



PRESBYTERY OF THE
CASCADES



Presbytery of the Cascades
Presbyterian Church (USA)

Toward Calling Your Pastor

*A Handbook for
Pastor Nominating Committees (PNC's)*

Revised: April 2021

Welcome to an Exciting Experience of God's Call

Congratulations on your election to the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) of your congregation. You and those you serve with will nominate a pastor who will work with you in the ministry and mission of Jesus Christ.

This booklet, entitled *Toward Calling Your Pastor: A Handbook for Pastor Nominating Committees*, (hereafter called “**Handbook**”) leads you through the pastoral transition process. It is not a substitute for the advice of your Commission on Ministry (COM) liaison or the support provided by the Presbyterian Church (USA) and its Church Leadership Connection (CLC). This Handbook will help you to know and understand what to expect throughout this process. Other materials and help will be provided by the COM liaison and the Advocate for Congregations and Clergy – the presbytery staff person who supports the COM and churches in transition.

This *Handbook* will be used in combination with the PCUSA Church Leadership Connections’, *On Calling a Pastor* (hereafter referred as “**OCP Manual**”). Copies are available on the Presbyterian Church (USA) website: [CLICK HERE](#) With these resources and support from your region’s COM, you should find the guidance and resources you need to fulfill your responsibility to nominate pastoral leadership for your congregation.

For the Christian the very best resource is prayer:

Eternal God: you called us to be a special people, to preach the gospel and show mercy. Keep your Spirit with us as we meet together, so that in everything we may do your will. Guide us lest we stumble or be misguided by our own desires. May all we do be done for the reconciling of the world, for the up building of the church, and for the greater glory of Jesus Christ our confidence, guide, and friend. Amen.

From the Book of Common Worship

May God richly bless and enhance your work!

Getting Started: How to Use This Handbook

First things first: start by printing out a copy of this Handbook as it will become your quick reference and allow for notation when tasks are completed and notes along the way.

In our Presbyterian understanding, pastoral service within congregations involves a three-way covenant and agreement among the pastor, congregation and presbytery.

A regional COM liaison will meet with your congregation to provide support, direction, resource, counsel, and guidance. Your COM liaison is either a teaching or ruling elder from your region who has volunteered to serve on the COM and work with your congregation as an expression of call and service to the larger Church. You will get to know that person well. It is important to remain in close contact with your COM liaison and the Advocate for Congregations and Clergy.

Note contact details here:

COM Liaison: _____	Advocate for Cong. & Clergy: Clark Scalera
Phone: _____	Phone: 541.606.5699
Email: _____	Email: clark@potc.life

In this *Handbook*, we establish a process that moves forward in an orderly fashion. Calling a pastor works best when you follow *each step in sequence*. We encourage you to resist the temptation to skip an item. Taking each step in turn will ensure your new pastor is called “decently and in order.”

A Key to Abbreviations in this Handbook

You will find this process is full of acronyms; below are the definitions of a few. The *OCP Manual* includes others on page 5.

- COM:** The presbytery Commission on Ministry. It fulfills our presbytery’s constitutional responsibility as outlined in the *Book of Order* G-3.0307.
- PNC:** Pastor Nominating Committee elected by the congregation. An APNC is an Associate Pastor Nominating Committee.
- MDP:** Ministry Discernment Profile developed by the PNC and approved by the session and the COM; it is eventually placed online.
- PDP:** Personal Discernment Profile developed by those who are seeking a call.

CLC: Church Leadership Connection of the Presbyterian Church which electronically matches the online MDPs and PDPs.

The Pastoral Change Process

For a review of our Reformed Faith's understanding of "the call," and a preview of the call process please read the *OCP Manual*, PART ONE & PART TWO, pages 5-12.

As Your Committee Begins to Meet

A first and critical word about your meetings: It is very important that you begin and end your meetings with prayer. It may seem strange to read this, but sometimes a PNC gets so involved in its "business," members forget a committee working on its own strength will not succeed. Depend on God's gracious Spirit to guide your deliberations and your decision-making.

