

PLANNING FOR A NEUTRAL PULPIT

Final candidates for a called position are usually invited to participate in a Neutral Pulpit Weekend. This is the time for face to face interviews, to observe the candidates in simulated work situations, for the PNC to become somewhat acquainted, and for the required examination by the Committee on Ministry of candidates who are not members of the Presbytery of Seattle.

By the time a Neutral Pulpit weekend is being planned, the PNC will have completed the following steps with the final 1 to 3 candidates:

- References listed in the PIF will have been contacted
- The Presbytery Executive will have conducted the executive level reference checks
- If the position being filled is for an Associate Pastor, the senior pastor will have had the opportunity to review the PIFs being considered
- The candidates will have been asked for permission for the PNC to contact any secondary references and those reference checks will have been completed

When the PNC is ready to make appointments for a Neutral Pulpit weekend the following steps are taken:

1. Contact churches in the Presbytery to arrange for a Sunday where each of the finalists may lead worship. It is good to try to arrange for neutral pulpit churches that are similar in size to your own, and not too nearby to protect confidentiality of the process. A sample letter to follow-up and confirm arrangements made by telephone is attached, below.
2. **When finalists are members of another presbytery or candidates under care of another presbytery, an examination with members of the Committee on Ministry must be scheduled.** Contact the Associate Stated Clerk in the Presbytery office (206-762-1991x2) or Barbara@presbytery.org to request that the Committee on Ministry exam be scheduled on either the Friday before or the Monday after the Neutral Pulpit weekend.
3. Forward a copy of the PIF for each finalist, preferably by e-mail, to the Presbytery Office.
4. Plan for the entire PNC to hear each finalist and to participate in the face to face interviews and any other hosted gatherings. If the position being filled is an associate position, the senior pastor, would be included.

After completion of the Neutral Pulpit Weekend/s the PNC makes their selection of their final candidate of the position.

NEUTRAL PULPIT ARRANGEMENTS

TO:

FROM: Pastor Nominating Committee, _____ Presbyterian Church
_____, Chair Telephone _____

Thank you for consenting to open your church pulpit for our Pastor Nominating Committee's candidate. As discussed on the telephone you have agreed to provide your pulpit on:

DATE:

TIME OF SERVICE:

One concern expressed by pastors and sessions who open their pulpit to a PNC candidate is "How do I introduce this person" or "Why do I say he/she is here?"

We, and the Presbytery Committee on Ministry, appreciate these questions and want to share with you our concerns. Our primary interest is in protecting the confidentiality of the candidate as well as the Pastor Nominating Committee throughout the search process.

We are, therefore, requesting that your introduction to the congregation not include any information about the candidating procedure. You may want to say simply "From time to time, it is our privilege to welcome a guest preacher to our congregation. This morning we are pleased to have The Rev. X. Dean Smythe who is from Jackson Park, California."

Of course, the session may be fully briefed, not only on the confidentiality issue but also that the church is cooperating with a request from Presbytery.

If you have any questions at all, please call the chair of the Liaison Transition Committee (COM sub-committee), Connie Fraser, (h) 206-783-8113, or Barbara Ranta, Associate Stated Clerk, 206-762-1991x2.