

Presbytery of Baltimore - Committee on Ministry
Basic Guidelines for Search Committee Etiquette

1. Every self-referred PIF submitted should receive an acknowledgement, by letter or email, thanking each candidate for his or her interest, within one week of receiving the PIF.
2. Those candidates from the electronic matching process may also be acknowledged; a post card would be sufficient. These candidates could also be asked if they are interested in being considered. On the other hand, keep in mind that these candidates do not know that you have been given their PIFs.
3. Be sure to send all correspondence to a home address or to the candidate's preferred address.
4. Each candidate being retained to the next level of the process should receive a letter informing him or her of the committee's progress and affirming that he or she is still under consideration. This is a good time to ask for further information or an interview. You may want to tell these candidates that they may contact the PNC at any time to find out about their status.
5. Notify candidates eliminated from the process at any stage, *immediately* (within one or two days) following the committee's decision, by letter or email. You should keep track of those PIFs that come from sources other than the candidate. A rejection letter out of the blue may well insult a candidate who doesn't know that he or she is being considered.
6. Periodically review your back burner pile to remove candidates from consideration and so notify them.
7. Interviews should be conducted in such a way that the candidates will not cross paths in the interview process.
8. Once any kind of interview, including a neutral pulpit, is arranged, the committee is obligated to participate. If between scheduling and event, the committee's discernment moves in a different direction, the arrangement should be cancelled and the candidate notified. Under no circumstances should the committee simply fail to appear. Remember that even if you have "fallen in love" with another candidate, that early candidate may withdraw.
9. When the committee has decided to issue a call to a candidate, the committee may be wise to retain other acceptable candidates, their second and third choices, for example, until the congregational vote and the signing of the call papers, as the chosen candidate may withdraw at any point up until that time. The second and third choices should be notified immediately at that point.
10. If the committee is definitely no longer interested in a candidate who has participated in a face-to-face interview, the committee should notify the candidate of that decision with a phone call, *not* a letter or email (unless the candidate has indicated that is the preferred mode of communication), *immediately* (that day or the next day). A formal letter sent as follow-up to or verification of the phone conversation, including thanks to the candidate for his or her participation, would then be appropriate.
11. Offer to talk with rejected candidates about why they were not selected. That information is helpful to candidates in the search process.

Approved by the Committee on Ministry on January 4, 2005