

Guide for Dissolution and Transition of a Pastoral Call

Presbytery of Milwaukee

(May 15, 2018)

Reasons for Dissolution of a Pastoral Call

There are five primary reasons that a pastoral call with a congregation may be dissolved:

- Retirement
- New Call/Life Change
- Result of Conflict
- Death of a Pastor
- Closing of a Congregation

The dissolution of the pastoral call may be initiated by the pastor, the session, or the presbytery; but, “An installed pastoral relationship may be dissolved only by the presbytery. Whether the minister of the Word and Sacrament, the congregation, or the presbytery initiates proceedings for dissolution of the relationship, there shall always be a meeting of the congregation to consider the matter and to consent, or decline to consent, to dissolution.” (G-2.0901 Book of Order 2017/2019) The congregational meeting shall not occur without the presence of someone designated by the Commission on Ministry to act as Moderator.

The Process for Dissolution of a Pastoral Call

- *G-2.0902 Pastor, Co-Pastor or Associate Pastor Requests*

In the event of retirement, change of call (or other life change), or irresolvable conflict, the pastor shall contact the Moderator(s) of the COM or the Associate for Ministry Vitality and state his/her reasons for requesting to dissolve the pastoral relationship. The COM will appoint a liaison to work with the congregation and the pastor through the dissolution process.

The liaison will meet with the session and pastor to discuss the dissolution process and, should it be the case, listen to reasons as to why the relationship should not be dissolved. Should the pastor and session, with the concurrence of the COM liaison, determine that dissolution is the necessary step, the pastor shall send a letter of resignation to the congregation.

At the appropriate time, determined by the reasons for dissolving the pastoral relationship, “the session shall call a congregational meeting (moderated by the liaison or other COM designee) to act upon the request and to make recommendations to the presbytery. If the congregation does not concur, the presbytery (through the COM) shall hear from the congregation, through its elected commissioners, the reasons why the presbytery should not dissolve the pastoral relationship. If the congregation fails to appear, or if its reasons for retaining the relationship are judged insufficient, the request may be granted and the pastoral relationship dissolved.” G-2.0902

The COM as a Commission of the Presbytery of Milwaukee shall take action upon the request and inform the pastor and session of its decision.

- *G-2.0903 Congregation Requests*

If any congregation desires the pastoral relationship to be dissolved, a procedure similar to G-2.0902, above, shall be followed.

The Clerk of Session (or approved session representative) shall contact the Moderator(s) of the COM or the Associate for Ministry Vitality and state the reasons for requesting to dissolve the pastoral relationship.

The COM will appoint a liaison to work with the congregation and the pastor through the dissolution process.

The session, in concurrence with the COM liaison, shall send a letter to the congregation stating the reasons for requesting a dissolution of the pastoral call and call a congregational meeting to act upon the request and to make recommendations to the presbytery.

The liaison (or other COM designee) shall moderate the congregational meeting.

Upon the approval of the congregation, the COM as a Commission of the Presbytery of Milwaukee shall take action upon the request and inform the pastor and session of its decision. (If the pastor does not concur with the request to dissolve the relationship, the presbytery shall hear from him or her the reasons why the presbytery should not dissolve the relationship. If the pastor fails to appear, or if the reasons for maintaining the relationship are judged insufficient, the relationship may be dissolved. G-2.0903)

- *G-2.0904 Presbytery Action*

“The presbytery may inquire into reported difficulties in a congregation and may dissolve the pastoral relationship if, after consultation with the minister of the Word and Sacrament, the session, and the congregation, it finds the church’s mission under the Word imperatively demands it.”

If the Presbytery initiates the dissolution, the COM will appoint a liaison to work with the congregation. Additional support, one each for the congregation and pastor will also be designated through the dissolution process by individuals not serving on the COM.

- *G-2.0905 Officiate by Invitation Only*

“After the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, former pastors and associate pastors shall not provide their pastoral services to members of their former congregations without the invitation of the moderator of session.” In the absence of a pastor the COM shall appoint a moderator of session and for congregational meetings.