A Prayer

*By your word, Gracious God, your creation sprang forth,
and we were given the breath of life.
By your word, Eternal God, death is overcome,
Christ is raised from the tomb,
and we are given new life in the power of your Spirit.
May we boldly proclaim this good news,
by the words of our mouths and the deeds of our lives,
rejoicing always in your powerful presence;
through Jesus Christ our risen Lord. Amen.*

1. The Pastor Nominating Committee is Elected

You are now at *your beginning* as a group, standing together at the heart of the process. Some on the committee you will know well, others may be new to you. Learn to work with each other, grow to respect and enjoy each other. *Build your life together with prayer and care. Attend to the community your committee builds.*

One of your first responsibilities when the PNC is formed is to plan who will open each meeting with prayer. Pass the experience around and ask each to include a meditation and opportunity for faith sharing among the group. *This time you spend together will be immensely important. It is an opportunity to grow in faith even as you seek a pastor.*

Your COM liaison is able to provide advice as you work through this process. Before beginning, it might be best to scan the full process in the *OCP Manual*, PART THREE, pages 14 – 16.

1. The Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) is elected on _____.
 - ▶ *OCP Manual*, page 23.
 - * initial when done _____ Date _____
2. The PNC receives its orientation and training by COM liaison and begins its organization on _____. The session and PNC agree to follow the Equal Opportunity Policy of our presbytery. [CLICK HERE](#) for PNC resources including this policy.
 - * initial when done _____ Date _____
3. A Mission Study may be required. This depends on how recently the congregation has engaged in deep reflection on its situation, ministry and program. The Mission Study is the opportunity to think carefully about your congregation's life and mission. The results of the study feed directly into the work of the PNC and the development of the Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP). Cascades Presbytery has a number of resources at its disposal and your COM liaison is eager to share them with you. If required, the Mission Study is completed on _____.
 - * initial when done _____ Date _____
4. The PNC begins the MDP by downloading and printing a copy to use as a work sheet from the CLC at [CLICK HERE](#). The MDP is *the* important tool introducing your congregation to potential candidates. Work through it carefully so it authentically represents your church's mission, program, and vision with fairness and vitality.

Your COM liaison will help in this process.

- ▶ *OCP Manual*, pages 27 - 31
 - * initial when done _____ Date _____
5. The first draft of the Ministry Discernment Profile is completed on _____
- ▶ *OCP Manual*, page 28
 - * initial when done _____ Date _____
6. This draft MDP is forwarded to your COM liaison and the Advocate for Congregations and Clergy on _____ for review and suggestions.
- * initial when done _____ Date _____
7. The MDP is revised and the final form is presented to session for approval.
- * initial when done _____ Date _____
8. Once the MDP is approved, the Advocate for Congregations and Clergy will generate a login ID and password for the CLC website for two persons in your congregation: (1) the PNC chair and (2) your clerk of session. You may change your passwords after you sign on for the first time. If you do change it, be sure to record the new password in a safe place. With this information, you may enter your approved MDP into the CLC system. The CLC website can be challenging to navigate, so if it gives you problems, reach out to the presbytery staff for help.

Here are the steps to take:

- a. Go to <https://clc.pcusa.org/login> and login.
- b. The website should automatically identify your congregation and generate Part 1 of the MDP. Please review the information and edit it if necessary.
- c. Move to Part II of the MDP. It is important to enter an e-mail address for your PNC. It may belong to the chair or a member of the committee. It must be one that is personal and secure. It should not be the church's email nor should it be an email of a person not on the PNC.
- d. Click "Submit MDP."

When your form is received, the computer will confirm it and generate a MDP ID. This ID is made up of your church PIN and some other digits that will identify your particular MDP. **You will need this ID to edit your MDP.**
Write it down and keep it. Report it to your COM liaison and the Advocate for Congregations and Clergy.

- ▶ *OCP Manual*, page 27
- * initial when done _____ Date _____

9. Your MDP is now in an electronic “holding area” awaiting on-line approval from your clerk of session and the COM (it can take several days to complete the approval process). Once the approvals have been granted, the CLC will place the MDP into the database where it will be accessible for job seekers across the denomination.

* initial when done _____ Date _____

10. While you are waiting for Item #9 to be completed, this is a good time for the PNC to discuss how it will process, review, and respond to each PDP received. They will come many ways: through the on-line search process, self-referrals from interested candidates, or PDPs handed to you by church members.

It is important to record how and when you received a PDP and to keep the categories separate since you know all PDPs received on-line from CLC have the validation of that person’s presbytery by the attestation of their stated clerk. If you have *any questions about any candidate at any time in the process*, contact the Advocate for Congregations and Clergy who has the ability to make the necessary inquiries.

