



**NATIONAL CAPITAL
PRESBYTERY**

PNC Guide to Calling a Pastor

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**A Handbook for Pastor Nominating Committees, Associate Pastor
Nominating Committees and Sessions of Churches Seeking Pastors**

PERMISSION TO DUPLICATE GRANTED

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NCP’s PNC Guide to Calling a Pastor

PNC Guide to Calling a Pastor or Associate Pastor

INTRODUCTION

This Guide is a rough map of the tasks, the steps and a timeline for a PNC to follow as you navigate the call process. Remember, the map is not the ground you are actually walking on. When following a map, you may encounter detours, bumps in the road, or weather conditions that slow you down. None of these will be on the map. However, a map is useful in telling you where you are and how to reach your destination.

This Guide is intended to give flexibility for PNCs to work with a presbytery liaison to decide what they need to do, what they don't need to do, and what they could do differently. Specific instructions can't be captured in a written Guide because every church is different. However, we do need a general description of steps in the process and what to expect. Lean on your liaison and presbytery staff as you encounter questions and major decision points in the process.

With some exceptions, PNC's are free to make well informed decisions that may be a better fit for accomplishing their goals. The PC (USA) Book of Order uses the words 'may' and 'shall' to indicate the difference between guidance and what is required. Tasks that are required by the Book of Order and NCP policy will be underlined in the text. Otherwise, this Guide is intended to provide helpful steps for PNCs to consider.

As your PNC works together to call your next pastor, may God bless you with future possibilities for your congregation's mission and ministry.

PART I: GETTING STARTED

The first meetings of a PNC serve as an orientation to the call process. A PNC Liaison will be appointed by the presbytery's Congregational Transitions Commission to work with the PNC. The PNC Liaison will moderate these first meetings of the PNC, beginning each meeting with the "Litany for a Pastoral Search."

Part I Goals:

- To build the foundation for the work ahead.
- To identify gifts and interests of PNC members.
- Group building to develop trust between PNC members.
- To strengthen the connection between the PNC and the presbytery.
- To provide an overview of the process and answer questions.

Part I Tasks:

- Overview of the call process and estimated timeline.
- Who does what?
- Team building.
- EEO/AA Policy and presentation on diversity.
- Theology of the Call presentation.
- Elect PNC leadership.
- Set a budget.
- Set a meeting schedule.
- Propose dates for a CAT Scan and Jumpstart retreat (as necessary).

Part I Resources:

- Litany for a Pastoral Search
- The PNC/APNC Guide (this document)
- [Calling a Pastor Matrix](#)
- PCUSA Office of the General Assembly Church Leadership Connection (CLC) site [PC\(USA\) OGA \(pcusa.org\)](#)
- [EEO/AA Policy](#)
- [Church Assessment Tool \(CAT\) Scan information](#)
- Jumpstart video

Litany for a Pastoral Search

Most gracious and loving God,

Having accepted the invitation to work together to seek out and prayerfully discern the person who, even now, is being called to serve, lead, and journey with this congregation, we ask you to come to our assistance.

Hear our prayer, O Holy One.

As the psalmist has written, "... you have searched us out and known us; you discern our thoughts from afar; you follow our journeys and are acquainted with all our ways ..."

Be with us now, O Holy One.

As we continue in this search process, be present among us, and guide each step.

Guide us in all our doings, O Holy One.

Build unity among us, guard us from distractions, and help us to welcome different viewpoints and perspectives as opportunities to hear, understand, and grow.

Teach us to listen, O Holy One.

Inspire not only our minds but also our hearts, allowing one to form the other, within each individual, and among all participants in this work.

Open our hearts and minds to your presence, O Holy One.

Quicken the heart of the person begin called to serve as our next pastor. Remove any obstacles that might stand in the way of this call.

Reveal the path and lead the way, O Holy One.

We offer ourselves as fertile ground through which your work may be done. And when our tasks are complete and the search is done, grant us a quiet mind and confident heart that, guided by your wisdom, we have accomplished what you have asked us to do. And then let us rest, be still, and know that you are God.

Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

(Adapted from a prayer found on the website of St. John's Church, Boulder, CO.)

Getting Started

The primary activities of first meetings include the following. It is best for the PNC to postpone leadership decisions for a few weeks, allowing time for trust to develop between the members.

- Open the meeting with the Litany for Calling a Pastor. Some PNCs have used this Litany to open every meeting of the PNC. The Litany can be shared with the Session and congregation, so they may participate in prayer for the PNC.
- The presbytery Liaison will orient the PNC to the search process, resources, and important concepts, using this Guide and resources on the [PCUSA Office of General Assembly's Church Leadership Connection \(CLC\) website](#). An additional resource is the book *Calling a Pastor the Presbyterian Way* by Dean Foose. Note that NCP policies and procedures take precedence over those described in Dean Foose's book.
- The Liaison will lead the PNC through a series of team and trust-building activities. One way for members' gifts and interests to become evident is to have each member share their faith journey with the group. Set aside time at each meeting for two members to share their journey until all have had a chance to tell their personal faith story.
- The Liaison will present the EEO/AA policy to the PNC and lead a discussion of openness to diversity. The Liaison will ask for the PNC's agreement to honor the policy. That action will be reported to the CTC on EEO/AA Form 1.
- The Liaison will arrange for the Theology of Call presentation by a trained presenter. Through reflection on the call of God in the lives of Biblical characters, participants are encouraged to recognize and trust the call of God in their own lives and in the work of the PNC. The PNC may invite the Session members and Board of Deacons to attend this presentation.
- If the congregation has participated in a CAT Scan in the past five years, the Liaison will arrange for a presentation of the resulting Vital Signs report by a trained interpreter. If a new CAT Scan is required, the Liaison will arrange for the PNC and Session to schedule the CAT Scan with NCP staff.
- If it is determined that a Jumpstart retreat is appropriate, the Liaison will schedule the Jumpstart with the General Presbyter.
- The Liaison will discuss the tasks that the PNC must perform, recommended leadership roles, and an estimated timeline. Typically, PNCs have a Chair, Vice Chair, Recording Secretary and Correspondence Secretary. The PNC may appoint a Chaplain to open each meeting with brief inspirational presentations such as a reflection on an appropriate Bible text, a piece of art or music, or a historical or contemporary story.

Who Does What: Responsibilities During a Pastoral Vacancy

The search for a new pastor is a partnership between the presbytery, congregations, Sessions, PNCs and the PCUSA.

1. The Session (on behalf of the congregation)

- may conduct a mission study and/or the Congregational Assessment Tool (CAT) Scan
- affirms its support of the EEO/AA policies of the PC(USA) and the Presbytery
- approves the position description and the compensation package following the Presbytery compensation guidelines, including the family leave and sabbatical guidelines, within which the PNC can negotiate
- provides a budget for PNC expenses (See [Appendix B, Budget Items for a PNC Search](#))
- reviews and approves the completed [Ministry Discernment Profile \(MDP\)](#)
- supports the PNC with prayer and respects the confidentiality of the search process
- calls the congregational meeting to hear the PNC's report and elect the new pastor

2. The Interim Pastor (if one is employed)

- may lead or assist with a mission study as necessary
- supports and prays for the PNC
- cannot ordinarily be called as the installed pastor (See [Policy on Changes in Pastoral Role Within a Congregation](#))

3. The Senior Pastor (if the PNC begins its search before the Pastor leaves, or if the search is for an Associate Pastor)

- honors the independence and confidentiality of the PNC
- is kept abreast of the progress of the PNC by PNC Chair
- participates in the search process for an Associate Pastor to the extent that he/she determines is appropriate
- interviews only the final candidates for an Associate Pastor position

4. The Pastor Nominating Committee

- prepares the Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP)
- reads and evaluates Pastor Discernment Profiles (PDP) from potential candidates
- interviews and conducts reference checks on candidates of interest
- hears the candidates preach on videos, Facebook, or in-person
- keeps the congregation, staff and CTC Liaison informed on the status of the search
- selects a candidate to place in nomination before the congregation
- provides support to the new pastor during the transition period

5. The Congregation

- prays for the PNC and respects the confidentiality of its work
- votes on the call of the pastor and the Terms of Call (in a single vote)

6. Presbytery staff

- conducts Presbytery Exec-to-Presbytery Exec reference checks on candidates before they are invited to face-to-face interviews
- orders and reviews criminal background checks on final candidates
- approves installation plans
- provides staff support for the CTC and COM
- maintains the [NCP website](#) where [COM documents](#) and pastoral vacancy [announcements](#) are posted
- serves as liaison to the [PC\(USA\) Church Leadership Connection](#) and generates CLC login credentials Clerks of Session who then creates the login credentials for the PNC chair(s)
- schedules and coordinates the Examination Process of the final candidate
- supports CTC in review of Terms of Call to assess compliance with Presbytery compensation policy
- serves as liaison to [PC\(USA\) Board of Pensions](#) on matters of compensation and benefits

7. Congregational Transitions Commission (CTC)/Committee on Ministry (COM)

- appoints a Liaison to work closely with the PNC through the transition period
- provides guidance documents and policies related to the search process
- along with the Session, approves the Ministry Discernment Profile and vacancy notices that are posted on the Presbytery website
- conducts theological examinations of finalists (COM's Examination Team)
- grants permission for Session to call a congregational meeting to elect a pastor
- approves the Terms of Call and the Examination on behalf of the Presbytery

