

VI • Ministry & Church Professionals

6.01 Ministry

I. Preparation for Ministry

The committee on preparation for ministry shall be responsible for all aspects of the care and oversight of inquirers and candidates, including authority to dismiss candidates, enroll inquirers, and certify candidates as ready for examination for ordination, with the provision that all such actions be reported to the next stated meeting of the presbytery (G-2.0605).

The committee nominates readers (and alternates) from its own body for the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee examinations (G-2.0607d). All actions carried out by the committee as a result of delegated authority shall be reported to the presbytery at its next regular meeting. (G-3.0307)

The committee on preparation for ministry also shall administer a commissioned ruling elder educational program. Upon completion of basic courses, the committee shall certify to presbytery persons ready to be commissioned as commissioned ruling elders (G-2.1001 & G-2.1002). (SR 3.025)

A. Inquirers

The purpose of the inquiry phase is described in the *Book of Order* (G-2.0603)

1. Admission to Inquiry

A member of a congregation is considered for enrollment as an inquirer when he or she approaches the session about the possibility of becoming a minister of the Word and Sacrament and formally agrees with the session and with the presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry to explore the implications of this quest. Enrollment is intended to be a thoughtful and deliberate step; people are encouraged to take this formal action soon after they have made their personal decision to explore this ministry so that the presbytery's committee can provide them with support and counsel as early as possible. The process and requirement of the inquiry phase shall be as follows:

- a. A person desiring to become an inquirer shall indicate to the session of the particular church a desire to explore the personal implications of becoming a minister of the Word and Sacrament.
- b. The person shall have been an active member of that particular church for at least six months.

- c. The session shall contact the Committee on Preparation for Ministry for orientation to the process used by the presbytery.
- d. The session shall consult with the person and, if the individual requests to be enrolled as an inquirer, shall make a recommendation to presbytery through the stated clerk with respect to the request.
- e. Upon receipt of the recommendation of the session, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry shall recommend to the presbytery whether to enroll the person as an inquirer. The Committee on Preparation for Ministry shall interview the person before making its recommendation. The period of enrollment shall be at least two years from the date of the presbytery's action, at least one year of which shall be as a candidate, required in G-2.0602. A presbytery may assign to its Committee on Preparation for Ministry the power to enroll inquirers, with the provision that the action be reported to the next stated meeting of the presbytery.
- f. This phase of inquiry shall be of sufficient length for the inquirer, the session, and the Committee on Preparation for Ministry to decide whether the inquirer should apply to become a candidate. During this time, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry shall make use of resources such as information provided by the inquirer, personal references, and reports from counseling services, the session, and the inquirer's institution of learning, if the inquirer is a student.

2. During Inquiry

Before deciding whether to apply for candidacy, the inquirer consults at least once a year with the Committee on Preparation for Ministry. During each consultation, the committee and the inquirer assesses her or his progress toward previously established goals and together negotiate new goals.

The presbytery shall require the inquirer to submit an annual written report on progress in studies and service to the church. The seminary or institution of theological education shall make an annual report on the progress of the inquirer toward preparation for ministry. The presbytery shall conduct an annual consultation for the evaluation and nurture of the inquirer. In no case shall an inquirer be excused from these annual consultations.

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry is given several options for conducting an annual consultation. The provisions are intended to underscore the importance of these mandatory consultations.

Presbytery, together with the session and the inquirer shall bear necessary expenses for the annual consultation, which shall be

concerned with spiritual growth and needs of the individual, the financial planning for his or her relation to the church and progress in the program of study leading to ordination for ministry. The annual consultation may be held by the entire committee or may be carried out by persons appointed by the committee either from its membership or by persons with similar responsibilities in a presbytery within which the inquirer is pursuing a course of study or engaging in other approved service. The case of final assessment shall be conducted by the Presbytery of Wyoming's Committee on Preparation for Ministry.

Each consultation shall include a decision, made by the whole committee, whether to continue or terminate the period of inquiry. The decision shall be reported to the presbytery.

