

On Calling a Pastor
A Manual for Churches Seeking Pastors

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

You are about to begin a journey that those who have gone before you have described as exciting, tedious, joyful, spiritual, frustrating, inspiring, lengthy, and powerful (just to name a few.) While your journey may feel more like a roller coaster ride than a lovely stroll through the park, the destination is certain: calling a new pastor who will serve your congregation.

This manual is designed to be a resource for those who are on this journey. We suggest that copies of this manual be secured as early as possible to ensure that the search process and specific responsibilities are understood by all parties. While the search for your new pastor could begin as soon as presbytery gives you permission to begin, following presbytery's approval of the date of dissolution of your current pastoral relationship, there is still much to be done as you say good bye to your pastor and prepare to search for your new one.

Those who would benefit most from having this manual are:

- every member of the session, as soon as a pastor has announced a dissolution date of his or her call,
- the moderator of session and temporary pastor, as they begin serving a congregation going through the call process,
- every member of the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC), after they have been elected by the congregation and before they begin their service, and
- every presbytery member responsible for resourcing congregations going through pastoral transitions.

Your congregation will be working in partnership with your presbytery to discern God's call to the church and to your new pastor. **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.

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.

Church Leadership Connection
Office of Vocation
Presbyterian Church (USA)

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Acronyms Used in this Manual

A number of acronyms are used in the call process. To help you become familiar with the most common acronyms, we have listed them below:

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|--------------|--|
| CIF | Church Information Form |
| CLC | Church Leadership Connection |
| EP/GP | Executive/General Presbyter |
| PDS | Presbyterian Distribution Service (Presbyterian Marketplace) |
| PIF | Personal Information Form |
| PNC | Pastor Nominating Committee |

Part One: Introduction to Calling a Pastor

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE PASTORAL CALL PROCESS

Christ Calls

Question: Isn't the pastoral call process just church language for a personnel search?

Answer: No. The pastoral call process is guided by Jesus Christ, the head of the Church, who provides you with all that you need to be the church.

Our Book of Order tells us that “*Christ calls the Church into being, giving it all that is necessary for its mission in the world, for its sanctification, and for its service to God. Christ is present with the Church in both Spirit and Word. Christ alone rules, calls, teaches, and uses the Church as he wills.*” (F-1.0102). In following Christ, the head of the church, you will seek to discern the will of God for the church's life and faith, including discerning whom God is calling into pastoral leadership with your congregation. In the pastoral call process it is God who calls and it is you who will listen. Charles M. Olsen and Ellen Morseth describe the call process this way:

*...the question before us could be framed thusly: ‘God, whom are you selecting/calling at this time to lead in this church? Show us your choice.’
We are invited to participate in God's own choice.*

Selecting Church Leaders, The Alban Institute, 2002

The pastoral call process, therefore, is not simply hiring a new employee for the church as would be done in a secular workplace. It is participating in God's own choice for the church by opening yourselves to the work of the Holy Spirit who will guide, nudge, empower, inspire, comfort and inform you in your journey toward finding new pastoral leadership.

Discerning Christ's Call

Presbyterians believe that God uses committees, papers, procedures, and our polity, sprinkled with a generous measure of prayer, Scripture, and worship, to help you discern who it is that God is calling to be your pastor.

During the time of transition between pastors, a congregation is invited to engage in a spiritual discernment process to discover or reconfirm its call to ministry — what God wants the church to be and do in the next phase of the congregation's life. Your presbytery may ask your congregation to engage in a mission study that involves Bible study, prayer, and an honest and thoughtful look at your congregation and community, as a way to discern the ministry direction where God is leading you.

Once this becomes clear, the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC), in consultation with the presbytery, begins the discernment process of discovering who God is calling to be the pastor in this next chapter of your congregation's life and ministry.

The discernment process is an exciting journey that will take you through specific steps but moves according to the Spirit's timing. Faithful attentiveness to and trust in the guidance of God's spirit, will help to make your journey rich and fruitful.

Spiritual Resources for the Journey

The most important resources you will need on this journey are the spiritual resources of Scripture and prayer. During this journey, be deliberate about spending time together with God's word and in prayer, not simply as bookends to a meeting but as an important part of listening for God's spirit. Here are a few resources that may be helpful on your journey:

Scripture passages about call:

Genesis 12:1-9	Abram	Jonah 1	Jonah
Genesis 24:1-61	Rebekah	Matthew 4:18-22	The disciples
Exodus 3:1-12	Moses	Luke 1:26-55	Mary
1 Samuel 3	Samuel	John 1:43-51	Philip and Nathanael
1 Kings 19:1-18	Elijah	Acts 1:15-29	Matthias
1 Kings 19:19-21	Elisha	Acts 9:1-19	Paul
Esther 4:1-17	Esther	Acts 16:14-15	Lydia
Isaiah 6:1-13	Isaiah	Revelation 3:14-22	The churches

Other Scripture passages:

Genesis 32:22-32	Jacob wrestles with God	Matt. 6:25-34	Do not worry
Exodus 14:5-31	God leads the people	Matt. 28:16-20	The Great Commission
Exodus 17:1-7	God provides	Mark 6:30-43	Feeding the five thousand
Psalms 42	Longing for God	Luke 11:5-13	Perseverance in prayer
Psalms 46	God's defense	John 17:1-25	Jesus prays for disciples
Psalms 136	God's work	John 20:19-23	The risen Christ appears
Psalms 145	The greatness of God	Acts 2:16-21	God's Spirit is poured out
Psalms 146	Praise for God's help	Acts 4:23-37	The young church
Isaiah 55:1-11	An invitation to life	Romans 12:1-5	New Life in Christ
Ezekiel 37:1-14	The valley of dry bones	1 Corin. 12:12-27	One Body
Matt. 6:5-15	Concerning prayer	1 John 4:7-12	God is Love

Other resources:

The *Book of Order*, especially Form of Government, chapters 1-4
The *Book of Common Worship*, especially Daily Prayer

PRESBYTERY AS A PARTICIPANT IN THE PASTORAL CALL PROCESS

Presbytery's Role

Presbyterians believe that pastors and congregations are brought together through a call from God. This call is confirmed as the pastor, the church, and the presbytery each say “yes” to the relationship. This three-way partnership is acted out throughout the pastoral call process with the presbytery having the primary responsibility for oversight of the call process. “No pastoral relationship may be established, changed, or dissolved without the approval of the presbytery.” (G-2.0502).

The presbytery will be your companion in the search process, often through someone who will serve as your liaison. Your presbytery liaison will provide you with guidance, resources, and other services as you go through the pastoral search process. It is wise to consult regularly with your presbytery liaison not only for advice and guidance but to keep him or her informed, especially at key times in your pastoral search process.

The presbytery will work closely with the PNC which has been elected to present a pastor or associate pastor nominee to the congregation and has the responsibility to guide and participate in the decision of the PNC. The presbytery will provide the PNC “counsel on the merits, suitability, and availability of those considered for the call.” (G-2.0803)

Each presbytery is unique and will have its own procedures and policies regarding the search process, which supersede any procedures found in this manual. Therefore, it is important for a congregation seeking a new pastor to be in regular contact with the presbytery.

Key Times for Presbytery Involvement

There are several key times in the call process when it is particularly important for presbytery to be involved with your congregation.

When Your Pastor is Leaving. As your current pastor prepares to leave, presbytery has the responsibility to dissolve the pastoral relationship, appoint a moderator for your session, and provide you with guidance about pulpit supply.

During the Pastoral Vacancy. Presbytery has the responsibility to assist the session with issues related to pastoral vacancies, including securing temporary pastoral leadership; assessing congregational finances, including costs associated with a pastoral search and pastoral compensation; engaging in a congregational mission study (if required); approval of the Church Information Form (CIF); and nominating and electing a PNC.

Working with the Pastor Nominating Committee. Presbytery has the responsibility to guide the PNC through the pastoral call process providing training, oversight, and assistance. Presbytery will also have a role in reference and background checks for the finalists being considered. Presbytery must examine the PNC's finalist for presbytery membership and concur with their final decision before a call can be issued.

When the New Pastor is Called. Presbytery has the responsibility to ensure that the call to your new pastor is in order and that the appropriate actions by the congregation and presbytery are taken.

When Your Pastor is Ordained and/or Installed. The call process for your new pastor is completed at a service of ordination and/or installation which is organized and conducted by the presbytery, often through the work of a presbytery appointed administrative commission.

As Your Pastor Ministers with You. The presbytery remains your partner in this pastoral relationship. Some presbyteries assign a permanent liaison to each congregation in the presbytery who will visit often and participate in special occasions. Other presbyteries will visit with you periodically. Don't hesitate to call your presbytery if you need extra support or guidance.

OTHER PARTICIPANTS IN THE PASTORAL CALL PROCESS

The Session

The session's responsibility is to set a positive and reassuring tone during the pastoral search process. This includes helping the congregation deal with the departure of the pastor, carrying on with the ministry of the congregation, and looking forward to the next stage of the congregation's life together. During this process the session needs to meet regularly with the moderator appointed by the presbytery in order to continue to fulfill its responsibilities for the congregation's worship life, Christian education, pastoral care, fellowship, mission and administration. Session responsibilities, in consultation with presbytery, include:

- Securing guest preachers and providing for pastoral care during the immediate vacancy
- Finding and contracting with temporary pastoral leadership for the longer vacancy period
- Providing for the process and participating in a congregational mission study, if appropriate or required by the presbytery
- Providing a process for the congregation to elect a PNC, including suggesting the number of PNC members
- Calling a congregational meeting for the election of the PNC
- Budgeting funds for the PNC to cover search expenses such as travel, telephone, mail, and other incidentals
- Determining the financial compensation available for your new pastor, including moving costs
- Reviewing and approving the completed CIF in order that the the clerk of session may attest to it in CLC
- Praying regularly for the PNC
- Calling a congregational meeting when the PNC is ready to present their nominee to the congregation
- Preparing for the new pastor's arrival by attending to such details as manse renovation, moving, and welcoming
- Arranging for the installation of your new pastor.

The Moderator of Session

During a pastoral vacancy, the presbytery will appoint a moderator who will moderate session meetings or arrange for another minister of presbytery to do so. In many instances the temporary pastor hired by the session will be appointed to serve as moderator. In unusual circumstances the moderator may permit an elder to lead a meeting for particular and non-controversial business. The moderator's responsibilities include helping the session fulfill their responsibilities such as:

- Providing for the education and reception of new members
- Providing for the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper
- Overseeing the finances of the congregation, including budgeting and stewardship planning
- Preparing and submitting the annual statistical reports for the congregation.

The Temporary Pastor

The temporary pastor provides pastoral leadership during the congregation's search for the next pastor. The presbytery can help the session determine if they need a temporary pastor and what responsibilities the temporary pastor will have. An interim pastor is a temporary pastor who has special expertise and training in working with congregations in the midst of a pastoral transition. The temporary pastor's responsibilities often include:

- Worship leadership, including preaching and administration of the sacraments
- Providing pastoral care
- Serving as moderator of session (when appointed by presbytery) and working with the session to provide for the life and ministry of the congregation
- Administrative work, including supervision of other staff persons
- Supporting the work of the PNC, but not being directly involved with their work
- Assisting with the congregational mission study (with presbytery approval)
- Helping the congregation prepare to welcome the leadership of a new pastor.

The Congregation

The responsibilities of the congregation, while few, are no less important than those of the other participants in the pastoral call process. The responsibilities of the congregation include:

- Continuing to support the ministry of the church through prayer, participation, and financial support during the time of pastoral transition
- Electing the PNC
- Praying regularly for the PNC
- Electing the new pastor and approving the terms of call
- Welcoming the new pastor as the ministry begins.

The Pastor Nominating Committee

The Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC), representative of the whole congregation and elected by the congregation, has the ultimate responsibility for nominating a minister to the congregation for election as your next pastor or associate pastor. Over a number of months, the PNC will journey through the pastoral search process, seeking to hear the call of Christ and “to participate in God’s own choice” for your next pastor. In the pastoral call process, the PNC’s responsibilities include:

- Completing the congregation’s CIF and submitting it to session and presbytery for approval
- Entering the approved CIF online with Church Leadership Connection (CLC)
- Receiving, reading and evaluating Personal Information Forms (PIF) in a spirit of prayerful openness to the movement of God’s Spirit
- Narrowing the field of prospective pastors through listening to sermon tapes, reference checking (by both the PNC and the presbytery) and phone or Skype interviews — all while sharing, listening and praying together
- Interviewing, face to face, the “short list” of prospective pastors, providing for a welcoming and hospitable visit to your church community
- Arranging with the presbytery for the necessary examinations and approvals of your finalists
- Selecting a nominee to present to the congregation and negotiating the terms of call
- Obtaining presbytery approval of the call
- Presenting the nominee to the congregation for their vote
- Following the affirmative vote of the congregation, signing the Pastoral Call Form for your new pastor
- Notifying Church Leadership Connection (CLC) when a call has been extended and accepted.

