

Presbytery of the Pines Committee on Ministry

Guidelines for Leaving a Congregation

Times of transition from one ministry to another and from one pastor to another are both exciting and stressful. During that time, there are some things that need to be done and the manner in which they are done can greatly affect the nature of what follows. These guidelines are designed to help pastors and congregations say good bye to each other in a healthy way so that they can prepare for new ministries that will follow. These guidelines are also designed to help pastors and congregations remember to take the appropriate actions with the presbytery and the Board of Pensions in order to make this transition as seamlessly as possible.

TIMELINE

This timeline only applies to those situations where the call is dissolved upon the initiation of the pastor. While most of the actions listed in the timeline below will take place when the dissolution is initiated by the presbytery or the congregation, there will be some important differences. Congregations seeking to initiate the dissolution of a pastoral call should consult with the General Presbyter or the Moderator of the Committee on Ministry before initiating that process.

When?	Pastor	Session/Congregation	Presbytery
Upon accepting a new call	Contacts the General Presbyter and/or Moderator of COM of the presbytery of call to receive that presbytery's process. Notifies the General Presbyter and/or Moderator of COM of Pines Presbytery.(Sec II A-1.1)		
4-6 weeks prior to last Sunday	3. Informs the session and requests that they call a congregational meeting to ask presbytery to dissolve the call.	(Session) Calls a congregational meeting to request that the presbytery dissolve the call. (Congregation) Votes to concur with the pastor's request to dissolve the call. (Session) Reports the vote of the congregation to General Presbyter and/or Moderator of COM (Sec. II B-2)	COM appoints a contact person to help guide the session & congregation through the transition. Sends a representative to be present at the congregational meeting (if possible). COM votes to dissolve the relationship upon the request of the pastor & congregation. COM schedules exit interviews with the session and with the pastor. (Sec.II A-1.2)

<p>In the 4-6 weeks between the session meeting and last Sunday</p>	<p>Participates in an exit interview with COM.</p> <p>Contacts the Board of Pensions regarding this change of call. (Sec II A-1.5)</p> <p>Negotiates with the session the details of his or her departure (final date of employment, use of the manse beyond the end of employment, use of unused vacation, disposition of laptop computer, etc).</p> <p>Clearly presents the concept of separation ethics as part of saying good-bye. (Sec. II A-1.3) (Sec. II A-1.4)</p>	<p>(Session) Participates in an exit interview with COM.</p> <p>(Session) Contacts the Board of Pensions regarding the end of this call and vacancy dues. (Sec II A-1.5 &A-1.6)</p> <p>(Session) Negotiates with the pastor the details of his or her departure. (Sec II A-1.4)</p> <p>(Session) Clearly explains to the congregation the concept of separation ethics as part of saying good-bye. (Session) Determines what kind of transitional leadership to seek and begins planning for the continuation of ministry after the pastor's departure. (Congregation) Plans how the congregation will say good-bye to the pastor.</p>	<p>5. COM conducts exit interviews with the pastor and with the session. Clearly explaining the presbytery's policy on separation ethics. (Sec II A-1.3) (Sec II A-1.4)</p>
<p>On the last Sunday of work</p>	<p>8. Celebrates the end of his or her ministry at that congregation.</p>	<p>10. Celebrates the end of their ministry together.</p>	<p>6. Sends a representative to be present and participate in the worship service.</p>
<p>After the Last Sunday of work</p>	<p>9. Vacates the church building and manse, returns any church property in his or her possession, and takes any vacation time as negotiated with the session.</p>		<p>7. COM appoints a moderator of session. (Sec. II B-3; B-3.1)</p>

WHEN DO I TELL MY CURRENT CONGREGATION?

Initiating your departure should be timed based on several factors:

1. Receipt of the vote of the calling congregation (not PNC)
2. Successful examination by the calling presbytery
3. The desired date of departure

HOW LONG SHOULD IT BE BETWEEN TELLING AND LEAVING?

Not Less Than 4 Weeks: Because of the things that need to be done between the initial announcement of the pastor's departure and the final Sunday of work, this time should be no less than four weeks. Any less time will make it difficult for the session, congregation, and presbytery to say good-bye and to complete the necessary planning for the continuation of ministry after the pastor's departure.

Not More than 6 Weeks: The pastor, session, congregation, and presbytery need sufficient time to say good-bye. However, too much time can present a problem. Six weeks should be sufficient. This does not apply to retirement which is often announced much further in advance.

Vacation: Any accumulated vacation that will be spent at the end of the call should not be factored into that 4-6 weeks, but instead, taken after the final Sunday of work. However, for Board of Pensions purposes, your final day of work will be at the end of that vacation.

TIMING YOUR LAST DAY

In order to facilitate a smooth transition, the Committee on Ministry recommends that you time your last day with a natural break in the church calendar. Leaving in the middle of Advent will cause additional stress upon you, your congregation, and the presbytery. Leaving on December 31, however, can ameliorate some of that stress. Additionally, timing your last day of work to the end of a pay period will help the treasurer avoid having to calculate a partial pay-period.

CONTACTING THE BOARD OF PENSIONS

When a pastor leaves a call and/or begins another, there are Board of Pensions implications for the pastor and the congregation. In order to make this transition as smooth as possible, both the pastor and the congregation should consult with the Board of Pensions about this transition. They can be contacted at:

National Office:
1-800-773-7752 (800-PRESPLAN)
www.pensions.org

Regional Representative
1-800-773-7752 (800-PRESPLAN)

TYPES OF TRANSITIONAL LEADERSHIP

As the session and congregation look forward to the future of ministry after the departure of the current pastor, there are several models for transitional leadership available. The session will need to decide which of these models to pursue and beginning planning now for that transition.

Interim Minister - A pastor who is specially trained and hired on a contract basis to help a congregation resolve conflicts, discern its mission, and prepare for the next pastor. Congregations seeking an interim minister should be prepared to go through at least a one year process of discernment. For more information, see the presbytery's policy on Interim Ministry.

Stated/Temporary Supply - A pastor who will serve as the pastor of the congregation (preaching, teaching, pastoral care, weddings, funerals, moderating session*, and presiding at the sacraments*) on a contract basis until a new pastor is called. This person is not

necessarily trained to help congregations through transitions and will not normally lead a process of discernment.

* = If approved by presbytery to do so

Pulpit Supply - A person or persons hired on a week-to-week basis to preach. These individuals do not generally do more than preach, though some may be approved to preside at the sacraments.

Designated Pastor - An installed pastor who is called by the congregation from a list of potential pastors provided to it by the presbytery. Designated Pastors are installed for a term of no less than two years and no more than four. However, they are eligible to become the next installed pastor at the end of that time. This model of ministry is helpful when a congregation is in turmoil because of an internal conflict, the sudden death of the previous installed pastor, or if the departure of the previous pastor was not amicable.

Once you have chosen the model of transitional ministry that you would like to pursue, contact the General Presbyter and/or the Moderator of COM to proceed.

SAYING GOOD-BYE

There are many ways that a congregation and a pastor say good-bye: receptions, dinners, and parting gifts are all appropriate so long as they set the tone for a healthy transition. The Committee on Ministry highly recommends that the worship service on the pastor's last Sunday be shaped to acknowledge the departure and reinforce the separation ethics that contribute to a healthy transition. *The Book of Occasional Services* has an outline for such a service that can provide a good starting place for planning that Sunday.