3. Completion of Inquiry

The initial phase concludes when the Committee on Preparation for Ministry knows the inquirer well enough to determine whether or not to recommend that presbytery receive him or her as a candidate.

4. Expected Outcomes

By the end of the inquiry phase, each inquirer shall demonstrate adequate promise for ministry by presenting

- a. a statement of his or her understanding of Christian vocation in the reformed tradition and how it relates to his or her sense of call;
- b. a statement of personal faith which incorporates an understanding of the Reformed tradition;
- c. an analysis of at least one concept from the personal faith statement regarding what it suggests about God, humanity and their interrelationships;
- d. a statement of what it means to be Presbyterian, indicating how that awareness grows out of participation in the life of the particular church;
- e. a statement of self-understanding which reflects the inquirer's personal and cultural background and includes a concern for maintaining spiritual, physical and mental health;
- f. a statement of his or her understanding of the task ministers of the Word and Sacrament perform, including an awareness of his or her specific gifts for ministry of the Word and Sacrament and of areas in which growth is needed.

B. Candidates

The purpose of candidacy is defined in G-2.0604.

1. Admission to Candidacy

The inquirer becomes a candidate by action of the presbytery. At that time the candidate formally agrees to accept the presbytery's

supervision in her or his preparation for the ministry of the Word and Sacrament. The process for the candidacy phase is as follows:

- a. An inquirer shall apply to the presbytery through the stated clerk to become a candidate for the office of Minister of the Word and Sacrament through the session of his or her church
- b. The session shall confer with the inquirer, review the evidence of the inquiry phase, and make recommendations to the presbytery through the stated clerk with respect to the application
- c. The Committee on Preparation for Ministry shall confer with the inquirer and review the evidence which indicates whether the inquirer is ready to proceed to candidacy
- d. The Committee on Preparation for Ministry shall make a definite recommendation to the presbytery with respect to whether the inquirer should be received as a candidate. Presbytery shall act on every committee recommendation regarding the application for candidacy.
- e. The presbytery or Committee on Preparation for Ministry shall examine the inquirer in person with respect to his or her Christian faith, forms of Christian service undertaken, and motives for seeking the ministry. The Committee on Preparation for Ministry is authorized to approve the candidacy.
- f. If the examination is approved, the presbytery shall receive the inquirer as a candidate after the following manner. The moderator of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry shall propose the following questions to the inquirer:
 - (1) Do you believe yourself to be called by God to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament?
 - (2) Do you promise in reliance upon the grace of God to maintain a Christian character and conduct, and to be diligent and faithful in making full preparation for the ministry?
 - (3) Do you accept the proper supervision of the presbytery in matters that concern your preparation for this ministry?
 - (4) Do you desire now to be received by this presbytery as a candidate for the ministry of the Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?
- g. If these questions are answered in the affirmative, a brief charge shall be given, the candidate's name shall be recorded on the presbytery's roll of candidates, and the proceedings shall close with prayer.

2. During Candidacy

The covenant relationship between the candidate and the presbytery is expressed through the negotiation and review of a series of learning contracts based on expected outcomes for this phase. In consultations that occur at least once a year, both the committee and the candidate assess her or his progress toward completion of previously established goals and negotiate appropriate new goals. It is essential that during each consultation the decision be made as to whether candidacy should be continued, especially if it becomes clear that adequate growth is not taking place.

The presbytery shall require the candidate to submit an annual written report on progress in studies and service to the church. The seminary or institution of theological education shall make an annual report on the progress of the candidate toward preparation for the ministry. The presbytery shall conduct an annual consultation for the evaluation and nurture of the candidate. In no case shall a candidate be excused from these annual consultations.

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry is given several options for conducting an annual consultation. The provisions are intended to underscore the importance of these mandatory consultations

Presbytery, together with the session and the candidate shall bear necessary expenses for the annual consultation, which shall be concerned with spiritual growth and needs of the individual, the financial planning for his or her relation to the church and progress in the program of study leading to ordination for ministry. The annual consultation may be held by the entire committee or may be carried out by persons appointed by the committee either from its membership or by persons with similar responsibilities in a presbytery within which the candidate is pursuing a course of study or engaging in other approved service, except in the case of final assessment, which should be conducted by the Presbytery of Wyoming's Committee on Preparation for Ministry.

