

PASTOR NOMINATING COMMITTEE (PNC) GUIDANCE

Introduction

One pastor wrote: "The Word of God is best heard through an organized group." That is probably a very good statement for PNC's: their job is to discern who God has already chosen to become their next pastor. The purpose of this guidance is to help PNC's be "organized" by documenting the process that one PNC used in its search for a new Pastor. It is intended to be a starting point and reference. While another PNC will certainly have different circumstances, this will hopefully provide an outline that may prove useful in implementing their search process. The guidance documents "process" – how a search was organized and conducted – and does not address the confidential elements of PNC discussions or pastor candidates.

The PNC is nominated by the Representative Nominating Committee and elected by the congregation. The committee reports to the congregation and not to the session. It usually consists of at least seven members of the congregation plus a liaison from the Committee on Ministry (COM). Session members are usually not members. The interim pastor is not involved.

A PNC Prayer

*O gracious and holy God,
Give us diligence to seek You in our next pastor,
Give us wisdom to perceive Your work in the applicant's life and prior experience
So we have a clear understanding of their ability to lead St Mark to fulfill Your call,
Give us patience to read prayerfully and wait thoughtfully for You to reveal your chosen pastor.*

*Grant us O God, guidance to find new pastor with
A mind that meditates on You,
Eyes that behold Your work in individuals and in the church,
Ears that listen for Your word and leadership,
A heart that loves and lives for You, and
A life that proclaims You through example.*

The Perfect Pastor

The perfect pastor will be young (30 to 35), with 25 years experience. They will be a masterful preacher who never uses a note in the pulpit and has preached for two decades. The person will be able to talk to the oldest member of the congregation as if they are old friends, but also be able to put youth and children at ease. The person will be able to make 8 calls a day on older members of the congregation and still have time to lead youth fellowship the same evening. The person will have a warm, wonderful touch with people and be an administrative whiz. They will not only have an idea at every committee meeting, but also attend every meeting and still be a strong family person who is home with the family every evening.

- from "A Guidebook for a Pastor Search Committee"

Reference Documents

A number of reference documents prove useful and worthwhile to obtain early:

- On Calling a Pastor download from pcusa.org/resource/calling-pastor/
- A Guidebook for a Pastor Search Committee order from desmin.org
- Searching for a Pastor the Presbyterian Way order from amazon.com
- Advice for Pastor Search Committees (8 articles) download from markdroberts.com

- Pastor Search Committee general information Google “pastor search committee”

Confidentiality

Committee discussions are kept strictly confidential (“what is said in committee, stays in committee”), particularly candidates’ names and information. The COM Liaison was copied on committee emails and attends some meetings, and candidate names and some information are shared with MIF (Mission Information Form) references, since they receive calls from candidates. During the interview visit stage, some spouses meet the candidates when at dinners in their homes. Process progress is shared with the congregation, but the only number mentioned was the number of PIFs (Personnel Information Forms) evaluated.

Technology

Email and the internet can be used almost exclusively:

- Establish an email address – pnc@stmarktx.org - to communicate with pastor candidates.
- Sent out information to the committee via email or confidential shared website.
- Establish a PNC tab on the church website to communicate information to potential candidates (in lieu of sending out information packets) and to communicate progress to the congregation.
- Use FaceTime/Skype to first interview shortlisted candidates (it works well).
- Check early that the distribution method you plan to use easily handles sending/receiving larger files. There were problems uploading larger files onto pnc@stmarktx.org, so a home email was used to distribute attachments, even to pastor candidates.

Progress Communication

Use several avenues to communicate progress:

- Include a short bulletin announcement on the last Sunday of each month
- Include a longer article in the monthly church newsletter
- Update a timeline and progress reports on the PNC tab at the end of each month
- Appear before the congregation about quarterly and at church meeting opportunities
- Email Session before most meetings (with more information than given to congregation), and appear before Session about quarterly or as requested. Remember the PNC reports to the congregation and not the session, so informing the session is a courtesy, but it is wise to keep the session on your side.
- Send a quarterly progress report to MIF references and COM Liaison.

