

# 6

## Process of Pastoral Search and Call

A local church in the EPC has the irrevocable right to call its own Pastor, with the concurrence of the Presbytery (G.6-6).<sup>18</sup> The time of transition between Pastors and the selection of a new Pastor are critical in the life of the local church. During these times, churches are often served by Pastors in temporary positions—Transitional Pastor, Stated Supply, or Occasional Supply (G.10-7)—and churches always utilize a Search Committee (G.10-4). This chapter describes first the typical process that takes place when a church is without a Pastor (a “vacant pulpit”) and searching for its next Pastor. It then will describe a scenario for “pastoral succession” and the search process for Associate Pastors and Assistant Pastors.

### ***Presbytery and Session Responsibilities When There Is No Pastor***

#### **Appointing a Moderator**

The Pastor is the Moderator of the Session (G.18-2A.1). When a church is without a Pastor, it often is wise for the Presbytery to appoint a Teaching Elder from the Presbytery to serve as Moderator (G.18-2A.4; G.21-2D.2(b)), especially in a solo Pastor situation. Such an appointment may strengthen the ties of the church to the Presbytery during this transitional time. If authorized by the Presbytery and with the concurrence of the Session, the Ministerial Committee may appoint an interim Moderator until the Presbytery can take action (G.18-2A.4; G.21-2D.2(b)). Since distance between churches can make it difficult for a Moderator to attend all meetings, it may be helpful for the Session to appoint one of their members to serve as a Moderator pro tempore when the appointed Moderator is unable to attend. The Moderator pro tempore also can serve as a helpful point of communication between the appointed Moderator and the Session. It is possible, if permitted by the Presbytery, for the Session to elect one of its members as Moderator when there is no Pastor (G.18-2A.3).

#### **Temporary Pastoral Positions**

In the absence of the Pastor, the Session is responsible to: 1) Continue regular worship services in accordance with the Session’s authority and responsibilities (G.18-3A, M), and 2) engage a Stated Supply, Transitional Supply, or Occasional Supply as appropriate and in consultation with the Ministerial Committee (G.10-7C). The Ministerial Committee is responsible for working with the Session in this process.

#### **Ministerial Committee Liaison**

The Ministerial Committee should send this chapter (or a publication of its own based on this chapter) to the Session as soon as it is aware of a pastoral vacancy. It is wise for the Ministerial Committee to appoint a liaison with the church as soon as there is a pastoral vacancy. This individual should be familiar with the concepts of Transitional Pastor ministries (chapter 12 in this Manual) and the pastoral search process in this chapter. The Ministerial Committee liaison

<sup>18</sup> All Book of Order references cited are found at the end of this chapter.

should meet with the Session as soon as possible after there is a pastoral vacancy to: 1) explain the merits of securing a qualified individual in one of those temporary pastoral positions, 2) help the Session locate an appropriate transitional, stated, or occasional supply minister; and 3) explain the pastoral search process in this chapter. Once a Search Committee is formed, the liaison can guide the committee through their responsibilities.

### ***Pastoral Search Process***

The Congregation has the irrevocable right to call its own Pastor, provided that the Presbytery concurs (G.6-6). It does so through an elected Search Committee (G.10-4A).

#### **Stage 1 — Preparatory Work by the Session**

One of the distinct advantages in having a Transitional or Stated Supply Pastor is the assistance that person can give in this preparatory work. Additionally, the presence of the Transitional or Stated Supply Pastor removes the need for the Session to manage day-to-day functions of the church so it can focus on these critical tasks and give the Search Committee a solid foundation on which it can work. The Ministerial Committee also may be aware of resources within the Presbytery or Office of the General Assembly to assist with these tasks.

1. Review and modify (or develop if none exists) the vision and mission of the church.
2. The Session or the Search Committee (in consultation with and approval of the Session) completes the Church Information Form (CIF), available on page 115.
3. The Session or the Search Committee (in consultation with and approval of the Session) completes a Pastor's Position Description. Those responsible for developing the Position Description should carefully consider how much detail should go into the document. If it is overly detailed, it may be too limiting. If there is not enough detail, important expectations may not be well communicated and be the source of problems in the future. The Position Description should be flexible enough to provide adaptability to changing congregational circumstances and needs, and prevent a candidate from simply giving lip service to a static document.
4. The Session determines a range of compensation it believes the congregation will support as terms of call for the new Pastor (G.18.3H). The Session should factor in required EPC items such as medical insurance and pension, and normal reimbursements for expenses (see the "Terms of Call—Pastor/Associate Pastor" form, available on page 116). In establishing those parameters, the Session should be sensitive to offering a level of compensation influenced by the previous Pastor's, and/or a particular candidate's education, training, experience, and other accomplishments. Ministerial Committees should have access to publications such as *The Compensation Handbook for Church Staff* by Richard R. Hammar (published annually by Christianity Today International) as they work with Sessions and Search Committees.

