

Pastoral Relationships in the Presbytery of North Central California

PURPOSE: Under the present *Book of Order*, presbyteries have the opportunity to define and describe the relationships between Ministers of Word and Sacrament and congregations. The Vitality in Ministry (VIM) of the Presbytery of North Central California (NCCP) recognizes both Installed and Temporary Pastoral Relationships, the nature of which are described as follows, along with the specifics as to how each relationship is constituted. Note: Pastoral leadership can also be provided by a Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE). That role has separate policies and procedures.

The mission strategy of the Presbytery of North Central California and the Vitality in Ministry Commission is to witness to God's transforming grace in Jesus Christ (*Book of Order* F-1.01) while living into the values of bold witness, radical love, equity and inclusion, spiritual growth, community, outreach, justice and hospitality. The Vitality in Ministry Commission does so open to the leading of the Holy Spirit which may include the "new thing God is doing" while being honest about our brokenness (F-1.0404). Therefore, discernment is on a case by case basis (F-1.0401).

The Presbytery's mission strategy for a particular ministry and mission of Jesus Christ in a particular region through a congregation is also guided by the principles and rules in the Book of Order, a mission study and any other relevant materials.

INSTALLED PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Pastor
- Co-Pastor
- Associate Pastor
- Designated Pastor

All installed pastoral relationships require three partners: the Minister of Word and Sacrament being called, the congregation extending the call, and the presbytery approving the call.

Generally, an installed pastoral relationship is for an indefinite term and is filled through a full and open search process with a properly constituted Pastor Nominating Committee elected by the congregation. After Vitality in Ministry approves the prospective candidate pastor, the Commission authorizes the Session of the church to call a congregational meeting for the purpose of voting on the call of the pastor. The position can be yoked (shared) with another church's installed position. Installed positions have terms of call which must include full participation in the Board of Pensions along with other stipulations. (G-2.0804)

While an installed pastoral relationship is customarily for an indefinite term, there are occasions where it is advisable for a pastoral relationship to be designated for a term, the length of which is determined by action of Vitality in Ministry in consultation with the congregation and specified in the call. All conditions for a full call are required in such instances—i.e. a full and open search by a duly elected designated pastor nominating committee (DPNC), examination by and concurrence of Vitality in Ministry, and an affirmative congregational vote. The unique features of such a call are the designated time period which all parties agree to and Vitality in Ministry appoints a team to screen possible candidates down to three or four persons for the Nominating Committee to consider. Before the time limitation has been met, the Session of the church may petition Vitality in Ministry for additional designated time. Or, should the congregation so desire and vote affirmatively, a pastor in a designated position may be called, with Vitality in Ministry approval, to an indefinite term as installed pastor.

Ordinarily, a Minister of Word and Sacrament in a position as Associate Pastor is not eligible to become the pastor in the church when serving as Associate Pastor. (G-2.0504a) Any action to move an Associate Pastor to become the installed pastor must be achieved as outlined in the *Book of Order* (G 2.0504c) and the Presbytery of North Central California's Policy and Procedures: on Making Exceptions in Calling a Pastor.

NON-INSTALLED PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS

The *Book of Order* permits the presbytery to establish non-installed (technically

“temporary”) pastoral relationships when a congregation is without called and installed pastoral leadership. Session or a team appointed by Session handles the search process (except Parish Associates). Any such pastoral relationship shall be set forth in a Covenant of Agreement between the pastor and the Session of the church where the pastor will be serving. The Covenant includes the expectations of the church and the pastor, the length of the term, compensation and benefits. Covenants can be renewed when approved by the pastor, Session and Vitality in Ministry. Vitality in Ministry shall vote to approve or not approve any temporary pastoral relationship except Parish Associate. When the congregation is going to be without pastoral leadership, the Session or Steering Committee meets with representatives from Vitality in Ministry to learn the options. Session, in consultation with Vitality in Ministry, takes the initiative to secure temporary pastoral leadership. In a temporary pastoral relationship, no formal call is issued and no formal installation takes place. (G-2.0504b) There can be a commissioning service for Covenant Pastors or a portion of the first worship service can have a prayer and litany for shorter term relationships.