EXIT INTERVIEWS

Once the pastor has asked the session to call a congregational meeting to dissolve the relationship, the Committee on Ministry will schedule an exit interview with the pastor and an exit interview with the session. Ordinarily, these interviews will be conducted by the General Presbyter and the COM Liaison to that congregation.

When a Pastor Leaves a Church

SAMPLE LETTER FOR DISSOLUTION OF A CALL

TO: Committee on Ministry, Presbytery of the Pines

FROM: (PASTOR NAME)

DATE: (CURRENT DATE)

I request that the Presbytery of the Pines dissolve the relationship which exists between me and the **(CHURCH NAME, LOCATION)**, so that I might accept the call of **(NAME OF FUTURE CHURCH, NEW PRESBYTERY)**, effective **(SPECIFIC DATE)**.

The **(CHURCH NAME)** Session has called for a congregational meeting to be held following worship on Sunday, **(SPECIFY DATE)**, for the purpose of concurring with this request.

My last Sunday in the pulpit will be **(SPECIFY DATE)**. My last day in the office will be **(SPECIFY DATE)**. I will begin terminal leave the following day to effect my relocation.

**Presbytery of the Pines Committee on Ministry
Exit Interview with a Pastor**

Questions to be Asked:

- ⌘ What are the good memories about this pastorate that you will take with you?
- ⌘ What are the strengths of this congregation that present the most potential as they move forward?
- ⌘ In what ways will you be a better minister at your next pastorate because of this one?
- ⌘ What have been your greatest frustrations in this pastorate and how can the presbytery help the next pastor avoid those frustrations?
- ⌘ Have you discerned any patterns in the history of this congregation that tends to be repeated?
- ⌘ Are there any problems in this congregation that you think should be dealt with before they proceed to call a new pastor?
- ⌘ What opportunities could this congregation embrace in the next 3-5 years with new pastoral leadership?
- ⌘ Who are the leaders in this congregation who will be most instrumental in shaping its ministry in the future?
- ⌘ What advice would you give to the next pastor of this congregation?
- ⌘ How have you prepared yourself and the congregation for your departure?
- ⌘ Is there anything that the Committee on Ministry should know that has not yet been said?
- ⌘ Is there any part of this conversation that you do not want shared with the session?

Presbytery of the Pines Committee on Ministry
Exit Interview with a Session

Questions to be Asked:

- ⌘ What good memories about your pastor will you cherish after he or she is gone?
- ⌘ What are the strengths of your current pastor that you hope your next pastor will have?
- ⌘ In what ways will you be a better Session and congregation because of this pastor's service?
- ⌘ What have been your greatest frustrations in working with your pastor? How can he or she become a more effective pastor?
- ⌘ Are there any problems in this congregation that you think should be dealt with before you proceed to call a new pastor?
- ⌘ What opportunities could this congregation embrace in the next 3-5 years with new pastoral leadership?
- ⌘ Who are the leaders in this congregation who will be most instrumental in shaping its ministry in the future?
- ⌘ How have you prepared yourself and the congregation for the departure of your pastor?
- ⌘ How can the Committee on Ministry help you in this time of transition?
- ⌘ Is there anything that the Committee on Ministry should know that has not yet been said?
- ⌘ Is there any part of this conversation that you do not want shared with your pastor?

When a Pastor Leaves a Church

SEPARATION ETHICS

RATIONALE

The relationship between a pastor and congregation is often deeply personal, built on an accumulation of shared transitional and transformational times in personal and corporate lives. It has evolved through teaching, preaching, sacraments, weddings, funerals, presence in times of crisis, praying with and for members, counseling, and shared leadership. The pastor has encouraged people in worship, equipped them for tasks, helped bring forth gifts, and prepared them for mission. From these times, trust, confidence, admiration, affection, fondness, respect, and love have grown. When the relationship between a pastor and a congregation ends for any reason, it marks the beginning of a period of high emotions, uncertainty, and excitement for both the pastor and the congregation. In the months and years that follow, the congregation will evaluate its ministry and seek new leadership; this is a particularly important time in the life of the congregation and it requires appropriate distance from the past pastor so that the congregation can embrace its future. Likewise, that time is important for the former pastor to embrace a new stage in his or her life whether that is retirement, a new call, a new vocation, or a period of Sabbath from the practice of ministry. When congregations and former pastors do not keep appropriate distance from each other, it impedes the ability of both to accept the guidance of the Holy Spirit in this new stage of their lives.

Impact on the Former Pastor

When congregations turn to a former pastor to preside at weddings, funerals, and baptisms or to provide counseling and instruction, it prevents the pastor from enjoying the respite he or she sought in retirement or time away from the practice of ministry. When the former pastor has accepted a new call, it robs the present to serve the past by stealing the pastor away from his or her current ministry. When there is a new pastor called to the congregation, the return of the former pastor can degrade the collegial relationship that they share as presbyters. Furthermore, such requests can strain the good will between the former pastor and former congregation as he or she is forced to choose which requests to accept and which to decline.

Impact on the Current Pastor

Because the relationship between a pastor and congregation is built on the sharing of their lives and faith, when a congregation turns to a former pastor to provide those things which the current pastor is called to provide, it prevents that relationship from growing and sends the message that the current pastor is not really the pastor of the congregation. The involvement of the former pastor in the present life of the congregation can undermine the authority of the current pastor and degrade his or her relationship with the congregation.

Impact on the Congregation

In the period between pastors, the congregation has the opportunity to discover what God is calling it to be and do in the next chapter of its ministry. When a former pastor is involved in that process, either at the request of the congregation or by the former pastor's own initiative, he or she robs the congregation of the opportunity to move into that next stage of ministry. Once the congregation has called a new pastor, the first few years of that ministry are critically important because it is during that time that the relationship between the congregation and the pastor is established and the new

direction of the congregation is set. The involvement of the former pastor during that time can prevent the relationship with the new pastor from being established, which can end the tenure of that pastor before it begins. The involvement of the former pastor during that time can also prevent the church from setting a new direction in ministry either out of respect for the former pastor and his or her leadership or because the former pastor does not agree with the new direction; this can be detrimental to the congregation as it decides to minister to its community as it was and not as it is.

Polity

Recognizing the difficulty that a continuing relationship between a former pastor and a former congregation can cause, the Book of Order stipulates the following:

G-2.0905 - Officiate by Invitation Only

After the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, former pastors and associate pastors shall not provide their pastoral services to members of their former congregations without the invitation of the moderator of session.

Additionally, the 210th General Assembly approved the document *Standards for Ethical Conduct for Ordained Officers in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)* which the Committee on Ministry commends to all deacons and elders (ruling or teaching) for study. A copy of that document can be obtained from the denomination's website (www.pcusa.org) or from the presbytery office. Items 14 through 17 of that document apply to the relationship between congregations, former pastors, and current pastors.

The "Standards of Ethical Conduct for Ordained Officers" in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

I will conduct my ministry so that nothing need be hidden from a governing body or colleagues in ministry. Therefore I will...

14. Deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and upon leaving a ministry or office speak and act in ways that support the ministry of my successor;
15. Participate in the life of a ministry setting I left or from which I have retired only as directed by presbytery;
16. Provide pastoral services for a congregation I previously served only as directed by the presbytery and provide pastoral services to members of other congregations only with the consent of their pastors; and
17. Consult with the committee on ministry in the presbytery of my residence regarding my involvement in any ministry setting during my retirement.

