

WHAT DOES A PERSONNEL COMMITTEE DO ANYWAY?

The session . . . has the responsibility . . . to provide for the administration of the program of the church, including employment of nonordained staff, with concern for equal employment opportunity, fair employment practices, personnel policies, and the annual review of the adequacy of compensation for all staff, including all employees. –Book of Order G-10.0102.

What is a Personnel Committee (PC)?

- PC acts as an arm of the Session and reports to it
- PC does not “interfere with the ongoing supervision that a head of staff (HOS) provides.” Rather, the PC “works in a supportive and counseling relationship with the HOS and with other staff, as needed.” (PCUSA Session Personnel Committee guidelines. See link below.)
- Collaboration with pastoral and administrative staff is vital
- PC’s provide vital human resources functions even in churches with only a pastor on staff

Who is considered staff?

- All those paid by the church, including pastors, administrative and support staff, program staff, musicians, and custodians. This includes both full and part-time staff members.

PC Members Need to:

- Be aware of issues and concerns of the congregation
- Be aware of issues and concerns of staff members
- Able to listen, to seek understanding, and to respond with compassion
- Be fair and objective in evaluating situations and people
- Consider issues professionally, providing both support and constructive criticism
- Protect confidential information
- Avoid gossip and rumor-mongering
- Approach decision-making collaboratively
- Be committed to identifying, addressing and resolving conflicts
- Bonus: Have human resources experience or a legal background

Responsibilities of Personnel Committees

Supporting and Supervising Staff

- Engage in staff advocacy, including regular interaction with each staff member
- Create the annual personnel budget, including negotiating and recommending compensation for all employees
- Provide guidance to HOS/Session on staff requests for things like leave, change in work hours,
- Communicate concerns from congregation to staff and from staff to the congregation
- Resolve conflicts between staff members and between staff and congregants when necessary

Human Resource Responsibilities

- Implement annual review and goal setting (Evaluate performance based on job description and goals)
- Create and update employee handbook, which is approved by the Session

- Address Staffing Needs, including hiring and termination of employees (except Pastors)
- Create and update job descriptions, which are approved by the Session)
- Ensure that personnel policies and practices conform with all applicable state and federal law
- Enforce Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery Sexual Misconduct Policy
- Encourage Professional Development
- Maintain/Set Guidelines for Staffing Record Maintenance

Reporting to the Session

- Prepare an Annual Report for Session and Congregation
- Report regularly to the Session on activities of the PC
- Advise the Session on policy and personnel changes as needed

Potential Pitfalls: The “Don’ts”

- Don’t get caught up in controversy
- Don’t overreach your authority (conflicts with HOS/micromanaging staff members)
- Don’t breaching confidentiality
- Don’t put off tough decisions (lack of action may exacerbate a problem)
- Dilemma: Do we employ a member of the congregation?

Additional Resources:

“PCUSA Session Personnel Committee guidelines.” This document provides detailed guidelines for establishing and conducting business as a Personnel Committee.

<https://www.pcusa.org/resource/guidelines-session-personnel-committee/>

“Regarding ruling elders: ruling elders and personnel matters” This is a short article describing a few basic tenants of successful staff supervision.

<https://www.pcusa.org/news/2016/7/15/regarding-ruling-elders-personnel-matters/>

Sexual Misconduct Policy of Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery

<https://www.glpby.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/SEXUAL-MISCONDUCT-POLICY-FINAL1108.pdf>