8. Presbyterian Church (USA) (PCUSA)

- maintains Church Leadership Connection, a computer system through which PNCs submit Ministry Discernment Profiles (MDPs) and candidates submit Pastor Discernment Profiles (PDPs) for the purpose of advertising vacancies and matching churches to potential candidates
- publishes information about MDP and PDP forms and instructions, and other guidance

The Nature of the PNC's Work

1. **The Need for Spiritual Guidance.** Calling a pastor requires wisdom beyond ourselves. The PNC begins and ends each meeting with prayer. The prayers of the entire congregation can bring deeper purpose to your work, encourage unanimity rather than divisiveness, and create a spirit of concern for the Church of Jesus Christ, rather than for lesser interests.
2. **The Need for Trust.** Allow yourselves some time to get to know each other. Early on, establish some ground rules for working together – commitment to the process; honoring each other's differences; listening; ensuring all have an opportunity to speak; dealing with conflict directly and honestly *within the meetings*; placing the needs of the congregation above any personal agenda or issues; striving for consensus.
3. **The Need for Confidentiality.** To protect the integrity of the process and the privacy of the candidates, all matters discussed by your committee must be kept ***absolutely confidential***. This confidence must be kept even from members of families of the committee and other church officers. Some committees have discovered that their work has been seriously undermined by misunderstandings that arise out of incomplete or premature information. It is appropriate to speak generally of where the PNC is in the process, but it is not appropriate to share any information that could reveal the identity of a candidate.
 - To protect the confidential nature of the work, PNC members should use personal email addresses for PNC correspondence, not those that are shared by others, such as family members.
4. **The Need for Communication.** It is important that the congregation and Interim Pastor know how your work is progressing. Although you cannot discuss names of individuals, you will keep the congregation informed through announcements in worship, congregational letters, newsletter articles, the church web site, etc. In addition, your committee should identify those key points at which the Session must be involved in your work.
5. **The Need for Leadership.** Elect a chair and vice-chair (or two co-chairs), and at least one secretary. The role of the chair is to encourage discussion of various viewpoints; to delegate responsibility and see that tasks are carried out, rather than doing all the work alone; and to ensure that decisions reached are the consensus of the group rather than the will of the chair or of an outspoken minority. The chair, therefore, should be someone who is highly respected, and chosen because of proven ability in these areas. Secretaries (Recording/Corresponding) keep notes of meetings and manage committee correspondence, including Pastor Discernment Profiles (PDPs). Appointing a Chaplain to the PNC will keep the PNC grounded in prayer and attention to the spiritual life of the committee. You may also want to appoint someone with computer skills to be responsible for submitting the Ministry Discernment Profile to the denomination's database, retrieving matched PDPs, and tracking forms as they are received, acknowledged, and reviewed.
6. **The Need for Scheduled Meetings.** Set a date and a time for weekly meetings, making certain that the time is clear for all committee members and convenient for the COM Liaison, and commit to honoring the allotted time for meetings. Members of the committee should be relieved of all other major responsibilities in the church. The task of seeking a pastor requires undivided commitment of time and energy.
7. **The Need for Concern for Persons.** Remember, you will be dealing with ministers as persons in an important time of their lives. The minister who seriously considers your church, and whom your committee seriously

considers, is entitled to honesty and openness and recognition by your committee of the minister's lifetime commitment to the work of the Church of Jesus Christ. The minister should be kept informed of whether or not you are still interested. PDPs, interviews, position descriptions, salary negotiations should never overshadow our concern for our brothers and sisters in Christ as persons.

8. **The Need for Fairness and Justice.** The Presbytery EEO/AA policies are designed to assist as you give serious consideration to people of all genders, racial/ethnic persons, and persons with disabilities. You, your Session and the Presbytery representative should go over the policy to be sure that you understand all parts of it. Note what records must be kept in order to fulfill this important responsibility.
9. **The Need for Funds.** The Session provides funds for expenses such as travel, secretarial services, entertainment of candidates, moving expenses, etc., separate from the money budgeted for pastoral salary. Consultation with them is required to make certain that the funds are adequate. (See [Appendix B, Budget Items for a PNC Search.](#))

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PNC/APNC Timeline in Five Parts

(Total 9 to 12 months assumes PNC meets weekly and all goes well.)

This outline and estimated timeline include the major steps for a PNC search for a called/installed pastor. The PNC may use this outline to write in proposed or completed meeting dates which can help track their progress and confirm they are “on-time”. The ‘Notes’ column allows the committee to write who will do what and questions as they come up during discussion.

Refer to the [Calling a Pastor Matrix](#) as a supplement. That document describes specific actions that are to be taken by all parties involved.

The same basic steps are followed in calling an Associate Pastor or Co-Pastor. The primary difference is the role of the Pastor, as Head of Staff, in the process. The Pastor and the PNC will discuss the nature and extent of the Pastor’s role in the search at the beginning of the process to clarify expectations and promote good communication.

Meeting Dates		Notes
	ONE: Getting Started	
Allow two meetings	Who does what? Team building. Review Timeline. Review resources. EEO/AA policy. Elect PNC leadership. Budget. Set meeting schedule.	Liaison attends all of Part I sessions. Discussion of EEO/AA policy and diversity.
One meeting	Theology of the Call Presentation	A dedicated meeting with no other business.

	TWO: Preparing to write the MDP	
	If doing a Jumpstart	
Allow 4-6 weeks	Schedule Jumpstart Schedule CAT Scan	Liaison does orientation for Part II.
Fri. eve – Saturday	Jumpstart event PNC takes notes on comments and results.	Liaison Attends. Key congregational leaders should attend.
Simultaneous with Jumpstart	Conduct Cat Scan (if necessary)	

or Mission Study		
	Schedule CAT interpretation for PNC	Liaison attends. May invite Session to attend; or do a separate interpretation for Session.
	If doing a Mission Study	
Allow 6-8 weeks	Plan Small Group Listening Sessions and design a Congregational Survey	Liaison available to answer questions.
	Session Meeting input	
	Worship Service Announcements of Survey and small groups	
	Release Survey	
	Staff Listening session	
	Deacons Meeting input	
	Small Group Listening Session #1	For congregation after church
	Small Group Listening Session #2	For congregation after church
	Synthesize findings of survey and small group Listening Sessions.	Liaison attends.

	THREE: Writing the MDP	
Allow 4-5 weeks	Write 1st draft of the MDP questions	Liaison does orientation for Part III. Otherwise available to answer questions.
	Review 1 st draft	
	Collect church data for Part I. Decide salary range.	Talk w/ Clerk of Session and Personnel Committee
	Write 2 nd draft of MDP	
	Review 2 nd draft of MDP	
	PNC approves final draft	
	Send MDP To Session & COM for approval	Session may hold a special meeting for this purpose.
	Respond to Session & COM Comments.	

	Finalize MDP.	
	FOUR: Selecting candidates	
Allow 5 weeks+	PNC enters church data and narrative on MDP form. COM confirms. MDP is activated on CLC.	Liaison does orientation for Part IV. Otherwise available to answer questions.
	Creative advertising and networking for candidates.	Send 'classified ad' to NCP for website.
	Decide how to review PDPs (break into small groups or all together). Receive first PDP matches from CLC.	
	Discuss results of PDP reviews with whole group	
	As desired, receive next group of PDPs from CLC and review.	
	Discuss results of new PDPs. If needed, continue to receive additional PDPs, allowing necessary time for review and discussion.	
	Decide on 10-12 candidates for first-round zoom interviews.	
	Check references. search Facebook, google, etc., for additional candidate info. Watch sermon videos.	
	Draft interview questions.	
	Decide how to evaluate and rank candidates.	
	Finalize interview questions.	.
	Schedule and conduct zoom or phone interviews.	
	Discuss results of initial interviews. Decide on candidates for second interviews. Repeat as necessary.	
	Decide if ready to proceed with at least 3 final candidates for in-person interviews.	

Allow one week+ for results <i>before</i> scheduling in-person interviews.	Submit final candidates' info to NCP Exec. for background checks.	
	Schedule weekend in-person interviews. Schedule neutral pulpits as needed.	
	Meet each week after a final interview to discuss each candidate.	
	**If no finalist, start over: review new PDPs, do initial zoom interviews, etc.	Do not close MDP portal until final candidate has accepted the call.
	FIVE: We Have a Finalist	
Allow 5-6 weeks	Liaison does orientation for V. Otherwise available to answer questions.	
	Identify the candidate to call. Offer call to candidate, negotiate terms of call.	
Allow 2 weeks to schedule exam and COM approval.	Request COM review of terms of call and schedule Examination.	
Requires 2 weeks notice.	Ask Session to schedule Congregational Meeting for purpose of calling a pastor.	
	Write a bio and description of the candidate to accompany the notice of the Congregational meeting.	
	Congregational Meeting votes to approve Candidate followed by a reception.	
After the call is finalized.	Final PNC housekeeping and records.	
	PNC provides support to new pastor during transition.	

