

Virtual Congregational Meeting for the Purpose of Calling a Pastor

This document provides an outline which a Session can use to call a virtual meeting of the congregation for the purpose of hearing the report of the Pastor Nominating Committee and voting to call a Pastor.

Step 1:

The Moderator calls an in person special Session meeting with extreme social distancing measures, i.e. the meeting be conducted in the sanctuary with elders much more than six feet apart, Session asked to wear masks, staggered building entry times, etc., with the understanding that this meeting is " To work or volunteer for businesses or operations (including both religious and secular nonprofit organizations) that provide food, shelter, and other necessities of life for economically disadvantaged or otherwise needy individuals" pursuant to Executive Order 2020-59(7)(a)(14).

Step 2:

That the business to be conducted by the Session shall include:

- a. The adoption of policies and procedures for virtual Session meetings and recommended policies and procedures for virtual congregational meetings. (Samples of these are at www.detroitpresbytery.org/clerkscorner).
- b. The appointment of an Administrative Commission (AC) pursuant to G-3.0109(b) for the purpose of "acting upon unofficial decisions of the congregation with regard to prosecuting the Call of a Pastor." The A.C. shall be constituted with the same individuals as serve on the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) plus the Transitional Pastor (or other Minister of Word and Sacrament), so that the PNC may prosecute the call at the Presbytery level.
- c. The call to a virtual (unofficial) congregational meeting specifically to act on the report of the PNC and related business.

The call to the virtual congregational meeting should be transmitted to the congregation with at least three weeks' notice, preferably with a snail mailing as well as email notice. The snail mailing should give specific, detailed directions for the virtual meeting, including:

- The internet format to be used for the meeting
- The equipment members will need in order to participate in the meeting
- The instructions for joining and/or dialing-in to the meeting
- The process which will be used for seeking recognition to speak and for voting (both by ballot and by consensus)

[It is recommended that a "practice" meeting be scheduled several days prior to the date of the virtual congregational meeting for the purpose of instructing members in the processes that will be used for speaking, voting, etc.; to make certain dial-in participants know how to be recognized and vote; to fix any technical issues.

Step 3:

The business to be conducted at the virtual congregational meeting shall include:

- a. The adoption of the Session's recommended policies and procedures for virtual congregational meetings.
- b. The Report of the PNC regarding extending a call to the pastoral candidate including all the terms of the Call.

The vote may be taken using the polling feature on your internet format. Since the polling feature allows for only one person to vote, it will be necessary for each member of the congregation have access to his/her own computer, laptop, tablet, or phone for the purpose of voting. If a member does not have direct access to a computer, laptop, or tablet for voting with the polling feature, he/she can vote by 1) emailing the vote to a specified church email address, or 2) phoning the church office. These forms of voting should be completed within 1 hour (or less) following the close of the virtual meeting. At the close of the meeting, Tellers should be in the church office to begin tallying the emailed and phoned-in ballots.

- c. Authorize the PNC to prosecute the call with the Presbytery.
- d. Vote to dismiss the PNC with thanks upon the date of the pastor's installation.

Step 4:

After the unofficial, virtual meeting, the Administrative Commission (PNC) can prosecute the Call with the Presbytery of Detroit and work with the Pastor-Elect on arranging for the Installation.

Step 5:

When safety concerns make it possible to gather in large groups, the congregation should meet to ratify these previous unofficial decisions.