

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

GUIDELINES FOR PASTORAL PLACEMENT

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Pastoral placement in the Church of the Brethren is a concern of the whole church. Policies and guidelines for pastoral placement are developed and revised by the Office of Ministry of the General Board in consultation with District Executives¹ under the authority of Annual Conference. Congregational search committees, the District Executives, and the Director of Ministry for the General Board are responsible for implementing these policies and guidelines.
- B. This statement of “Guidelines for Pastoral Placement” will explain the nature and use of documents, provide definitions of placement terminology, outline the responsibilities of the partners who facilitate the process, describe the steps and give a checklist for the process, and indicate the manner in which pastors may access the process.

II. PLACEMENT OF LICENSED MINISTERS

- A. The current “Ministerial Leadership” paper restricts the pastoral service of licensed ministers (see the *Ministerial Leadership Manual*, pages AC10.16 and AC10.3). Therefore, it is understood that the denominational placement system is for the placement of ordained ministers and licensed ministers who have been approved for ordination by their district boards and congregations.
- B. A licensed minister who is nearing the completion of ordination requirements and desiring his or her first call as a pastor is in a special situation. One cannot be ordained prior to receiving a call to serve, and a profile is placed in the system in order to obtain a call. This dilemma is resolved by following “The Process of Ordination,” *Ministerial Leadership Manual*, page AC10.9.
- C. The District Ministry Commission should interview the licensed minister who is nearing the completion of ordination requirements, using the “Pre-Ordination Interview Guide” to determine the individual’s readiness for ministry. If it appears that the licensed minister is making good progress and is ready to place a pastoral profile in the denominational placement system, the commission should recommend ordination to the respective District Board. The District Board can approve an ordination pending the completion of the requirements of ordination, including a call to serve. The District

1. The term “District Executive” is used in this paper to refer to a variety of titles used by districts to identify their executive staff.

Board's approval should be sent to the licensed minister's congregation for a vote, again pending the completion of ordination requirements, including a call to serve.

- D. The District Executive, once the requirements of ordination have been met and the individual has received a call to serve, may move forward with a service of ordination.
- E. District Executives and District Ministry Commissions need to be alert to the fact that the timing of the above is important. A student, for example, who is graduating in the spring of the year, should have a pastoral profile in the placement system by January of that year. Therefore, it is important for the interview and District Board/congregational actions to occur in the summer or fall of the previous year.

III. THE PLACEMENT OF A PASTORAL PROFILE IS NOT AUTOMATIC

- A. The denominational placement system is managed by districts and the denominational Office of Ministry. A District Executive, acting on behalf of the District Ministry Commission and the District Board, and the Director of Ministry for the General Board may refuse to place a minister's profile in the placement system if 1) the profile is not properly filled out; 2) it is determined the minister has been deceptive with his or her responses on the profile; 3) the placement of the profile would violate polity and established practices; 4) the minister is under investigation for ethical indiscretions.
- B. The District executive and/or the Director of Minister may place an existing profile in the system on *hold* or *remove* it for any of the reasons stated in the previous paragraph.
- C. The Office of Ministry will remove a pastoral profile after it has been in the placement system for twelve (12) consecutive months. The profile should be reviewed by the pastor and the executive and updated before it is resubmitted for another twelve months.

IV. PLACEMENT DOCUMENTS AND THEIR USE

- A. A search committee for a congregation seeking a pastor fills out a congregational profile and sends it to the District Executive for circulation through the placement system.
- B. Any minister who wishes to be considered as a pastoral candidate is expected to fill out a pastoral profile and send it to his or her District Executive for circulation through the Office of Ministry.
- C. If the pastoral candidate names his or her District Executive as a reference on the pastoral profile, the District Executive is legally bound by the disclosure guidelines; that is, the District Executive may share any and all documented information contained in the pastor's ministerial file.
- D. Students who are nearing completion of the requirements for ordination and desire placement in the Church of the Brethren shall fill out pastoral profiles and have them distributed through the placement system just like other ministers. (See item II above for proper procedures.)

- E. A minister who has not circulated a profile through the Office of Ministry and agrees to an interview at the invitation of a specific congregation shall fill out a pastoral profile for use in that congregation alone. (See item V below for an exception on the use of the pastor profile for congregations that call pastoral leaders from their own membership.)
- E. An ordained minister from another denomination may fill out and circulate a profile through the District Executive in the geographic area where she or he resides, after being interviewed by the Ministry Inquiry Committee and approved for ministry by the District Ministry Commission and the District Board of that district. A letter affirming the candidate's ministry will be on file at the district office.