Church Leadership Connection

The services of CLC, located at the PC(USA) denominational offices in Louisville, Kentucky, are available as a support to your church free of charge. CLC can provide you with tools and resources to assist you in conducting and completing your pastoral search. CLC works by matching CIFs with PIFs using a variety of criteria such as position type, skills, experience, church size, community type, and salary. The use of CLC in your pastoral search allows your CIF to be matched with numerous teaching elder PIFs on file with CLC. More detailed information about CLC and a listing of the materials and resources provided can be found on the CLC Web site at www.pcusa.org/clc.

Using CLC is just one step in a spiritual discernment process that invites individuals, churches and other ministry entities to hear God’s call to service within the church. CLC is not a job placement service; it is more like an Internet dating service where individuals with particular

skills and interests are brought together with congregations seeking those same skills and interests in their next pastor. In the pastoral call process, CLC's responsibilities include:

- Assisting PNCs and/or the presbytery with submission of CIFs and assisting pastors with submission of PIFs
- Notifying the clerk of session and presbytery when the CIF is ready for their approval
- Posting the church CIF on the CLC Web site so that it is available for online viewing by interested parties through the CLC Opportunity Search
- Matching CIFs with PIFs. Matching may be done by the executive/general presbyter (EP/GP) of your presbytery, who knows your church best. CLC staff does the matching when requested by the presbytery
- Notifying the appropriate parties when a CIF has been matched with PIFs within the CLC system
- Answering questions and assisting PNCs and presbyteries
- Removing a CIF from CLC when a call has been extended and accepted.

All participants in the pastoral call process are invited to engage in prayer, contemplation and engagement with God's word, as they work together to discern Christ's call.

THE STAGES AND STEPS OF THE PASTORAL CALL PROCESS

The presbytery, will work with your congregation, session, and PNC to guide and support you through this time of pastoral transition. Your presbytery may have its own variations or requirements in the stages of your transition, which will supersede any suggestions made in this manual. Be sure to consult your presbytery.

The stages and tasks of the pastoral call process are as follows:

Transition Beginnings: The Work of Session and Congregation

1. Dissolving the Pastoral Relationship
2. Planning Your Transition
3. Engaging the Congregation in a Mission Study
4. Assessing Your Finances
5. Electing a Pastor Nominating Committee

Searching for a Pastor: The Work of the Pastor Nominating Committee

1. Getting Organized
2. Writing and Submitting the Church Information Form
3. Receiving Personal Information Forms
4. Reading and Screening Personal Information Forms
5. Contacting References
6. Narrowing the Search
7. Meeting Prospective Pastors Face to Face
8. Choosing the Nominee and Extending the Invitation
9. Preparing to Present the Nominee
10. Finishing Your Work

Calling a New Pastor: The Work of Session and Congregation

1. Preparing for the Report of the PNC
2. Electing the Pastor
3. Picking Up Where the PNC Leaves Off
4. Ordaining and/or Installing the Pastor
5. Support for the New Pastor

Part Two: Transition Beginnings

THE WORK OF SESSION AND CONGREGATION

1. Dissolving the Pastoral Relationship

When a pastor announces his or her acceptance of another call for service or his or her retirement, the congregation often experiences a variety of emotions: sadness, anger, betrayal or even relief. It is important that the exit of the pastor is handled well for the benefit of all concerned. Congregation members and pastor need time and opportunity to celebrate their ministry together and say good-bye. It is important that the exit time be neither so short that good-byes do not get said nor so long that everyone is ready to move on before the actual departure date. A good ending is the foundation of a good new beginning for the next pastor.

The minister will inform the presbytery and the session and shortly thereafter share the news with the congregation. The session calls a congregational meeting to act on the minister's request that the relationship be dissolved. The congregational action becomes a recommendation to presbytery, which will vote to dissolve the pastoral relationship. The pastoral relationship between a pastor or associate pastor and a church is dissolved only by presbytery.

Exit interviews

The presbytery will probably arrange for an exit interview with your departing pastor and with your session. This is an opportunity to reflect on the ministry you had together, its strengths and weaknesses, and things to be worked on in the months ahead. It is helpful to express feelings that you may have, both positive and negative. What you learn from this occasion may inform your pastoral search later on.

Resources for Congregations in Pastoral Transition

Beginning Ministry Together: The Alban Handbook for Clergy Transitions

Roy. M. Oswald, James M. Heath, and Ann W. Heath, The Alban Institute, 2003.

A Change of Pastors...And How It Affects Change in the Congregation

Loren B. Mead, The Alban Institute, 2005.

Discerning God's Will Together: A Spiritual Practice for the Church

Danny E. Morris and Charles M. Olsen, The Alban Institute, 1997.

Leading Change in the Congregation: Spiritual and Organizational Tools for Leaders

Gilbert R. Rendle, The Alban Institute, 1998.

2. Planning Your Transition

The transition between pastors is a valuable time for congregations. It is an opportunity to reflect on your congregation, its community context, and its ministry in the present and future. It may also provide the opportunity to experience different styles of pastoral leadership and work

on particular issues facing the congregation. The session, presbytery, and the PNC (once it is elected) work together to make the transition time constructive.

Each congregation has unique needs, resources, and challenges during a transition between pastors. Some congregations, such as those recovering from a conflict or unhappy dissolution of a pastoral relationship, or those in need of a new direction for their ministry, might plan for a longer transition time. Whatever your situation, it may be of great benefit to secure the services of a skilled interim pastor who can offer valuable assistance to the congregation as you discern God's leading in the transition time from one installed pastor to another. This allows time for healing, spiritual development, and strategizing before moving ahead with the election of the PNC. Congregations may also use this time to experience different patterns of leadership by taking into intentional consideration clergywomen or racial ethnic persons as interim pastors. Your presbyter can help you look at your situation and determine the best path.

Finding Temporary Pastoral Leadership

As soon as you learn that your pastor is leaving, your session will want to consider options for the first four to six Sundays following your pastor's departure. This could be a good opportunity for the ruling elders in the congregation to provide worship leadership and pastoral care. Presbytery may also be able to provide you with names of suitable persons to lead worship, help with congregational pastoral care, and serve as pulpit supply. This transition time is also a good opportunity to invite your EP/GP to lead worship on one of the Sundays early in the vacancy.

Depending on the size and needs of your congregation and the transition work you want to accomplish, your session and presbytery will work together to obtain the services of a longer term temporary pastoral leader during your search. Your presbytery will help you understand the differences in types of temporary pastoral leadership, help you to select the best option for you, and help you find appropriate persons to consider. The session is authorized to make decisions about temporary pastoral relationships and to contract with individuals to provide temporary pastoral leadership, with presbytery approval.

There are several items to note particularly about temporary pastoral leadership. First, a temporary pastor is not installed and is not a member of the session. Second, the presbytery, in appointing a moderator of session, may appoint the temporary pastor as moderator. And finally, a pastor serving in a temporary relationship is ordinarily not eligible to serve that church in the next installed pastoral relationship. Any exceptions to this require presbytery action as outlined in G-20504c.

What is an Interim Pastor?

An interim pastor is a temporary pastor who has had special training for the unique ministry of serving churches in the midst of pastoral transition. Some interim pastors serve full-time and others serve part-time, depending on the needs of the church. Not all persons who would like to serve as an interim pastor have the necessary skills and training to do effective transitional work with a congregation. Make sure you ask individuals about the training they have received.

An interim pastor serves as your congregation's pastor, carrying on the ministry of the church with you while you search for an installed pastor. An interim pastor is trained to help you:

- deal with all the feelings that accompany the departure of a pastor, such as grief, anger, relief, confusion, and anxiety.

- think about the church and its ministry in the past, present, and future.
- deal with any problems before a new minister is called.
- prepare for a new minister.

If your session chooses to contract for the services of an interim pastor, remember that, as a temporary pastor, the interim pastor is ordinarily not eligible to serve as your next installed pastor.

Your presbytery can help you assess your needs for an interim pastor and give you names of interims available to serve you. With presbytery approval, you can also search for an interim pastor through CLC, completing a CIF to have your interim position listed with CLC and be matched with available interims. Additional information about completing a CIF for an interim position is available at the CLC Web site. Be sure to involve your presbytery in the reference checking of potential interims and please note that some presbyteries require that presbytery review all potential interims before names are given to the session or search committee.

The session usually appoints a committee to interview potential interims and select one interim to present to the session for their consideration. The congregation does not vote on an interim pastor; that responsibility resides with the session.

Contracting with a Temporary Pastor

The temporary relationship you establish with a minister, full-time or part-time, will be established by the session and approved by the presbytery. A minister serves in a temporary pastoral relationship for a specified period, not to exceed twelve months, but can be renewed with presbytery approval. There needs to be a written agreement, covenant, or terms of call signed by the minister, the clerk of session, and presbytery which specifies the pastoral functions, compensation, and any special skills or training regarding the ministry. A “Sample Contract for Temporary Pastor Leadership” can be found in the “Forms and Contact Information” section at the back of this manual or online with CLC.

Resources for Pastoral Leadership

The Association of Presbyterian Interim Ministry Specialists (APIMS) Web site.
www.apims.org

CIF Tips for Specific Positions/Situations: Interim Positions
 download from “Resources” on the CLC Web site,
<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/cif-tips-interims/>

The Interim Pastor's Manual Revised Edition
 Alan Gripe, WJK Books, 1997 (available through Cokesbury)

“Sample Contract for Temporary Pastoral Leadership”
 download from “Resources” on the CLC Web site,
<http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/clc/printable-forms/>

Temporary Shepherds: A Congregational Handbook for Interim Ministry
 Roger S. Nicholson, editor, The Alban Institute, 1998.

3. Engaging the Congregation in a Mission Study

An understanding of the nature of a particular church and its unique mission is essential before the search for a new pastor can begin. Some presbyteries require such a mission study prior to the election of a PNC. Others find it more helpful for congregations to do a full mission study after a new pastor has arrived. In any case, an analysis of the church's mission is the foundation on which the PNC bases its work. The session has primary responsibility for determining the mission of the church. If a mission study of your church's program and its mission directions has not been done recently, the session, with the guidance of the presbytery should determine whether this vacancy time is the appropriate time for you to do a study.

Certain times of the year are better to involve your members in a mission study (summer or fall) and there are times of the year that are prime time for pastoral searches (ministers often prefer to move in the summer or after Christmas). Take all of this into consideration when you plan your transition in order to make the best use of your time. Don't just "let it happen."

Mission studies are especially appropriate when:

- a congregation is seeking a new pastor.
- the congregation needs to consider a new strategy for pastoral leadership.
- the congregation has grown or declined significantly.
- the congregation does not reflect community changes.
- there has been a major change in congregational leadership or a conflict.
- a congregation seeks funding for pastoral support.

The best mission studies involve everyone who wishes to be involved and will ask the following or similar questions:

- What are we doing as a congregation? What is God calling us to do in the next phase of our ministry?
- What are the needs of our community? What is God calling us to do to meet those needs?
- What specifically will we do to strengthen our congregational and community ministries in the next year?
- What must the teaching and ruling elders do to help that to happen?
- What kind of skills, experience, and personal characteristics do we need in our pastor?

Research Services, a ministry of the PC(USA), provides helpful and free online resources to congregations engaging in a mission study. These resources are available at www.pcusa.org/research/help and include:

- *Research Strategies for Congregations*. A compilation of tools which can be used to help you understand the people in your church and community, including information on Congregational Surveys.
- *Ten-Year Trends in Your Congregation*. Data from your Congregation's session annual statistical report for the most recent 10 years with graphs and comparisons.
- *Demographic Report*. Demographic information for the community around your congregation using data from the U.S. census.

Check to see if your presbytery has a contract with a company such as MissionInsite or Percept and see what resources may be available to your congregation through them.

If a mission study has recently been completed, consider it carefully to understand the mission of the church and the qualities required in the pastor to be called. The session, in consultation with presbytery, should meet to study and interpret the findings and determine if they are adequate for the purpose of calling a pastor.