It is important that you acknowledge all PDPs that are received and also to promptly notify a person if they are no longer being considered. Establishing a process for how the PNC’s intentions and timelines are communicated is an important step.

- ▶ *OCP Manual*, pages 34 - 37

* initial when done _____ Date _____

2. The Committee Considers Candidates

To review: the inquiries and PDPs you receive from possible candidates come from many sources: the CLC (<https://clc.pcusa.org/login>), self-referrals from those who have heard of your opening, and suggestions that may come to your committee.

Please note: all PDPs coming through the CLC have been approved for circulation. That would not necessarily be the case in self-referrals or second-party suggestions.

It is critical that you treat your communications with each candidate and each PDP with confidentiality. Sometimes, a PNC may use e-mail communication in order to communicate with candidates who are still available for conversation with a committee. A mass e-mail communication shares confidential information in the e-mail header that the Office of Vocation vows to protect. **Please, no mass e-mails!** Always communicate individually!

You will want to develop your own criteria for evaluating interested persons. Read the *OCP Manual*, pages 36 - 37, for an overview. Begin by screening out the prospective candidates from those who do not fit your situation. The objective, of course, is to refine the list, keeping in mind the opportunities, vision and needs of your particular congregation as you have defined them in the MDP.

The good work you did on the MDP bears directly on this part of the process; the quality of your MDP will invite the interest of potential candidates. When you arrive at the point of interviews, think very carefully about the structure of the experience and plan your questions well. The *OCP Manual* suggests possible questions (page 38), you will think of others, and your COM liaison can suggest even more. The *OCP Manual* makes some excellent suggestions on structuring the interview, pages 38 - 40.

This period in the PNC's work represents a significant commitment of time and energy. You will be engaged in evaluating candidates, phone conversations with them, listening to sermons, checking references. All of this effort has a basic underlying focus: you are looking toward building a consensus in the committee as you move toward those individuals you wish to interview in person.

Again, as a matter of courtesy, it is very important that you be in communication with the candidates regarding their place in your process and your anticipated timelines.

Any questions that you have about this process should be referred to the COM liaison or the Advocate for Congregations and Clergy. This is an important time of discernment for your congregation.

11. The PNC checks references noted on the candidate's PDP and narrows the list of potential candidates to 3 or 4 for interview. The COM liaison will guide you

through this step. The names of potential candidates are referred to the Advocate for Congregations and Clergy to complete reference checks and mandated criminal background checks.

- * initial when done _____ Date _____
- 12. COM liaison helps to arrange for your interview candidates to preach in a neutral pulpit.
 - ▶ *OCP Manual*, page 40
 - * initial when done _____ Date _____
- 13. COM and presbytery staff reference check on candidates completed on _____ and the PNC proceeds with the interviews and preaching in a neutral pulpit. Your COM liaison can help you with the interview process and the *OCP Manual* gives some excellent guidance.
 - ▶ *OCP Manual*, pages 38 - 40
 - * initial when done _____ Date _____
- 14. At this point, your top candidate(s) must also be interviewed and approved by your regional COM. Your COM liaison will coordinate a time for this interview, which may occur via video conferencing, or in person when possible. Ideally, the interview will take place in advance of or as part of the neutral pulpit preaching experience. Following this interview, the regional COM will either give you approval to proceed with the applicant or advise you as to potential obstacles with calling that applicant.
 - * initial when done _____ Date _____

3. The Committee Selects a Candidate

The *OCP Manual*, pages 41 - 43 covers this part of the process. It is an exciting time when the PNC comes to its decision. The COM liaison and the Advocate for Congregations and Clergy are to be involved in this aspect of your task helping to negotiate the various approvals, interviews, and forms that are required by our *Book of Order*.

