



Presbytery of the Cascades
Presbyterian Church (USA)

Toward Calling Your Pastor

*A Handbook for
Pastor Nominating Committees*

Revised: August, 2017

Welcome to an Exciting Experience of God's Call

Congratulations on your election to the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) of your congregation. You and those you serve with will nominate a pastor who will work with you in the ministry and mission of Jesus Christ.

This booklet, *Toward Calling Your Pastor: A Handbook for Pastor Nominating Committees*, (hereafter called *Handbook*) leads you through the pastoral change process. It is not a substitute for the advice of your Commission on Ministry (COM) liaison or the support provided by the Presbyterian Church (USA) and its Church Leadership Connection (CLC). This Handbook will help you to know and understand what to expect throughout this process. Other materials and help will be provided by your regional co-executive presbyter and COM liaison.

This *Handbook* will be used in combination with *On Calling a Pastor: A Manual for Churches Seeking Pastors*, published by the CLC, Office of Vocation (hereafter referred to as "*Manual*"). Copies are available on the Presbyterian Church (USA) website, www.pcusa.org; on Cascades Presbytery's website, www.cascadespresbytery.org; or through your regional presbytery office. With these resources and support from your region's COM, you should find the guidance and resources you need to fulfill your responsibility to nominate pastoral leadership for your congregation.

For the Christian the very best resource is prayer:

Eternal God: you called us to be a special people, to preach the gospel and show mercy. Keep your Spirit with us as we meet together, so that in everything we may do your will. Guide us lest we stumble or be misguided by our own desires. May all we do be done for the reconciling of the world, for the up building of the church, and for the greater glory of Jesus Christ our confidence, guide, and friend. Amen.

From the *Book of Common Worship*

May God richly bless and enhance your work!

Getting Started: How to Use This Handbook

In our Presbyterian understanding, pastoral service within congregations involves a three-way covenant and agreement among the pastor, congregation and presbytery.

A regional COM liaison will meet with your congregation to provide support, direction, resource, counsel, and guidance. Your COM liaison is either a teaching or ruling elder from your region who has volunteered to serve on the COM and work with your congregation as an expression of call and service to the larger Church. You will get to know that person well. It is important to remain in very close contact with your COM liaison and your regional co-executive presbyter.

Your COM liaison is:

Name _____

Phone: Hm: _____ Wk: _____

E-mail: _____

In this *Handbook* we establish a process that moves forward in an orderly fashion. Calling a pastor works best when you follow *each step in sequence*. We encourage you to resist the temptation to skip an item. Taking each step in turn will insure your new pastor is called “decently and in order.”

A Key to Abbreviations in this Booklet

You will find this process is full of acronyms; below are the definitions of a few. The *Manual* includes others on page 4.

COM: The presbytery Commission on Ministry. It fulfills our presbytery’s constitutional responsibility as outlined in the *Book of Order* G-3.0307.

PNC: Pastor Nominating Committee elected by the congregation. An APNC is an Associate Pastor Nominating Committee.

MIF: Ministry Information Form developed by the PNC and approved by the session and the COM; it is eventually placed online.

PIF: Personal Information Form developed by those who are seeking a call.

CLC: Church Leadership Connection of the Presbyterian Church which electronically matches the online MIFs and PIFs.

The Pastoral Change Process

For a review of our Reformed Faith's understanding of "the call," and a preview of the call process please read the *Manual*, Part I, pages 5-12.

As Your Committee Begins to Meet

A first and critical word about your meetings: It is very important that you begin and end your meetings with prayer. It may seem strange to read this, but sometimes a PNC gets so involved in its "business," members forget a committee working on its own strength will not succeed. Depend on God's gracious Spirit to guide your deliberations and your decision-making.