Each consultation shall include a decision, made by the whole committee, whether to continue or terminate the period of candidacy. The decision shall be reported to the presbytery.

3. Completion of Candidacy

Candidacy continues until the presbytery acts in one of three ways to remove the candidate's name from the Roll of Candidates:

- a. Withdrawal by the candidate;
- b. Removal by the presbytery;

- c. Completion of the preparation for the ministry process with a call to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament. In this case, the following steps are involved:
 - (1) The Committee on Preparation for Ministry determines that the candidate is ready to be examined for ordination;
 - (2) The candidate receives a call; and
 - (3) The candidate is examined and approved for ordination by the responsible presbytery (G-14.0481).

By the end of the candidacy phase, each candidate to be ordained shall demonstrate readiness to begin ministry of the Word and Sacrament by

- a. presenting evidence of competence in the fields of theology, Bible, polity and worship and sacraments, ordinarily attested to by completion of the requirements of G-2.0607; and evidence of ministerial skill attested in the supervised practice of ministry;
- b. presenting evidence of readiness to participate in a calling presbytery's plan for transition and of plans for continuing study and growth;
- c. expressing theological views compatible with the confessional documents of the church;
- d. expressing understanding of the meaning of the questions required for ordination informed by knowledge of the church in diverse settings;
- e. revealing commitment to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) with personal maturity, spiritual depth, and a capacity to respond to the needs of others, including colleagues in the ministry;
- f. presenting a written sermon, together with a description of the contemporary need to which it was addressed and an exegetical interpretation of the biblical material out of which the sermon arose. This sermon shall be preached before the calling presbytery or a committee thereof as part of the appearance of the candidate.

C. Requirements to be Certified Ready for a Call

To be certified by the presbytery responsible for the candidate's preparation, each candidate is required to fulfill the following:

- 1. demonstrate the readiness to begin ministry of the Word and Sacrament as required in the expected outcomes above;
- 2. presentation of a transcript showing satisfactory grades at a regionally accredited college or university, together with a diploma;

3. presentation of a transcript from the theological institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools acceptable to the presbytery, the transcript showing satisfactory grades, and presentation of a plan to complete the theological degree including Hebrew and Greek texts.
4. presentation of satisfactory grades together with the examination papers in the five areas covered by the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates; and
5. successful completion of at least one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education.

Ordinarily it takes at least two years to proceed from admission to the inquiry phase to ordination as a minister of the Word and Sacrament. During this time, the inquirer or candidate and members of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry strive to discover and be faithful to God's purpose. The committee's recommendations to begin and to continue the candidacy phase are based on prayerful reflection, on common negotiations with the candidate, and on their mutual discernment that God has called that person and that he or she has adequately developed in response to that call.

When conducting final assessment and certifying candidates ready to seek a call, it is important for the Committee on Preparation for Ministry to give attention to, and prepare the candidates for, some of the first call issues which include:

1. self-understanding in their role as pastor;
2. help for understanding the congregation they will serve in terms of history, ethos, programs, and status in the community, and in relation to the denomination;
3. assistance in establishing an appropriate pastoral relationship style for their situation;
4. support in dealing with conflict that may emerge in the congregation; and
5. intent to attend the Board of Pensions' and the Synod of the Rocky Mountains' *Seminar for New Pastors*.

The candidates are to be reminded of the resources and programs available to them as newly ordained pastors: New Pastors Seminars, Seminar Debt Program, presbytery mentor programs and pastoral support groups.

D. Extraordinary Circumstances for Candidates

General

Exceptions to the requirements in G-2.0610 are at the discretion of the presbytery. The requirement that any exception be granted only by a

three-fourths vote of the members present at a meeting of presbytery makes it clear that exceptions are not to be granted lightly.

