

CHAPTER IV – CARE OF THE CONGREGATION DURING A PASTORAL VACANCY

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, often through COM. The COM is an active participant with a congregation as they seek a new pastor.

The COM is intensively involved when a church is without a pastor. This is also an opportune time for church transformation issues to be raised and the expertise of the appropriate committee to be solicited. Many presbyteries find it helpful to utilize a team approach where a cluster of COM members go together to work with a church. Collaboration between the session and COM can be very constructive in the following situations:

- When a small church is stretched to support a full-time pastor
- When a church is considering an addition to staff
- When the community is changing and the church is declining or growing
- When the church seeks transformation following a serious conflict
- When it may be appropriate for the church to seek a designated pastor to work with them on transformation

During the time of a pastoral vacancy the COM

- Appoints one of its members or seeks a co-opted member to work closely with the church through the entire vacancy process
- Appoints a Moderator of the session
- Provides names of potential Interim Pastors or pulpit supplies
- Approves a Church Information Form (MIF) developed by the session or PNC
- Does presbytery to presbytery reference checks on candidates before they visit
- Meets with the "finalist" candidates
- Examines selected candidates for suitability for the church and membership in the presbytery
- Requires the church to conduct background (including criminal) checks and credit checks

Results of background and credit checks will be used by the PNC as additional information, along with reference checks in considering and interviewing candidates. All information gained through such checks shall be destroyed for all but the pastor-elect, whose documents will be sealed and kept in the church personnel files.

A chart showing the various stages of the Pastor Search Process is shown on the following pages.

Other Resources to Consult

Office of Vocation "On Calling a Pastor" – Church Leadership Connection- available for free download

GA- COM Handbook

ENTERING AN MIF: www.pcusa.org/clc and the Appendix to this Handbook.

Pastoral Transitions

Phase 1 - Saying Goodbye

Discernment Work/Issues	Congregation	Presbytery
Gratitude & Grieving	Congregational Meeting to dissolve relationship Provide times to Cry & Celebrate...and say Thanks	Appoints a Liaison from COM (Commission on Ministry) Offers assistance when asked Conducts exit interview w/ pastor
Preparing for Interim Leader	Session conducts Search – appoints search team, prepares papers, interviews candidates recommended by Presbytery, selects	Reviews paperwork, provides a short list of candidates to interview

Phase 2 – After Interim is in place: Reflecting, Exploring, Declaring

Adjusting to new leader	Session & congregation works with Interim pastor in new beginnings	
Engages in ongoing ministry	Explores next developmental steps of ministry	
Declares renewed sense of vision & direction	Conducts a mission study with help of Interim leader	Provides resources for mission study work

Phase 3 - Approximately 18 months after Pastor leaves - Searching

Stage 1 - Preparation	Congregation elects PNC (Pastor Nominating Committee) PNC & Session prepare paperwork (MIF) (Church Information Form)	COM liaison accompanies COM approves MIF before advertising
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Stage 2 – Active Search	PNC advertises, screens, reference checks and conducts face to face interviews	COM liaison accompanies Executive conducts references BEFORE any face to face contact
Stage 3 – Identifying Candidate	PNC/Session negotiate terms Congregation elects Candidate	COM liaison accompanies

Phase 4 - Approximately Two Years later: Welcoming

Gratitude & Grieving	Session & Congregation say goodbye to Interim Pastor	Conducts exit interview
Getting Started	Session works with pastor in new beginnings	Welcomes new colleague in ministry

For more information, go to: [pbygrandcanyon.org/about / Commission On Ministry](http://pbygrandcanyon.org/about/Commission%20On%20Ministry)

PASTOR SEARCH PROCESS OUTLINE

<u>OCAP*</u>	Local Church Responsibilities	Presbytery / COM Responsibilities
II-1.	1. Pastor consults COM about dissolution	Exit interview arranged by COM partners. Liaison present, or receives copy
II-2.	2. Pastor meets with session regarding dissolution. a. Session calls Congregational Meeting b. Session makes arrangements for personnel during vacancy. c. Vacancy dues discussed (must continue for 1 year when installed pastor or associate leaves or until new Pastor arrives). d. Session / Pastor certify all financial obligations are met. e. Pastor leaves	COM partner attends. The Pastor presides but may invite another minister to preside. G7.0306 Record according to Book of Order languages Same representative (Liaison) outlines process that lies ahead.