Upon the termination of any pastoral relationship on a date set by either the session or the presbytery, there should be no further contact between the pastor and the congregation.

A former pastor shall never return to a former congregation to perform any pastoral function (wedding, funeral, memorial service, baptism, or worship) without the express invitation of the session and presiding pastor, and without the approval of the Commission on Ministry.

No former minister shall be permitted to perform any pastoral services (named above) within the facilities of the church without permission and invitation from the session, presiding pastor, and the COM.

Covenant of Closure: the Covenant of Closure (found at www.pbymilwaukee.org under Work of the Presbytery and Commission on Ministry Resources) should be included in and signed during the final worship over which the departing pastor is presiding. It includes the presbytery's guidelines on boundaries between former pastors and congregations and is signed by the pastor, Clerk of Session, and the COM representative and remitted to the Presbytery Office as a signed covenant that all parties understand the appropriate boundaries moving forward.

A further list of the Presbytery of Milwaukee's guidelines and policies for ethical boundaries can also be found at the website location indicated above.

- *Vacancy Dues, Board of Pensions*

When a ministerial position becomes vacant, the church is expected to remit vacancy dues to the Board of Pensions. Vacancy dues are calculated at 12% of the Pension Plan Basis of the last minister who occupied the vacant position. They are payable for the first twelve months that the position is vacant or until the position is filled, whichever comes first.

Vacancy dues are not required when the church decides to abolish the position and the Clerk of Session informs the Board of Pensions in writing of the decision. The Board of Pensions may waive vacancy dues when, in extenuating circumstances, the church cannot afford to remit them. To determine the waiver, the BoP needs a written request from the Presbytery of Milwaukee via the Commission on Ministry explaining the circumstances.

- *Compensation Policy for Dissolution of a Pastoral Call During Times of Conflict*

When a session, congregation, pastor, or the presbytery determines that a ministry is conflicted, they first seek to address the problems/concerns with the Commission on Ministry (COM). Should those efforts prove ineffective and should it be decided that the pastoral relationship must be dissolved, even though the pastor has no new calling, the following policy provides the minimum terms for dissolution. Cessation of pastoral duties with or on behalf of the congregation begins on the effective date of dissolution.

A. Dissolution Under the Terms of a Contract

A time limited term of pastoral service may be dissolved upon 30 days written notice by either the session, congregation, pastor, or the presbytery.

1. Transitional and Bridge Pastors

Full compensation as agreed upon in the contract (excluding vacation and professional reimbursable expenses) shall be provided for 30 days after the effective date of dissolution, or until the expiration of the contract or the pastor begins work in another position, whichever occurs first.

2. Stated Supply and Commissioned Pastors

In the first year of the pastorate, full compensation as agreed upon in the contract (excluding vacation and professional reimbursable expenses) shall be provided for 30 days after the effective date of dissolution, or until the expiration of the contract or the pastor begins work in another position, whichever occurs first. One month's compensation shall be added for each additional year of service not to exceed three months, with the exception that if the pastor dissolves the relationship the additional compensation is forfeit.

B. Dissolution of a Called and Installed Position

The request for and effective date of the dissolution must be approved by the presbytery through the Commission on Ministry. Pastoral office items or other effects may be negotiated in addition to compensation.

1. Designated Pastor

In the first year of the pastorate, full compensation as agreed upon in the terms of call (excluding vacation and professional reimbursable expenses) shall be provided for 30 days after the cessation of employment, the pastor begins work in another position, or the end of the designated period, whichever occurs first. One month's compensation shall be added for each additional year of service not to exceed three months, with the exception that if the pastor dissolves the relationship the additional compensation is forfeit.

2. Called and Installed

Full compensation shall be provided for three months after the cessation of employment or the pastor begins work in another position, whichever occurs first.