Terms of call should include salary, housing (02-4.3) (or a statement such as "housing allowance included in salary and will be specified when housing has been secured"), EPC medical insurance, retirement 10% (minimum), two weeks' study leave, and four weeks' vacation (81-04; 81-05; 81-06; 82-07.34, 5.4). Terms of call also should include appropriate accountable plans (e.g., mileage, books/study, etc.). Accountable reimbursement plans are recommended instead of "allowances," which are paid regularly without requiring documentation. A "reimbursement" paid in ac-

cordance with a properly formed policy is not taxable to the minister; whereas some a portion of the “allowance” could be.

### **Stage 2 — Formation of the Search Committee**

The Ministerial Vocation Committee recommends extensive involvement of the Session in forming and preparing materials for the Search Committee, as well as representation on the Search Committee. At the same time, the irrevocable right of the congregation to elect its Pastor must be preserved (G.6-6). Ultimately, the Search Committee is formed by and responsible to the congregation, not the Session.

1. The Session, as the elected leadership of the church, should take the responsibility allowed in G.10-4A and nominate members for the Search Committee. The congregation has the right to determine the size of the Search Committee (G.10-4A). In making its recommendation, the Session should consider that experience has shown that seven members is optimal for the larger churches and five members for the smaller churches (under 200 members). A good composition for the Search Committee is:
  - a. Two or three Ruling Elders serving on Session. The new Pastor will work directly with the Session as its Moderator (G.18-2A), so the Session should be adequately represented. The Search Committee will be dissolved, but the new Pastor’s relationship with the Session will be critical to a fruitful, long-term ministry.
  - b. One from the Board of Deacons, if the church has this Board (G.6-4). Often the Pastor is the Moderator of the Board of Deacons (G.17-4A), and if not, the Pastor is an advisory member (G.17-7). Therefore, the Deacons should be represented in the pastoral search.
  - c. Three or four spiritually mature, discerning members of the congregation who are not new to the church. These qualities are more important than electing people to represent various constituencies or interest groups in the congregation. Search Committee members are to seek and represent the mind of Christ on the committee.

It is common to think that staff members should be on the Search Committee. Having staff members on the Search Committee is not recommended due to the inherent conflict of interest in hiring the person to whom one will report in an employment setting. The Search Committee should consult with staff in the process for an understanding of the needs of the church’s ministry, and the prospective Pastor should meet with staff, but it is unwise for staff members to serve on the Search Committee.

2. The Session calls a congregational meeting to elect a Search Committee (G.10-4A; G.7-1, 2, 3) and presents its recommendation for the size of the committee and its nominees for the committee. The congregation has the right to amend the size of the committee, and the floor must be opened for additional nominees (G.10-4A).

### **Stage 3 — Orienting the Search Committee**

It is common for this to be the first involvement in a pastoral search by most members of a Search Committee, though some may have Human Resources experience in their professions. There is common wisdom from that profession that transfers to the pastoral search process, but there is a unique additional dimension that must be considered. The Search Committee, on behalf of the congregation, is seeking to understand the mind of Christ about whom He has called to be the pastoral leader of this congregation. Additionally, most Search Committee

members have had little or no exposure to the EPC form of government and *Book of Order*. Many may carry assumptions from other churches with a different form of government where they have been active. For these reasons, it is imperative that the Ministerial Committee (probably through its appointed liaison) meet with the Search Committee shortly after it is elected to orient them to the process. This orientation/training of Search Committees must be done by a representative of the Ministerial Committee in person or via a teleconference if distance presents an obstacle.

1. Preliminary Responsibilities of the Session.

Communicate the items developed in Stage 1 to the Search Committee and the Ministerial Committee:

