

Presbytery of the Pacific (POP)

Guidelines for Commission on Ministry Liaisons Supporting Pastor Nominating Committees During the Search for an Installed Pastor or Associate Pastor

You have been appointed by the Commission on Ministry (COM) to serve as a liaison with the Pastor Nominating Committee or Associate Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) of a church in Presbytery of the Pacific (POP). It is your responsibility as the appointed COM liaison to support and resource this PNC and to be a link between the presbytery and the congregation during this period. Presbytery of the Pacific COM expects our liaison to be present with the PNC during their meetings; interviews and other activities with candidates; and at meetings of the congregation when actions are taken to call the pastor or associate pastor. Following are some guidelines to help you prepare for this work and to effectively support the PNC. If the PNC has already begun its work when you are appointed, gather your materials, get acquainted with the PNC leadership, and – prayerfully – jump in!

1. Become familiar with [ON CALLING A PASTOR \(OCAP\)](#), the PC(USA) resource for PNC's. (These guidelines are based on the 2015 edition of *OCAP*.) Note the list of acronyms on page 5. Other materials to gather: [Transitional Ministry Policy](#) of POP if the church has an Intentional Transitional Pastor; the support documents in the Appendices following these guidelines; any recent mission assessments from the church; any other material recommended by the COM moderator or POP staff.

2. Get to know the person at the church who is convening the first meeting of the PNC. Coordinate your calendars so that you will be able to participate in this very important meeting. Some questions to ask:

- Who will moderate this meeting?
- Will someone at the church have prepared copies of [On Calling a Pastor](#) for each member?
- Will they be electing leadership at this meeting?
- How will future (ongoing) meeting times be determined?
- What role will you play in this meeting? When will you be given time to train the PNC?

3. After the PNC elects its leadership, spend some time building a relationship with the chair. You will be working closely with this leader for a long time!

4. Prepare an initial training for the new PNC. Every member should have a copy of [ON CALLING A PASTOR](#); a copy of **APPENDIX A – [PNC Membership Covenant](#)**; and any other handouts you plan to distribute at this time. Figure out how much of the process the PNC needs to understand at this point.

- ~~Refer to [OCAP, Part One](#), pages 5 – 7, for Acronyms used in the book and for spiritual and foundational resources. If you want to consider using the [OCAP Video](#)~~

~~[Introduction](#), view it first to see if it fits the needs of this PNC. We do not recommend that you use the video if you are already familiar with PNCs.~~

- Refer to [OCAP, Part Five – Searching for a Pastor](#), pages 25 – 40 for an overview of the work of the PNC.
- Highlight p. 25: Suggestions for Your Work; Understanding Your Work; Confidentiality; Selecting Leadership.
- Recommend the PNC establish a covenant of agreement among the PNC and hold one another accountable to the terms of the covenant. See **APPENDIX A**, [PNC Membership Covenant](#).
- Share the graphic, **APPENDIX E**, [Pastor Nominating Process](#) (*this needs revision*). Some PNCs use this to communicate where they are in the process with their congregation.
- Because this latest version of OCAP no longer places an emphasis on the spiritual focus of the search process, consider sharing the material in **APPENDIX F**, [Your Call as a Pastor Nominating Committee](#) (*this was revised in 2023*).

5. Support the work of the PNC in identifying the resources they will need to gather information to present their vision of God’s call to their church for future pastoral leadership. This process will vary depending on the needs of the church. Some churches may have spent time updating their mission and vision prior to electing a PNC. Others will expect the PNC to develop such a process. PNCs use surveys (which can be done online with apps such as Survey Monkey), listening groups, town halls, focus groups, interviews with church leadership, and other methods to gather current information from the congregation. Ask the Session/Personnel Committee to provide a Position Description for the Pastor and the minimum and maximum effective salary.

6. Support the PNC as they prepare the [Ministry Discernment Profile \(MDP\)](#).

- When the MDP is completed, the PNC sends it to the church session for approval.
- After the session’s approval, the PNC sends the MDP to the Clerk of Session (COS) and COM for approval. Be sure that this is on the agenda of the next COM meeting. (Transitions subcommittee.)
- Following the COM Chair’s approval of the MDP, the MDP becomes “Released”

[At this point the process will change if the PNC is seeking a Pastor for a Designated Term. See Presbytery of the Pacific COM’s guidelines: [Guidelines for Search for Pastors for a Designated Term](#). Return to these Guidelines at Step 10.]

9. Support the PNC in determining a process to receive and review Personal Discernment Forms (PDP).

10. Provide counsel as the PNC gets to know candidates through visits, interviews, reference checks, and other interactions. **Book of Order:** “...the pastor nominating committee shall receive the presbytery’s counsel on the merits, suitability, and availability of those considered for the call.” (G-2.0803).

- Establishing Interview Process: p. 38 **OCAP**.