Resources for Congregational Mission Studies

Beyond the Ordinary: 10 Strengths of U.S. Congregations

Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce, WJK Books, 2004
(available through PDS, item #226930)

Congregations in Transition: A Guide for Analyzing, Assessing and Adapting in Changing Communities

Carl S. Dudley & Nancy T. Ammerman, Jossey-Bass, 2002
(available through Cokesbury)

Congregational Mission Studies Notebook

(available through PDS, item #7238096002)

Discerning Your Congregation's Future: A Strategic and Spiritual Approach

Roy M. Oswald and Robert E. Friedrich, Jr., The Alban Institute, 1989

Field Guide to U.S. Congregations: Who's Going Where and Why

Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce, WJK Books, 2002
(available through PDS, item #225691)

Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as Spiritual Practice for Congregations

Gil Rendle and Alice Mann, the Alban Institute, 2003

Places of Promise: Finding Strength in Your Congregation's Location

Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce, WJK Books, 2008
(available through PDS, item #0664230237)

Presbygrow.net

Presbygrow is a ministry of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and our Church Growth Network. Here you can find available resources — across denominational lines — for New Church Development, Church Transformation and Church Growth.

www.presbygrow.net

Spiritual Strategic Journey: Tutorial for Congregational Redevelopment

An online tutorial providing a learning experience for congregations

<http://congregationalresources.org/sites/congregationalresources.org/files/SpiritualStrategicJourney.pdf>

Studying Congregations: A New Handbook

Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney,
Abingdon Press, 1998 (available from Cokesbury)

4. Assessing Your Finances

A critical step before searching for a new pastor is a financial assessment done by the session in order to get the true financial picture of the congregation.

Assessing the Church Budget

The session must determine whether there will be sufficient funds to adequately support the pastor you call. It is unfortunate when a congregation calls a pastor by stretching its income and depleting its reserves only to find that they cannot afford to pay that pastor after the first year or so. Also, pastors and congregations can become frustrated when the pastor's salary is over half the church budget, leaving little for anything else.

If you find your church in this situation, talk with your presbytery about options other than a full-time minister for pastoral leadership. An excellent resource is *New Times, New Call: Pastoral Options for Small Churches* available from Presbyterian Distribution Service (PDS).

Don't forget to budget for the pastoral search costs and the cost of moving your new pastor to your community. Once you are clear about the financial picture for your congregation, be sure to thoroughly brief presbytery and PNC members so they will be better prepared to talk with prospective pastors.

If the presbytery is assisting you with funding to supplement the church's own financial resources be sure you are clear as to how much funding can be expected, for what period of time, and for what purpose.

The Compensation Package

Consider an appropriate compensation package for a pastor with the skills and experience you are seeking as well as for living in your church community. A conversation with your presbytery, a review of the current Board of Pensions Clergy Effective Salaries, and a look at similar church positions listed on the online CLC "Opportunity Search" may be helpful in assisting you to make that determination. Most presbyteries have established minimum "effective" compensation guidelines which must be met for pastoral positions within the presbytery. Be sure you know the current presbytery minimum and if it is expected to be raised in the coming year.

The manse, if you have one, is an important part of the compensation package. The manse should be inspected and if major repair work is required, make plans to get it underway. If a housing allowance will be offered in lieu of a manse, someone may need to acquaint your committee with the housing options available in your community. Set an annual housing allowance figure that will provide adequate or reasonable housing in your community through mortgage payments or rental.

Figure the annual cost of medical, death, disability, and pension coverage for your pastor through The Board of Pensions. The Board of Pensions Web site has more detailed information about understanding effective salary and current dues. (*Note:* The percentages on which dues are calculated often change each year so make sure you are working with current figures.)

Add the proposed cash salary, housing and other compensation in the total effective salary to the other costs of ministry such as maintenance of a manse, professional expenses and office expenses. Look at the total in the context of your entire budget for ministry, including mission, program, administration, and property. Then take the long-term view. How might your expenses increase if you live out your vision of ministry over the next five years? What is a realistic estimate of changes in the income side of your budget?

Resources for Assessing Finances

Association of Presbyterian Tentmakers (APT) Web site
<http://www.pcusatentmakers.org/>

Board of Pensions PC(USA) Web site
www.pensions.org

Cost of Living Calculator
www.bankrate.com/brm/movecalc.asp

Church Leadership Connection Opportunity Search
<https://clc.pcusa.org/asp/OpportunitySearch.aspx>

New Times, New Call: A Manual of Pastoral Options for Small Churches
Presbyterian Marketplace #7231203001

5. Electing a Pastor Nominating Committee

Election to a PNC Is a Sacred Trust

In the PC(USA) call process, the congregation gives authority to search for a pastor to a PNC. Once the PNC is elected, the other members of the congregation and the session have no role in determining who will be the next pastor until the PNC is ready to present their nominee to the congregation for a vote.

The presbytery has a responsibility to work with the PNC, to advise them, and to evaluate the nominee they select to present to the congregation. They are authorized by our *Book of Order* to be partners with you in your discernment process.

The presbytery may have recommendations for the session regarding the process and suggested number of members in the election of the PNC. Often congregations will use the congregation's nominating committee to propose a slate of nominees for the PNC. In considering nominees for the PNC, the congregation's nominating committee should strive for a PNC that is representative of the whole congregation and consider church members of integrity who are:

- knowledgeable about the church and community, Presbyterian theology and government;
- able to make a significant commitment of their time, energy, and very best wisdom;
- willing to accept this as a task of spiritual discernment, not being easily influenced by personal desires or congregational politics, but rather listening for the voice of God; and
- able to honor confidentiality.

The congregation must give careful and prayerful attention to the election of persons to serve in this important role.

The Process for Electing a PNC

After receiving presbytery permission and guidance, the congregation is ready to elect a PNC. Following are suggested steps for electing a PNC:

- The session, in consultation with presbytery, recommends the number of people to serve on the PNC, and ordinarily asks the congregational nominating committee to nominate members of the congregation to serve on the PNC.

- The congregation's nominating committee (or other designated committee) meets to compile a slate of nominees, providing for a mechanism to receive input of names from the congregation.
- The congregation's nominating committee contacts the proposed people to outline the requirements for serving on the PNC and to determine if they would be willing to serve, if elected. When a slate of nominees for the PNC is completed, session is notified that the nominating committee is ready to present the slate to the congregation.
- Session sets a date and time for a congregational meeting for the purpose of electing a PNC, ensuring the appropriate amount of notice for the meeting is given.
- A ballot is prepared in advance with space for nominations from the floor.
- At the time of the congregational meeting, if at all possible, a presbytery representative should be present in order to answer questions or advise the congregation on the election and/or work of a PNC.
- Nominations from the floor are in order provided that members so nominated have given their consent in advance.

At some point, early in the work of the PNC, you may wish to commission the members of the PNC during worship. This provides a way for the congregation to know who members of the PNC are and to pray for them as they begin their work on behalf of the congregation.

Part Three: Searching for a Pastor

THE WORK OF THE PASTOR NOMINATING COMMITTEE

1. Getting Organized

When the members of the PNC have been elected it is time to get organized and map out what you will need, what you will do, and the timetable you hope to follow (your presbytery will help you know what is realistic based on experience with other congregations).

Scheduling PNC Meetings

In consultation with your presbytery liaison plan for your first meeting. The presbytery liaison often leads this orientation meeting, so it will be essential for all of your members to be present. The presbytery may also ask the session to be present for the first part of the meeting.

Plan to set regular meeting days, times, and places making certain that all PNC members will be available and that your presbytery liaison will be able to attend or be available by phone. Many PNCs, wisely, decide to meet every week. Regular and frequent meetings are a major factor in helping to move the call process along. It is much easier to cancel a meeting than it is to schedule an additional meeting when calendars are already full. If you will be meeting at the church building, be sure the room in which you will be meeting is adequate for your confidentiality needs. Some PNCs choose to meet away from the church building due to the number of other church activities going on during their scheduled meeting time.

Understanding Your Work

As your committee begins working together, a number of points should be discussed by your committee:

- ***Spiritual Focus.*** Calling a pastor requires wisdom and spiritual guidance. Plan for a regular time for prayer and reflection as part of your meetings, deciding on how this time will be structured and who will lead it. This is more than opening and closing your meetings with prayer. Bible study and prayer are important tools as you seek to discern God’s call. Don’t skimp on this important time for listening to God. A list of biblical and other resources for use by the PNC can be found in Part I of this manual.
- ***A Sense of Consensus and Unity.*** It is important for there to be an evolving sense of consensus and unity within your PNC. As you pray and work together, you should become increasingly clear about the work you will be asking your new pastor to do and the type of person you will be seeking to fulfill that ministry. Be clear about your process for decision making. Know the steps you will be going through. Set agreed-upon timelines knowing that adjustments may have to be made since our timelines are not necessarily God’s timelines.
- ***Gather Materials.*** Gather together the materials you will need to help you in your task and help you understand the pastoral call process. You will need a Bible, a current *Book of Order*, a copy of this manual for each PNC member, presbytery policies and processes for the search process, the church mission statement and/or mission study, blank copies of a CIF, instructions for completing a CIF, and/or a copy of the “On Calling a Pastor” DVD/VHS (available from your presbytery office or through PDS), just to name a few items.
- ***Coordinate with Session.*** The PNC reports to the congregation. However, there will be times when your committee will need to consult with the session to ask for additional information, negotiate financial matters, and/or request the calling of a congregational meeting for the purpose of hearing your report and presenting your nominee. Identify those key times and identify who will be the liaison from the PNC to the session.
- ***Communicate with the Congregation.*** Decide how you will keep the congregation informed. Many PNCs find it helpful to post a list of the stages of a pastoral call process and then mark their progress. Articles in the church bulletin, newsletter, and Web site, as well as reports during worship, are good ways to keep the congregation informed. While you cannot disclose names or descriptions of individuals being considered or places visited for interviews, you can tell the congregation the stage you are in (such as “We are receiving and evaluating PIFs”) and give general statistical information (such as “We have received PIFs from thirty-two individuals – eighteen men and fourteen women”). Do what you can to keep the congregation informed, prayerful, and optimistic during the search process.
- ***The Need for Confidentiality.*** Review and affirm the necessity for confidentiality in all matters discussed by the PNC.

Confidentiality

Maintaining confidentiality within the PNC is of the utmost importance. Maintaining confidentiality ensures that the identity of the prospective pastors your PNC is considering is protected. Prospective pastors do not want word to get back to their congregation that they are seeking or considering a new call. It doesn’t take much for a congregation “back home” to hear that their pastor is circulating his or her PIF, even if you think you are sharing with someone

“who would never tell.” This means that all information about prospective pastors does not go beyond the members of the PNC, your presbytery liaison and the EP/GP.

Maintaining confidentiality also ensures the integrity of the work of the PNC keeping it free from outside influence or interference. A good rule of thumb is “What happens within the committee stays within the committee.” This includes all conversations, deliberations, and perceptions of the PNC. If a PNC member has any issue regarding the work of the PNC, the appropriate place for that issue to be dealt with is within the PNC.

Selecting Leadership

You may find it helpful to identify leaders with specific responsibilities to help facilitate the work of the PNC. These leaders may include a chairperson or co-chairs, secretary, and/or Internet communicator.

The role of the chairperson or co-chairs might be to:

- encourage discussion of various viewpoints rather than discourage them.
- delegate responsibility and see that tasks are carried out.
- ensure that decisions reached are the consensus of the group.
- communicate with the presbytery, CLC, candidates and prospective pastors.

The role of the secretary might be to:

- be responsible for correspondence to and from the committee.
- keep records for the committee.
- perform other duties as determined by the PNC.

The role of the Internet communicator might be to:

- enter your approved CIF online with CLC.
- send and receive confidential communication to and from prospective pastors.
- To access and/or download from CLC all referred PIFs.

Ideally, the Internet communicator would be your PNC chairperson or co-chair, but if she or he is not comfortable with the Internet, or if you just want to share the work of the PNC, another member of the committee could assume this role. Be sure that this person has access to the Internet on a regular basis and an e-mail account where confidentiality can be maintained. Access through a church office computer is not recommended unless complete confidentiality can be assured. All mailings and e-mails should go only to PNC members and not through others who are not PNC members. The church office address is not the best place to receive mail, so decide the primary mail and e-mail addresses your committee will be using for all communication.

A Word About Getting Stalled

Before you begin your work as a PNC, know that occasionally PNCs become discouraged when things do not move along as quickly or smoothly as they had hoped, when committees have trouble reaching consensus, when prospective pastors drop out of the process or when the pastor to whom you have extended a call decides not to accept your call. If any of these things should happen, it would be well to consider, prayerfully, the cause of your discouragement and deal with it realistically. If needed, ask your presbytery liaison or EP/GP to help your committee, or recommend an experienced person who can deal with these disappointing aspects of your work as a PNC.