2. Joint meeting of Session, Search Committee, and Ministerial Committee representative.

- a. The Session, Search Committee, and Ministerial Committee representative should review/discuss the CIF and make any necessary adjustments/corrections.
- b. The Search Committee should be in complete support of the church's vision and mission, and agree to accurately represent it to candidates.
- c. The Ministerial Committee representative should outline the constitutional requirements for the pastoral search, requirements that Pastors must meet to become a member of the Presbytery, and any Presbytery-specific requirements for the Search Committee process. There should be clear agreement as to the expectations each party has of the others, and establish communication channels and timetables between the Search Committee and Ministerial Committee.
- d. The Ministerial Committee representative should communicate the Presbytery's policy on background checks for ministers (98-15).
- e. The Search Committee and Session should agree on a suitable timetable of reporting to both the Session and congregation, and announce the schedule to both bodies.
- f. In its initial meetings on its own, the Search Committee should:
  - 1) Agree on praying regularly for God's guidance and direction in the selection.
  - 2) Schedule regular meetings.
  - 3) Elect a chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary.
  - 4) Establish a covenant of confidentiality with clear boundaries for the committee. It is highly recommended that names of individuals be kept confidential, even from family members and church officers until the final stages of the search process.
  - 5) Decide the method of voting, type of majority needed to select a Pastor-nominee, and how decisions are to be made. Although unanimity is not essential, the committee should strive to receive unanimous and enthusiastic support in the choice of the nominee.
  - 6) Decide on who will speak for the committee.
  - 7) Set up systems whereby it will:
    - i. Keep the Session and the congregation informed of the committee's progress,
    - ii. Keep the Ministerial Committee fully informed of progress.

- iii. Keep clear and accurate files of ministers under consideration, including their Personal Information Forms (with the dates it was requested and received), correspondence with individuals, and decisions made concerning each candidate.
- iv. Keep candidates still under consideration informed of the committee's progress.
- v. Promptly inform candidates when they are no longer under consideration.

#### **Stage 4 — Conducting the Search**

##### **1. Announce Pastor vacancy.**

The Search Committee, in consultation with the Session, will announce the open position. Typical channels are the EPC Office of the General Assembly through the Ministry Staff Opportunities at [www.epc.org/mso](http://www.epc.org/mso), Presbytery meetings, and General Assembly meetings. The Ministerial Committee should be actively involved in referring ministers to churches with vacancies. Search Committees also have posted positions through placement offices at seminaries and through online services like ChurchStaffing.com. It is common for Search Committees to ask members of the congregation to submit names. If so, the congregation should also be informed of EPC qualifications for ordination. There is a growing trend to use pastoral search organizations.

##### **2. Communication.**

Periodic updates (monthly recommended), from the Search Committee are critical, even if there is no progress (e.g., "The Search Committee continues to meet, pray, read Personal Information Forms, and listen to candidates' sermons. Please keep us in your prayers as we proceed.").

##### **3. Preliminary Screening/Interviewing.**

###### **a. Communication with Candidates.**

- 1) Acknowledge receipt of the candidate's Personal Information Form shortly after it is received.
- 2) Advise the candidate of his or her current status shortly after decisions are made to continue or end consideration.

###### **b. Considering Associate Pastors and Transitional Pastors as candidates.**

Sometimes it is appropriate to consider an Associate Pastor as a candidate. The committee should be mindful that their familiarity with the Associate Pastor or Transitional Pastor is both a positive and a negative. For some, serving as an Associate Pastor is excellent preparation for serving as Pastor. However, for many the specific calling of an Associate Pastor is the position for which the Teaching Elder is best suited. Unfortunately, it can be an opportunity for "politicking" by the Associate or Transitional Pastor in order to gain a position to which the Lord may not be calling. For these reasons, there are special stipulations for considering Associate and Transitional Pastors as candidates. In both cases, the Search Committee must obtain a three-fourths vote of the Session and the Ministerial Committee in order to proceed (G.10-4D; G.10-7B).

An Assistant Pastor serving on the staff when the pastor position becomes vacant is not eligible under any circumstances to be a candidate (G.10-4E).

c. **Reviewing Personal Information Forms (PIFs).**

The Search Committee should receive many of these, both from within and outside the EPC. Review, study, and most importantly pray over the PIFs in light of the agreed upon vision and mission, the position description, and the requirements for ordination in the EPC. At some point, at least three or four candidates should constitute the committee's "short list." The Search Committee should then very prayerfully agree to list these as "First preference," "Second preference," and so on.

Remember to communicate decisions with all candidates (see section 3 above).

d. **Check references.**

It is unlikely anyone would list someone who would give a bad reference. The Search Committee should seek out references in addition to the ones listed in the PIF, such as the Stated Clerk and/or Ministerial Committee Chairman of the minister's Presbytery, General Assembly Stated Clerk or executive staff, or friends from the candidate's church and/or place of residence. If a candidate is currently serving a church, be very cautious in contacting people in that church. The candidate's interest in another position may be confidential, and this kind of "leak" could prove detrimental to the minister and church.

The Chairman should communicate the "short list" to the Ministerial Committee liaison, giving an opportunity for the liaison to note any concerns that should be taken into account. A common concern is "ordainability." If a Search Committee is considering a person from outside the EPC, there could be extra requirements to be met before the person is eligible for examination and ordination by the Presbytery. For example, a person who is a candidate for ordination in another denomination may have to first be a member for six months in an EPC local church before being eligible to be endorsed by the Session and received as a Candidate Under Care of the Presbytery (G.11-2A; G.11-2J).

