ARTICLE I
INTRODUCTION

Section 1.01: Purpose

This Pastoral Transitions Manual is intended to offer guidance for working through a critical time in the life of a congregation. It is intended to assist Committee on Ministry (COM) Liaisons who will work with sessions and Pastor Nominating Committees (PNCs), as well as those leaders in congregations who oversee and implement the transition process. This manual should be provided to:

1. COM Liaisons
2. chairpersons of interim pastor search committees
3. interim pastors
4. chairpersons of PNCs
5. clerks of session of churches in transition

Section 1.02: Congregational Culture

While each church transition is unique and requires unique responses to its particularities, there are some important broad concepts to understand about nearly all church transitions.

Ordinary transitions, those times of leadership change resulting from a pastor leaving because of a new call or retirement, are opportunities for congregations to analyze and assess their ministry, and discern where God is calling them to go in the future. Other transitions are related to trauma, disappointment, or conflict, and during these times there needs to be efforts to heal, learn and adjust, before moving on.

Irrespective, all transitions are significant phases in the continuing spiritual life of congregations.

Section 1.03: Developmental Tasks

The first reaction during a time of pastoral transition is, “Well, we all know what to do, and that is only one thing – get a new pastor. And the sooner, the better!”

While this feels right at the time, there is so much more to transitions that this. Our faith is so often framed in a context of movement. The historical Biblical narrative is about movement. While the gospel never changes, the world ever changes, and this is by God’s design. And we are asked to go forth to minister to the world – this ever changing world.

As frustrating as it might seem to our impatient natures, without taking the time to explore to where God might be leading, congregations make decisions emotionally first,
and spiritually second. After an unhappy pastoral relationship, congregations impulsively look for a polar opposite of the last pastor, without ever stopping to understand their role in the difficulties in the ministry; and while style and personality are indeed important, neither may have been at the root of the problems. More commonly however, congregations, after a happy pastoral relationship, impulsively seek a clone of the departed beloved pastor. Initially, such might seem to be a logical conclusion which might make many people happy, but the reality is that such a direction shows no real understanding on the changes that have occurred over the time of that successful ministry. If ministry has been indeed successful, then the church from which a pastor leaves, in different from the church to which that pastor came. The church calling the “same” pastor over again makes a statement that “we really haven’t gone anywhere on our spiritual journey.”

Congregational studies have identified five specific developmental tasks during the transition period:

1. coming to terms with history
2. discovering a new identity
3. coping with power shifts among members
4. strengthening partnership with Presbytery and other congregations
5. building a commitment to a new future and a new pastor

Trained interim pastors know many ways to help a congregation handle these tasks. When these tasks are effectively completed, the start-up of a new pastor is enhanced. When the developmental tasks are not completed, the effectiveness of the new ministry is delayed.

ARTICLE II
DISSOLUTION

Section 2.01 Introduction

Under usual circumstances a pastor will announce a dissolution request (which asks that the Presbytery dissolve the pastoral relationship) and this will come as somewhat of a surprise to the congregation. The process of announcing the dissolution request brings a new set of attitudes and expectations within the congregation.

Section 2.02 Process for Dissolution

Upon accepting an invitation to candidate for a new call, the pastor should inform the Committee on Ministry Liaison and Chairperson, the Executive Presbyter, and the Stated Clerk. In most cases, the process that follows begins once the pastor has accepted a new call.
1. Called Meeting of the Session: The session does not act on the dissolution request but calls a congregational meeting to act on the pastor's request, including notice of a termination date. Terms of the present call continue to the termination date.

2. Congregational Meeting: The resigning pastor cannot moderate this meeting (G-2.0903), and normally will invite another Teaching Elder from the Presbytery to moderate. If necessary, COM can assist in obtaining a moderator. At this meeting the congregation votes to request that Presbytery dissolve the pastoral relationship, and acts on any arrangements for termination provisions. Two members of the congregation need to attest in writing to the congregation’s action to request dissolution. Ideally, the COM Liaison or other representative should be present.

3. Committee on Ministry Meeting: The Presbytery, through COM, dissolves the pastoral relationship and appoints a moderator of the session, effective the dissolution date.

4. In the unlikely event of a pastor and congregation not concurring in the dissolution, the Committee on Ministry shall seek to mediate the disagreement. If this is not possible, the matter may be presented to the Presbytery meeting for appropriate action.

