

P-23 Suitability Decision-a SALT Proposal

Simply stated, we recommend that the COM decision about suitability/compatibility about a call and a candidate be moved from the end of the process (the final decision that permits a call to be issued) to much earlier in the process. To accomplish this we recommend the following changes in our practice as a COM. It should be noted that we assume that this decision will, ordinarily, be made by the neighborhood COM.

1. The PNC Liaison shall meet with the PNC at the PNC's initial meeting, along with the Interim Pastor (if there is one). The PNC shall not meet unless the Liaison (and Interim Pastor if there is one) is/are present. The Liaison (and Interim, if there is one) will guide the PNC through the process of selecting its officers and orient them to the process they will be following.
2. When the first batch of PIF referrals arrives, the Liaison (and Interim if there is one) will meet again with the PNC to teach them how to read PIF's and how to sort them. After this meeting, the Interim (if there is one) shall no longer meet with the PNC, to make certain there is no appearance that the Interim is influencing the PNC's choice.
3. After the PNC has sorted out the PIF's and contacted the group that they are most interested in (probably by email) to determine if they are still available and perhaps interested in being considered, they will submit the names of that group (together with the presbytery affiliation of each person) to the neighborhood presbyter who will do a presbytery background check with the person's presbytery staff. Under no circumstances should the PNC begin other than cursory conversations until the neighborhood presbyter has done his/her check.
4. The Liaison shall ordinarily meet with the PNC during their sorting and interviewing at least once a month. If the liaison learns of potential problems with a candidate to be brought for an interview with COM, the liaison must notify COM before the interview."
5. When the PNC brings its final candidates to the field for an on-site interview, they shall allow an hour to an hour and a half for the neighborhood COM to interview the candidate for suitability/compatibility. Ordinarily, this interview will take place with the PNC present. The Liaison will arrange for this to take place, inviting the entire neighborhood COM to be at the meeting, and making sure that the neighborhood COM members have a copy of the candidate's PIF in advance of the meeting; so that they might study it ahead of time. A quorum shall be 50% for the West neighborhood, and 33% for the Central and East neighborhoods. Presbytery program staff should be invited and may be counted to reach the quorum.
6. The style of the interview will be like that which we are using currently at the COM meeting: comparing what the CIF says about what type of leader is being sought with the interviewee. Neighborhood COM members will read the CIF, which they have had since they approved it and craft questions that help to discover the compatibility/suitability of the candidate for the congregation.
7. Once the interview is completed, the neighborhood COM will communicate to the PNC through the Liaison its assessment of the compatibility/suitability of the candidate for the call. This report might contain concerns about the match. The report may take place after the weekend, but no later than Monday.
8. This may mean that the neighborhood COM may interview and approve more than one person for a particular church.
9. When the PNC is ready to present a candidate for a call, if the person has been approved by the neighborhood COM, the Liaison will present the terms of call to the neighborhood COM one week before the monthly neighborhood COM meeting for the neighborhood COM's approval of the terms of call. Further, the Liaison will arrange for the candidate to be examined by the Presbytery Examination Committee. During the time between the delivery of the terms of call and the meeting of the neighborhood COM, the neighborhood Presbyter will do a criminal background check on the candidate.

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The neighborhood COM will approve the terms of call and give the PNC permission to ask the Session to call the congregational meeting to issue the call, pending affirmative action by the Examination Committee. [If there is need for permission to move on the field and begin work before a Presbytery meeting, the neighborhood COM will do that at the same time that it approves the call.]

10. If the candidate has not been approved by the neighborhood COM, but the PNC still thinks the candidate is appropriate, the PNC may appeal the decision of the neighborhood COM to the COM as a whole. This will entail a called meeting of the entire COM for the purpose of hearing the appeal. The neighborhood COM will be allowed to address the entire COM first, sharing its concerns and conclusion, then the PNC will be allowed to address the entire COM to make their case for the candidate.

If the entire COM approves the candidate, then the process will go forward with a meeting with Examinations Committee and proceed as normal. If the entire COM sustains the decision of the neighborhood COM, then the PNC will have to decide whether it wants to start over or present the call to Presbytery with the negative recommendation about the call from the COM.

11. If the candidate is not approved by the Examinations Committee, the process from there on will be determined by the Examinations Committee policies.