PART II: PREPARING TO WRITE THE MINISTRY DISCERNMENT PROFILE (MDP)

The Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP) provides information about the position you are seeking to fill, and information about your church and your community. It is used to match your pastoral needs with the experience and skills of candidates who are seeking churches, and to advertise your position. One way to prepare to write the MDP is to ask: Who is God calling your congregation to be and what is God calling your congregation to do? The congregation and key church leadership will be invited to participate in this period of church wide discernment.

Part II Goal:

- To collect information about the congregation, its values and priorities, and the church's community setting.

Part II Tasks:

- Become familiar with the [MDP narrative questions](#).
- Decide what methods and resources the PNC will use to gather information.
- Schedule a CAT Scan, if necessary, or schedule a presentation of results from a recent CAT Scan.
- Schedule a Jumpstart event or develop a plan for alternative ways to gather information.
- Schedule meetings with Session, Deacons, staff, youth, key leaders, etc., for input.
- Divide up responsibility for these tasks among the PNC members: Who will do what, by when?

Part II Resources:

- Congregational data from the Clerk of Session submitted annually to the PCUSA
- Church Assessment Tool (CAT Scan) (coming soon)
- Jumpstart Retreat
- Church mission studies
- Congregational surveys
- Demographic data on the community surrounding the church from [MissionInsight](#) (Contact the Director of Congregational Development and Mission)

Options to Gather Information for the MDP

These options offer PNCs flexibility in how they will gather information for the MDP. The choice of how to gather information for writing the MDP is up to the PNC. Avoid focusing on past ministries. The purpose is to do an analysis of the church's mission and ministry for the *future*.

Schedule a CAT Scan, if necessary, or schedule a presentation for the PNC of recent CAT Scan results. The presbytery requires all churches seeking new pastoral leadership to have completed a CAT Scan within the past five years. The results of a CAT Scan will help the PNC describe the strengths, culture and vital signs present in your congregation. The CAT Scan, conducted by Holy Cow, can be scheduled simultaneously with other information gathering tools. The PNC will work with the Session and presbytery staff to schedule the CAT Scan and the follow up meeting where an interpretation of the results will be presented. The PNC may invite Session members to attend the results presentation. However, if the PNC wants to be free to have a candid conversation about results and maintain confidentiality, the PNC may ask that a separate executive summary of CAT Scan results be presented to the Session and the congregation. Holy Cow staff are available to consult with a PNC on desirable leadership characteristics of the next pastor, based on the results of the CAT Scan.

A Jumpstart retreat is the shortest path to writing the MDP.

This two-day gathering is led by trained members of the presbytery staff and can be held at the church. The focus is on what is most important to the congregation, and the future hopes and dreams of the congregation. Everyone in the congregation is welcome to attend. The PNC will work with church leadership and presbytery staff to schedule the Jumpstart and manage the logistics. The date for the event should allow all members of the PNC and the presbytery Liaison to attend. PNC members are encouraged to take notes during the Jumpstart event. Especially note comments and insights that resonate with a large number of attendees. The PNC will publicize the Jumpstart event, making sure that key leaders are personally invited. Some churches supplement the information gained at the Jumpstart by holding a series of listening sessions for input from groups such as the Session, Deacons, youth group, administrative staff, music staff, and other key leaders.

A Mission Study is another information gathering tool, but it can take longer to complete.

Some churches have a planning committee responsible for this task. Other churches contract with paid consultants to conduct this type of study. The PNC may delegate a mission study to the Session or an appropriate Session committee. A church may have recently completed an intensive study of future mission opportunities. Depending on when a mission study was completed, the PNC may want to update the study with a series of several small group listening sessions for members after Sunday worship. The PNC may also hold a series of listening sessions for input from groups such as the Session, Deacons, youth group, administrative staff, music staff and other key leaders.

Mission studies can be helpful for churches that haven't reviewed or changed their mission goals in the last 5-10 years or longer. However, the goal of a Mission Study is not finding out what people in the congregation want in their new minister, and then trying to make everyone happy. A PNC may skip the Jumpstart or Mission Study when the church practices a discipline of reviewing the congregation's mission every year or two using a discernment process.

An outside Consultant may be hired to as an alternative to a Mission Study conducted by the Session or the PNC.

During this period of information gathering, the PNC will keep the congregation informed of opportunities to participate. The quality of a congregation's input can make a difference in a successful match with a pastor who understands and shares the church's values and mission priorities.

PART III: WRITING THE MINISTRY DISCERNMENT PROFILE (MDP)

Now that you have gathered information, it's time to create the MDP document. The MDP tells prospective candidates about your congregation. Using input gathered from the congregation, the PNC will develop a description of the pastor you are seeking and describe the congregation's mission priorities. In the process of writing, the PNC will prayerfully discern what God is calling your congregation to do in your next phase of ministry.

Goals for Part III:

- Complete the Ministry Discernment Profile
- Post the MDP on the PCUSA search system, the Church Leadership Connection (CLC)

Tasks for Part III:

- Download the printable MDP form and instructions from the CLC website (add link).
- Work in small groups to draft different sections, or work as a whole team to write the narrative sections.
- Decide on a salary range for the new pastor.
- Get approval for the final draft from the Session and the COM representative.
- Acquire access to and a password for the CLC system from COM administrator.
- Post the MDP on the CLC web site.
- Write a "want ad" and brief job description to be posted on the NCP web page.

Resources for Part III:

- CLC User Guide and Instructions (<https://pcusa.org/about-pcusa/agencies-entities/life-witness/ministry-areas/call-process/church-leadership-connection>)
- Support from CLC staff (clcsupport@pcusa.org)
- [Examples of MDPs from other churches](#)
- Clerk of Session, for congregational data (for Part I of the MDP)
- Your Session or its Personnel Committee, and [presbytery's Pastor compensation policy](#) (Under Resources/CTC/Clergy) for guidance on the minimum effective salary and benefits.
- [Presbytery Administrator for COM](#)
- [Presbytery Web Site Administrator](#)

The Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP)

Guidelines

- Give yourselves ample time to do a thorough job as this document is a potential candidate's first impression of your church.
- In response to the narrative questions, present a realistic picture of your church, including both its strengths and weaknesses. A competent candidate may be more drawn to a challenge than to an easy situation. Be honest in your assessment of the congregation and don't just mention positive things. Every church thinks it is "warm and friendly!"
- Emphasize what is unique about your congregation, community, and possibilities for ministry. Try to convey not only factual information, but something of the "feel" of your church, the level of energy for the church's ministry, and the community within which it exists.
- Paint a portrait that will attract the kind of leadership your church needs for its next chapter of ministry. The PNC should not be afraid to raise challenges, such as "We need a pastor who will help us better reflect our changing neighborhood" or "We need a pastor who will help us energize a congregation that feels too comfortable."

Notes on Part I

- This section asks for objective descriptive information about your congregation and community.
- The Clerk of Session of your church can provide the Ministry ID (also known as your church's "pin number") and can also help you gather the most recent statistical information that is requested, such as congregation size, average worship attendance, church school attendance and curriculum, and the racial ethnic composition of the congregation.
- Your church is in National Capital Presbytery, in the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic.

Notes on Part II

- Part II asks for the position type and years of experience desired; leadership skills and experience required and desired; salary information; and narratives about the church's mission, programs and accomplishments, and the gifts and experience of your congregation.
- As you begin this section, decide on the characteristics you want in your new pastor. Completing this exercise first will make it easier to write the narrative questions. Use language in the MDP regarding competencies as conversation starters.

- Your Session will give direction about the mission statement, the position description, and the compensation package you can offer a new pastor. The rest is up to you, drawing from the resources used to gather information in preparation to write the MDP.
- When writing the narrative questions, don't write about what you did 20-30 years ago. Be honest about who you are now as a congregation. Prospective candidates may be attracted to a church that admits they aren't perfect or that they don't know what their future will be.
- For Compensation and Housing, enter both the maximum and minimum effective salary that your Session feels it can offer. The Session is responsible for providing this information, and it must be in compliance with Presbytery's Pastor Compensation Policy, [COM Documents](#). The church treasurer, personnel committee or COM Administrator can help you with this section. CLC uses the maximum salary for matching purposes.

Submitting the MDP

- When the PNC completes the MDP it submits it to the Session and the COM Liaison for approval.
- The final, approved MDP is signed by the Clerk of Session, COM representative, and PNC chair, is sent to the presbytery's COM Administrator.
- The PNC Chair and the Clerk of Session contacts the COM Administrator to gain access to the Church Leadership Connection (CLC).
- The PNC submits the MDP online, following CLC instructions.
- The Clerk of Session and the PNC chair will be alerted by email to log in to Church Leadership Connection to attest to Session and COM approval of the MDP electronically.
- When approvals are completed, the MDP is released to the CLC database, and will be publicly accessible.
- CLC will perform a computer match of the MDP against Pastor Discernment Profiles (PDPs) in the database. The matching is done on objective information in the documents, such as position type, years of experience, leadership competencies, language, etc. The PNC is notified by email to log in to CLC and retrieve the referred PDPs. PNC is encouraged to login and check for PDPs periodically.
- Note that candidates can self-refer their PDP through the CLC system.