ARTICLE III
TRANSITION ORIENTATION

Section 3.01: Session Orientation

As soon as possible following the congregational meeting to dissolve the pastoral relationship, the COM liaison should meet with the session. The incumbent pastor, if continuing in service, should not attend the meeting but appoint a moderator pro tempore (often the Clerk of Session) to preside. The goals for this are to get to know one another, to outline what the transition period will entail, to discuss how to break the ties with the incumbent pastor, to establish an initial timeline with target dates to accomplish certain tasks, and to draw up a list of assignments needing immediate attention, chief among these is often the need for determining the immediate next steps in pastoral service.

One matter often overlooked during the transition period is the participation of the congregation in the Presbyterian Pension Plan. COM liaisons should alert sessions of this continuing requirement. Vacancy dues are the dues a local church pays while any of its ministerial called positions are unoccupied. Vacancy dues are calculated at 12% of the total effective annual salary of the last teaching elder who occupied the position that has become vacant. A church begins paying vacancy dues the day after the last day it paid...
salary and dues for the member who left the position. Vacancy dues end at the end of the first twelve months that the position is vacant. If a church hires and enrolls a new pastors in the Pension Plan before the position has been vacant for twelve months, vacancy dues will end the day before the first day salary and dues are paid for the new pastor. Vacancy dues are important in the Pension Plan. These funds directly benefit retired Teaching Elders, missionaries, church workers, and their spouses by financing the Supplement to Medicare benefits offered to retirees.

**Section 3.02: Pastoral Service**

The *Book of Order* (*G*-3.0201a) assigns the responsibility for the continuation of pastoral service during this time to the session. Ideally a congregation will benefit from continuous pastoral service. The *Book of Order* defines all non-installed pastoral relationships as *temporary pastoral relationships* (*G*-2.0504b). The Committee on Ministry will assist the session in determining the best immediate course of action as well as strategy for a longer term. Normally, COM encourages a move to *interim ministry* which is meant for a church without a pastor but actively engaged in seeking a new pastor. This is a relationship between the session and pastor, and must be approved by the Presbytery, through COM.

The COM liaison will work with the session to determine the most advantageous approach for the congregation. Depending on timing and availability, often this process can be concluded so that there is no gap between the end of the departing pastor’s tenure and the commencement of the interim (or temporary supply) pastor. However, where this is not the case, the session has the responsibility to determine worship leadership. COM has a list of persons available for pulpit supply on a Sunday to Sunday basis.

**Section 3.03: Exit Interview**

Prior to departure, an exit interview with COM must be conducted for all departing pastors and associate pastors. The interview may take place during a Committee on Ministry meeting, or be conducted by a COM team at a mutually agreeable place and time.

**Section 3.04: Farewell**

It needs to be determined how the church will provide for a suitable farewell. Often this is the responsibility of a congregational committee appointed by the session. Farewell celebrations should be a time where expressions of appreciation may be made. Notice of such events should be given throughout Presbytery so that others might join in the festivities. Upon the departure of the pastor, the moderator appointed by the Presbytery takes office and persons with transition assignments begin their work.
ARTICLE IV
INTERIM MINISTRY

Section 4.01: Rationale

Ordinarily, after the close of a long term pastorate, the Committee on Ministry advises congregations to engage an interim pastor. The primary purpose of interim ministry is not merely to “keep things going” but rather to assist the congregation in understanding its history, systemic dynamics, and opportunities for discerning and responding to God’s call. Interim ministry provides the necessary developmental tasks for all of this while providing consistent pastoral leadership during times of transition.

Section 4.02: Selection

When it has been determined that a church will seek an interim pastor, the session normally will appoint a small search committee of three or four members. It is not required that this committee be elected by the congregation, nor representative of the congregation. It may consist entirely of session members. The Committee on Ministry shall assist this committee in preparing goals and objectives for the ministry, as well as in a position description with appropriate compensation. An interim pastor is engaged by a direct contract with the session. The Executive Presbyter will provide Personal Information Forms (PIFs) for review by the committee.

As with all entering pastors, the interim will be interviewed by COM for membership in the Presbytery. As part of that interview, COM will conduct an initial “ministry” orientation for the interim pastor.

It is the policy of the Presbytery of the Miami Valley, in accordance with the provisions of G-2.0504c, exceptions for interim pastors to become the next installed pastors of congregations are not permitted.

