

**A CHECKLIST FOR A CHURCH IN TRANSITION
FOLLOWING DISSOLUTION OF THE PASTORAL RELATIONSHIP
AND
PASTOR NOMINATING COMMITTEE ORIENTATION**

COM – Committee on Ministry; volunteers elected by the presbytery

PNC – Pastor Nominating Committee; members of the church elected by the congregation

PIF – Personal Information Form; resume of potential candidates

MIF – Ministry Information Form; resume of the church

- Dissolving the Pastoral Relationship:** The pastor informs the Committee on Ministry (COM) liaison and the General Presbyter of the intention to accept another call or retire and discusses the timeline of events.
- The pastor meets with the session** to share plans for new call or retirement. The COM liaison and the General Presbyter are present at this session meeting. The COM liaison outlines the process regarding the dissolution of pastoral leadership. The COM liaison provides information about the period of transition, discusses the need for immediate pulpit supply and pastoral care, and guides the session in planning for transitional pastoral services.
- The session, pastor, and COM agree to the Terms of Dissolution.**
- The session calls a congregational meeting to concur with the pastor's request to dissolve the pastoral relationship and approve the Terms of Dissolution.** The clerk of session informs the COM liaison of the date of the congregational meeting. The COM appoints a moderator for the congregational meeting. The moderator informs the COM of the action of the congregation.
- The COM acts to dissolve the pastoral relationship on behalf of the presbytery.**
- The COM appoints a moderator for the session during the pastoral vacancy** (required) to serve until temporary pastoral leadership is in place or the church calls a new pastor. The COM liaison informs the session of the name and contact information for the appointed moderator.
- Two members of the COM meet with the departing pastor** for an exit interview and to sign the Ethical Understanding for Former Pastors.
- Two members of the COM meet with the session for an exit interview** to hear the session's perspective on the church's ministry during the pastor's tenure and to assess the church's current ministry needs.

- **The General Presbyter fills the pulpit on the Sunday following the departure of the Pastor** or as soon as possible following the departure of the pastor. On this Sunday, the General Presbyter brings greetings from the congregations of the Presbytery, outlines the transition process for the congregation, shares the name of the appointed session moderator, and assures the congregation of the partnership of the COM.
- **The session works with the COM liaison and General Presbyter to hire transitional pastoral leadership.** The position may be part-time or full-time depending on the recommendation of the session.
- **The session, or a designated sub-committee,** creates a position description for transitional pastoral leadership and sets the terms of call. These are approved by the session and then presented to the COM liaison for approval by the COM.
- **Following the approval of the COM for the transitional position description and terms of call,** the COM liaison and the General Presbyter meet with the session, or its designated subcommittee, to outline the process for hiring transitional leadership.
- **The successful candidate for transitional leadership shall be examined by the COM** for fit and for membership (if not already a member of the presbytery); COM shall approve the final negotiated terms of call for the transitional leader. Ordinarily, the transitional leader is the session moderator and a member of Eastminster.
- **Following approval by the COM, the session hires the transitional leader.** At the first stated meeting of the presbytery following the effective start date, the transitional leader is introduced and welcomed by Eastminster Presbytery.
- **A date is set for the Litany of Welcome** for the transitional leader to be used during Sunday morning worship.
- **After 2 – 3 months to orient to the life of the congregation, the transitional leader works with the congregation to begin the Mission Vision Study.** The Holy Cow survey is an approved method for the Mission Vision Study. The session appoints a Mission Vision Study Team (MVST).
- **The Mission Vision Study is completed by the MVST.**
- **The transitional leader provides a written report to the COM liaison at the six-month marker** to give an update on the progress/completion of the Mission Vision Study. This report is shared with the COM liaison and the General Presbyter.
- **The session assesses the fiscal health of the congregation,** determines what compensation may be offered a new pastor, and allocates funds for the expenses of the

Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC). This information is included in the Mission Vision Study.