Suggestions for Advertising Your Position

A search is not waiting passively for candidates to find you. Currently there are more churches seeking pastors than there are pastors seeking to serve churches. Therefore, you must actively generate interest in your position. The following are some ideas to increase your visibility and broaden your outreach to possible candidates:

- **Post your church's vacancy on the Presbytery website.** After approval by CTC, send the presbytery's Website Administrator a brief job description and she will post it in the "Calls & Jobs" menu with a link to your MDP.
- **Enhance your church's web site.** Your MDP contains your church website's address, as should any advertisements you publish. Work with your church's website administrator to ensure your website is up-to-date and attractive not only to the public but to potential candidates. You can also use this site to keep your congregation informed on the PNC's progress by setting up a PNC web page. The PNC web page could include photos of the members of the PNC, the Litany for a Pastoral Search, and updates on milestones in the search process.
- **Get creative and make a video to advertise your search.** If your church has people with technical skills, create a homemade video showing the church building, people engaged in worship, mission projects, the music and educational programs, and social activities. This could be as simple as a project for the youth group. Or, the church could hire a videographer to produce a video. One church produced a video that featured testimonials from members of all ages and backgrounds saying why they love their church. Pictures can tell a compelling story about who you are as a congregation.
- **Network.** Talk to friends and relatives, pastors, other Presbytery executives about your vacancy and your church. Ask if they know of candidates who might be a good fit. Encourage members of your congregation to do the same. Never underestimate the power of word-of-mouth advertising!
- **Contact seminaries.** Most have placement offices that will post information about pastoral vacancies. An increasing number have web sites for posting vacancies and graduates' resumes. Click [here](#) for links to all Presbyterian seminaries on the PC(USA) website.

PART IV: SELECTING AND INTERVIEWING CANDIDATES

As you read Pastor Discernment Profiles (PDPs) and conduct interviews keep this question in mind:
Is God calling this pastor to lead and work with your congregation in its mission and ministry?

Part IV Goals:

- To collect and evaluate applicants' PDPs, discerning if their theological background, experience and other qualities match you church's MDP.
- To evaluate a candidate's fit with your congregation.
- To interview candidates.
- To decide on final candidates for in-person, on-site interviews.

Part IV Tasks:

- Receive Pastor Discernment Profiles from the CLC and self-referrals.
- Choose an evaluation tool to use to rank the PNC's interest in candidates.
- Decide if or how your PNC will divide up PDPs for review.
- Discuss results of PDP reviews with the whole group.
- Identify 10-12 promising candidates for first interviews.
- Check references, watch sermon videos, and seek additional candidate information.
- Develop interview questions.
- Schedule first interviews on zoom or conference call. (Repeat as necessary.)
- Identify candidates for second interviews. (Repeat as necessary.)
- When ready, Identify at least three final candidates for in-person, on-site interviews
- Submit final candidates' information to the General Presbyter and COM Administrator for background checks before scheduling final in-person interviews.
- Schedule in-person, on-site interviews at the church.
- (If no final candidate is chosen, repeat selection process)

Part IV Resources:

- Sample evaluation tools (see [Appendix C](#)).
- Sample interview questions (see [Appendix D](#)).

The Pastor Discernment Profile (PDP)

The Pastor Discernment Profile (PDP) provides information about candidates in a format similar to the MDP. It is used to match your pastoral needs with the experience and skills of candidates who are seeking churches. For example, the information in Part I of a PDP can be compared to the information in Part I of your MDP; and pastors answer the same questions in Part II of the PDP that you answered in your MCP.

Preparing to Receive PDPs

Become familiar with CLC instructions for receiving and responding to PDPs. The CLC system provides a record to keep track of when PDPs are received, acknowledged, and acted upon. To maintain confidentiality, PDPs are stored on the CLC system using a secure, password protected account.

Take time to consider how the committee will organize itself to evaluate candidates. Establish ranking, screening, and selection criteria based on the requirements in your MDP. (See [Appendix C, Sample Evaluation Forms](#).) A standard form used by all members of the PNC provides for an unbiased ranking process.

Links to information about your church should already be listed within your MDP. If not, prepare a package of materials (in electronic format) that you can send to interested candidates to tell them more about your church, such as sample worship bulletins, links to the church web site and Facebook page, newsletters, and neighborhood information.

Receiving and Acknowledging PDPs

Acknowledge that you have received all self-referred PDPs sent directly to the PNC.

A simple, friendly e-mail message or letter will suffice. PDPs that are matched by the CLC system, or are self-referred from within the CLC system, are distinguished by a notation in the 'Referred by' column.

You do not need to acknowledge receipt of PDPs received through CLC matching. Pastors are able to find out the churches their PDPs have been matched with, but they are not expecting acknowledgement.

Suggestions for Reviewing PDPs

Each PDP should be reviewed and compared with your MDP. For example:

- Does the candidate have the years of experience you are seeking?
- Do they exhibit the qualifications and skills that you need?
- Have they lived and worked in a setting like yours?
- Do their narrative statements satisfy your requirements?
- What words or phrases catch your attention, both positive and negative?
- What else would you like to know about the candidate?

Create a shared spreadsheet to keep notes on individual candidates. It will be difficult to remember early candidates after you have reviewed many PDPs, and notes will jog your memories.

When promising candidates are identified

First, use the check boxes in your CLC account to determine if candidates are indeed interested in being considered for your position by offering an invitation to apply.

Seek more information on a candidate. A Google search will often reveal much, such as video sermons; personal blogs and other publications; and involvement in denominational and community activities. You can often discover more background on a candidate if they have a Facebook page.

Develop questions for the candidate to answer either by email or in an initial zoom/phone interview. Use first interviews to focus on identifying a candidate's skills. When a candidate has the skills you are looking for, use a second interview to explore the candidate's vision and spiritual journey.

If geographically possible, consider sending one PNC member to visit the candidate's current church as a guest. If you visit, do not identify yourself as a member of a PNC to protect confidentiality that the pastor is a candidate.

Use email to schedule initial interviews by zoom or phone. These interviews will narrow the field to candidates you may wish to interview in person later in the process.

Communicate with candidates the PNC is still actively considering by saying, "We continue to discern God's will in this process, and you are still under consideration." Candidates whom you have ruled out should be notified promptly as a matter of courtesy.

Note: Occasionally, an applicant from a denomination other than the PCUSA may be self-referred. These applicants must be approved by the presbytery's CTC before the PNC can consider them for interviews. If CTC determines that an applicant is qualified, or can become qualified, to be received as a minister member of the presbytery, the candidate may be considered by the PNC.

Interviewing Candidates

Set a time limit for initial and follow-up interviews to set expectations, but be flexible. During the interview, time can be extended depending on how the interview develops. It is not necessary to draft dozens of questions that include every subject in your MDP. Limit questions to your top ministry priorities. In addition to the PNC's questions, build in some time to follow up on conversations that may not address one of your questions. Allow time at the end of the interview for the candidate to ask the PNC questions about your church. A candidate's questions can be as revealing as the questions you decided to ask.

All questions to candidates should relate to qualifications for the position as described in the MDP and not personal characteristics that can lead to bias. For example, it is not appropriate to ask questions about an applicants' age, family and marital status, spouse's occupation; race or nationality; whether they have children or plan to have children; physical or mental health disabilities; or clubs and organizations to which they belong.

PNCs should let all candidates interviewed know that this Presbytery conducts criminal background checks on all prospective incoming candidates. The check is done on final candidates for in-person interviews and as a part of the preparation for the COM Examination Interview. See the [Clergy Sexual Misconduct Policy](#) on this matter.

Sample interview questions are in [Appendix D: Theological Fit](#), for questions designed to assess theological compatibility with candidates.

Checking References

Primary References are those listed in the candidate's PDP.

Following telephone interviews, conduct reference checks on all candidates you are seriously considering.

Call each of the references listed on the PDP, asking both general questions and questions that your PNC has developed about this person as it relates to your position. If a current parishioner cannot be contacted in confidence, it is not a good sign. Should the PNC wish to interview references other than those whom the candidate has listed, the candidate must give permission.

See the Sample Form 3: Reference Checks in [Appendix C Sample Forms](#) for a sample "script" and suggested questions to use when conducting a reference check.

Secondary References are those suggested by primary references or anyone other than the candidate. **You must get the candidate's permission to contact secondary references.**

General Presbyter Reference Checks are required before inviting candidates for face-to-face interviews.

After conducting preliminary phone interviews and your own reference checks, request Presbytery reference checks from the General Presbyter. Use [EEO/AA Form 2 \(Appendix F\)](#) to request the checks.

The General Presbyter will provide his own reference for candidates who are members of National Capital Presbytery. For other candidates, he will consult his counterpart at other presbyteries, seeking any negative information about the candidate that would preclude them from your further consideration. Within a few days of your request, you will be informed of the results of the reference checks and whether you are able to move forward with scheduling a face-to-face interview.

As soon as you determine you're not going any further with a candidate you've contacted, write a thoughtful letter to that person. Remember that an entire family may be waiting to hear from you, not just the candidate. The prospect of a potential move can affect family plans and routine. Put yourself in the place of the candidate's family and be prompt in concluding conversations.

Checking Your Process and Progress

Communication

Communicate regularly with the congregation in a variety of ways, including announcements in worship, the church newsletter, website, and Facebook page – whatever is most effective in your congregation. Remember, there is no such thing as over-communicating in a church!