The Committee on Ministry will conduct three month and six month reviews with the interim pastor to assess how the pastoral transition is proceeding, to review the interim’s goals for ministry, proposing revisions as necessary, and to offer support for the interim pastor. The reviews may be conducted at a time and place of mutual agreement and shall include the COM liaison, who will convene the review.

ARTICLE V
MISSION SELF-STUDY OF THE CONGREGATION

Section 5.01: Rationale

Mission circumstances and conditions challenging congregations change significantly on an on-going basis. Churches which assess the situation God has called them to serve may
have a clearer identity of who they are, what their direction is, and the mission to which God calls them in Jesus Christ. Ideally, a congregation will conduct an in-depth mission self-study every five to seven years, and every two years, review the study, updating as necessary. The time of pastoral transition offers a unique opportunity to conduct a new mission self-study if a recent (less than three years old) one is not available, to refine an existing mission self-study, or to review and update an existing mission self-study. This process is an effective way to meet the developmental tasks requiring attention during the transition period and to provide information for the process of calling a pastor.

Section 5.02 Resources

COM offers advice, training and consultant service in conducting mission self-studies as well as in the refining and updating of existing studies. Sessions are urged to contact their COM liaison about these resources before proceeding. Those guiding the mission study process will provide information as to the nature of the process, timelines, costs, the make-up of the committee, etc. Recommendations will be made assessing a congregation’s size and resources.

Section 5.03: Process

The session appoints the committee to conduct the new mission self-study (or to refine or to update a recent one). The committee should be representative of the congregation and have the capabilities required for the task. The interim pastor may participate in the process, offering orientation, guidance, and expertise, as well as spiritual context and foundations for the undertaking. COM may also provide consultants to guide the process. When the mission self-study committee formulates its findings and recommendations, these are presented to session for discussion and revision. The revised mission self-study is submitted to COM for its review. The session will then share the self-study with the congregation.

ARTICLE VI
DETERMINING LONG TERM PASTORAL NEEDS

Section 6.01: Options

The usual assumption of a congregation, upon the dissolution of a pastoral relationship, is that a new pastor will be sought to serve in the same way as before. While this is ordinarily the case, COM has the responsibility to make recommendations concerning the form and nature of pastoral leadership in a congregation, especially when there are reasons which might make a regularly called and installed relationship inadvisable. There are other options, and the session, under the guidance of the interim pastor, and in consultation with COM, must lead the congregation in determining the form and nature of its pastoral leadership. All decisions must be approved by the Committee on Ministry.
Section 6.02: Installed Pastor

If there are no extenuating circumstances in the church, this is the option that will likely be chosen; and the steps of pastoral selection are as defined in the following sections of this manual. Sometimes a congregation will determine to have additional or shared staff. This may include a called and installed co-pastor or associate pastor.

Section 6.03: Non-Installed Pastoral Relationships:

It is the goal that Presbyterian congregations be served by installed pastors. An installed pastorate provides a stronger three-part relationship (congregation, pastor and presbytery) often coming about through a process that seeks more discernment of God’s leading. However, the process is more deliberate, requiring serious commitments of time, energy and money. There are circumstances when such commitment may not be possible or advisable. Some of these include congregations which have undergone serious conflict and stress or find themselves with severely dwindling financial resources. In these instances there are other possibilities for providing regular pastoral coverage, often through the use of a Stated Supply pastor, which is an appointment by the Committee on Ministry, under the authority of Presbytery.

Section 6.04: Stated Supply

Stated Supply appointments can only be used with counsel and concurrence of COM. They are not to be seen as a way to circumvent the regular “call process” for an installed pastor. In fact, sessions need to understand that neither they nor the congregation has significant “say” in the search process at all. While the relationship is with the session, pastor and presbytery, the session effectively has only the “right of refusal” for a candidate or candidates nominated by COM for consideration. Depending on specific circumstances, COM is likely to propose only one candidate at a time for consideration.

It is out of the COM’s counsel with the session that a Stated Supply relationship may be recommended, offered, or mandated, always because COM has specific goals or strategies in mind for a particular congregation; things like conflict resolution; congregational transformation; or part-time pastoral coverage in a declining congregation. The persons proposed for consideration will be seen by COM as possessing certain gifts, skills, and experiences that relate well to the Presbytery’s strategic intent for, or understanding the needs of, a particular congregation.

