

### **The Process of Work in the Pastor Search Committee**

The PCA process of calling a pastor is found in the PCA *Book of Church Order*, Chapter 20

1. In each step, seek the Lord in prayer before and during the process.
2. The church adopts a vision agreed upon by the Session and the Congregation.
3. The Session considers the need of an interim pastor, appointing one if desired.
4. Session calls congregational meeting to elect the Pulpit Search Committee.
5. Composition of the Committee
  - a. The Session should not try to select the Search Committee prior to the congregational meeting, but rather should call the meeting with the stated purpose given at least one week ahead and allow the Congregation full freedom to decide whether they want to name the Session or a select group from their number at large.
  - b. The Congregation may choose to elect a Committee of 9-11 (recommended) members to represent various aspects of the church including church offices, specific ministries, etc.
6. Organizing the Committee
  - a. Solicit ongoing prayer support from the Congregation and Session.
  - b. Solicit counsel and/or training if needed for the Committee's work.
  - c. Elect chairman, secretary, and someone to handle correspondence.
  - d. Establish rules for processes, decision making, etc. Requiring unanimous consent on a Candidate is not advised.
  - e. Strict confidentiality must be maintained by the Committee regarding the individuals it reviews, its process, and decisions.
  - f. A process for communication with the Congregation and the Session is important, as there will need to be a method for occasional updates as well as a process for some consultation with the Session.
  - g. The committee will find it valuable to spend time getting to know each other, including each member's background, beliefs, and expectations.
7. Work of the Committee
  - a. Seek agreement within the Committee for the type of ministry profile needed and sought by the Committee to meet the vision of the church.
  - b. Complete the PCA Church Profile Form and/or develop a profile specific to the particular church and a position description or announcement.
  - c. Obtain names of potential Candidates through avenues that may include:
    - i. PCA Office of the Stated Clerk
    - ii. Recommendations from individuals who know your church
    - iii. Presbytery
    - iv. Seminaries
    - v. Materials submitted by individuals in response to public announcements
  - d. Evaluation of Candidates
    - i. Review printed materials – Ministerial Data Forms, Resumes, etc.
    - ii. Listen to sermons – Candidate's website or their church's website
    - iii. Review supplemental materials such as articles, blogs, and church websites
    - iv. Obtain Candidate's answers to supplemental questions if necessary
  - e. Select a short list of Candidates for the following:
    - i. Phone, Skype or other remote interviews with the Committee
    - ii. Discreet inquiries
    - iii. Candidate's references as well as secondary references given by references
    - iv. Discreetly visit Candidate's church to hear sermon and observe

8. Selection of the Candidate.
  - a. The Committee shall vote to select a Candidate.
  - b. This meeting should include every member. If any cannot be at the meeting, have them participate by telephone or reschedule the meeting.
  - c. An approval of no less than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the Committee is strongly recommended.
  - d. Call the Candidate to inform of decision and request possible dates available for candidating.
9. Notify the Session and request suggestions for dates for candidating and holding a congregational meeting for the Congregation to vote on a call.
10. It is the Session's responsibility to call a congregational meeting, but not their right to veto the Committee's nomination.
11. The Committee should give a report to the Congregation regarding the Candidate and his upcoming visit.
12. Planning the Candidate's visit
  - a. Develop a schedule for Candidate's visit
    - i. The church should pay all expenses for the trip.
    - ii. The family should be included.
    - iii. Three of four days should be allowed, to include time for:
      1. Meeting with all officers and spouses (possibly a dinner at church)
      2. Meeting with the Session
      3. The Candidate's wife meeting with the women
      4. The Candidate and family meeting the whole Congregation at a family dinner or picnic
      5. Candidate and family looking at housing, schools, etc.
  - b. Send the Candidate a packet of materials that includes:
    - i. A church directory
    - ii. Area maps
    - iii. Information on public and private schools
    - iv. Housing information
    - v. Church bulletins, newsletters, etc.
13. Notification of Candidate
  - a. Once the Committee has made a decision regarding a particular Candidate, it should notify him in a timely manner that it is recommending him or is not recommending him.
14. Election and Call
  - a. Session calls a congregational meeting to vote on a Candidate.
    - i. The meeting should *not* take place on the same weekend in which the Candidate visits the church.
    - ii. The Session shall appoint one of their number to call the meeting to order and to preside until the Congregation shall elect their presiding officer.
    - iii. The Moderator shall ask the question: "Are you ready to proceed to the election of a pastor?" At this point, the BCO allows for other nominations, if any. The General Assembly has determined that the voting must be done by ballot and that a majority of all voters present must be required to elect.
    - iv. If a large minority are averse to the Candidate receiving a majority of votes and cannot be induced to concur on the call, the Moderator shall endeavor to dissuade the majority from pursuing the call further. However, if the electors are nearly unanimous or insist on their right to call a pastor, the Moderator shall proceed to draw a call, certifying at the same time in writing the number of those not concurring in the call.