Even though there may be little specific information that you can give, describe where you are in the process. Remind the congregation and the Session how to access the MDP so they remain aware of what the PNC is searching for. Ask the Session and the congregation to continue to pray for the PNC and its work.

As the search process winds down, keep the Interim Pastor informed of the progress so that he/she will know when to begin searching for the next interim position.

Direction

It is important that the PNC and the Session continue moving in the same direction during the search process. Before beginning face-to-face interviews, the PNC Chair should ask the Interim Pastor and Session if the MDP continues to reflect the church's direction and its needs for future leadership. The MDP may be edited on the CLC system at any time.

Openness

Give thoughtful consideration to candidates of all races, ages, abilities, conditions, and stations in life, including candidates of different genders. PNCs are to be mindful of the Presbytery's EEO/AA policy and the PC(USA) Book of Order statements on diversity and openness in F-1.0403 and F-1.0404.

The PNC is required to have persons of different genders among its final candidates--that is, those you are prepared to interview in person. (This reference to NCP's EEO/AA policy is pending approval by the presbytery.)

Taking Stock

You are probably more than halfway through the process of searching for a pastor. You are beginning to wonder if you will ever be able to make a decision. That is probably the sign that it is time to take stock.

1. **Are we too hard to please?** That is a legitimate question. Probably no one person can combine all the attributes we would like to see in our pastor. That means we have to pick and choose those attributes which are most important to our church.
2. **Have we just not found the right one yet?** That is the other side of question one. There is no need to panic just because we have not made a decision. It may be the ideal candidate is just finishing up a building program, or completing a crucial counseling session, or just realizing they have said all they have to say to their present congregation. Our potential pastor may just now becoming available. God may have been stalling us until now.
3. **Do we need to seek additional candidates?** Maybe the "right" person hasn't come forward. Consider reaching out beyond PDPs received to contact pastors whom you have heard about or whom you know from elsewhere. Possibly they are not looking for a new call, but they may be willing to consider your invitation to apply. Many good matches have resulted from this type of contact.
4. **Are we sure about what we want?** Is there clarity in the committee about what we want in a pastor? Are some set on a preacher and some on an administrator? Do some want a young person and others want maturity? Have we honestly faced up to those differences of opinion or are we just hoping to find someone who fits both? Talk it through openly so everyone understands what everyone else is looking for.

5. **Why have we turned down some of the candidates we have heard?** Were our reasons sound? Were our reasons really connected with the candidate? If we didn't like his/her preaching, was it because of the church rather than the candidate? Few candidates have perfect sermons every day. Did we not like their PDP? Perhaps they just don't express themselves well on paper. Look a little deeper at what they are trying to say about themselves. Were some references negative? That may be a positive sign. Few people who try to accomplish something are liked by everyone. Their judgment may be biased. Beware the candidate about whom everyone says good things.
6. **Why have some candidates turned us down?** Have we presented our church fairly and openly? Have we been too eager or too aloof? Is our salary scale adequate for the type of pastor we want? Ask your General Presbyter or presbytery Liaison to evaluate you. They may have some feedback from candidates you have interviewed. If you felt particularly comfortable with some candidates who declined your call, telephone them and ask for help in evaluating yourself.
7. **Is there external pressure on us?** Is our church having trouble getting supply pastors? Is our Interim's time running out? Can we get another Interim? Do things at the church seem to be slowing down because we don't have a pastor? Can Presbytery aid our church in keeping up enthusiasm among teachers, leaders and officers? You cannot let this pressure force you to a premature decision, but you can do something to relieve it.
8. **Have you asked for help?** Have we asked the presbytery Liaison or the General Presbyter's opinion of who would be best for us? We don't have to take their advice, but it might be helpful to have.
9. **Have we prayed enough?** The obvious is sometimes ignored. Have we opened ourselves to God's leading? Ours is, after all, a spiritual task. We believe that God is, through us, placing a pastor here so that we can be God's witness in this place. If we ask and if we listen, we will be led to the right person. However, God's timetable may not be the same as ours.

Final Candidates

Checking in with the Session.

This is a good time to confirm that the Session and the PNC are moving in the same direction.

- Does the MDP still reflect the church's current needs and direction?
- Does the previously-approved compensation package need to be adjusted to take into account a change in the congregation's finances or annual adjustments in the Presbytery's compensation guidelines?
- Are there any developments in the life of the congregation that the PNC needs to be aware of as it makes its selection?
- Is the Session clear about the process for finalizing the call? Review the steps in the process, from the time the PNC selects a finalist through the installation of the pastor.

Required information for final candidates.

- Per Presbytery policy, the PNC shall provide final candidates for pastor with:

- the most recent three years of a church's financial records
- the church treasurer's annual reports for the most recent three years
- the current year's budget
- the most recent expense report

Final candidates shall also be informed that they may make an appointment with the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery to review the Presbytery file on the congregation at the Presbytery's office. The General Presbyter and the church's Interim Pastor will also be made available to talk with the candidate and answer questions.

These steps are to protect the congregation from choosing candidates who may not be a good fit. They also ensure that final candidates are well informed in order to discern if they want to continue to be considered in the process.

Face-to-Face Interviews. The committee's final interviews are usually held over a weekend that includes time for questions and answers, informal fellowship, an opportunity to hear the candidate preach in a neutral pulpit, a tour of church facilities, a tour of the community surrounding the church, and meetings with select staff members.

- The PNC reviews the MDP, candidate's materials, and notes from reference checks in preparation for the final interview.
- Create opportunities for the candidate to meet informally with 2-3 members of the PNC as well a more formal interview session with the entire PNC.
- Focus especially on issues related to style and theological fit. See [Appendix D, Theological Fit](#), for suggested questions. Be sure the candidate's theology is "right" for your congregation.
- This is also a time for the candidate to "interview" the PNC, so be sure to allow time in the interview for the candidate to ask questions. PNC's may assign members to be prepared to answer questions in different subject areas (worship, education, mission, administration, etc.).
- The interview weekend offers opportunities for the candidate to interview other church professional staff. All involved must be aware of the necessity to maintain confidentiality.
- In a search for an Associate, the Pastor/Head of Staff will interview all of the final candidates, with the PNC and separately from the PNC, as the Pastor chooses.
- In a search for Pastor/Head of Staff, the candidates also meet with the Associate Pastor.

Neutral Pulpits

- Having a final candidate to preach at a neutral pulpit is optional to protect confidentiality. There are both risks and benefits to neutral pulpits.

It is important to maintain confidentiality to retain freedom in decision-making and to protect the candidate, who may not have told his/her current congregation of his/her interest in pursuing another call. Many congregations broadcast their worship services online. There is a risk that someone in the candidate's home church may hear that their pastor has preached at another church and confidentiality is breached. Allow your final candidates decide if they will preach in a neutral pulpit. If the candidate agrees to preach in a neutral pulpit, there are precautions the host church can take to reduce the risks.

On the other hand, many PNCs have benefitted from seeing the candidate preach in person. Watching a

two-dimensional video is different from seeing the candidate preach in an actual worship setting. By experiencing the sermon in person, PNCs can observe the congregation's reaction to the preacher's message.

- The presbytery Liaison arranges for the candidate to preach in a neutral pulpit – a church other than the calling church. The Liaison will try to find a neutral church of similar size and with a similar setting to the calling church.
- The Liaison will seek to identify a host church for the neutral pulpit where the chances for PNC members to be recognized are minimized (e.g., not in a church too nearby, too small where PNC members will be conspicuous, or where it is likely that congregants from the two churches might know one another).
- The host pastor and the candidate will communicate directly about the details of the service and the extent of the candidate's involvement in the worship service beyond preaching the sermon.
- The PNC should not schedule activities on Saturday evening of the interview weekend, allowing the Pastor time to prepare and rest before preaching in the neutral pulpit.
- Usually a member (or members) of the PNC drives the candidate to the host church, and the PNC often schedules a time for lunch and conversation following the service, bringing the interview weekend to a close.

After the Interview/Neutral Pulpit Weekend

- Give yourselves some time to reflect on the events, conversations, and impressions from the weekend individually, and then gather as a committee to talk and pray about next steps.
- Experienced presbytery Liaison, Alice McGinnis, offers the following advice on discernment after a face-to-face interview. These are her observations of PNCs and APNCs when they have found the right candidate. Wise words!

There is always excitement after the phone interview, and the committee is eager to check references and arrange for a face-to-face interview. After the face-to-face, the committee is eager to share with me all the good things that happened during the weekend. Usually they describe easy social connections, thoughtful presentations of faith journeys, humor and laughter, creativity in answers, and a quiet confidence (or in some cases, bold confidence) on the part of the candidate in his/ her ability to fill the job and succeed. Often the candidate has asked thoughtful questions to further clarify the committee's expectations. The PNC usually has a sense that the match will be good and the candidate will be successful.

In fact, the APNC or PNC can hardly wait for their families and close friends at church to meet the candidate. In the cases where there is a youth representative on the committee, the young person thinks

the candidate will be well received by the youth at church. There does not have to be a “cool” factor, but there has to be warmth, connections and a steadiness that can be sensed by any young person. Finally, the committee needs to know that when they stand up to present the candidate to the congregation, they will be presenting someone of whom they are proud ... and eager to have in their own lives.