The session, either acting as a body of the whole, or through its own subcommittee (comprising session members) will act on the COM’s nominee, with no congregational input whatsoever, accepting, declining, or in the rare cases where a choice is given, choosing. If there is no acceptance, then the process continues with the session waiting.
until another nominee becomes available. It should never be assumed that there are many persons always available to serve in this capacity in the Presbytery. In fact, because of the need for specific gifts, skills and experiences, the reverse is essentially true.

A Stated Supply contract is made for no more than one year, but is renewable as needed with the concurrence of the session and COM. Depending on specific circumstances, there are often specific and unusual financial requirements for things like Board of Pensions and vacancy dues.

ARTICLE VII
PASTOR NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Section 7.01: Election

When approved by the Committee on Ministry, the congregation may elect a Pastor Nominating Committee for installed pastoral positions, including associate pastors.

“The session shall call a congregational meeting to elect a pastor nominating committee that shall be representative of the whole congregation. The committee’s duty shall be to nominate a pastor for election by the congregation. (G-2.0802)

Section 7.02: Size

The session, in addition to calling the meeting of the congregation to elect this committee, has the responsibility of recommending the size of the committee and the process by which persons are nominated for election to it.

Determining the size of the committee is a matter of importance and practicality. The Pastor Nominating Committee should be representative of the entire congregation. Where a congregation has wide diversity, it is important to have representation of each sub-group. This consideration could imply a large highly disciplined committee. However, practical considerations require that, in its work, the committee meet regularly and often over a period of time; it will need to reach agreement on many issues; it will need to make many personal contacts; and it will need to travel occasionally to visit with prospective candidates.

These processes become more difficult as the number of members of the committee increases. Considerable expense may also be involved in the work of the committee, and the session must budget funds for these expenses as the committee either needs to travel or to pay the costs of persons coming to them for interview. The key is the people involved. One rubric that has been used is that the committee should be large enough to represent the congregation but small enough to be able to travel in two cars.
Section 7.03: Process

These considerations indicate that the process of nominating persons to the Pastor Nominating Committee is crucial. The Session itself may serve as the committee to nominate persons for the Pastor Nominating Committee to the congregation or it may ask the Congregation’s Nominating Committee to do this. Whoever does the nominating, that group should be prepared to identify how persons nominated are deemed to fulfill the need of being representative of the congregation and of being responsive to the mission study process.

Section 7.04: Guidelines for Selecting Nominees

Whoever is determined to select the nominees for the Pastor Nominating Committee should begin with an orientation provided by the interim pastor (or session moderator) and the COM liaison.

1. Seek agreement on what “representative” means for the congregation.

2. Consider persons knowledgeable of the congregation and responsive to the mission study.

3. It is strongly recommended that no church staff be nominated, and that there be no alternates named.

4. Determine how suggestions for nominees from the congregation may be received.

5. Membership on the Pastor Nominating Committee is time-intensive and may extend from 6 to 9 months. The particular time demands will vary widely depending on the committee. Those asked should be told of this. Those being nominated to serve should have given their prior consent before nomination.

6. Membership on the Pastor Nominating Committee has many rewards: making a difference for the future of the congregation, spiritual growth, deepening relationships with others, etc. Those asked should be asked to prayerfully consider election as a call.

Section 7.05: Election

The COM liaison (or another COM representative) should be present for the congregational meeting to elect the Pastor Nominating Committee. The COM representative may address the congregation on the responsibilities of membership on
the committee. While nominations from the floor are always in order in elections, the members of the congregation can be challenged to present equally sufficient reasons for submitting a name or names in nomination. Those nominated from the floor should be present and agree to serve.

Ordinarily, the Pastor Nominating Committee meets briefly with the COM liaison following the congregational meeting to elect a convener and to set a date and time for their first meeting. The COM liaison team should be present to provide guidance at the first meeting of the Pastor Nominating Committee.

ARTICLE VIII
PNC ORIENTATION AND ORGANIZATION

Section 8.01: Rationale

It is important that there be an initial orientation of the PNC. This will generally be conducted by the COM Liaison, and may include others from COM or Presbytery as well. The purpose of this orientation is to present an overview of the task at hand as well as developing the rubrics necessary for the PNC to be transformed into a community of faith and a community of trust. The actual detail work of the committee, and the way that in needs to be done, is best understood as part of an ongoing process of orientation and discernment, which will be guided by the COM Liaison.

