

Metokos Ministries

Encouragement for Smaller Churches

Electing a Pulpit Committee

Hope Evangelical Church

North Liberty, Iowa

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INTRODUCTION TO THE CONGREGATIONAL SEMINAR

IMPORTANCE OF A PULPIT NOMINATING COMMITTEE IN THE LIFE OF A CHURCH.

- Calling the ‘right’ pastor is important for any church
- Calling the ‘right’ pastor for a smaller church is exceedingly important since there is no other staff available to provide leadership and equip ministry for the congregation.
- In a smaller church each person has more direct influence in the choice of a new pastor as well as effecting the success or failure of that pastor than would an individual member in a large church.
- Even in a larger church, the same principles and responsibilities for the work of a Pulpit Nominating Committee should be considered.
- A Pulpit Committee should develop a number of documents and/or surveys in order to effectively carry out its work. Examples of these are:
 - Church Profile – to be used to describe the church to prospects
 - Pastor Profile – to be used to compare a prospects gifts and experience with the needs of the church
 - Core Values Inventory – determining what the Core Values of the church are to be certain a prospect fits into those Core Values
 - Evaluation of Current Ministries – determining if there are areas of the church ministry and structure that should be considered for change with the arrival of a new pastor to be certain these are areas in which he can lead the church in that change
 - Readiness for Change Inventory – an analysis of the readiness for change in the congregation – to determine obstacles to change
- We will administer the Readiness for Change Inventory right now!

PART ONE
SUGGESTED GUIDELINES
SELECTION OF A PULPIT NOMINATING COMMITTEE
(TO BE ADOPTED BY THE SESSION)

Basic Principles:

1. A Pulpit Nominating Committee (PNC) is elected by the congregation and reports to the congregation. While the Elders of the church must be involved during the process, this committee is one-of-a-kind in its rights and responsibility to report directly to the congregation.
2. A set of guidelines/instructions for the PNC should be prepared in advance (preferably by the Session, or at least to be approved by the Session) and these guidelines should be proposed to the congregation for their approval prior to the election of the PNC. These guidelines should be taken from the elements taught in this seminar, as desired and approved by the Session.
3. These suggested principles are presented as the advice of Metokos Ministries, based on experience gained while working with more than 20 pulpit committees in 12 states during the past decade (See appendix with summary).

Proposed Guidelines:

1. **Makeup of the PNC:**
 - An odd number should be elected. In a small church, five voting members, plus two non-voting, but participating, alternates are recommended. Alternates are elected in priority order and become voting members in that priority order if any of the initial voting members become unable to continue their participation.
 - It is highly preferable that members of the PNC be selected for their individual gifts and abilities rather than for some portion of the church they might represent. Having a specific segment of the membership represented by an individual not gifted for service on such a committee can be more of a detriment than a help to the process. A PNC is no place for a person with a personal agenda.
 - One person should be elected specifically by the congregation as the chairman, rather than allow the committee to select one of its own.

2. Qualifications for Members of the PNC:

a. Personal qualities:

- A deep spiritual commitment to Christ and the work of His church.
- Eager to serve, not coerced. Should be a volunteer; if too bashful, should not serve.
- Have a reasonable amount of available time (the process is seldom quick)
- Secure enough to speak up; humble enough to not dominate
- Have a positive attitude about the future of the church – not a ‘downer’
- Be able to keep confidences, even from a spouse
- Be decisive; able to come to a decision

b. Specific skills:

- Organizational and management skills
- Theological astuteness
- Interviewing and assessment skill
- General understanding of financial matters relating to personnel

(NOTE: All four of these skills are not necessary in each member, but each member must have at least one, preferably two of the skills.)

3. Qualifications for Chairman of the PNC:

- Strong gifts in organization and leadership
- Ability and willingness to delegate responsibilities to others
- A temperament which is able to mediate differences and help reach consensus
- Be an effective communicator
 - To/with members of the congregation
 - To/with prospective candidates
 - To/with the Church Session
 - To/with members of Presbytery

4. Relationship of the PNC to the Session:

- Obtain an approved budget from the Session for allowable expenses of the PNC.
- Make periodic written reports (preferably monthly), including expense accounting.
- Chairman of PNC or a designated representative attend Session meetings to deliver report and answer any appropriate questions
- Direct any theological and financial questions to the Session for advice.
- Obtain a proposed compensation package (including relocation expenses) from the Session prior to making an offer to a prospective candidate. The PNC may (and should) present their recommendations based on the specific needs of the candidate. Final approval of the compensation package is left to the approval of the congregation as part of approving terms of a call. (NOTE: In this case the Session is not the final authority.)
- When ready to present a candidate to the congregation, make Session fully aware of any exceptions to the Standards of the church that the candidate may hold.

