

Presbytery of the Pacific

Expectations of the Session during a Pastoral Search

The Session's responsibility is to lead the congregation, setting a positive and reassuring tone during the pastoral search process. During this process, the session needs to meet regularly with the moderator appointed by the presbytery in order to continue to fulfill its responsibilities for the congregation's worship life, Christian education, pastoral care, fellowship, mission, and administration.

Regarding the pastoral search, it is important to remember that the Congregation elected the Pastor Nominating Committee, so the PNC reports to the Congregation. In the PC(USA) call process, the Congregation gives authority to search for a pastor to a PNC. ***Once the Session and the Commission on Ministry (COM) approve the Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP), the other members of the Congregation and the Session have no role in determining who will be the next pastor until the PNC is ready to present their nominee to the congregation for a vote.***

However, the Session has certain responsibilities in the pastor search process, and the PNC is encouraged to work with the Session during crucial times in its work. The PNC is also reminded that long-term, the work of the Pastor is most closely tied to the work of the Session, so the wisdom of the Session needs to be respected as the search is conducted. Session responsibilities include:

- ✓ Providing for and participating in a congregational mission study, if appropriate or required by presbytery, or giving input into the Ministry Discernment Profile (MDF) as requested by the PNC
- ✓ Budgeting funds for the PNC to cover search expenses such as travel, telephone, mail, and other incidentals
- ✓ Determining the financial compensation available for your new pastor, including moving costs
- ✓ Reviewing and approving the completed Ministry Discernment Profile, which will be attested to by the clerk of session and COM
- ✓ Praying regularly for the PNC, and helping to manage the questions and anxiety of the congregation
- ✓ Interpreting and helping to maintain the integrity of the pastoral search process, especially the need for confidentiality and giving the PNC its support and confidence in the PNC's diligence
- ✓ Calling a congregational meeting when the PNC is ready to present the nominee to the Congregation
- ✓ Preparing for the new pastor's arrival by attending to such details as manse renovation, moving, and welcoming
- ✓ In consultation with presbytery, setting the time for the installation of your new pastor

Please note that the PNC is not required to seek the Session's approval of a candidate—or even tell the Session the identity of the candidate—prior to the presentation of the candidate. In its leadership role with the life of the Congregation, the Session will be counted on to provide for on-going support of the Congregation, for providing insight into describing the mission and vision of the Congregation, and for showing respect for confidentiality and support for the PNC's work.

The PNC is being asked to sign a covenant attesting to their commitment to take on this sacred trust, and are being advised to work with the appropriate parties—including the Session, Congregation, and Presbytery leadership—as needed.