor about current and emerging ministry. Session approves the position description and suggested terms of a contract for the Stated Supply Pastor position.

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- COM reviews and approves the position description and proposed contract.
- The Session or Stated Supply Search committee handles publicity: posting on the church website with full job description, time, range of salary (meeting PNNE minimum Terms of call, prorated if part time). Submit short summary of the position for publication by the presbytery newsletter and neighboring presbyteries.
- The Session or Stated Supply Search committee evaluates applicants using AA/EEO guidelines and conducts reference checks; when there is interest in a candidate, they arrange a site visit. Prior to or during a site visit, all serious candidates meet with COM liaison and a few COM members for a **Clearance Interview to determine “fit” with congregation and context, as well as to answer any of the candidate’s questions regarding the congregation and its ministry/context**. PNNE Staff conducts presbytery to presbytery reference checks; a criminal background check is secured by PNNE Stated Clerk once a final candidate is selected.
- Session and final candidate come to agreement on contract. When approved by the session, the contract is sent to COM for approval; COM examines and approves all candidates (those transferring to PNNE, as well as PNNE Members) and approves the final contract. COM liaison will continue to keep in contact with pastor and congregation and is available to aid with evaluation of the position and subsequent annual contracts. Any subsequent contracts shall be approved by COM.

Once the Stated Supply Pastor is in place, a decision to call a pastor to be installed will require session and COM action based on the financial and spiritual health of the congregation and the sustainability of the congregation and the proposed ministry. If COM concurs, continue with Step 5. below.

Path 2: Summary of Search for pastoral leadership in congregations calling an Interim and, eventually, a new pastor to be installed.

- When the session hopes to find an installed pastor to fill the pastoral vacancy, COM recommends inviting an Interim Pastor to serve for 1-3 years to guide the congregation during the transition period between the departure of the former pastor and the arrival of next pastor for the congregation.
- To search for an Interim Pastor, the session appoints the existing personnel committee or establishes a new committee to conduct the search. Ordinarily, the session does not act as the search committee.
- The search committee writes the Interim Pastor position description, recommends a salary range, and prepares a contract. These are presented to the session and COM for approval. Once these documents are approved by session and COM, the search committee may publicize the position with PNNE, neighboring Presbyteries and other regional denominations.
- A national search includes posting on CLC/PCUSA and advertising in national church publications like The Presbyterian Outlook and The Christian Century; COM will advise on using the CLC system.

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- Procedure for application: applicants submit a PCUSA Personal Discernment Profile (PDP) or a resume with a cover letter, affirming transitional ministry training and interim experience. Transitional Training or a commitment to attend training within the first 6 months is required by PNNE. PDPs are available from the PCUSA Church Leadership Connection (CLC) and when posted, ensure a committee the applicant is in good standing in his or her presbytery. Applicants from Formula of Agreement Denominations are acceptable, but require some accommodations. (For example, the candidate may need PUCSA Book of Order training prior to being approved to moderate session.)
- The Search Committee reviews applications and selects applicants to interview. A potential candidates may be invited for a site visit. Before inviting any candidate to a site visit, the search committee shall submit the candidates name, contact information, PDP or resume and the candidate's presbytery to COM liaison for Presbytery to Presbytery/Clerk to Clerk background check. **Prior to or during a site visit, COM conducts a Clearance Interview to determine the candidate's with congregation and context, as well as to answer any of the candidate's questions regarding to congregation and its ministry/context.** (Note: The PNNE Stated Clerk conducts a criminal background check only on the final candidate)
- When Search Committee decides on a candidate for the interim position, the contract is finalized and sent to COM for approval. There may be an opportunity for the candidate to meet the congregation, to preach and to be welcomed. However, the contract is confirmed by action of the Session and COM; Interim, Stated Supply Pastors and CRE positions are not called by the Congregation, but are contracted by the session.
- COM interviews the candidate for transfer, if applicable, into the presbytery and presents the Interim at the next PNNE Assembly. COM arranges for Interim to meet regional clergy. The interim guides the interim process (transitional tasks), as well as providing the ministry outlined in the position description.

Step 5 Developing a Mission Study

- The session or a committee of session, with the assistance of the interim pastor, shall develop a mission study for the congregation. Note: A Mission Study will take time to complete; the COM liaison has examples of Mission Studies and can offer suggestions for resources to aid in the work of understanding context and describing mission and outreach.
- Once approved by session and by the Commission on Ministry. The session calls a congregational meeting to elect a PNC, proposed by the Church Nominating Committee. The Church's Nominating Committee presents the slate to the congregation for election, current Book of Order, G-2.0802. It is recommended that a member of session and/or member of the mission study committee be included on the PNC for continuity. The committee typically consists of 5 – 9 members. The congregational meeting shall be moderated by a member of Presbytery or designee of COM.