5. Relationship of the PNC to the Presbytery:

- Obtain information from the Chairman of the appropriate committee of Presbytery concerning the process of having a prospective candidate examined and approved by the Presbytery. This information should be obtained EARLY in the work of the PNC. (NOTE: All planning should be done to avoid a Called Meeting of Presbytery, if at all possible.)
- When ready to present a candidate to the congregation, ensure the Presbytery Chairman is made aware of any exceptions to the Standards of the church that the candidate may hold.

6. Relationship of the PNC to the Congregation:

- Early in the process develop a proposed time line and tentative target date for the completion of the PNC work and report that to the congregation.
- Make periodic written reports to the congregation (preferably monthly) This could be done by means of a bulletin note/insert and probably should be less detailed than the report made to the Session.

- Keep accurate minutes of all proceedings which will be turned over to the Clerk of Session at the end of the process for safekeeping with the Session/Congregational minutes.
- Only one candidate is to be presented to the congregation for approval at a time. If the first candidate is not approved, the PNC will resume the process to find another candidate for presentation.
- The congregation will seek a number of volunteers for a separate Prayer Support Group who will meet regularly (at least weekly) to pray specifically for the needs of the PNC.

7. Principles of Confidentiality for Members of the PNC:

- Names of prospective candidates will not be revealed to anyone outside the committee, including Session members not serving on the PNC, and also including spouses and other family members.
- All prospective candidates will be informed of full confidentiality, especially those currently involved in another ministry who are not ready to declare his intent to move.
- All individuals giving reference on prospective candidates will be informed of full confidentiality.
- When a committee member learns of information concerning a candidate that would clearly him from consideration (especially involving sin or some potential embarrassing fact), that information should be shared only with the Chairman of the committee in order to limit the number of people knowing this information.
- Early in the process the PNC will determine their position in the following areas:
 - Where/when will members receive mail and phone calls - home or office?
 - Where will files be kept and who will be doing the preparation and distributing of copies?
 - Should candidates be called at their homes or their offices?
 - What should be said if a candidate's secretary asks the purpose of a call?
 - When visiting a candidate's church to hear a sermon, what response will be made to a friendly member who asks: "What brings you to be with us today?"
- As soon as a candidate is dropped from consideration all materials concerning that candidate will be either returned or destroyed. (The only exception to this would be the file on the 'second place' candidate (should there be one) in case of lack of approval of the 'first place' candidate by the congregation.)

8. Ethical Principles for Members of the PNC:

- PNC members must place the needs of the congregation and the efforts of the committee above their own viewpoint and pet ideas.
- PNC members must be willing to submit to the majority in making a final decision. A unanimous vote should NOT be required, but a significant majority is strongly recommended (e.g., 4 out of 5).
- PNC members must assume their fair share of the tasks to be accomplished and a commitment to do them on schedule.
- PNC members must be willing to speak up and be an active participant, while at the same time taking care not to dominate the process.
- PNC members must consider the needs of a prospective candidate's current ministry in balance with the needs of their own church.
- PNC members should make their commitment to absolute confidentiality known to all the other members (most preferably at the organizational meeting).
- PNC members must be willing to share not only positive factors of the situation in the church, but also share negative factors - especially any recent problems and issues.
- PNC members must be willing to communicate on a regular basis with all prospective candidates so they are aware of the progression of their status.
- Any PNC member who voted against a candidate who is eventually called by the congregation should NEVER let that be known outside the committee.

PART TWO

DETERMINING THE CHURCH'S CORE VALUES

A. WHAT ARE CORE VALUES?

1. Definition (from Aubrey Malphurs): "The constant, passionate, Biblical core beliefs that drive a church's ministry"
 - or as Dr. Robert G. Rayburn, founding president of Covenant College and Covenant Theological Seminary would say "The laws of the Medes and Persians which varieth not."