V. ADDITIONAL PLACEMENT GUIDELINES

Congregations that call pastoral leaders from their own membership shall consult with their District Executive about placement policies and procedures. For example, the congregation may have an ordained minister within its membership who is willing to serve as pastor in a full-time or part-time salaried position, as a nonsalaried leader, or in a bi-vocational capacity. The District Executive can be helpful in clarifying a number of issues, including the option of using the denomination's pastoral profile, interview guidelines, and clarifying legal issues for both the congregation and the district.

VI. PLACEMENT TERMINOLOGY

- A. *Placement System*: The process through which congregations call leadership in the Church of the Brethren.
- B. *Clearance*: A contact between two District Executives before a contact is made with a potential pastoral candidate. When a search committee expresses an interest in interviewing a potential candidate, the executive of the receiving district contacts the executive of the sending district as a courtesy and for the sharing of information as outlined in the "disclosures" sections of the congregational and pastoral profiles. Clearance, however, does not connote permission granting. No effort shall be made by any District Executive to prevent other District Executives from contacting a potential candidate about an interview.
- C. *Interview*: A get-acquainted session between a potential candidate and the congregation's search committee.
- D. *Negotiation*: A commitment between a search committee and a candidate to pursue with each other a relationship that results in either an accepted call or termination of the process.
- E. *Confidentiality*: A commitment by District Executives, search committees, and candidates to divulge no names until the candidate is presented to the congregation.
- F. *Call*: The affirmation of a congregation for the candidate to become the pastor, by at least two-thirds of the votes cast by persons legally entitled to vote, excluding blanks and abstentions, at a regular or properly called meeting.

- G. *Acceptance of the call:*** The positive response of a pastor who is called by a congregation.

VII. RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTNERS IN THE PLACEMENT PROCESS

A. Search Committee

The search committee may be composed of the executive committee of the church board (or the ministry committee/commission) plus additional people to assure its representative character, consisting of no less than five (5) and no more than ten (10) people. The search committee . . .

1. Prepares the congregational profile;
2. Develops lists of potential candidates in consultation with the District Executive and makes careful comparisons of profiles. Search committees will normally work with pastors who have circulated their profiles, although any pastor in the Church of the Brethren may be considered. Long-term pastorates are valued in the Church of the Brethren; therefore, we believe it is beneficial for a pastor to remain in the same congregation for at least five (5) years before being contacted for a possible pastoral placement elsewhere. However, no effort shall be made by anyone in the placement system to prevent a search committee from seeking an interview with any ordained minister in the denomination at any time.
3. Determines which candidates shall be interviewed and conducts the interviews. The search committee shall, to the best of its ability, seek to treat all candidates equally by interviewing all candidates in the same way. For example, whenever possible the search committee should avoid interviewing one candidate in person and another via a telephone call. In addition, similar questions, a similar process, and a similar time frame should be used in all interviews.
4. Selects a candidate for negotiation and negotiates the terms of the call.
5. Makes the best possible arrangements for the candidate and family to meet and become acquainted with members of the congregation.
6. Recommends the candidate and terms of the call to the church board and/or to the congregational business meeting for a vote.

B. District Executive

Both the congregation seeking a pastor and a pastor involved in a change are expected to seek the counsel of the District Executive. The District Executive . . .

1. Confers with representatives of the congregation (church board or other appropriate group) to clarify procedures and working relationships and to provide and/or explain profile forms.
2. Assists the search committee by suggesting names, providing pastoral profiles, and providing assistance as needed for prioritizing a candidate list. The District

Executive shall not discriminate against anyone because of gender, age, race, or nationality and shall present a variety of candidates to a search committee.

3. Secures clearances from the appropriate District Executive.
4. Arranges, or assists search committee in arranging, interviews and negotiation sessions between congregation and pastoral candidate.
5. Since the District Executive is prohibited from making comments on the congregational profile, he or she is permitted to share information verbally or in writing about the congregation with pastoral candidates. Since employment laws are not involved with this type of sharing, as they are with a pastoral candidate, the District Executive is free to share information about the congregation that will be of assistance to the candidate, provided that sharing does not violate denominational polity, policies, and procedures.
6. Is present or represented at interviews, negotiation sessions, and congregational votes.
7. Clarifies concerns and issues that may emerge in negotiation sessions.
8. Assures that the congregation negotiates with only one candidate at a time and that candidates negotiate with only one congregation at a time.
9. Reports promptly to the Director of Ministry regarding vacancies, pastoral profiles, negotiations, and calls that are accepted.
10. Installs (or provides for the installation of) the pastor.

C. Director of Ministry

The Director of Ministry of the General Board . . .