Resources for the PNC

Church Leadership Connection Web site

www.pcusa.org/clc

“On Calling a Pastor” DVD/VHS

(available from PDS item #7221404014)

Pastoral Search: The Alban Guide to Managing the Pastoral Search Process

John Vonhof, The Alban Institute, 1999

Selecting Church Leaders: A Practice in Spiritual Discernment

Charles M. Olsen and Ellen Morseth, The Alban Institute, 2002

So You're On the Search Committee

Bunty Ketcham and Celia Allison Hahn, The Alban Institute, 2005

2. Writing and Submitting the Church Information Form

In some congregations, one of the first tasks of the PNC is to complete the CIF. In other congregations, before the PNC is elected, a special writing team is appointed by session to complete the CIF. No matter who has the responsibility there is much to consider and write before you should begin to attempt to enter your CIF online with CLC. In fact, CLC strongly urges all CIFs be completed in a word processing document offline before attempting to complete a CIF online.

Begin by downloading for each member of the committee a copy of “CIF Instructions” and a blank CIF from “Printable Forms” on the CLC Web site. Having these will help guide you in gathering needed information and answers, sizing up the task before you, and identifying the computer-wise member who will eventually enter your CIF online (co-opting someone to enter your CIF, from outside the committee, is perfectly okay. Others before you have done so.)

Writing the Position Description

A position description should begin to emerge out of the congregational mission study. You will need to draw up a proposed position description so that both the PNC and prospective pastors will have a common understanding of the expectations and qualifications for the position. “Guidelines for a Session Personnel Committees” contains information on writing position descriptions as well as sample position descriptions. You can download a copy from “Resources” on the CLC Web site.

The information from the position description will be used to complete the two sections of the CIF related to the position description: “Major Responsibilities” and “Description of Characteristics and Qualifications.” Your responses in each of these sections will be limited to 1500 characters (including spaces and punctuation). As you consider the position description, it is helpful to identify the particular skills you believe the person should possess in order to be called to the position.

The Mission Statement and Narrative Questions

Hopefully, your church will have a mission statement, which can be inserted in the “Brief Church Mission Statement” section of the CIF. If not, your session will need to assist you.

There are also three narrative sections on the CIF that need to be completed within the limits of no more than 1500 characters, including spaces and punctuation. They are:

- *Please write a brief description of your church/organization programs or accomplishments.*
- *Describe what gifts, skills and experiences your congregation possesses to fulfill its mission.*
- *What are the key theological issues of our church and society that are reflected in the ministry of your congregation/organization?*

If your church mission study or other materials do not provide you with clear answers for these sections, you may consider meeting with session to discuss the answers. Nothing surprises a session more than to read a CIF that they believe is not an adequate representation of the congregation or the pastor you will be seeking.

Ensuring Equal Opportunity for Service

“God unites person through baptism regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, disability, geography, or theological conviction. There is therefore no place in the life of the Church for discrimination against any person.” F-10403

The PC(USA) is committed to equal opportunity employment. Your presbytery liaison will assist you in understanding your role in implementing this commitment in your pastoral search. You will be asked to consider candidates based on the gifts they bring to ministry and not on factors such as race, ethnic origin, sex, age, marital status, or disability. You are encouraged to develop selection criteria that are not discriminatory. For example, “being married with young children,” “having a wife who plays the organ,” or “must be African American” should be ruled out as criteria. It may be helpful to explore feelings and perceptions in a nonjudgmental way allowing folks to discuss the unfamiliar, to ask questions, and to express concerns. Those PNCs who do not allow personal preferences to close doors often find themselves deeply enriched as God surprises them. PNCs have been known to say things such as, “We have nothing against a woman pastor, but our congregation just isn't ready for that yet” and then find themselves presented with a number of PIFs from very qualified prospective pastors, who happen to be women. (Over half of the Presbyterians preparing for ministry are women!). It would not be unusual for this PNC to find themselves in the position of presenting with great excitement a woman nominee to the congregation. Be open to the movement of God's Spirit.

When your CIF is being completed your PNC will need to be able to answer “yes” with integrity to the following questions:

Has the presbytery counseled with the Pastor Nominating Committee regarding Equal Employment Opportunity?

Yes _____ No _____

Each Pastor Nominating Committee is expected to undertake its search for a minister in a manner consistent with the good news that in the Church "... as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Has the Pastor Nominating Committee affirmed to the Presbytery its intention to follow the Form of Government in this regard?

Yes _____ No _____

At the completion of your pastoral call process presbytery may be asked to report to the presbytery the steps you took to ensure adherence to this commitment. A sample reporting form, "Equal Employment Opportunity in Ministry Report for Search Process," can be found at the back of this manual and in the "Printable Forms" section of the CLC Web site.

Completing and Submitting the CIF

Complete your CIF in conversation with your session and with your presbytery liaison. Your session will give direction about the compensation package you can offer a new pastor. Your presbytery liaison has experience with the pastoral call process and will be able to help you present your church in the best way. When your research is complete and the information needed for all parts of the CIF has been gathered, the PNC, session, and presbytery should make certain all agree on the information to be submitted. All items should be fully discussed since the CIF is the means by which your PNC will receive and evaluate PIFs. It is also a statement of the expectations under which your new pastor will come to your church and within which he or she will begin ministry with you.

When the information on the CIF has been agreed on, the final CIF must be submitted to the session for review and approval at a meeting of the session and to the presbytery for their approval. Once the CIF is approved it may be entered with CLC following the instructions found in "CIF Instructions." (*Note:* In order to enter your CIF online with CLC you will need a user name and password. Congregational PNCs get their user name and password from the presbytery. All other search committees should call CLC.)

Once your CIF has been entered with CLC, both your clerk of session and presbytery must read and approve it. They can electronically "sign" your CIF online or download a copy of the attestation form from "Printable Forms" on the CLC Web site, complete it and fax or mail it to CLC. After the approvals have been made, your CIF will be released for matching with PIFs and will be posted in "Opportunity Search" on the CLC Web site. Your PNC chairperson will receive notification when matching has been done and can, then, access the PIFs online. Prospective pastors will also be viewing your CIF through "Opportunity Search" and may self refer their PIF to the PNC.

It is suggested that a midpoint check be done at this time, to determine how the PNC will organize itself for the steps ahead. The committee may also want to set some target dates for completing each of the remaining steps.

Resources for Writing and Submitting the CIF

Blank CIF and "CIF Instructions"

download from "Printable Forms" on the CLC Web site

<http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/clc/printable-forms/>

CIF Approval Forms for Clerk of Session and COM

download from "Printable Forms" on the CLC Web site

<http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/clc/printable-forms/>

“Guidelines for Session Personnel Committees”

PDS #7221404014 *or*

download from “Resources” on the CLC Web site

<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/guidelines-session-personnel-committee/>

Church Leadership Connection Opportunity Search

can be accessed on the CLC Web site: <https://clc.pcusa.org/aspx/OpportunitySearch.aspx>

“Equal Employment Opportunity in Ministry Report for Search Process” Form

download from “Resources” on the CLC Web site:

<http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/clc/printable-forms/>

3. Receiving Personal Information Forms

Your PNC will receive PIFs from several different sources and at different times. Your PNC may wish to set a reasonable deadline for the receipt of all PIFs but should not wait until that deadline to begin reading and screening PIFs.

Suggested Names

Members of your congregation and presbytery may suggest names of prospective pastors to the PNC. Communicate to the congregation the mechanism by which they can suggest names of prospective pastors to the PNC. Be sure to communicate to the congregation that while you appreciate their suggestions of prospective pastors, you will be unable to share with them the current status of any suggested prospective pastors in order to honor the confidentiality of the process.

The easiest way to handle suggested names is to ask the person suggesting the prospective pastor’s name to contact the individual directly and invite them to send their PIF to the PNC by self referral. However, an initial contact of a prospective pastor by a PNC member may be enough to spark a prospective pastor’s own discernment process in seriously considering your position. Decide how your committee will handle these suggestions.

Matched PIFs

CLC or your EP/GP will do the initial matching for your CIF. The PNC chairperson will receive notification that matching has been completed. The PNC chairperson can then access the referred PIFs through the CLC system.

If the PNC would like to receive additional matched PIFs, the PNC chairperson may request additional matching every seven days.

Persons with a PIF in CLC can see where their PIF has been referred. This means that candidates have the ability to know that your PNC has received their PIF.

In some presbyteries, names of prospective pastors who are presently members of your own presbytery are not matched and referred to you. Contact your presbytery if you are interested in someone within your own presbytery. This does not apply to candidates under care of a presbytery.

Names of racial/ethnic persons and women are included in matching wherever possible. Your PNC may request additional names of women and racial/ethnic persons at any time by calling CLC.

Self referred PIFs

You may receive PIFs not only from the matching done through CLC but directly from interested prospective pastors who will refer their PIF to you through the CLC system. These self referred PIFS will be posted along with all PIFs matched to your CIF on the CLC system and are accessible by the PNC or search committee chair.

Consult with your presbytery on how to handle PIFs or resumes that are sent directly to your PNC or search committee apart from the CLC system. If your presbytery allows you to consider PIFs that are not referred through CLC matching or CLC self referral, there are a couple of things to keep in mind.

Attestation Assurance. When a PIF for prospective pastors or candidates for ministry comes through the CLC system, you can be assured that the PIF has been attested to by a teaching elder's presbytery stated clerk or a candidate's presbytery of candidacy. If you receive a PIF apart from the CLC system, you will need to ascertain whether that PIF has been attested to by the appropriate person. You should not consider a PIF until proof of such attestation is provided. It is the prospective pastor's responsibility to provide you with the attestation. Simply let the individual know that their PIF will not be considered until such attestation is provided and set the PIF aside. If you have any questions about whether a PIF you receive may be considered, check with your presbytery liaison or EP/GP.

Notifying the EP/GP and/or presbytery representative. When PIFs are referred to you through CLC, notification may also be sent to a presbytery representative and/or your EP/GP depending on the request of your presbytery. When you receive a PIF apart from CLC, be sure to inform the presbytery liaison, and EP/GP of receipt of these direct referrals.

A Word About Possible PIF Differences. PIFs entered in the CLC system have limitations that PIFs completed on personal computers and then sent directly to you may not have. First, CLC PIFs have character limitations to the answers for narrative questions. A PIF sent to you that has not come through the CLC system may have longer answers to the narrative questions than found on PIFs entered with CLC. Second, there is more latitude in formatting a PIF that is not entered with CLC thus allowing for the ability to make a PIF look more pleasing to the eye. Your PNC may have to deal with the issue of "comparing apples to oranges" if you receive PIFs with more lengthy answers and are more beautiful to behold than those sent through the CLC system.

Acknowledging Receipt of a PIF. Prospective pastors whose PIFs have been matched with your CIF and those who have self referred their PIF to you would like to know that you have received their PIF. Please acknowledge receipt of all PIFs and keep prospective pastors informed of their status, including whether they are being considered.

Ministers from Other Denominations. Ministers from other denominations, including ministers from our Formula of Agreement partner denominations, have been known to send PIFs or resume directly to PC(USA) PNCs for their consideration. If you receive a PIF or resume from a minister from another denomination consult with your presbytery before consideration.

4. Reading and Screening Personal Information Forms

PNC Access to PIFs

Every member of the PNC needs access to every PIF received by the PNC. A PNC chairperson or any other PNC member should never “pre-screen” or discard PIFs that have not been shared with the full committee. Determine how your committee will make available all received PIFs to PNC members. Options may include the following:

- **Printed Copies.** Printing a copy of each PIF for each PNC member or make several copies to be circulated among PNC members. The PNC chairperson can access and print referred PIFs through the online CLC system. Anytime you have a printed copy of a PIF, please remember to be careful about confidentiality issues by guarding the copies you have been given and shredding them when you are through with them.
- **Viewing Online.** Have PNC members view each referred PIF online through the CLC system. If members of the PNC would like to access the PIFs this way, the PNC chairperson should call either CLC or the presbytery to obtain a shared password for the other PNC members. CLC does not suggest that the PNC chairperson share his or her password with the other members of the PNC. If desired, PIFs viewed online can be copied and pasted into a Word document and saved to your computer.
- **Electronic Copies.** Receive copies of referred PIFs by e-mail. One member of the PNC (usually the chairperson) can copy and save into a Word document on his or her personal computer every referred PIF through CLC. These can then be e-mailed as an attachment to members of the PNC who can save them to their own computers and/or print copies.
- **Combination of Options.** Be creative. What works best for one member of the PNC may not work well for another. The goal is to make sure that PNC members have access to all PIFs in a timely and helpful way.