- Once the Mission Vision Study is completed, it is forwarded to the session for approval and to the COM for review.** If Holy Cow! is used, the summary is shared in place of the Mission Vision Study.
- When the Mission Vision Study is approved by the session and the COM, the COM will authorize the election of a PNC by the congregation.**
- The session decides the size of the PNC, informs the congregational nominating committee,** and sets the date for the congregational meeting. The nominating committee prepares the slate of PNC members to be elected by the congregation. The COM approved moderator (or designee) moderates the congregational meeting.
- After the election of the PNC,** a session may choose to commission the PNC during a service of worship. A format for the commissioning of the PNC is available from the COM liaison or in the *Book of Occasional Services* of the PCUSA.
- The PNC meets with the COM liaison and General Presbyter for PNC orientation.** Copies of the Mission Vision Study of the congregation are made available at this first meeting of the PNC. The COM liaison and the General Presbyter review the recommendations for the search process. The PNC elects a moderator and a secretary and schedules the next PNC meeting.
- The PNC completes the Ministry Information Form (MIF) using information from the Mission Vision Study.** The MIF is reviewed and approved by the session and the COM. Feedback may be offered during this review by COM. The approved MIF is placed on-line through the Church Leadership Connection (CLC) of the PCUSA.
- The moderator of the PNC and Clerk of Session contact the COM moderator** for User IDs and passwords for the MIF to be placed on-line through the CLC.
- The PNC moderator requests that the General Presbyter match the congregation's MIF** to Personal Information Forms (PIFs) in the system.
- The PNC may also choose to advertise the MIF** through The Presbyterian Outlook, Presbyterians Today, letters sent to General Presbyters, or other means approved by the COM
- Once the MIF is complete, the PNC contacts the COM liaison to schedule the next training.** The PNC follows up on PIFs which have been matched.

- **The PNC interviews potential candidates.** Interviews may be via telephone, Zoom, FaceTime interviews, requests for video recordings of sermons or online links to sermons, and face-to-face interviews.
- **The PNC checks references of candidates.** Reference checking is primarily the responsibility of the PNC. For candidates of high interest, the PNC may wish to complete second and third level references noting that this requires the permission of the candidate.
- **When the PNC is ready to invite a candidate for an in-person visit, contact the General Presbyter to conduct a presbytery reference check.** This is a conversation with the leader of the candidate's presbytery. The general presbyter will need a copy of the candidate's PIF. The result of this check will be green light – there are no issues, and the conversation may proceed, yellow light – there are some issues which need to be explored and the conversation may proceed with caution, red light – the conversation will not go forward. A presbytery reference check must be done prior to inviting the candidate for a visit.
- **Candidate is invited to visit in-person.** Contact the COM liaison. The COM may arrange for an interview with the candidate. Provide a tour of the church, the community, and the area depending on the candidate's interest. Plan a meal with the members of the PNC for further conversation.
- **The PNC chooses a candidate.** The PNC chair informs the COM liaison. The terms of call and timeline are prepared.
- **The PNC negotiates the terms of call and communicates the terms of call to the session and COM for approval.**
- **A timeline is negotiated with the transitional leader.** A date for the Litany of Farewell is set.
- **The session calls a congregational meeting for election of the pastor and approval of the terms of call.** Due notice must be given prior to the congregational meeting. On the day of the congregational meeting the candidate will preach in worship prior to the congregational meeting. The PNC will contact the COM to appoint a moderator for the congregational meeting. The election will be by written ballot. It is recommended that the PNC plan a reception to introduce the candidate to the congregation, preferably prior to the congregational meeting. The congregation votes to dissolve the PNC upon the installation of the pastor.
- **The PNC destroys all confidential materials such as PIFs of ministers not chosen.**

- **The PNC, pastor, session, and COM liaison schedule a Service of Installation.** The pastor contacts the moderator of the presbytery to begin the process. The COM liaison helps the pastor to choose an Administrative Commission to Install. The liaison provides the list of the commission to the COM for its approval. And outline and requirements for the installation are provided by the COM liaison.
- **The pastor is introduced and welcomed at the next stated meeting of the presbytery.**
- **The PNC schedules a meeting with the COM liaison and the General Presbyter to de-brief the process of electing the pastor.**