

THE DESIGNATED TERM PASTOR
A PLAN FOR NOMINATING A PASTOR

1. The Designation Plan is a plan wherein carefully selected volunteer pastors and churches may be matched by the Committee on Ministry (COM), thereby greatly reducing the time required to call a pastor. A pastor nominated through the Designation Plan is elected by the congregation for a term of two to four years, and the terms of the call are approved by presbytery, the same as a pastor nominated by our usual system.

A Theological Concept

2. The Plan may be interpreted as a new expression of missionary spirit, a willingness to go wherever the Spirit sends or leads us. In the New Testament record there are occasions when the disciple seems to interpret the Holy Spirit's call individually by himself/herself, but at other times, the call is clearly by the church. In Acts 11:22 we read that it was the church that sent Barnabas to Antioch, and in Acts 13:2 and 3, the church sends both Barnabas and Saul to Salamis. But most of Paul's missionary trips seem to have been determined by Paul's own individual understanding of where the Spirit was calling him to go. There are many ways in which calls to mission are realized and implemented throughout both the Old and New Testaments.

3. For some today, the call to mission and ministry will come clearly through the councils of the church saying, "This is where your special gifts are most needed today. Go there in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." Every minister needs to be ready to consider the possibility that this is the way the call may come today, and every presbytery or COM needs to be willing to come more directly God's agent in initiating and implementing a specific call to mission for a particular person and congregation.

Who May Be Called

4. Ministers who are interested in seeking a new call and who are willing to experiment may volunteer to participate in the Plan. Congregations willing to experiment with new ways to call a pastor may also volunteer to use this Plan.

5. Ministers who might be especially interested in the Plan would include:

- a. those who desire to relocate within a certain time limit, e.g., a chaplain whose term of service is ended, an overseas missionary or fraternal worker whose assignment has ended, a minister who has completed a particular mission strategy of presbytery and now must find another call, a minister who has merged two or more churches and should relocate for the sake of the merger...and the like.
- b. individuals with a specific kind of open-ended, unrestricted commitment to mission and service in the local church.
- c. those who may have specific geographical preferences or needs.
- d. those interested in tent-making or dual-role ministers.

- e. clergy couples.
- f. dual-career couples

6. Congregations which might find the Plan of particular value would include:

- a. Congregations with unusual opportunities or special requirements which may be hard to match through the usual channels for seeking a pastor.
- b. Those needing to call a pastor within a certain time limit.
- c. Congregations with special problems, especially those with problems of a temporary nature.

7. Presbytery might benefit from the Plan as it provides flexibility by which presbyteries may deal on an individual basis with particular situations.

8. Goals

Some goals of the Plan are:

- 1. To offer another "track" or method of relocation in the church.
- 2. To match pastors and congregations appropriately and efficiently.
- 3. To make creative use of the skills and potential of pastors.
- 4. To offer pastors a wider range of job opportunities.
- 5. To assist in promoting inclusiveness.

9. The Plan

After prior consultation and approval of the COM, any congregation or closed field or larger parish may voluntarily enroll in the Designation Plan for a specific period of time. Ministers or candidates may also volunteer to enroll, but only after consultation and approval of the COM. Calls of pastors to churches or other positions would then be approved by the presbytery on recommendation of the COM from among those churches and persons accepted in the Plan. Both the Pastor Nominating Committee and the minister should interview one another, before the minister is nominated to the congregation.

10. The terms of the call, including the length of the time of the contract (two, three or four years), would be agreed on at the beginning of negotiations with the COM.

11. Enrollment

Both ministers and churches seeking to enroll in the Plan should study its implications carefully and then make written application to the COM. It may be wise in some situations for the COM to adopt a policy that both churches and ministers agree upon entering the Plan to accept one of the first three designations proposed by the COM, or be dropped from the Plan.

12. A minister enrolling in the Plan should complete a Personal Information Form (PIF) through the regular placement system at the same time she is seeking relocation through the Designation Plan.

13. Ministers should then meet with the COM or its sub-committee for a personal interview. Some criteria for the fitness of an individual for the Plan are suggested in Item 17 below.

14. If a session wants to participate in the Plan, then the congregation should also be introduced to the Plan and their assent secured in a special congregational meeting. At this same meeting (or at one which should follow shortly thereafter, the congregation should elect a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) following the provisions in the Book of Order (G-14.0502). (In some cases the COM may want to initiate conversations with a particular session to suggest they consider using the Plan.)

15. The session should make application to participate in the Plan. The session or the committee to negotiate for the new pastor should prepare a new Church Information Form (CIF) and/or other mission study as directed by the COM.

16. Normally, pastoral designations terminate at the end of the agreed upon term. However, if a pastor and session participating in the Plan desire to continue the pastoral relationship beyond the agreed upon term, and if the congregation joins in making such a request, the COM may recommend to presbytery that the pastoral relationship be continued, either for another agreed upon term or as a call for an indefinite term.

17. Criteria for Clergy Participants

Ministers admitted to the Plan should be persons who meet as many of the following criteria as possible:

- a. Able to serve effectively when properly matched to a position.
- b. Healthy persons, spiritually, physically and mentally.
- c. Persons who enjoy a difficult challenge.
- d. Persons who have a pioneering spirit.
- e. Persons willing to accept this Plan and the guidance of the COM.
- f. Persons who are serious about moving.