Finally, when a former pastor is interfering in the life and work of a former congregation and its current pastor, it is the responsibility of the presbytery to uprightly administer ecclesiastical discipline through the processes outlined in the Book of Order (G-2.0509) remembering that discipline is "for building up the body of Christ, not for destroying it, for redeeming, not for punishing" (D-1.0102).

Removal by the Presbytery

If a pastor is removed at the initiative of the presbytery because of renunciation of jurisdiction, disciplinary action, or for any other reason, that pastor shall not be invited to return without the approval of the Committee on Ministry.

Pastors Emeritus & Parish Associates

The Book of Order no longer includes these titles commonly used to order the relationship between a retired pastor and a congregation. That does not mean that they are not allowed, just that they are not defined by the constitution. In the case where a healthy relationship between the congregation, current pastor, and former pastor exists, these designations may be helpful in recognizing and ordering that relationship. For these purposes, the Committee on Ministry will understand these terms to mean:

Pastor Emeritus - a title given by the session to a pastor who retired from service to that particular congregation. By nature, pastors emeritus are retired and are not expected to perform any pastoral functions because of this honorary designation. Pastors Emeritus are expected to abide by the standards for ethical separation.

Parish Associate - a title given to a pastor who is retired, engaged in a validated ministry outside of the congregation, or a minister-at-large and who wishes to have a formal relationship with the congregation where he or she worships. Parish Associates serve at the invitation of the moderator of session and their relationship with the congregation is dissolved when a new moderator is appointed unless the new moderator extends a new invitation. Parish Associates are not installed and should be considered a temporary pastoral relationship and abide by the polity for such contained in G- 2.0504b-c. Parish Associates may or may not be compensated depending on the nature of the relationship with the congregation as it is defined by the session and its moderator. Parish Associates are expected to abide by the standards for ethical separation.

When a session desires to name a pastor emeritus or a parish associate, they shall obtain the approval of the Committee on Ministry before proceeding.

STANDARDS FOR ETHICAL SEPARATION

The Committee on Ministry recognizes that each congregation and pastor are different and so some flexibility in separation is required in order to encourage the health of the presbytery and the congregations and teaching elders under its care. Therefore, the committee requires that separating pastors and congregations complete a *Boundaries Covenant* to order their lives after the call is dissolved. The *Boundaries Covenant* has some parts that are non-negotiable and some that will be negotiated by the session and the departing pastor and then sent to the Committee on Ministry for approval. The *Boundaries Covenant* will be kept on file at the presbytery office and will be given to any temporary or installed pastors who serve the congregation after that point for so long as it is relevant to the life and ministry of the congregation.

Non-Negotiable

No Relationship with the PNC - The former pastor shall not be involved in the call process for a new pastor in any way. This includes, but is not limited to, influencing the election of a PNC, commenting on the mission study, or making recommendations on particular candidates.

Compensation Ceases - The former pastor shall not continue to receive compensation from the congregation, whether salary, use of church property, or reimbursements except those negotiated as part of a severance agreement that has been approved by the Committee on Ministry.

Officiate by Invitation Only - The former pastor will only provide pastoral services to members of their former congregations as invited to do so by the current moderator of session. The moderator of session may withdraw an invitation previously given by a past moderator or pre-arranged in the *Boundaries Covenant*.

Discourage Membership Transfers - If the former pastor has taken a new call near the former congregation, he or she will not attempt to recruit members from the former congregation and will encourage any who inquire about moving their membership from the former congregation to the new one to remain committed to their current congregation.

Negotiable

Period of Separation - It is customary for a former pastor to observe a period of no contact with the congregation for a period of time after the call is dissolved. Ordinarily, this period lasts until 1 year after a new pastor is installed.

Return for Pre-Arranged Services - Are there any impending services that will take place after the date of dissolution for which it has already been arranged for the pastor to preside? Is there someone else who can preside at these services instead?

Community Relations - A pastor is often seen as a pastor to people beyond the membership of the congregation. This may take on many forms whether it is presiding at weddings and funerals of non-members, participating in the leadership of local ministries, or providing counseling to members of the community at-large. To what extent were these activities because he or she was the pastor of the congregation and to what extent were they the personal projects of the pastor? Which of these activities will continue and which will end? Who needs to be told of these new boundaries (funeral directors, wedding planners, hospital chaplains, ministry boards, etc.) and how will they be informed?

Family - Are any of the pastor's family members also members of the congregation? Will they continue to be active in the life of the congregation? How will the congregation continue to provide support and care to them while also keeping appropriate distance from the former pastor? What considerations need to be made for and by the family as the congregation proceeds to call a new pastor?

Friendship - Just because the former pastor is no longer the pastor, does not mean that he or she does not have real and lasting friendships with members of the congregation. How will the line be drawn between being someone's pastor and being someone's friend?

Social Media - New forms of media have enabled new forms of ministry; they have also complicated separation ethics as pastors who have moved far away can more easily continue to provide pastoral services to members of their congregations using those means. To what extent have blogs, social media, text/instant messages, email and other electronic means been a part of the ministry of the pastor? What activities need to end? What needs to change to help the congregation turn away from their former pastor and towards their new one?

Severance - When a pastor leaves a congregation there are some final compensation issues to be negotiated including the use of accrued vacation time, the disposition of church property (laptop, books, cell phone, vestments, etc.), the use of a manse beyond the date of dissolution, etc. In the event that the dissolution of the call was not initiated by the pastor, the presbytery will often require an agreement that includes the continuation of compensation for a defined period of time while the pastor seeks a new call.

To Whom These Standards Apply

Pastors - All former pastors whether they are teaching elders who served in installed or temporary positions or are commissioned ruling elders are expected to abide by the *Boundaries Covenant* out of respect for their ordination vow to "be governed by our church's polity, and abide by its discipline... and be a friend among your colleagues in ministry" (W-4.4003e).

Congregations - Congregations are expected to abide by the *Boundaries Covenant* out of respect for the former pastor, his or her new call (or retirement), and the new pastor of the congregation, and the promises that the congregation made regarding that new pastor "to respect his (her) decisions, and to follow as he (she) guides" (W-4.4006b(2)).

Presbytery - The Presbytery is expected to encourage all parties to live within the terms of the *Boundaries Covenant* as an extension of its responsibility for "disciplining its members who are teaching elders; commissioning ruling elders to limited pastoral service; [and] promoting the peace and harmony of congregations" (G-3.03001c).

While the Committee on Ministry does not require a *Boundaries Covenant* for persons serving congregations in other capacities, (youth ministry directors, Christian Educators, organists, etc), they commend it to congregations as a way to have a discussion about separation ethics when those individuals leave their employ.

Communicating These Standards to the Congregation

It is best if multiple parties explain the standards for ethical separation to the congregation so that it can be fully understood and does not appear to come from only one source. After the departure of the pastor is announced, the presbytery will meet with the session to talk about next steps and include separation ethics as part of that discussion. The session should share the contents of that discussion with the congregation. It is also particularly important for the departing pastor to speak about separation ethics with the congregation and to publically share the contents of the *Boundaries Covenant*.

On the pastor's last Sunday, the Committee on Ministry encourages the congregation to include a liturgical dismissal of the pastor that acknowledges his or her service to the congregation and the agreed upon separation ethics. Both the *Book of Occasional Services* and *Saying Goodbye: A Time of Growth for Congregations and Pastors* by Edward A. White include some resources for that purpose. A representative of the presbytery is often present on the pastor's last Sunday and will say a few words about separation ethics at that time; if a representative is unable to attend, a letter to the congregation will be sent instead.