15. The Call.

- a. The call shall be approved by the Congregation in the following or like form:
  - i. The \_\_\_\_\_ Church being on sufficient grounds well satisfied of the ministerial qualifications of you, \_\_\_\_\_, and having good hopes from our knowledge of your labors that your ministrations in the Gospel will be profitable to our spiritual interests, do earnestly call you to undertake the pastoral office in said Congregation, promising you, in the discharge of your duty, all proper support, encouragement and obedience in the Lord. That you may be free from worldly cares and avocations, we hereby promise and oblige ourselves to pay you the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_ a year in regular monthly (or quarterly) payments, and other benefits, such as manse, retirement, insurance, vacations, moving expenses etc., during the time of your being and continuing the regular pastor of this church.
  - ii. In testimony whereof we have respectively subscribed our names this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, A.D. \_\_\_\_\_.
  - iii. Attest: I, having moderated the congregational meeting which extended the call to \_\_\_\_\_ for his ministerial services, do certify that the call has been made in all respects according to the rules laid down in the *Book of Church Order*, and that the persons who signed the foregoing call were authorized to do so by vote of the Congregation.
  - iv. \_\_\_\_\_
  - v. (Moderator of the Meeting)
- b. The church may designate ruling elders and deacons or a committee to sign its call, but it shall be fully certified to the Presbytery by the minister or other person who presided, that the persons signing have been appointed for that purpose by a public vote of the church, and that the call has been in all other respects prepared as directed above.
- c. One or more commissioners shall be appointed by the church to present and prosecute the call before their Presbytery.

16. Notification of the Call

- a. The minister being called should be notified immediately by the Committee chairman or someone he designates.
- b. This notification should include the vote so that if it was divided, he may take this into consideration.
- c. The call should include such items as salary, and other benefits, such as, manse, retirement, insurance, vacations, moving expenses, etc.
- d. Once the Candidate indicates his intention to accept, the Session shall notify the clerk of the Presbytery so that his examination and reception can be docketed. Candidates for the ministry or licentiates are allowed to move onto the field prior to ordination, but ordained ministers are not to move until approved by Presbytery.
- e. Once the new man is approved and Presbytery has placed the call in his hands, a time and place are set for his installation.

17. Installation (and Ordination if Candidate is not ordained)

- a. The Installation day arrives and after the new pastor gives satisfactory answers to the constitutional questions, he is installed, and the Pulpit Search Committee is dismissed.

## **PULPIT NOMINATING COMMITTEE OFFICER DUTIES**

### **Chairman:**

- Chairs all meetings
- Provides leadership and direction
- Makes assignments of specific tasks
- Keeps process moving
- Makes progress reports to the congregation
- Insures prospects are advised of their status in a timely way

### **Vice Chairman:**

- Chairs meetings in Chairman's absence
- Maintains records of all names submitted to the Committee
- Contacts prospects to determine interest and request MDF and sermon tape

### **Secretary:**

- Keeps minutes of all meetings
- Provides Committee members with copies of minutes
- Types correspondence for Chairman and Vice Chairman, as required

## TERMINOLOGY & DEFINITIONS

**Applicant:** One who submits his MDF to the Search Committee before they contact him.

**Candidate:** The individual whom the Committee selected out of all names received and processed to present to the congregation for a vote and a possible call.

**CPF:** Church Profile Form – a form used by Search Committees to determine the profile of a congregation. This form should be used in screening; in particular the Part III Congregational Priorities should be compared with Part III Pastoral Activities of the MDF.

**MDF:** Ministerial Data Form – the standard form used by the PCA to provide basic information about a Teaching Elder to churches seeking to fill a vacant pulpit or other position requiring an ordained man.

**Potential Candidate:** Someone who has passed through the screening process to a predetermined level. This level would normally be reached after a telephone interview, when the Committee decides to send a group to visit to the man's church or invite him to a neutral pulpit to observe a worship service and interview him and his family in person. This group should be about two or three in number, and not more than five.

**Prospect:** A name obtained by the Committee that has not yet been eliminated in the screening process.