

## **PNC Orientation – Where do we even begin?!**

Every Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) enters this process with plenty of fear and trepidation, which is good! This is indeed very serious work and the entire congregation is looking to you to make the “right call”. But this is also an exciting time in the life of the church and you are right in the thick of it. With that in mind, here are some guidelines to help you along the way.

### **Fear not....**

Step 1: Yes, this happened. You are not dreaming. You *are* a member of the Pastor Nominating Committee of your congregation.

Step 2: **Fear not, all is well.**

Step 3: Seriously, fear not, all is well. This is a *call* process, not a decision-making process. God already knows who has been called to your congregation to serve as your next pastor, so embrace that reality and remember that this is a process of discernment, not a process of hiring the right candidate. The hardest part of this process is remaining patient, *no matter how long it takes for God to present your next pastor to you*. That is the most critical thing your congregation needs from you: patience. They will be anxious and they will be fearful, but they have put their faith in you and they need you to remain calm and patient throughout the entire process, so find the mindset you need to be ready for this journey. And above all else, fear not, all is well.

### **Day One: Training and Setting up Shop**

On the day of the election of the PNC it is imperative that you come together to elect your moderator and to set up the first meeting date. This is *not* about expediency, this is about setting the tone of an organized, and therefore calming, process of discernment. **If you are structured, you are equipped. If you are equipped, you are calm.**

Training: A member of the Congregational and Pastoral Care (CPC) team, or other leader within the presbytery appointed by CPC, will lead you through a training / orientation on the same day you elect your moderator or at your first meeting after that.

Assessment of Team Chemistry: It is vital that a PNC trusts each other and the work they are doing. Community building activities, non-work related outings, etc. can be very effective in building up the chemistry of the PNC. You *must* trust each other or the process will be far more difficult and exhausting, so do what you need to do to find the necessary chemistry to build trust with each other.

### **Ministry Information Form**

In order to publicize your pastoral vacancy and seek candidates to fill the position you must write a Ministry Information Form (MIF) that will be uploaded to the denomination's Church Leadership Connection website. Aside from remaining patient this is the most critical aspect of your job as a PNC and should be taken very seriously. Typically the congregations that put forth the greatest effort to write their MIF have had the greatest success in finding the pastor who is truly meant for them.

The writing of the MIF is another matter of mindset. This document *must* be authentic to who you are at the writing of this document. Do not build yourself up to be something you are not. Do not make yourself appear to be more missional than you are. It is truly okay to admit your weaknesses. Just be who you are right now, and be honest with who you want to be in the future. This level of honesty and

transparency is highly sought after by quality and gifted pastors, and they can tell when a congregation is not authentic and will pass by those MIFs in search of “the real deal”.

### **Establish Timeline**

The PNC and Session should meet prior to the first meeting of the PNC to determine proposed timelines.

1. Take some time as a group to really think about your next pastor and how long you hope they will remain with you. Do you simply need someone to add some stability and leadership for 2-3 years? Then factor that into your timeline because a short-term pastor is far easier to find and will not require a lengthy process. However, if you want your next pastor to remain for 7-10 years or longer then a two year investment of time to find that pastor will be worth the effort. It may not take that long, but be mentally and prayerfully prepared for that to keep the process calm and free from anxiety, and most importantly free from rash decisions that you may later regret.
2. Once you have established your overall search timeline then you can set a realistic timeline for the creation of the MIF. Be sure to set a realistic timeline that does not cause the PNC to rush through the writing process. A timeline of 6 months is a good rule of thumb because it gives the PNC plenty of space to build team chemistry and calmly write the MIF. It is entirely possible it can be done sooner, but it's best to enter the process with more time allowed.
3. Communicate the timelines to the congregation. Communication of timelines is critical to keeping people calm and patient throughout the process. If everyone knows the PNC has 6 months to write the MIF and up to two or more years to find the *right* pastor then it dramatically reduces anxiety and allows the session to make the appropriate arrangements for filling the pulpit during that period of time. Again, **if you are structured, you are equipped. If you are equipped, you are calm.** If you are *all* patient God will present your next pastor to you in a very clear way, it's simply a matter of seeking out that person with a calm and open heart.

### **Nuts and Bolts of the Remaining Process**

1. PNC researches and writes a Ministry Information Form (MIF) describing the congregation and its ministry to determine the traits desired in a pastor.
2. Session and CPC approve the MIF and grant permission for it to be placed on the Church Leadership Connection (CLC) website. Please do not be offended in CPC comes back to you with edits. They are the outside set of eyes that can relay how it reads to someone who has been completely removed from the writing process. Take their guidance as a barometer of how a perspective pastor might read the MIF.
3. User Name and Password are assigned to make it possible for the moderator of the PNC to access the CLC website.
4. Request for a “match” of potential candidates is made by the moderator.
5. Copies of pastors' Personal Information Forms (PIFs) for those matching several of the criteria are sent to the moderator of the PNC. At first an initial wave of PIFs will be provided because you will be presented with all of the PIFs currently available in the system. Be prepared for it to dramatically trail off after that as PIFs will only be provided as they are posted by new perspective candidates. It is very unlikely that your next pastor is in that initial batch of

candidates. Knowing this helps prevent anxiety and helps the PNC remain patient as you await additional PIFs to find their way to you.

6. PNC reads and evaluates those PIFs, selecting particular ones who might be a potential candidate. Contact is made with those individuals to see if they are still available.
7. If no satisfactory candidate is found, another request is made for a new match and the process repeats until serious potential candidates are found.
8. If a candidate (or candidates) is found that you would like to pursue then the moderator of CPC should be asked to complete a Presbytery to Presbytery reference check *prior to any extensive interviews are conducted*. The Stated Clerk of the Presbytery should also be asked to do some research for additional information that might prevent you from going too far in the process before finding out if the candidate has any “baggage” that you need to be aware of in your discussions.
9. If given the “all clear” to continue, the PNC is encouraged to complete reference checks and determine if the candidate would be a good match for your congregation.
10. If things continue to go well with a particular individual, a request is made of the Presbytery Stated Clerk to complete a criminal and financial background check.
11. If all is well, the individual is brought in for a face-to-face interview and to preach before the PNC in a neutral pulpit.
12. If that goes well and the PNC and candidate agree to move toward a call then the candidate is asked to conduct an interview with appointed members of the Congregational and Pastoral Care team. Once again, the CPC is there to help offer an outside perspective from those who are very closely associated with the process within the PNC.
13. If CPC concurs, then the invitation is extended for the candidate to meet the congregation and preach at a worship service, with a congregational meeting to follow for the vote to extend a call to the candidate.
14. If there is an overwhelming positive vote and the candidate accepts the vote as God’s will to come to your congregation, the papers are signed and a start date is announced.
15. Once on site a date for an installation service by the Presbytery is determined, after which the process is completed and the PNC is dissolved with thanks for their hard work.

While regular process reports are to be made to the session and the congregation, much of the work of the PNC is confidential, especially regarding the names of any potential candidates.

Throughout the process the congregation is encouraged to pray for the PNC and to patiently understand that the right “match” may take a long time, but it will be well-worth it in the end!