It is recommended that once you have determined how you will evaluate PIFs that you get down to business. Don’t hold on to PIFs until you “have them all” before you begin reading and evaluating.

Evaluating PIFs

All PIFs should be prayerfully considered and thoroughly evaluated. As you read each PIF, give attention to the source of the referral (matched or self referred; suggested name from someone; etc.), to the “fit” of the potential pastor to the church, and to God’s “still, small voice” speaking to you.

Your PNC will need to determine how you will evaluate PIFs. Check with your presbytery to see if they have any recommendations. If your presbytery does not have a recommended process you are free to create your own, making it as complex or as simple as you choose.

It is important to make your work a priority and to do your work quickly. Pastors of interest have been lost from consideration because PNCs have taken months to read and evaluate PIFs and prospective pastors have accepted calls elsewhere.

A Suggested Process:

- Each PNC member reads **all** the information in a PIF and ranks the PIF 1, 2 or 3:
 - 1 for those in whom you are very interested
 - 2 for those in whom you have some interest
 - 3 for those you do not want to consider further

Keep in mind that PIFs referred through computer matching are selected based on the compatibility of the information your committee has submitted in the CIF and the statement of preferences, experience, skills, and financial needs of each person as submitted in their PIF. PNC members would be wise to keep notes to be shared with the rest of the committee about why they ranked a PIF a particular way.

- If your committee receives two copies of a PIF take a closer look at this individual because these PIFs have come to you from two different sources: self referral and computer matching. This means that from both the computer matching point of view and the prospective pastor's point of view his or her skills, interests and experience match those your church is looking for.
- After all PNC members have had a chance to read and evaluate a PIF, carefully review and evaluate the PIF together as a committee. Allow each member to share their reasons for the particular ranking and listen attentively to one another.
- Reach some kind of consensus on the PNC ranking for each PIF. As a committee, you may not wish to remove any PNC member's first choices from consideration unless the PNC member agrees to remove them.
- If your PNC is interested in a prospective pastor who is unable to sign the PIF sexual misconduct statement in the affirmative turn the matter over to your EP/GP or presbytery who will provide you with guidance. Please trust their advice.
- Set aside those prospective pastors the PNC has rated 3. If you are sure that you will not be returning to these PIFs, notify them with an affirming letter that they are no longer being considered. If you want to hang on to these PIFs just in case, feel free to do so.
- Contact your higher ranked individuals to determine whether they are interested and available to consider your position. Don't wait until your committee has evaluated every PIF. Let prospective pastors know of your interest in them and find out if they are interested in you.
- Repeat the process until all PIFs have been read and evaluated and the interest of your higher ranked prospective pastors has been ascertained.
- Once a prospective pastor's interest has been ascertained, you may want to move right to asking for a sermon and checking references. How many prospective pastors will this be? There is no magic number, although your presbytery liaison may have a suggestion. Much depends on your position, the prospective pastors, the consensus of your PNC, and the movement of the Holy Spirit.
- Share the names of those you are interested in with your presbytery liaison and EP/GP. Make sure you know and follow your presbytery's screening process for those under consideration.

Contacting Prospective Pastors

While there are a number of PIFs available for matching in CLC everyone's search process is on a different time line. Some prospective pastors may already be negotiating a call with a church while others are just beginning their search. Also, there will be individuals who are simply not

interested in your position. You will need to determine who is really a viable candidate for your consideration.

As soon as the PNC has agreed that a candidate is one to consider further, contact them and let them know of your interest. The following process is suggested:

- Phone each candidate using the preferred phone number listed on the PIF. Use the alternate phone number only as a back-up. Don't use e-mail to contact candidates unless you have trouble reaching them. A phone call is more personal and indicates an interest on your part.
- When you reach the prospective pastor identify yourself and indicate that the call is initiated based on the PNC's reading of their PIF at an early stage in your process.
- Briefly describe the church and the position opening. Have a copy of the CIF handy for reference.
- Ask if the prospective pastor is interested in receiving further information about the position and your church. If so, direct the prospective pastor to your CIF through the CLC Web site or offer to e-mail or mail a copy. You can also direct the individual to your church Web site for additional information, or you can mail a packet of informational material.
- Be ready to answer any questions the prospective pastor may have.
- If the prospective pastor is *interested in the position*, express how pleased you are and share the PNC's next steps and timeline.
- If the prospective pastor *asks for additional time for consideration*, agree on when and how the person will inform your PNC of his or her interest.
- If the prospective pastor *does not wish to be considered*, thank the person and wish them well in his or her new call, continued pastoral search, or whatever their situation may be.
- Make notes about the call and follow-up with whatever was agreed upon such as mailings, follow-up calls, or e-mails.
- If someone other than the prospective pastor answers the phone and the prospective pastor is unavailable ask if there would be a more convenient time to call back.
- *Do Not* leave messages on answering machines (other than on a personal cell phone) or with a person. Do not identify yourself as a member of a PNC unless you are speaking directly with the prospective pastor.

All prospective pastors who are being considered appreciate being kept informed of their status including whether they are still being considered. Be prompt in sending a thoughtful letter to those the PNC has decided not to consider further and to those who are still being considered. If you are holding on to PIFs of prospective pastors you might consider later, be sure to let them know that they are still being considered.

Requesting Additional Materials

You may want to request additional materials from prospective pastors to help you in your discernment process.

Sermon Videos. Most PNCs ask prospective pastors for a sermon video. For positions with primary responsibilities for preaching viewing a sermon is a must. These may come to you in a variety of formats. In evaluating sermons, remember that you are evaluating the content of the sermon, not the production quality of the piece. Determine your process for viewing, circulating and evaluating sermons. In a spirit of good stewardship, return any videos to the prospective pastors when you are through with them.

Supplemental Questions. For positions in a unique ministry setting or situation, you may wish to make use of supplemental questions. Use supplemental questions if you need more in-depth and thoughtful answers to questions than can be adequately answered during a phone or face to face interview. If you use supplemental questions ensure that all members of the PNC have access to a copy from each prospective pastor's responses.

Other Material. You may choose not to get bogged down in requesting other supplemental material but prospective pastors have been known to send—unsolicited—supplemental material that may include church newsletters, bulletins, published articles, and newspaper clippings. Decide how you will handle this material.

Web Sites. Some individuals you are considering may direct you to church or personal Web sites for additional information. While you can get information about a prospective pastor this way, be careful that your impressions of an individual are not formed simply from the impressiveness (or lack thereof) of the Web site. Remember you are searching for a pastor with the gifts and skills listed on your CIF, and web design and technology might not be one of those skills.

5. Contacting References

Primary References

The PNC has the responsibility to check the primary references of each prospective pastor you are considering. Primary references are those references that a prospective pastor has listed on his or her PIF. There can be up to six references for each PIF.

Before making any calls prepare, prepare in advance the questions that will be asked of each reference. Review the questions with your presbytery liaison. Divide the reference calls up among PNC members and set a deadline for when reference calls should be completed.

Make your calls when you are able to think clearly and be focused. Choose a time and place free from distractions and demands. When you reach the reference ask if this is a convenient time to talk with you. If not, offer to call back at a better time. If you must leave a message simply say that you are calling them as a listed reference for an individual and leave your name and phone number so they may call you back.

Make notes of your conversation for use when comparing those being considered. Be sure to confirm the identity and role of the reference and make notes about the date, time, and content of your conversation.

Be sure you get reliable information and ask references to respond only on the basis of firsthand knowledge. Do not share rumors or impressions that cannot be substantiated and be sure you have specific information to back up negative references. When negative references are received, they should be carefully checked. Remember to consider the evaluator as well as the person being evaluated. Your presbytery liaison may follow up on any negative references.

Do not share reference material with anyone other than your committee, presbytery representative and EP/GP.

Questions to Ask. It is usually helpful to tell the reference a bit about the congregation, community, and position for which the prospective pastor is being considered, and then ask the reference to give an assessment of how the prospective pastor might serve in your setting.

It is appropriate and important to ask questions related to the individual's skills and experience that relate to the position being filled. Such questions might be "Tell me about John Doe's worship style and leadership" or "How does Jane deal with conflict?"

Many Presbyterians who serve on PNCs are familiar with secular employment practices where it is illegal to ask certain questions about a prospective employee. Because of the separation of church and state the rules are different for PNCs. *Neither civil nor church law mandate prohibited questions.* However, questions should focus on the ability of the person to do effective ministry and not be unnecessarily intrusive.

A good final question is "Is there anything else we should know?"

Following the completion of reference calls, take time as a PNC to debrief and evaluate the results. You may be able to remove some candidates from consideration at this point in your process.

Secondary References

Secondary references are persons who are not listed by the prospective pastor but are suggested by others or contacted because they are thought to have knowledge of the individual. Secondary references should only be contacted when the prospective pastor has given permission. Under no circumstances should a PNC contact members of a prospective pastor's present congregation without her or his permission to do so. Discuss with your presbytery liaison the presbytery guidelines for contacting secondary references.

EP/GPs, stated clerks, and appropriate presbytery committee or commission moderators do not fall into this category. They are automatically used as references because of their roles and no authorization is needed from a prospective pastor to consult with them.

Presbytery to Presbytery Reference Checks

Once you have narrowed your search to those persons you want to interview, your presbytery or EP/GP will do reference checks with their colleagues in the presbytery of which your prospective pastor is a member or candidate. This is for your protection and for the benefit of all involved. If the information leads to serious doubts about the prospective pastor's ability to do effective ministry in the particular calling church, these concerns will be shared with the PNC, usually giving specific areas of ministry where potential difficulty may arise. The identity of the reference may not be shared with the PNC. Do not share the information with the prospective pastor under consideration.

Background Checks

Background checks are assessments of a prospective pastor's character and fitness for employment. They may include checks of employment, credit, criminal, and motor vehicle records. Many presbyteries require background checks at certain times in the call process and

are done for the protection of the congregation. Check with your presbytery liaison to learn your presbytery requirements.

If this position will involve work with children, your state will probably require you or your presbytery to do a background check on the person you call. Check your state law.

6. Narrowing the Search

Taking into consideration prospective pastors' PIFs, references, sermons and/or supplemental questions your committee may be able to narrow down the list of prospective pastors you are considering. It is expected that the PNC will also receive and consider presbytery's counsel on the merits, suitability, and availability of any prospective pastor your PNC is considering.

You may be able to narrow your list even more by using phone or internet video interviews.

Phone or Internet Video Interviews

Phone or internet video (like Skype) interviews allow you to get a beginning sense of interacting with a prospective pastor as you also gain and share information. It is a two way conversation that is part of the discernment process of your PNC and the prospective pastor.

In preparation for phone or internet video interviews:

- Determine how you would like to structure the interview and how much time you will need. Be sure to allow for time on your schedule to prepare yourselves as a PNC for each call.
- Determine what questions you will be asking prospective pastors and who will be asking them. You may want to ask prospective pastors to clarify or expand on information in their PIF or on information you may have gleaned from references.
- Arrange with each prospective pastor, in advance, the time and how to reach them for the interview, letting him or her know how long the interview is expected to take. Try not to schedule interviews back-to-back. Allow time after each interview for the PNC to discuss, at least briefly, each completed interview.
- If using a phone, arrange for a telephone amplifier, a phone with several extensions, or a conference call so the entire PNC can be involved in the conversation. If using internet video, you may want to arrange for enhanced sound or video projection so the entire PNC can see and hear without huddling around a computer screen. Before the interview, test the equipment you will be using to ensure that everyone will be able to hear and/or see.
- Each member of the PNC should be prepared to take notes during the phone interview, although you should designate a recorder to write down the content of the interview. Some conference call programs have the ability to print up transcripts of a call. Blessed is the PNC that has access to such a program!
- Each member of the PNC should be sure to have copies of the PIF and CIF handy for reference during the phone interview.

At the time of the interview:

- Call at the agreed upon time.

- Make introductions so the prospective pastor knows who is on the call. When asking a question during the interview each PNC member should again tell her or his name.
- Begin the interview with prayer offered by one of the PNC members.
- Let the prospective pastor know what the structure of the interview will be and follow it.
- Allow the prospective pastor to ask any questions he or she may have.
- When you have reached the end of your time bring the interview to a close thanking the prospective pastor for his or her time and interest.
- Let the prospective pastor know when they can expect to hear again from the PNC and ask them to please notify the PNC if they decide their interest in the congregation changes.
- Close the interview with prayer offered by the prospective pastor or a member of the PNC.