Step 6 Orientation to the search

- The COM Liaison attends a session meeting to discuss the search process. The Checklist for Interim Pastor and Pastoral Search is reviewed and completion dates noted.
- At the first meeting of the PNC, the COM liaison explains the process of searching for a pastor and offers resources to the PNC. The liaison assists the PNC in assigning the various administrative roles of PNC chair/co-chairs, secretary, as well as roles with specific responsibilities: computer, communication, chaplain, and others as needed. A complete

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explanation of the call process, with many helpful suggestions, is outlined in “On Calling a Pastor,” available on the PNNE website, under Committees/COM/Resources. There are many helpful videos related to the use of Church Leadership Connection on their website:

<https://clc.pcusa.org/login>

Step 7. Initiating the Search

- PNC prepares the Mission Discernment Profile (MDP), a full description of the mission of the congregation and its desired qualifications for leadership, with assistance and support of COM, including input from Session on package (including moving expenses), and input from the Mission Study, and sends to session and COM for approval.
- Once approved, COM assists with posting the MDP on CLC website. The PNC publicizes the position in the same way as an interim pastor, as noted above. Helpful videos are available from CLC to acquaint PNC's with the system; updates and changes are also provided via video.
- Search is conducted in accordance with AA/EEO. Use current best practices by consulting with liaison or Presbytery Staff as needed. Check references and request permission from applicant to speak with secondary reference.
- PNC sets up a consistent process of reviewing PDPs and sermons, and a process for interviewing. The committee often conduct phone or virtual interviews in the first round. COM or Stated Clerk or Resource Presbyter contacts the presbytery of membership for screening before candidates are invited to town to assure the candidate is a member in good standing. The PNC contacts the candidate's references and asks the candidate for permission, in writing, to contact secondary references for a full picture of the candidate.

Step 8. Face to face visits with prospective candidates

- **Before or during the church visit, the COM liaison sets up a Clearance interview consisting of a few COM members, to explore if the candidate is a “fit” with the congregation, cultural context, and PNNE; and to act as a secondary reference for the prospective candidate.**
- Candidates should come to town, in-person, for an interview and a site visit; a neutral pulpit in a nearby church may be arranged for the PNC to experience the candidate leading worship and preaching; however, with the abundance of recorded worship services, not all PNCs use neutral pulpits. It is suggested that an interview process be established that is consistent for each candidate. Search committees are encouraged to visit the candidate's church remembering the requirement of confidentiality with regard to the candidate.
- If the final candidate is a candidate under care of PNNE or of another presbytery, the Commission on Preparation for Ministry must approve the nominee before the congregational meeting at which he or she is presented.
- Before a candidate for installed pastor is presented to the congregation by the PNC, the PNC shall ask the Stated Clerk to conduct a criminal background check. The Commission on Ministry. COM shall approve the candidate and the terms of call before presentation to the congregation.

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Step 9. Concluding the search

- Upon approval by COM, the session calls a congregational meeting to receive the report of the PNC including the approved call documents, and to dissolve the PNC (upon the installation of a new pastor).
- The candidate should be presented by the PNC to the congregation informally, at a welcome event, before leading worship and preaching. After worship the candidate shall be presented to the congregation for election.
- The provisions of Book of Order G-2.0805 shall be followed in the installation of a minister of word and sacrament. The pastor sets the date and secures a commission in conjunction with the Moderator of PNNE and approved Leadership Commission and Commission on Ministry.
- COM recommends that the PNC hosts small group gathering/s to introduce the pastor. COM present the new pastor at the next Assembly of PNNE.
- Representatives of the Commission on Ministry shall meet with the pastor and session near the first anniversary of the pastor's installation for the purpose of reviewing the pastoral relationship.

Other considerations during the period of transition:

- Session plans a celebration for the outgoing pastor, including the PNNE's litany of good-bye in worship. It is helpful to invite the COM liaison to participate and to offer words of counsel as the transition begins. Session approves the budget for the search process, positions, and moving expenses. It is wise for the transitional search committee and PNC to make regular general reports to session and the congregation about their progress towards calling a pastor, without making any public statements about potential candidates or their currently held positions. *Confidentiality* is important in all matters of the call process, for the protection of the reputation or standing of the candidates.
- The interim pastor shall follow the guidelines of Interim Ministry in the PNNE Policies and Procedures Manual . This includes the Mission Study Policy as outlined in the manual. The interim pastor/stated supply keeps in touch with the COM liaison and serves in Presbytery. Once a PNC is formed, the interim may assist in the preparation of materials that describe the congregation, for the purpose of promoting the position. Once the PNC is under way, it is acceptable for the interim to begin looking for a new position. If the session decides to release the interim, at least thirty days of notice shall be given, per contract. Ordinarily, the interim pastor shall not be eligible to apply for the position; however, COM will entertain such request.
- COM Liaison – keeps in touch with the PNC during the search and makes monthly reports to COM on the process.
- The Board of Pensions no longer requires session to pay vacancy dues for the outgoing pastor.