Boundaries Covenant Presbytery of the Pines

This covenant will order the future relationship between _____ (hereafter referred to as “the pastor”) and _____ of _____ (hereafter referred to as “the church”) who both understand and accept the terms of this covenant and commit themselves to abiding by them as a way of encouraging the health and ministry of both the pastor and the congregation when the pastoral relationship is dissolved as of _____.

As of the date above, the pastor and the congregation covenant together that

- ⌘ The pastor will cease all pastoral duties and will only perform pastoral services to the congregation at the invitation of the moderator of session;
- ⌘ The congregation will end compensation to the pastor except any negotiated severance;
- ⌘ The pastor will not attempt to influence the search process for a new pastor;
- ⌘ The pastor will not recruit members of the congregation to join him or her in his or her new call;
- ⌘ Any future contact between the pastor and members of the congregation will be as friends and not as pastor & parishioner.

Period of Separation: _____

Return for Pre-Arranged Services: _____

Community Relations: _____

Family: _____

Social Media: _____

Severance: _____

This covenant is made for celebrating the shared ministry of the pastor and the congregation as it draws to a close and for strengthening their separate ministries as they go their separate ways. May Christ use it for the building up of his Church and may all glory be given the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever, Amen.

In signing, the parties indicate a commitment to abide by the above covenant and that they have received, understand, and will abide by the separation ethics policy of the Presbytery of the Pines.

Clerk of Session

Date

Pastor

Date

Moderator of COM

Date

When a Pastor Leaves a Church

BOARD OF PENSIONS

**2000 Market St.
Philadelphia, PA 19103-3298
800-773-7752**

<http://www.pensions.org>

**SERVICE TERMINATION SERVICE CHANGE
ENROLLMENT**

Notify Board of Pensions of enrollment or changes within thirty (30) days of effective date of call. The

Church the minister is leaving completes the ENR-301 Termination of Service Form, signed by authorized representative of the Church, the minister and mailed to Board of Pensions.

May be downloaded from the Board of Pension website:

<http://web.pensions.org/Publications/pensions/Home/Forms%20%26%20Publications/Forms/enr-301.pdf>

When the Church calls a new minister complete the ENR-110 Change of Service Form with new information from new call, signed by authorized representative of the Church, the new minister and mailed to Board of Pensions.

May be downloaded from the Board of Pensions website:

<http://web.pensions.org/Publications/pensions/Home/Forms%20%26%20Publications/Forms/enr-110.pdf>

When the Church calls a new minister and the candidate is not a member of the Board of Pensions, the ENR-001 Enrollment Form is completed, signed by authorized representative of the Church, new minister and mailed to Board of Pensions.

May be downloaded from the Board of Pension website:

<http://web.pensions.org/Publications/pensions/Home/Forms%20%26%20Publications/Forms/enr-001.pdf>

The Church and minister reports annually changes in terms of call of the minister - ENR-111

May be downloaded from the Board of Pension website:

<http://web.pensions.org/Publications/pensions/Home/Forms%20%26%20Publications/Forms/enr-111.pdf>

When a Pastor Leaves a Church

BOARD OF PENSIONS VACANCY DUES

including

POLICY FOR WAIVER OF VACANCY DUES

Adopted by Presbytery October 17, 2009

Committee on Ministry has the responsibility to share information on vacancy dues at the point of a pastor's leaving with the church session. The Committee on Ministry is the entity to approve any request for waivers. The Committee on Ministry uses the Board of Pensions' criteria for waiver exemption. Congregations requesting a waiver from the COM must provide financial need with supporting documentation.

**Board of Pensions
Vacancy Dues**

Benefits Plan

The Benefits Plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) reflects and expresses the values and beliefs of the church community that created it. Through the Benefits Plan, the Church provides pensions for retirees and help for those who need healthcare, suffer disability or face the death of a family member. Vacancy Dues are an important part of the Plan.

Vacancy Dues

When a congregation has a ministerial vacancy, the congregation continues to participate in the community by bearing part of the cost of the Medicare Supplement Program on a limited basis through Vacancy Dues. A vacancy exists when a Presbyterian congregation is without an installed pastor, co-pastor, associate pastor, or designated pastor, but plans to call a replacement.

Dues tailored to the congregation

The dues are tailored to each congregation's financial situation by using the salary of the most recent minister as the basis rather than a fixed dollar amount. **The dues are calculated at 12% of the effective salary of the most recent installed minister who occupied the now vacant position.** Union or federated churches and churches regularly served by a supply minister do not pay these dues.

Community

The Plan calls for all who are in the community of faith to share in the care of the servants of the church. The biblical understanding of sharing based on needs and abilities means that a congregation's dues pay for that congregation's share of the total costs of providing benefits for all Church workers in the Plan, including its own employees. Dues are not directly related to the cost of benefits of that congregation's employees; the costs of the benefits programs are apportioned on the basis of each employing organization's compensation expense. Larger organizations with more highly paid personnel contribute more to the cost of the programs than the smaller employing organizations of the Church.

Retirees benefit

Vacancy Dues directly benefit retired servants of the Church: ministers, missionaries, other congregation workers, and their spouses participating in Medicare Supplement coverage. These dues provide a modest subsidy that helps to reduce the cost of that coverage for them. This subsidy is a

concrete expression of the community nature of the Plan. Congregations can provide the funds for our retired neighbors in need of healthcare through the Medicare Supplement.

The Medicare Supplement augments the coverage of Medicare so that retired members and spouses do not bear the full cost of expenses Medicare does not cover. Medicare does not cover the cost of outpatient prescription drugs; about 70% of the Medicare Supplement costs relate to those expenses. More than 10,000 retirees and their spouses benefit by subscribing to the Medicare Supplement coverage.

Post-Retirement Service Dues, paid when churches have the services of a retired member of the Plan, are also used to support the Medicare Supplement program.

Dues used for care

Without these dues payments, individual subscription dues for the Medicare Supplement coverage would be higher. For members with traditional coverage Medicare Supplement dues are subsidized and are \$190 per member per month. The Medicare Supplement for the Affiliated Benefits Program is not subsidized and costs \$230 per member per month.

Increasing need

The financial support for this coverage is becoming increasingly important because the cost of healthcare is constantly increasing. Retirees usually face more health issues than other age groups and must meet those needs from limited incomes.

Dues start

Congregations pay these dues for the first twelve months of the vacancy when it is not filled immediately. These twelve months need not be consecutive. A congregation begins paying the dues the day after the last day it paid salary and dues for the installed minister member who left the position.

Dues stop

These dues cease at the earlier of payment of the full twelve months of dues or when the Board receives notification that the position is occupied temporarily and dues are being paid. See the section on filling the position temporarily.

- abolished (see section below: When a position is abolished).
- filled by the newly installed pastor.

Filling the position temporarily

The congregation does not pay dues twice on the same position. For this reason, congregations **do not pay these dues** when a position is temporarily occupied by one of the following:

- a minister ordained in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the congregation remits full benefit dues to the Benefits Plan.
- a Commissioned Lay Pastor and the congregation enrolls the CLP in the Benefits Plan.
 - a retired minister ordained in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) because the congregation pays post-retirement service dues instead. Post-retirement service dues are 12 percent of the total annual effective salary paid to the retiree during the post-retirement service.
 - a minister of another denomination and the congregation remits dues to that minister's denominational plan. The Presbytery Executive, Moderator of the Committee on Ministry or the Stated Clerk must verify in writing that the congregation is remitting dues to the minister's denominational plan.
 - a minister of another denomination enrolled in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Benefits Plan.

