

## CHAPTER 20

### *The Election of Pastors*

**20-1.** Before a candidate, or licentiate, can be ordained to the office of the ministry, he must receive a call to a definite work. Ordinarily the call must come from a church, Presbytery, or the General Assembly of this denomination. If the call comes from another source, the Presbytery shall always make a record of the reasons why it considers the work to be a valid Christian ministry. (See also *BCO* 8-7 and 21-1).

A proper call must be written and in the hands of the Presbytery prior to being acted upon by a Presbytery. It must include financial arrangements (such as salary, vacation, insurance, retirement, etc.) between those calling and the one called, and assurance that the definite work will afford the liberty to proclaim and practice fully and freely the whole counsel of God, as contained in the Scriptures and understood in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. It shall be in accord with the *BCO* 8.

**20-2.** Every church should be under the pastoral oversight of a minister, and when a church has no pastor it should seek to secure one without delay.

A church shall proceed to elect a pastor in the following manner: The Session shall call a congregational meeting to elect a pulpit committee which may be composed of members from the congregation at large or the Session, as designated by the congregation (see *BCO* 25). The pulpit committee shall, after consultation and deliberation, recommend to the congregation a pastoral candidate who, in its judgment, fulfills the Constitutional requirements of that office (e.g., *BCO* 8, 13-6 and 21) and is most suited to be profitable to the spiritual interests of the congregation (cf. *BCO* 20-6).

The Session shall order a congregational meeting to convene at the regular place of worship. Public notice of the time, place, and purpose of this meeting shall be given at least one week prior to the time of the meeting.

**20-3.** When a congregation is convened for the election of a pastor it is important that they should elect a minister or ruling elder of the Presbyterian Church in America to preside, but if this be impracticable, they may elect any male member of that church. The Session shall appoint one of their number to call the meeting to order and to preside until the congregation shall elect their presiding officer. All communing members in good and regular standing, but no others, are entitled to vote in the churches to which they are respectively attached.

**20-4.** Method of voting: The voters being convened, and prayer for divine guidance having been offered, the moderator shall put the question:

**Are you ready to proceed to the election of a pastor?**

If they declare themselves ready, the moderator shall call for nominations, or the election may proceed by ballot without nominations. In every case a majority of all the voters present shall be required to elect.

**20-5.** On the election of a pastor, if it appears that a large minority of the voters are averse to the candidate who has received a majority of votes, and cannot be induced to concur in the call, the moderator shall endeavor to dissuade the majority from prosecuting it further; but if the electors be nearly or quite unanimous, or if the majority shall insist upon their right to call a pastor, the moderator shall proceed to draw a call in due form, and to have it subscribed by them, certifying at the same time in writing the number of those who do not concur in the call, and any facts of importance, all of which proceedings shall be laid before the Presbytery, together with the call.

**20-6.** Form of call: The terms of the call shall be approved by the congregation in the following or like form:

**The \_\_\_\_\_ Church being on sufficient grounds well satisfied of the ministerial qualifications of you, \_\_\_\_\_, and having good hopes from our knowledge of your labors that your ministrations in the Gospel will be profitable to our spiritual interests, do earnestly call you to undertake the pastoral office in said congregation, promising you, in the discharge of your duty, all proper support, encouragement and obedience in the Lord. That you may be free from worldly cares and avocations, we hereby promise and oblige ourselves to pay you the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_ a year in regular monthly (or quarterly) payments, and other benefits, such as, manse, retirement, insurance, vacations, moving expenses etc., during the time of your being and continuing the regular pastor of this church.**

**In testimony whereof we have respectively subscribed our names this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, A.D. \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Attest: I, \_\_\_\_\_ having moderated the congregational meeting which extended a call to \_\_\_\_\_ for his ministerial services, do certify that the call has been made in all respects according to the rules laid down in the *Book of Church Order*, and that the persons who signed the foregoing call were authorized to do so by vote of the congregation.**

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Moderator of the Meeting

**20-7.** If any church shall choose to designate its ruling elders and deacons, or a committee to sign its call, it shall be at liberty to do so. But it shall, in such case, be fully certified to the Presbytery by the minister or other person who presided, that the persons signing have been appointed for that purpose by a public vote of the church, and that the call has been in all other respects prepared as above directed.

**20-8.** Prosecution of call: One or more commissioners shall be appointed by the church to present and prosecute the call before their Presbytery.

**20-9.** When a pastor desires to accept a call to another Presbytery, he must be examined and approved by the Presbytery for the pastorate to which he is being called, and must be released for transfer by his present Presbytery from his pastorate.

**20-10.** A congregation desiring to call a pastor from his charge, shall, by its commissioners to the Presbytery, prosecute the call before its Presbytery. The Presbytery, having heard all the parties, may, upon viewing the whole case, either recommend them to desist from prosecuting the call; or may order it to be delivered to the minister to whom it is addressed, with or without advice; or may decline to place the call in his hands; as it shall appear most beneficial for the peace and edification of the Church at large.

No pastor shall be transferred without his own consent, if the parties are not ready to have the matter decided at the meeting then in progress, a written citation shall be given the minister and his church to appear before the Presbytery at its next meeting, which citation shall be read from the pulpit during a regular service, at least two weeks before the intended meeting.

**20-11.** If the congregation or other field of labor to which a minister, licentiate, or candidate is called, be under the jurisdiction of a different Presbytery, on his acceptance of a call he shall be furnished with the proper testimonials, and required to repair immediately to the Presbytery, in order that he may be regularly inducted into his office. (See *BCO* 21).

**20-12.** A candidate or licentiate found fit and called (in accordance with *BCO* 20-1) for missionary service by a missionary agency or Presbytery shall be examined by Presbytery for ordination. If approved the Presbytery shall proceed to his ordination.

**20-13.** A missionary who is an ordained teaching elder in another denomination found fit and called (in accordance with *BCO* 20-1) for missionary service by a missionary agency or Presbytery shall be examined by Presbytery for admission to Presbytery in accordance with *BCO* 13-6. If approved he shall be enrolled as a member of Presbytery.