

COM Entrance Interview

The Committee on Ministry seeks to discern the merits, availability, and suitability of any candidate or minister whose name is contemplated for nomination to the congregation and whether the candidate or teaching elder will be collegial in "serving in the councils of the church" [W-4.4003i(3)]. Remember that the person being interviewed is forming an opinion about you, the questioner. Think about the impression you want the person to have about the congregation and the presbytery as you decide which questions to ask.

The COM cluster that relates with the congregation arranges for the entrance interview and reports to the COM and stated clerk. No fewer than two COM members shall conduct the interview, which shall take place before the PNC or APNC notifies the session that it is ready to report to the congregation. If the candidate preaches in a "neutral pulpit," that visit provides an excellent opportunity for the entrance interview. It is recommended that those conducting the entrance interview contact the COM liaison to the PNC or APNC regarding the candidate's merits, availability, and suitability.

A COM interview of a prospective pastor must include:

1. We are required to: "examine each teaching elder or candidate who seeks membership in [the presbytery] on his or her Christian faith and views in theology, the Sacraments, and the government of this church" (G-3.0306). Some COMs address this constitutional obligation by discussing the constitutional questions (W-4.4003) with the candidate.
2. Do you have any departures from the Constitution to declare?
3. If you receive a PIF that does not contain the sexual misconduct sign-off section or Stated Clerk's attestation, ask the candidate for a complete PIF or do not consider them further.

A COM interview of a prospective pastor should include:

1. Share with us how your journey in faith has led you to explore this call.
2. What specific challenges and opportunities do you see for this congregation and what gifts do you have to deal with those challenges and opportunities?
3. Describe your previous participation in the ministries of presbytery. How would you prefer to fulfill your promise to "be active in government and discipline, serving in the councils of the church" [W-4.4003i(3)]?
4. Discuss the expectations of both the congregation and the pastor regarding the pastor's spouse and /or significant other and/or family.

A COM interview of a prospective pastor might discuss:

It is important that COM has a copy of the CIF and PJF to ask specific questions that relate to what the church is looking for and the skills of the pastor. It is also important to have information from the exit interview of the previous pastor and questions as to how the new pastor might handle a problem (if such exists). The more you know about a congregation, particularly in the areas of worship, mission and the community, the easier it is *to* ask questions that will benefit the new pastor and the church. For example, the COM entrance interview might cover such things as an example of a conflict the prospective pastor has experienced in the recent past and how she or he helped to resolve it.