1. Coordinates and oversees the placement process.
2. Regularly clarifies and reviews placement policies, procedures, and concerns with District Executives.
3. Counsels with District Executives and with pastors regarding placement.
4. Maintains and circulates congregational and pastoral profiles.
5. Shares appropriate information about pastoral and congregational profiles through regular placement reports.
6. Assists students at Bethany Theological Seminary who are seeking placement.

VIII. STEPS AND A CHECKLIST FOR PLACEMENT

Each of the following steps in the placement process should be taken by the congregation in conjunction with the District Executive. This principle is held throughout the placement system, although some district practices may vary due to local factors. Check the blanks when a step has been completed.

- ___1. When a pastoral vacancy occurs and a letter of resignation has been submitted, the church board chair notifies the District Executive.
- ___2. The District Executive meets with the church board and informs them of the process. The church board names a search committee to act on its behalf. The board decides whether an interim pastoral ministry will occur.
- ___3. The search committee gathers information from the congregation and completes a profile.
- ___4. The District Executive forwards the completed profile to the Office of Ministry, which in turn distributes it to all of the Church of the Brethren district offices and to Bethany Theological Seminary.
- ___5. The District Executive and the search committee build a list of potential candidates and may meet to discuss them.

Confidentiality is maintained throughout the process from this point on.

- ___6. The search committee indicates its interest in each of the potential candidates and decides which individual(s) they wish to interview.
- ___7. The District Executive secures clearance from appropriate people, determines the interest of potential candidates and provides profiles for the search committee. When additional pre-interview resources are used, care for fairness and equity are exercised by all parties.
- ___8. At this point the search committee contacts references listed on the profiles. In consultation with the chair of the search committee, the District Executive then makes preliminary arrangements for the interview(s) with the candidate(s).
- ___9. The search committee with the assistance of the District Executive conducts interviews with the candidate(s). The search committee cares for their expenses and hospitality. These interviews are times to get acquainted and explore mutual interests.
- ___10. The search committee decides at this point to enter into negotiation with a particular candidate or to conduct more interviews.
- ___11. The District Executive either (a) secures the agreement of the candidate for negotiation or (b) obtains additional names for interviews. If a negotiation is established, the candidate and the search committee are not free to talk with additional candidates or search committees. When a negotiation is established, the District Executive promptly notifies the Church of the Brethren Director of Ministry and the candidate's District Executive.

- ___12. When there is agreement between the candidate and the search committee, the chair of the search committee notifies the church board that negotiation will occur and recommends, if the negotiation is satisfactory, that a call be extended. The church board acts upon this recommendation at that time or at the time of the negotiation. In some cases the search committee's recommendation goes directly to the congregation.
- ___a. The search committee plans a congregational visit at which time it arranges hospitality for the pastoral candidate and family and cares for their expenses; the candidate meets formally and informally with the church board and congregational groups as deemed appropriate and conducts formal or informal services of worship, which are mutually agreed upon.
 - ___b. One of the purposes of the negotiation step is for the search committee and candidate to consider and agree on the details of the call, e.g., salary, benefits, housing, professional growth, conference and travel expenses, start-up date, etc.
 - ___c. The church board calls a special congregational business meeting to take place after the negotiation visit to vote on the candidate (requires a two-thirds majority, see page OM220.3, item VI. F) and on the terms of the call (requires a simple majority), with the District Executive (or designee) present to oversee the vote. In some cases there is one vote that includes both the call of the candidate and the terms of the call.
 - ___d. The negotiations are completed with the congregation's vote to extend the call and the candidate's acceptance, or they are terminated if either party so decides. In either case, the District Executive notifies the Office of Ministry.
- ___13. The search committee is excused at the time of the installation of the new pastor(s), the time for which is set in consultation with the District Executive.

NOTE: The process described above follows Church of the Brethren polity for congregational organization. This document continues to use familiar terms like "church board" and "congregational business meeting," because most congregations still use these terms. The 2000 "Congregational Structure" paper uses other terms for these same groups. For example, the church board is referred to as the "leadership team," and the congregational business meeting is called the "open forum." In addition, some congregations have constitutions that vary; their processes for placement should be consistent with their organization.

IX. ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND THE PLACEMENT SYSTEM BY PASTORS

- A.** Pastors may gain current information on placement at their district offices through consultation with their District Executive or the Director of Ministry.
- B.** Pastors may make their availability known by filling out a pastoral profile and asking their District Executive to circulate it through the placement system.
- C.** After the profile is circulated through the placement system, a pastor may express interest in any specific congregation, in any district, by consulting with his or her District Executive.

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