A Prayer

*By your word, Gracious God, your creation sprang forth,
and we were given the breath of life.
By your word, Eternal God, death is overcome,
Christ is raised from the tomb,
and we are given new life in the power of your Spirit.
May we boldly proclaim this good news,
by the words of our mouths and the deeds of our lives,
rejoicing always in your powerful presence;
through Jesus Christ our risen Lord. Amen.*

1. The Pastor Nominating Committee is Elected

You are now at *your* beginning as a group, standing together at the heart of the process. Some on the committee you will know well, others may be new to you. Learn to work with each other, grow to respect and enjoy each other. *Build your life together with prayer and care. Attend to the community your committee builds.*

One of your first responsibilities when the PNC is formed is to plan who will open each meeting with prayer. Pass the experience around and ask each to include a meditation and opportunity for faith sharing among the group. *This time you spend together will be immensely important. It is an opportunity to grow in faith even as you seek a pastor.*

Your COM liaison is able to provide excellent advice as you work through this process. Before beginning, it might be best to scan the full process in the *Manual*, Part III, pages 19-46.

1. The Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) is elected on _____.
 - ▶ *Manual*, pages 18-19
 - * initialed when done _____ Date _____
2. The PNC receives its orientation and training by COM liaison and begins its organization on _____. The session and PNC agree to follow AA/EEO guidelines in their deliberations and selection.
 - ▶ *Manual*, pages 19-22
 - * initialed when done _____ Date _____
3. A Mission Study may be required. This depends on how recently the congregation has engaged in deep reflection on its situation, ministry and program. The Mission Study is the opportunity to think carefully about your congregation's life and mission. The results of the study feed directly into the work of the PNC and the development of the Ministry Information Form (MIF). Cascades Presbytery has a number of resources at its disposal and your COM liaison is eager to share them with you. If required, the Mission Study is completed on _____.
 - ▶ *Manual*, pages 15-16
 - * initialed when done _____ Date _____
4. The PNC begins the MIF by downloading and printing a copy to use as a work sheet from the CLC at www.pcusa.org/clc, or you may obtain a copy from your COM liaison. The MIF is *the* important tool introducing your congregation to potential candidates. Work through it carefully so it authentically represents your church's mission, program, and vision with fairness and vitality. Descriptions of the various terms used in the Primary Skill Choices of the MIF are found at www.pcusa.org/media/uploads/clc/doc/skills_01.doc.

Your COM liaison will help in this process.

- ▶ *Manual*, pages 22-25
 - * initialed when done _____ Date _____
5. The first draft of the Ministry Information Form is completed on _____
- ▶ *Manual*, page 24
 - * initialed when done _____ Date _____
6. This draft MIF is forwarded to your COM liaison on _____ and to the regional co-executive presbyter on _____ for review and suggestions.
- ▶ *Manual*, page 24
 - * initialed when done _____ Date _____
7. The MIF is revised and the final form is presented to session for approval.
- ▶ *Manual*, page 24
 - * initialed when done _____ Date _____
8. Once the MIF is approved, your regional COM chair or the regional co-executive presbyter will assign a login ID and password for two persons in your congregation: (1) the PNC chair and (2) your clerk of session. These passwords will be a mix of letters and numbers. Please note that upper and lower cases are critical for you to remember and observe. You may change your passwords after you sign on for the first time. If you do change it, be sure to record the new password in a safe place. With this information you may enter your approved MIF into the CLC system. If you need help, ask.

Here are the steps to take:

- a. Go to www.pcusa.org/clc and then click "User Login." Enter your login ID in the first box and your password in the second one. Click "*MIF Transactions*"; click "*Fill a MIF*"; type in your congregation's ID (also called the PIN number).
- b. The computer already knows about your congregation from the Statistical Report completed by your clerk of session in January. It will complete Part I. You may review and change the information if necessary by clicking on the task list "*Review Church/Organization Information*."
- c. Move to Part II of the MIF and consider the suggestions in the *Manual* on pages 22-25. It is important to enter an e-mail address for your PNC. It may belong to the chair or a member of the committee. It must be one that is personal and secure. It should not be the church's email or nor should it be an email of a person not on the PNC.
- d. Click "Submit MIF."
When your form is received, the computer will confirm it and generate a MIF ID. This ID is made up of your church PIN and some other digits that will identify your particular MIF. You will need this ID to edit your MIF.