2. Brief Bible study on Philippians 3:7-16 to flesh out the definition
 - a. **CONSTANT**
 - 1) Not the specifics of what ministries a church might or might not be involved in.
 - 2) Rather the beliefs that should never change no matter who the pastor is and what the sociological or demographic climate in which the church finds itself might be.
 - b. **PASSIONATE**
 - 1) While it must be 'intellectual'; that is, understood in the mind – it must also be 'felt'.
 - 2) Passion causes one to act on what they believe.
 - c. **BIBLICAL**
 - 1) Certainly in confessional churches such as the PCA/OPC/ARP this would be a given – but even so, it should not be taken for granted.
 - 2) Sometimes it is difficult to separate the things we do because of the influence of our culture from the things we should do because of Biblical teaching.
 - d. **BELIEFS**
 - 1) A belief is simply a conviction or opinion that you hold to be true. It is something you trust, or have faith in. It is NOT a fact. Facts are beliefs that a large number of people believe are true based on overwhelming evidence.

- e. IDEAS THAT DRIVE THE MINISTRY OF A CHURCH
 - 1) They affect decision-making.
 - 2) They sometimes involve risk taking.
 - 3) They provide means for conflict resolution.
 - 4) They provide means for problem solving.
 - 5) They provide means for determine priorities.

B. Determining church's Core Values through use of Survey Questionnaires

- 1. Metokos Ministries has developed a process of administering two related surveys to at least 30 members of the congregation that will greatly help in developing
- 2. Getting input from 'grass roots' is essential; the pulpit committee process is a congregational process, not a Session process.
- 3. Questionnaires are identical in content, but
 - one asks how things are currently
 - one asks how things should be in the future
 - comparing the two sets of answers reveals probable core values
- 4. Pulpit Committee makes final determination of what they believe are the actual core values early in their work as this will guide the rest of what they do.

WE WILL DISTRIBUTE THE FIRST QUESTIONNAIRE AT THIS TIME.

SUGGESTED PNC MEMBERSHIP

PULPIT NOMINATING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS TO BE PRESENTED TO THE CONGREGATION

It is the recommendation of the Session that the Congregation adopt the following plan for election of a PNC. The congregation will first vote to adopt (or not adopt) the plan and then proceed to election of a PNC.

Part One: Elect one Ruling Elder to serve on the PNC from an attached slate:

Part Two: Elect one Deacon to serve on the PNC from an attached slate:

Part Three: Elect three At-Large members to serve on the PNC from an attached slate. (Note: other nominees may be added to the list by nomination and second from the congregation prior to voting.) In electing At-Large members the congregation should give consideration to not electing members of the immediate family of the Elder or Deacon already elected to serve.

Part Four: Elect two alternates to serve on the PNC from names remaining on an attached slate. (Note: other nominees may be added to the list by nomination and second from the congregation prior to voting.) In electing alternates the congregation should give consideration to not electing members of the immediate family of the Elder, Deacon, or At-Large members already elected to serve.

Part Five: From the names of the five members of the PNC, the congregation should either:

- a) Proceed to elect one of the five as the chair.
- b) Approve a motion to allow the PNC to elect its own chair.

An attached Proposed Slate should include the names of everyone who attended the Pulpit Committee Workshop and is in agreement with the general principles outlined and is willing to serve in this important aspect of ministry. (Note: Someone who was providentially hindered from attending and has listened to the tapes should also be considered). This Proposed Slate should be developed by and approved by the Session.

SUMMARY OF PULPIT COMMITTEE TRAINING

The work of Metokos Ministries falls into three parts:

1. Congregational Training Seminar prior to election of PNC
2. Training the PNC in the process of their work.
3. Consulting with the PNC during their process

Churches listed below are identified by state only and which of the three categories of assistance were provided. They are listed by year of initial contact and results of the committees work:

YEAR	LOCATION	MINISTRY	RESULT
1998	West Virginia	1, 2, 3	Called pastor in 1998; he left after 5 years
2001	West Virginia	2, 3	Called pastor in 2003, church is growing
2001	New York	3	Called a pastor in 2002, church is growing
2002	West Virginia	1, 2, 3	Called pastor in 2003, church is stable
2003	Virginia	1, 2, 3	Small PCUSA congregation, no pastor has yet been called.
2003	Mississippi	1, 2, 3	Called pastor in 2004, church is stable
2003	Virginia	2	Decided to leave PCA
2003	West Virginia	1, 2, 3	Called a pastor in 2003, he left after 4 years
2003	South Dakota	1, 2, 3	Call a pastor in 2004, church is growing
2003	Pennsylvania	1, 2, 3	Called a pastor in 2004; return trip to do a Vision Planning Seminar, church is growing
2004	Tennessee	2, 3	Called pastor in 2005, church is growing
2004	Virginia	1, 2, 3	Called pastor in 2005, church is growing.
2004	South Carolina	1, 2, 3	Called pastor in 2005, church is growing
2005	Virginia	1, 2, 3	Very small church with limited finances and narrow core values; PNC continues
2005	Virginia	1, 2, 3	Called pastor in 2006, church is growing
2006	Mississippi	3	Called a pastor in 2008; just arrived
2006	Ohio	3	Called pastor in 2007, church is stable
2007	Virginia	1, 2, 3	PNC continues its work
2007	North Carolina	1, 2, 3	Called pastor in May, 2008; has not arrived

Biography – The Rev. Dr. Don K. Clements

Dr. Clements was raised in Detroit, Michigan and after two years of college enlisted in the U. S. Navy. He completed his undergraduate work at a number of different colleges while on active duty. In 1968 he married the former Esther Reiben Alexander, a Naval officer, while both were stationed in the Pentagon. While living in Cherry Hill, NJ in 1969, Dr. Clements began to attend the Covenant Church, an RPCES congregation, with his wife, and that fall committed his life to Jesus Christ.

The next summer, having been convinced that God was calling him to the ministry, Dr. Clements left the Navy and he and his wife moved to St. Louis where they both attended Covenant Seminary, graduating in 1974 – Don with an MDiv, Esther with an MRE. Dr. Clements was ordained in the newly formed Presbyterian Church in America and became pastor of the Eastern Heights church in Savannah, Georgia. In 1976 he resigned as pastor in order to accept a commission as an active duty Navy Chaplain (the first active duty chaplain endorsed by the PCA).

While in the Navy Dr. Clements served as a Destroyer Squadron chaplain in San Diego; as a staff chaplain at the Naval Air Station Pensacola; in Norfolk as Ship's Chaplain for USS TEXAS (CGN 39), as Executive Assistant at the Fleet Religious Support Activity, and as Senior Chaplain on USS EMORY S. LAND (AS 29); and prior to retirement in 1985 as Senior Chaplain at the Naval Hospital, Newport, RI. During this period he completed a DMin from Gordon Conwell Seminary in South Hamilton, MA.

While on active duty in the Navy Don served as part-time interim pastor for two Orthodox Presbyterian churches in San Diego and for a Conservative Baptist Church in Newport, RI, as well as part-time Minister of Education for a PCA church in Virginia Beach, VA. Since retirement from the Navy, Dr. Clements served as pastor at Grace Covenant, Blacksburg, VA for 7 years and as pastor of Valley Church, Narrows, VA for nearly 10 years. On September 1, 2003 Don left the pastorate and has moved to full time with PEF.

In November, 2000 Don was approved as an Affiliate Evangelist with PEF. He developed a ministry (at that point part-time) to work with smaller churches that has become his primary call as of September 1, 2003. Known as *Metokos Ministries* (Metokos is the Greek word in Luke 5:7 which refers to the relationship of the fishing boats owned by several of Jesus' disciples, usually translated 'partner') he is specializing in working with Pulpit Committees, in assisting churches to do Vision Planning, and to preach conferences and campaigns when invited.

Dr. Clements currently serves as the Stated Clerk for the Presbytery of the Blue Ridge, an office he also held in New River Presbytery for 5 years. He is a past Chairman of the PCA Nominating Committee, a frequent Chairman of various Committees of Commissioners at annual General Assemblies, and is a current member of the Permanent Committee for Christian Education and Publications of the PCA. He is the author of several books, including *Biblical Church Government*; *God the Holy Spirit, Historical Roots of the PCA*, and *The Vision Thing*. Titles including: *God the Son*; and *Preaching and the Ruling Elder* are scheduled for 2008. He is also a co-founder of TheAquilaReport.com – a new, independent Web Magazine covering the PCA and other evangelicals in the Presbyterian and Reformed world.

Don and Esther have three grown daughters. Stephanie, who is Assistant Director of Financial Aid at Virginia Tech; Susannah, Chairman of the English Department at Regent University in Virginia Beach; and Sarah, who is married, living in Cleveland, MS, and working as a Professor of Social Sciences (Political Science, Sociology, and Geography) at Mississippi Delta Community College. They have two granddaughters.