The above policy reflects the minimum terms of dissolution. Additional terms may be negotiated, or in extenuating circumstances the above terms may be appealed to the COM which has the final say. Unless otherwise agreed upon at the outset of the pastoral relationship, these terms shall be applied to all contracts and terms of call from the date this policy was approved by the Presbytery of Milwaukee. The requirements of this policy cease to apply- but may continue to serve as guidelines where appropriate- in situations involving legal and/or ecclesiastical judicial proceedings. (This policy was approved by COM May 15, 2018)

- *Policy Dispute Protocol*

In the event that either the congregation or pastor disputes the terms of the compensation policy for any reason, a member of COM or designated representative will act as mediator. Additional advocates, one each for the congregation and pastor, will also be designated by COM as support through the dissolution process consisting of individuals not serving on the COM. While mutual agreement of dissolution terms will be the goal of the mediation process, in the event this is not possible, COM will make the final determination.

Transition Process

When it is acknowledged by the session, the pastor, and the COM that a Dissolution of Pastoral Relationship is imminent, a COM liaison will meet with the Session to provide information on the pastoral transition process.

G- 2.0504b Temporary Pastoral Relationships

Temporary pastoral relationships are approved by the presbytery and do not carry a formal call or installation. When a congregation does not have a pastor, or while the pastor is unable to perform her or his duties, the session, with the approval of presbytery, may obtain the services of a minister of the Word and Sacrament, candidate, or ruling elder in a temporary pastoral relationship. No formal call shall be issued and no formal installation shall take place. Titles and terms of service for temporary relationships shall be determined by the presbytery. A person serving in a temporary pastoral relationship is invited for a specified period not to exceed twelve months in length, which is renewable with the approval of the presbytery. A minister of the Word and Sacrament employed in a temporary pastoral relationship is ordinarily not eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor.

There are four basic models for pastoral transition in the Presbytery of Milwaukee: Bridge, Designated, or Transitional/Interim Pastor, and Commissioned Pastor. Each model speaks to the temporary relationship needed to supply pastoral care and support during the time of transition. The COM will work with the session to help determine which model is most appropriate. With the exception of the Designated Pastor model, transitional/temporary pastors are not ordinarily eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor.

Bridge Pastor: This model helps to provide stability through consistent week-to-week pastoral leadership. This model can either be used as the session and congregation go through the process to call and install their next pastor or an interim. When serving as a bridge to a called and installed pastorate, this model is best suited to congregations who have experienced otherwise stable and positive leadership and are not in conflict, significant congregational transition, or dealing with concerns that are better suited to a Transitional/Interim or Designated Pastor. When serving as a bridge to Transitional/Interim or Designated Pastor, this model is appropriate for congregations that need more immediate and consistent pastoral support when the interim search is prolonged or it is otherwise deemed prudent.

The Position Description can be posted and advertised for a full-time or part-time position. Candidates for the Bridge Pastor may be referred by the Presbytery but are interviewed and chosen by a committee elected by the Session. The Pastor is hired by the session not the congregation for a specified term not to exceed twelve months but which is renewable.

Transitional/Interim Pastor: This model, in addition to providing stability, is one for which some pastors have received additional training in areas of conflict management, working through grief, looking at past patterns and evaluating their impact, listening for concerns/issues and guiding in mutual problem solving, and other areas needing additional time and energy beyond basic week-to-week pastoral leadership. This model is best suited to congregations which are facing the search process after: a conflictual relationship with a previous pastor, the death of a pastor, the end of a long-term pastoral relationship, conflict in the congregation, significant congregational change, or any other area for which COM discerns the need for a Transitional Pastor/Interim.

The Position Description can be posted and advertised and can be full-time or part-time. Candidates may apply and may be referred by the Presbytery. They are interviewed and chosen by a committee elected by the Session (usually an Interim Pastor Nominating Committee). Candidates preferably have specialized training in interim work. The Transitional Pastor is hired by the session not the congregation usually for a 1 year term of contract that is renewable annually.

