

“society” worshipping with them, may be and generally are invited to unite with them in this call.

If the call be accepted by the candidate, a committee of the church, with the candidate, agree on certain neighbouring churches, who shall be invited to compose the ordaining council. “Letters missive” are sent to these churches, signed by said committee.

The pastors and delegates invited assemble and organize. A record of the doings of the church and candidate is read. They then proceed to examine said candidate. If they are satisfied in regard to his qualifications, they arrange for public services. According to this arrangement, the candidate is installed over the church as pastor.

The work of this council is to review a previous act of the church. If they approve, they proceed to induct the candidate to the pastoral office; this being only the consummation of the previous act of the church.

The same principle obtains in calling a council to consider any previous act of the church for *dissolving* the pastoral relation. In both cases the calling of a council is a standing rule in our American Congregational churches. Some of the reasons may be given.

1. The office of the pastor is of such weight and solemnity, that there should be a service of special consecration to that office, and of special prayer to God that the pastor may discharge his duty in a becoming and faithful manner. Such is the nature of the services observed when the pastor elect is inducted into office.

2. These services, properly conducted, heighten the pastor’s own conception of the importance of his work. The public interest manifested in the work he has chosen, and the care expressed by surrounding churches, tend to impress his own mind more deeply with the sacredness of this divinely appointed office.

3. It deepens the conviction of the church and society in regard to *their* duty. The solemn covenant between the pastor and the people is not only sealed now by mutual agreement, but by inviting neighbouring pastors and churches in council, they call on them to witness this covenant, which they voluntarily pledge themselves faithfully to keep. Being encompassed by such a cloud of witnesses, the conviction will be more deep in the church, that every man will be expected to do his duty.

4. The installed pastor is to have fellowship with other pastors and churches. They are branches of one Christian family. Confidence in each other’s views of doctrine and church polity is necessary. There must be general agreement and interchange of Christian activities and courtesies. And neighbouring churches are interested that the newly settled pastor should be approved by examination as to his ability, his fitness for his work, and his soundness of faith. This is satisfactorily done through the ordaining council giving their unanimous public approval.

5. Though the council of churches has no ecclesiastical authority over any church, yet their approval or disapproval of the pastor-elect has great power over the public mind. The case of Rev. Mr. F., of Massachusetts, may be given as an illustration. A few years ago he was cited before a council of churches, to answer charges which seriously affected his moral character. After a full examination of the case, he was pronounced guilty; and it was decided that he was not a proper person to preach the gospel. But he had friends and influence. He appealed to the civil courts of the commonwealth, and was acquitted. That court declared him *not* guilty. But this did not change the mind of the Christian public. In a few churches he was invited