

Support Teams for Churches in Transition

COM walks alongside churches in pastoral transition through a team that includes:

- COM appointed Moderator (not necessarily a member of COM)
- Liaison (preferably a member of COM)
- Interim/Executive Presbyter
- Stated Clerk

These representatives of the presbytery, whether members of COM or presbytery staff, work together to support churches through transitions in pastors. One or more members of the team work collaboratively in fulfillment of the following stages and tasks in support of Sessions navigating a pastoral transition.

As the transition begins:

- Representatives of the team conduct Exit Interviews with the departing pastor and with the Session
- In conversation with the Session, the team offers consultation and guidance about options for Temporary Pastor leadership and
- Supports the Session's planning for immediate needs such as worship leadership, emergency pastoral care, staff support, administrative matters and
- Clarifies roles among members of COM's support team

Seeking Temporary Pastoral Leadership:

Throughout our denomination and within Carlisle Presbytery, there is currently a shortage of pastors trained in Interim/Transitional ministry. Widespread congregational decline creates vulnerability for churches that may not be sustainable through a lengthy transition. Churches vary in what they need, to prepare for their next installed pastoral relationship. For these reasons, decisions about Temporary Pastor leadership will of necessity, be handled on a case-by-case basis.

- The exit interviews, the transition team's work with the Session, COM's knowledge of the congregation's history and assessment of the church's current resources of people and money, energy for mission, and the needs to be met during the transition are among the factors to be considered as options for Temporary Pastor leadership are considered.
- The search for a Temporary Pastor may be local (Carlisle Presbytery and neighboring presbyteries) or national (using Church Leadership Connection). In either case, the

Session develops and approves a description of the scope and responsibilities of the position, leadership competencies needed, and a rate of compensation.

- The Session appoints a Temporary Pastor Search Team
- The COM support team helps publicize the position, identify potential Candidates, and orients the Search Team to best practices for the search
- The Temporary Pastor Search Team, supported by COM support team, conducts interviews and reference checks and negotiates the content of the Covenant of Agreement
- When a Temporary Pastor candidate is identified, the Support Team arranges for a 'Fit' Interview with COM representatives; Representatives shall include both Teaching Elder and Ruling Elder members of COM; A statement of faith and spiritual autobiography will be provided by the candidate, in advance of this conversation.
- Once the Temporary Pastor Search Team, the Session, and the candidate have negotiated a Covenant of Agreement, a representative of the COM support team communicates with COM chair about readiness for COM's action.

Action on Covenants with Temporary Pastors

- The Covenant of Agreement is reviewed by members of the COM Support Team, with any changes in financial terms or description of the position worked out in advance of the COM meeting in which action is sought.
- As an Order of the Day, the Temporary Pastor candidate and representatives of the Search Team meet with COM. After introductions, COM engages in dialogue about:
 - The Search Team's process and sense of call to this candidate; a report on the Session's action (or pending action)
 - The Temporary Pastor's sense of call to this position
 - The recommendation of the COM team that conducted the 'Fit' Interview

NOTE: Ordinarily, COM will not 'interview' the candidate and search team separately during the COM meeting, as this is the role of the team that conducts the 'Fit' interview. The candidate's Statement of Faith and Spiritual autobiography will be circulated with materials distributed in advance of the COM meeting.

NOTE: Members of COM who have a conflict of interest due to current or past service to the congregation, will, in accordance with COM's ethics policy, recuse themselves from the discussion and vote.

NOTE: Ordinarily, no more than two 'Orders of the Day,' will be scheduled in a given COM meeting.

- COM will act on the Temporary Pastor Relationship, as defined by the COA

Once a Temporary Pastor is in place:

The COM Support Team members stay in touch with the Temporary Pastor and Session, especially with regard to:

- Discernment about a Mission Review or its alternative
 - Annual review/renewal of Temporary Pastor Covenant
- Assessment of readiness to elect a Pastor Nominating Committee