Commissioned Pastor: Commissioned Pastors are elders who have gone through training and the process of becoming Commissioned Pastors as verified by the CPM and the COM of the Presbytery of Milwaukee. A Commissioned Pastor may be commissioned to limited pastoral service in a congregation based on approval of COM and the Presbytery. In this capacity, Commissioned Pastors have the same pastoral authorization as a Minister of the Word and Sacrament in regards to officiating over the Lord's Supper, baptisms, and weddings as well as moderating session meetings. This model is available in instances where a Minister of the Word and Sacrament is unavailable to serve as a Bridge Pastor and/or in instances when the pastoral leadership needed is limited due to a congregation's size or finances.

Designated Pastor: A Designated Pastor is a called and installed pastorate with a designated term of service as determined by the presbytery, in consultation with the congregation. The Designated Pastor model is best suited for congregations: engaged in transformation and its redirecting its ministry; wanting to test a new direction or new model of leadership; that have been wounded by conflict or by a "revolving door" in the pastor's office through which a number of pastors have come and gone in a relatively few years; considering engaging in shared ministry; or needing a different pastoral leadership style.

The Designated Pastor (DP) is a plan wherein carefully selected pastors and churches are matched (prescreened) by the COM, potentially greatly reducing the time required to call a pastor. Candidates are then interviewed and chosen by a PNC through a formalized search process. The MIF can be posted and advertised for full-time or part-time. The DP is elected by the congregation for a term of two to four years with the option to make it permanent at the end of the designated term. The terms of call are approved by the COM.

Dissolution of a Pastoral Relationship

The following are examples of why a pastoral relationship with a congregation would/may be dissolved:

- Retirement
- New Call/Life Change
- Result of Conflict
- Death of a Pastor
- Closing of a Congregation

Contact the Presbytery Associate for Ministry Vitality or Moderator of COM to notify pending dissolution

Meeting with Session, Pastor, and member of COM to discuss dissolution and necessary steps

Pastor/Clerk of Session sends a letter to the congregation announcing dissolution

COM Transition Team conducts separate exit interviews with Pastor and Session

COM appoints a moderator of session and consults with session on pulpit supply and other assistance needed until a Temporary Pastor is appointed

COM will consult with the session on the Temporary Pastor model needed during the time of transition. (This may wait until after the pastor's final date.)

The Transition Process for Congregation's using the Bridge Pastor Model

- Soon after the pastor's final date, the COM will consult with the session on the process of conducting a Mission and Ministry Study
- The session, in consultation with the COM (through its liaison or other designated party), will create a job description for the Transitional Pastor position
- Upon approval by COM, the position will be posted to the presbytery by the appropriate presbytery staff member. (It may also be posted in our neighboring presbyteries and with ecumenical partners).
- The COM liaison (or other designated party) will work with the session through the search and interview process for the Bridge Pastor; and upon completion of an agreed contract and Fit interview, the session may hire the Bridge Pastor. (see guidelines and contract form for Bridge Pastor)
- Upon completion of the Mission and Ministry Study and approval of COM, the session calls a congregational meeting for the purpose of forming a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC)

Work of the PNC

- Once the congregation has elected a PNC, the first meeting of the PNC will occur with the COM liaison (or designated party) to walk through the call process.
- The PNC completes the Ministry Information Form (MIF), which upon approval of both session and the COM, the PNC posts to the Church Leadership Site. (The Associate for Ministry Vitality can assist the PNC in posting the MIF.)
- The PNC begins receiving PIFs
- The Associate for Ministry Vitality or Presbytery Executive provide EP reference checks for top candidates
- PNC conducts initial phone interviews and reference checks, and prior to in-person interviews the PNC requests background checks on top candidates via the presbytery office
- When a candidate has been selected, the PNC extends a Call and negotiates the Terms of Call
- The COM approves the Call and Terms and conducts a Fit Interview with the candidate
- The PNC requests Session to call a Congregational Meeting to elect pastor
- The formal Terms of Call are completed and signed and sent in to the presbytery office to be signed by the COM moderator. A completed copy is held at the presbytery office and sent to both the pastor and the Clerk of Session.
- The pastor begins the process for Ordination/Installation

