

PNC Process for Recommending Temporary Pastor as Pastor

[Approved by the Presbytery; Dates of Approval and Revisions 09/19/2017]

[Responsible Body: Commission for Congregational Life]

Introduction

Historically the Presbyterian Church (USA) held that changing a pastor's role from a temporary position (transitional, stated supply) to a called position in the same congregation was not in the best interest of the congregation. Until the 2011 revisions to the Form of Government, the Book of Order expressly forbade such pastoral changes. Temporary pastors could not be considered for the corresponding permanent position in a congregation.

The Form of Government revised in 2011 sought to change the pattern of creating a rule to address every aspect of our connectional life. At this point, councils and congregations are encouraged to place God's mission at the heart of their decision-making, and the church is called to be led by the Holy Spirit and apply the broad principles of our polity with creativity and flexibility.

Of particular interest has been the degree of flexibility afforded by the Book of Order provisions regarding changes in pastoral leadership in a given congregation. While the new flexibility empowers the presbytery to help churches navigate a changing world, the collective wisdom which led to the previous restrictions should not be discounted. There remain significant concerns regarding the movement of a temporary pastor, especially a transitional pastor, to called pastor and each attempt must be viewed with a healthy skepticism.

It is the view of this presbytery that the significant concerns are best addressed through building partnerships and communicating with congregations (as is delineated in our mission statement). The presbytery policy allows for hopeful flexibility while empowering the commissions to act as a necessary check against ill-advised transitions.

This document establishes the policy of the Presbytery of Scioto Valley for enacting the new provisions related to changes in a temporary pastoral relationship.

Pastoral Succession in the Book of Order

With respect to changes in pastoral roles, the current Book of Order states:

- G-2.0504b Temporary Pastoral Relationships ... "Titles and terms of service for temporary relationships shall be determined by the presbytery. . . A teaching elder employed in a temporary pastoral relationship is *ordinarily* not eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor." [emphasis added]

The authority for granting exceptions to these provisions is found in the following:

- G-2.0504c Exceptions. "A Presbytery may determine that its mission strategy permits a teaching elder currently called as an Associate Pastor to be eligible to serve as the next installed pastor or co-pastor, or a teaching elder employed in a temporary pastoral

relationship to be eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor. Presbyteries that permit this eligibility shall establish such relationships only by a three-fourths vote of the members of presbytery present and voting.”

Presbytery of Scioto Valley Process

- 1) A congregation shall complete the required steps on the pastoral search process up to and including the election of the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) and the creation of a Ministry Information Form (MIF).
- 2) If after creating the MIF, the PNC and the temporary pastor both believe the temporary pastor might be a good fit for the congregation, the PNC chair must notify the congregation’s liaison to the Presbytery’s Commission for Congregational Life (CCL) of their desire.

When notified, the presbytery liaison shall notify the CCL chair, the Presbytery’s Commission for Church Professionals (CCP) chair, the Presbytery’s Mediation and Support Team (MAST).

- 3) A CCL representative then meets with the PNC to discuss the issues present in recommending a temporary pastor as a candidate for call.

These issues include, but are not limited to:

- a. Given that temporary pastors might better enable congregations to deal with their agenda if the pastor has no vested interest in their own long-range call to that congregation, what issues have been successfully handled during the temporary period? What issues have been unaddressed?
- b. Given that trust is essential in covenantal relationships, what steps will be taken to ensure distrust is not part of the climate in which the new long-term relationship will begin?
- c. During a temporary pastorate, the pastor has, most likely, had to push, confront, challenge or strongly discourage certain behavior, actions or policies. This is particularly true of transitional pastorates. Given that it is risky to consider a temporary pastor when there may be underlying opposition to that individual by persons in the congregation, is the PNC aware of the ways in which the transitional work has impacted the congregation?

- 4) If the PNC desires to consider the temporary pastor as a candidate, the PNC, in consultation with the session, shall request that the CCP and CCL consider recommending to the presbytery that the request be endorsed by the presbytery (See Pastoral Succession in the Book of Order above).
- 5) The presbytery’s Commission for Church Professionals (CCP) shall interview the candidate as it would a new teaching elder entering the presbytery and to discuss the potential issues present in moving to a called position.
- 6) The CCP and CCL representatives shall meet to discuss the changing call. If both CCP and CCL agree with the PNC and the pastor that the call is acceptable the PNC is informed that the process can proceed to the next step.
- 7) If the CCP and CCL commissions support the possibility of the changing call, given the particular circumstances involved, the request to consider the temporary pastor as candidate for pastor shall be presented to the presbytery as an extraordinary action supported by both the CCP and CCL. If less than the required 75% of the presbytery

votes to approve the consideration of the temporary pastor, the contract for the temporary pastorate will ordinarily not be renewed.

8) If the presbytery supports the consideration of the temporary pastor, the PNC shall interview the pastor as they would any pastoral candidate.

9) If the PNC nominates the temporary pastor as the candidate, the session and the temporary pastor shall submit an amended contract to the CCP indicating that the session will pay the temporary pastor a 3-month severance package should the temporary pastor receive insufficient votes at the congregational meeting (See Step 9 below).

10) The session schedules a congregational meeting for the election - with a member of the CCP acting as moderator.

The relationship between the temporary pastor and the congregation shall be terminated if there is insufficient congregational support as indicated by the vote.

Applicability of Process to Commissioned Ruling Elders

The Presbytery of Scioto Valley commissions ruling elders, who have been through transitional ministry training, to churches in transition. Commissioned Ruling Elders (CRE) always function within the bounds of a temporary role. In some instances, when the situation in a congregation warrants it, the Presbytery of Scioto Valley might determine that the CRE will need to function in the same manner as a Teaching Elder called to a transitional position. The cautionary approach advocated by the Book of Order was particularly related to the unique relationship between a transitional pastor and a congregation. Neither the level of education of a pastor nor the particular ordination of a pastor provides the basis for the cautionary approach. As such, if the presbytery has recommended that a CRE position be considered a transitional position, any congregation that seeks to change the existing relationship with the CRE must adhere to the process outlined by this policy.

CREs are not called by congregations, but rather are contracted by sessions. With regard to Step 10, the session shall convene a congregational meeting for the purpose of conducting a non-binding advisory vote of the congregation to determine support for an ongoing, contractual relationship with the CRE.

By the PNC

This policy has been read and is agreed to by the _____ Church of PNC of the _____ Ohio.

Date of Action _____

Signature _____
PNC Chair

By the Session

This policy has been read and is agreed to by the _____ Church of
session of the _____ Ohio.

Date of Action _____ Signature _____

By the Teaching Elder or CRE

I hereby accept this policy and the terms and conditions contained herein.

Date of Acceptance _____ Signature _____
Teaching Elder/CRE

By the Commission for Church Professionals

The changing covenant between the Teaching Elder and the Congregation is supported by the Commission for Church Professionals of the Presbytery of Scioto Valley.

Date of Action _____ Signature _____
Commission Moderator

By the Commission for Congregational Life

The changing covenant between the Teaching Elder and the Congregation is supported by the Commission for Congregational Life of the Presbytery of Scioto Valley.

Date of Action _____ Signature _____
Commission Moderator

Date of Action _____ Signature _____
Stated Clerk