

T	Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)	P
I	Call Referral Services	N
P	100 Witherspoon St., Mezzanine	I
S	Louisville, KY 40202-1396	

For: Pastor Nominating Committees

RE: Receiving and Evaluating Personal Information Forms

As the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) completes the Church Information Form (CIF) and submits it to Call Referral Services (CRS), it enters a new and challenging phase of its work.

This TIPS, which includes SAMPLE PIFs, is de-signed to help PNCs prepare for receiving and evaluating Personal Information Forms (PIFs) for their position. We hope this packet of training materials will provide productive work for your committee during the period of time when CRS is working to select individuals who appear to meet your congregation's needs.

What Will The PNC Need To Do To Prepare Itself for Receiving PIFs?

The PNC will want to prepare for the work ahead by:

- Reviewing the information contained in **On Calling A Pastor** (included in the PNC packet), particularly the sections on "Receiving Personal Information Forms" and "Organizing Your Work And Evaluating PIFs." This is also a good time to review the section on "Equal Employment Opportunity in Ministry."
- Selecting the information upon which

your committee will do its initial screening. Draw up a list of those qualifications your PNC feels are mandatory, and another list of qualifications which it considers desirable. Remember that at this point you are trying to determine what specific qualifications, experience, and attributes your committee is looking for in a minister.

- Studying the packet of sample PIFs. Once actual PIFs begin to arrive, destroy all sample PIFs.
- Setting up a process for handling PIFs as they arrive. Your PNC may want to develop a process sheet so that members of the PNC may evaluate each PIP in the same manner and compare their impressions about particular PIFs later.
- Preparing a series of letters to be used when corresponding with applicants. One of your primary tasks as a PNC is communication with all those who show an interest in your position, by self-referring their PIFs to your committee, and with those in whom your committee has an interest. It is sometimes easy to forget that each PIP represents a person who has committed his or her life to work in the church. It could be a real "ministry" for one person of your committee to make certain that communication is as thoughtful, prompt, and informative as possible.

Using The Sample PIFs To Begin The Evaluation Process

Your committee will save time by using the sample PIPs to familiarize themselves with the format and type of information provided in a PIP. Note how the information is presented in each of the sample PIFs. At this time it might also be helpful to do a mock evaluation of the sample PIFs.

Below is an outline of the information your committee can expect a PIP to contain along with some suggested questions that are appropriate for the PNC to ask as it looks at each PIP.

- A. Applicant's Name and Address - The "preferred" address/telephone number should always be used unless you have made repeated attempts to contact the person and have been unsuccessful or if the person has specifically requested that the "alternate" address/telephone number be used.
- B. Work History - Includes starting and ending dates, name of church/institution, city, state, position held, church type, community type, and, if applicable, membership of each church. If your committee hoped for certain types of experience, does this person meet your expectations? For example, were the years of experience, kinds of positions held, types of congregations served, sizes of churches served, lengths of stay satisfactory? How does the person's work history relate to the needs of your congregation as expressed in the CIF? Keep in mind that some irregularities in work history may be indicative of a person's willingness to

take risks in ministry.

- C. Other Service to Church - Includes dates, names of organizations, and responsibilities. Is such service in keeping with your needs? Is there enough? Too much? Do any of these responsibilities make up for anything your PNC thought was lacking in the Work History?
- D. Formal Education – Includes names of colleges/universities and graduate schools attended, the specialty (major), and degree earned. Does your PNC feel the education is adequate? Is it relevant to the position? Does this record show a person who changed schools often? If so, is there an indication why such changes took place? What kind of schools did this person attend? Current study indicates that the primary factor in selection of theological institutions is location, not theology or reputation. It is not accurate therefore, to conclude that a student who attended a particular seminary holds any particular theological stance.
- E. Ecclesiastical Status –Includes denominational affiliation (Presbyterian or other denominational affiliation), ordination date, or for those not yet ordained, date of candidacy. If you have any questions about ecclesiastical status, contact your Committee on Ministry representative.
- F. References - Includes the names of individuals who know the applicant personally and who will be able to comment on the person's preaching, current skills, interests, and

experiences in almost all aspects of their professional life. Before you contact references, you will want to read **TIPS PN-2, “Privacy Guidelines For Pastor Nominating Committees.”** Those who telephone the references should be prepared to describe the situation and the position, and ask such questions as, “Do you believe this person could be successful in our type of church/community?” “Do you have any reservations about this person’s ministry in our type of setting?” This will also be a good opportunity to ask questions that might have been raised by information in the PIP, or by omissions in that information. Remember, however, that though you will want to discover the references’ opinion and experience concerning the applicant, these contacts should not be a substitute for conversations with the applicant; do not attempt to find out from references what the applicant thinks or would do in a specific setting.

- G. The Narrative Section - Includes answers to several broad questions about the persons work, their theology, goals, and ideas about programs and challenges for the church. This is the **“free-style”** section of the PIP, and should reflect the writing style, ministry style, and personality of the individual. Remember, the PIP is not an exhaustive account of the minister’s life. Some questions should arise as you read the narrative, and you will

want to note them.

