

SEARCHING FOR AND CALLING AN INSTALLED PASTOR
Presbytery of Geneva
Committee on Ministry

1. Forming a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC)

An installed pastor is called by a congregation, not the session, normally for an indefinite period. Thus the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) is a committee elected by the congregation and is probably the most important committee that ever serves in a particular church. The action of the PNC, in nominating a Pastor, Co-Pastor or Associate Pastor to a congregation, is critical in the life of a church for many years. Once the PNC is elected, the congregation and the session have no role in determining who will be the next pastor until the PNC is ready to present its nominee to the congregation for a vote.

Calling a pastor requires wisdom, spiritual guidance, and hard work. Prayer should surround each meeting of the PNC. In addition, the PNC should regularly ask the congregation to pray for them and the church during this period of transition. Prayers not only support the work of the PNC but also encourage unity within the congregation at a time when divisiveness could occur.

Refer to p. 23 in "On Calling a Pastor" for important guidance on the composition of a PNC.

Steps in forming a PNC:

Contact the COM to receive authorization to elect a PNC (COM@presbyteryofgeneva.org). Once authorized, then:

1. The session recommends the number of people to serve on the PNC.
2. The church's nominating committee or another designated committee follows the guidance in "On Calling a Pastor" as it prepares a slate for the PNC to be voted on by the congregation at a meeting called by the session.
3. A congregational meeting is held to elect the PNC.
4. The PNC is elected and commissioned for its work.
5. The COM is informed that the PNC has been elected.

2. Getting the PNC organized

1. The PNC should meet as soon as possible with the COM training team and the PNC liaison from COM. The training team will share resources, answer questions, and outline the work of the PNC.
2. The PNC elects a chair, vice chair, and secretary.
3. With help from the training team and liaison, the PNC plans a timetable for their work.
4. Meeting times are scheduled, ensuring that the liaison will be able to meet with the PNC as needed, in person or otherwise.
5. Decide how the PNC will keep the session and congregation informed of their progress.
6. Read and discuss resources relevant to the PNC's work to get an understanding of the whole process. Share resources with the congregation as well.

7. Identify stages when the session must be involved in the PNC's work.
8. Agree that confidentiality is essential on all matters discussed.
9. Develop a proposed budget for PNC activities and secure session approval. PNC expenses will depend on the feasibility of in-person visits and access to online candidate worship services and sermons.

3. Getting accounts on the Church Leadership Connection (CLC) website.

The Church Leadership Connection (CLC) is the internet-based matching and referral system of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The CLC is where you will post information on your church and the type of pastor you are seeking and where individuals seeking positions post their information.

1. Once the COM knows your PNC has been formed, the COM CLC Assistant will send your Clerk of Session an invitation to log onto the CLC site. The Clerk will then enter some basic information about your church, set up the PNC, and then invite the chair to log onto the CLC site.
2. The PNC Chair will invite other members of the PNC to log onto the CLC site.

4. Writing the Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP)

The MDP provides information about the position you are seeking to fill as well as details about your church and community. It is used to match your needs with the characteristics of pastors who are seeking churches, and to advertise your position on the Church Leadership Connection (CLC) website. The content of the MDP draws upon a congregation's congregational self-study report. The MDP must be approved by the session and the COM. The MDP form, supporting materials, and explanatory videos can be found on the PC(USA) CLC site: <https://oga.pcusa.org/section/clc/clc/clc-calling-organizations-churches/>

Guidelines for writing the MDP:

- Give yourselves ample time to do a thorough job as this document is a potential candidate's first impression of your church.
- Present a realistic picture of your church, including both its strengths and weaknesses. A competent minister may be more drawn to a challenge than to an easy situation.
- Emphasize what is unique about your congregation, community, and possibilities for ministry.
- Try to convey not only factual information, but something of the "feel" of your church, and level of energy for the church's ministry and the community within which it exists.
- Paint a portrait that will attract the kind of leadership your church needs for its next chapter of ministry.
- The session should provide the PNC with a job description for the position, whether part-time or full-time, whether open to a clergy couple, and the maximum effective salary. The maximum will not be visible on the posted MDP, but it will guide matching by the CLC.
- Request feedback from the COM liaison on a draft MDP.

5. Getting the MDP approved by the session and COM

1. Submit the MDP to the session for approval.
2. Once approved by the session, contact the COM chair and submit the MDP for COM approval. It is recommended that one or two people from the PNC meet with the COM as they review the MDP.

6. Posting the MDP on the Church Leadership Connection (CLC)

Refer to CLC instructions for posting all parts of the MDP.

Once the MDP has been approved by the session and by COM, it will become “active” on the CLC website (<https://clc.pcusa.org/login>). This site is a central clearinghouse of the PC(USA) for people looking for positions and for churches seeking to fill positions.