		Liaison also attends congregational meeting.
II-3. II-5..	3. a. Session arranges for mission study; provides guidance and funds for Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) b. On receiving COM approval of the Mission Study, session requests permission to call a congregational meeting to form a PNC	Representatives from COM cluster assist. COM partners approve mission study within 2 weeks
II-5..	4. <i>Session calls meeting of Congregation to elect PNC. Election of alternates is not appropriate.</i>	New Moderator moderates. Liaison attends.
II-5.	5. Congregation elects PNC. Chair, vice-chair, secretary chosen. Date for first meeting set.	
III-1.	6. First meeting of PNC. Session attends for the first half-hour to clarify roles.	Liaison explains task and presents forms for Ministry Information Form (MIF), EEO, and PGC's Examination for Membership Policy along with statement to be signed
III-2.	7. PNC completes MIF in coordination with session	Liaison maintains contact.
III-2.	8. Session approves MIF	COM Partners approve MIF within 2 weeks after it is submitted. Then files MIF with Presbytery & Louisville.
III-3.	9. PNC meets with Liaison for training with respect to reading Personal Information Forms (PIF), interviewing, EEO, etc.	Liaison trains PNC
III-4.	10. PNC receives PIFs, evaluates them and prioritizes names of candidates	Liaison suggests rating system. Meets with PNC frequently.

III-5.	11. PNC requests preliminary clearance for 3-5 candidates from Presbytery Executive or COM before in-person interview. PNC advises candidates to be interviewed to provide Statement of Faith and Biographical Summary two weeks prior to interview. Provides PIFs and other documents to Liaison in advance.	Presbytery Executive does reference checks, and reports results to Liaison. PNC conducts background and credit checks, and bears cost of same.
III-6,7.	12. PNC sets up interview for final clearance with candidate in Arizona, giving COM partners 2 weeks notice and provides COM Liaison with required documents. PNC asks Presbytery Office Manager to arrange for neutral pulpit(s).	COM partners interview candidate PRIOR to candidate preaching in accordance with Interview Guidelines found in Chapter IX, and make recommendation to COM and informs PNC chair of the results of its interview.
III-8-10.	13. PNC selects one candidate to present to the Congregation. Arranges for travel, meals, and accommodations. Candidate preaches for Congregation	
IV-1-2.	14. Session calls a congregational meeting to act upon the nomination and presents the CALL. Moderator presides.	Liaison reviews terms, reports to COM if candidate is accepted by congregation action. COM acts upon the Call, and reports to Presbytery.
IV-4.	15. Pastor-elect, Session, PNC suggest names for Installation Commission.	Liaison brings names and date of Installation to COM for recommendation to the presbytery.
IV-4.	16. Church hosts Installation	Presbytery installs new Teaching Elder during Worship.

IV-4. PNCs are urged to schedule ordination and/or installation of clergy at such time and in such fashion that allows and attracts the largest attendance of both congregation and presbytery colleagues. COM discourages holding such services concurrent with regular worship hours. We urge PNCs and sessions to go to greater lengths to raise the level of expectation as to the importance of this Service of Worship in terms of the welcoming and bonding which it establishes between pastor, congregation, and presbytery. We suggest linking the service with a complementary gathering activity, such as a potluck supper, etc. COM will not recommend competing Ordination or Installation Services of different Pastors on the same day.

	17. Session encourages freedom of new Pastor to attend retreat.	Presbytery provides orientation for new Pastor in Presbytery Retreat.
	18. Session hosts meeting for six-month review	COM, through COM partners provides six-month review of new Pastor and Session

*On Calling A Pastor

Content of a Congregational Mission Study

A mission study is the telling of the congregation’s story. It takes into account its history, the lives of its members, the community in which it is located, and the hopes for the future. The power of a good study is in narrative. Every study needs to include the following in some manner:

