

## Calling an Installed Pastor for a Designated Term

### **G-2.0504a Installed Pastoral Relationships**

The installed pastoral relationships are pastor, co-pastor, and associate pastor. A minister of the Word and Sacrament may be installed in a pastoral relationship for an indefinite period or *for a designated term determined by the presbytery in consultation with the congregation and specified in the call* (italics added). In the Presbytery of Genesee Valley, the criteria, specific process, and the length of the designated term is determined by the Committee on Ministry.

### **CRITERIA**

As congregations go through various life cycles and critical events, there are times when installing a pastor for a designated term may provide essential stability. Installing a pastor for a designated term is reserved for special circumstances such as:

- when a congregation is engaged in an intentional process of transformation and is redirecting its ministry.
- when a congregation wants to test a new direction or new model of leadership.
- when a congregation has been wounded by conflict.
- when the congregation has experienced the sudden loss of a pastor or frequent pastoral leadership turnover.
- when congregations are considering engaging in shared ministry.
- when exceptional circumstances indicate that an expedited process would benefit the mission and ministry of the congregation.

### **PROCESS**

The process of considering installing a pastor for a designated term may be initiated by a Session or by the Committee on Ministry (COM) as part of the initial conversations regarding pastoral transition.

- To proceed, a written rationale for installing a pastor for a designated term must be approved by both the session and COM. The rationale shall include a list of concerns/tasks to be addressed and the specific length of the designated term.
- The session facilitates the completion of a mission study or congregational self-study approved by the session and COM.
- A congregational meeting is called to elect a Designated Term Pastor Nominating Committee (DTPNC) and to consult with the congregation regarding the pursuit of a pastor for a designated term.
- The DTPNC completes the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Ministry Information Form (MIF) for session and COM approval.
- The COM Church Leadership Connection (CLC) Liaison submits the completed and approved MIF to CLC for matching.
- A COM review team including the COM CLC liaison, the congregation's COM liaison and up to two other COM members are appointed by COM to review PIFs. The COM review team discusses the needs of the church based on the MIF, the criteria that will narrow the choices, and the process that will be used to review the PIFs.
- Self-referrals may be considered only if submitted to the COM review team directly providing a clearance check confirms the desirable qualifications.
- The COM review team presents the DTPNC with a list of candidates if available and have acceptable clearance checks.
- The DTPNC conducts the interview process and selects a candidate to present to the congregation.
- If the DTPNC cannot agree on one of the recommended candidates, the COM team will present an additional list of candidates for consideration, if available. If the DTPNC still cannot agree, then the

DTPNC will be free to conduct the search for an installed pastor through the required process with no designated term.

- Following the presumed approval of the congregation, the DTPNC submits the Terms of Call worksheet, Pastoral Call Form (including the length of the term), and Plans for Installation Service worksheet to the session and the COM for approval.
- Once approved by COM, the pastor shall be installed for the designated term.

### **Length of the Designated Term**

The specific length of the term shall be no less than two years and no more than four years and shall be specifically identified in the initial terms of call.

### **Eligibility and Process for Calling the Pastor to an Indefinite Term.**

Discussions between the pastor, the session, and the COM liaison regarding the possibility of calling the pastor for an indefinite term should begin no later than six months prior to the conclusion of the designated term.

The pastor serving for a designated term is eligible to be installed for an indefinite term provided:

- the Session first assesses the health of the ministry of the congregation under the leadership of the pastor, using the suggested norms and behaviors found in the *Advisory Handbook for Ministry Committees/Commissions* of the PCUSA (see appendix)
- the COM liaison, and the session, and the pastor together review the rationale and criteria for the designated term together to determine if specific concerns and issues have been addressed.
- a COM team including the liaison conducts separate interviews with the Session and the pastor to ensure there is mutual understanding and agreement to proceed with the call.

If there is mutual agreement to proceed to indefinite term:

- The session shall inform all members of the congregation by letter of their recommendation to request that Presbytery install the pastor to an indefinite term. This will include a rationale for the recommendation that seeks to demonstrate how this action will enhance the mission and ministry of the congregation.
- The session, in consultation with the COM Liaison, shall initiate an opportunity for open discussion and discernment within the congregation. At minimum, there shall be one congregational gathering for discussion and discernment. The COM liaison or COM designee shall be present at all congregational gatherings.
- Following this time of discussion and discernment, the session and COM shall determine if the process should go forward.
- If the decision is to go forward, then the session shall call a congregational meeting for the purpose of electing an installed pastor for an indefinite term. The called meeting of the congregation shall be moderated by a designee of the Committee on Ministry.
- Following full discussion at the congregational meeting, a vote shall be taken by secret ballot. A supermajority (three-fourths vote of the members of the congregation present and voting) for the election of the installed pastor is required by the Presbytery.
- Upon successful election by the congregation, the PNC submits the *Terms of Call Worksheet, Pastoral Call Form, and Plans for Installation Service* worksheet to COM for approval.
- COM seeks the approval of the Presbytery.
- Once approved by the Presbytery, the pastor may be installed for an indefinite term.

**Appendix: adapted from “What is Healthy Ministry?”**

*Advisory Handbook for Ministry Committees/Commissions of the PC(U.S.A.)*

Healthy congregations can be found in inner city settings, on the square in county seat towns, and nestled into suburban developments. Yet in all the variety of healthy expressions of ministry, healthy congregations are alike in sharing many of these norms and behaviors:

- Vibrant faith in God is expressed in lively, faithful worship and in a commitment to engage in ministries of justice and compassion.
- Caring response to the needs of people outside the church is as important as fostering relationships of friendship and caring within the congregation.
- Following God’s intentions for the congregation is more important than maintaining buildings or merely balancing the budget.
- Respect for tradition and the past are balanced by flexibility and creativity.
- People of all ages are growing in wisdom and knowledge.
- Relationships of friendship and mutual accountability provide the context for inclusive hospitality and respectful evangelism.
- Respect, accountability and trust rather than control, individualism and secrecy characterize relationships within the congregation.
- Clear structures of authority and decision-making are coupled with open access to those structures by the entire congregation.
- Transparency and openness in regard to communication, information sharing and decision-making are balanced by appropriate and respectful treatment of confidential information.
- Respect for the authority of called and elected leaders is coupled with the awareness that leaders are only part of a very complex organism.
- Congregational self-confidence is balanced by appropriate humility.