The *Book of Order* leaves it to presbyteries to determine titles and terms of service for temporary pastoral relationships. (G-2.0504b) The Presbytery of North Central California recognizes that there are varying circumstances when a church is in need of temporary pastoral leadership and that not all temporary pastoral relationships are alike. To respond to these various needs, the Presbytery has established the following descriptions of temporary pastoral relationships. These may be applied to both Pastor and Associate Pastor relationships.

Non-Installed Pastor: Interim/Transitional

An Interim/Transitional Pastor is the preferable option when a church would benefit from specialized leadership to navigate the transition between fully installed pastors.

Interim/Transitional Pastors bring skills to work with the dynamics of congregations in transition, including feelings of grief, loss, and, sometimes, relief or anger.

Interim/Transitional pastors help Sessions provide for continuity of essential ministries, and may assist the session in assessing new directions due to changes in ministry

context or congregational realities. The interim/transitional pastor is instrumental in helping the congregation prepare to welcome the leadership of a new installed pastor. Ordinarily, an interim/transitional pastor shall have successfully completed formal training in transitional-transformational ministry or do so soon after beginning their service. Usually, the candidate will transfer their membership to the Presbytery of North Central California. Terms often begin with one year Covenant Agreements with subsequent agreement tenure dependent on where the church is in the process.

Non-Installed Pastor: Covenant Pastor

Some congregations in need of pastoral leadership are unable to call a full-time installed pastor to an indefinite term, but wish to continue as a congregation. In such cases, a Covenant Pastor may be placed in a congregation to serve for a specified amount of time that can be renewed an unlimited number of times. Each term can be for one year to a maximum of three years. This position can be yoked with another Covenant position or an installed position.

Non-Installed Pastor: Bridge Pastor

In other cases, there can be a need for a pastor to serve briefly between two pastors. It is also needed after a sudden departure of a former pastor. The chosen Interim/Transitional Pastor may not be available right away or may leave a couple of months before a called pastor begins. If the former pastor's leaving was traumatic in some way, a pastor with specific skills may be needed before discerning the next steps. These are most typically short-term relationships lasting months. The Covenant Agreement can be renewed.

Non-Installed Pastor: Parish Associate

An installed pastor and Session may establish a relationship with a Minister of Word and Sacrament serving in a validated ministry, or who is a member-at-large or a retired pastor (from a different congregation) to serve a specified number of hours and/or to do a specified task, set of tasks. This position can include compensation or can be unpaid service. Such relationships are not seen as indefinite relationships. They fill a need for

specific pastoral leadership, temporarily. The agreement can be renewed annually and is between the installed pastor, Session and the Parish Associate. A copy of the agreement is shared with Vitality in Ministry but not approved by Vitality in Ministry.

Presbytery of North Central California
Policy and Procedures: Making Exceptions in Calling a Pastor

Unless the presbytery determines that its mission strategy permits it, a Minister of Word and Sacrament currently called as an Associate Pastor is not eligible to serve as the next installed pastor or co-pastor. Likewise, a Minister of Word and Sacrament employed in a temporary pastoral relationship is not eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor or Associate Pastor of the congregation, unless the presbytery determines its mission strategy permits it. *Such relationships shall be established by a three-fourths vote of the members of the presbytery present and voting, according to the following process:*