7. Advertising Your Position

In addition to posting your MDP at the CLC site, you may:

- Request that your MDP or a shorter job advertisement be posted on the Presbytery of Geneva website. Contact the Presbytery's Administrative Support Services (315-536-7753, ext. 1; officeadmin@presbyteryofgeneva.org) to submit your posting.
- Submit an announcement to the Presbytery of Geneva's newsletter. Contact the Presbytery's Administrative Support Services (315-536-7753, ext. 1; officeadmin@presbyteryofgeneva.org).
- Fill out a form to post your position at the Synod of the Northeast website's Job Postings page (<https://www.synodne.org/job-postings>).
- Place ads in national/international Presbyterian publications such as *Presbyterian Outlook* and *Presbyterians Today*.
- Contact Presbyterian seminaries, especially those in our region. Many seminaries post job opportunities for graduates.
- Enhance your church's website to attract candidates. Your MDP includes your website's address, as should any advertisements you publish. Make sure your website is up to date and represents who you are.
- Network. Talk to friends and relatives, pastors, other presbytery executives about your vacancy and your church. Never underestimate the power of word-of-mouth advertising.

8. Receiving and Evaluating Personal Discernment Profiles (PDPs)

A. Preparing to receive PDPs

1. After submitting the MDP, take time to consider how the committee will deal with candidates matched by the CLC and candidates self-referring themselves to you. Establish ranking, screening, and selection criteria based on the requirements set out in the MDP. Assure fairness for EEO/AA in ranking, screening, and selecting process.
2. Prepare a package of materials, weblinks or electronic documents you will send to interested candidates to tell them more about your church, such as sample bulletins, newsletters, brochures, etc., and about your community.

B. Reviewing matched and self-referred PDPs

Refer to CLC instructions for specifics on handling PDPs.

1. When you first receive a group (up to 25) matched candidates, you will not see their whole PDP; omitted will be the candidate's name, contact information, statement of faith, and optional links. For each candidate you'll need to either (1) invite to apply, or (2) decide not to consider. Be sure to have criteria ready to help you decide between these two choices. For example:
 - Does the individual have the years of experience you are seeking?
 - Do they have the skills you need? Do their leadership competencies match yours?
 - Do their responses to the narrative questions indicate they'd be a good match for your congregation?
2. Candidates invited to apply will have 14 days to reply to your invitation. If they decide to apply, you will see their entire PDP and it will be moved to a list of 'PDPs in Discernment.' If they decline, or do not respond, the PDP will be moved to a 'Not Considered' section. Candidates receive emails alerting them to actions taken by the PNC.
3. Self-referrals made through the CLC system will appear in a 'PDP Matches Requiring Action' section of your matching list. You will be able to read the full PDP of any self-referred candidate.
4. Self-referrals may also be received directly from candidates outside of the CLC system. These may be from individuals who are not Presbyterians or Presbyterians who have opted not to utilize the CLC system. Search committees should contact their liaison to discuss considering these individuals for a pastor position.

9. Evaluating promising candidates

A. Once the PNC has a list of promising candidates::

- Explore the candidates' church websites, online sermons, etc.
- Contact people who know the candidates. These may include:
 - References listed on the PDP
 - Secondary references, only after receiving permission from the candidate. Secondary references come from people who are not listed by the candidates but are suggested by someone because they are thought to have knowledge of the candidate. Under no circumstances should the PNC contact members of a pastor's current congregation without permission from the candidate.
- Set up phone or web-based conversations with the candidates.

B. Phone/videoconference interviews with candidates

- Develop a set of common questions to ask each candidate.
- Involve all PNC members if possible.
- Discuss both the church's MDP and the candidate's PDP to generate a two-way dialogue.
- The PNC may decide to do two rounds of interviews. The second round will likely include some unique questions for each candidate.

C. Presbytery-level reference check

When the PNC has narrowed its search to one or two candidates, the names should be given to the COM and the Presbytery Leader will contact the candidates' current presbytery of membership for additional information about their practice of ministry and any areas of concern.

D. Evaluating candidates in person

If at all possible, PNC members should have an opportunity to meet a candidate in person. This could be:

- During a visit to the candidate's current ministry setting (only with permission from the candidate).
- During a candidate's visit to your area. This visit should be coordinated with the COM. The COM can help arrange a "neutral pulpit" somewhere nearby that provides an opportunity for the candidate to lead worship while you are present without sacrificing the important confidentiality of the search. The COM might want to interview the candidate during this visit. The cost of the candidate's travel and accommodations will be the church's responsibility.