Educational Requirements (G-2.0607b-d)

Presbytery may determine (by three-fourths vote at a stated or called meeting) that an inquirer or candidate need not meet certain of the educational requirements of G-14.0310b(2) or b(3) and that an exception shall be granted, only after the Committee on Preparation for Ministry has reported in full the reasons for such exceptions to the presbytery and the course of study which shall be completed to satisfy the presbytery that the candidate has adequate educational preparation, which preparation would normally be demonstrated by the transcripts and degree for a college or university and a theological institution. A full account of the rationale shall be entered in the minutes of presbytery.

Examination Requirements (G-2.0607d)

This portion of the policy requires review every three years, including the approval of the synod.

Presbytery may not waive any of the examination requirements before an inquirer or candidate has failed to receive a satisfactory grade on two attempts on any particular exam, unless the inquirer or candidate has a disability that affects the person's test-taking disability, such disability to be documented by a person or persons of the presbytery's choice. The Committee on Preparation for Ministry shall be authorized to select the person or persons to make the determination of disability. The Committee on Preparation for Ministry shall report the rationale for granting the exception; approval shall be by three-fourths vote of the presbytery. The exception shall be noted in the minutes of presbytery.

In cases of either failure on a particular exam on two attempts or documented disability, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry shall appoint a special committee of three members of presbytery qualified to conduct an examination of the candidate.

The special committee shall consult with the Associate of Examinations in the Office of the General Assembly on an appropriate alternate exam or examination process, such as an oral examination, in the area of examination (see G-6.0607d) and conduct the examination. The examination will require approximately the same time to complete as would the standard exam.

The results of the exam shall be reported to the Committee on Preparation for Ministry and shall inform the recommendations of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry on future steps toward ordination.

Time requirements (G-2.0610)

The presbytery shall act upon a request for an exception to the time requirements of G-2.0610 only after hearing the report of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry regarding the advisability of granting an exception. The exception shall be approved by a three-fourths vote of

presbytery and the account of the rationale shall be included in the minutes of presbytery.

Reporting Exceptions to Any Presbytery Receiving an Inquirer or Candidate (G-2.0610)

The presbytery shall always report any exceptions granted to another presbytery considering receiving the inquirer or candidate. If the presbytery receives the candidate, the presbytery has confirmed exceptions granted and such exceptions shall be binding on any presbytery.

II. Ordination/Installation of Ministers of the Word and Sacrament

The committee on ministry ordinarily appoints the administrative commission, and accepts suggestions from the candidate of persons to serve on the commission. The commission will consist of at least five members, one of whom shall be the moderator of the presbytery or his/her designee, who will act as the presiding officer. The candidate or congregation may invite others to participate in the service, with the concurrence of the commission and at their own expense. Presbytery encourages the candidate and the church to extend invitations to the service far enough in advance so that other presbyters and members of others churches may attend.

The order of worship for services of ordination and installation shall be planned by the person to be ordained/installed, and shall conform in all respects to the provisions of the *Book of Order*. The order of worship shall be submitted (in working form) to the presiding officer of the commission for approval at least two weeks before the service is to be held. The presiding officer will make any necessary additions or corrections before service folders or bulletins are printed. (The *Book of Common Worship* and *Book of Occasional Services*, published by this denomination, are reliable resources for services of ordination/installation.)

6.02 Pastoral Relationships

The Committee on Ministry is authorized to approve and present calls for service for ministers of the Word and Sacrament, to approve the examination of ministers of the Word and Sacrament transferring from other presbyteries, to dissolve the pastoral relationship in cases where the congregation and pastor concur, to grant permission to labor within or outside the bounds of presbytery, and to dismiss ministers of the Word and Sacrament to other presbyteries, with the provision that all such actions be reported to the next stated meeting of presbytery. The committee also may appoint administrative commissions for ordination and installation of ministers of the Word and Sacrament and commissioning and installing of commissioned ruling elders. The committee also reviews and recommends policies affecting calls and contracts for a variety of pastoral and professional services.