We are people who like facts and proof, and up to this point, you have used numbers and scores for some of your discussions. But after meeting candidates face-to-face, it is time for gut feelings and intuition and prayer. That is what you need for discerning if a candidate is right for your church. The question becomes, “Are you excited, enthusiastic and confident that this candidate will be successful at our church?”

PART V: WE HAVE A FINAL CANDIDATE

The time has come to make the selection of your final choice. The Holy Spirit has chosen you for this task and has led you to select a particular person. Trust the Spirit's direction as well as your own judgment.

Part V Goal:

- The PNC, the presbytery Liaison and the COM Administrator work together with the candidate to complete the steps to approve the call.

Part V Tasks:

- Choose a final candidate and offer a call.
- Negotiate the terms of call, salary and housing package.
- Schedule and complete a COM Examination.
- Seek approval from CTC for the terms of call and examination.
- CLC is notified to remove the MDP from the system.
- The PNC prepares a report to the congregation and a letter to the congregation to introduce the candidate.
- Session schedules a congregational meeting to elect the new pastor.
- Candidate preaches during worship and is elected at the congregational meeting and terms of call are approved.
- The pastor is installed by the presbytery.
- The PNC supports the new pastor during relocation and transition to new ministry.

Part V Resources:

- Forms for Terms of Call
- Presbytery policy for pastor compensation
- [COM Administrator](#)
- COM Examination – Contact the Stated Clerk (page 2)
- Agenda for the Congregational Meeting for the Call of a Pastor ([Appendix G](#))
- Sample Ballot for Congregational Meeting ([Appendix H](#))

Choosing Your Candidate

This time of discernment can take several meetings. However, keep in mind that during the time since your in-person interviews, and even as you are making a decision, some candidates may be considering a call offered by another congregation. It is in PNC's best interest to extend a call before a desired candidate becomes unavailable. And yet, don't rush to make decisions. This is not a hurry-up process. Stay in touch with your top candidates and let them know that you expect to make a decision soon.

The PNC may begin the selection process by taking an informal poll to allow each member to name their top candidate and say why they would choose that person. Members may pass during this round if they are not ready to choose. Listen to each other and listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit. As the PNC discerns who to call as the new pastor, be sure there are no unresolved issues which could cause problems later. Ensure that all members of the PNC have an opportunity to share the perceived strengths of each candidate and also share any reservations.

Strive for a unanimous decision reached through consensus. Prayerfully make your decision.

Once a decision is made, discretion, respect for confidentiality, and careful attention to timing are critical at this stage.

Extending the Call

The Chair of the PNC will contact the candidate by phone and extend an invitation. If the candidate asks for time to think and pray about the decision, request a time within which you can expect to hear from him/her, usually no longer than two weeks.

When you receive a positive answer, finalize the Terms of Call with the candidate. This task is usually best done by one or two PNC members meeting privately with the candidate, in person or by phone. Presbytery staff can refer you to resources for guidance about shared equity housing agreements. Contact the COM Administrator for the Terms of Call Packet and instructions for finalizing and reporting the Terms of Call.

Should the pastor's salary expectations exceed the previously approved compensation package, meet with the Session for further discussion, **without revealing the identity of the candidate**. If the Session is not willing to increase the compensation, you may need to renegotiate with the candidate. The agreed-upon Terms of Call are reviewed by the COM Administrator and the CTC to make sure they meet [Presbytery compensation guidelines](#). *(Double-check with the COM Administrator or your Liaison for the most recent Compensation guidelines as they change yearly)*

If the candidate accepts, the PNC informs the presbytery Liaison, who will ask the COM Administrator to schedule a COM examination interview and CTC approval of the terms of call.

Continue to honor your commitments to confidentiality. The PNC is not free to reveal the candidate's identity until the CTC has approved the call and the pastor grants permission for the PNC to "go public"—that is, when the Pastor has informed his/her current church of the new call.

Finalizing the Call

The Examination Process

After the PNC selects the final candidate and negotiates the Terms of Call, but before the congregational meeting is called and before the pastor is presented to the congregation, the Committee on Ministry (COM) will conduct an Examination Interview to approve the call and recommend the candidate for membership in NCP. Presbytery policies like this are to protect the congregation from extending a call to a pastor who may not be a good theological fit.

When the PNC notifies the Presbytery Liaison of its selection, an Examination Interview will be requested from the Administrator for COM. An examination is not required if the candidate has already been received as a member of the presbytery no more than 10 years ago.

Scheduling an examination may up to two weeks. The interview is conducted on Zoom by a team of three COM members. The Administrator for COM sends the candidate emails, with all necessary documents attached, confirming the details of the interview and describing how and when the candidate's documents should be returned.

The candidate will provide a statement of faith, biographical information, and responses to five questions regarding Presbyterian polity and Reformed theology. These will form the basis for the examination discussion. For the examination process, contact the COM Administrator for details.

In preparation for the examination, the General Presbyter or Stated Clerk will order and review a criminal record background check on the candidate. The results will only be shared with the PNC if there are any problems. (For details, see the [Clergy Sexual Misconduct Policy](#).)

At the conclusion of the interview, the exam team will send its recommendation to the Administrator for COM. The recommendation can be for approval, or for the candidate to complete further study of polity and/or Reformed theology before they can be approved.

The Administrator then requests an e-vote from the CTC, normally completed within 48 hours. With a positive vote and approval of the Terms of Call, CTC recommends receiving the candidate as a minister member of National Capital Presbytery, and grants the Session permission to call a congregational meeting to vote on the pastor and the Terms of Call. CTC approves the call on behalf of COM, pending the vote of the congregation.

Preparing for the Congregational Meeting

After CTC's approval of the examination and terms of call, the PNC can ask the Session to call a congregational meeting where the candidate is presented to the congregation for a vote. Public notice of the meeting should be given in accordance with the rule for minimum notification requirements (G-1.0502). Prior to setting a date for the congregational meeting, have a letter from the PNC introducing the candidate ready to send to the congregation.

PNC's excitement is building and the desire to share the good news is strong! However, **the announcement of the candidate's identity can be done only after successful approval by CTC and the candidate's announcement to his/her own congregation.**

With the candidate's permission and involvement, the PNC can send a letter to the congregation 5-7 days before the congregational meeting, introducing the candidate, with a short biographical sketch, photos and a message from the candidate.

If the candidate agrees, start planning social events for the candidate to meet members of the congregation prior to the congregational meeting. The reception can be held on the Saturday before the congregational meeting or at some later date. A schedule of these events should be included in the introductory letter. Events could include a meeting with church officers and a reception or luncheon for members at large. You should not plan anything for Saturday evening to give the candidate time to relax and get ready to preach on Sunday.

In advance of the meeting, prepare ballots for the election of the pastor and line up ballot counters. See [Appendix H, Sample Ballot for the Congregational Meeting](#).

The Congregational Meeting

Depending on the congregation's custom, the candidate preaches at the worship service prior to the congregational meeting. The candidate is excused from the congregational meeting. A member of the PNC may keep the candidate company during this part of the meeting. The candidate is invited back to the meeting after the votes have been counted and announced.

The agenda for the congregational meeting is found in [Appendix G](#). It includes a time for the PNC to present a report to the congregation that summarizes its process and why they believe God has led them to select the candidate. The PNC should be prepared for questions from the congregation on wide-ranging questions related to the search and the candidate.

The vote on the pastor and the Terms of Call is a single vote, accomplished by secret ballot. See [Appendix H](#). After the tellers have counted the votes, the Moderator will announce the exact count of the vote.

After favorable votes by the congregation, the candidate will be invited into the meeting and congratulated by the congregation. The Moderator attests to the actions taken, and the Clerk of Session completes the formal call forms and returns them to the Presbytery Office for the Stated Clerk and the COM. The PNC is then dismissed with the congregation's thanks.

Per Presbytery policy: Whenever a congregational vote to call a pastor results in a substantial minority in opposition (15%), the moderator shall announce that the vote will be forwarded to the COM to review the results of the election with the candidate and the PNC and the congregation and offer guidance to the candidate as he/she discerns the will of God. COM will approve or not approve the call.

Other Final Steps

- The Stated Clerk of NCP writes to the candidate's Presbytery to request the pastor's membership be transferred. The candidate's Presbytery then dismisses the pastor to NCP.
- The candidate is welcomed into the presbytery. New minister members are introduced by the General Presbyter at a subsequent Presbytery meeting and asked to offer a brief account of their faith journey.
- The MDP taken offline. After the call is approved, the COM Administrator asks CLC to remove the MDP from Church Leadership Connection. The CTC Co-Chair requests that the vacancy listing be removed from the Presbytery website.
- PNC Wrap-up. The PNC reviews its work and submits final data to the Administrator for COM on [EEO/AA Form 3](#). The PNC then seals all materials related to the chosen candidate, including references, and stores them in a secure place. To protect confidentiality of candidates who applied, the PNC destroys all references to applicant's names, interview notes, and reference check notes. They cannot be reused and should not be passed on to the other committees.
- The New Pastor's Arrival. The congregation prepares for the arrival of the new Pastor and welcomes every member of the family. Team building with the new Pastor and Session begins. The PNC will provide support to the new pastor during the transition. It is recommended that the PNC meet regularly with a new pastor to serve as a sounding board and provide helpful feedback.
- Ordination/Installation. The Session and the new Pastor select a date for the installation service, in consultation with Presbytery staff and Presbytery policy. The Stated Clerk approves the installation plans. The new Pastor is installed by Presbytery at a time when other members of the Presbytery are able to attend. Because the service of installation is a Presbytery service, it is the policy of COM not to approve services to be held on Sunday mornings, since that time would preclude many members of Presbytery from attending. Exceptions to this policy may be submitted to the Stated Clerk.