Section 8.02: Study

PNCs are all different and within a short time usually find their own “rhythms” as to how the work is to be approached. Many committees find it useful and fulfilling to begin their work with a coordinated study. Two good short books that might be helpful for PNC members are Searching for a Pastor the Presbyterian Way (Dean Foose, Geneva Press), and So You’re on the Search Committee (Bunty Ketcham and Celia Allison Hahn, Alban Institute). The COM Liaison can arrange for multiple copies to be purchased at a discount.

The COM Liaison will also provide a copy of On Calling A Pastor, a manual from the PC(USA) about the search process. This may be duplicated as necessary for use by the PNC.

Section 8.03: PNC Organization

As soon as possible following the initial orientation, the PNC should meet to organize. The COM liaison should be present as an advisor. Those matters receiving attention are:

1. Election of Officers: The PNC needs a minimum of a chairperson and a secretary. Many PNCs also have a vice chairperson. Some PNCs split the
role of secretary into recording and corresponding. Often it is advisable to
elect a treasurer to handle expenses. All officers are elected by the
committee from within its own members and the only ex-officio
participants with the committee will be the Committee on Ministry liaison
team, the COM chair, and the Executive Presbyter.

2. Confidentiality: The congregation and the session need to understand that
the PNC works in extreme confidentiality and, except for regular progress
reports on the process, does not consult with or report to either the
congregation or the session during its work. The PNC needs to determine
how it will advise the congregation and session of this requirement and how
to respect it within its own work.

3. Budget: A budget needs to be prepared to be submitted to the session. In
estimating expenses, the Committee will need to include advertising of the
position in national journals, committee travel, certain meals, telephone,
copying costs, and interviewing expenses for candidates. It should be
remembered that some or all PNC members may visit two or three
candidates at the places of their present work, and a candidate (or
candidates) on a “finalist short list” will need to be brought to the area at
least once, and once a call has been proffered and accepted, there will be
two additional trips. It is better to estimate the expenses early on.

4. Schedule: The PNC needs to establish target dates for the completion of the
MIF, for beginning the search process, for completing candidate reference
checks and screening, for beginning interviews, for selecting a candidate,
for having a new pastor on the field. These target dates may be changed,
sometimes many times, but without such targets the process can go on and
on. Having established target dates, the PNC needs to meet regularly to
meet them. COM recommends that the PNC set a regular meeting day and
time and stick to it.

5. PNC Spiritual Life: This process ends in a call to a new pastor. While the
process has many steps, techniques and details, it is a discernment process.
The PNC needs to give attention regularly to its own wellbeing, sharing joys
and concerns, and pausing to celebrate milestones. It needs to seek and be
open to the work of the Holy Spirit in its midst. The PNC should begin each
meeting with worship, and spend additional time in prayer together. Each
member is urged to spend time each day in prayer and meditation. Initial
plans for attending to the spiritual life of the PNC should be made at this
meeting.

6. Congregational Context and Church Dynamics: The next step for the PNC is
to begin work on the Ministry Information Form. In preparation for this
important task, the committee needs to become familiar with the mission
self-study and its refinements and updates as approved by session. Copies
should be in the hands of each committee member. The PNC may want to consult with members of the mission self-study committee in order to understand their report.

ARTICLE IX
MINISTRY INFORMATION FORM

Section 9.01: Church Leadership Connection

The Church Leadership Connection (CLC) of the PC(USA) is the central point for receiving and circulating information for persons seeking pastoral positions and churches seeking to fill positions. Persons seeking pastoral positions complete a Personal Information Form (PIF) or dossier, which is a standardized form that is used by CLC in their computer system. Similarly, for churches seeking candidates for pastoral positions there is the “Ministry Information Form” (MIF).

Copies of MIFs, along with resources for their completion can be downloaded from the Church Leadership Connection website www.pcusa.org/clc/. The mission self-study and refinement or update will provide much of the information needed. PNC reading in the field of church dynamics will provide a broader context for discussion of what is included about the congregation.

Section 9.02: Completing the Form

It is possible to work on many parts of the MIF at the same time by making assignments. Some parts may have to be revised in light of later decisions. Some sections can be assigned to individual members for writing. It is helpful, however, to have two readings of every section before its acceptance is voted upon. Other parts of the MIF require discussion and agreement of the PNC as a whole. These include: pastoral activities (skills, capacities) and variety of gifts (experiences).