The Committee on Ministry shall perform those duties assigned in the *Book of Order* (G-3.0307), including authority to perform those functions delegated to it

by the presbytery. All actions carried out by the committee as a result of delegated authority shall be reported to the presbytery at its next regular meeting. (G-3.0307)

6.03 Continuing Education for Church Professionals

Requirements

In light of the importance placed on formal education for ministers and church professionals in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and recognizing the value of continuing education, the Presbytery of Wyoming requires:

- a. That all calls to ministers and other church professionals, whose terms of call are approved by presbytery, shall provide annually two weeks for continuing education (including two Sundays), during which time the employee is relieved of all job-related duties.
- b. That continuing education is not to be considered part of the employee's vacation, nor is it to be treated as such by the employee.
- c. That churches, parishes and other employing agencies shall budget a minimum of \$500.00 annually for each minister or church professional whose terms of call are subject to presbytery approval; and that those funds be accruable up to a maximum of three years.
- d. That study leave be cumulative to a maximum of six weeks, with the approval of the session or other appropriate body.
- e. That ministers and church professionals confer with the session or other appropriate body at least annually concerning plans for continuing education.
- f. That there be an annual accounting to the employing body of the utilization of study leave taken and funds expended; and that this information be included in the annual report on ministerial compensation and changes in terms of call.
- g. That continuing education be a concern in biennial visits with sessions, and in annual visits with non-parish ministers of the presbytery.
- h. That unused accrued continuing education leave for ministers and other church professionals, whose terms of call are subject to presbytery approval, be forfeited (not compensated financially) when the call is dissolved.
- i. As part of the Terms of Call, first call pastors within Wyoming Presbytery will be required to attend the Board of Pension's and the Synod of the Rocky Mountain's *Seminars for First Call Pastors* at the earliest opportunity. The calling church's responsibility will be to provide monetary assistance to attend. COM will provide registration costs.

Guiding Principles

The Presbytery of Wyoming recognizes that educational needs vary with individuals and with situations of employment. The presbytery further recognizes that education opportunities encompass a broad range of events and programs, some involving portions of a day and other requiring several years. The nature of particular educational programs, and the duration of courses of study, has direct bearing on associated costs; and special circumstances may require inclusion of expenses for a spouse or other family members. The presbytery encourages all

persons utilizing continuing education leave and funding – and all employing agencies – to give careful consideration to planning and funding study programs that benefit both the employee and the church. Travel tours, while often educational, are not considered appropriate use of continuing education leave and funds unless an organized program of study is included.

6.05 Commissioned Ruling Elders

COMMISSIONED RULING ELDER PROGRAM BOOK OF ORDER REQUIREMENTS G-2.10

- A. The Commissioned Ruling Elder is an elder of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), who is granted a commission by the presbytery to:
- lead worship
 - watch over the people
 - and provide for their nurture and service.

This commission is valid only in one or more congregations designated by the presbytery.

Such an elder is selected by and receives training approved by the presbytery. The elder is instructed in:

- Bible (Old and New Testaments)
- Reformed theology and sacraments
- Presbyterian polity
- Preaching
- Leading worship
- Pastoral care
- Teaching

The elder shall be examined by the appropriate committee of presbytery as to:

- Personal faith
- Motives for seeking the commission
- The areas mentioned above

An elder who has been commissioned and later ceases to serve in a particular congregation may continue to be listed as available to serve, but is not authorized to perform the functions of a Commissioned Ruling Elder until appointed again to a particular congregation by the presbytery.

- B. The commission shall be valid for a period up to three years as determined by the presbytery. It may be removed at expiration or terminated at any time at the discretion of the presbytery.

Presbytery shall regularly provide resources for the person's spiritual and intellectual development.

A review of the Commissioned Ruling Elder shall be conducted annually. Presbytery shall revoke the commission of any commissioned ruling elder who does not abide by these provisions or whose work is evaluated as not adequate to meet the needs of the particular congregation or the presbytery.

