

# Calling a Pastor

## The Congregational Meeting to Call a Pastor

### Preparing for the Congregational Meeting

1. After the PNC has made its choice, the COM liaison will meet with the PNC to give an overview of the upcoming steps for a smooth transition and positive experience for the incoming pastor and congregation.
2. Review the terms of call with the PNC (and with the appropriate Assoc. Minister) BEFORE they are sent to the potential candidate. Refer to the guidelines for terms of call, [http://www.pghpresbytery.org/forms/pdfs/com/guidelines-terms\\_of\\_call.pdf](http://www.pghpresbytery.org/forms/pdfs/com/guidelines-terms_of_call.pdf)
3. The PNC meets with the session, notifying the interim pastor and clerk of session.
4. At the session meeting the PNC gives their report and requests the session call a congregational meeting to act on the recommendation of the PNC. (NOTE: This date is best worked out with the interim pastor and candidate ahead of time.)
5. The COM liaison (or the appropriate Assoc. Minister) should review with the PNC the following issues and questions.
  - How will the candidate be presented? Publicized to the congregation? e.g. Call to the meeting, a brochure, letter? Will a "meet and greet" be held for the candidate (and family)? This process must be discussed with the candidate in order to avoid lapses in confidentiality while providing the congregation with adequate information.
  - Who will moderate the congregational meeting? Interim, Assoc. Minister, COM liaison?
  - Who will take minutes? Usually the clerk
  - Who will speak at the congregational meeting?
    1. Who will present the call?
    2. Who will review the process? EEO
    3. Who (from the PNC) will present the candidate's qualifications, pastoral experience, and why the PNC believes this pastor is the one of God's choosing to lead the congregation at this time?
    4. Who will present the terms of call?
    5. Who will make the motion?
    6. Who will go out of the room with the candidate and his/her family?
6. What will the congregation do while the ballots are being counted?
7. Who will count the ballots? Appoint 3 tellers
8. Have the PNC chair prepare copies of the call papers to be signed.

### Agenda for Congregational Meeting

This meeting should be moderated either by the interim pastor (or pastor if the call is for an associate pastor) or COM Liaison. The Clerk of Session serves as secretary for the meeting (or, if not present, a secretary *pro tem* may be appointed).

1. Open with prayer.

2. The reading of the call of the meeting:  
"A special meeting of the \_\_\_\_\_ Presbyterian Church has been duly called and announced by the session, to be held on \_\_\_\_\_ (date) for the purpose of hearing and acting upon the final report of the Pastor Nominating Committee and to elect \_\_\_\_\_ as pastor."
  - a. Appoint 3 tellers (not PNC members)
  - b. Appoint Minute Reader
3. The Pastor Nominating Committee presents its final report, including:
  - Review of the process followed by the PNC;
  - The EEO final report;
  - Terms of call, including effective start date;
  - Introduction and presentation of the candidate.
4. The candidate may be asked to introduce him/herself further. Following this, the candidate and family are excused. A member of the PNC should be designated to keep the candidate company while the congregation votes.
5. A motion is made that the congregation elect the Reverend \_\_\_\_\_ to serve as (pastor, associate pastor, or co-pastor) effective \_\_\_\_\_ (date) for a term of \_\_\_\_\_ years (if pastor is serving for a designated term) and that the congregation ask the Presbytery to concur with the call.
6. Discussion.
7. Vote by written ballot.
  - a. Vote is shared with candidate in private, and candidate is asked if he or she accepts the call.\*
  - b. The congregation is informed of the candidate's and the PNC's decision – either the Call is accepted and you move on to item 8, or the Call is refused/denied or the decision is delayed and you move to . . . (see note \*)
8. Invite the pastor-elect and family back into the meeting to congratulate them on the call.
9. The clerk (or PNC chair) ensures that the signed Call Forms are delivered to the presbytery within 48 hours of the meeting.
10. The minutes of the special meeting are approved before adjournment *or* submitted to the session.
11. Adjournment with Benediction.
12. Celebration!

\* Note: In some situations the negative (against) portion of the vote of the congregation exceeds 1% of those in attendance, and may reach 8% or higher.

In those situations, at the discretion of the PNC and in full consultation with the candidate, a delay in the decision is recommended until PNC, candidate and COM liaison can discuss why this negative portion is high. If the negative vote exceeds 10%, a delay is mandatory until that conversation can be held.