

Session Personnel Committees

Basic guidelines and responsibilities

Personnel Committee Experiences

- What was a good experience for you of being reviewed by a personnel committee?
- What was a painful experience?
- What was the difference?

Some “Soft” Guidelines

- Members of a Personnel Committee need to be able to understand their own biases and preferences when it comes to pastoral leadership and other work within the church
- It is not the pastor’s job to make everyone comfortable or help a congregation avoid conflict, and it is not the Personnel Committee’s job to bring the pastor every complaint or concern
 - Discomfort is inevitable when there is change and engaging in mission and ministry together is meant to help us grow in our faith, which is also uncomfortable
- Serving as a pastor is distinctly vulnerable work, most of which is unseen and hard to pin down; having an awareness of the spiritual, emotional, and physical drain on the pastor is an important way for the Personnel Committee to provide support and encouragement

Session Responsibilities: G-3.0201

- The session shall have responsibility for governing the congregation and guiding its witness to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that the congregation is and becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness.
- In light of this charge, the session has responsibility and power to:
 - a. provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard...
 - b. provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received...
 - c. nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ...
 - employing the administrative staff of the congregation

Possible Personnel Committee Responsibilities

- Partner with the pastor/moderator and session to determine staffing needs and appropriate ways to fill those needs with session approval
- Review position descriptions prior to filling a position, and after filling a position, emphasizing strengths and strategizing to address weaknesses
- Support the pastor by encouraging regular Sabbath time, vacation and continuing education, and praying for the pastor
- Provide for necessary boundary awareness training and any background checks required by the position
- Propose salary increases based on merit; cost of living adjustments should be granted whenever possible

Resources

- Guidelines for Session Personnel Committees from Churchwide Personnel Services of the PC(USA)
 - This resource has not been updated and offers many opinions about the work of a personnel committee, but also has good templates and samples that are worth taking a look at
- Sample Personnel Committee description
- If you Google “pcusa personnel committee guidelines,” you will find many different resources, including examples of guidelines that are currently being used