



The Presbytery of  
**DONEGAL**

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## **Steps to Launch the Search for an Installed Pastor**

## Responsibilities of the Session

### 1. Determine Sufficient Vision, Focus and Direction of the Congregation

Before a congregation can look for the next longer-term pastor, the session needs to discover what to tell a prospective pastor about the congregation, and what “sort” of pastor would be a good match with the congregation. The questions on the Ministry Information Form (MIF) are:

- a. *What is the congregation’s or organization’s vision for ministry? Additionally, describe how this vision is lived out?*
- b. *How do you feel called to reach out to address the emerging needs of your community or constituency?*
- c. *How will this position help you to reach your vision and mission goals?*
- d. *Provide a description of the characteristics needed by the person who is open to being called to this congregation and/or organization.*
- e. *For what specific tasks, assignments, and programs areas will this person have responsibility?*

Answering these questions requires that the congregation both “Look in the Mirror” and “Look Outside the Window.” There are several ways ways to gather this information:

#### A. Narrative (Qualitative Assessment) Provided by the Presbytery

- **Option 1: Snorkel Option – Gather Enough Data to Move on with the Pastoral Search**
- **Option 2: Scuba Option – In depth process to discover the strengths and identity of the congregation and develop an action plan for ministry and mission**

SNORKEL – SURVEYS AND CONVERSATIONS	SCUBA – DEEPER ENGAGEMENT AND PLANNING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Electronic and Print Surveys – usually on the MIF Questions</li><li>• At least one gathering for the congregation using a small group or “World Café” format to gather input</li><li>• A congregational gathering or time during worship services to share results</li><li>• Written summary for the PNC and Connecting Our Mission Commission (COM)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Electronic and Print Surveys – usually on the MIF Questions</li><li>• Church Offices and congregation engage in a “12 Keys for Effective Churches” Process to identify strengths and develop an action plan -- Two 4-hour sessions for officers/congregation, then a team carries planning forward</li><li>• A congregational gathering or time during worship services to share results</li><li>• Written summary for the PNC and Connecting Our Mission Commission (COM)</li></ul>

Sometimes sessions decide to begin with the “snorkel” option and then to decide whether to proceed to the Scuba Option. In this case, the session uses the feedback gathered from the congregation to decide whether to proceed with the pastoral search, or to move into the “scuba” phase of deeper reflection and planning.

**B. Quantitative Assessment Provided by Holy Cow Consulting or Another Firm**

This method involves contracting with an external firm to administer a quantitative overarching assessment to gauge many factors about the congregation's vitality and readiness to proceed through a transitional period. Fees range from around \$1500 - \$4000 for this service.

**C. Vision and Mission Assessment/Consultation Provided by an External Organization**

This method brings in a consultant or group of consultants to work with the session to administer a process to assess the congregation and provide recommendations for the future. Costs vary and can range from around \$5,000 - \$20,000.

**2. Use the Transitional Period to Resolve any Pressing Issue**

The transitional period is often a good time to resolve issues that may become apparent. Major transitional work might include the need to develop a new staffing model, the need to end the employment of one or more significant employees, major financial issues, healing after a significant trauma, addressing conflict or general malaise. Leaving glaring issues for the new pastor will affect the desired momentum that comes with a new pastorate.

**3. Conduct a Financial Review for Sufficient Funding to Proceed with a Search**

Is there sufficient funding between projected current year income and available reserves to provide for the pastoral compensation package for three years? The finance committee or entire session should review the past two or three annual financial reports and the congregation's financial position. If there is not confidence that the position can be funded for three years into the future, then a designated pastor, or a non-installed (and perhaps part-time) pastor option will need to be considered. When the Financial Review is complete, it should be sent to COM as part of the COM review.

**4. Conduct a Facility Tour and Develop a Plan to Address Clutter and Facility Issues**

When someone – a visitor or a new pastor – walks into the church, what do they see? Are there major building issues looming that will require major funding? A "Clutter Team" should tour all parts of the building and make plans to deal with any clutter or outdated materials. A plan must be developed for any building issues requiring capital expenditures. A COM walk-through to ensure that building and clutter issues have been resolved will be conducted before approval is given to launch the Mission Information Form.

**5. Approve the Position Description for the Installed Pastor/Head of Staff**

The Personnel Committee should develop the position description to the Session for Session approval. This must then be approved by COM as well.

**6. Approve Compensation Range for Salary, Benefits, and Professional Expense Reimbursements**

The Personnel Committee proposes a minimum and top range for the compensation package for session approval. The PNC will then be authorized to negotiate up to the top amount. Any compensation above the approved amount must be approved by the session. The compensation range approval must also include provision for one-time moving expenses.

## **7. Approve the PNC Budget**

The session approves the budget for the PNC, either from the annual budget or from other funds available for this purpose. This budget covers the cost of the PNC, including bringing candidates on site, or visiting candidates in their locations

## **8. Call a Meeting of the Congregation to Elect the PNC**

The Nominating Committee proposes a slate of 5-9 people for the PNC for election by the congregation. In many cases, a session member or a member of the Nominating Committee explains the PNC to the congregation and invites suggestions. A “youth” PNC member is often elected.

## **9. Approve the MIF**

The PNC writes the MIF based upon the data gathered by the session. After the MIF is complete, it must be approved by the Session.

## **Session Responsibilities Later in The Process**

### **1. Receive regular monthly reports from the PNC**

The session has the right to know “how” the search is going, and where the PNC is in the process. The session may not know the identities or other confidential details.

### **2. Call the Meeting of the Congregation to elect the Pastor and Participate in Planning for the Candidating Weekend**

When there is a candidate, the PNC will bring the terms of call to the session for final approval. The session will approve and participate in plans for the candidating weekend, call the meeting of the congregation, and participate in plans for support of the new pastor once they are on the field. The identity of the candidate is revealed at this meeting, and congregational communications are dispatched in the next day or so after the session meeting.

### **3. Develop the Plan for the Pastoral Start-Up and Support**

When the new pastor or co-pastor begins service, support is needed for “on-boarding” and for navigating the first year of service. COM recommends the Presbytery of Donegal Coaching/Equipping Process and will consult with the session/Personnel Committee to adopt a plan. Members of the PNC often are included in the support team for the new pastor.