Thank you!

The Congregational Transitions Commission appreciates the work you have done. You have participated in a unique experience, and we honor your dedication.

We continue to need Liaisons to work with churches in transition to new pastoral leadership. Elders who have served on PNCs have the experience and commitment needed to be presbytery Liaisons. Please consider serving in this capacity. The Congregation Transitions Commission of COM provides training for new Liaisons and holds occasional meetings for continuing education and sharing experiences. Let your presbytery Liaison know if you are interested in more information on becoming a Liaison to future PNCs.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Resources

NCP Committee on Ministry Documents

- Presbytery policies, procedures, handbooks (including this one), and manuals are available on the NCP website and may be found under documents may be found on NCP's website under DOCUMENTS/[Committee on Ministry Documents](#)
- Procedures documents
 - Calling a Pastor or Associate Pastor
 - Establishing a New Associate Pastor Position
 - Securing Pastoral Leadership for Immigrant Worshipping Communities
 - Admitting Ministers from Other Denominations
 - Conducting a Dual Search
 - Calling a Designated Pastor as Pastor
 - Pastoral Relationships for Teaching Elders Serving in Congregations
- The [Calls and Jobs](#) tab on the NCP website lists current vacancies in our Presbytery, along with links to MDPs on Church Leadership Connection.

Searching for a Pastor the Presbyterian Way

- The Congregational Transitions Commission recommends that each PNC have access to *Searching for a Pastor the Presbyterian Way*, by Dean Foose.
- NCP will provide one copy to each church engaged in a search for an installed pastor. Additional copies can be ordered from Amazon and Cokesbury.

[Presbyterian Church \(USA\) http://www.pcusa.org/](http://www.pcusa.org/)

- [Church Leadership Connection](#)
 - provides access to [Opportunity Search](#), the database of active MDPs (no password required)
 - [blank MDP and PDP forms and instructions](#); Church Leadership Connection staff and resources; log-in screens for submitting, editing, and approving MDPs (passwords required); and other materials on the search process.
- [PC\(USA\) Seminaries](#)
 - links to the websites of all PC(USA) theological institutions
 - placement offices in seminaries that post resumes of current and former graduates who are seeking positions.

Appendix A1: Description of Installed and Designated Pastors

Pastoral Relationships for Teaching Elders Serving Congregations

Appendix B: Budget Items for a PNC

It is not unreasonable for a church to have a budget of \$7,500 to \$10,000 for conducting a pastoral search. Churches that are limiting their search geographically may be able to have a smaller budget. The following expenses should be planned included when establishing the PNC budget:

- advertising in denominational publications
- face-to-face interviews, per candidate interviewed
 - travel (may include spouse)
 - hotel and meals for one or two nights
 - dinners with committee members
 - other incidental expenses
- return visit for the final candidate for examination unless the examination is conducted by interactive conferencing
 - may include travel expenses, up to two nights lodging, meals, and incidental expenses
- return visit for the final candidate for the “Candidating Weekend” (including the congregational meeting and vote)
 - usually travel expenses, two nights lodging and meals, and incidental expenses (may include spouse)
 - may include cost of a reception for church with candidate and spouse, as well as a gathering/celebration with the candidate and the PNC and families. (It is a time to celebrate, and for the committee and their families to gather and have a chance to recognize the efforts of all committee members.)
 - printing of a brochure for the congregation to be introduced to the candidate
- return visit for the final candidate to look for real estate
 - up to three days’ travel, lodging, meals, incidental expenses (plus spouse)
- moving expenses, per Presbytery compensation guidelines

Appendix C: Sample Evaluation Forms

Sample Form 1: PDP EVALUATION FORM

Candidate's Name:

Evaluation based on:

_____ Personal Discernment Profile (PDP)

_____ Contact with _____ by _____

_____ Interview with Candidate

LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

List leadership competencies below and rank (on a scale from 1 to 7; one being weak and seven being strong)

Sample Form 2: PDP EVALUATION FORM

Candidate: _____

Ranking: Unacceptable (No) Possible (Maybe) Acceptable (Yes)

Objective Impressions of the Candidate (List)

Subjective Impressions of the Candidate (List)

Overall Impression of the Candidate

Specific Strengths or Weaknesses of Note:

Scoring of this PDP – Outstanding Above Average Average Unlikely Candidate

Disposition:

Do you recommend that the PNC continue to consider this candidate?

Sample Form 3: PDP Evaluation Form

Candidate's Name _____

Date Received _____ Date Reviewed _____

Reviewer _____

Specific Strengths:

Weaknesses Identified:

Other Comments:

General Impression of this Candidate (circle one): Outstanding Above Average Average Poor

Disposition:

Do you recommend the PNC continue to consider this candidate? ____ Yes ____ No ____ Maybe

Possible follow-up questions I would like to ask:

Q1.

Q2.

Q3.

Note: *On the other side of this form, you might want to list your skill choices, key points to look for in PDPs, and any other important characteristics you are looking for*

Sample Form 4: REFERENCE CHECK FORM

Candidate _____

PNC Member _____ Date _____

Introduce Yourself

I am _____, representing the PNC of _____ Church in _____

We are searching for a _____ whose responsibilities would encompass

We are considering _____ for this position and s/he has given your name as a reference.

I'd like to spend a few moments talking to you about your perceptions of _____'s gifts, talents, and suitability for such a position.

Is this a convenient time for you to talk?

[When might I call back?]

Interview Questions

How long have you known _____?

In what capacity have you known _____?

If you were on a search committee at your church looking to call someone to a position such as ours, why would you want to call _____?

If you were on a search committee, are there any reasons that would make you hesitate to call _____ to such a position? If so, please describe.

Please give me some specific examples of actions that you think would uniquely qualify _____ for our position.

What is an area that may prove challenging for _____?

Is there an area that might prove challenging for us with _____?

How would you describe _____'s leadership style? _____

How does _____ relate to volunteers? Session? Professional staff?

Have you had occasion to see how _____ handles conflict?

Can you give us a one-word description of _____?

Recalling that _____ are the important components of our position, how would you rate _____ in relation to this position, on a scale of 1 to 5? (1=excellent match to 5=no match) Rating = Why?

What other comments or information about _____ would be helpful for our committee to know?

Are there other persons that you could suggest we talk with concerning _____? Would you spell their names for me? Do you have phone numbers for them?

(Note: These are secondary references. You will need to get the candidates permission to contact them.)

Thank you very much for your time and input.

Appendix D: Theological Fit

Are Our Theologies Compatible?

Questions to Help a PNC Ascertain the Theological “Fit” Between Final Pastoral Candidates and the Congregation

Baptism

- What factors do you take into account in deciding whether to baptize an infant?

Being a Presbyterian

- Why are you a *Presbyterian*; in your daily ministry does it matter that you are a Presbyterian as opposed to some other denomination? If so, how?

Church Growth

- Do you favor a program that actively recruits new church members? Why or why not?

Church’s role

- Do you believe that the church has a prophetic role in our society?

Confessions

- Within our Book of Confessions, what is your favorite confession or creed, and why?

Continuing Education

- What theologians or other Christian writers do you read and use in your own spiritual and theological development and sermon preparation?
- What periodicals and books have you read over the last year? What one or two concepts did you find most intriguing in that reading?

Creation

- How would you explain to a class of young people the relationship between creation as described in Genesis and the theory of evolution?
- Do you believe that Adam and Eve were real people? If not, how do you interpret their role in the Biblical story?

Education

- What is your opinion about having church school held concurrently with the worship service?

Evangelism

- How do you see evangelism being implemented in the life of your congregation?

Heaven and Hell

- Do you believe in hell? If so, describe what it means to you. If not, why not?
- What is heaven? Describe what you believe it is.

Lord's Supper

- Whom do you invite to partake of communion? Who is included; who is excluded?

Mission

- What does the "mission" of the church mean to you?
- What does it mean to be "missional?"

Officers of the Church

- What qualifications do you believe are important for elders and deacons to have?

Prayer

- Why do we pray; what happens during prayer?

Preaching

- How do you go about preparing sermons? How much time do you spend in sermon preparation?
- What are you seeking to accomplish in your preaching?

Reformed Theology

- What doctrine within the Reformed Tradition do you have the most trouble with, and why?

Resurrection

- Do you believe in the literal bodily resurrection of Jesus?

Salvation

- What is salvation, and how is one saved?

Seminary

- Why did you attend the seminary you did? If you were to make the choice again now, would you choose the same place? Why or why not?

Universalism

- Is Christianity the only true religion?

Weddings

- What factors do you take into account in deciding whether you will perform a marriage service?