Write it down and keep it. Report it to your COM liaison and your regional co-executive presbyter.

▶ *Manual, page 24*

* initialed when done _____ Date _____

9. Your MIF is now in an electronic “holding area” awaiting on-line approval from your clerk of session and the COM. When this happens, CLC will place the MIF into the database and ready for computer searches by CLC or your regional co-executive presbyter.

▶ *Manual, page 24*

* initialed when done _____ Date _____

10. While you are waiting for Item #9 to be completed, this is a good time for the PNC to discuss how it will process, review, and respond to each PIF received. They will come many ways: through the on-line search process, self-referrals from interested candidates, or PIFs handed you by church members.

It is important to record how and when you received a PIF and to keep the categories separate since you know all PIFs received on-line from CLC have the validation of that person’s presbytery by the attestation of their stated clerk. If you have *any questions about any candidate at any time in the process* contact your co-executive presbyter who has the authority to make the necessary inquiries.

It is important that you acknowledge a PIF received and that you promptly notify a person if they are no longer being considered. This is simply good manners and you need to have a process established for your committee’s good intentions to be appropriately exercised.

▶ *Manual, pages 25-26*

* initialed when done _____ Date _____

2. The Committee Considers Candidates

To review: the inquiries and PIFs you receive from possible candidates come from many sources: the CLC (www.pcusa.org/clc), computer searches by your regional co-executive presbyter, self-referrals from those who have heard of your opening, and suggestions that may come to your committee.

Please note: all PIFs coming through the CLC have been approved for circulation. That would not necessarily be the case in self-referrals or second-party suggestions.

It is critical that you treat your communications with each candidate and each PIF with confidentiality. Sometimes, a PNC may use e-mail communication in order to communicate with candidates who are still available for conversation with a committee. A mass e-mail communication shares confidential information in the e-mail header that the Office of Vocation vows to protect. **Please, no mass e-mails!** Always communicate individually!

You will want to develop your own criteria for evaluating interested persons. Read the *Manual*, pages 27-30, for an overview. Begin by screening out the prospective candidates from those who do not fit your situation. The objective, of course, is to refine the list, keeping in mind the opportunities, vision and needs of your particular congregation as you have defined them in the MIF.

The good work you did on the MIF bears directly on this part of the process; the quality of your MIF will invite the interest of potential candidates. Again, note the *Manual's* warning on page 31 regarding the presbytery-to-presbytery reference check performed by your co-executive presbyter. Depend on that person.

When you arrive at the point of interviews, think very carefully about the structure of the experience and plan your questions well. The *Manual* suggests possible questions (page 37), you will think of others, and your COM liaison can suggest even more. The *Manual* makes some excellent suggestions on structuring the interview, pages 34-38.

This period in the PNC's work represents a significant commitment of time and energy. You will be engaged in evaluating candidates, phone conversations with them, listening to sermons, checking references. All of this effort has a basic underlying focus: you are looking toward building a consensus in the committee as you move toward those individuals you wish to interview in person.

Again, as a matter of courtesy, it is very important that you be in communication with the candidates regarding their place in your process.

Any questions that you have about this process should be referred to the COM liaison for your PNC or your regional co-executive presbyter. This is an important time of discernment for your congregation.

