

## ADDITIONAL REFERENCE MATERIAL FOR PNC'S

- Blank Ministry Information Forms may be downloaded from [www.pcusa.org/clc](http://www.pcusa.org/clc) to be utilized as the committee works on its draft document. The final copy will be placed into the system electronically. Instructions for entering a new Ministry Information Form are also available at the website listed above.
- Manual for Pastor Nominating Committee (On Calling a Pastor)  
(Copies may be downloaded from [www.pcusa.org/resource/calling-pastor-word/](http://www.pcusa.org/resource/calling-pastor-word/).)
- If the PNC would like to see a sample Personal Information Form, copies may be downloaded from [www.pcusa.org/clc](http://www.pcusa.org/clc).
- Telephone Reference Check Form and Sample Questions
- Secondary references may not be contacted without the signed consent of the pastoral candidate. Please see "Secondary Reference Release Form." Copy available at [www.winnebagopresbytery.org/forms-and-policies](http://www.winnebagopresbytery.org/forms-and-policies).
- Questions which are Illegal and SHOULD NOT BE ASKED
- Sample Interview Questions
- Interview Questions to Determine Candidate Characteristics
- Questions a Candidate May Ask a PNC
- Sample Release Language/Letter

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## Telephone Reference Check Form and Sample Questions

### METHOD FOR DOING REFERENCE CHECKS

Reference calls should be initiated after an initial contact is made to determine if the selected pastor is interested in a conversation with your PNC. If the answer is “yes,” you should report that references will be contacted. At least two committee members should make reference calls for each applicant. If your PNC prefers to complete a reference call on a speakerphone with multiple PNC members present, please share that information early in the call.

This form is meant to provide a standardized process and sample list of questions, as well as provide documentation of the calls. Additional or alternate questions may be used. It is important that a standardized list be used for all primary reference checks.

Candidate Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference Called: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone

#: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Ask if this is a convenient time to check a reference on \_\_\_\_\_ . It will take approximately 20 minutes. If now is not convenient, ask to set a time when you may return the call.
2. Provide a short description of the church and its location. PNC should agree on common descriptive language.
3. Sample questions:
  - a. How long and in what capacity have you known this candidate?
  - b. Please describe the candidate’s strengths and gifts in carrying out pastoral responsibilities. Refer to such things as creativity, sense of humor, staff relationships, leadership style, and worship.
  - c. What are areas of growth or development that would benefit this person?
  - d. Describe the candidate’s ability to interact/work with others. Is she/he more effective with a specific age group?

- e. How would you describe the candidate's approach to helping a church discern its mission and developing strategies to interpret and "live" that mission?
  
  - f. Is there anything else you think would be important or helpful for us to know as we consider   (name)   for the pastoral vacancy in our church?
  
  - g. Is there someone else we should speak with? (NOTE: Secondary Reference Release Form must be obtained prior to contacting someone not listed as a personal reference )
4. After the call---reflect on the conversation.
- What was the level of enthusiasm in support of the candidate?
  
  - Did anything in the conversation surprise me or raise questions?
  
  - Were there any reservations expressed during the reference call?
  
  - Additional comments/notes:

Winnebago Presbytery**Secondary Reference Release Form**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

To Whom It May Concern:

I understand that the Pastoral Nominating Committee of \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Church may be contacting secondary references not listed  
on my Personal Information Form (or resume).

You have my permission to:

Contact any and all references as you see fit and think necessary

\_\_\_\_\_ please initial

Contact only the secondary references listed on the back (names &amp; addresses)

\_\_\_\_\_ please initial

Contact any and all references except those listed on the back (names &amp; addresses)

\_\_\_\_\_ please initial

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please return by \_\_\_\_\_ in the enclosed, self-addressed, stamped  
envelope (date)

The following questions are **ILLEGAL** and **SHOULD NOT BE ASKED** in an interview unless the question is related to a bona fide qualification for the position as described in the position description.

- Marital status, spouse's name, original name of applicant whose name has been changed by court order, including inquiry of maiden name of a married woman.
- Inquiry into applicant's lineage, ancestry, national origin, descent, parentage or nationality, sex, maiden name.
- Birthplace, birthplace of applicant's parents, spouse or other relatives.
- Are you a U.S. citizen? Requirement that applicant produce naturalization papers or his/her first papers. Requirement that applicant submit birth certificate, baptismal record.
- Whether applicant's parents or spouse are naturalized or native-born citizens of the United States; the date when such parents or spouse acquired citizenship.
- What is your native language? (or (first language," or "language spoken at home.")
- Inquiry into how applicant acquired ability to read, write or speak a foreign language.
- Names, addresses, ages, number or other information concerning applicant's spouse, children, or other relatives not employed by company. Where does your spouse work?
- Do you rent or own your home? Names and addresses of persons to be notified in case of accident or emergency.
- Are you married? Single? Divorced? Separated? Do you wish to be addressed as Mr., Mrs., Miss, Ms.?
- Do you have children? Do you plan to have children? Are you pregnant? What are the ages of your children? Who takes care of your children?
- Comments reflecting age preferences; inquiry as to age, date of birth.
- Do you have any physical disability?
- Have you ever been arrested?
- Inquiry into applicant's general military experience.
- List all clubs, societies, and lodges to which you belong.

**SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

1. In light of our Church Information Form, what personal strengths particularly qualify you for this position?
  
2. What excites you about this position?
  
3. Describe your style of leadership as applied to:
  - a. Your interaction with church staff.
  
  - b. Your interaction with session and church committees.
  
  - c. Your interaction with the congregation as a whole.
  
4. What have your continuing education experiences been in the last three years? What are your future plans for continuing education?
  
5. What question(s) do you wish we had asked but didn't, and how would you have answered the questions(s)?
  
6. What questions do you have for us after reviewing our Church Information Form?

**Characteristics**

**PNC Interview Questions**

**Emotional Intelligence**

Self-Awareness	Who are you when you are not being a pastor? What do you do for fun?
Maturity	What passage of Scripture has been meaningful for you and why? How have you experienced the truth of its message in your life?
Self-Differentiation	Do you have a support system outside of the church? Please explain.
Social Skills	Does the candidate project warmth with eye contact, small talk, social cues? Does she/he listen?
Healthy Boundaries/Balance	How do you balance your personal/family life with your ministry responsibilities?
Support Network	Where do you seek help when you get "stuck" or don't know how to proceed? Please share an example.
Clarity about Call to Ministry	Tell us about your sense of call to ministry (as opposed to expectation of others, no other possibilities, or gratitude to church as a supportive place).

**Non-Anxious Presence**

Self-Understanding	What type of situation make you anxious? How do you manage your anxiety level?
Aware of Systemic Relationships	Please describe a conflictual situation in a previous congregation (or work place) and the resolution.
Humor	Tell us about a time when you laughed at yourself. What role does humor play in your ministry?
Empathy	Please describe a situation in which you provided pastoral care following an unexpected death or in some tragic situation.
Hopeful	How generally and specifically has the grace of God impacted your life?

**Collaborative**

Flexible	Tell us about a situation (either in your ministry or personal life) that did not go as you had anticipated. How did you deal with it? In hindsight, what would you do differently?
Engaging	Tell us about the best experience with a congregation. Recall a time when you felt most alive, most involved, spiritually touched or most excited about your involvement.
Willingness to Learn/ Try new ideas	Please share one thing you have learned from a previous congregation or pastoral experience. Can you give us an example of a new process or practice which you tried? Was it considered successful? Why or why not?
Give Space to Others/ Supportive	Please share an example of your leadership style which you have found successful.

**Spiritual Discipline**

Faith	How do you renew yourself spiritually? Do you practice a spiritual discipline?
Self-Care/ Energy	What do you do to care for yourself? How do you "re-charge your battery?"

## QUESTIONS A CANDIDATE MAY ASK

### General

- Why am I of interest to you as a candidate?

### Nature of the congregation:

- Tell me about the history of the congregation. What have been some of the high points and some of the disappointments?
- What are the major strengths of your congregation? The weaknesses?
- What are the three greatest challenges in your church that the next pastor will have to face?

### Worship Life

- How would you describe your worship?
- What aspect of your worship would you never want to see changed? What aspect of your worship would you like to change as soon as possible?
- How are decisions about baptisms made?
- How does your congregation define “biblical preaching?”

### Outreach

- How is your congregation committed to a ministry in the community?
- How does your community view your church?
- What role would you like your pastor to take in community service organizations and ecumenical activities?

### Program

- What is the mission of your congregation?
- How was the mission determined and is it written down somewhere?
- How does your congregation set goals and priorities?

### Finances

- How does this congregation go about building budgets?
- What is the present financial condition of the congregation?
- What part do you expect your pastor to take in financial stewardship?

### Denominational Connection

- In what ways does your congregation participate in, or relate to, the ministry programs of the PC(USA)?
- Are there members who are active at the presbytery level?
- How does the presbytery view your congregation?

**SAMPLE RELEASE LANGUAGE/LETTER**

(Date)

Dear Pastor \_\_\_\_\_:

On behalf of \_\_\_\_\_ Presbyterian Church, I want to thank you for interviewing with our Pastor Nominating Committee. (OR I want to thank you self-referring your Personal Information Form to our PNC.) During this time of discernment, we are pleased that we had the opportunity to meet strong candidates with many gifts.

After much deliberation and prayer, the PNC has made the decision to no longer consider you for a Call.

We appreciate your interest in our congregation and wish you continued success in your ministry.

Sincerely,

PNC Chairperson