After the Interview:

Discuss and evaluate each phone interview as soon as possible after the call. When you have completed and evaluated all phone and internet video interviews, you may begin to get a sense of who you would like to have further conversation with and who your committee does not want to consider any further. Some PNCs find ranking the prospective pastors in order of preference helpful. You may also find that you need to return to your PIFs and select several more for consideration.

Compiling a “Short” List

You may be able to narrow down the list of prospective pastors to a “short list” of those you would like to meet and interview face to face. Do not focus on any one person too soon. Your committee may become less interested in a prospective pastor following the face to face interview or he or she may turn you down.

How long should this “short list” be? As mentioned earlier, there is no magic number, although your presbytery may have a suggestion. Much depends on your position, the prospective pastors, the consensus of your committee, and the movement of the Holy Spirit. However, there are financial costs associated with face to face interviews, so the number of folks you can feasibly interview may be limited by your budget. If you face budget constraints that the PNC believes would hamper the work of the committee, discuss this with your session.

Forward your “short list” of prospective pastors to your presbytery liaison and the EP/GP. Check with your presbytery liaison to be sure that presbytery to presbytery reference checks have been done and you have their approval to move to the face to face interview stage with each prospective pastor on your “short list.” Do not arrange for any face to face interviews without permission from presbytery.

Be sure to follow up with each prospective pastor by the agreed upon contact date even if it is only to tell him or her that the PNC is still deliberating. If the committee decides it will not be considering an individual any further, a letter should be sent as soon as possible thanking the individual for offering themselves for consideration, letting them know that the committee is no longer considering them, and wishing them well as they continue to discern God’s call.

If your committee is having trouble reaching consensus, it may be necessary to request more PIFs and continue the process or to ask presbytery for assistance.

7. Meeting Prospective Pastors Face to face

In order for a PNC to evaluate prospective pastors fully, it is necessary to meet face to face, engage in conversation, and participate in worship together. It is in time spent with prospective pastors that PNCs recognize the experiential nature of the call process as they attend to “the chemistry between people” and the movement of the Holy Spirit. As PNCs meet prospective pastors face to face, they would be wise to remember the Presbyterian balance between “ardor and order” or “heart and head.”

By the time you are ready to meet face to face with prospective pastors you should be able to convey a sense of clarity and harmony as a PNC. If you are not able to do this, you may want to take some time as a committee to get to such a place. Face to face interviews are not the time for you to sort out your differences in front of an unsuspecting prospective pastor!

Visiting Prospective Pastors in Their Ministry Setting

Some PNCs, or a small delegation of the PNC, elect to visit prospective pastors in their current ministry setting including attending worship. Obviously, this will require travel on the part of some or all of the PNC members. If your PNC decides to visit prospective pastors, do so only with the permission of the prospective pastor. Be sure the prospective pastor is still interested in your position before you make the trip. If the prospective pastor feels it is unwise for you to visit the church he or she is currently serving, a face to face interview in your own area should be arranged.

When visiting the church of a potential pastor, keep the following in mind:

- Before going, become thoroughly familiar with the prospective pastor’s PIF.
- Confirm the time of worship and that the prospective pastor will be preaching that particular Sunday.
- Visit discreetly. Especially in smaller congregations, it is difficult to conceal the identity of a PNC. Do what you can to arrive, sit, and leave separately or in pairs. Do not introduce yourselves to church members as members of a PNC!
- Arrange to meet the prospective pastor in the afternoon if you want to hold an interview or have informal conversation at the time of your visit. Do not expect to do so immediately following the service.
- If only a portion of the PNC is visiting, engage only in an informal conversation rather than a formal interview. Take notes on your visit so that on your return you will be able to give a full report to the other members of the PNC.

Hosting Prospective Pastors in Your Community

Invite prospective pastors in whom the PNC is most interested to meet with you in or near your own community. This gives your committee extended time with prospective pastors so you can get to know them better and, hopefully, continue to discern whom God is calling to be your next pastor.

If a prospective pastor should decline your committee's invitation, understand that this is part of the discernment process. You may need to hear a "no" from several prospective pastors in order to hear the "yes" from the one of God's own choosing.

When you extend an invitation to the prospective pastor to meet with you in your community, also extend the invitation to the pastor's spouse, if there is one. Most married prospective pastors wish to include a spouse in visiting a community and meeting with a PNC because their spouse's impressions will be part of their own discernment process.

Always coordinate any prospective pastor's visit with presbytery. Your presbytery can help arrange a "neutral pulpit" somewhere in your area that provides an opportunity for the prospective pastor to lead worship while you are present without sacrificing the important confidentiality of the search. Your presbytery may also want to interview the prospective pastor while he or she is in the presbytery. If so, make sure to schedule this time with presbytery.

The PNC should make the arrangements for the visit, in consultation with the prospective pastor and presbytery, including arranging for transportation, housing, and meals. It is expected that the church will cover the costs of hosting a prospective pastor meeting with you in your community. If the PNC finds it necessary to reimburse a prospective pastor for expenses incurred during his or her visit, please do so quickly.

If at all possible, host prospective pastors in your community only one or two weeks apart. If too much time passes the PNC memory of earlier interviews and the interest of an earlier interviewee may both fade.

Practicing Hospitality

Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.

1 Peter 4:9-10

The PNC, "as good stewards of the manifold grace of God," will need to use their gifts and talents to provide hospitality to prospective pastors who will be your guests during their time in your community. Such hospitality will need careful and thoughtful planning, as well as an availability and openness to your guests' needs, on the part of the PNC.

Hospitality is not about how lavish you are (first-class tickets and five-star hotels) but about all the ways you welcome and host a prospective pastor. The hospitality you show (or fail to show) will shape impressions of the kind of hospitality a pastor might expect from the congregation as a whole and will have a direct impact on a prospective pastor's discernment process.

Hospitality in the biblical sense raises the expectation that God will play a role in the guest/host encounter. Knowing this, PNCs should be ever attentive to God's presence in the midst of your time with your guests.

Your PNC will be called upon to demonstrate hospitality in the following areas:

A place for rest. Your guests will need a comfortable, convenient, and private place to stay. This may be a hotel, bed and breakfast, guest house, or guest room. Consider having a few refreshments, small gift bag, and/or community information in place before your guest(s) arrive. Be sure enough time is allowed in your schedule for adequate rest.

Sustenance for life and health. Your guests will need to eat and drink while they are with you. Be sure that there is a plan to provide for three meals a day and plenty of water to drink. Before your guests arrive, inquire about any specific dietary needs. While a PNC does not need to eat every meal with their guests, meal times do offer an opportunity for some or all of the PNC to share local cuisine, engage in informal conversation, and/or to simply break bread together as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Transportation for the journey. Your guests will need to travel to and within your community. For longer distances, air travel may be necessary and will require the art of negotiating with your guests regarding which airline to be used, flight schedule and ticket price. While they are in your community you may choose to provide your guests with a rental car, along with a map or GPS, allowing prospective pastors the freedom to do their own exploring in the community. Or you may choose to have PNC members do the driving, allowing for members to have one-on-one time with the prospective pastor. In some situations, airport shuttles or cabs may be necessary. Be sure that all transportation arrangements are made clear with your guests.

A warm welcome for the soul. Your guests will need to be welcomed by you. In all your interactions with your guests be sure they know, through word and deed, that you are pleased to have them with you. You do not want to come across as if you find your guest's presence an inconvenience or interruption, nor would you want the formal interview to sound like an inquisition. A PNC would be wise to consider Michele Hershberger's words from her book *A Christian View of Hospitality*. "In its simplest form, hospitality is seeing the stranger through the eyes of Jesus. It is choosing to look for Jesus in the eyes of each stranger. It is loving the stranger."

The Schedule

Create and distribute the schedule for each guest's visit so that everyone (the prospective pastor, PNC members, and presbytery) knows where they are supposed to be and when. You may wish to include transportation information, such as when your guest will be picked up and by whom.

The schedule should include:

- Arrival and departure times including arrangements for transportation, housing, and meals
- The formal interview with the entire PNC and prospective pastor. Spouses are not usually included in this interview so some arrangement for a spouse may need to be made
- A tour that gives a good picture of your church and community. However, be careful to protect confidentiality
- A shared meal with the entire PNC at a home or restaurant for informal conversation and fellowship
- The presbytery interview, if required, by your presbytery
- Some "down time" especially if the prospective pastor is preaching on Sunday
- Worship, often at another church, with the prospective pastor preaching in "a neutral pulpit"
- A final time with the prospective pastor before his or her departure for any last minute questions, comments and interaction

It is not appropriate for non-PNC members to participate in these events, nor should you introduce the prospective pastor around town. This is a small world and many stories are told about pastors who became “lame ducks” because congregations back home heard that they were out interviewing.

The Formal Interview

Conducting a “formal interview” does not mean planning for a stuffy and rigid interchange. It simply means that your PNC is deliberate about having a specific plan and time for an interview with the potential pastors you are hosting. Be sure to allow enough time to conduct a thorough interview, usually two to three hours.

Plan Ahead for the Interview. Review your CIF, the prospective pastor’s PIF, and other materials from the prospective pastor. Decide what information you want and need in order to evaluate the person as your potential pastor. What questions will you ask of each prospective pastor? What unique questions will be asked of a particular prospective pastor? Who will be asking the questions? What information will the prospective pastor want to know about your church and community? Gather this information and make your plan before each interview, outlining how you will spend the interview time, the questions to be asked, and the responsibilities of each PNC member.

Interview Questions You Might Ask. Check with your presbytery to see if they have a list of questions that may be asked in an interview with potential pastors. The following are also questions you may consider asking:

Tell us about your faith journey.

What are the things you feel best about in your present ministry?

What have been the challenges there?

What makes you think you may be called to leave there now?

What interests you about this position?

What would you bring to our ministry?

What are your greatest strengths in ministry? Your greatest weaknesses?

One of our goals is to strengthen our _____. How would you do that?

Describe a typical week in your ministry.

Share your perspectives on the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

One of the issues our session has debated in the past few years is _____. Tell us how you might address that topic.

If we selected you as our pastor (or associate pastor), when could you start and what would be your start-up plan?

How do you balance your personal/family life with your ministry?

What will you need from the members of this church in order to be effective as our pastor?

What are the financial concerns you have about possibly coming here?

What questions or concerns do you have?

You will also want to develop questions related to the specific individual you will be interviewing. These will come out of your reading of the PIF and any issues you may have heard from the prospective pastor's references.

Conducting the Interview. Before the interview, be sure the interview room you will be using is comfortable and private, where you will not be interrupted or overheard. Be sure that water is available and within reach of the prospective pastor. Each PNC member should be prepared to take notes, not only of the information shared, but also of impressions gained in the course of the interview. One member of the PNC should be designated to write down the content of the interview. Members should also be prepared to ask follow-up questions that arise.

This is a suggested outline for the interview:

- Begin the interview with prayer offered by a member of the PNC.
- Start the interview by giving a statement regarding the nature of your church and the position to be filled.
- Ask the prepared questions for every prospective pastor.
- Ask the prepared questions for this particular prospective pastor.
- Ask the follow-up questions that have arisen.
- Allow the prospective pastor to ask questions. These may sometimes be difficult and penetrating but they indicate interest on the part of the minister. Face the problems and weaknesses as well as the strengths and opportunities of your situation directly and openly.
- Bring the interview to a close thanking the prospective pastor for his or her time and for coming to meet with you.
- Reiterate that this is a discernment process on everyone's part. Let the prospective pastor know the specific date by which the PNC will next be in contact. Also ask the prospective pastor to notify the PNC if his or her interest in the position changes.
- Close with prayer.

Report the results of the interview to the presbytery liaison, if they were not present.

After a Prospective Pastor's Visit

As soon as possible after each prospective pastor's visit, a meeting of the PNC should be held to fully review and discuss PNC members' impressions of the prospective pastor. The presbytery liaison should also be present.

When all visits have been completed and the PNC has completed a full review of each prospective pastor, it is the time to see if your committee is able to come to consensus on choosing your nominee.

If it becomes clear to your committee that none of the prospective pastors you have met and interviewed should be considered any further, you may need to look more closely at your second tier of PIFs or request additional PIFs and begin the process again with a new batch of prospective pastors. Remember, this is a discernment process, and if your PNC has discerned

that these particular prospective pastors are not being called to your congregation, it is good to move on. Do not be tempted to “settle” for someone just so your PNC can finish up its work.

8. Choosing the Nominee and Extending the Invitation

Choosing the Nominee

As your PNC prays together, shares perceptions and insights, and listens to one another it will, hopefully, become clear to you who God is calling to be your next pastor. The PNC should strive to make this decision both unanimous and enthusiastic.