- Primary Reference Checks: The PNC chair or designee will contact only those references listed on the candidate's PDP.
 - Secondary Reference Checks: The PNC chair or designee will contact secondary references only when the prospective pastor has given permission. Secondary references are persons not listed on the PDP but who have been suggested by the prospective pastor or others because they are thought to have knowledge of the individual. Under no circumstances should PNC contact members of a prospective pastor's present congregation without her or his permission to do so.
 - Presbytery to Presbytery Reference Checks: Before the PNC invites a candidate to come for a final interview process (e.g. preaching at neutral pulpit), the PNC will ask that the General Presbyter (GP) conduct a presbytery to presbytery reference check. You will inform the GP when this check is needed. Encourage the PNC to take seriously the responses from the GP.
 - COM may want to schedule a credentialing interview with a candidate coming for a visit/preaching/meeting with the PNC, depending on the circumstances. Check with the COM moderator.
 - If there are any concerns about a particular candidate, direct them to the General Presbyter, who will offer counsel.
11. Participate in the PNC's in-person interviews with candidates. Be available to answer questions from the candidates.
12. Provide counsel as the PNC chooses its nominee and extends the invitation to the call. (pp. 41-42 **O**CAP)
- The PNC will ensure the new call is within the stated budget. (See **Book of Order** G-2.0804). The session has approved the effective salary listed on the MDP. If the PNC negotiates a package that exceeds the previously approved compensation, the PNC will go to the session and ask them to approve the compensation package that the PNC has negotiated with the candidate. The PNC does not disclose the identity or other information about the candidate to the session or anyone else at this time.
 - See **APPENDIX B** [Presbytery of the Pacific Pastoral Call Form and Pastoral Call Form Explanation](#). The PNC will use this form to complete its negotiations with the candidate and report the call to COM for the presbytery.
 - When the PNC has negotiated the Terms of Call and invited the candidate to come to the church for a candidate sermon, send the Terms of Call to the COM moderator and the stated clerk. Also, send a copy of the church's MDP and the candidate's PDP.
 - If the church has a manse, be sure that they are following the [POP Manse Policy](#).
13. Once the PNC selects a final candidate and before the call is extended, offer guidance about the presbytery examination and approval process.
- Schedule the necessary interviews between the candidate and COM. The candidate may need to have both a credentialing interview to examine the terms of the call and an examination for membership in the Presbytery of the Pacific (or for ordination if

- not previously ordained.) Let the PNC and the candidate know when the candidate will meet with COM.
- Teaching elders in PC(USA) who are members of another presbytery are examined for membership in the Presbytery of the Pacific by COM. See **APPENDIX C [Examining Teaching Elders](#)**. Communicate with the candidate, the PNC and COM to set up this examination.
 - A candidate for ordination as a teaching elder in PC(USA) will usually be examined on the floor of the Presbytery of the Pacific and be ordained by us. Consult with the Stated Clerk on the process for individual candidates.
18. Encourage the PNC to design a communication plan for introducing the nominee to the congregation, including church leadership. They may want to schedule “Meet and Greet” opportunities for the congregation, the nominee, and his/her family. See pp. 42-43 of OCAP. Participate in as many activities as possible.
 19. Advise the Session to call a Congregational Meeting to elect the new pastor and approve the Terms of Call. Attend the meeting if possible. In our presbytery, it is customary for the candidate to preach at a worship service of the congregation with the congregational meeting immediately following. If the church needs a moderator for this meeting, ask the presbytery staff or COM moderator to help obtain one. There are several actions to be taken at this meeting, including dissolving the PNC. If the meeting moderator needs assistance in setting the agenda for this meeting, ask for help from the presbytery’s stated clerk.
 20. You may want to discuss with the PNC and the candidate before the meeting how the pastor will respond to a congregational vote that is not unanimous. (Votes are rarely unanimous.) Ask COM to recommend the percentage of votes in the affirmative they recommend for the will of the congregation to be seen as supporting this new call.
 21. Report the action of the congregation in electing a new pastor. After the affirmative vote to approve the call at the congregational meeting, members of the PNC plus the moderator of the meeting and the newly elected Pastor will sign the call papers. Representatives of the church will deliver the completed papers to the POP stated clerk. Assist the PNC chair in getting the papers to the stated clerk.
 22. “When the congregation, the presbytery, and the pastor or candidate have all concurred in a call to a permanent or designated pastoral position, the presbytery shall authorize the installation and or ordination service” (***Book of Order*** G-2.0805). Offer assistance to the new pastor in forming an Administrative Commission for the installation/ordination service. See **APPENDIX D [Ordination Installation Procedures](#)**. The service is conducted by the presbytery. The candidate should consult with the POP moderator to set the date and time for the service.
 23. The PNC, in consultation with the session, should plan ways to welcome the new pastor to the church community. They may want to establish a new pastor’s welcome team within the congregation.

24. Help the PNC chair conclude the work of the committee. See p. 43 **OCAP** for notifying Church Leadership Connection of a “Call Pending”. Destroy all personal files.

APPENDICES:

- APPENDIX A: [Pastor Nominating Committee Membership Covenant](#)
APPENDIX B: [Pastoral Call Form POP 2024 and Pastoral Call Form Explanation](#)
APPENDIX C: [Examining Teaching Elders](#)
APPENDIX D: [Ordination/Installation Procedures](#)
APPENDIX E: [Pastor Nominating Process \(Timeline graphic for use with the congregation\)](#)
APPENDIX F: [Your Call as a Pastor Nominating Committee](#)