Some candidates may be eliminated during this phase. Remember to communicate these decisions to the candidates (see section 3 above).

e. **Sample Sermons.**

Those remaining on the "short list" should provide the Search Committee with recorded sample sermon(s). It may be appropriate for the Search Committee to attend a service where the minister is preaching. If so, the visit should be discreet (e.g., don't enter and sit together as a large group).

The following suggestions are offered for guidance when listening to a sermon:

- 1) Reread the person's PIF.
- 2) Have the following questions in mind:
  - i. Does the person read the Scripture well and carefully?
  - ii. Is the sermon faithful to Scripture?
  - iii. Is the pulpit manner compelling?
  - iv. Are the prayers helpful?
  - v. Is the sermon easily followed, well organized, and applicable to life?

- vi. Is the congregation attentive?
- vii. Is the person's custom at the close of the service acceptable?

Once all members of the Search Committee have heard/seen the candidate's sermon, the Search Committee should decide whether to pursue one candidate at a time from this point forward, or to conduct preliminary interviews with all those on the "short list" first, and then review and rearrange that list before the next step.

f. Initial interview.

Teleconferencing or videoconferencing are encouraged at this stage of the process. Otherwise, the Search Committee Chairman and the candidate(s) must arrange a suitable time and place to meet face-to-face. It is best to select one member of the Search Committee to lead the interview. The leader should announce at the beginning of the interview that time will be provided for questions from the committee members and from the candidate. A preliminary interview usually consists of the following (but is not limited to):

- 1) The candidate's testimony, call to ministry, and brief description about the candidate and candidate's family.
- 2) What led the candidate to be interested in your church?
- 3) The candidate's initial vision/impression of ministry for your church based on the CIF.
- 4) Ask about his particular ministry strengths and weaknesses. In other words, what part of the ministry does he have a passion for and feels he is best suited for (and likewise for weaknesses).
- 5) Probe to discover if the candidate seems prone to enlist help from others in his admitted weak areas and how he would go about that.
- 6) Make sure you understand what the candidate is saying. If a statement is unclear or vague, be sure to ask for clarification (e.g., "What did you mean when you said ... ?").
- 7) Preliminary interviews should not last beyond two (2) hours. Followup questions with a particular candidate can be addressed in a future interview.

Many Search Committee members are inexperienced at interviewing. An audio training resource, "Biblical Interviewing Skills," is available on the EPC website at [www.epc.org/biblicalinterviewingskills](http://www.epc.org/biblicalinterviewingskills).

4. In-depth interviews and calling.

a. Reconsider the "short list."

Once the first round of interviews is concluded, the Search Committee should review its "short list" for modification or change(s). After prayer individually and together, one candidate may emerge as the first preference and the first candidate to pursue for calling as Pastor.

b. In-depth face-to-face interview with the first preference candidate.

The Search Committee should strongly consider arranging time for the candidate to meet with the Session so that the two parties can discern whether or not there is a "fit." From this point on, it is recommended that this candidate is the only candidate considered, taking the attitude by faith, "This appears to be God's

choice as our Pastor” until it is obviously evident otherwise.

c. **Vote on the first preference candidate.**

After completing the in-depth interview phase and following adequate time for prayer, the Chairman calls for a vote of the Search Committee.

If the vote is favorable for the candidate, the Search Committee, having information from the Session in hand, agrees to the terms of call to be offered to the prospective new Pastor and informs the candidate of their intent to recommend him or her as the new Pastor with the terms of call stipulated. There may be some questions, discussion of the terms of call offered (which is appropriate), as the candidate may have special needs, concerns, and/or circumstances that the Search Committee may not be aware of. It is most desirable for the Search Committee and candidate to agree on terms of call prior to informing the Session. If the Search Committee feels the candidate’s requests are unreasonable or unworkable, the candidate should be made aware of the Search Committee’s concerns and that the congregation and/or Session may or may not agree to them. The Search Committee should not inform the Session of its candidate choice if terms of call become a serious point of contention, as this revelation may be grounds for the Search Committee’s reconsideration of a candidate.

## **Stage 5 — Concluding the Search Process**

1. **Informing the Ministerial Committee.**



The Search Committee must seek the consent of the Ministerial Committee before the next step. Normally, the Chairman contacts the Ministerial Committee liaison. The liaison informs the Ministerial Committee Chairman who polls committee members on their advice and/or consent regarding the Pastor-nominee. If the Ministerial Committee does not give its consent, the Search Committee may still continue with the Pastor-nominee, but should be aware that there could be difficulties with Presbytery approval as the process moves forward (G.10-4C).