Prepared by Betty Douglass, April 2015

Appendix E: EEO/AA Form 1

PNC Process & EEO/AA: Form #1

Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action in Ministry

TO: Committee on Ministry, National Capital Presbytery

FROM: _____ (Name of Church)

1. On _____ (date), the congregation heard the PC(USA) EEO/AA policy as described in the *Book of Order* F-1.0403 and the Presbytery's Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Program for calling of a Pastor (Associate) to fulfill the requirements.
2. On _____ (date), the Pastor Nominating Committee discussed and took action signifying its affirmation of the *Book of Order* F-1.0403 and its intent that the Pastor Nominating Committee will follow the Presbytery's Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Program for calling of a Pastor (Associate) to fulfill the requirements.
3. On _____ (date), the Session of the congregation heard the PC(USA) EEO/AA policy as described in the *Book of Order* F-1.0403 and the Presbytery's Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Program for calling of a Pastor (Associate) to fulfill the requirements. Its approval of the CIF signifies its support of this policy and program.

Signed:

_____ (Clerk of Session)

_____ (Chair, PNC)

_____ (Moderator of Session)

_____ (Date)

This form should be sent to the Administrator for COM and must be received before the MDP will be approved by COM.

Approved by COM/MPR February 1986

Revised by COM/NCP May 2007

Revised by COM 7/29/09

Appendix F: EEO/AA Form 2 - Request for General Presbyter Check

This form is required each time a General Presbyter Check is requested.

Name of Church _____

PNC Chair _____ Liaison _____

Please conduct a General Presbyter Check on (PDPs attached): Date _____

Candidate(s)	Presbytery	For NCP use

Liaisons should review the EEO/AA policy with PNCs noting: *“that each PNC track its implementation of this policy, that the Liaison report to the COM the compliance of the PNC with this policy, and that each PNC include at least one woman among its final candidates.”* PNCs must, therefore, have at least one woman among the candidates for whom they are requesting General Presbyter Checks.

Indicate all of the steps you are using and plan to use in your search under “Your Steps” in the chart below. Then complete the rest of the chart through the General Presbyter’s Check step by indicating the appropriate numbers of candidates in each column.

Search Process		Total	Women	Persons with Disabilities (if known)	Racial/ Ethnic Persons (if known)
<i>Potential Steps</i>	Your Steps				
<i>PDPs Received & Reviewed</i>	PDPs Received & Reviewed				
<i>Sermon Review (CDs, Web)</i>					
<i>Phone Interviews</i>					
<i>Reference Checks</i>					
<i>Gen. Presbyter Check</i>	General Presbyter Check (Required before face to face.)				
<i>Face-to-Face Interviews</i>					
<i>Heard Preach</i>					
<i>Offered the Position</i>	Offered the Position				

Please send the completed form and the PDP(s) of the candidate(s) by email to the COM Administrator.

Appendix F: EEO/AA Form 3 – Final Report

Final Report of the PNC Process and EEO/Affirmative Action Compliance

This form is intended for use by COM Liaisons in cooperation with the PNC at the completion of the Pastor Nominating Committee search process and prior to the Examination. Liaisons and/or PNC Chairs are encouraged to answer the questions as frankly and openly as possible. Information from this questionnaire will be used by the Committee on Ministry in its continuing efforts to promote and establish equal employment opportunities and affirmative action as appropriate. **Please submit the completed form to the COM Administrator.**

Name of Church: _____

PNC Chair: _____ Liaison: _____

PNC Elected (Date): _____ CIF Completed (Date): _____

Examination (Scheduled Date): _____

Title of Position Filled: _____

Name of Person Called: _____

Check all that apply:

Woman: _____ Racial/Ethnic Person: _____ Person with Disability: _____

Other: _____ Specify: _____

Search Process		Total Number	Women	Persons with Disabilities (if known)	Racial/Ethnic Persons (if known)
<i>Potential Steps</i>	Your Steps				
<i>PDPs Received & Reviewed</i>	PDPs Received & Reviewed				
<i>Sermon Review</i>					
<i>Phone/Video Interviews</i>					
<i>Reference Checks</i>					
<i>Gen. Presbyter Checks</i>	<i>Gen. Presbyter Check (Required before face-to-face)</i>				
<i>Face-to-Face Interviews</i>					
<i>Heard Preach</i>					
<i>Offered the Position</i>	Offered the Position				

Appendix G: Agenda for the Congregational Meeting for the Call of a Pastor or an Associate Pastor

Note: The candidate is not present at the congregational meeting until after the result of the vote is announced. The candidate is told the details of the vote before rejoining the meeting.

1. The Moderator opens the meeting with prayer.
2. Organization of the meeting
 - a. Moderator announces that the Clerk of Session shall serve as secretary of the meeting. If the Clerk is not present, a secretary pro tem is elected, or appointed with congregational approval.
 - b. The Moderator determines whether a quorum of the congregation is present.
 - c. The Clerk reads the call for the meeting and certifies that public notice of the call has been given in accordance with the congregation's own rule for minimum public notice for its meetings.
3. The Moderator introduces the Pastor Nominating Committee to present its report.
4. Report of the Pastoral Nominating Committee
 - a. The Chair of the PNC, or several members, presents information on the search process, the candidate, reasons for his/her selection, and the Terms of Call.
 - b. An opportunity is provided for questions and answers.
5. Election of the Pastor or Associate Pastor
 - a. The Moderator puts the question, "Are you ready to proceed to the election of a Pastor (or Associate Pastor)?"
 - b. The Moderator explains that Committee on Ministry policy directs that a positive vote of less than 85% of those present requires the vote to be forwarded to COM for further review and to give the candidate guidance and time to discern the will of God. COM will approve or not approve the call.
 - c. If they declare themselves ready, the Moderator shall declare the name submitted by the PNC to be in nomination.
 - d. The Moderator explains the voting process.
 - i. All communing members on the active roll of that particular church who are in good and regular standing, but no others, are entitled to vote.
 - ii. The vote is one vote on both the candidate and the Terms of Call.
 - iii. The vote is taken by secret ballot, with 3 choices: yes, no, or abstain.
 - e. The Moderator appoints tellers and designates one as chairperson.
 - i. To expedite counting, suggest that ballots not be folded but simply turned over.
 - ii. The ballots are distributed, collected, and counted.
 - f. The chairperson of tellers reports to the Moderator and the congregation the number of ballots cast and the number of affirmative and negative votes and abstentions.
 - o If the vote was not unanimous, a motion to make it unanimous is not permitted. (See note below if there is a substantial minority.)

- g. The candidate is told the exact tally of the votes, is invited to join the meeting, and is welcomed!
- 6. The Moderator calls for a motion to dismiss the PNC and commend the members for their good work and faithfulness.
- 7. Announcements are made relative to the pastor-elect, such as expected date of arrival, etc.
- 8. A motion for adjournment is made, and the meeting is closed with prayer.

Reminder: The Terms of Call Form B must be signed by the PNC Chair, pastor/candidate and the moderator of the meeting. The Stated Clerk will sign the forms later. The signed form may be mailed, FAXed or sent as an email attachment to the COM Administrator.

Relevant COM Policy:

Whenever a congregational vote to call a pastor results in a substantial minority in opposition (15%), the moderator shall forward the vote to the COM to review the results of the election with the candidate and the PNC and the congregation, and offer guidance to the candidate as he/she discerns the will of God. If this occurs, the moderator should announce to the congregation that the large minority vote (over 15%) requires the vote to be forwarded to COM for further review and to give the candidate guidance and time to discern the will of God. COM will approve or not approve the call.

This action was taken by COM on June 5, 2003 on behalf of Presbytery and reported to Presbytery on June 24, 2003.

Relevant Book of Order provisions: G-2.0803 Call Process

According to the process of the Presbytery and prior to making its report to the congregation, the pastor nominating committee shall receive and consider the Presbytery's counsel on the merits, suitability, and availability of those considered for the call. When the way is clear for the committee to report to the congregation, the committee shall notify the Session, which shall call a congregational meeting

Appendix H: Sample Ballot for Congregational Meeting

1. Sample Ballot for the Congregational Meeting to elect a Pastor or an Associate.
(On half or quarter sheet of paper.)

The Pastor Nominating Committee nominates the Rev. _____ to be called by
_____ Presbyterian Church as Pastor / Head of Staff under the terms of call as
presented to the congregation.

My vote: _____ YES
 _____ NO
 _____ ABSTAIN

2. Instructions for Tellers
 - a. Distribute ballots to all those on active membership role.
 - b. Collect completed ballots.
 - c. Go to a secure place to count the ballots.
 - i. Pull out any "abstains" and put them in a separate pile. Count them, but DO NOT factor abstentions into either the yeses or the nos.
 - ii. Then count the yeses and the nos. *(Determine if there are 15% or more no's in this group.)*
 - iii. In the very unlikely event that there are 15% or more no's, report that fact to the moderator.
 - iv. People CANNOT make a separate vote on the Terms of Call. It's a single vote for the Candidate and the Terms. Disregard any improperly marked ballots.
 - d. Write the totals down on two blank ballots. Give one copy to a PNC member who will report the results to the candidate and bring the candidate back to the meeting. Give the other copy to the moderator who will announce the results to the congregation.