

Hudson River Presbytery
Policy on Interim Ministers being called to their church as an installed Minister

DRAFT

The PC (USA) Book of Order states: “A minister of the Word and Sacrament employed in a temporary pastoral relationship [such as in Interim Pastor] is ordinarily not eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor.” (G-2.0504b) It also, however, grants presbyteries the ability to grant exceptions to this rule; “presbyteries that permit this eligibility shall establish such relationships only by a three-fourths vote of the members of presbytery present and voting.” (G-2.0504c)

This policy establishes the Hudson River Presbytery’s view of such exceptions and lays out the procedure to be followed if an exception is desired.

POLICY

The process of calling a pastor to a church must be rooted in a process of spiritual discernment – the church must engage in a Spirit-led listening for God’s direction. This process should be open to all possibilities and should not start with a pre-conceived ending. Additional interim pastors are hired by the session in times of transition to do important developmental work with the church. These tasks of transition should not be curtailed or short-changed because either party is anticipating a longer-term relationship. Thus **all parties should go through the transition and enter the process of calling a new pastor with the assumption that the interim pastor is ineligible for that position.**

We recognize that there may be rare and extraordinary circumstances in which a Spirit-led process will discern that the interim pastor and the church are called by God to go forward together. In those cases, we ask both parties to review the circumstances and the process with COM before submitting their request for an exemption to the presbytery for a vote. COM’s recommendation as to whether or not such an exemption best serves the missions of the church and the presbytery will be presented to the presbytery along with the church’s request.

PROCEDURE

1. If a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) decides they want to consider their interim pastor as a candidate, they should inform their Transition Rep, who will inform COM and any other appropriate presbytery officers.
2. The PNC should prepare a report of the circumstances and the process resulting in their request for an exemption. The report should present evidence of a fair, open, and thorough search process, which would include
 - a. The duration of the search (the committee should have been reviewing resumes/PIFs for at least six months after the posting of the church’s MIF)
 - b. The numbers of PIFs received, candidates interviewed, second interviews conducted, and the procedures followed for any serious candidates
 - c. A clear explanation of any candidate PIFs that did not lead to an interview
 - d. A clear explanation of any candidate interviews that did not lead to a second interview
 - e. A clear explanation of why any candidates granted second interviews were not pursued further
 - f. A clear explanation of why remaining serious candidates were not considered a good match for the church.
 - g. The circumstances of the church which led to the difficulty in finding a suitable candidate
 - h. Why they think the interim pastor would be a good candidate, despite those circumstances.
 - i. The status and evidence of completion of the developmental tasks of the interim ministry

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- j. Any evidence of concerns within the congregation that might lead to a split vote on calling the interim pastor. (If the vote is not nearly unanimous, the pastor will find it very difficult to lead the church.)
3. The PNC should **NOT** approach the interim pastor to inquire about their interest in the position (and neither should anyone else in the church).
4. The Transition Rep and COM will put together a COM subcommittee who will meet with the PNC to review and discuss the circumstances and process
5. After that meeting, if the PNC wants to continue, the General Presbyter and/or the subcommittee will meet with the interim pastor to discuss the PNC's interest and the pastor's willingness to consider a call to the church. No one from the church should discuss this with the pastor; the pastor must not feel pressured to be open to their call. The pastor should, also, not have indicated any interest in the position to anyone in the church.
6. The COM subcommittee should also discuss with the interim pastor (at that initial meeting or a subsequent one)
 - a. The status of the development tasks of the interim ministry
 - b. Any concerns about the possibility of a split vote within the congregation
 - c. The status and process of the pastor's search for a new position
7. The Transition Rep will inform the PNC of the pastor's openness to being considered for the position.
8. If both the interim pastor and the PNC are interested in pursuing the call, the COM subcommittee will report their discussion to COM, and COM will vote on whether to recommend the exemption to the presbytery or not. The General Presbyter and/or the Transition Rep will inform the interim pastor and the PNC of COM's decision.
9. If the church wants to continue their request for an exemption, the church's request and COM's recommendation will be presented to the presbytery and voted on at the next scheduled meeting. Both the PNC and the interim pastor should be present and ready to answer questions from the presbytery. Approval requires a three-quarters vote of those present and voting.
10. If the presbytery approves the exemption, the PNC is free to consider the interim pastor as a candidate for the position and to move forward with their process
11. If the presbytery does not approve the exemption, the PNC will continue their process understanding that the interim pastor is not and will not be eligible for the position.