2. **Informing the Session.**

After receiving input from the Ministerial Committee, the Search Committee Chairman contacts the Clerk of Session (if verbal, it must be followed up in writing) of their decision. It is wise for the Session to meet with the Search Committee (or its Chairman) in executive session. If the interview process has not included a time for the Pastor-nominee and Session to meet, it should be arranged before a congregational meeting is called. The Session does not have veto power over the Search Committee’s recommendation. However, a good working relationship between the prospective Pastor and Session is extremely important for a long, fruitful tenure. Both the Pastor-nominee and the Search Committee should carefully weigh the input from this time with the Session.

3. **Informing the Congregation.**

When the Pastor-nominee and the Search Committee are in agreement to move forward, the Session must call a congregational meeting for the Search Committee to present their recommendation for the person to be called and the terms of that call (G.10-4G, H). A common practice historically has been for the congregation to vote before it formally meets the Pastor or hears the Pastor-nominee preach. In recent

years, the practice of “candidating” has become more popular, in which the Pastor-nominee preaches and meets members of the congregation in a variety of settings before the congregational vote. There are merits for both procedures, and the process the church will follow should be determined beforehand and a congregational meeting timed appropriately.

#### 4. Congregational Meeting.

Some Search Committees have demonstrated creative ways to introduce the Pastor-nominee and his or her family, such as conveying biographical and professional information through video clips, Powerpoint presentations, colorful printed brochures, leaflets, and other media. It is appropriate for the Search Chairman, on behalf of the committee, to move approval of the call and terms of call (see the “Terms of Call—Pastor/Associate Pastor” form, available on page 116) to the Pastor-nominee. There is no need for a second because the recommendation comes from a committee. Voting is done by tallying a standing vote, a show of hands, or written ballot. The vote count must be reported to the Pastor-nominee (G.10-4G) and it is advisable to report it to the Ministerial Committee. Assuming the motion is approved and the Pastor-nominee has accepted, the Chairman of the Search Committee should offer a motion to dissolve the Search Committee upon approval of the Pastor-elect by the Presbytery (unless this has been done when the Search Committee was formed). The clerk of the meeting shall send minutes of the meeting, including the exact vote, to the MC Chairman and also to Presbytery’s Stated Clerk.

#### 5. Presbytery examination and approval.

The local church has the irrevocable right to call its own Pastor(s). While the right is irrevocable, it is not unconditional (G.6-6). The Presbytery must examine, approve the call, approve the terms of the call, and receive the Pastor-elect into its membership. This is a primary way in which the EPC expresses its theology of church government as Teaching and Ruling Elders meeting together in representative assemblies of ascending order (G.2-1). The examination process is described in chapter 4 of this Manual. The Search Committee should have a spokesperson at the Presbytery meeting at which the Pastor-elect is being examined in order to advocate for the call.

It is strongly recommended that a minister not be allowed to begin service at the calling church prior to the Presbytery having completed all its work. Doing so places the minister and church in an extremely awkward position if the Presbytery does not approve the Pastor-elect’s examination.

#### 6. Ordination and installation.

When a Teaching Elder has been approved by the Presbytery, an Administrative Commission is appointed on to act on behalf of the Presbytery to ordain (if necessary) and install the new Pastor. The process is described in chapter 6 of this Manual.

### ***Planned Pastoral Transitions***

The process of dissolving the pastoral relationship, securing a transitional supply, forming a Search Committee, and calling a new Pastor has a long history and is still common, but it is not the only way a pastoral transition may take place in the EPC—especially in larger churches. This paragraph is titled deliberately to avoid the notion of “pastoral succession.” Given the irrevocable right of the congregation to call its own Pastor, the Pastors of local churches do not have the right to “name their successor.” However, there are situations in which it is wise and

beneficial for the Pastor to be involved in a planned transition.<sup>20</sup> These situations generally occur when a long-term Pastor knows that the time is coming to end the pastoral relationship, often (but not always) due to pending retirement.

Although transition planning should begin earlier, an announcement of the Pastor's retirement (or intention to leave), with the Presbytery's consent and affirmed by the congregation and pegged to a date or event is equivalent to the announcement of a vacant pulpit, making it possible for the congregation to elect a Search Committee before the effective date of the Pastor's departure.<sup>21</sup> In some situations, an Associate Pastor has been called with an expectation that this individual could be the next Pastor. If so, special provisions described above must be followed.

### **Associate Pastor Search Process**

1. Called by a Search Committee.

An Associate Pastor is called by the congregation. When that Associate Pastor will be coming from outside the church staff, the congregation follows the same process as calling a Pastor. As the Session is making preparations, the Position Description must include the main areas of responsibility in which the Associate Pastor will be serving (G.10-5). Although the Pastor is not a member of the Search Committee, the committee should regularly seek out the Pastor's input and advice. Because of the close working relationship, the Pastor should openly and enthusiastically support the candidate selected.