11. The PNC checks references noted on the candidate's PIF and narrows the list of potential candidates to 3 or 4 for interview. The COM liaison will guide you through this step. The names are referred to the regional co-executive presbyter for staff reference and mandated criminal background checks.
 - ▶ *Manual*, pages 32-34
 - * initialed when done _____ Date _____

12. COM liaison helps to arrange for your interview candidates to preach in a neutral pulpit.
 - ▶ *Manual*, pages 34-39
 - * initialed when done _____ Date _____

13. COM and presbytery staff reference check on candidates completed on _____ and the PNC proceeds with the interviews and preaching in a neutral pulpit. Your COM liaison can help you with the interview process and the *Manual* gives some excellent guidance.
 - ▶ *Manual*, pages 34-39
 - * initialed when done _____ Date _____

14. At this point, your top candidate(s) must also be interviewed and approved by your regional COM. Your COM liaison will be your guide through this process. This ought to be done when your PNC interviews the candidate in person and they preach in a neutral pulpit. If not done at that time, your church will need to bear the cost of the candidate's return to the presbytery for interview and approval. The regional COM interview and approval ensures your final choice can be freely made since approvals have already been secured.

As part of the examination for membership in the Presbytery of the Cascades by a regional COM, each candidate shall be asked if he or she has a departure from ordination standards as described in G-2.0105 of the *Book of Order*. That departure may be a matter of doctrine, discipline, or governance. In the event that a candidate which the regional COM has otherwise deemed suitable for membership declares a departure, the authority of a regional COM to act as a commission of the presbytery shall end and the remainder of the examination of the person seeking admission must be done at the next stated meeting of the presbytery. The presbytery shall determine on a case-by-case basis whether the departure is from an essential or not and whether to approve membership in the presbytery. If the person is a candidate for a pastoral position the PNC/ APNC of the church seeking pastoral staff will be notified that action on the teaching elder's reception must be deferred until the next stated meeting of the presbytery and provided information as to why the COM cannot take action to receive the teaching elder into membership. The PNC/APNC may then seek another candidate for examination by the regional COM or wait until the presbytery as a whole has had opportunity to examine the candidate and has

voted whether or not the candidate may be received as a member of the Presbytery of the Cascades.

* initialed when done _____ Date _____

3. The Committee Selects a Candidate

The *Manual*, pages 39-42 covers this part of the process. It is an exciting time when the PNC comes to its decision. The COM liaison and regional co-executive presbyter are to be deeply involved in this aspect of your task helping to negotiate the various approvals, interviews, and forms that are required by our *Book of Order*.

Final candidates for your congregation receive a Cascades Presbytery booklet titled *Welcome to the Presbytery of the Cascades: A Handbook for Those Considering a Call and/or Entering the Presbytery of the Cascades*. This outlines for the candidate their various responsibilities. Please be sure they receive a copy!

15. PNC makes the final selection and reports this information to COM. The PNC requests session to call a congregational meeting on _____.

▶ *Manual*, pages 40-41

* initialed when done _____ Date _____

16. At this point, the PNC will do some planning and thinking: what is the best way to communicate information about the nominee with the congregation?

▶ *Manual*, pages 40-41

* initialed when done _____ Date _____

17. The COM liaison (and if necessary, the co-executive presbyter) will work with the PNC, session, and pastor-elect/associate pastor-elect in developing recommendations for the terms of the call (Step 18), installation and/or ordination.

▶ *Manual*, page 40

* initialed when done _____ Date _____

18. The PNC Chair contacts their COM liaison for the official Call Forms and information regarding the congregational meeting and how it is to be conducted. All four copies of the forms are to be treated as originals with signatures.

▶ *Manual*, pages 49-50 are samples. Please use the forms supplied by your COM liaison or regional co-executive presbyter.

* initialed when done _____ Date _____

19. The Congregational Action:

Action of the _____ Presbyterian Church of _____ held at a congregational meeting on _____, and moderated by The Rev. _____ to call The Rev. _____ to serve as their full time (part-time ____%) (Associate) Pastor beginning _____ with annual terms as follows:

Salary		Housing	
Utilities		Social Security Allowance	
Professional Expense		Vacation	Four weeks
Continuing Education		Study Leave	Two weeks
Other		Other	
Full pension, Medical, disability and death coverage under the Board of Pensions.			
Attendance at the ___ Spring or ___ Fall Cascades Discovery Retreat.			
Three months sabbatical at full pay after each seven years of service.			