PNC Meetings

The committee chose to meet at 6:30 pm on Sunday nights at the church. Meetings were every week for about 2-3 hours, depending on the amount of discussion. Allow plenty of time for prayer and sharing at the meetings. Try to meet monthly for a group dinner, with little or no business discussion, at a home or restaurant.

Meetings with Others

Meet with others at regular meetings to obtain guidance on the process:

- COM Liaison
- Mission Presbytery Executive Presbyter
- Interim minister
- CIF references

Budget

Actual PNC expenses were about \$4,500 for travel, meals and miscellaneous and \$6,500 for moving a pastor from their home to Boerne. One expense is not recommended: an advertisement in the Presbyterian Outlook magazine produced two candidates, neither of which was acceptable.

Timeline

Below are key dates in the process:

	<u>month</u>
• Pastor leaves	0
• Interim Pastor arrives	3
• Mission Study starts	7
• First PNC meeting	13
• MIS goes live on PC(USA) website	15
• First request for addition information from longlist candidates	17
• First video interview	19
• First PNC visit to a candidate's church	20
• First neutral pulpit visit by a candidate	22
• Intent to Call offered & accepted	24
• Terms of Call approved by COM	25
• Pastor approved by Congregation	25
• New Pastor arrives	27

Mission Study

A Mission Study team precedes the PNC to conduct a Mission Study for St Mark to define the state of the church and define its preferences for a pastor. The Mission Study obtained their findings from cottage group meetings and an online congregational. This information was the basis of the MIF.

Mission Information Form (MIF) Preparation

The first work of the PNC is to prepare the MIS. A few comments on preparing the MIF:

- First download MIF (and PIF) blank forms & instructions from pcusa.org/ministries/clc/printable-forms/. Also contact the Church Leadership Connection (CLC) office in Louisville at clcstaff@pcusa.org or 1-800-728-7228x8550 to gain access to the website to view other church's MIFs. Also talk to them about entering your MIF online, as it is entered online before it is released for view.
- The MIF is entered online at gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/clc/ using a username (tied to the church's ID number) and password from the CLC office. The entry format requires each paragraph to be less than 1500 characters, including spaces. (WORD counts characters when a word count is done.) Unneeded words can be eliminated from long paragraphs. It was easy to upload paragraphs from WORD to the online form.
- Statistical data can be found in the Annual Statistical Report submitted to Presbytery after the new year.
- Once the MIF is completed and approved by the committee, it is approved by Session and then the Committee on Ministry (which meets monthly). Once you hear COM has approved it, call the CLC office to get instructions on how best to have it entered online (if not already done) and have it formally approved by the PNC chair, Clerk of Session and COM Liaison.

- The six paragraphs describing the church are most important. A narrative format is more effective than a corky dot format. Starting with the draft paragraphs from the Mission Study, we assigned each paragraph to a team of two to further develop the paragraph, then finalized and harmonized the paragraphs during regular meetings.
- The paragraph “Major Responsibilities” was a condensation of the previous pastor’s job description.

Pastor Salary

The MIF asks for both a minimum and maximum pastor salary, but only the minimum is shown to candidates. We, somewhat arbitrarily, chose \$50,000 as the minimum, but worked with the Personnel and Finance Committees to establish the maximum, as what we might reasonably pay and to include in the church budget. (Do get approval of this from Personnel and Finance Chairs up front so there is no question of latitude when the terms of call are negotiated.) The committees had access to documents that were very useful: the first was a listing of the terms of call for all pastors in Mission Presbytery and the second was a statistical breakdown of salaries by church size and pastor experience from the Board of Pensions. Pastor’s compensation can be viewed in three parts:

- a effective salary = salary + housing + other payments (this is what is used in the MIF)
- b reimbursable expenses = auto allowance, continuing ed/book allowance, professional expenses and any other reimbursesables
- c ½ SECA (Self Employment Compensation Act) = 7.65% of effective salary (equivalent to social security paid by the employer)
- d pension/medical = 31.5% of the effective salary

The pastor gets a + b and the church budget is a + b + c + d. (The split for salary vs housing allowance is up to the pastor. The IRS allows pastors a tax deduction equal to the lesser of (1) actual housing expenses, with allowable expenses defined by the IRS, or (2) the housing allowance. So the housing allowance should not be below their estimated actual expenses.) The final agreed terms of call are listed on a Presbytery form, which is the official form signed after the congregation meeting to approve the call and terms.