2. Calling an Assistant Pastor as an Associate Pastor.

The Session, by a three-fourths vote and with the approval of Presbytery's Ministerial Committee, may recommend to the congregation that an Assistant Pastor currently on staff be called as an Associate Pastor without needing to elect a Search Committee. Presbytery must approve the call and the terms of call. Since it is a new call, Presbytery also conducts a service of installation (G.10-6B).

### **Assistant Pastor Search Process**

An Assistant Pastor is called by the Session for particular responsibilities for a limited period of time (which may be extended). The Session may conduct a search for an Assistant Pastor in a manner it deems appropriate (G.10-6A). The provisions for forming a congregational Search Committee do not apply, however it is wise to involve members of the congregation in the search process, especially those in the areas of ministry to which the Assistant Pastor will be called. The Assistant Pastor must be examined and approved by the Presbytery in the same way as a Pastor or Associate Pastor. In many cases, an individual is called as an Assistant Pastor with the understanding that he or she will be considered as an Associate Pastor in the future (see section immediately above).

---

<sup>20</sup> There is an increasing amount of helpful literature available on planned leadership transitions in organizations such as *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken About Pastoral Transitions* (Weese and Crabtree, Leadership Network, 2004) and *Next: Pastoral Succession that Works* (Vanderbloemen and Bird, Baker Books, 2014).

<sup>21</sup> In the absence of a specific provision or prohibition in the *Book of Order*, this has been the consistent advice of the Office of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly.



## **Book of Order References**

- G.2-1     The government of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church shall be Presbyterian in form.** This is government by Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders meeting in representative assemblies called Church Courts.
- A. These Church Courts, in their ascending order, are the Session, the Presbytery, and the General Assembly.
  - B. Churches may also elect Deacons, but the Board of Deacons is not a Church Court.
- G.6-4     The local church has the right to determine whether or not it shall have a Board of Deacons.**
- G.6-6     The local church has the right to call its own Pastor(s), provided the Presbytery concurs by receiving such Pastor(s) into its membership.**
- G.7-1     Calling a meeting.**  
The Session may call a congregational meeting when deemed necessary. Also, when at least one-fifth of the active membership shall request a meeting in writing, the Session shall do so without delay. Further, the Session shall call a meeting when instructed to do so by the Presbytery.
- G.7-2     Notice of meeting.**  
At least two Sundays' notice shall be given. The meeting may be conducted on the same day the second notice is given. The purpose of the meeting must be stated in the call.
- G.7-3     Agenda of meeting.**  
Only those matters stated in the call may be presented and handled.
- G.10-2     The right of calling may never be taken away or conditioned for non-Scriptural reasons. This right is inalienable and may not be changed. At the same time, a Church Court also has the inalienable right not to approve an individual for reasons the Court determines to be proper and in keeping with Scripture.**
- G.10-4     The call of a Pastor by a local church.**  
When a local church desires to call a Pastor, the procedure shall be as follows:
- A. The Session shall call a congregational meeting. The Session may nominate a Search Committee to the congregation, although the floor must also be opened for other nominations. The congregation shall proceed to determine how many persons are to serve and to select them.
  - B. The Search Committee shall carry on its work in regular consultation with the

Ministerial Committee of the Presbytery.

- C. Upon agreeing on an individual they feel led of God to nominate, the Search Committee shall secure the consent of the Ministerial Committee. Should that committee decline to consent, the Search Committee may persist with the nomination, recognizing the Presbytery has the right to reject the call.
- D. Ordinarily, an Associate Pastor is not eligible to succeed the Pastor. However, should a Search Committee desire to consider an Associate Pastor as Pastor, approval by a three-fourths vote of Session and a three-fourths vote of the Ministerial Committee shall be required for the Search Committee to proceed.
- E. A person serving as Assistant Pastor on the same church staff at the time the pastor position becomes vacant shall not be called to fill that position in the same church, by any means.
- F. After consulting with the Ministerial Committee, the Search Committee shall notify the Session in writing of its nominee and the Session shall call a congregational meeting.
- G. When the congregational meeting has been convened, the Search Committee shall make its report and recommendations to call a Pastor. This recommendation shall include the details for remuneration, including all benefits. The congregation shall conduct a counted vote in a fashion it deems appropriate. A majority favoring the recommendation is required to elect a Pastor. The exact vote must be recorded in the minutes and the person being elected notified of the count. The congregation shall appoint representatives to advocate the call at a meeting of the Presbytery.
- H. The call of the congregation shall always conform with the Acts of the General Assembly and follow the form approved by an appropriate committee of the General Assembly.