Other Benefits: _____

Any special information: _____

Congregation also authorizes _____ to sign all four copies of the Call Form on behalf of the congregation. They are sent to the regional presbytery office.

* initialed when done _____ Date _____

20. Presbytery Action taken to approve the Call of The Rev. _____ to the _____ on _____ (Date) with the Call Forms signed by the COM chair.

* initialed when done _____ Date _____

21. An Administrative Commission will be established by the presbytery through your regional COM to conduct the Service of Installation [see the *Book of Order* W-4.4006]. This is a service of the presbytery. The commission membership must include at least five persons divided as equally as possible between teaching elders and ruling elders with the ruling elders from different congregations including one from your congregation. Your regional vice moderator or his/her designee is always a member of the commission and presides at the service as an officer of presbytery by asking the constitutional questions.

There are two resources available to guide this process:

- *Welcome to the Presbytery of the Cascades: A Handbook For Those Who are Considering a Call and/or Entering The Presbytery of The Cascades.*
- *The Manual*, pages 44-45, also describes the service.

An offering is to be taken at the installation service. The proceeds are to be designated for Cascades Presbytery's Ministerial Assistance Fund and forwarded to the bookkeeper at the Portland Presbytery Office, 0245 SW Bancroft Street, Suite D, Portland, OR 97239-4272.

A suggested format for the installation service can be found in the *Book of Occasional Services* [Geneva Press © 1999, Presbyterian Church (USA)].

To install The Rev. _____ as (Associate) Pastor of the _____
Presbyterian Church of _____ on _____ with the following
Commission of Presbytery:

A. Presbytery Vice Moderator or his/her designee:

B. Ruling Elders (name and church):

1. _____

2. _____

C. Teaching Elders:

1. _____

2. _____

D. Others: _____

Presbytery Action taken on _____ to approve the installation of
The Rev. _____ on _____.

* initialed when done _____ Date _____

A Good Work Completed

Congratulations!

Your responsibilities are now officially over. The congregation has dismissed you with thanks. No longer are you a “PNC.” Yet, as a group you have bonded and, as a group, there are unofficial things you can still do (see *Manual*, pages 45-46).

You can be the support group for your new pastor and your common ministry together in the coming years. Here are some suggestions you might consider:

- Help your new pastor by facilitating details for the move to your community.
- Welcome your new pastor by stocking the pantry with food stuffs upon arrival. Some congregations have had a “pounding party” with a pound of this and a pound of that.
- Meet with your new pastor periodically throughout the year to check in and see how things are going.
- Serve as a sounding board for the ideas and insights of your new pastor.
- Plan a first year anniversary celebration with your new pastor and for all the things you will be able to accomplish together as a congregation in mission to Jesus Christ.

You will think of some other possibilities. The objective is to work together so this new relationship of pastor and congregation is a rewarding experience for all and lifts up the Good News of the gospel. May God richly bless your common work and ministry together.

Just as we began this process with prayer, may we finish it with prayer:

*Gracious and ever-living God, ruler of all things in heaven and earth,
hear our prayers for this congregation.
Strengthen the faithful, arouse the careless, and restore the truly sorry.
Grant us all things necessary for our common life,
and bring us all to be of one heart and mind as we serve
our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ; through our risen Lord. Amen.*

Useful web links:

Presbyterian Church (USA):

www.pcusa.org

PCUSA – *On Calling A Pastor* booklet:

www.pcusa.org/media/uploads/clc/doc/callingpastor.doc

PCUSA – Church Leadership Connection:

www.gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/clc/

Presbytery of the Cascades

www.cascadespresbytery.org

Presbytery of the Cascades – Commission on Ministry Resources:

<http://www.cascadespresbytery.org/resources/committee-resources/commission-on-ministry/>

Presbytery of the Cascades

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