Pastor’s Desired Characteristics

The MIF starts the important discussion of the qualities and qualifications desired in a new pastor and building PNC consensus on it.

- We spent some time discussing and selecting the 10 primary skill choices. While we found that little attention was paid to this by candidates, it is internally valuable as probably the first time the committee discusses what they want in a new pastor. (We voted on this and several other items using a “nominal group technique” - a description of this voting technique can be found using Google.)
- We also discussed the MIF entry for years of experience required but found, in the end, that little attention was paid to this also. But this brought up several good questions:
 - How experienced (or older vs younger) should the new pastor be? (For St Mark, the desire was to have someone who could stay at the church for a significant time period. Longest serving St Mark pastor to date has been 8 years.)
 - Is a “first call” pastor acceptable? (No for St Mark)
 - Does the new pastor have to have head/solo pastor experience or would an associate from a larger church be acceptable? (Either for St Mark. Advice from several sources was that an associate from a large church sees a boarder array of programs and ideas than a solo/head pastor at a smaller church.)

- The PNC can spent a considerable amount of time after the MIF was completed and before starting to interview candidates in further defining what we wanted in a new pastor. Another good question is “what qualities should a pastor have that would be unique for this church”. several were identified for St Mark, the first two being the most important:
 - A pastor that would lead the congregation “outside the walls” to mission in the community. This was a clear message from the Mission Study.
 - A pastor that would grow the church “deep and wide”.
 - Being in the Texas Hill Country, the best fit would be someone who could connect well one-on-one with members of the congregation.
 - While a pastor who was “non-polarizing” was desired, the congregation is center-right and a pastor with similar beliefs would fit best.
- One issue that we did not discuss early enough or deep enough is what would make a candidate unacceptable, particularly, what beliefs. There are several PC(USA) and cultural issues that individuals have strong feelings about, and a PNC is no exception. If there are PNC members who believe that a candidate who believes a certain way on an issue would not be acceptable (to them or to the congregation), that needs to be acknowledged and dealt with. Appropriate questions should be asked during early interviews to assess a candidate’s beliefs, if needed.
- We also spent some time discussing and voting on the strengths of and challenges facing St Mark today and our hopes for 10 years in the future.

Candidate Pastor Evaluations

Candidate pastors can be evaluated in four steps, with the question for the PNC at each step (except the last) being: should the candidate proceed to the next step so we can get to know them better.

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| Step 1 | PIF evaluation (for all candidates) |
| Step 2 | Listen to sermons, additional questions, reference checks (for longlist candidates) |
| Step 3 | Video interviews, visit to some candidate churches (for shortlist candidates) |
| Step 4 | Preach at neutral pulpit and meet with PNC in Boerne (for finalists) |

Step 1 - Personnel Information Forms (PIFs) Evaluations

PIFs started arriving within 24 hours of the MIF going live on the CLC webpage.

- 121 PIFs were received from a number of sources. CLC will match PIFs with candidates; candidates’ self-refer by posting their PIFs on CLC for the position; candidates submit their PIFs by email or letter; and a few were referred by members of the congregation. CLC automatically matched St Mark with some PIFs right after the MIF went live and supplied us with another batch when we asked for another match. For St Mark, the percentage breakdown was: email/letter to PNC (43%), PIF posted on CLC (33%), CLC matched (23%) and congregation referred (1%).
- Two pieces of advice we received proved useful. One was to expect surprises, both good and bad. If there are preconceived notions about the desired attributes of a new pastor, you will get PIFs from attractive candidates who do not fit this mold. Also, “ideal” candidates can drop out for any number of reasons – so it is best to think about keeping a number of good candidates until the end, rather than windowing down to one too early. Second, if you know of an attractive candidate that has not applied, contact them. They may be flattered to be asked, and the Holy Spirit may be working within them without your knowledge.

