

## **When a Congregation Loses a Pastor:**

### **(The Recommended Transitional Pastor Protocol and Standing Process)**

1. Upon the Ministerial Committee or the Church Health Coordinator discovering that a church is or will be without a pastor, the Presbytery Church Health Coordinator (PCHC), in consultation with the Ministerial Committee, will normally hold a conference call with that church's Session and/or the Director of Transitional Pastors (DTP's).
2. The PCHC or the Director of TP's, until such time as the Coordinator is prepared to do so, will walk them through the Case for a Transitional Pastor (TP). The Session will brief the Director of TP's and the PCHC on their context. We strongly encourage Sessions to consider making use of a Transitional Pastor's training and gifts.
3. Believing in the validity of our process, the PCHC will offer to aid the Session in assessment using tools like the: <sup>1</sup> Viability Assessment, <sup>2</sup> the Purpose and Design of a Healthy Church, <sup>3</sup> the Missional Posture Survey, <sup>4</sup> and the Intentionality Grid (For the type of TP needed).
4. If/when the Session votes to contract with a Transitional Pastor (TP), the Director of TP's will help serve the Session by conducting a survey of the existing pool of trained TP's within the EPC for a candidate(s) with the appropriate gifts, skills and experience for their context. If there is not an available candidate, then the Director will contact other compatible sources such as the Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians (ECO), Vital Church, and Interim Pastor Ministries (IPM) for any potential candidates.
5. Contact information for identified candidates will be forwarded to the Session of inquiring church for a potential interview.
6. Upon the selection of a candidate, a Transitional Pastor contract will be drawn up by the Session. The candidate and the Session should include the Director of TP's, the Presbytery Church Health Coordinator and the Ministerial Committee Chairperson in that process of establishing contract benchmarks. These will normally include:
  - providing for worship and the practice of ministry with the congregation and community, including facilitating a comprehensive assessment of every aspect of congregational life and mapping the initial implementation steps necessary to bring the church's shared life into continued or greater alignment with God's calling;

- partnering with the Session and the congregation to clarify their vision or correctly identify God’s calling for them in their context at this time;
  - strengthening the unity of the church;
  - training the congregation to live as evangelists;
  - preparing the congregation for the coming of a permanent pastor called by the congregation;
  - allowing for contract extensions and
  - this contract will also typically include a line committing the church and the TP to ongoing coaching at a cost of \$600 per year with a coach approved by the National Church Health Director of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.
7. An interview between the candidate and that presbytery’s Ministerial Committee will take place. The Transitional Pastor needs the same “approval” as that of a Stated Supply. Please note BOG chapter 10. The key phrase in 10-7A.1.c is: “*Upon approval of the Ministerial Committee.*” The Ministerial Committee approves the candidate and presents that candidate to presbytery as an information item. The presbytery votes to receive them as corresponding members with voice but without vote. If the Transitional Pastor transfers her/his membership to the new presbytery, the normal exam on views applies.
  8. At the end of the TP contract a digital assessment of the TP’s tenure will normally be done by the Session, key staff and key leaders (totaling at least 12 individuals). This will be forwarded to the Director of TP’s. An interview with the Director of TP’s will also be conducted.
  9. The goal is to establish a trained pool of certified candidates upon which we draw to serve our EPC faith communities.