- What significant facts, ideas, and experience are revealed here? Does vocabulary, style of writing, and sentence structure, reveal anything notable?
 - Does the picture you get from this statement reflect the kind of person who is likely to meet your present needs and future goals?
 - Does the person’s personality show through, either explicitly or implicitly?
 - Note what the writer considers as his/her important assets. Do these have special value for your position?
 - If particular skills are listed here, do they relate to the activities your PNC has selected? Would they be helpful for your congregation’s particular situation?
 - Does the overall appearance of the narrative section have any particular significance? Does neatness count? If so, how much? Note, too, that the PIP instructions allow for a good bit of flexibility. Don’t hastily reject a PIP because of its appearance.
- H. Summary of Preferences and Experience Included here are the types of opportunities which the applicant will consider and a summary of the types of experience he/she has had. If you receive the PIP through the CRS matching process, you can expect the individual to have indicated an interest in your type of church and community. If the PIP is received through direct self-referral or through the third-person referral process, you may not find your church type selected. If you receive a PIP through direct self-referral process, it is an indication that the applicant is

- interested in your particular position. You might want to find out, in an early conversation, what in your church is of special interest to him or her.
- I. Pastoral Activities - Although most ministers consider all of the pastoral activities listed to be important and fully a part of his or her ministry, this emphasis analysis provides a means of identifying the pastoral activities which the individual would find most satisfying in a new congregation. In reviewing this section ask yourselves, **“Are these the same pastoral activities our particular congregation would place a high emphasis on?”** Rarely will a minister have selected the same eight activities the PNC has selected; probably four or five matches should be enough to warrant serious consideration of this person.

Items For PNC Review And Consideration

As you read through the sample PIFs, discuss with each other HOW you are evaluating the information. Are you weighing these people against an “ideal” minister? If so, do your colleagues share that same image? Did new criteria surface, such as writing style, humor, ease of theological expression? Were such **“subjective”** criteria part of your original list? How are these valued in comparison to the “objective” criteria of educational background or church experience?

Did you find yourself looking for information about age, marital status, number of children, gender, or ethnic heritage? if so, discuss with your committee why these are important to you. We encourage you to investigate where your feelings come from.

Are you making assumptions based on stereotypes of people? Discuss and determine how you and your congregation can begin to break some of these stereotypes. Think about whether those characteristics really have to do with a person’s ability to do the ministry you need. Depending on your discussions, you may wish to do further work on the issue of your commitment to Equal Employment Opportunity in Ministry. For assistance, contact your presbytery or COM representative.

Remember that the PIF is not an exhaustive account of the minister’s life. If the writer meets your overall qualifications and there are not specific reasons for not considering him or her. Further, keep that PIP among those you are actively considering. Make notes of questions left unanswered. This will be helpful to your committee when speaking with the minister or his/her references. Do not summarily discard the PIF just because all your questions were not answered.

Ask yourself if you have made decisions about the clergyperson’s career or life. Often, committees find they dismiss excellent ministers because they think the minister would not want to serve in their church. Sometimes ministers discover that they are unhappy with their present situation; their lives have changed and they are ready to try a different challenge or lifestyle. If you receive a person’s PIP, assume that he or she will be interested in your church until he or she tells your PNC otherwise. Being open to a minister who has moved through several types of ministry and ministry settings may reward your church with a minister who has a great depth of experience, freshness, and creativity.

Throughout your study of the PIP keep in mind that the question you are asking is, **“Is**

my interest about this person growing or am I just trying to convince myself that this could work?" For instance, if the person lives too far away, or hasn't sufficient experience, or selects Pastoral Activities which don't match the congregation's needs then the committee may want to evaluate the need to spend any more time with that individual's PIP. However, if some members of the PNC want to know more about the individual, then by all means do more research upon which to make a better decision.

Your PNC may receive PIFs for clergy couples who are interested in sharing the responsibility for ministry. Couples whose PIFs are sent with a cover sheet are interested in sharing the responsibilities of a single position. Shared Ministry is becoming more common in all denominations and has been successful in most instances. Many couples serve together precisely because their skills complement each other, for example, one is skilled in preaching, the other in Christian Education; one is pastoral in style and the other is gifted in administration. If your presbytery does not have experience in joint calls, the Board of Pensions will work with couples and churches to make this arrangement workable. The Office of Person Services (502) 569-5729 will also help you with this or other styles of ministry performed by clergy couples.

What Your PNC Should Receive With Its First Computer Match

CRS will send your first computer match within ten working days of receipt of your CIF. (Please take into consideration the additional time needed for postal service.) Along with your first computer match you should receive:

- A work order indicating the ID number name, city, and state of each individual suggested; the work order will also indicate who will receive copies of the PIFs. (This will vary from presbytery to presbytery depending on the processes followed within that particular presbytery.)
- A letter describing which selection criteria were used.
- A PNC Progress Report Form which you will use to communicate important information to PBS.

If any of the above items are missing, or if your first computer match does not arrive within the specified time, please contact your church services representative, Marva Miles (502) 569-5743 or Wilma Scott (502) 569-5738.

This TIPS bulletin is one of several which Call Referral Services has developed to interpret our work to those who use our services. If you would like others, please let us know. Those specifically written for Pastor Nominating Committees include:

- PN -2 Privacy Guidelines For Pastor Nominating Committees