- Keeping track of many PIFs requires organization and time. Matched and self-referred PIFs were downloaded from the CLC webpage. PIFs that came in on paper were scanned into pdf files. All PIFs were given a number (eg, 76-Smith PIF) for tracking, then stored and sent to committee members via email for discussion and evaluation at regular meetings.
- Numerical evaluation of PIFs was done as recommended by PC(USA): a score of 1 meant to PURSUE the candidate for more information, 2 was to HOLD the candidate for possible later consideration should the 1's not work out, and 3 was to REJECT the candidate. After discussing a candidate, each member scored the candidate 1, 2 or 3 (and sometimes 1.5 or 2.5), and the scores were recorded and averaged on the master spreadsheet. (If some scored a candidate a 1 and others a 3, further discussion took place to understand the reason.) The consensus score for the candidate was the average numerical score. We initially said we would pursue candidates with a consensus score of about 1.5 or less and reject candidates with a consensus score of about 2.5 or higher, but relaxed that on both sides to reduce the number of Hold candidates. (We did not go back to pursue any of the Hold candidates.) For St Mark, the percentage breakdown was: Pursue (13%), Hold (18%) and Reject (69%).
- Each member evaluated PIFs somewhat differently. Advice given to us early in the process was that evaluation of PIFs becomes easier and faster the more PIFs you looked at, and that proved to be true. Emailed and mailed PIFs tended to be longer than those downloaded from the CLC, but that did not influence evaluations.
- We tried to send an email acknowledgement of receipt within a week of receiving a PIF. We generally sent Reject emails every few weeks. We sent the first Pursue and Hold emails out about two months after the first PIFs arrived and after we had a group of candidates that we were sure we wanted to pursue.

Step 2 - Sermons, Questions and Reference Checks

The Pursue candidates (called the longlist) were each sent an email requesting access to their sermons and asking several additional questions not on the PIF. We listened to one sermon at the regular PNC meetings and reviewed their responses to the additional questions. For those candidates that we thought would go to step 3, we split up and called each of their references. One person also did an internet search of the candidate, including reviewing their church's website. All this information was then used to develop a shortlist of candidates to go to the next step, with the sermon quality probably being the most important item. The shortlist was sent to the Mission Executive Presbyter to perform a reference check with the EP's of the candidates' Presbyteries to determine if there were any "red flags". (Presbytery requested this be done before the PNC "falls in love with a candidate".)

Step 3 - Video Interviews

The shortlist candidates were interviewed by the committee as a whole using video. Questions were not shared with the candidate in advance. The video worked well, allowed the PNC to view the candidate and the candidate to view the PNC. (Someone on the committee needs to be familiar with the technology and be responsible for setting-up video and the link with the candidate.) We allowed about 1 hour for the PNC to ask questions and about 45 minutes for the candidate to ask questions of the PNC. We were careful to ask the same questions to all candidates, and, in these interviews, asked almost no follow-up questions due to time constraints.

For those candidates that we thought would be a finalist (or if someone on the committee was traveling in the vicinity of a shortlist candidate), we did try to visit them in their home church to

view their interaction with their congregation and to meet with them briefly. We requested permission for the visit from the candidate and worked out appropriate dates. The visit was generally limited to two from the PNC, and story lines made up so as not be identified by the congregation.

During Step 3 may be the appropriate time to notify the CLC to take the CIF offline. We received many PIFs over the first few months after the CIF went live and continued to receive PIFs at the rate of one to two a week while it was online. The CLC will not close out the CIF until they are notified that the congregation has approved the Call.