1. **MISSION STATEMENT:** A concise, specific statement generally supported by the whole congregation, which captures a vision of the faithful and calls the congregation to respond to God in the immediate future. A vague paragraph of religious platitudes of the “one size fits all Christian churches” sort is not helpful. This MISSION STATEMENT may be used to introduce the study or as a logical summation at the end.
2. **A word “picture” of the congregation** - an accurate description of the church should include:
 - a. **Who are we?** A description of who you are as the people of God. What is special about you? What is your history? What walks of life do your people come from? Are there distinctive groups, unusual programs or particular circumstances within your congregation? The “picture” should capture something of the living spirit of the congregation, reflecting its strengths and uniqueness. This may be in straightforward description or through analogy, image or comparison. Draw information from demographics, but keep the actual data in an appendix.
 - a. **How do we encounter Christ?** Tell what you believe, where and how members experience Christ in their lives. Describe how the church helps people encounter Christ.
 - b. **Who is our community?** God calls us to minister in and to a community. How do you define community? Draw a narrative “picture” of the community in which the church is located. It is important that this “picture” not be drawn exclusively from the congregation’s point of view. Do not forget to investigate current trends in the congregation and community which will have an inevitable impact in the near future.

Support this picture with information from demographic studies, maps, charts, or other documentation and one-on-one neighborhood contacts and interviews.

- c. **What are our gifts?** God has given each church a variety of unique, definable gifts. (See I Cor. 12.) Congregational gifts may include financial assets, the physical plant, skills of members, opportunities and/or abundance in areas such as worship, education, or fellowship. Make a list of all of the gifts God has blessed the church with including those discovered in items a, b, and c above.

3. **What is the ministry of the church and what are the expectations for the future?** This may include:

- a. How Christ calls us to ministry. A mission study must address specific needs of the congregation that are consistent with the mission statement. Give specific examples and programs that show how you minister to your community in the name of Jesus Christ. These may be in the nature of outreach (some form of proclamation), or an “in house” building up of the Body of Christ in some manner (e.g. a deacon’s plan to support elderly members through a transportation program).

- b. How can we use our gifts? God has planted you in a particular context with gifts, people, assets and tools to do a specific work. How will God use the gifts that are already in your hands to do a new and mighty work? Examine your context, gifts, membership and other assets and ask how these gifts can be used for mission. Be creative.

- c. Expectations for the future - that is, a Vision Statement. What do you want to happen? What are your three to five year goals? How will you make it happen? (strategies)

4. **Supporting documentation.** Maps, site plans, charts, budgets, lists of community services or attractions or schools, graphs, and statistics may all be used to validate and/or clarify the descriptions of the community and congregation.

Good narrative prose, well edited and supported, is essential. Items of humor and illustrations can enhance the study. Painful honesty, combined with constant prayer and openness to the Holy Spirit by the Commission responsible for the study, and continual communication with the congregation and session, will make it a significant contribution to the life of the church. A Mission Study is not a marketing document!

Guidelines For Electing A Pastor Nominating Committee

I. **The Book of Order Statement (G-2.0801 and .0802.)**

When a congregation has a vacancy in a pastoral position, or after the presbytery approves the effective date of the dissolution of an existing pastoral relationship, the congregation shall, with the guidance and permission of the presbytery, proceed to fill the vacancy in the following manner. The session shall call a congregational meeting to elect a pastor nominating committee

that shall be representative of the whole congregation. The committee’s duty shall be to nominate a pastor for election by the congregation.

II. **Guidelines (Not directly a part of The Book of Order)**

1. Session meets to set date and time for congregation to meet and elect pastor nominating Commission (PNC).
 - a. Public notice required on two successive Sundays.
 - b. Session can recommend size, though final authority rests

with congregation.

2. Nominations for PNC might best be made through church officer nominating Committee, for the following reasons:
 - a. Committee is already established and Moderated.
 - b. Committee is representative of the congregation.
 - c. Committee is familiar with nominating process.
 - d. Committee likely knows the membership and the groups that need to be represented, as well as their race, ethnic origin, sex, and marital status.
3. Nominations Committee should provide a mechanism for receiving input of names from the congregation. Persons nominated should be contacted to ascertain if they will serve.
4. Nomination Committee's slate should be representative of the whole congregation.
5. Ballots should be prepared in advance, with space for nominations from the floor, as well as names placed by the Committee. Care must be taken that persons nominated from the floor are present and agree to serve, or have so consented in advance.
6. PNC meets briefly following meeting to elect its own moderator (or a convenor for first meeting), and set day and time of first meeting. COM liaison should be present to provide guidance.

