

PRESBYTERY OF ST. ANDREW

STEPS IN THE VACANCY PROCESS: GUIDING SESSIONS, PNCs, AND LIAISONS THROUGH THE VACANCY PROCESS

I. The following initials are used throughout this document:

CIF: Church Information Form
COM: Committee on Ministry
CPM: Committee on Preparation for Ministry
CRS: Call Referral Services
E/CD Evangelism/Church Development Committee
EP: Executive Presbyter
PIF: Personal Information Form
PNC: Pastor Nominating Committee

II. Steps in the vacancy process

A. Departure phase

1. Upon notification that a position will become vacant, the COM moderator appoints a COM member to serve as Liaison to the congregation.
2. If the congregation and minister concur on dissolution, COM dissolves the relationship (G-11.0502h). If they do not concur, then the matter is docketed for the next meeting of the Presbytery.
3. The COM recommends and Presbytery appoints a moderator of the Session (G-10.0103b). The session shall consult with COM to secure a temporary moderator until Presbytery appoints a moderator.
4. The Liaison conducts separate exit interviews with the Pastor or Associate Pastor, and the Session. The results of this interview are reported to the Moderator of the COM, the Chair of the Sub-committee on Vacancies, and the Executive Presbyter. The purposes of the interviews are: to discern which areas of the pastoral relationship were satisfactory, as well as those which need improvement; to decide what tasks should be attended to during the period between ministers; to talk both to the Session and the Pastor or Associate Pastor about the nature of their new relationship once the minister leaves; and to preview for the Session the Vacancy Process.
5. Churches reimburse mileage of sessional moderators at the current IRS rate, and the presbytery pays for expenses of liaisons.

B. Vacancy phase

1. The Session makes appropriate plans for interim pastoral leadership in consultation with COM through the Liaison.
2. If the Session wishes to call an Interim Pastor, it shall consult with the EP and the COM Moderator, who shall provide assistance in securing an Interim Pastor and defining the Interim Pastor's role.
3. The Session shall ensure that Vacancy Dues are paid to the Board of Pensions in a regular and timely fashion. Vacancy Dues are the continuation of the *Pensions* portion (only) of total dues during the first year of a new vacancy. This figure is currently 12% of effective salary. This money is used by the Board of Pensions to assist clergy in emergency situations, and to supplement the retirement packages of plan members such as missionary workers who were paid very low salaries during their careers and therefore accumulated fewer pension credits than their other colleagues. It will be automatically billed to the church by the Board.

C. Search preparation

1. Prior to the election of a PNC, the Session should engage in a process of self-study in consultation with the COM Liaison. The session may appoint a self-study committee for this purpose.
2. If the congregation cannot afford a full-time package, several part-time pastoral relationships are available in consultation with COM. For example, the congregation may wish to establish a Yoked-field relationship, a part-time relationship, a stated supply relationship, lay pastoral leadership, or a Presbytery Partnership. In this last case the Session shall contact the Evangelism/Church Development Committee of the Presbytery and request a Liaison from that committee.
3. If a CIF needs to be written, the Session must decide who shall be responsible for its creation. The CIF may be written by the Session, by a committee designated by the Session, or by the PNC.
4. Where appropriate the Session calls a meeting of the congregation for the purpose of electing a PNC. The Session shall pay special attention to the *Book of Order* G-14.0502a:

When a church is without a pastor, or after the effective date of the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, the congregation shall, with the guidance and permission of the committee on ministry, G-11.0502d, proceed to elect a pastor in the following manner. The session shall call a congregational meeting to elect a nominating committee, which shall be representative of the whole congregation. This committee's duty shall be to nominate a minister to the congregation for election as pastor. Public notice of the time, place, and purpose of the meeting shall be given at least ten days in advance, which shall include two successive Sundays.

5. Once the PNC has been elected, the COM Liaison shall convene the organizational meeting of the PNC, at which time the PNC elects its moderator. At this meeting the

COM Liaison shall counsel with the PNC about the search process.

6. Once a CIF has been prepared, **and before it has been approved by the Session,** copies of the CIF shall be sent to the COM Liaison, the COM Moderator, the Chair of the COM Sub-committee on Vacancies, and the Executive Presbyter for review. Once it has been reviewed, the CIF is returned to the PNC by the COM Liaison, who communicates to the group responsible for its preparation, and to the Session if necessary, the results of the review. When the Session approves the CIF, the Executive Presbyter assigns login IDs for the Clerk of Session and the PNC moderator or their designees. Then the PNC moderator or his/her designee uploads the CIF to the P.C.(U.S.A.) website. Then it must be certified as approved by the Clerk of Session and the COM moderator or their designees. The final step is certification by Call Referral Services in Louisville, which makes the CIF available for matching with potential candidates.

D. Search process

1. The EP seeks PIFs through the CRS website. If there are PIFs that match, the EP sends copies of the PIFs to the PNC chair and the COM Liaison.
2. The PNC reviews the PIFs and decides whether it is interested in pursuing a conversation with any of the potential ministers. If the PNC decides it does wish to pursue a conversation, the PNC makes an initial contact by phone, mail, or e-mail to the individual to determine whether or not they are interested in being considered for the position.
3. Ordinarily, individual desiring to be referred to the PNC (“Self-Referrals”) will do so through the office of the Executive Presbyter, who will then forward these PIFs to the PNC
4. When PNCs receive forms directly, or when they receive names of potential candidates from other sources, they may make initial contacts as described above to determine whether or not there is a mutual desire for conversation.
5. When further conversation is desired, the PNC moderator requests an Executive Reference Check. These reference checks should be initiated only if the PNC wishes to pursue a conversation, not to decide whether to pursue a conversation. The Presbytery Executive will require a PIF before conducting this Reference Check with the Ecclesiastical body having jurisdiction over the minister or candidate.
6. Once the Executive Reference Check is complete the EP authorizes personal contact with the potential minister. The PNC then contacts the potential minister and conducts an interview process.
7. If the PNC thinks it may wish to call the potential minister, members of the PNC contact the minister’s references.

E. Entry phase

1. When a minister is selected for the position and before a congregational meeting is held, the minister is examined by COM at the PNC's expense. COM votes whether or not to recommend that the minister be received into the membership of Presbytery. The COM also reviews the terms of call to ensure they meet or exceed the presbytery minimums.
2. If the terms of call exceed those which were approved by the Session, the PNC must return to the Session for approval.
3. If the way be clear, the PNC notifies the session that it is ready to report. The session then calls a meeting of the congregation. The PNC reports to the congregation, which votes whether or not to extend the call.
4. At its next meeting, Presbytery hears the recommendation of COM with respect to the minister or candidate, and receives the terms of call as information. The Presbytery conducts its own examination of the minister or candidate, and votes whether or not to receive him or her as a member of the Presbytery. If he or she is received, Presbytery appoints a commission to ordain and/or install the person. The minutes of the commission are reported back to Presbytery.
5. Ordinarily, the minister does not begin work at the church until after the meeting of the Presbytery. Exceptions to this practice can be made by COM under certain circumstances.
6. COM may appoint someone to serve as mentor for an incoming minister.