- C. When a presbytery, in consultation with the session or other responsible committee, determines that its strategy for mission in a local church requires it, and after additional instruction deemed necessary by the presbytery has been provided, a presbytery may authorize a commissioned ruling elder to perform any or all of the following functions described in 1-6 below:

1. Administer the Lord's Supper.
 2. Administer the Sacrament of Baptism.
 3. Moderate the session of the congregation under the supervision of and when invited by the moderator of the session appointed by the presbytery.
 4. Have a voice in meetings of presbytery.
 5. Have a vote in meetings of the presbytery (such vote to be counted as an elder commissioner).
 6. Perform a service of Christian marriage when invited by the session or other responsible committee, and when allowed by the state.
- D. The commissioned ruling elder shall work under the supervision of the presbytery through the moderator of the session of the church being served or through the Committee on Ministry. A minister of the Word and Sacrament shall be assigned as a mentor and supervisor.
- E. When the presbytery is satisfied with the qualifications of an applicant it shall ask the applicant the following questions:
1. Do you trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?
 2. Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal, and God's Word to you?
 3. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our Church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?
 4. Will you fulfill your commission in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions?
 5. Will you be governed by our Church's polity, and will you abide by its discipline? Will you be a friend among your colleagues in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God's Word and Spirit?
 6. Will you in your own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world?
 7. Do you promise to further the peace, unity, and purity of the Church?
 8. Will you seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?
 9. Will you be a faithful commissioned ruling elder, watching over the people, providing for their worship? In your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?
- F. The applicant having answered these questions in the affirmative, the moderator shall pray and say to the applicant: [Name] you are now a ruling elder commissioned to lead worship and preach for the time and place set by this presbytery. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

OVERVIEW OF CRE PROCESS

Application and Interview

An applicant for the commissioned ruling elder training program shall be a ruling elder. The applicant shall submit to the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (1) a Commissioned Ruling Elder training program application form, (2) a pastor's statement, and (3) a session endorsement from the session of the applicant's church.

Upon receipt of these forms, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry shall interview and examine the applicant with respect to (1) personal faith, (2) motives for entering the training program, and (3) experience in the church. Part of the purpose of the interview shall be to

determine whether past training, experience, course work, or other background shall qualify the applicant in one or more of the training areas specified in the *Book of Order*.

On the basis of this interview, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry shall recommend and work with the applicant on obtaining the necessary training to fulfill the requirements of the *Book of Order*.

Recognition of Candidacy

Following the application and interview by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry and the designing of a program of training, the applicant shall be presented to the presbytery as a candidate for Commissioned Ruling Elder and upon vote of the presbytery shall be enrolled as a candidate for Commissioned Ruling Elder.

In consultation with the Committee on Preparation for Ministry there shall be appointed a pastor-mentor who shall be a consultant and guide for the candidate during his/her period of training.

Psychological Evaluation

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry will secure a background check and evaluation by a qualified psychologist of persons desiring to become Commissioned Ruling Elders.

The Training Program

During the period of training the candidate shall be expected to take course work or other training in each of the areas specified by the *Book of Order*, with the exception of those areas in which it has been determined that the candidate is already qualified.

Options for Training

1. Dubuque Theological Seminary offers online courses for Commissioned Ruling Elders in each of the areas specified by the *Book of Order*. Online application and registration may be accessed through:

<http://udts.dbq.edu/lillyhome.htm>

or by contacting:

John P. Jewell, Jr., D.Min.

Director of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning

University of Dubuque Theological Seminary

Phone: (319) 589-3101; Fax: (319) 589-3110

2. Starting in the fall of 2002, some or all of these courses will be able to be taken, one each year, at the Western National Leadership Training event in Jackson.
3. Presently the committee is reviewing courses in the biblical areas and church history on tape. These are university level courses produced by The Teaching Company and chosen for their excellence from universities and colleges across the country. In using these courses, the committee would be responsible for any assessment process to determine satisfactory understanding of the material.
4. Resources which may be used between mentor and candidate include the following:

Bible

The Bible Speaks to You, Robert McAfee Brown

The Interpreter's Bible, Vols. 1 and 7

The New Interpreter's Bible, vols.1 and 8

The Laymen's Bible Commentary

Understanding The Old Testament, Bernhard W. Anderson

Understanding The New Testament, Kee and Young

Others approved by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry.