18. Criteria for Churches and Other Institutions

Churches admitted to the Plan should meet as many of the following criteria as possible:

- a. Have a nucleus of persons who understand the mission of their own congregation and are committed to that mission.
- b. Be "healthy," spiritually and financially (able to support a pastor).

- c. Be willing to accept the Plan and the guidance of the COM.
- d. Be serious about the Plan and its purpose.
- e. Follow the program of the presbytery for implementing inclusiveness.

WHAT STEPS ARE TO BE TAKEN?

The COM discusses this alternative with the Session and secures their agreement to proceed with it.

A Congregational Meeting is called to elect a Pastor Nominating Committee and approve the process to be used in calling a pastor. (See G.-14.0501)

The plan is outlined for the congregation. A small PNC is elected.

Committee on Ministry meets with the PNC to explain its requirements for forms and processes, and outlines the suggested time-line.

PNC completes all requirements.

Committee on Ministry provides the PNC with the names of 3-5 persons whom they have pre-screened and who understand and are interested in the Designation Plan.

PNC decides from among these persons. The PNC, Committee on Ministry and the pastor agree on terms of call, including the contracted time of the call. (SEE G - 11.0502)

PNC asks Session to call a congregational meeting. Congregation elects pastor in the usual manner.

The pastor is installed in the usual manner.

One year prior to the ending date of the call, the Session, the Pastor and the Committee on Ministry conduct a review of the ministry.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE ARRANGEMENT TURNS OUT TO BE SATISFYING TO BOTH THE CONGREGATION AND THE MINISTER?

If, when the review is held one year prior to the end of the contract, the pastor and the session want to continue the pastoral relationship beyond the agreed upon term, the congregation is asked to join in making a request to continue the relationship either for another specified period or for an indefinite term. The Committee on Ministry recommends that the presbytery approve this as a change in the terms of call.

BUT WHAT IF IT ISN'T SATISFACTORY?

Normally, the Designation ends at the agreed upon time. One year prior to the end of the contracted time, the congregation, the minister and the Committee on Ministry meet and agree to discontinue the relationship at the end of the contract period. The minister will then have up to a year to secure a new call.

WHERE CAN WE GET MORE INFORMATION?

From either of the following.

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Questions and Answers For Presbyteries As They Consider Using

THE DESIGNATION PLAN FOR CALLING A PASTOR

WHAT IS THE DESIGNATION PLAN?

The Designation Plan is an alternative way to call a pastor which a Committee on Ministry (COM) of Presbytery may recommend to a congregation or a pastor under special circumstances.

WHY IS SUCH AN OPTION NECESSARY?

There are times when a congregation would be best served by avoiding a long search for a new pastor. There are also times when a person's ministry can be made most effective by a rapid change in call.

HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT FROM A STATED SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP?

Churches often feel that a Stated Supply relationship is temporary and may be terminated on short notice. The Designation Plan provides for a 2, 3 or 4 year period of consistent leadership. Because the Designated Pastor is called and installed, the congregation and the pastor are able to gain a sense of self-assurance in this ministry.

DOES THE PLAN TAKE AWAY THE CONGREGATION'S RIGHT TO SELECT A PASTOR?

Not at all. The congregation still elects a Pastor Nominating Committee, although a smaller committee may be appropriate. The Committee on Ministry may set its own requirements for forms and processes to be used. The difference is the number of ministers whom the committee will consider. The COM might recommend up to 3 pastors who have been pre-screened and interviewed. The PNC chooses from among those persons.

DOES THE PLAN RESTRICT A PASTOR'S FREEDOM TO LOCATE?

Not necessarily. Each Presbytery may set its own policies as to whether a pastor may use the Designation Plan and the usual relocation system concurrently.

UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD THE DESIGNATION PLAN BE CONSIDERED?

When Churches need:

time to test new possibilities for growth or to gain a firmer financial position before entering a permanent pastoral relationship.

stability after a period of conflict.

a few years for planning for new mission or ministry.

self-confidence in their ability to call a pastor rather than continuing a stated supply relationship.

an alternative way to call a pastor when the usual referral system has not been effective.

FOR WHAT REASONS MIGHT A MINISTER CHOOSE TO BE A DESIGNATED PASTOR?

When a minister is seeking:

to move in a rapid time frame.
a call within a limited geographical area.

a period of time to test the viability of a situation.

an opportunity to explore new patterns of ministry such as tent-making or team ministry.

a call which fits the special needs of dual career or clergy couples.

a time of stability before making a long-term commitment.

a few years of ministry before retirement.
relocation when the usual process hasn't been effective.

WHAT IF THE PASTOR NOMINATING COMMITTEE CANNOT DECIDE ON ONE OF THESE PERSONS?

At any time, the Committee on Ministry can recommend, or the Pastor Nominating Committee may request that plan be set aside and the usual calling practice be used.

HOW DOES A PRESBYTERY KNOW WHAT MINISTERS MAY BE OPEN TO DESIGNATION?

In many cases, the Committee on Ministry is aware of ministers in their own or nearby presbyteries who would find an immediate move to be helpful. There are other ministers who may prefer this kind of service as an alternative to the usual calling procedure. At some point, the Church Vocations Unit may be able to provide some networking services and to suggest names, but this is not presently possible.