10. Selection of the nominee

- The PNC should strive to make its decision both unanimous and enthusiastic. Experience has shown that when there is a serious division in a committee regarding a candidate, 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 someone has about the candidate 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 COM liaison should be consulted as to the advisability of presenting the candidate to the congregation.
- When the PNC has reached a final decision, the PNC chair or other PNC member should contact the selected candidate and extend the invitation. Although you will be eager to get an affirmative response from the chosen person, she or he may want some time to respond. Except for unusual circumstances, two weeks should be sufficient time in which to expect a response. The candidate is likely to request that terms of call be negotiated before responding.

Note: Steps 11 -14 make take place concurrently

11. Negotiating the terms of call

A subcommittee might be named to work out the final terms of call with the candidate in preparation for the meeting of the entire PNC. The PNC is not authorized to negotiate beyond the maximum set by the session. If there is a need to do so, session approval must be obtained. The financial package should meet or exceed the Presbytery of Geneva's minimum Terms of Call. Moving expenses for the pastor should be included in the terms of call. Terms of Call forms are available on the [Presbytery of Geneva's COM webpage](#).

12. Terms of call approved by COM

The terms of call form must be approved by COM before the candidate is presented to the congregation. Send completed terms of call (minus signatures) to COM liaison and to COM chair: COM@presbyteryofgeneva.org.

13. COM Clearance Interview

A COM subcommittee will conduct a clearance interview unless the candidate is already a member of the Presbytery of Geneva. The chair of the subcommittee will contact the candidate to set up the time. The candidate will be asked about his or her Christian faith and views on theology, sacraments, and worship, the Bible and polity. The report of the subcommittee will be reported to the COM, which will approve the candidate, assuming a positive report from the subcommittee. Candidates called by a PNC who are also candidates for ordination must submit all required paperwork (as set forth in the letter to the candidate) to COM 30 days prior to the presbytery meeting at which the candidate will appear.

14. Background check

The PNC will contact the Presbytery (Administrative Support Services: 315-536-7753, ext. 1 or officeadmin@presbyteryofgeneva.org) to arrange for a criminal background check, paid for by the church.

15. Presenting the nominee to the congregation

1. Following approval by COM and a successful criminal background check, the PNC will ask the session to call a congregational meeting to hear the report of the PNC. The congregational meeting typically follows a worship service at which the nominee preaches. Notice of the meeting must be given ten days in advance and include two successive Sundays. The meeting must be moderated by the session moderator, another minister, or a member of the COM.
2. Before the date of the congregational meeting, the PNC shares what it has learned about the nominee with the congregation. This report usually includes a biographical sketch along with a description of the process the PNC followed, including the number of PIFs reviewed, the number of candidates interviewed, and the reasons for selecting the nominee. The terms of call should also be included.
3. At the congregational meeting, a member of the PNC makes the motion on the PNC recommendation. One or more members of the PNC usually explain why they support the nominee and then invite questions from the congregation.
4. The election of the nominee is by secret ballot. The terms of call must also be approved by the congregation.
5. The nominee is informed of the results of the secret ballot. Assuming a positive result from the balloting, the terms of call papers are signed and sent to the COM chair. If there is a significant minority of the congregation who vote no, the nominee would be wise to prayerfully reconsider accepting the call, and the PNC should consult immediately with the COM liaison.

16. Additional work of the PNC

1. Notify CLC that the church has a call pending.
2. Through the CLC site, notify any remaining candidates that the search has been completed.
3. All materials related to the person the PNC has called should be sealed and kept in a safe place. All other PIF materials, including references, should be destroyed. They cannot be reused or passed on to other PNCs.
4. Ensure that a PC(USA) Board of Pensions account is set up by the treasurer or other officer of the church and that agreed upon contributions are made.
5. Given the relationship established between the PNC and the incoming pastor during the call process, PNC members should support and serve as a sounding board for the pastor during the first year of the call.
6. It is important that the PNC and the session make an intentional plan for welcoming and supporting the new pastor. The relationship that the PNC has built with the pastor must now be extended to the session and to the congregation and community.

17. Examination by and election to the Presbytery

The presbytery “shall examine each candidate’s calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of ordered ministry. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate’s ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.0404)”(Book of Order G-2.0104).

The COM will make a recommendation to presbytery that it examine the candidate and vote to elect the candidate as a member of the Presbytery of Geneva.

18. Installation of the Pastor

Installation is an act of the presbytery establishing the pastoral relationship. A service of installation occurs during a worship service. The service of worship should conform to the guidelines in the Book of Order’s Directory for Worship.

1. The pastor to be installed, in consultation with the session, decides on a date and time for the service. The service should be within three months of starting the new called position.
2. The pastor to be installed should inform the COM of the date and time of the installation service and recommend to COM the persons to serve on the Installing Commission, which shall include at least five teaching elders and ruling elders from the Presbytery of Geneva.
3. The service typically takes place in the presence of the pastor’s congregation, with members of the presbytery also present.