

Chapter 3: Preparing for the Search

CONTENTS

COM Liaison meeting with Session before formation of the PNC	page 2
Twelve Strategic Questions Background and Purpose	page 3

Note to reviewers – *This packet was extensively revised. The 12 Strategic Questions themselves and samples of other questions that pertained historically to Church of the Hills and to Lakewood Presbyterian churches were deleted. The current version of the 12 Strategic Questions is on the Presbytery website and should be used in case other changes are made to these questions in the future. See this link: <http://denpres.org/com-policies> under the heading “Journey Between Pastors.”*

COM Liaison Meeting with Session

Once COM has approved formation of the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC), the liaison will meet with the Session to discuss the details of the process from this point forward. Prior to initiating the 12 Strategic Questions, the COM Liaison will review (or refresh their memories of a previous discussion) two documents. They are *“Definition of Roles for Pastor Search/Call Process – A Narrative”* and the flow chart *“The Presbytery of Denver Journey Between Pastors Process”* both of which are found in the Preface of the Journey Between Pastors. These two documents together outline the steps in the PNC search.

Additionally, in Chapter 2, “Seeking Temporary Leadership” there is a discussion of the process leading up to the formation of the PNC and the discussion between the Interim, the COM Liaison and approvals needed to proceed with the 12 Strategic Question.

At the meeting with Session discuss the optimal size of a PNC. In part, this is a function of the size of the congregation. It should be no fewer than five people. Seven to nine persons is a good size. Some committees have been as large as 11 to 13 and worked well. A resignation because of a move or other circumstances should be anticipated.

Session may use the church’s Nominating Committee to select candidates for the PNC or select candidates itself.

Review the work that will be expected of the Pastor Nominating Committee – see Chapter 4 “Pastoral Search” in Journey Between Pastors. The demands on an individual’s time are enormous. It is not uncommon for a PNC to meet for several hours a week for many months. This committee work requires the highest level of commitment and sacrifice on the part of the PNC member and his/her family.

The Session (or Nominating Committee) should make a list of the gifts/skills/talents that will need to be present in this committee. Not everyone will need to have all of the skills listed. Discuss who should not be considered for service on this committee. Members who are employed by the church should not be considered. Members who are involved in other leadership in the church should be given the opportunity of being released from those responsibilities for service on this committee.

Develop a list of possible names and indicate which skills each one has. The liaison and/or Session could assist in prioritizing the list of names, if needed.

It may be appropriate for Session to outline a recruitment process. Encourage “in-person” visits, not telephone calls. Make sure, in these visits, to indicate the importance of the task, the time commitment involved, and the variety of work that lies ahead. DO NOT indicate who else is being considered. Give the person the opportunity to reflect and pray on this invitation. Conclude the visit with prayer.

When a slate of names is ready, ask the Session to call a special Congregational Meeting. Request that a written notice be sent to the congregation at least two Sundays in advance of the congregational meeting. If desired, provide the congregation with information about the proposed Pastor Nominating Committee. It may be helpful to give a bit of biographical information about each person, such as length of church membership, areas of service, professional and family information.

Remind the Session that the PNC will be considering candidates without regard to race, age, ethnic origin, gender, physical disability or marital status. Discuss recommendations relative to AA/EEO guidelines found in Chapter 4.

Discuss the housing and salary challenges that are to be expected. The current compensation policy and annual minimums are found on the Presbytery's website at: <http://denpres.org/com-policies>. The information on compensation is very detailed and will be helpful in the future when develop proposed terms of call for the selected candidate.

Explain to the Session, including its moderator, that the PNC will be responsible only to the congregation that elected it - not to the session or to any pastor. An Interim Pastor may be asked for advice but will play no active role in the work of the PNC. Suggested guidelines are available in Chapter 4 regarding the Head of Staff involvement in the search for an Associate Pastor.

The COM liaison should ask for questions or concerns.

Chapter 4 of the *Journey Between Pastors* contains detailed guidance on the election of the PNC and orientation and training of the PNC.

The 12 Strategic Questions Background and Purpose

The 12 Strategic Questions are found on the Denver Presbytery website at this link: <http://denpres.org/com-policies>

The Twelve Questions have several functions. They have replaced the former Mission Study that was required prior to a search process. They allow a church (congregation and/or leadership) to think about direction and emphasis in effort and resources for the future.

The answers to these questions form the basis for part of the Ministry Information Form (MIF) submitted to the General Assembly through the Church Leadership Connections (CLC). The form will be submitted electronically to the CLC.

The questions also allow a PNC to evaluate a candidate in terms of his/her strengths and interests in the areas of the work to be accomplished at the church. The form, if sent to a candidate, allows the applicant to evaluate the fit of the church and its goals with their own interests.

Lastly, it serves as a tool for the Session and pastoral staff to assess the accomplishments, and discuss programs and staffing to be changed/deleted due to circumstances after the candidate is installed.

These questions can be answered by the Session, by the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) and normally include input from members of the congregation. It is up to each Session and PNC to gather the resources needed to answer the questions. This process is intended to create an opportunity for creative, extensive dialogue within your congregation, Session and PNC.

Once completed the answers are presented to the Session for their input and approval. Once approved by Session, the 12 Strategic Questions are provided to the COM liaison who reviews them and receives approval from the Committee on Ministry to proceed. Occasionally, COM will offer advice or seek clarification of some of the answers. The COM's assessment of the answers forms the basis of their decision as to the church's readiness to proceed with the search.