

Associate Pastor Nominating Committee Guidelines

Commission on Ministry, Pittsburgh Presbytery

An Associate Pastor serves the congregation by way of direct accountability to the session, and their call is independent from that of the Pastor. According to the *Book of Order*, "The relationship of an associate pastor to a congregation is not dependent upon that of a pastor." (G-2.0504a) Thus, an Associate Pastor's call process is conducted by an Associate Pastor Nominating Committee (APNC) elected by the congregation for that purpose. The role of the Pastor (Head of Staff) in that call process is limited to appropriate counsel to the APNC, as specified below.

The position of Associate Pastor is different from the former role of an Assistant Pastor (which the PCUSA removed as a pastoral category in the 1980s). An Assistant Pastor served the Head of Staff directly as a ministry assistant. The Associate Pastor may be supervised by the Pastor, but is accountable to the whole congregation in the same way as the Pastor.

While the Pastor does not direct the work of the APNC, it is important for the APNC to consult with the Pastor as it seeks to discern whom it will nominate to the congregation as Associate Pastor. To maintain that balance appropriately, COM advises the APNC as follows.

When an Associate Pastor search is being conducted, the APNC shall conduct its process in a way that assures that:

- the nominee has the endorsement of the Pastor;
- the APNC maintains full ownership of the search process, without undue influence from the Pastor; and
- Confidentiality of applicants is fully protected.

Toward this end, COM advises that the Pastor:

- participate in the initial APNC meeting with COM representative and/or presbytery branch minister;
- have access to all PIFs throughout the APNC process;
- be given opportunity to speak to the APNC about particular candidates in an advisory capacity at any stage of the process;
- be given opportunity to suggest removal from consideration any potential finalist candidate before candidates are told they have been selected as finalists;
- separately interview finalists one-on-one and advise the APNC as to any particular concerns; and
- endorse the nomination before the nominee is presented to COM and to the congregation.

The COM further advises that the Pastor should not:

- participate in most APNC meetings, but should be available as invited;
- be present when the APNC interviews candidates;
- serve as chair or as a voting member at any meeting of the APNC; and
- circulate or discuss any PIFs of candidates beyond the APNC.