

# *The Pastor Search Process*

*Everything you wanted to know  
about calling a new pastor. . .  
. . .but were afraid to ask.*

# *The Pastor Search Process*

*“Isn’t this just  
church language  
for a personnel search?”*

# *The Pastor Search Process*

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**No.**

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*Calling a Pastor involves a  
spiritual discernment process.*

# *The Pastor Search Process*

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*There is no need for the  
congregation to panic.*

*This can be the most exciting  
spiritual journey a church can  
embark upon.*

# *The Pastor*

## *Search Process*

### *Acronyms*

- *PNC ~ Pastor Nominating Comm.*
- *COM ~ Committee on Ministry*
- *CIF ~ Church Information Form*
- *PIF ~ Personal Information Form*

# How it Begins

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- FIRST,  
the decision is made that the pastoral call needs to end, and that decision must be communicated to the General Presbyter or the Committee on Ministry.

# How it Begins

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- THEN,  
members of the COM are appointed to serve as Liaisons to work with the Session,  
and the congregation,  
but especially the PNC.

# How it Begins

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- The Liaisons will conduct an exit interview with the departing pastor
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# How it Begins

- A COM Liaison,  
or a representative of the COM,  
will attend the last worship  
service of the pastor and  
declare the pulpit vacant.

# How it Begins

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- The liaisons will then meet with the Session and:
  - Explain the call process
  - Explain the role of the session, PNC, and COM
  - Explain nomination and election of PNC

# How it Begins

- Discuss the possibility of a Transitional
- The need to pay vacancy dues
- The potential need to do a mission study
- Discuss setting a budget for PNC
- Discuss and determine range of salary for the new pastor

# How it Begins

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Other things for the session  
to consider

- Sabbatical Leave
- Repair/Remodel the Manse
- Repair/Remodel the Office
- Changes in Church Staff

# How it Begins

- A congregational meeting is called
  - A PNC is elected
  - AND THE FUN BEGINS

# Pastor Nominating Committee

- Elects a Chairperson and a Clerk
- Determines how often they will meet
- Decides how their decisions will be made
  - By a simple Majority
  - Or a Unanimous vote

# Pastor Nominating Committee

- Begins work on the  
***MINISTRY INFORMATION  
FORM***

***MIF***

# Writing the MIF

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- Be frank and open
- Consider how your MIF will be read
- This is your opportunity to shine
- Must be approved by the COM liaisons
- Must be approved by the Session

# Posting the CIF Online

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- Once approved, liaison will provide passwords for online access for the:
  - PNC
  - Clerk of Session
- Go to [pcusa.org](http://pcusa.org) CLC to put the form online
- Once the MIF is on-line, the General Presbyter will schedule a meeting and perform an initial match.

# Receiving Personal Information Forms

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Personal Information Forms  
(PIFs) may be received:

- Through the computerized process from Church Leadership Connection
- The PNC may ask a pastor they've heard of to submit a form
- Pastors may self-refer

# Receiving Personal Information Forms

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always remember,

**CONFIDENTIALITY!!**

# Receiving Personal Information Forms

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- After the MIF is online and the initial match is made PIFs will start coming in
- Every member of the PNC should read each PIF carefully
- A process of prioritization or ranking system needs to be determined in order to narrow the list
- Decide how you will respond to applicants

# Contacting the Candidate

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- The PNC may call the prospective candidate and ask
  - If they are still seeking a call
  - Would they be interested in receiving further information and a copy of your MIF
  - Would they send a tape or video of a sermon
- The members of the PNC should then begin calling references listed on the PIF under review

# Contacting References

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- Call at a convenient time
- Have your questions prepared
- Introduce yourself and explain what the call is about
- Ask if this is a good time to talk. If not then when would be a good time?
- Take notes
- Thank them for taking the time to talk

# Contacting References

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You may not contact any Secondary References without the candidate's permission!

Under no circumstances are you to contact members of a pastor's present congregation without her or his permission to do so!

# Vetting the Candidate

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- The liaisons need to be kept in the information loop as you consider potential candidates
- The General Presbyter or COM Moderator must also do reference checks on all candidates prior to the PNC bringing a candidate in or visiting that person.

# Contacting the Candidate

After **CHECKING REFERENCES** the PNC may communicate with the candidate in a variety of ways

- Telephone conversations
- Conference Calls
- Letters or Email
- Video conferences

# Contacting the Candidate

Conversations will continue with potential candidates, as the list of those you are interested in is narrowed down.

It is advised to have one person at the

***TOP OF THE LIST***

and seek to discern whether God is moving you toward that person, rather than keeping a number of people at the same level in the process.

***Remember . . .***

***“ . . . All things should  
be done decently  
and in order.”***

1 Corinthians 14:40

# COM Clearance

*Once the PNC has narrowed the search to 2-3 candidates the General Presbyter and/or COM Moderator will make final background calls.*

*This COM “clearance” is necessary prior to bringing a candidate in*

# COM Clearance

*...it is up to the PNC to initiate the clearance process.*

*The COM does not read minds.*

*The best way to make sure that the PNC does not get ahead of itself is to keep the liaisons involved in all communications.*

# **If the Candidate is not already ordained**

If the person being considered  
is a candidate for ordination  
under the care of a

**Preparation for Ministry Committee**

the COM will consult with that  
committee

# **Bringing a Candidate In**

**The candidate and family may be brought to the community after clearance**

**If the PNC is very serious about a candidate then an examination of that candidate should be set up to occur during the candidate's visit.**

**The liaisons can assist with scheduling the Examinations Subcommittee's examination.**

# Face-to-Face Visit

The PNC will meet with the candidate and -

- Show them the church
- Show them around town/community schools, homes, places of interest
- Have an in-depth conversation about the church and the call
- Be careful about confidentiality (spouse may be invited)

# Face-to-Face Visit

While they are in town the Examinations Subcommittee of the COM will meet with and examine the candidate in the areas of:

- Their faith journey
- Their “fit” with the church
- The constitutional areas of examination:
  - Theology
  - Worship and Sacraments
  - Presbyterian Polity
- Their connection and commitment to PC(USA)

# Examination of Candidate

A Pastor who is called by a congregation of the Presbytery of Arkansas must also:

- ◆ Complete Background Check forms for the presbytery's sexual misconduct policy
- ◆ Submit a one-page Statement of Faith

# Decision Time

***IF*** the COM Examinations Subcommittee sustains the examination, and

***IF*** the PNC wishes to extend a call to the candidate

***Then*** the PNC communicates that desire to the candidate and, if the candidate also feels called, they work together on the terms of call.

# Decision Time

***If*** the PNC and candidate agree that God is calling the pastor to this congregation

***Then*** the PNC submits to the COM the terms of call for approval

***If*** the COM approves the terms of call

***Then*** the Session calls a congregational meeting to elect the Pastor

# Decision Time

***IF*** the congregation elects the pastor

***THEN***

The PNC works with the Pastor to provide the COM with the following:

Date and time for an Installation/Ordination service

Offering recipient

Names for members of an Administrative Commission to install/ordain (the moderator of presbytery moderates, and all members should be asked prior to their names being submitted)

*The COM will recommend at the following presbytery meeting:*

that the Presbytery approve the pastor for membership in the presbytery

that the information concerning the Administrative Commission and worship service to install/ordain be approved