The Transition Process for Congregation's using the Transitional/Interim Pastor Model

- Soon after the pastor's final date, COM will consult with the session on the process of conducting a Mission and Ministry Study
- Session appoints an Interim Pastor Nominating Committee (IPNC) to nominate a candidate
- Session and IPNC, in consultation with COM liaison (or designated party), develop a job description and/or MIF along with a compensation package for the Transitional/Interim Pastor
- COM approves job description and compensation package
- IPNC and the COM liaison (or designated party) conduct the search for T/I Pastor
- IPNC negotiates contract with preferred candidate (see guidelines and contract form for Transitional/Interim Pastor please note that because of the nature of the work of a T/I Pastor the minimum hours necessary are 25/week)
- Based on approval of contract, COM conducts Fit Interview with Interim Candidate
- Session elects Interim for the transition period
- Upon completion of the Mission and Ministry Study and approval of the COM, the session calls a congregational meeting for the purpose of forming a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC)

Work of the PNC

- Once the congregation has elected a PNC, the first meeting of the PNC will occur with the COM liaison (or designated party) to walk through the call process.
- The PNC completes the Ministry Information Form (MIF), which upon approval of both session and the COM, the PNC posts to the Church Leadership Site. (The Associate for Ministry Vitality can assist the PNC in posting the MIF.)
- The PNC begins receiving PIFs
- The Associate for Ministry Vitality or Presbytery Executive provide EP reference checks for top candidates
- PNC conducts initial phone interviews and reference checks, and prior to in person interviews AMV conducts background checks on top candidates
- When a candidate has been selected, the PNC extends a Call and negotiates the Terms of Call
- The COM approves the Call and Terms and conducts a Fit Interview with the candidate
- The PNC requests Session to call a Congregational Meeting to elect pastor
- The formal Terms of Call are completed and signed and sent in to the presbytery office to be signed by the COM moderator. A completed copy is held at the presbytery office and sent to both the pastor and the Clerk of Session.
- The pastor begins the process for Ordination/Installation

The Transition Process for Congregation's using the Commissioned Pastor Model

This model follows the same steps as the Transitional Pastor model with the exception that the CP must be approved by the Presbytery in addition to the session and the COM. Please see the guidelines and contract form for CPs.

The Transition Process for Congregation's using the Designated Pastor Model

- Soon after the pastor's final date, COM will consult with the session on the process of conducting a Mission and Ministry Study
- The session and COM agree that a Designated Pastor search is the best option for the congregation at this time
- The session with the help of the COM liaison create a plan of pastoral leadership during the Designated Pastor search
- The session gains approval from the COM to call a congregational meeting to elect a Designated Pastor Search Committee (DPNC)
- The COM liaison or other designated party meets with the DPNC for the initial meeting which includes orientation the selection of DPNC leadership
- The Session, with as needed assistance from the COM, works with the DPNC on MIF parts regarding church's mission, position description, and parameters for compensation (the Associate for Ministry Vitality will provide access and support in using CLC)
- The session and the COM approve the MIF
- The MIF directs all PIF submissions to come directly to the Associate for Ministry Vitality or her/his designee
- The COM provides a team to review PIFs and initiate matches
- The COM team requests EP reference checks on top candidates
- The COM team forwards the name of select candidates to the DPNC for consideration
- DPNC conducts phone/skype interviews and reference checks and takes measures to assess candidates
- DPNC requests background checks on top candidates from presbytery staff before bringing candidates for in-person interviews
- DPNC negotiates terms of call and requests COM Fit interview with final Candidate
- With approval of the COM, the session interviews the Candidate before requesting permission from the COM to call a congregation meeting at which DPNC presents the Candidate for a vote. The Candidate may meet with officers/members before the Congregational and lead in worship.
- The formal Terms of Call are completed and signed and sent in to the presbytery office to be signed by the COM moderator. A completed copy is held at the presbytery office and sent to both the pastor and the Clerk of Session.
- The pastor begins the process for Ordination/Installation