



Guidelines for COM Interviews with Pastoral Candidates – 2021

The Commission 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 Minister will be collegial in "serving in the councils of the church". The COM Liaison and General Presbyter, as well as selected other COM members, will work with the PNC and congregation to arrange for the entrance/fitness interview, and reports to the COM and stated clerk. No fewer than two COM members 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.

Per the Book of Order, COM is required to "examine each Minister 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". Some COMs address this constitutional obligation by discussing the constitutional questions with the candidate. Suggested elements are below:

1. Whether they have any departures from the Constitution to declare.
2. 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.
3. A COM interview of a prospective Pastor should include:
 - o Share with us how your journey in faith has led you to explore this call.
 - o What specific challenges and opportunities do you see for this congregation and what gifts do you have to deal with those challenges and opportunities?
 - o 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" in the Presbytery of Cincinnati?
 - o Discuss the expectations of both the congregation and the Pastor regarding the Pastor's spouse and /or significant other and/or family.

Process for the Interview

The Presbyter-to-Presbyter check should be completed before this final interview with COM. As much as can be shared with the COM and (with issues) the PNC should be shared before the interview is conducted.

It is important that COM has a copy of the MIF and PIF 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 exist). 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.

Adopted by COM November 2017

Edited to reflect Commission 9/8/2021

- Meet with candidates and PNC together to describe the process.
- Meet with PNC alone to ask:
 1. How did you conduct your interviews – number of PIFs received, how you screened them, number of first round interviews (and demographics: male/female, race, age), number of second round interviews (and demographics)
 2. What characteristics are most important to you? How do you see them in this candidate?
 3. Any concerns?
- Meet with candidate alone
 1. Tell us about your experience interviewing for this position. What was your discernment process?
 2. What skills do you bring that match what you see this church as needing?
 3. Do you have any concerns about the fit of this call for you?
 4. What is your experience in dealing with... conflict, change, growth, etc.
 5. How do you plan to interact with the Presbytery – what is your experience in your previous Presbytery?

Meet as a COM team to discuss fit theologically, spiritually, administratively, etc.

Meet with the full team (PNC and candidate to concur or if a concern, make it known to the PNC). COM doesn't get a vote but does have voice for the call.