Final candidates for your congregation receive a Cascades Presbytery booklet titled *Welcome to the Presbytery of the Cascades: A Handbook for Those Considering a Call and/or Entering the Presbytery of the Cascades*. This outlines for the candidate their various responsibilities. Please be sure they receive a copy, which can be found at: [CLICK HERE](#)

15. PNC makes the final selection and reports this information to COM. The PNC requests session to call a congregational meeting on _____.
- ▶ *OCP Manual*, pages 42 - 43
 - * initial when done _____ Date _____
16. At this point, the PNC will do some planning and thinking: what is the best way to communicate information about the nominee with the congregation?
- ▶ *OCP Manual*, page 43
 - * initial when done _____ Date _____
17. The COM liaison will work with the PNC, session, and pastor-elect / associate pastor-elect in developing recommendations for the terms of the call (Step 18), installation and/or ordination.
- * initial when done _____ Date _____
18. The PNC Chair contacts their COM liaison for the official Call Forms and information regarding the congregational meeting and how it is to be conducted.
- ▶ Please use the forms supplied by your COM liaison or presbytery staff.
 - * initial when done _____ Date _____
19. The Congregational Action:
 Action of the _____ Presbyterian Church of _____ held at a congregational meeting on _____, and moderated by The Rev. _____ to call
 The Rev. _____ to serve as their full time (part-time ___%)
 (Associate) Pastor beginning _____ with annual terms as follows:

Salary		Housing	
Utilities		Social Security Allowance	
Professional Expense		Vacation	Four weeks
Continuing Education		Study Leave	Two weeks
Other		Other	
Full pension, Medical, disability and death coverage under the Board of Pensions.			
Attendance at the Cascades Presbytery Discovery Retreat.			
Three months sabbatical at full pay after each six years of service.			

Other Benefits: _____

Any special information: _____

* initial when done _____ Date _____

20. COM / Presbytery Action taken to approve the Call of The Rev. _____
to the
_____ on _____ (Date) with the Call Forms signed by the COM chair.

* initial when done _____ Date _____

21. An Administrative Commission will be established by the presbytery through your regional COM to conduct the Service of Installation [see the *Book of Order* W-4.4006]. This is a service of the presbytery, and usually takes place within the first three months of a new pastor's start date. The new pastor is responsible for coordinating this service and inviting people to serve on the Administrative Commission after their arrival.

The presbytery has a resource available to guide this process:

- *Welcome to the Presbytery of the Cascades: A Handbook For Those Who are Considering a Call and/or Entering The Presbytery of The Cascades.* [CLICK HERE](#)

A Good Work Completed

Congratulations!

Your responsibilities are now officially over. The congregation has dismissed you with thanks. No longer are you a “PNC.” Yet, as a group you have bonded and, as a group, there are unofficial things you can still do (see *OCP Manual*, page 44).

You can be the support group for your new pastor and your common ministry together in the coming years. Here are some suggestions you might consider:

- Help your new pastor by facilitating details for the move to your community.
- Welcome your new pastor by stocking the pantry with food stuffs upon arrival. Some congregations have had a “pounding party” with a pound of this and a pound of that.
- Meet with your new pastor periodically throughout the year to check in and see how things are going.
- Serve as a sounding board for the ideas and insights of your new pastor.
- Plan a first year anniversary celebration with your new pastor and for all the things you will be able to accomplish together as a congregation in mission to Jesus Christ.

You will think of some other possibilities. The objective is to work together so this new relationship of pastor and congregation is a rewarding experience for all and lifts up the Good News of the gospel. May God richly bless your common work and ministry together.

Just as we began this process with prayer, may we finish it with prayer:

*Gracious and ever-living God, ruler of all things in heaven and earth,
hear our prayers for this congregation.*

Strengthen the faithful, arouse the careless, and restore the truly sorry.

Grant us all things necessary for our common life,

and bring us all to be of one heart and mind as we serve

our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ; through our risen Lord. Amen.

Useful web links:

Presbyterian Church (USA):

www.pcusa.org

PCUSA – *On Calling A Pastor* booklet:

www.pcusa.org/media/uploads/clc/doc/callingpastor.doc

PCUSA – Church Leadership Connection:

<https://clc.pcusa.org/login>

Presbytery of the Cascades

www.cascadespresbytery.org

Presbytery of the Cascades – Commission on Ministry Resources:

<https://www.cascadespresbytery.org/commission-on-ministry/>

Presbytery of the Cascades Office

245 S. Bancroft Street, Suite D, Portland, OR 97239-8526
(503) 227-5486

The Rev. Clark Scalera, Advocate for Congregations and Clergy

E-mail: clark@potc.life

The Rev. Paul Belz-Templeman, Stated Clerk

E-mail: paul@potc.life