Congregations do pay dues when an ordained minister or a commissioned lay pastor in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) occupies a position temporarily and the congregation does not remit dues to the Benefits Plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for that minister or Commissioned Lay Pastor.

Dues resume following suspension

When a temporary pastor for whom the congregation was remitting dues leaves, dues resume only if the congregation has not satisfied the total twelve-month obligation. Vacancy Dues resume the day after the last day of service of the temporary pastor and continue until the congregation satisfies the twelve-month obligation, again fills the pulpit temporarily, or installs a new minister.

Waiver (See Waiver Request Policy beginning of this section)

The Board of Pensions alone determines if it should grant a waiver of these dues. The Presbytery Executive must request the waiver in writing on a congregation's behalf. The request must include all the specific circumstances prompting the presbytery to recommend a waiver be granted; some examples might be the significant loss of members or income, trauma within the life of the congregation, or damage from natural disaster.

More information

Please call the Board of Pensions at 800-773-7752 (800-PRESPLAN) for more information. On this Web site [Administrative Rules](#) provide additional information.

Vacancy resulting from military activation

Congregations pay either Vacancy Dues or dues under the USERRA requirements, not both. Please see the [information on USERRA](#) on the Board of Pensions Web site.

When a position is abolished

If a congregation decides not to fill a vacant ministerial position, it should inform its presbytery. When the Board of Pensions receives written confirmation from the presbytery that the position is abolished, Vacancy Dues end on the date the position is abolished. The letter may come from the presbytery executive, stated clerk or the moderator of the Committee on Ministry and should include the date that the position was abolished.

Any Vacancy Dues paid before the position is abolished are not refunded.

--adopted by Presbytery 10/17/09

Dissolving Pastoral Relationships

While it is not always practical, where possible it is advisable for a COM representative to attend the congregational meeting where a pastoral relationship is dissolved. The following is a sample script for that meeting:

SCRIPT FOR COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY AT CONGREGATIONAL MEETING TO DISSOLVE PASTORAL RELATIONSHIP

Today marks a significant turning point in your journey of faith here at _____
_____ Presbyterian Church. The dissolution of a pastoral relationship is an occasion
which involves a touch of sadness over the fact that your pastor, _____
_____, [and his/her family, as applicable] will soon be moving away. Yet, even more so,
this occasion is a moment in which to give thanks for the fruitful ministry which you have enjoyed and
shared with _____. And beyond that, it is a moment in which we all can begin looking
forward with hope and joy to the future which God has prepared for _____ Church.
Just as we believe that God has called _____ to a new ministry, so also
we believe that God is calling you into a new ministry under new pastoral leadership. So today, we
begin this new journey in joy!

The Committee on Ministry stands by to assist in your search for a new pastor. I [or another appointed person] will be serving as the liaison for your Pastoral Nominating Committee. I will be active in attending the meetings, and will do all I can to aid the process; but I have no intention or desire to "find" or "place" the next pastor of this congregation. That's the work of your nominating committee, to be confirmed by a vote of the congregation.

(Here you might briefly review the PNC/call process. See next section, "Working with a Pastor Nominating Committee" for the steps.)

I would encourage you to begin work now to pray for your Session, your soon-to-be-elected Pastor Nominating Committee, and for yourselves, as you seek to listen for and respond to God's special call in your life at this special time.

Thank you, and every blessing for the journey!

**SAMPLE CONGREGATIONAL MINUTES TO DISSOLVE
PASTORAL RELATIONSHIP**

The congregation of _____ church name _____ Presbyterian Church,
_____ city, _____, state _____, met at the close of worship, Sunday, _____ date _____ at _____ time _____

Written notice had been given on two consecutive Sundays of this meeting called by the Session.

The purpose of the meeting was to ask the congregation to join with _____ pastor name _____
_____, Minister of the church, in the request that the Presbytery of the Pines dissolve the
pastoral relationship between _____ pastor _____ and _____ church _____ Presbyterian
Church effective _____ date _____ [in order that he/she might be free to accept the call to _____ new
church/agency/institution _____.]

_____ moderator _____, presided at the meeting and called the congregation to order
with prayer. He/she read to the congregation the purpose of the meeting cited above, and on motion by
_____, seconded by _____, the matter was placed before
the congregation. The congregation voted unanimously to join with _____ pastor
_____ name _____ in his/her request to the Presbytery of the Pines at the following terms:

- A. Salary: _____
- B. Housing: _____
- C. Vacation Pay: _____
- D. Board of Pensions: _____
- E. The minister shall return all church property and vacate the church office by:
_____ (date) _____.
- F. The minister shall vacate the manse (if there is one) by: _____ (date) _____.
- G. The party receiving financial payment under this agreement agrees not to make use of civil courts in
matters that pertain to their ministry in the church or the negotiations that have led to this agreement.
- H. All benefits for the minister will be discontinued at any time before the end of this agreement should
he/she accept another position for full time employment or adjusted if he or she accepts a part time
position.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned with prayer by the Moderator.

Respectfully submitted:

(typed name), Moderator

(typed name), Clerk of Session

Guidelines for Moderators of Sessions of Pastorless Churches

A church without a resident pastor is vulnerable to certain pressures, both from within a church and from outside its membership. This makes it extremely important that the person appointed by Presbytery to moderate a session take seriously this responsibility and maintain close contacts with the session during this time.

The Committee on Ministry will write the minister appointed to moderate a session and share the following:

1. It is the responsibility of the Clerk of the Session to contact the moderator and arrange for the first meeting. At that meeting, several issues need to be discussed:
 - A. Dates and times for stated meetings of the session.
 - B. Under what conditions does the moderator give his/her permission for the session to meet in a special meeting. It is important that the session notify the moderator of the need for a special meeting and see if it is possible for him/her to be there and to share what business will be transacted.
 - C. The standard docket that will be used at session meetings.
2. The Committee on Ministry requests a quarterly report from the moderator on the general health of the congregation. Information gained in this report will be shared with other agencies so that Presbytery can be helpful to the church during this time without a pastor.
3. The moderator of the session will have no responsibilities for working with the Pastor Nominating Committee. The Committee on Ministry will have a Contact Person who will work closely with this committee.

The Committee on Ministry will write the Clerk of Session a letter and the following will be included in this letter:

1. The name of the minister appointed to moderate their session.
2. The need for the session to be flexible in their meeting dates in order to accommodate the schedule of their moderator.
3. The fact that the session can meet without their moderator only in extra-ordinary situations and with permission of the moderator.
4. The expenses of their moderator, including mileage at the current IRS rate is the responsibility of the Session.

--adopted Committee on Ministry, 2000



THE PRESBYTERY OF THE PINES
210 NORTH BONNER STREET
RUSTON, LOUISIANA 71270

date

<Name>, Clerk of Session
<Church> Presbyterian Church
<address>
<city, state zip>

Dear <clerk>,

This is formal notification that the Committee on Ministry has appointed Minister as the Moderator of Session for Church Presbyterian Church. Minister is pastor of Mini ster's Church Presbyterian Church, City and his/her address at the church is address, city, state zip.