CHAPTER V - INTERIM PASTOR SELECTION

When a pastor or associate pastor relationship is vacated, the COM shall counsel with the session of the church as to the need for ministry until a new pastor is installed. Ordinarily, the interim pastor will be approved by the presbytery (through its COM), in consultation with the session. The interim pastor may be designated Moderator. The interim pastor shall guide the congregation in ministry, enable clarification of directions, and prepare for the arrival of the new pastor, conducting the work of a pastor. The interim has no relationship with the PNC

about the selection of a pastor. The interim will work closely with the presbytery to address the needs of the congregation. The interim cannot be considered as a candidate for the pastor position, unless there are exceptional circumstances and with approval of $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Presbytery, pursuant to G-2.0504c .

To implement the presbytery's policy on interim pastorates, the Presbytery of Grand Canyon requires that all interim pastors endorse the "Interim Pastor Agreement" contract, and agree to abide by the policies and guidelines of the Interim Pastor Covenant document, which is set forth in the Appendix.

It is the policy of the presbytery to ordinarily require that an interim pastor be a member of the Presbytery of Grand Canyon and those accepting assignment to an interim pastor position who are not already members of the Presbytery are expected to request transfer of membership and be received into the membership of the presbytery.

INTERIM PASTOR SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Visit with session by COM Liaison and/or Presbytery Pastor to:
 - Determine appropriateness of having an interim pastor
 - Educate in general terms about the transition time in a congregation
- Session names the group who will search for interim pastor
- Clerk of Session, Search Team Chair, and COM Liaison execute the Procedures for Securing Interim Pastor agreement
- Interim pastor search papers are prepared by the Search Team:
 - Description of the congregation
 - Job Description
 - Outline of contract
- Search Team submits these documents to Presbytery Pastor, who reviews them with COM
- Presbytery Pastor and COM liaisons identify at least three candidates:
 - Review PIF to assure basic training, understanding of ministry, availability
 - Perform governing body reference checks
- Interim Pastor Search Team receives PIFs from Presbytery
- Process of Selection:

1. Review PIFs
2. Interview by whole Search Team
3. Check references on PIF
4. Listen/watch tapes of sermons
5. Prioritize
6. Notify COM liaisons so that COM interview can be set up while the person is in town
7. If desired, bring in others – congregation pays for reasonable expenses*
8. Choose person, negotiate contract. COM liaison may be present if you wish.
9. Presbytery provides basic contract. You and person may add or specify details.
10. Present choice to session for approval.
 - (a) The search team is the decision-making body in the selection of a candidate. However, if a church has more than one pastor the search team may set up a confidential, informational meeting with the continuing pastor(s) to introduce the candidate prior to presentation to the session for approval.
 - (b) To ensure confidentiality, Personal Information Forms for the selected candidate should not be distributed outside the search team without the permission of the candidate, and should be limited to the pastor(s) and members of the session.
 - (c) Present choice to the session for approval. Have COM liaison forward all papers to the presbytery office.
11. Set starting date.
12. Obtain COM approval.
13. Inform other candidates quickly.
14. Session informs the congregation. Congregation does not vote on candidate. It is a session contract.
15. Prepare for an exciting time of growth during your interim experience.

*Reasonable Interview Expenses:

Coach airfare for candidate. You choose as to whether to pay for spouse. Overnights in local motel of your choice – you arrange.

Meals during the trip

Mileage to and from home airport

Rental car if needed – distance from airport to your town – you determine

Make arrangements clear before person comes. Prepaying ticket, motel keeps you in budget.

Interim Pastor Agreement

At the request of the _____ Church, the Presbytery hereby appoints _____ to be Interim Pastor for a period of _____, beginning _____, 20____, subject to 30 days notice for termination. A description of duties and services expected is attached. It is clearly understood by all parties that the interim pastor and the church subscribe to the policies of the presbytery regarding an interim pastor relationship. Further, it is understood that the interim pastor shall not be a candidate for the position of pastor, associate pastor, or designated pastor and is not eligible to be the next installed pastor or associate pastor.