Before the MIF can be completed, the session must establish parameters for the terms of call which will be included in the form. Compensation guidelines for the Presbytery will be provided by the COM Liaison. These parameters will be considered as authorization for the Pastor Nominating Committee to negotiate within them.

The COM liaison will be available to answer questions and give advice. As the PNC makes critical decisions for the MIF, it is wise to have the COM liaison present for the discussion. The COM liaison should be present for the final approval of the document by the PNC. When the final document is prepared, it is recommended that for one PNC member edit the whole document for style and presentation. It is very important for the whole document to have congruence, to “fit together” and be consistent.
Section 9.03: Approvals

The completed MIF is presented first to the session for its approval. This is an important step for the future of the congregation. It is one where expectations can be clarified and commitment can be secured. Work closely with the Interim Pastor (or Moderator of the Session) on how to do this.

The completed MIF must be approved by COM. When approval is granted, the PNC will be provided authorization codes for entering the MIF on the CLC website. The Clerk of Session will also be given an authorization code to attest to the session’s approval of the MIF.

ARTICLE X
SOLICITING PERSONAL INFORMATION FORMS

Section 10.01: Advertising

Once the MIF is entered on the website the PNC is free to advertise the position seeking self-referrals. This is strongly recommended, as studies show that most successful pastoral relationships are intentional on the part of the candidate. While the computer matching process of the Church Leadership Connection will provide many dossiers for review, none of these are screened as to a particular candidate’s interest in a particular congregation.

Many self-referrals will come from persons who look through the CLC listings, looking for congregations that match a particular interest in geography, size, theology, and style. Others will come from persons looking through advertisements in various periodicals, such as Presbyterian Outlook, Presbyterians Today, Christian Century, and Christianity Today. It is recommended that PNCs avail themselves of as many points of contact possible to let others know of the position available.

Section 10.02: Receiving

Self-referral candidates will send PIFs directly to the PNC. It is best if these are done electronically as well as by hard copy. Many self-referrals will contain additional information, such as tapes and CDs for the PNC to review. However, it is recommended that the PNC not review any of these materials until candidates are further along in the screening process, which will be undertaken to assure that candidates are qualified and cleared to serve.

Computer matched PIFs from the CLC website will be forwarded electronically to the PNC chair directly from CLC. PIFs for submission to PNCs are generated using criteria from in both PIFs that are currently “in the system” (that is persons who have submitted their
dossiers for computer matching) and the MIF.

ARTICLE XI
REVIEW AND SELECTION

Section 11.01: Initial Screening

It is recommended that the initial screening process narrow the search to perhaps 5 to 10 “high interest” candidates. These persons should be contacted to affirm that indeed they are available and interested. Following this, initial reference checks, with at least two of the primary (listed) references, should be made for all of these candidates, and a copy (electronic) of each PIF forwarded to the COM Liaison and the Executive Presbyter.

The Executive Presbyter will perform an initial “red flag” check with the Executive Presbyter (or counterpart) in the jurisdiction of each of the candidates, and inform the Liaison as to the findings. A “red flag” occurs when reference checking reveals information that would make a person unfit for service in the Presbytery of the Miami Valley. Such information is often legal in nature, and not related to a candidate’s theological orientation. The Liaison will instruct the PNC if any candidate must be eliminated from consideration.

Section 11.02: Active Screening

Active screening includes telephone and Skype interviews, reviewing tapes, CDs and DVDs, and further reference checks, still limited to those names provided on a dossier. During this process it also makes sense to exchange information about the church with candidates, mission studies, annual reports, for instance. A lack of interest in these things on the part of a candidate might be very telling.

If affordable and practical, this is also a good time for teams from a PNC to visit a candidate’s church during worship. However, this must be done with the utmost discretion. Members of a PNC should never sit en masse, and any contact directly with a candidate must be made in a manner that is agreed by and comfortable to, a candidate.

At the close of this active screening process, a PNC should have a list of 3 to 5 candidates.

Section 11.03: Final Screening

At this point, the PNC is should check secondary references. To do this, each of the remaining candidates must provide written permission. At this time the Chair of COM would also seek a reference from the COM Chair in the corresponding Presbytery.
Again, should economics and distance allow, the entire PNC might want to meet prospective candidates and experience them in worship, in their home church setting. The same aforementioned level of discretion still applies. This is also not to be a formal interview, but more of a “get-acquainted” meeting.