1. Representatives of the church (Pastor Nominating Committee, Associate Pastor Nominating Committee, Designated Pastor Nominating Committee, or Session) request, in writing, that Vitality in Ministry consider asking the presbytery to vote on an exception, with rationale based upon the mission strategy of the presbytery. A VIM team works with the church to shape the recommendation and rationale, in light of the *Book of Order* criteria. As part of this work, the VIM team meets with the candidate and search committee/transition team; a statement of faith and spiritual autobiography are provided. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss their mutual sense of call. When the report, rationale, and fit interview have been completed, the team informs the chair of VIM that the church wishes time on the VIM's agenda.
2. Representatives of the PNC, DPNC, APNC, or Session (as applicable) meet with Vitality in Ministry to present their request and rationale. After discussion and discernment, Vitality in Ministry acts on a recommendation (positive, negative, divided) with regard to the request for exception.
3. Vitality in Ministry refers the request for exception via the Stated Clerk to the presbytery at a regularly scheduled meeting. At its meeting, in order that the presbytery may consider the request for exception:

- The church's written report, and VIM's recommendation, with rationale, are posted with meeting materials.
 - The Moderator reads aloud the Book of Order guidance concerning exceptions G-2.0504c, and calls upon representatives of the PNC, DPNC, APNC, or Session to state their request in the form a motion.
 - Representatives of the entity making the request for exception and the Vitality in Ministry are given opportunity to speak to the motion, summarizing their rationale.
 - Presbyters are given opportunity to ask questions and debate the motion.
 - In order for the exception to be granted, the Presbytery must vote to approve the exception and establish the pastoral relationship by an affirmative vote of three fourths of the members of the presbytery present and voting. (G-2.0504c)
4. If the vote of the presbytery is in the affirmative, the way is clear for the call process to proceed, in accordance with the *Book of Order* and the policies of the Vitality in Ministry, including the meeting of the congregation. If the motion fails, the search team will need to discern a new candidate and the currently serving pastor will need to discern their next steps with the support of Vitality in Ministry.

Pastor Emeritus or Pastor Emerita

When a Minister of Word and Sacrament retires, and the congregation is moved by affection and gratitude to continue an association in an honorary relationship, it may, at a regularly called congregational meeting, elect the former pastor as Pastor Emeritus or Emerita, with or without honorarium, but with no pastoral authority or duty. This action shall be taken only after approval by the Vitality in Ministry concerning the wisdom of this relationship. This action may be considered at least one year after the new pastor begins their service and a minimum of two years after the former pastor left.

APPENDIX A

Chart of Pastoral Relationships and Selection Process in the Presbytery of North Central California

PASTOR/ASSOCIATE/ CO-PASTOR	DESIGNATED	INTERIM/ TRANSITIONAL/BRIDGE	COVENANT	PARISH ASSOCIATE
<i>Called/Installed</i>	<i>Called/Installed</i>	<i>Provides pastoral leadership during transition in pastoral leadership</i>	<i>Church is not seeking a full-time installed pastor, seeks continued ministry</i>	<i>Handles specific, limited tasks</i>
PNC elected by congregation	DPNC elected by congregation	Chosen by Session with Presbytery approval through VIM	Chosen by Session with Presbytery approval through VIM	Installed or Covenant Pastor arranges, Session approval
Open search process	Open search process	May be local or nation-wide	Typically regional	No search, available local pastor (at-large, specialized, retired)
Called by congregation	Called by congregation for limited term; renewable	Discerned by Session; congregation not involved	Discerned by Session; congregation not involved	Initiated by church Pastor
Terms of Call	Terms of Call	Covenant of Agreement outlining expected duties and financial terms of call	Covenant of Agreement outlining expected duties and financial terms of call	Brief, written agreement approved by Session, paid or unpaid
Approved by VIM	Approved by VIM	Approved by VIM	Approved by VIM	VIM informed
Indefinite term	After completion of specified term, can renew for a term or move to indefinite term	Ordinarily not eligible to be called as next installed pastor, associate pastor or designated pastor	Ordinarily not eligible to be called as next installed pastor, associate pastor or designated pastor	Annual review recommended

Original chart inspiration came from Genesee Valley Presbytery