The _____ Church will provide the following support for the ministry:

Salary _____	Study Leave _____
Housing _____	Moving _____
Travel _____	Vacation _____
Medical/ Pension _____	Other _____

ENDORSEMENT TO THIS AGREEMENT

1. By the session on _____ 20____
date _____, Clerk
2. By the COM on _____ 20____
date _____, Chair
3. By the Presbytery on _____ 20____
date _____, Stated Clerk
4. By the interim pastor on _____ 20____
date _____

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

Pastoral Call

(For Pastor or Associate Pastor)

The _____ Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
of _____
belonging to _____ Presbytery (PIN _____)

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 interest 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 the Word among us, we promise and obligate ourselves to pay you the sum of \$ _____ a year in regular monthly payments. Further, we promise to provide you the following: (Those agreed upon are to be filled in.)

Table with 2 columns: Allowance Type and Amount. Rows include Use of the Manse, Housing Allowance, Utilities Allowance, Automobile Allowance, Expense Allowance, Book Allowance, Medical Insurance, Moving Costs, Study Leave Allowance, and Other (specify).

Vacation of _____ (Time period) Study Leave of _____ (Time Period)

All EEO Requirements have been met _____ Yes _____ No

and we will pay regularly in advance to the board responsible for pensions a sum equal to that requisite percent of your salary which may be fixed by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for participation in its pension plan during the time of your being and continuing in the pastoral relationship set forth in this call to this church. We further promise and obligate ourselves to review with you annually the adequacy of this compensation. In addition, we promise to provide:

In testimony whereof we have subscribed our names this _____ day of _____ A.D.

Having moderated the congregational meeting which extended a call to _____ for ministerial services, I do certify that the call has been made in all respects according to the rules laid down in the Form of Government and that the persons who signed the foregoing call were authorized to do so by vote of the

_____ Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

(Signed) _____
Moderator of the Meeting

CERTIFICATION OF THE CALL

BY THE CHURCH'S PRESBYTERY

1. ACTION OF THE COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

This call has been reviewed by the Committee on Ministry. The Committee recommends that Presbytery approve (not approve) this call.

Date of Action _____

Chairperson

2. ACTION BY THE PRESBYTERY

This call was approved by the Presbytery of _____

Date of Action _____

Stated Clerk

A. BY THE MINISTER'S/CANDIDATE'S PRESBYTERY

1. ACTION OF THE COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

This call has been reviewed by the Committee on Ministry. The Committee recommends that the Presbytery find it expedient (not expedient) to release _____ to accept this call.

Date of Action _____

Chairperson

2. ACTION BY THE PRESBYTERY

The Presbytery of _____ hereby finds it expedient (not expedient) to release _____ to accept this call and therefore has placed (has not placed) this call in the minister's/candidate's hands.

Date of Action _____

Stated Clerk

B. ACCEPTANCE OF THE CALL

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

Date of Acceptance _____

Signature

Instructions for use of the form, "Pastoral Call"

Prior to the congregational meeting to call a pastor or associate pastor, four copies of the Call for Pastor or Associate Pastor should be completed. It should specify all and only those allowances and amounts which are undertaken as part of the Call. If the Call is for less than full-time, the precise terms of the contract should be indicated.

All four copies of the Call should be signed by those persons elected by vote of the congregation to prosecute the Call, as well as by the moderator of the congregational meeting.

All copies are sent to the Presbytery. If the Presbytery finds the Call in order, it informs the person being called. The Stated Clerk of the Calling Presbytery should transmit all copies of the Call to the Stated Clerk of the minister's/candidate's Presbytery.

The Stated Clerk of the minister's/candidate/s Presbytery should deliver the Call to the Commission on Ministry, who recommends to Presbytery what action should be taken. Upon approval, the Presbytery presents one copy of the Call to the minister/candidate, along with permission to transfer to the Calling Presbytery. The Stated Clerk makes record of the Call, and sends two copies to the Calling Presbytery.

The Stated Clerk of the Calling Presbytery sends one copy to Clerk of Session for the church's record and retains one copy for the Presbytery's record.

IF THE PERSON REJECTS THE CALL, the Stated Clerk of the minister's/candidate's presbytery shall promptly return all copies of the Call to the Stated Clerk of the church's presbytery for return to the church which issued the Call.