At this point, the PNC needs to be ready to rank the candidates in order of preference. However, each candidate, in order to remain in process, must be confirmed by the PNC as “being able to fill the position.” If there is not general agreement about this, the candidate should be eliminated from the process.

Section 11.04 Selection

There is not necessarily any “best way” to proceed from here. Some PNCs decide to move linearly in preferential order, bringing only the top candidate for an interview and preaching in a neutral pulpit. These PNCs then meet after to decide either to offer the position or to continue to look further at the remaining candidates. Other PNCs bring each of the candidates for interviews and preaching, only after which they begin their final selection process.

As part of this process, an interview with COM should be scheduled as part of the visit. This interview is for determining the “fitness of to be received into membership of the Presbytery” and not for COM’s approval of a call. After the candidate’s visit is complete, the PNC should meet to discern and decide if a call is to be offered.

It is the policy of the Presbytery of the Miami Valley that all persons serving professionally in churches, the Presbytery, or as teaching elder members will be subject to a Background Check, using a professional reference agency. The cost of this is borne by the Presbytery. The timing of this will be coordinated with COM, the PNC and the candidate, and will normally take place during this part of the selection process.

Section 11.05: Offering a Call

Ordinarily, the chair of the PNC should contact the candidate and discuss the call, providing the specifics of the terms of call, and outlining the next steps in the process (Interview for Call with COM, candidating sermon and Congregational Meeting, etc.). Since the general parameters of compensation have been established in the MIF, and assumed that that more specifics will have been discussed during previous interviews, there should be no great surprises as to finalizing compensation. Should it be necessary to exceed the general parameters of compensation, such a decision must be agreed to by the session. It is recommended that both the candidate and PNC reach an agreement on when the candidate will inform the PNC of acceptance.
Section 11.06: COM Interview for Call

When a candidate has accepted, a final interview with COM needs to be arranged, ideally during a regularly scheduled meeting. This will allow for maximum participation of COM. As part of the Presbytery’s commitment to facilitate strong pastoral relationships, the Committee on Ministry will share equally the travel expenses of this visit. While the purpose of this interview is COM approval of the call, pastoral calls can only issued by the congregation. The precise action COM will take is to authorize the session to call a congregational meeting for the purpose of acting on the report of the Pastor Nominating Committee.

Representatives of the PNC must attend and be interviewed, in the presence of the candidate, discussing their process and what led them to agree on this particular candidate; how they see this person assisting them in living out the goals and expectations in this new time in their ministry. This will be followed by a separate interview will be candidate alone, focusing on this pastor’s understanding of the congregation’s ministry, what specific gifts are brought to further it, and what kind of Presbytery support might be needed.

The intent of this interview is to approve calls with clear understandings of the strengths of the match between congregations and pastors, as well as establishing foundations for strong connections in the tri-part relationship of pastor, congregation and Presbytery.

ARTICLE XII
ELECTION AND CONFIRMATION

Article 13.01: Session

Having been authorized by COM, the session must call a special meeting (G-2.0803) of the congregation to act on the report of the Pastor Nominating Committee and matters related to it. The PNC can recommend a time schedule but must be aware of limitations in any negotiations with a candidate.

The session will usually call such a meeting for the time immediately following a regular Sunday worship service which the recommended candidate will lead. The Clerk of Session will arrange for appropriate announcement of the call to the meeting. Note that the Pastor Nominating Committee reserves to itself the introduction of the name of the candidate. The Pastor Nominating Committee presents the name of the candidate to the Session and to the congregation at the same time.

The session, having acted to call the special congregational meeting, discusses plans for concluding the interim pastor’s service. These plans include completion of the terms of the contract, setting a date for departure, scheduling of an exit interview and evaluation, and a time for recognition of the service.
**Section 12.02: Introduction of the Candidate**

The Pastor Nominating Committee will determine the method of introducing their candidate to the congregation. Often the PNC sends to the entire congregation a letter including brief biographical information about the candidate, reiterating the date for the worship service and congregational meeting and inviting the congregation to a “meet the candidate” reception on Saturday. This provides everyone an opportunity to become acquainted, celebrate a bit, and feel that the decision and vote is made on the basis of more than one “trial sermon.”