As you look forward to working with Minister, we would share the following observations:

1. Due to his/her work schedule, your Session will need to be flexible in establishing the dates for the meetings of the Church Session.
2. Your Session and Minister will need to come to a clear understanding concerning the need for Special Meetings of the Session when the Moderator cannot be present. Clearly, you will need to notify Minister in advance of the meeting and have him/her give permission to meet.
3. It is your responsibility to make initial contact with Minister and make arrangements for his/her first meeting with you. The phone at the Mini ster's Church is phone and his/her home phone is phone. His/Her email is Minister email.
4. Your Session is responsible for reimbursing him/her for any expenses in coming to Church as your moderator. The current IRS rate for mileage is .50.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Sincerely yours,

_____, Moderator
Committee on Ministry



THE PRESBYTERY OF THE PINES
210 NORTH BONNER STREET
RUSTON, LOUISIANA 71270

date

<Minister>
<Church>
<address>
<city, state zip>

Dear <Minister>,

At the *date* meeting of the Committee on Ministry it was voted to appoint you as the moderator of the Session of *Church* _____ Presbyterian Church, *city, state* _____.

Enclosed you will find:

1. The paper "Guidelines for Moderators of Sessions of Pastorless Churches".
2. Copy of the letter to the Clerk of Session at *Church* _____ Church, _____ *city* _____, _____ *clerk* _____.

Please examine these papers and see if there are any questions. Thanks a lot for accepting this assignment. Do let me know if I can help.

Sincerely yours,

_____, Moderator
Committee on Ministry

Phone

Email

Enclosures

Pulpit Supply Fee

The minimum fee for Pulpit Supply shall be \$100 with \$50 for each additional service at the same church on the same day. Travel shall be reimbursed at applicable IRS rate.

--adopted by Presbytery, 10/17/09

Appointed Session Moderator Fee

Any Clergy or Elder assigned or invited pursuant to Book of Order section G-10.0103 to moderate Session or Congregational meetings in the absence of the pastor shall be reimbursed by the host church for mileage at the applicable IRS rate.

--adopted by Presbytery, 10/17/09

Appointment of Moderator of Session

adopted by Presbytery February 18, 2012

When a church is without an installed pastor or the installed pastor is unable to invite another moderator, the presbytery shall provide for a moderator (G-30201).

It is the policy of Presbytery of the Pines the Committee on Ministry shall appoint a moderator who meets one of the following criteria:

1. Is a teaching elder member of the presbytery in good standing.
2. Is a ruling elder who is now serving or has previously served on the Committee on Ministry.
3. Is a ruling elder commissioned to particular pastoral service for that congregation.

Unless serving as a Commissioned Ruling Elder to that congregation, no ruling elder shall moderate the session of a congregation where he or she is a member.

Working with Pastor Nominating Committees Pastor Search/Call Process

One of Committee on Ministry's responsibilities is helping pastor nominating committees with their work. When a congregation is seeking a pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor, a member of Committee on Ministry will be appointed as contact person with the church's Pastor Nominating Committee.

The COM contact person's role is to help the Pastor Nominating Committee understand and work through the process of calling a new pastor.

Outline for Calling a Pastor

Dissolving the pastoral relationship when the pastor and congregation concur

- Pastor notified COM of his/her intention to accept another call or to retire, and discusses necessary steps and time line in relocation process.
- Presbytery executive or member of COM is present in worship on the Sunday when the pastor's departure is announced, if possible.
- COM meets with the departing pastor for an exit interview.
- COM contact person consults the clerk of session when the pastor's intention to leave is known to the congregation, regarding the process for dissolution of the pastoral relationship. (Book of Order G-14.0610).
- Session calls a congregational meeting to concur with the pastor's request to dissolve the relationship. Clerk of session informs the COM contact person of the congregation's action.
- Presbytery acts to dissolve the pastoral relationship.

Planning the transition

COM contact person meets with the session and moderator (not the departing pastor) for the purpose of:

- A pastoral visit early in the process to assure the COM will help them through the process.
- Discussion of where the session feels the church is in its ministry and life.
- Sharing information and answering questions about the transition process.
- Sharing information about interim ministry or other temporary pastoral leadership.
- Discussing types of pastoral leadership, called or temporary.
- Discussing a congregational mission study as part of the transition. (See Mission Study Resources section)
- Exploring with the session the congregation's finances as relates to whether there will be sufficient funds to support the pastor the church might call. (Remind the session of pastoral search expenses, as well as moving expenses are the church's responsibility.)
- Explaining Board of Pension vacancy dues.

Electing the pastor nominating committee (PNC)

- The Session writes COM requesting permission to form a Pastor Nominating Committee.
- COM grants permission
- **The session calls a congregational meeting for the purpose of electing a pastor nominating committee.**
- If possible, the COM contact attends the congregational meeting to explain the search process to the congregation.

- If the COM contact person is unable to attend the congregational meeting, a letter outlining the contact person's role, and indicating that meeting will be scheduled soon with the PNC, should be sent to the congregation (see sample letter).

The PNC begins its work.

- After the PNC is elected, COM contact sets a time to meet with PNC for the purpose of discussing the search process, sharing resources with PNC, sharing contact information so that the PNC and COM contact can stay in touch, helping the PNC organize, and schedule future meetings with the PNC. During that meeting, the following should be covered: the Presbyterian Church U.S.A.'s commitment to Equal Employment Opportunity, the relationship of the PNC to COM, manner in which names of possible candidates come to the PNC, the confidential nature of the work of the PNC, and how the PNC goes about considering the qualifications of candidates.
- The PNC and/or Session conducts a congregation-wide mission study. (Presbytery of the Pines COM strongly urges that this be done.)
- The PNC, at the conclusion of the mission study, begins writing the Church Information Form (CIF).
- COM contact person is available for consultation on writing the CIF, and should plan to attend PNC meetings at least intermittently throughout the process.
- PNC shares a draft of the CIF with the COM contact person for helpful suggestions.

When the PNC completes the Church Information Form

- PNC completes the CIF and presents it to the COM contact and the session for approval.
- COM approves the CIF.
- The PNC sends the original approved CIF, signed by the clerk of session, the PNC chair, and the COM to the Presbytery office.
- The PNC submits the CIF online on Church Leadership Connection; the clerk and COM moderator approve the CIF electronically.
- Church Leadership Connection adds the CIF to the database and informs the presbytery office of availability of initial matches with Personal Information Forms of pastor candidates.

Collecting Personal Information Forms (PIFs)

- Each PNC will develop its own screening procedures, and receive and evaluate PIFs obtained through Church Leadership Connection computer matching, self-referral, advertisements in church publications and at seminaries, networking with other Presbytery execs, word-of-mouth.
- COM contact person should stress that during this time confidentiality on behalf of the PNC is vital.
- PNC narrows to final candidates and request the required Presbytery reference checks.

PNC chooses the nominee

- PNC interviews final candidates in person, hears the candidate preach, and determines the candidate's willingness to accept a call if extended.
- PNC negotiates terms of call in consultation with the General Presbyter and requests COM examination and review of terms of call.
- Candidate meets with COM
- General Presbyter orders and reviews a criminal background check on the candidate
- If the way be clear, COM conducts an examination with the finalist.

- If the examination is sustained and COM reviews the terms of call, the COM authorizes the session to call a congregational meeting for the purpose of hearing a report from the PNC.
- If all is in order, Presbytery, having approved the terms of call, receives the minister.
- The new pastor begins work, with the PNC providing support for the transition.

The new pastor is ordained/installed

- Once approved by the Presbytery, the new pastor presents plans for ordination/installation to COM.
- COM, on behalf of the Presbytery, approves ordination/installation plans (See Ordination/Installation Service Guidelines)
- The new pastor is ordained/installed by Presbytery in cooperation with the congregation, at a time when other members of the Presbytery are able to attend.