Experience has shown that where there is a serious division in a PNC regarding the chosen nominee, the same division may appear in the congregation. Bear in mind that each member’s integrity and individuality is to be respected and that any reservations he or she has about the nominee selected should be brought to the committee’s attention and discussed with candor. If the PNC is not unanimous and enthusiastic regarding the selection, your presbytery liaison should be consulted as to the advisability of presenting the nominee to the congregation.

If your committee has reached an enthusiastic and unanimous decision, thanks be to God! However your work as a committee is not yet complete. Give the finalist’s name to presbytery for their final approval. Also, do not rush to tell the other prospective pastors “no” until you have received a “yes” from your chosen nominee.

The entire PNC will want to look again at the financial information of the CIF and come to a preliminary decision on the total effective salary you are willing to offer your nominee. Be sure that the terms of call meet presbytery minimum requirements. The PNC cannot negotiate a total effective salary beyond the total amount allocated by the session. If there is a need to do so, session approval must be obtained.

Extending the Invitation

Contacting Your Chosen Nominee. When the PNC has reached a final decision *and* has received presbytery approval to call your chosen nominee, the PNC chairperson should phone the chosen nominee and invite him or her to be the nominee presented to the congregation. Be sure that you let the person know why he or she was chosen by the PNC, and tell him or her about the enthusiastic response of the committee. You should also be prepared to share the amount of the total effective salary that you will be offering.

The person whom you have chosen may be ready to respond immediately, or he or she may need time to talk with family, spiritual advisors and/or mentors to consider all of the aspects of this call and to listen again for God’s voice. If he or she asks for this time it is important to give it. If that is the case ask, “How soon can you let us know?” or suggest a time such as “Would it be possible to hear from you by one week from today?” Except in unusual circumstances, one week should be sufficient time in which to expect a response.

When The Nominee Accepts the Invitation. When your chosen nominee accepts your invitation notify your presbytery. Do not reveal your final decision to the session or congregation until the presbytery has given its final clearance. If presbytery has not already examined your selected nominee, they will need to do so before you present the nominee to the congregation. Confirm with presbytery your next steps so that they will be done “decently and in order.”

Discuss with your chosen nominee the terms of call, effective date of the call, and the tentative schedule for the next steps, which will include approval by the presbytery, congregational meeting to call the pastor, dissolution of the nominee's current position, and the installation service. Coordination with all the involved parties will be key. There are additional steps in the process if your chosen nominee is a candidate for ministry yet to be ordained. Your presbytery and stated clerk can help you work out a timeline in coordination with the nominee's presbytery of candidacy.

When The Nominee Declines the Invitation. If your chosen nominee declines your invitation, it is natural to feel disappointed. However no church benefits from a pastor who does not feel called to that ministry setting and God may be leading your PNC to someone else. The PNC will need to meet and discuss your next steps in consultation with presbytery.

Negotiating the Terms of Call

When a nominee has accepted your invitation you will need to negotiate with the nominee the specific terms of call. An individual or subcommittee might be named to work out the terms of call with the nominee. If you have not already agreed upon the total effective salary, do so now. Once you have agreed upon the total effective salary, the nominee may suggest how he or she would like it to be allocated. Be sure that the terms of call include all other applicable items such as vacation, continuing education, all reimbursable expenses, moving costs, sabbatical leave, military service leave, and any other presbytery requirements. If you have questions about compensation, your presbytery liaison should be able to advise you.

These agreed-upon terms of call are necessary before your presbytery can approve the call of your new pastor. The congregation will also need to approve these terms of call at the time it calls the new pastor. Usually a "Pastoral Call Form" is provided by your presbytery stated clerk. A "Sample Pastoral Call Form" can be found at the back of this manual.

9. Preparing to Present Your Nominee to the Congregation

There are a few final details that must be arranged before you will present your nominee to the congregation:

Obtaining Presbytery Approval

As one of the partners in the call, the presbytery has a responsibility to examine and approve your nominee for presbytery membership and approve the terms of call. Make sure that you have presbytery approval to present your nominee to the congregation.

Coordinating with Session

It is important for the PNC to coordinate with the session scheduling the congregational meeting to call a new pastor. Session has the responsibility to call the congregational meeting to hear the report of the PNC, to give adequate notice to the temporary pastor for his or her departure, and to arrange for any pastoral coverage between the temporary pastor's departure and the arrival of the new pastor.

Preparing a Report for the Congregation

The congregation needs to be informed about the nominee the PNC has selected. Your written report to the congregation might include something of the process the PNC followed including the number and kinds of PIFs reviewed. A brief biographical sketch of the nominee, taken from the PIF with revisions suggested by the nominee, will help the congregation to know the new

pastor more intimately. The terms of call should also be included. It is recommended that this report be mailed or e-mailed to the congregation a few days before the congregational meeting. Care should be taken to be sure that the identity of the proposed new pastor not be shared with the media, and that the information is not used in a way that could compromise the pastor with his or her present congregation, which at this point, will normally be unaware of the pastor's plan to leave.

Presenting the Nominee to the Congregation

Depending on the tradition and preferences of the congregation and/or presbytery, the PNC nominee may preach and conduct all or part of the worship service prior to the congregational vote, or the PNC may simply report and the congregational vote be taken with results being communicated to the pastor.

The PNC has the responsibility to share with the congregation what it has learned about the nominee. Generally speaking, the more you can do to facilitate these introductions the more enthusiastic will be the support of the congregation for the PNC's work, and the easier it will be for the pastor's transition as he or she begins ministry with you.

The PNC chairperson should prepare, in advance, the formal motion on the PNC recommendation for the congregational meeting, checking with the moderator and clerk of session to be certain it conforms to provisions presbytery processes and guidelines. During the congregational meeting, the PNC chairperson should make the motion and then be ready to speak to the motion by presenting personally or through members of the PNC the reasons for selecting this nominee. This should include something of the nominee's background, experience, and abilities. On occasion questions will be raised by members of the congregation. A PNC that has done its work well will be able to answer these questions with ease. After the PNC report and congregational discussion, the congregation should be ready to vote on whether to concur with the report of the PNC to call the pastor and to vote on the terms of call.

10. Finishing Your Work

Following the election of the new pastor by the congregation, the PNC has a few last details to finish:

Notifying CLC of a "Call Pending"

The PNC chairperson needs to notify CLC of the call of your new pastor. This can be done through the CLC online system using the PNC chairperson's password and entering the information under "Admin", "Notify of New Call." Please provide the CIF number, the PIF number (if there is one), the pastor's full name and the effective date of the call. The PNC chairperson can also notify CLC by phone, e-mail, or fax.

Notifying Remaining Prospective Pastors

If you have any other prospective pastors that have not yet been notified that they are no longer being considered, each one needs to be contacted, thanked for their consideration and informed that a nominee has been chosen.

Disposing of PNC Materials

Information and references regarding your pastor-elect should be sealed and kept in the church's personnel files. All remaining PIFs and supplemental material should be destroyed or returned

to each prospective pastor. Any notes and references should be destroyed. These materials cannot be reused and should not be passed on to other PNCs.

Sharing Agreements with Session

The PNC chairperson should inform the session of any agreements the PNC may have made with the pastor-elect, such as starting date, moving details, financial arrangements, time away for prior commitments, travel expenses for house-hunting, or planning for renovation of the manse. Once this information is passed along, the session assumes the responsibility for the ongoing work with the pastor-elect.

Understanding Your New Role

Once the PNC has completed its work and has been dissolved by vote of the congregation, the PNC is no longer a committee. However, PNC members often find that the relationships forged during the pastoral search process turn into lifelong friendships. While you are no longer an official committee required to meet, you may wish to spend some time together to reflect on the journey you have been through and to celebrate and give thanks to God for the successful completion of your work.

With the dissolution of the PNC there is no longer an official connection between you and the new pastor. Certainly, each member of the PNC will want to pray for the new pastor as he or she begins ministry with you. You will want to extend hospitality and provide for a ready welcome as he or she arrives into town. However any official relationship the new pastor has is now with the congregation and session.

The installation of your new pastor will be the completion of the call process that has brought a new pastor to your congregation. Plan to attend this service of worship as your final act as a committee. Your presence will not only be a show of support for your new pastor, but can also be an opportunity to worship God, who faithfully guided your committee through the pastoral call process.

Part Four: Calling a New Pastor

THE WORK OF THE SESSION AND CONGREGATION

1. Preparing for the Report of the PNC

Calling a Congregational Meeting

When the PNC has notified the session that they have chosen a nominee to present to the congregation, the session will need to call a congregational meeting, giving the appropriate amount of notice for the meeting. The purpose of the meeting will be to hear and act on the report of the PNC. This meeting usually takes place after a worship service and must be moderated by the session moderator or other minister appointed by presbytery for this purpose.

Coordinating Worship with the Nominee

If the PNC nominee is scheduled to preach and conduct all or part of the worship service prior to the congregational meeting and vote, the session will need to ensure that planning for that particular worship service is coordinated with the PNC nominee.

Distributing the PNC Report to the Congregation

The session needs to coordinate with the PNC the timely distribution of the PNC's written report to the congregation. This report should be mailed or e-mailed to congregation members, allowing them enough time to read the material in preparation for the congregational meeting, usually a few days before the congregational meeting.

It is important that congregation members be reminded to not share this information with a wider circle until the vote of the congregation has been taken and the nominee has been able to inform his or her current congregation.

Concluding the Temporary Pastor's Ministry

The session also needs to plan ahead for an appropriate departure time for the temporary pastor, before the arrival of the new pastor. Sufficient notice, meeting contractual obligations, should be given to the temporary pastor. Also allow enough time for the congregation to say farewell and thank you to the temporary pastor. It may be helpful to plan for some time between the conclusion of the temporary pastorate and the arrival of a new pastor by using the teaching elders or presbytery pulpit supply for worship leadership and pastoral care.

2. The Congregational Meeting to Call the Pastor

The moderator and clerk of session for the congregational meeting will need to coordinate, prior to the congregational meeting, with the session, PNC and presbytery to be sure that all business items relating to the call are completed "decently and in order."

Normally, the vote of the congregation is conducted by ballot, with the count reported to the congregation and to the nominee. If the vote is overwhelmingly in favor of the nominee, rejoice and give thanks to God! If there is a significant minority of the congregation is opposed to the nominee, the nominee would be wise to prayerfully reconsider the call and the PNC should consult immediately with presbytery. In such a case the PNC should not be dismissed at this time.

Other items of business relating to the call might need to be acted on, but don't let the meeting adjourn without someone making a motion to dismiss, with heartfelt thanks, the members of the PNC.

3. Beginning Where the PNC Ends

Relationship with Session

It is very important to give particular attention to the new pastor's transition from relating primarily to the PNC to developing a good working relationship with the session. Schedule times for session to, collectively and individually, meet with the new pastor to get better acquainted and to spend time together socially. Arrange for times, apart from business meetings where information, expectations, and promises can be shared with one another and where deeper conversations around the issues of faith and life can happen. Spending this time early in your new pastor's ministry will help you as a session work with your new pastor.

Personnel Matters

The session holds the personnel responsibilities for the new pastor. Be sure that session and the personnel committee understand all agreements the PNC may have made with the pastor-elect, such as starting date, moving details, financial arrangements, time away for prior commitments, travel expenses for house hunting, or planning for renovation of the manse.

The session and/or the personnel committee of session should start the personnel file of your new pastor, which will contain the sealed material from the PNC and a copy of the newly approved and signed terms of call.

A Transition Committee

The session may wish to set up a transition committee to help the new pastor in the early phases of startup. Participants might include a member of the PNC and a member of the session. Tasks assigned to the transition committee may include the following:

- Planning for the arrival and welcome of your new pastor
- Orienting the new pastor to the needs or concerns regarding the manse, the church office, other staff of the church, the church calendar, and pressing pastoral concerns
- Introducing the new pastor and family, if any, to community services, schools, and shopping
- Assisting the new pastor and the presbytery in arranging for the service of ordination and/or installation

Care should be taken so that the transition committee does not become a de facto personnel committee or mini session in terms of personnel matters. Personnel issues with the new pastor rightly reside with the session.

4. Ordaining and/or Installing the Pastor

A Word about Ordination

If your congregation has called a candidate for the office of minister of the Word and Sacrament to be your new pastor, the candidate will need to be ordained. Ordination will need to be coordinated between the presbytery of candidacy, the presbytery of call, and your congregation. Check with the stated clerk of your presbytery for guidance.

