

LIAISON ROLE DURING A VACANCY IN A CONGREGATION

The role of the Liaison is to be available:

1. first to the Session to offer an overview of the vacancy process, and as it elects 3-5 of its members to look for an Interim Pastor or Interim Associate Pastor.
2. to work with the EP to identify available people to serve as Interim.
3. to consult with the Interim and Session about the appropriate time to elect a PNC, DPNC or APNC* and to recommend to the COM whether the congregation is ready to elect a PNC.
4. to orient the PNC with assistance from the EP, being sure that they establish a routine of sharing responsibility for opening devotionals, making the resources On Calling a Pastor and Searching for a Pastor the Presbyterian Way available to them (the first is on the CFP website; 10 copies of the second are in the Resource Center). Provide a blank CIF to that orientation and a copy of the monthly PNC report form. Ask the PNC to check the church calendar for the best date for the Mission Study.
5. to meet with the PNC *as they have need* following that first meeting. Some Liaisons will become more involved on an ongoing basis than others are prepared to be.
6. to attend the Mission Study.
7. to communicate with the EP and the COM regularly regarding the process.
8. to communicate with the EP regarding 3-5 ministers for whom the PNC requests EP reference checks.
9. to receive copies from the EP of any communication with people from the church and from pastors who may be interested in the church.
10. to meet (together with another local COM member) with any candidate(s) brought in for weekend interviews. The purpose is to explain to the candidate(s) any pertinent concerns about the church and to offer an overview of the CFP examination process.
11. to make the PNC and Session aware of the need to negotiate with the incoming pastor regarding housing. Such negotiation may involve sharing equity in the purchase of a home, offering a loan to the pastor to cover double housing expenses until a home is sold where the pastor has left, etc., and in every case to counsel with the pastor regarding the costs of moving.

* PNC is a Pastor Nominating Committee. This committee nominates pastors and co-pastors.

DPNC is a Designated Pastor Nominating Committee. A designated pastor is a pastor installed for a designated period of time, two to four years.

APNC is an Associate Pastor Nominating Committee.

TERMS OF CALL

At the installation of a new pastor, the congregation is asked, "Do we promise to pay him (her) fairly and provide for his (her) welfare as he (she) works among us...?" (W-4.4006b(3)) Unfortunately, determining what constitutes paying a pastor "fairly" is often not always easy.

While the Book of Order has an expectation that Presbytery will have established minimum terms of call which must be met for pastoral positions (G-2.0804), terms of call that exceed the presbytery minimum are often more difficult to determine. As the search for a new pastor begins and at the time of the annual review of a pastor's terms of call, sessions often seek guidance from presbytery in helping to determine the terms of call.

The phrase "terms of call" usually refers to more than salary, housing and participation in the Benefits Plan or the Board of Pensions. Terms of call also includes items that a presbytery has identified as part of the minimum terms. This may include deferred compensation, dental insurance, SECA supplement, professional expenses including study leave, vacation and study time away, and sabbatical leave. The Board of Pensions publication "Understanding Effective Salary" can provide more detailed information about various parts of a compensation package.

Calling a New Pastor

When a congregation begins the process of seeking a new pastor an understanding of the possible terms of call needs to be reached by the session. The salary range of the effective salary that will be used to seek a new pastor will be entered on the congregation's Ministry Information Form (MIF). A resource that may assist in determining possible salary ranges for position types can be found in the salary studies on the Board of Pensions site, pensions.org.

Extending the Call

While a salary range will be necessary to search for a pastor, once a call is extended the specific terms of call will need to be negotiated between the pastor and the PNC, usually within the parameters of the salary range listed on the CIF, including any presbytery required terms of call. The pastor, PNC and presbytery will all need to agree upon the terms of call.

Voting on the Call

When a congregation votes to extend a call to a new pastor, the congregation will be asked to vote on the agreed upon terms of call for the new pastor. Presbytery must also approve the call and the terms of call.

Annual Review

Once a pastor is in place, sessions have a responsibility to annually review the minister's terms of call and to propose any changes to the congregation for their approval. The expectation is that any changes to the terms of call will continue to meet the presbytery's minimum requirements. Any changes to the terms of call must be reported to the presbytery for approval since no pastoral relationship may be established, changed, or dissolved without the approval of the presbytery.

A form for reporting the initial Terms of Call or changes to existing Terms of Call is available from the presbytery office, and is also available on the presbytery web site.

FIVE DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS OF INTERIM MINISTRY

The major agenda of an interim ministry period centers on five developmental tasks first spelled out by Loren Mead in a monograph entitled *The Developmental Tasks of the Congregation in Search of a Pastor* and then elaborated on in his book *Critical Moment of Ministry: A Change of Pastors*.

1. Coming to Terms with History

It is important for congregations to know their history so that they can appreciate their heritage and at the same time be aware of the issues and concerns that need to be resolved in order to move freely into the future.

2. Discovering a New Identity

Identity is the task of understanding "who we are now in our present context and what it is we understand God is calling us to be." It is the task of developing the vision to which a congregation is being called.

3. Shifts of Power/Leadership Changes

In most congregations over a period of time the leadership begins to take on much of the style and values of the previous pastor. When that pastor leaves, there is often a time when persons who have been in leadership rethink their commitment and determine whether or not they want to continue in leadership positions. Other persons often find the interim time an opportunity to take leadership roles. This is an opportune time to empower those who are out of power and to welcome leadership gifts from all parts of the congregation.

4. Rethinking Denominational Linkages

Congregations often are not aware of the support and resources they receive from their middle judicatory and national denominational structures. That relationship is normally more visible while the structures of the church beyond the congregation are engaged in working with the congregation in moving through the interim period and seeking to find the right pastor to call. The transition time helps raise the awareness of a congregation to its denominational heritage, ministries and resources.

5. Commitment to New Leadership and to a New Future

When a congregation has developed a shared vision of its future and has sought to call a pastor to help lead it in moving into that future, there will probably be a new commitment both to that new leader and to that new future.