**G.10-5 The call of an Associate Pastor by a local church.**

A congregation may call an Associate Pastor by means of a Search Committee in the same fashion as indicated above, with the exception that the call of the congregation shall stipulate the primary responsibilities to be exercised by the Associate Pastor.

**G.10-6 The call of an Assistant Pastor by a Session.**

- A. A Session, in consultation with the Ministerial Committee of the Presbytery, may call an Assistant Pastor. The call of the Session shall be for a definite period of time and is renewable. The call of an Assistant Pastor may be terminated by the Session prior to that time only with the consent and approval of the Presbytery. The call shall stipulate the primary responsibilities to be exercised by the Assistant Pastor. The call of the Session shall always conform with the Acts of the General Assembly and follow the form approved by an appropriate committee of the General Assembly.
- B. A Session, by a three-fourths vote and with the approval of Presbytery's Ministerial Committee, may recommend to the congregation that an Assistant Pastor of the local church be called as an Associate Pastor without a Search Committee being elected. The call as Associate Pastor must be approved by Presbytery and

an installation service shall be conducted by the Presbytery or by its appointed Commission.

**G.10-7 Temporary Pastoral Relationships.**

A. Temporary Pastoral Relationships may be established with lawfully ordained ministers or Commissioned Pastors when a church is without a Pastor.

1. Transitional Pastor.

- a. A Transitional Pastor is called by the Session to serve during the period a congregation is seeking a Pastor. The Transitional Pastor intentionally leads the congregation toward greater health and readiness for their next Pastor and will ordinarily be appointed by the Presbytery to moderate the Session during the time of service.
- b. Due to the temporary nature of the call, Transitional Pastors called from another Presbytery in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church will ordinarily maintain membership in their home Presbytery.
- c. Upon approval of the Ministerial Committee, Transitional Pastors are introduced to the receiving Presbytery and enrolled as corresponding members (voice but not vote).
- d. If a Transitional Pastor is called from outside the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the Presbytery shall examine and transfer the Pastor according to applicable provisions of the *Book of Government*.

2. Stated Supply Pastor.

- a. A Stated Supply Pastor is invited by the Session to serve for a definite period of time, not less than one month and no more than twelve months. The term of service is renewable. Although this invitation is not a call, the invitation to serve, authority to preach the Word and administer sacraments, and to moderate Session must be approved by the Presbytery or by the Ministerial Committee, if authorized by the Presbytery.
- b. Stated Supply Pastors from outside the Evangelical Presbyterian Church are invited by the Session and shall be interviewed and approved by Presbytery or the Ministerial Committee, if authorized by the Presbytery.

3. Occasional Supply Pastor.

- a. An Occasional Supply Pastor is invited to serve regularly on specific days. Only the Ministerial Committee must approve.

B. Ordinarily, a person currently serving in a temporary pastoral relationship is not eligible to be called as Pastor of that church. Should a Search Committee desire to consider any person who has served in a temporary capacity since the pulpit most recently became vacant, it must secure approval by a three-fourths vote of the Session and a three-fourths vote of the Ministerial Committee in order to proceed.

**G.11-2 Preparation for Ordained Ministry as a Teaching Elder.**

Since the office of Teaching Elder is seen as the first office in the church both for dignity and usefulness, special preparation is required.

- A. A person desiring to become a Teaching Elder shall first become a Candidate Under Care of the Presbytery of which that person's church is a member. That person begins this process by seeking the endorsement of the Session of the local church where the person's membership has been held for at least six months. When the Session has approved the candidate, application shall be made to the appropriate committee of the Presbytery.
- J. A candidate from another Reformed denomination who has been under care for at least one year in that denomination, has met EPC educational requirements for ordination, and is pursuing a call from an EPC congregation shall be examined in the manner prescribed in G.12-2. Any candidates from outside the Reformed tradition follow the procedures of G.11-2.

**G.12-1** Prior to approving a candidate for ordination as a Teaching Elder, Ruling Elder, or Deacon, it is important for the ordaining court to assure itself of the competency of the individual being ordained to serve. Therefore, certain examinations should be made.

**G.12-2 The examination of a Candidate for Ordination as a Teaching Elder.**

- A. The candidate shall present evidence of competency in the original languages of Scripture, including transcripts of coursework taken, along with the required exegesis.
- B. The candidate shall be examined in Christian experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and progress in spiritual growth.
- C. The candidate shall be examined in writing and orally in the following areas: Theology and Sacraments, English Bible, the *Book of Order*, History of the Church and the Reformed Tradition, and the Nature of the Office of Teaching Elder.
- D. The candidate shall preach a sermon to the Presbytery to demonstrate the ability to expound the Word of God effectively.
- E. If the Presbytery has previously received a candidate and has not required the stipulated work of college and/or seminary, the requirements for language shall be omitted. However, every other part of the examination shall be given. The examination must be approved by a two-thirds majority of the Presbytery.