Step 4 – Neutral Pulpit Visit

Finalists were invited to preach at a neutral pulpit and meet with the PNC. (Allow plenty of time for this step as establishing dates when a candidate with a congregation is easily free may be difficult.) It is recommended to have more than one finalist candidate visit, even if one candidate is “head-and-shoulders” above the others. We worked with the Committee on Ministry to identify churches and acceptable dates. We invited both the candidate and the spouse to visit. The exact itinerary for a visit depends on when a candidate would arrive and leave over the preaching weekend, but we tried to incorporate four items in each visit:

- 1 Preaching at a neutral pulpit on Sunday morning, which all of the PNC who were available attended. Either a member of the PNC carried the candidate to the church or accompanied them if they drove themselves. Generally, the candidate communicated directly with the neutral church pastor beforehand on service format and logistics.

- 2 Meeting with the PNC for about three hours of discussion in a home or church room. This was the time to really get to know the candidate and for the candidate to know the PNC. Again, allow about 1/3 of the time for the candidate to ask questions. We generally did this on Saturday or Sunday afternoon. One of the PNC spouses took the candidate’s spouse out during this time, generally looking at local shopping.

- 3 Touring the candidate around town, including sights, ministries where the church may be involved, subdivisions, schools and showing them inside the church. We found the best way to do this was to have (generally two) different PNC members accompany them on different parts of the tour (some knew schools best, others subdivisions, others ministries) for 30-60 minutes each. This also allowed one-on-one discussion time with the candidate. We did take all candidates through the St Mark facilities. (At this stage, alert the church staff that they may see or meet candidates coming through the church, but that confidentiality is particularly important as the candidate’s congregation does not know they are interviewing for another call.)

- 4 Dinners and/or lunches with the PNC, depending on schedule. We generally tried to have a meal at a PNC member’s home and a lunch at a restaurant. We did not have dinner with candidates after the discussion (we found three hours of discussion to be tiring for all parties) or on Sunday nights and tried to have the candidate back to the hotel early on Saturday night before preaching on Sunday.

We also conducted credit and criminal background checks on the finalists using a Presbytery account.

Final Voting

After all visits were completed, we held a PNC meeting to make the final choice. The meeting was filled with prayers for discernment and discussion of candidate pros and cons. Voting was done by secret ballot (the only time in the process) and in a manner similar to what the

Presbyterian Church uses, with prayer and discussion between each vote. If more than two finalists, then the candidate with the fewest votes is dropped in successive votes until two candidates remain. Voting continues on the two candidates until one gets the majority of the vote, as the Holy Spirit leads members toward a candidate. At that point, ask for consensus – the lead candidate is acceptable to all, but may not be the first choice of some. If a PNC is split such they can't reach consensus (probably more than one dissenting member), it is suggested to get help from your COM liaison.

Intent to Call and Next Steps

We held another PNC meeting several days later for prayer, celebration and to place a call to the pastor select to offer an "intent to call". In our case, the pastor accepted immediately, but most books say to give a week for a response. After acceptance of the intent to call, we notified our COM liaison and the COM Chair. The PNC Chair negotiates the terms of call with the pastor select, in consultation with the Personnel and Finance Chairs (without naming the pastor). After terms agreement, the next step is to have the COM approve the terms of call. We then notified the Session that a (unnamed) pastor had been selected and requested Session call a congregational meeting for the purpose of calling the pastor and approving his terms of call (two votes). At the congregational meeting, we handed out a pamphlet about the pastor select and had members of the PNC read what some references had said.

Arrival of the Pastor

Plan at least five activities for arriving pastors:

- Deacons deliver food to his home during the pastor's move-in.
- Put a press release of his arrival in the local newspaper.
- Members of the PNC, elders and deacons are invited to attend the pastor's recognition at the Presbytery meeting.
- Plan a welcoming celebration between services of his first Sunday and give his family a welcoming gift basket.
- Set up an installation service for about 6 weeks after his arrival.

The PNC is disbanded after the arrival of the pastor, usually after about a year's work. The PNC Chair, along with the Personnel Committee Chair, should stay in close touch with the Pastor for six months to a year to smooth any transition issues.