

POLICY _ TRANSITIONAL PASTOR (TEACHING ELDER) TO INSTALLED PASTOR
Presbytery of Western North Carolina
June 12, 2012

Preamble

The function of this policy is to provide procedural guidance for installing a Transitional Pastor in the position of Pastor, Co-Pastor, or Associate Pastor. Relevant Book of Order (2011-2013) guidance for this policy is:

Pastoral Vacancy [G-2.0801]: When a congregation has a vacancy in a pastoral position, or after the presbytery approves the effective date of the dissolution of an existing pastoral relationship, the congregation shall, with the guidance and permission of the presbytery, proceed to fill the vacancy....

Temporary Pastoral Relationships [G-2.0504b]: The session, with the approval of presbytery, may obtain the services of a teaching elder ... in a temporary relationship. No formal call shall be issued and no formal installation shall take place. A person serving in a temporary pastoral relationship is invited for a period not to exceed twelve months in length, which is renewable with the approval of presbytery. A teaching elder employed in a temporary pastoral relationship is ordinarily not eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor.

Exceptions [G-2.0504c]: A presbytery may determine that its mission strategy permits a teaching elder employed in a temporary pastoral relationship to be eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor. Presbyteries that permit this eligibility shall establish such relationships only by a three-fourths vote of the members of presbytery present and voting.

MISSION OF THE PRESBYTERY OF WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

We strengthen congregations to be faithful and vital witnesses to Jesus Christ
as together we build relationships and partnerships
in order to
equip congregations for ministry, make disciples,
witness to God's love, strengthen people in ministry.

Guiding Principles to achieve the mission of our Presbytery:

Coordinate, guide, encourage, support, and resource the work of the congregations for the most effective witness to the broader community and partner with a particular congregation in carrying out its Mission in accordance with the Book of Order (2011-2013).

Oversee the transition during a time of pastoral change in the life of the congregation by serving as pastor, counselor, and advisor to teaching elders and congregations.

Based on these Presbytery guiding principles the Presbytery will work in partnership with congregations to ensure that procedures are followed which will provide appropriate pastoral relationships for a particular church at a particular time.

I. Procedure at the beginning of a pastoral vacancy:

- A. Congregations which normally have an installed Pastor, Co-Pastor or Associate Pastor are strongly encouraged to be led by a trained transitional pastor who intends to devote him/herself to the interim task through the interim period between installed pastors.
1. The work of such a transitional pastor is important to any congregation which has experienced a pastoral vacancy, regardless of the cause, as all such vacancies generate some level of grief and anxiety. Moreover, the work of a transitional pastor becomes increasingly valuable where there has been a long-term pastorate or where the conclusion of the prior pastorate has been sudden and/or accompanied by conflict.
 2. Interim ministry requires particular personal skills and specialized training which equip the transitional pastor to lead the congregation through the specific tasks of the interim period as well as provide for the normal pastoral functions that are a part of any pastoral ministry. If the transitional pastor has not previously received specific interim training, he or she must do so within six months after beginning this pastorate. Such transitional pastors are not merely place-holders or caretakers, but rather are agents of stability and change and preparation for the church's future under new pastoral leadership.
 3. To be effective and to accomplish the tasks that should be completed during a pastoral transition, a transitional pastor must be objective and maintain his/her independence from influences that would compromise his/her judgments and autonomy, including but not limited to the possibility and perceived benefits of the interim relationship being converted to an installed pastoral position. Therefore, it is important that the person serving as a transitional pastor or a transitional associate pastor ordinarily should not be eligible to be called to an installed position in that congregation.
- B. In compliance with the Book of Order (2011-2013) the Presbytery affirms that a teaching elder employed in a temporary pastoral relationship is ordinarily not eligible to serve as the next installed Pastor, Co-Pastor, or Associate Pastor. Only in rare and unusual circumstances where the Presbytery determines such action is appropriate (see guidelines below) will the Presbytery consider allowing a transitional pastor to become the next installed pastor.

II. Procedure for ordinary replacement of Pastor, Co-Pastor, or Associate Pastor

A. Interim Period

To ensure that the interim period will be effective and the interim tasks will be accomplished the Committee on Ministry (COM) will partner with the Session and congregation from the time the departing pastor announces his/her intention to end his/her pastorate. A member of the COM will speak to the entire congregation about the nature of the transition time. A COM member will counsel with the Session about the options for ministry during the vacancy period and will be a resource during their journey, whatever decision is made.

B. Transitional Pastor Search Committee

If there is a Session search committee for a transitional pastor they will consult with the COM with regard to possible candidates. After a candidate is chosen by the search committee the COM will meet with the candidate to assess his/her fit with the needs of the congregation. After the approval of the COM, the Presbytery will approve the candidate being accepted into the Presbytery as a transitional pastor for the congregation.

C. COM Relationship with Transition Pastor

The COM Subcommittee for Non-Installed Pastors will build a relationship with the transitional pastor and stay apprised of the status of the congregation through regular meetings with him/her and also through written reports from the transitional pastor.

D. Installed Pastor Nominating Committee

The COM will meet with the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) as they begin their work to discuss the Presbytery's guidance for the calling of a new pastor and to build relationships with the committee members. The COM will meet with the PNC at others times at the request of the committee or to assess their progress.

III. Procedure for allowing an "exception"

- A. The congregation will have completed several transition steps: (1) It will have done a mission study. (2) The PNC will have been active for several months and may have interviewed one or more suitable candidates. (3) The transitional pastor and the PNC will have been in close contact with the COM to keep Presbytery informed of the situation at the particular church. (4) The skills and interests of the transitional pastor will match the skills and interests indicated by the PNC in the relevant part of the Church Information Form (CIF).
- B. The Session and the Presbytery will have determined that there are conditions which are rare and unusual. Therefore, Presbytery can conclude that its mission strategy will be served by permitting the transitional pastor to be called as the installed pastor. Some examples of such circumstances are a congregation recovering from the untimely death of a pastor, an unfortunate situation such as pastoral sexual harassment, an out of control environmental issue such as a changing neighborhood or declining population, a split in the church involving some members leaving to join with another denomination, a general attitude of contentiousness, and/or a history of conflict.
- C. *A teaching elder may be installed in a pastoral relationship for an indefinite period or for a designated term determined by the presbytery in consultation with the congregation and specified in the call (G-2.0504).* When a teaching elder employed in a transitional relationship becomes an installed Pastor, Co-Pastor or Associate Pastor it should be for a designated term of two years. The rationale for this approach is that the two year period will give the Session, the congregation, the teaching elder and the Presbytery an appropriate time frame to optimize resolution of issues and to assess the match of pastor to congregation and to the achievement of Presbytery and congregation mission strategies.

IV. Procedure for concluding a designated term

- A. The transitional pastor can be installed for an indefinite term as pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor. In this case, a congregational meeting shall be held to call the pastor for an indefinite term which, if favorable, will be followed by an installation by Presbytery.
- B. The designated period shall be extended by one or two years if recommended by the congregation and Presbytery
- C. The pastoral relationship can be terminated by the pastor's resignation, the non-renewal of the call by the congregation, or by action of the Presbytery.