

Approved: 11/13/2022

Guidelines for Call of a Minister – Covina Community Church

These following best practices are designed to guide the congregation through a transition in ministerial leadership or the addition of a new minister to the existing team.

Upon the resignation, retirement, or other departure of a minister, the moderator should contact the Southern California Nevada Conference (SCNC) of the United Church of Christ (www.SCNCucc.org) as soon as possible to initiate their partnership in the transition process.

The [Guide to Pastoral Search and Call](#) should be downloaded from www.UCC.org and provided to all members of the Church Council.

An informational letter should be sent to the congregation, informing them of the minister's departure and the basic steps that will follow. Ethical guidelines for clergy who are leaving a congregation should be shared with the congregation so that they are aware of appropriate boundaries and are prepared for the intentional space exiting clergy will create between themselves and those who pick up the mantle of pastoral leadership.

The Church Council will be tasked with securing interim staffing till a full search process can be completed. This should be done in partnership with the SCNC Conference. An interim contract should reflect similar financial support as the outgoing minister. This is to preserve the stewardship required to support a minister and limit confusion in the Church's budgeting process. The basic qualifications for an interim should be the same as those of a settled minister, as outlined in the Church bylaws. Those with specific training in interim ministry should be highly considered over those who do not have this specific training or experience.

A Search and Call team should be formed with diverse representation from the congregation, being sure to include some participants who do not serve on the Church Council. The Moderator should serve as an ex officio member of this team.

If this call will be an additional minister on the staff, existing clergy may also be ex officio. If the call will be for a lead minister or head of staff, it should be clear from the beginning that those called ministers who are currently serving on staff will continue to serve in their positions as called by the congregation. This should be communicated to any candidate who moves beyond a first interview.

The Search and Call team chair and the Moderator should clearly outline who will be responsible for which portions of the process, as outlined in the Guide to Pastoral Search and Call and as advised by the SCNC Conference. This includes the creation of a congregational profile, community profile, and providing regular communication with the congregation.

The Search and Call team should be added to the weekly prayer list for worship and the full committee's membership shared with the congregation.

Updates to the congregation should be made at least monthly, with no names or personal details of candidates being shared. Rather, these updates should include the type of work being done and any prayer requests from the Search and Call team.

Review of profiles, interviews (in person or by video conferencing), and other discernment conversations should include as many members of the Search and Call team as possible. All candidates should be interviewed by the same group, as much as it is possible.

Once the Search and Call team has a candidate they would like to move forward with, they should confirm that the candidate is interested in moving forward with the congregation and comfortable with the general range of the financial support package position expectations as outlined in the Congregational Profile. If everyone is on the same page, the Search and Call team should begin arranging opportunities for the congregation and the candidate to meet. Some of this may be done online but at least one on-site visit to the Church property should be arranged so that there are no surprises.

The congregation should only be engaged in such a process with one candidate at a time. The Search and Call team should not present multiple candidates, following a process of discernment with one person until they are ultimately called or are no longer considered a candidate for the position.

Once a candidate and congregation have met, if the Search and Call team feels this is the right person, they submit the candidate to the Church Council and ask them to call a Special Congregational Meeting to approve the candidate. The Moderator, as described in the bylaws, will call a Special Congregational Meeting for the purpose of calling a new minister.

The Special Congregational Meeting called to receive a candidate should be focused on the call process with no other unrelated business on the agenda. If other business is required to facilitate the call, the relevance should be clearly explained.

The Special Congregational Meeting should be announced and communicated in accordance with the Bylaws of Covina Community Church.

The Special Congregational Meeting can be held in the sanctuary or Fellowship Hall and will include an online option for attendance and participation.

The Special Congregational Meeting to call a minister should open and close with prayer like all congregational meetings.

The Moderator will invite the Search and Call team chair to present the candidate and the team's reasons for recommending this call. The Moderator will then open the floor for questions and discussion. If the candidate is present, they may be invited to answer questions.

Once the Moderator feels adequate time has been allowed, they should call for a vote, following the guidelines outlined in the Bylaws of Covina Community Church. Since this call will initiate a legally binding contract, this includes a requirement that those voting have been recently participating in the congregation for at least one year.

The vote may be taken by show of hands or as a written ballot but should be a quantifiable vote since it will initiate a legally binding contract. For this reason, a simple voice vote is not sufficient. Those attending the meeting online should have equal access for their votes to be counted, including multiple participants in one household who are sharing one streaming source.

Written ballots may be received by those attending virtually via email or by life chat functions. Those counting should confirm votes received by email correlate to those attending online. No votes should be counted from those who are not in attendance.

The result of the vote should be announced by the Moderator as soon as they are available and confirmed by the Secretary / Clerk.

In response to a positive vote of call, a prayer of thanksgiving should be offered as a moment of celebration (if there is more business to conduct, related to the call process) or as part of the meeting's closure.

In response to a positive vote of call, the Moderator should present the candidate with an official contract and any other official paperwork to be signed.

In response to a positive vote of call, the Search and Call team chair should communicate with the SCNC Conference to inform them of the vote and provide the new minister's contact information for the Easter Association.

The Church Council should appoint a Support Team to help with the new minister's transition and acclimation to the community. Having some members of the Search and Call team in this role is very helpful.

The new minister, Moderator, and the Support Team should work together to set dates such as first days in the office, first Sunday in worship, and service of Installation. After the Installation service, the Support Team has completed its work and the new minister and congregation support one another as described in the Bylaws of Covina Community Church.