Other resources available to COM members serving as contact person for a PNC can be found on the PCUSA website, www.pcusa.org. Especially helpful are the following:

- On Calling a Pastor at <http://www.pcusa.org/resource/calling-pastor/>
- The Pastoral Search section of the COM Handbook at <http://www.pcusa.org/resource/committee-ministry-advisory-handbook-pdf/>
- A Presbytery of the Pines Handbook for Pastor Nominating Committees

-- adopted by Committee on Ministry 10/1/09

**Sample Letter to a Congregation Explaining COM Contact
Person's Role**

Dear _____ (clerk of Session)

As part of its responsibility to help your newly elected Pastor Nominating Committee work through the process of seeking a new pastor for your church, I've been appointed by Presbytery's Committee on Ministry as your PNC's contact person with COM.

I'll be contacting the PNC soon to set a time to meet with it to discuss the pastoral search process, share resources with the PNC, exchange contact information so that the PNC and Committee on Ministry can stay in touch, and schedule future meetings with the PNC.

But I thought it might be helpful to share a bit about the process with the congregation. Though much of the PNC's work is confidential, the Committee on Ministry urges that the PNC keep you, the congregation, informed on as much of its work as possible.

At our meeting with the PNC, we'll talk about the Presbyterian Church U.S.A.'s commitment to Equal Employment Opportunity, the relationship of the PNC to COM the manner in which names of possible candidates come to the PNC, the confidential nature of the work of the PNC, and how the PNC goes about considering the qualifications of candidates. Your COM strongly urges that either the PNC or the Session conduct a congregation-wide mission study soon after your current pastor leaves. We have resources to help with that.

COM has found that congregations that conduct mission studies see better who they presently are in their journey of faith, and that information helps the PNC write a Church Information Form that gives an accurate, up-to-date picture of your church to potential pastoral candidates. The Church Information Form contains not only statistical data about your congregation, but also narratives on topics such as your church organization and programs; the gifts, skills and experiences your congregation possesses to fulfill its mission; and the key theological issues that are reflected in your ministry. The form also contains a check list of skills that your PNC determines your new pastor should have.

Once your PNC has completed your Church Information Form, COM will review it. Once the form is approved, the PNC will begin to receive the resumes, or Personal Information Forms, of potential pastors.

The search process can be long. Indeed, it is a process that should not be rushed. COM will work with your PNC throughout the process. It is our goal to help your PNC find the person that God is calling to your church.

Sincerely,

PNC/COM Liaison Checklist

Working with a Congregation

Name of Church _____

Liaison(s) _____

Name of Previous Pastor _____

Name of Moderator of Session (interim) _____

Name of Moderator of PNC _____

Other Members of the PNC _____

1. If possible, attend congregational meeting to declare the pulpit vacant.
2. COM conducts exit interview with former pastor, and session.
3. Consult with Clerk of Session about dissolution process and calling a congregational meeting to concur with pastor's request.
4. Informed by Clerk of Session about results of congregational meeting.
5. Meetings (as necessary) with Session and appointed moderator about transition period. (See "Planning the Transition" under *Working with Pastor Nominating Committee*)
6. COM approval of interim covenant, when appropriate.

Name: _____ Date of contract _____
7. Session request that COM approve calling a congregational meeting for the purpose of electing a PNC.
8. PNC elected at congregational meeting. If possible, attend the meeting. In lieu of that, send a letter (see sample under "Working with PNC")
9. Initial meeting with PNC to give packet, explain process, etc.
10. Additional meetings, as needed, with PNC
11. Approve/sign off the CIF

12. Clerk of Session, PNC Chair, COM approve/sign off on CIF
13. Passwords given to PNC moderator and CIF is placed on line
14. Receive PIF from PNC: Date: _____
15. References checked with _____
16. Request General Presbyter clearance of candidate.
17. COM meeting with candidate
18. Final examination of candidate by COM
Steps 13-18 repeated if needed.
19. Terms of Call and Statement of Faith approved by COM
20. COM gives permission to move into field.
21. COM gives permission to Session to call a congregational meeting to hear the report from the PNC.
22. Presbytery examines candidate, approves Statement of Faith and Terms of Call.
23. Names of Administrative Commission approved by COM
24. Date of Worship Service and effective date of call approved by COM
25. Notification that letters have been sent to members of the Commission.
26. Pastoral Call form signed by PNC and Moderator; Certification of Call form signed by pastor.
27. Effective Date of Call; Pastor moves into field (if not already in place).
28. Notification that letters have been sent to members of the Commission
29. Worship service to install/ordain.
30. Report to COM that process is complete.

Guidelines for Congregational Mission Study/Congregational Survey

Be Transformed by the Renewal of Your Mind:

A Guide to Mission Statements in the Church Introduction

In the letter to the Romans, Paul wrote, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God - what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2, NRSV). A perfect description of a mission statement for a community of faith. A declaration of the eternal striving for God's will - that could describe the essence of a mission statement. There was a time when mission statements were very popular. From churches to business organizations, everyone developed mission statements. Retreats, both ecclesiastical and corporate, centered around creating a mission statement for a church, a department, a business, a project. We were collectively bombarded by mission statements!

Perhaps the term 'mission statement' is one of those that is used so often we, in the church, have lost sight of its particularly unique relevance for us as a part of the Body of Christ. What is a mission statement anyway? Does it differ from a vision statement? A plethora of resources abound - as detailed or as general as anyone would like. There are multiple definitions. It's confusing to look at the vastness of available information! The purpose of this booklet, therefore, will be to swim through the sea of data to summarize for the individual church what it means to develop and live into a mission statement.

Why do a mission statement?

The purpose of the church is to serve God, so why bother with a mission statement? Not only is each church diverse in its personality, each community of faith is called to live as God's own in different ways. In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, he wrote of the many and varied tasks of the church. "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone." Each church has its own singularly unique mission to the world. Together we comprise the Body of Christ.

One of the hallmark cries of Presbyterians is *ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda*, the church reformed and always to be reformed. That does not mean that we are blown about by the winds of change but that we are purposefully living both in a state of looking to God for God's will and guidance and, at the same time, looking inward - examining ourselves to see how we can best be who God has called us to be. "Consider your call." (I Corinthians 1: 26) Churches, like people, change with time and experience. There is an ebb and flow to the life of any church, and a mission statement responds to the rhythm of the congregation.

Changes can be brought about in a congregation due to the demands of daily living, but there are also major transitions that occur affecting every church body. With each change in leadership, congregations adjust and adapt. A new minister or CLP brings fresh insight, new ideas, different perspectives. Members join and leave creating a ripple of changing experiences in the well that is the church. A crisis in the church, the community, or even in larger society can also impact a church's identity. With each life-changing event, the church is called to examine itself with new eyes, look at God's claim, and determine if she is still being true to that call. Thus, mission statements fill a deep need in the church to be aware of who she is and how God calls her to live out the Gospel.

What is a mission statement?

A mission statement is a celebration! It is an opportunity for a church to rejoice in her God-given gifts and talents as they are used in a particular setting. Not a brag sheet, a mission statement is an open, honest inventory of the identity of a church. It carves out a place in the world for the church, grounding her in the traditions of the past, living out the missional call of the church in today's world, and seeking God's vision and hope for the future.

A mission statement is:

- clear - Use simple sentences, plain language.
- concise - Be brief; one paragraph is sufficient.
- concrete - Be specific.
- energetic - Make it interesting.
- practical - It serves as guideline for the church's identity and actions.
- honest - Do not claim to be something you are not.

