**Calling an Installed Pastor: For the Between Times**

**A Packet for Sessions**

**Introduction**

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

You are about to begin a journey that those who have gone before you have described as exciting, tedious, joyful, spiritual, frustrating, inspiring, lengthy, and powerful (just to name a few). While your journey may feel more like a roller coaster ride than a lovely stroll through the park, the destination is certain: calling a new pastor who will serve your congregation. The following provides the wisdom and experience of Presbytery’s Committee on Ministry (COM) in helping congregations call a pastor.

In this process, trust in God and trust the Presbyterian call process. The former is faithful in everything and in every time, and the latter has been effective for 300 years.

The process outlined in the Book of Order for calling an installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor is rather brief and straight-forward. **(G-2.0504)** The steps are as follows:

1. The presbytery, providing guidance to the congregation in the call process, grants permission for a congregation to fill a pastoral vacancy. **(G-2.0801)**
2. The congregation elects a pastor nominating committee whose responsibility is to nominate a pastor for election by the congregation. **(G-2.0802)**
3. According to the process of the presbytery, the pastor nominating committee shall receive and consider the presbytery’s counsel on the merits, suitability, and availability of those considered for the call. **(G-2.0803)**
4. When the committee is ready to present the nominee to the congregation, the committee shall notify the session, which shall call a congregational meeting for the purpose of electing the pastor. **(G-2.0803)**
5. The terms of call shall always meet or exceed any presbytery minimum requirements. The call shall include participation inn the benefits plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), including both pension and medical coverage. **(G-2.0804)**
6. The presbytery completes the call process by organizing and conducting a service of installation. **(G-2.0805)**

There are three parts to this process, which we will discuss separately:

- Section I: Dissolving the pastoral relationship and saying good-bye.

**-** Section II: The interim period.

- Section III: Searching for and calling a new pastor

Each part can take varying amounts of time and will vary from church to church depending on the situation.

**Section I – Dissolving the Relationship and Saying Good-bye**

1. Pastor makes decision to leave.
   1. Calls Executive/Transitional Presbyter and Committee on Ministry Chair
2. Pastor calls session meeting.
   1. Session receives pastor’s desire to leave.
   2. Sets date for congregational meeting, chooses Moderator (Normally is not the leaving pastor), agenda.
   3. Suggest termination agreement, time pastor will leave and finances.

- Set date for first meeting with COM liaison.

- Notify EP and COM of decisions.

1. Session calls congregational meeting.
   1. Congregation acts on dissolution of relationship.
   2. Congregation acts on session recommendations for termination terms.
2. Session meets with COM liaison and plans for the interim.
   1. Receives information and discusses options during interim period.
   2. Discusses who should be named session moderator after pastor leaves.
3. COM meeting to confirm congregation’s actions.
   1. Session rep(s), or COM liaison, present and speak to congregation’s vote to dissolve relationship.
   2. Moderator named at this meeting.
4. Pastor has exit interview with COM or administrative commission of COM.
5. Session makes plans for pastor’s leaving.
   1. Plan a reception after worship (or another time).
   2. Invite presbytery reps and COM liaison to farewell events.
   3. Think of appropriate farewell gift.
6. Determine pastoral leadership for the in-between period
   1. List tasks, determine what members can do, estimate the time needed to complete tasks, what meetings need to be attended, investigate financial obligations and options.
7. Session leads the church before the interim arrives.
   1. Proclaiming trust in God
   2. Arranging for pastoral care
   3. Overseeing all church matters
   4. Providing stability
   5. Honoring the family systems in play in times of change
   6. Ensuring boundary issues with former pastor are clarified from a church perspective
      1. Liaisons will have exit interview with the Pastor to clarify the boundary requirements from his/her perspective
8. Session fills the pulpit
   1. Pulpit supply list is a source of pastors.
   2. “Bridge” candidates identified by the Executive Presbyter (EP)/COM who may be willing to commit to serve the church for weeks/months can be identified for session consideration to lead until an interim candidate is selected
   3. If Bridge pastor is not in place, COM can help identify pastors to moderate session and lead communion as well as pastors to serve as pulpit supply.