



In the Presbytery of Donegal, a designated pastor is called by the congregation and installed by the presbytery for a designated period of time. The time frame is at least 2 years, and no more than four years. At the end of the designated term, the congregation either votes to call the person as the installed pastor, or the pastorate comes to a conclusion.

Deciding Whether a Designated Pastor is a Good Choice for the Congregation

The Connecting our Ministry Commission (COM) meets with the session to decide what type of pastor would best serve the situation of the congregation.

1. The session completes the Financial History and Projection Report (Which will show what sort of pastoral position the session can reasonably recommend).
2. The session and COM vote to recommend establishing the position as a designated pastor Position. The reasons for establishing a Designated Pastor position might include:
 - a. When the congregation needs to transform its future direction in ministry and transitional leadership is needed for longer than the typical Interim Pastorate.
 - b. When the session and COM wonder if financial trends indicate that a full-time pastorate is still feasible for the congregation. The designated contract period permits the session and the designated pastor to work towards building sustainable financial health, but also permits termination of the pastorate at the end of the contract period if warranted without contracting severance responsibilities.
 - c. When the congregation needs to engage in transforming conflict and to develop new systems that are rooted in resilience and health.
 - d. When it is unclear whether transitional leadership is needed that will prepare the way for the next installed pastor, or whether the needed transitional leadership would be the first step in a healthy longer term installed pastorate with the transitional leader continuing in the position.
3. Once the work of the session is complete, the congregation will elect a Designated Pastor Search Committee (DPNC) which will serve for the Designated pastor (which is an installed position.)

Calling the Designated Pastor

The procedures in the presbytery Vacancy Handbook and the PC(USA) Handbook on calling a pastor are followed.

The designated term will be at least two years, and no more than four years. The call will specify that if the Designated Pastor Agreement is terminated before the end of the contract period, the congregation

agrees to six months continuation of Effective Salary and any other negotiated benefits and expenses (a longer time frame may be negotiated as part of the agreement).

The Session and Presbytery as Partners During the Designated Term

The session (which includes the designated pastor) and the COM will design a process for healthy ministry and support during the designated term. This will include a Covenant Team with the following responsibilities:

- Focus on these questions – Who are We? (Identity and Vision); Who is our Neighbor? (Sent as Witnesses); What is God Calling us to Do? (Specific Ministry and Mission).
- Development of specific goals and action plans
- Regular meetings (at least three per year)
- Adoption of a coaching/equipping/evaluation process for the designated pastor.
- Covenant for the session and presbytery for a healthy partnership. This will include COM support of the designated pastor process. The congregation will participate in the shared proportional administrative budget of the presbytery, and demonstrate financial participation in mission beyond the congregation. The session, the designated pastor and Covenant Team will identify ways for members of the congregation to connect and engage in the mission of the presbytery. The Covenant Team will seek ways to engage in the ministry of reconciliation wherever wholeness and shalom are needed.

What Comes Next? After the Designated Term Comes to an End

When the designated pastor has served for at least sixteen months, COM representatives will meet with the session (including the designated pastor) to discuss the progress of the designated term, and to talk about next steps. The options include:

- Move to Installed Pastorate: The session serves as the PNC to call a meeting of the congregation to present the designated pastor as their recommended candidate for an unlimited term. The congregation votes upon this recommendation, following the procedures to elect a pastor.
- Extension of the designated period: The session decides (with COM concurrence) to recommend that the designated term be extended for another six months or a year. The maximum time to extend a designated term is four years. The exact time frame for the extension of the designated period will be decided in each case, as all are different.
- Termination of the Designated Pastorate: The session and the COM may decide that the best course is for the designated pastorate should conclude at the end of the designated term. The designated pastor must be given at least six months' notice, in order to have time to search for a new position or to make other arrangements.

Communicating with the Congregation About Next Steps

A responsibility of the session is to communicate with the congregation regularly on the progress of the designated term. When the session has decided upon the next steps at the end of the two year timeframe, the session must also devise a plan to communicate with the congregation.

The Communication Plan includes how to communicate information to the congregation, and also includes ways to seek feedback from the congregation about decisions that need to be made. There are a wide range of communication options from gatherings of the congregation, to surveys, to advisory votes, to called meetings with formal votes. The Session and COM will develop the communication plan as part of the consultation on next steps.

Implementing the Next Steps

- If the next step is to call a congregational meeting to elect the pastor for an unlimited term, the Vacancy Handbook on electing and installing a pastor will be followed. There must be a formal service of installation once the COM approves the congregation's vote to call the pastor.
- If the next step is to extend the designated term, the Covenant Team continues with the plan for the designated term.
- If the next step is to end the designated term, the COM will meet with the session to decide on next steps for the coming vacancy, including the model for transitional leadership, plans to search for a new pastor, and anything else that needs to be determined. The designated pastor will be excused from that discussion. When it is wise to do so, a PNC may be elected to search for the next pastor while the designated pastor finishes the designated term.
- The designated pastorate can have a number of endings -- all of which can be appreciated as ways that God helps move congregations and pastors forward in faithfulness and service. Regardless of the outcome, the designated pastorate should end with expressions of appreciation for growth that has occurred during the transitional time.