

The Pastoral Search Committee

Oak Mountain Presbyterian Church

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McGowan Global Institute

1. What is the Pastoral Search Committee (PSC)

The Pastoral Search Committee (PSC) is a committee of the congregation, voted upon to select a Senior Pastor. In Presbyterian Church of America (PCA) polity, the congregation receives applicants from the congregation to serve on the committee. Usually, an odd number of congregants are chosen to serve, usually nine or eleven, although the congregation can determine how many members serve on the committee.

Once selected, the committee has the duty to organize itself in prayer and function to follow in-depth processes to offer to the congregation God's choice for Senior Pastor. With the PSC's final choice, the congregation will vote to/not to affirm the PSC's choice.

2. Why do we need a PSC?

A good Pastoral Search Committee (PSC) is valuable following best practices to offer God's best candidate for Senior Pastor. They will be called to dig deep into profiles of select candidates, from which they can discern preaching qualities, leadership qualities, theological correctness, wisdom and pastoral qualities, and other giftedness necessarily for a quality Senior Pastor. The search committee does the regular and necessary investigative and profile functions that are essential to a wise and deep evaluation process.

3. What is the relationship of the PSC to the congregation?

The PCA Book of Church Order gives the congregation of a local PCA church limited duties, yet specifically calls for the PSC to be a committee of the congregation. Thus, the PSC reports to and is accountable to the congregation and must carefully follow communications, reporting, and best practices for a Senior Pastor search, as approved by the local congregation.

4. What is the relationship of the PSC to the Session?

The PSC must honor the role and authority of the Session, as given by our Lord through the scriptures. Even so, the PSC does not report to the Session, nor is the Session given by the Book of Church Order ruling authority over the PSC. However, PSC's always keep the Session informed of their progress and functions, even though the Session has no authority over those functions.

5. What role does the Session vs the PSC play in this process?

Many times one or two Session members are on the PSC, and they can communicate to the Session appropriate functions of the PSC. The Chair and Co-Chair of the PSC can also communicate with the Session. Pointedly, this communication is a courtesy to the Session, the God-appointed leaders of the

church. However, as previously noted, the PSC does not report to the Session. The PSC usually, with discretion, keep the Session informed of its activities, in a liaison way, maintaining open, but non-binding, communications between the PSC and the Session.

6. What is expected of a PSC member and how long should he/she be expected to serve?

A comprehensive search many times takes a year or even longer, with most PSC's meeting weekly to establish processes, and accomplish the profiling and investigative work required by any committee. The member is expected, with the congregation, to pray and seek God for the good of the local church, and to follow best practices to identify and vet and choose God's man. PSC members should understand that their role in participating in a Senior Pastor search is critically important to the life, work and future of the church.

7. What is the role of McGowan Global Institute (MGI) and how does the PSC and MGI work together?

MGI is an established assessment and placement ministry which functions with the PSC as a ministry partner and a company with a long track record of using wise best practices to aid the PSC. MGI has members who are teaching elders, ruling elders, and administrators with an expansive background in those practices and procedures and processes that work best for PSC activities. As a ministry partner, MGI works to bring qualified candidates to the PSC for consideration, and to walk the search committee through practices that are "tried and true" and have led to great results. Thus, MGI will have a lead consultant working weekly with the PSC to establish patterns of prayer, establishment of various committees, establishment of vetting and profiling processes, processes on listening wisely to sermons and discerning proper information from references and interviews.

8. How will the PSC selections and congregational meetings be conducted?

The role of the PSC, upon selecting a final candidate for Senior Pastor, is responsible for producing a comprehensive profile for the church, to include ways to hear sermons, biographical information, and background and experiences that offer reasons for the selection.

This normally occurs in a specially called congregational meeting to communicate the PSC findings and present information on the candidate. Following the congregational meeting to present the candidate, most PSC's have a follow up meeting in several weeks to vote on the candidate. A candidate should receive a high majority of the vote—though only a majority is required.

9. How many will be on the PSC and how will a committee chair be selected?

MGI recommends an odd number of members on the PSC, with nine being the usual number. The odd number keeps the committee from having tie votes, and allows for a super majority to function more easily. The committee chair is selected by the PSC, normally one with experience or time to run committee functions.

10. How often does the PSC meet with the Session and the congregation?

The PSC meets with the congregation to inform them of progress, or to give specific information about the search. These meetings should occur only when clear communications or information is required. The Session is normally apprised of committee functions by the Chair or Co-Chair, but if the PSC so decides, the full committee can meet with the Session, as needed.

11. What is the BCO and how does it prescribe information to this process?

The Book of Church Order offers the polity and procedural information, by which a candidate is voted on and approved by the local church. The local church then sends all information to the Presbytery, which approves the proposed call package, and examines and approves the candidate and installs him.

In sum, while Biblical precepts give the Session major leadership functions within a local church, the PCA, through the Book of Church Order, gives the authority of the Senior Pastor session to the Congregation, with the pulpit Search Committee functioning as the committee of the congregation. It is the role of the congregation to ultimately select and vote on the new Senior pastor. It is then up to Presbytery to review and approve the selection by the local congregation/church