**G.17-4 Officers of the Board of Deacons.**

- A. Moderator.

The Board may elect a Moderator for a term of one year, or the Session may appoint a Pastor of the congregation to serve as Moderator.

**G.17-7 The Board and the Pastor(s).**

Though not a voting member of the Board, the Pastor(s) is officially designated an advisory member. As such, the Pastor(s) is entitled to participate in deliberations, giving advice and wisdom.

## **G.18-2 Officers of the Session.**

### **A. Moderator.**

1. The Pastor shall be the Moderator and is a voting member of the Session. If the Moderator wishes to make motions or otherwise participate in debate, some other member of the Session should serve as temporary Moderator.
2. An Associate Pastor, at the request of the Pastor and with the consent of the Session, may serve as Moderator for the Pastor.
3. If there is no Pastor or Associate Pastor, or if there is no Associate Pastor and the Pastor is absent for more than one month, the Session may elect one of its members to serve as Moderator.
4. Presbytery, at its discretion, may appoint a Teaching Elder of the Presbytery to serve as Moderator when a church has no Pastor. The Presbytery may authorize its Ministerial Committee to appoint, at its discretion with concurrence of the church Session, a minister of the Presbytery to serve as Interim Moderator of the church Session until such time as the Presbytery can act in the matter.

## **G.18-3 Authority and Responsibilities of the Session.**

- A. To oversee the worship of the congregation in accordance with the *Book of Worship*, including the time and place of worship, special services, the music program, and the celebration of the sacraments. This shall not infringe on the responsibility of the Pastor in the selection of hymns, Scriptures, sermon, administration of the sacraments, or other duties that are incumbent on the office of Pastor.
- H. To determine the budget of the church and the benevolence objectives of the congregation.

## **G.21-2D [Ministerial Committee] Authority and Responsibilities.**

2. With regard to local churches.
  - a. It shall counsel with local churches in securing Pastor(s). Calls shall always be placed in the hands of this committee who shall then make its recommendation to the Presbytery. No call to a Pastor may be issued by a congregation that has not first consulted with the committee.
  - b. It shall recommend to the Presbytery a Teaching Elder to serve as Moderator of the Session, and shall work with a congregation in securing pulpit supply. The Presbytery may authorize the Ministerial Committee to appoint, with concurrence of the Session, an Interim Moderator of the Session.

- 81-04 Terms of call for any minister of member churches shall provide for participation in the denominational hospitalization and disabilities program (Minutes, 1-32).
- 81-05 Terms of call for any minister shall provide a minimum of 18% benefit to provide for group hospitalization, disability, and pension. The pension factor shall not be less than 10%. This benefit shall be computed on the gross effective salary base, i.e., salary and housing/utilities allowance (Minutes, 1-32).
- 81-06 The denominational group insurance plan providing health, disability, and life coverage shall be mandatory for all ministers within member churches (Minutes, 1-36).
- 82-07 4. Terms of call: The amount of annual vacation time: one month.  
5. Terms of call: The amount of time to be given for study leave: two weeks, cumulative up to six weeks.
- 82-10 The General Assembly approves the concept of self-funding insurance and instructs its Committee on Administration to execute a plan in trust as appropriate. Individual churches are urged to assume the deductible portion of the health insurance program and cost of co-insurance as part of a minister's compensation (Minutes, 2-52, Appendix I).
- 83-02 Opportunity shall be provided at each General Assembly for Pastors seeking a call to meet with churches and ministries seeking to issue a call (Minutes, 3-37).
- 84-08 General Assembly adopts the self-funding group insurance plan offered by The Travelers and gives authority to the permanent Committee on Administration to approve and establish all details relative to the establishment of proposed plan.  
General Assembly requires Pastors and employees of all member congregations, Presbyteries, and the Assembly who meet minimum requirements to enroll in the program.  
This major medical program shall be reviewed annually and a full report made to the General Assembly (Minutes, 4-37).
- 87-12 The Assembly approves the establishment of an employer-sponsored, tax-sheltered annuity program for the required minimum (10%) of gross effective salary for retirement for each minister and missionary, and urges each congregation to participate in such program (Minutes, 7-53).
- 88-08 Assembly amends participatory requirements for group health insurance plan by requiring participation of all ministers on the rolls of Presbyteries with the exception of:
1. Missionaries laboring in cooperative agreements with mission agencies;