

03/31/2016

Guidelines for Commission on Ministry Clearance Interview

A clearance interview is generally conducted near the end of a PNC's search process. It is often scheduled to coincide with a candidate's visit to Pittsburgh Presbytery for an on-site interview or to preach in a neutral pulpit. If possible, it is best for the COM to conduct a clearance interview with any of the "finalists" being considered by the PNC. The COM liaison should serve as a member of the clearance interview team, and the Associate Minister to Presbytery for the appropriate branch should be present. Based on the clearance interview, the interview team will recommend to the COM how to proceed with the call process.

Purpose of the interview:

1. To examine the candidate on his or her Christian faith and views in theology, Sacraments and the government of the church, if the call includes the candidate being ordained as a teaching elder, or if the candidate is seeking to serve as a commissioned ruling elder.
2. To determine whether the candidate will be a good match for the congregation and a good member of Pittsburgh Presbytery in terms of theological style, professional skills, ability to handle conflict, and leadership style.
3. To answer the candidate's questions about the congregation and presbytery.
4. To explore any unusual circumstances in the call.
5. To review the final stages of the call process and obtain necessary information:
 - Congregational meeting
 - Installation
 - Terms of call
 - Call papers
 - Effective date of call

Possible Behavioral Interview Questions

1. Tell about a time when you created an opportunity out of an obstacle. What were the results?
2. Describe a situation that put your personal relationship with God to the test. What did you do? What were the results?
3. Tell about a time when it was necessary for you to adjust your behavior or your approach in order to be successful in ministry. What was the situation? What did you do?
4. Describe your service to the presbytery or the wider church in your most recent call? How was the presbytery supportive of you?
5. How have you helped a congregation define a vision for a successful missional strategy?
6. Tell about a time when you were able to lead someone to become a true disciple of Christ?
7. Tell about a time when you provided spiritual and emotional support to someone in need. What was the situation? What did you do?
8. Discuss a time when you encouraged your congregation to make a major change that was vital to spiritual growth and discipleship. How did you handle the situation? What were the results?
9. Tell about a time when you were able to gain the commitment of others toward a common goal.
10. How have you successfully engaged conflict to bring about growth and productive change?
11. Tell about a time when it was hard to stay focused on God's mission because of competing demands on your time and attention. How did you stay focused?
12. How do you understand the biblical theology of stewardship and how have you applied it in your own practices?

Process

1. Members of the clearance team should receive copies of the candidate's PIF and copies of the 10-year congregational statistics reported to GA prior to the meeting.
2. Before meeting with the candidate, team members may share their impressions of the PIF and statistical report and receive information concerning the call from the COM liaison and the Presbytery's General Minister or an Associate Minister. The Presbytery Minister should clarify any unusual circumstances concerning the call, such as the transfer of ordination from another denomination, part time, temporary, or validated ministry status, conflict in the congregation, etc.
3. Invite the candidate into the room, introduce participants and pray.
4. Members of the interview team should ask behavioral questions of the candidate and ask the candidate whether he/she continues to affirm the ordination promises without exception.
5. The candidate may ask questions of the team concerning the congregation or presbytery.
6. Ask the candidate to step out of the room while the interview team discusses its recommendation concerning COM action.
7. Invite the candidate back into the room.
 - a. If the team does not plan to recommend the call, explain the reasons to the candidate.
 - b. If the team will recommend the call, inform the candidate of the decision.
 - Explain the process for the call to move forward
 - Ask the candidate to read the presbytery's Policy on Sexual Misconduct and sign a receipt form and complete the required clearances on child abuse and FBI finger printing.
 - Inform the candidate of the COM's New Clergy Orientation and Ethical Training attendance requirements
 - If the candidate is called to a position outside of a congregation, determine whether he/she is interested in being included on the pulpit supply list
8. Ask the candidate to close the meeting in prayer.