

## Pastoral Transition Process

This Committee on Ministry Policy supersedes the following Presbytery Policies:

Procedure for Congregational Meeting for Dissolution of the Pastoral Relationship;  
Adopted 11/17/81.

When a Pulpit Becomes Vacant, adopted 11/17/81.

Procedures and Policies for a Congregational Meeting to Elect a Pastoral Nominating  
Committee, adopted 11/17/81

Polices and Procedures for a Congregational Meeting for the Call of a Pastor or Associate  
Pastor, adopted 11/17/81.

Policies and Procedures for Ordination and/or Installation, adopted 11/17/81.

Policy on Mission Studies, adopted 2/18/84.

Procedure for Interviewing Candidates, adopted 4/28/84.

Equal Opportunity in Ministry: AA/EEO, adopted 4/30/93.

Ordination/Installation Services, adopted 11/17/98.

Policy for COM Interview of Prospective Candidates, adopted 2/21/04.

Examination for Pastoral Candidates Previously Ordained, adopted 10/10/06.

Equal Employment Opportunity, adopted 4/15/86.

## **Pastoral Transition Policy and Process**

Adopted 11/17/12

The process of pastoral transition has is both a rich as well as challenging time in the life of a congregation. Every church situation is unique. Numerous variables have an impact on the transition; however, this policy provides the basic parameters of such transitions. This policy includes the current policy of the Presbytery of Lake Erie as well as the best practices that have developed within the Committee on Ministry over the years. The Pastoral Transition Process also depends heavily on current wisdom from the Presbyterian Church (USA), including manuals for churches seeking a pastor. That information evolves from time to time and is not included in this policy.

### **Procedure for Congregational Meeting for Dissolution of the Pastoral Relationship**

A congregation desiring to dissolve the pastoral relationship between pastor and congregation shall:

1. Have the Session call a congregational meeting (G-1.0502). The purpose of the meeting shall be stated in the call to the meeting.
2. The request shall be made for the dissolution of the relationship. (G-2.09)
3. A vote shall be taken and that information reported to the Committee on Ministry.
4. Care shall be taken by the Session to determine that all details of the dissolution are handled in a mutually satisfactory manner – concluding date, final details of financial compensation, clarity on separation ethics and other information.

## **When a Pulpit Becomes Vacant**

1. When the resignation of an installed pastor is reported to the Committee on Ministry an exit interview will be conducted between the departing pastor, the Session and COM. (G-3.0307)
2. At the time of the exit interview the COM will discuss with the Session the next steps they may desire to take. The range of options of pastoral leadership in the short term, as well as in the long term, are considerable. COM will assist the congregation in seeking temporary pastoral leadership.
3. The Committee on Ministry will appoint a moderator of Session for this time of transition.
4. During a period in which a congregation is without a regularly installed pastor the Ruling Elders will assume additional leadership. This is not a period for a church to mark time. Rather, it is an opportunity for new leadership to emerge and new insights develop. The presbytery staff and the COM stand ready to assist in order that this will be a fruitful time in any congregation's history.

## **Procedure for the Calling of a New Pastor**

1. When the Session, in conjunction with the COM, discerns it is ready to do so the congregation engages in a mission study process. The purpose of the mission study is to engage in deep reflection on the shifts and changes occurring within the church and community. Broad participation from church officers, committee members and the congregation ensures a better understanding of leading of God in this time of transition. The presbytery will assist in this mission study process.
2. Once a mission study is approved by both the Session and appropriate presbytery committee the congregation will move to the election of a Pastor Nominating Committee.
3. A PNC is elected by the congregation guided by the bylaws of that congregation. (G-2.08)
4. Throughout the process information about candidates and proceedings of the PNC are confidential, although the congregation is to be informed of overall progress.
5. The COM will appoint a liaison to the PNC.
6. The PNC will complete the Church Information Form (CIF), drawing heavily on the information gathered in the mission study process. The CIF is to be approved by the Session as well as the appropriate people within COM.
7. As candidates are interviewed the PNC agrees to abide by AA/EEO guidelines currently in force. Further, it is required that both male and female candidates will be interviewed, giving special attention to considering candidates of all ages and various ethnic groups, where possible.
8. As a PNC becomes interested in a candidate the following processes are to be followed:
  - a. It is the responsibility of the PNC to complete the reference checks on the candidate to ensure an appropriate match between pastor and congregation.
  - b. When a candidate is brought to the community she/he will normally meet with representatives of the COM so that the candidate might obtain additional insight on the potential call.

- c. At the same time a background check is completed by the General Presbyter on the candidate.
  - d. Prior to reception into the Presbytery of Lake Erie the candidate must also complete the current criminal background policy of the presbytery. If questions arise it will be the responsibility of COM to determine the appropriate course of action in light of the report.
9. When the PNC has settled on the candidate they believe is being called to serve with them arrangements shall be made for the candidate to meet with COM. COM will interview her/him based on the current interviewing practices of COM. The committee expects to have the candidate's PIF and faith statement in advance of the meeting. A candidate must have COM approval prior to the public announcement of the candidate to the Session and congregation. This interview will normally occur at the regular monthly COM meeting. When possible it is helpful for a member of the PNC to accompany the candidate to the COM meeting.
  10. When cleared by COM the Session of the church is to be informed by the PNC that they are prepared to recommend a candidate. The Session will vote for a candidating Sunday.
  11. A congregational meeting will be called following the candidating sermon where a secret ballot will be taken. The vote shall include both an invitation for the person to serve as pastor and the terms of call under which she/he is called. Terms of call shall be clearly delineated in vote by the congregation.
  12. A motion to dissolve the Pastor Nominating Committee would also be appropriate at this meeting unless the congregation chooses to continue the committee through the installation service.
  13. The moderator shall report the action of the congregation to COM.
  14. COM has the authority to receive a teaching elder who has been previously ordained. The newly called pastor will be introduced at the first presbytery meeting following her/his arrival on the field.

### **Policy and Procedure for Ordination and/or Installation**

1. Ordination of a candidate for the ministry is an act of Presbytery, performed when the candidate has completed all the trials for ordination as specified in the in the Book of Order and by the Presbytery. (G-2.0701)
2. Installation of a minister is an act of the Presbytery when a candidate has received a call approved by the Presbytery.
3. A service of Ordination or a Service of Ordination and Installation is conducted by the Presbytery at a time and place and in a manner approved by the Presbytery.
4. Following proper action by the congregation and the approval of the call by the Presbytery, the candidate shall then be ordained and/or installed. Preparation for the Service of Ordination/Installation shall conform to the following provisions:
  - a. Publicity for the Ordination/Installation shall be conveyed in a timely manner by the Presbytery office to the churches and teaching elders of the presbytery.
  - b. The Service shall be conducted by a commission established by the Presbytery consisting of not less than five members of the Presbytery of Lake Erie (two or three teaching elders and ruling elders [from different congregations]).

- c. The date, time and place of the Service shall be approved by the Presbytery. Ordinations/installations will not occur during Sunday morning worship.
- d. The Order of Worship will be in conformity with W-4.4000 and shall have the approval of the Commission.
- e. Offerings take at such services are to be divided:  $\frac{1}{2}$  to the Emergency Assistance Fund of the COM and  $\frac{1}{2}$  to a mission project designated by the Session of the local church.
- f. Persons other than members of the Presbytery Commission may be invited to participate in the Service. The expenses of those people so invited, if any, shall be paid by the host congregation.
- g. A report from the Commission shall be made to the net meeting of the Presbytery concerning the satisfactory completion of its assignment and the Commission is dissolved