A mission statement boldly asserts, "This is who God has called us to be, and this is our hope for the future."

How is a mission statement prepared?

Prayer undergirds the foundation of any mission statement. The first step, therefore, is to pray - seeking God's guidance and wisdom. In a larger church, often a committee is selected by the Session to formulate the new mission statement. Other churches will utilize the Session itself for this task. Throughout the process, humble, honest prayer with openness to hear God is essential.

Congregational surveys are quite useful in taking the pulse of the congregation. What do the people of the church see as strengths and weaknesses? What is their vision of what the church could be? Surveys can be as straightforward as the one attached, or you can access some of the other resources included. Outside firms that specialize in church surveys can be brought in to aid the process. The PC (U.S.A.) website (www.pcusa.org/congregations) offers valuable information. What is imperative is that, no matter the format, the church takes a look at who she is - gifts, strengths, and areas needing improvement - and where she feels God is leading her in the future.

The survey situation can be augmented by congregational discussions. For example, at a church dinner, each table can talk about the church using questions as simple as "What do you like about

this church?", "What do you dislike?", "What do we do well?", "What could we do better?". These four questions can serve as a springboard for some lively discussion that will offer a great deal of insight into the church as a dynamic body.

With all this information gathered, the committee can then begin the process of constructing the statement. This is an excellent time to compile the responses from the church, study other mission statements, and begin to consolidate ideas. Once a first draft is developed, it is reviewed and discussed. Collect feedback from others. The group then comes together once more to revise the statement, develop a consensus, and shape the mission statement that best fits this particular part of the Body of Christ.

How often should a mission statement be revisited?

Certainly, every time a church enters a major transition, such as change in leadership or crisis within the church, the mission statement should be examined and retooled. Even among churches with consistent leadership and few upheavals, it is best to regularly look at the mission statement. Are we living into what we believe God has called us to do? Are we true to the picture created in this statement?

Conclusion

Mission statements encourage the church to ask, "Are we listening to God?" It provides focus, a sense of purpose, an identity, clarity. It is the center around which the church develops programs, missions, projects. Mission statements provide shape and structure for the church to live out her call to God.

Sample Mission Statements

Resources Presbytery
survey

Studying Congregations: A new handbook edited by Nancy T. Ammerman, et. al.

CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY

Please answer the following questions as they best fit *your* view of this congregation. At the end of each section, you will find opportunities to offer comments.

I. What Is Important?

Rank in order of importance (1 being most important; 5 being least important) I'd like to see:

- Education _____
- Fellowship _____
- Mission _____
- Stewardship _____
- Worship _____

II. What Does Our Congregation Do?

For the following questions, please use the scale below:

- Very much so
- somewhat
- adequate
- needs much improvement
- not at all

1. Our worship experience reflects who we are.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Our worship experience connects us with God.	1	2	3	4	5
3. There is Christian education for all ages.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The church provides enough opportunities for individual and group spiritual growth.	1	2	3	4	5
5. The church reaches out to the greater community.	1	2	3	4	5
6. There are adequate fellowship opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
7. The church is active in mission work.	1	2	3	4	5
8. The church takes good care of those in need: the ill, shut-ins, ones in crisis, grief	1	2	3	4	5

OVER

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9. In this church, there is clear understanding of what it means to be Presbyterian. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Stewardship-use of time, talents, and money- is clearly understood as expressions of God's grace. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

What does this church do best?

Where does this church need the most improvement?

Other comments:

III. Who Are We

Using the same scale as provided for Section II, please answer the following questions:

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The leaders of the church-Session and committee members-are well known and easily accessible. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Communication of events and decisions is timely and open. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. This church enjoys cooperative efforts with other congregations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Lay leadership is important to this church. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Conflict and disagreements are adequately addressed. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. This church's theology is conservative. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. This church's worship is traditional. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. A visitor would feel welcome in this church. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. The church has a clear, hopeful vision for the future. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. If this church were to disappear, it would impact my life. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

How would you describe this church to a potential visitor?

Other comments:

Thank you for being a part of the effort to develop a statement of hope for the future of the church.

Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Policy

TO: Chair, Committee on Ministry

FROM: _____
(Name of Church)

1. On_(date), the congregation heard the PC(USA) EEO/AA policy as described in the *Book of Order* G-11.0502g for calling of a Pastor (Associate) to fulfill the requirements of the *Book of Order* G-14.0532.
2. On_(date), the Pastor Nominating Committee discussed and took action signifying its affirmation of the *Book of Order* G-11.0502g and its intent that the Pastor Nominating Committee will follow the Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Program for “calling” of a Pastor (Associate) to fulfill the requirements of the *Book of Order*, G-14.0532.
1. On_____ (date), the Session of the congregation heard the PC(USA) EEO/AA policy as described in the *Book of Order* G-11.0502g for calling of a Pastor (Associate) to fulfill the requirements of the *Book of Order* G- G-14.0532. Its approval of the CIF signifies its support of this policy and program.

2.
Signed _____
(Clerk of Session) (Moderator of Session)

(Chair, PNC) (Date)

CITATION FROM THE BOOK OF ORDER RELATED TO EEO/AA

- G-11.0502g
"It [**Committee on Ministry**] shall provide for the implementation of equal opportunity employment for ministers and candidates without regard to race, ethnic origin, sex, age, marital status or disability. In the case of each call, it shall report to the presbytery the steps in this implementation taken by the calling group."

Temporary Supply Agreement

This Agreement between the Session of the _____ of _____, Pastor Name _____ and the Committee on Ministry of the Presbytery of the Pines is for the purpose of providing Temporary Supply Pastoral Services.

_____ will be designated a Temporary Supply Pastor of the _____ Church, _____, _____ city _____ state

The duties of the Temporary Supply Pastor shall include: *(check all that apply)*

- _____ Lead worship and preach each Sunday
- _____ Administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper
- _____ Moderate session and congregational meetings
- _____ Visit the sick and shut-in
- _____ Lead funeral services upon request
- _____ Other _____

Approximate Time Expectation: _____ hours per week.

As the Temporary Supply is in active service to the Presbyterian Church (USA), if employed in a full-time capacity, Presbytery's Minimum Terms of Call shall be required.

Compensation: Cash salary \$ _____ for the term of the covenant.

Housing: _____ Free use of manse ___ Yes ___ No

Ministry expenses reimbursed including travel at IRS approved rate.

Vacation - 1 week per quarter

Continuing Education - 1 week every six months

The Temporary Supply Pastor shall have no relationship with the Pastoral Nominating Committee.

This agreement must be approved by the Committee on Ministry of the Presbytery.

OVER

During the term of this agreement, _____ is accountable to the Presbytery through the Committee on Ministry.

- A. Send to the Committee on Ministry, every three months, a one page written report which will provide information on the well-being of the congregation.
- B. Keep the Board of Pensions informed of the compensation received from the Congregation.
- C. Attend all meetings of the Presbytery of the Pines.

At the end of this agreement, the Session of the _____ Church agrees to provide a process for the evaluation of this Temporary Supply Minister.

This agreement is for a period of _____ months (not to exceed 12 months), effective _____. Either the Session or the Temporary Supply Pastor upon thirty (30) days written notice, may terminate this agreement. All financial responsibility of the Session shall cease on the effective date of the termination.

Signature, Temporary Supply Pastor

Signature, Clerk of Session

Signature, Moderator of Committee on Ministry or Presbytery Executive