**Section 12.03: Congregational Meeting**

Ideally, the COM Liaison or other COM representative should be present at both the service of worship and the congregational meeting. At the meeting, the chairperson of the Pastor Nominating Committee should make a brief report about the work of the committee, its process, and its final decision to bring one unanimous recommendation to the congregation. Several committee members may be asked to speak on behalf of the candidate. The names of any other persons who may have been considered are never reported. The chairperson, at the conclusion of the report, will make one motion that the proposed candidate be called at specific terms. *Note that the motion to call and the terms of the call are not separated but are considered to be a single action.*

The moderator of the meeting should inform the congregation of their right to cast negative votes but should caution the congregation that a negative vote must be cast for reason against the presented candidate rather than as a protest because the PNC did not choose another personally favored candidate or for some other extraneous reason. The Clerk of Session should be prepared with ballots so a secret ballot vote can be taken and tabulated immediately. Even though it may be a generous gesture, it is not normally wise to take an additional vote to “make the call unanimous.” People have a right to record opposition and the candidate has a right to know the strength of declared support at the outset. The numerical result of the vote must be announced to both the congregation and the candidate.

It is often forgotten that, upon hearing the vote of the congregation, the candidate still has the option of accepting or rejecting the call. Rejection rarely happens, but weakness of vote support or other last-minute information may change a candidate’s sense of call to a particular situation.

While there in no longer a provision in the *Book of Order* defining provisions to be followed if a *substantial* minority oppose issuing the call, it is advisable that the Moderator of the meeting recommend that COM be asked to seek to understand the underlying reasons for the negative vote, consider the past history of pastoral relationships in the congregation, and counsel with the candidate as to reasons for wishing to accept the call and the advisability of doing so.
The PNC is dismissed with thanks by the congregation by vote of the congregation. In the unusual circumstance, where a congregation does not sustain the recommendation of the Pastor Nominating Committee to extend a call, the Pastor Nominating Committee has done its best work, it has brought its best candidate; if the congregation rejects the recommendation it must elect a new Pastor Nominating Committee and begin the search process over again.

**Section 12.04: Pastoral Transition Team**

While not required in our polity, it is recommended that a Pastoral Transition Team be formed to assist with the session and the COM Liaison in the pastoral start-up process, and continuing on as an advisory support group for the new pastor, usually for perhaps a six-month period. Since the PNC has worked with the new pastor in the selection process it often happens that its members form the core of this transition team. This often proves to be valuable for both the pastor and the congregation but it is important to understand that it an informal group with no specific authority. Providing continuing support for a new pastor does not constitute an advocacy or arbitrator role in the relationship between the pastor and the session.

**Section 12.05: Interim Ministry Concludes**

The session and the interim pastor conclude agreements. Ordinarily the session provides for the recognition of the interim’s service and for a farewell celebration. The Clerk of Session notifies the COM Liaison and the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery that the interim pastor will conclude the term of service as of a certain date. COM will conduct an exit interview with the departing pastor and report to Presbytery the conclusion of the ministry.

**ARTICLE XIII**

**THE NEW MINISTRY BEGINS**

**Section 13.01: Reception**

The pastoral start-up period is an important time. The congregation usually plans a welcome for the new pastor, often enlarging this beyond the membership to include others from nearby congregations, as wells as colleagues from other Presbyterian churches. Sometimes this expanded reception is part of a service of installation.

**Section 13.02: Support**

COM will appoint a companion pastor to provide initial support to the new pastor.
Additional support and orientation will be provided through a pastoral transition team. This team probably should continue during the first year of the new ministry.

Section 13.03: Planning

When a church has undertaken a mission self-study as part of the transition, often final planning conclusions are delayed until the arrival of the new pastor. Around six months or so after the new ministry begins it is often a good time for planning events to be scheduled to pick up these last portions of the study.

SECTION XIV
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND POLICIES

Section 15.01: Additional Guidance

This Transitions Manual is intended as a guide for “normative” pastoral transitional process. Its provisions cannot cover every foreseeable circumstance that might arise. This is where the relationship with the COM Liaison is of the utmost importance as the Liaison is the person who will likely be the best position to bring together all of the disparate parts of the Presbytery (COM, Executive Presbyter, Stated clerk) necessary to look creatively at a unique or special need.

Section 15.02: Authority

No provision of this Transitions Manual is not to be understood as prescriptive or doctrinaire, unless also covered by Presbytery or COM policy. Such policy documents are available on the Presbytery website; and pastors and sessions are encouraged to refer to them in times of transition.