“The presbytery placing the call to the candidate for ministry shall ordinarily examine, ordain, and install the candidate.” (G-20702) If, for some reason, the candidate will be ordained at his or her home church, coordination will also need to include that congregation. Also, consider sending at least one representative from the PNC or session to be present at the candidate’s ordination in his or her home congregation.

Installation of the Pastor

When the congregation, the presbytery, and the pastor-elect have all concurred in the call, the presbytery shall complete the call process by organizing and conducting the service of installation.

On the day designated for the installation, the presbytery or the commission appointed by the presbytery for this purpose shall convene and call the congregation gathered to worship. The service shall focus on Christ and the joy and responsibility of the mission and ministry of the church, and shall include a sermon appropriate to the occasion. The installation service normally follows the service for installation of a teaching elder outlined in the *Book of Order, Directory for Worship*.

Resources for Ordaining and/or Installing a Pastor

Book of Order, Directory for Worship

W-4.400 Ordination, Installation and Commissioning

Book of Occasional Services

Ordination to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament

Installation of a Pastor

Scripture Readings for Ordination and Installation

Hymns for Ordination and Installation Services

5. New Pastor Support

The Presbytery

Your new pastor will be a minister member of your presbytery and will be accountable to presbytery for his or her ministry. Your presbytery will also provide support to your new pastor. Your presbytery or synod may offer orientation programs, peer support groups, and/or continuing education opportunities. Encourage your pastor to take advantage of these programs and to make connections with the presbytery. Encourage your new pastor to make attendance at presbytery meetings a priority, so that he or she may begin to make and build relationships within the presbytery.

When your pastor is ill, has a special anniversary, or a family crisis, please alert your presbytery EP/GP, or your presbytery office so that the presbytery may provide outreach and pastoral care.

The Session

As your new pastor begins his or her ministry with you, you will find that the session often bears much of the responsibility for the “care and feeding” of the new pastor. The session, often through a personnel committee, will want to be deliberate about the regular support and encouragement it provides to the new pastor. Your pastor will need to know where he or she can ask questions, hear kindly delivered feedback, and find encouragement when the going gets a bit rocky. You will also want to work out with the pastor a more formal process by which you will evaluate your ministry together.

While your new pastor ultimately bears the responsibility for his or her own self-care, including asking for support when needed, you can create an environment that enhances such care. Provide your new pastor with a list of local retreat centers for personal retreat, honor his or her days away from the church (days off, Sabbath keeping, and vacations), and provide your new pastor with information about ecumenical lectionary groups, ministerial alliances, and/or clergy support groups.

Resources for New Pastor Support

Clergy Self-Care: Finding a Balance for Effective Ministry

Roy M. Oswald, The Alban Institute, 1991

Completing the Circle: Reviewing Ministries in the Congregation

David R. McMahill, The Alban Institute, 2003

New Beginnings: A Pastorate Start-Up Workbook

Roy M. Oswald, The Alban Institute, 1989

When Better Isn't Enough: Evaluation Tools for the 21st-Century Church
Jill M. Hudson, The Alban Institute, 2004

**May God richly bless you and your new pastor
as you enter this new phase
in your congregational life and ministry!**

Part Five: Forms and Contact Information

SAMPLE CONTRACT FOR TEMPORARY PASTORAL

The following contract between the session of _____ Presbyterian Church and the Rev. _____, is for the purpose of providing pastoral services as _____ to the Church for a period of _____ (not to exceed 12 months). The contract is to begin on _____ 20____.

DUTIES:

The pastor will be responsible to (please add or delete from this list):

- moderate the session and congregational meetings
- serve as Head of Staff
- lead worship and preach at regular Sunday services
- arrange for substitute preachers on any Sundays not present
- call on sick and home-bound
- provide administrative leadership
- officiate at weddings and funerals
- lead new member classes
- work with committee chairs
- represent the church in dealing with outside organizations
- pray for the church

The congregation and session will be responsible to (please add or delete from this list):

- support the pastor in his/her ministry
- provide regular financial compensation according to the terms outlined below
- provide a performance review to the pastor at least annually
- pray for the pastor during this contract period
- negotiate goals for contract period

During the length of this agreement, the pastor will be accountable to the presbytery. It is understood that the pastor will participate in the quarterly temporary pastors meeting sponsored by the presbytery. Should the Temporary Pastor have any serious differences or difficulties with any former pastor of this congregation, the matter will be immediately referred to the presbytery. It is understood that the pastor will not be involved in any way with the Pastor Nominating Committee, except to facilitate that committee's regular reports to the session and the congregation. Any concerns or suggestions about the congregation's search for a new pastor shall be carried to the presbytery liaison. It is understood by all parties that the pastor under contract may not be considered for the installed pastoral position in this congregation.

This agreement may be terminated by either party (session or pastor) upon 30 days written notice.

This agreement may be extended in one to 12 month periods, upon written notice to, and the approval of, the presbytery. It is understood that the pastor will participate in any training/discussions sponsored and/or requested by presbytery and will participate in an exit interview conducted by presbytery.

TERMS:

The pastor is employed on a () full-time () part-time basis, serving approximately _____ hours per week, and will be compensated as follows:

Effective salary

Cash Salary \$ _____
 Fair rental value of manse \$ _____
 Housing Allowance \$ _____
 Utilities Allowance \$ _____
 Deferred Compensation \$ _____
 Other allowances \$ _____
Total \$ _____

Reimbursable expenses (by voucher)

Automobile expense (___per mile) \$ _____
 Business/professional expenses \$ _____
 SECA Supplement (up to 50%) \$ _____
 Continuing Education \$ _____
 Other allowances \$ _____
 Moving Costs (up to) \$ _____

Full medical, pension, disability, and death benefit coverage under the Board of Pensions

Paid Vacation _____

Paid Continuing Education _____

APPROVALS:

The session approved this contract and its conditions on _____

Signed: (clerk of session) _____ Date: _____

I agree to accept the terms of this contract.

Signed: (pastor) _____ Date: _____

The presbytery approved this contract and its conditions on _____

Signed: (pastor) _____ Date: _____

Signed copies to be given to: 1) the minister, 2) the clerk of session, 3) the presbytery and 4) the minister's presbytery of membership/care (if other than the presbytery of this congregation).

SAMPLE PASTORAL CALL FORM

Pastoral Call

(for Pastor, Co-Pastor, Associate Pastor)

The _____ Presbyterian Church of _____
belonging to _____ Presbytery, being well satisfied with your qualification for ministry
and confident that we have been led to you by the Holy Spirit as one whose service will be profitable to the spiritual
interests of our church and fruitful for the Kingdom of our Lord, earnestly and solemnly calls you,

(name)

to undertake the office of

of this congregation, beginning _____, promising you in the discharge of your duty all proper
support encouragement and allegiance in the Lord.

That you may be free to devote full-time (part-time) to the ministry of Word and Sacrament among us, we promise
and obligate ourselves to pay you in regular monthly payments the following effective salary and following
vouchered expenses (fill in those which are agreed to):

Effective salary

Cash Salary \$ _____
Fair rental value of manse \$ _____
Housing Allowance \$ _____
Utilities Allowance \$ _____
Deferred Compensation \$ _____
Other allowances \$ _____
Total \$ _____

Reimbursable expenses (by voucher)

Automobile expense (___per mile) \$ _____
Business/professional expenses \$ _____
SECA Supplement (up to 50%) \$ _____
Continuing Education \$ _____
Other allowances \$ _____
Moving Costs (up to) \$ _____

Full medical, pension, disability, and death benefit coverage under the Board of Pensions

Paid Vacation _____

Paid Continuing Education _____

We further promise and obligate ourselves to review with you annually the adequacy of this compensation.

In the seventh year of service, the congregation will provide for a three-month Clergy Renewal Leave, continuing
the salary and benefits for that period, and providing for pulpit supply in the pastor's absence.

In testimony whereof we have subscribed our names this ____ day of _____, 20 ____.

Having moderated the congregational meeting which extended this call for ministerial services, I do certify that the
call has been made in all respect according to the presbytery policy and the Form of Government, and that the
persons who signed the foregoing call were authorized to do so by vote of the congregation.

Vote of the congregation at the meeting was _____ in favor of the candidate and _____ opposed.

(signed) _____
moderator of the meeting

Certification of Call

A. Action by Presbytery of Call

1. The Presbytery of _____ has reviewed and approved this call.

Date of action _____ (Signed) _____
Stated Clerk or Authorized Signer

B. Action by the Minister's/Candidate's Presbytery

1. The Presbytery of _____ finds it expedient (not expedient) to release _____ to accept this call.

Date of action _____ (Signed) _____
Stated Clerk or Authorized Signer

C. Acceptance of the Call

This is to certify that I have received and accepted the call.

Date of action _____ (Signed) _____
Minister

Complete and sign four original copies. When all parties have signed, an original copy goes to 1) the minister, 2) the calling church, 3) the presbytery of call and 4) the minister's presbytery of membership/care.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY IN MINISTRY
Report on Pastoral Search Process

To: Presbytery of _____

From: _____
 Name of Church, City, State

Title of Position Filled: _____

Name of Person Called: _____

Check all that apply:

Racial/Ethnic: _____

Woman: _____

Other: _____ Specify: _____

	Total Number	Racial/Ethnic	Women
PIFs received			
Phone interviews			
Heard preach			
Face to face Interviews			
Offered the position			

 PNC Chairperson

 Date

Complete at the end of your search process and return to your presbytery.

CONTACT INFORMATION

A variety of resources are available to assist individuals, committees, sessions and PNCs explore all the issues surrounding pastoral transitions. The resources presented in this manual represent just a few that are available. The following contact information is for those resources and entities mentioned in this manual.

The Alban Institute

Phone: (800) 486-1318, ext. 244

Fax: (866) 448-4391

Web site: www.alban.org

The Association of Presbyterian Interim Ministry Specialists (APIMS)

Web site: www.apims.org

Association of Presbyterian Tentmakers (APT)

Web site: www.pcusatentmakers.com

The Board of Pensions PC(USA)

Phone: (800) 773-7752

Web site: www.pensions.org

Church Leadership Connection (CLC)

Phone: (888)728-7228, extension 8550

Fax: (502) 569-5870

E-mail: clcstaff@pcusa.org

Web site: www.pcusa.org/clc

Cost of Living Calculator

Web site: www.bankrate.com/brm/movecalc.asp

Presbyterian Distribution Service (Presbyterian Marketplace)

Phone: (800) 524-2612

Web site: www.pcusa.org/marketplace

Presbygrow.net

Web site: www.presbygrow.net

Research Services PC(USA)

Phone: (800) 728-7228 extension 5161

Web site: <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/research/>

Spiritual Strategic Journey: Tutorial for Congregational Redevelopment

Web site:

<http://congregationalresources.org/sites/congregationalresources.org/files/SpiritualStrategicJourney.pdf>

PNC REPORT TO SESSION

Your PNC's been faithful. (No question of that.)
Through forty-plus meetings we've faithfully sat.

We've read two hundred PIFs and we've ordered some more.
(And thinking of them makes my eyeballs quite sore.)

We traveled to Maumee and met Face to face
with ten ministers whom you'll not meet in this place.
We touted our church and our schools and our city:
We told them we're great and this area's pretty.

We've made phone calls to references farther than near,
and spent hours listening with more than one ear.
We've heard good stuff and bad stuff and stuff in between.
Then we've gathered and prayed and said, "What does it mean?"

We drove up to Youngstown to hear a man preach
(though some would rather have a trip to the beach).
We listened to five different sermons that day —
one when we got there, and four on the way.
Though five different sermons are tough to remember
we figured they'd do us at least through November.

We heard from three candidates we liked a lot.
We asked them to visit and all said "Why not?"
Some drove and some flew,
some with kids, some just two.
We showed them the church, showed the "Y", the Big Bear.
Showed them Jim Mitchell's house cause it's so nice up there.

But none was just right, none was just the right fit
(though we wavered and argued and threatened to quit).

We've raked up some muck in the midst of our toil.
And we've dealt with issues to make your blood boil.
You bet we have wrestled and struggled and fought.
(If you think this is easy, you've thought the wrong thought!)

We've tried to be faithful.
We've tried to be true.
And patience and prayers are what we need from you.

For there is a minister awaiting our call.
It might be tomorrow. It might be next fall.

The one of God's choosing is yet to appear,
but we'll stop all this PIFing when God's will is clear.
(and not one day sooner)

Respectfully submitted,
Susan E. Roesch Co-chair, PNC
First Presbyterian Church, Marietta, OH
(Used by permission)