Reformed Theology

Presbyterian Creeds: A Guide to the Book of Confessions, Jack Rogers

Presbyterian Creeds: A Supplement on the Brief Statement of Faith, Jack Rogers
A Commentary on the Confession of 1967 and an Introduction to the Book of Confessions, Edward A. Dowey, Jr.

Major Themes in the Reformed Tradition, Donald K. McKim

Book of Confessions: Study Edition

Presbyterian video series by Jack Rogers, Isabelle Rogers or Synod of Lakes and Prairies.

Others approved by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry.

Worship and Sacraments

Directory for Worship

Reformed Worship, Rice and Huffstutler.

Polity

Book of Order

Mentorship and Review

1. During the course of study, the candidate will have regular recourse to the mentor appointed by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry to answer questions and discuss the material being studied. There should normally be regular meetings with the mentor during this time. The mentor may make recommendations for further reading and/or supply materials for intellectual and spiritual growth which he/she deems to be of value to the candidate.

The first meeting with the mentor shall take place with a representative of Committee on Preparation for Ministry during which time the full program of study and practical learning shall be explained and an understanding reached with respect to the roles of the learner, the mentor, and the committee, and a regular schedule of meetings between mentor and learner agreed upon.

2. Once or twice a year, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry shall convene a seminar of one to three days duration to include the candidates, their mentors, with invitation extended to already commissioned ruling elders, and a person or persons from the presbytery or from the outside with particular expertise in one or more of the areas of study for the purposes of:
 - a. Sharing progress in the studies and development of the candidates.
 - b. Covering areas of importance not specifically covered in the academic courses.
 - c. Allowing for practice in specific areas of ministry (such as sermon delivery).
 - d. To build collegiality and mutual support in ministry.

Topics to be covered in seminars could include, but not be limited to: personal spiritual development and disciplines, worship leadership, the writing and delivery of sermons, church school and other curricula, youth programming, the techniques of caring ministries, the use of biblical study tools for sermon preparation, such as concordances, commentaries, Bible dictionaries, and Bible atlases, the conduct of funerals and weddings (if applicable).

3. During the period of training and under the guidance of the mentor, the candidate shall begin, when ready, to carry out certain functions such as worship leadership, preaching, pastoral care, or teaching, and shall spend time observing the mentor functioning in these capacities. Experiences in these areas of growth shall be shared in the seminars conducted by the committee for the mutual growth of all.
4. Toward the end of the training program, the candidate, under the guidance of the mentor, shall prepare a personal statement of faith to share with the Committee on Preparation for Ministry and the presbytery. This shall be discussed with the Committee on Preparation for Ministry in the final interview with the candidate.
5. The committee anticipates a completion time of two to six years for the program, depending upon the pace at which the various learners work.

Completion and Commissioning

When the candidate has completed the necessary course work, has attended the seminars during that period, and in the assessment of the mentor and the Committee on Preparation for Ministry has learned the material and skills required for commissioned ruling elder ministry as specified in the *Book of Order*, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry shall present the candidate to the presbytery as ready for commissioning. Upon questioning on the floor of presbytery and vote of the presbytery, the candidate shall be approved for commissioning. At that point, the Committee on Ministry shall work with the candidate to arrange ministry for which the candidate may be commissioned.

6.06 Moderators for Sessions/Churches without Pastors

When a church is without a pastor, the Committee on Ministry shall have the authority to appoint Session Moderators for churches without pastors on behalf of Presbytery and shall report all appointments to Presbytery. The church shall be responsible for the moderator's direct expenses, including mileage reimbursement, overnight accommodations and meals, as necessary. If reimbursement of expenses poses a financial hardship on the church, the session will negotiate with the Committee on Ministry so that no church suffers undue hardship in providing for a moderator.

When convenient to do so, travel expenses for more than one purpose may be combined and costs pro-rated to the appropriate churches/committees.

6.07 Compensation for Pulpit Supplies

Compensation for pulpit supplies includes mileage reimbursement, overnight accommodations and meals when necessary, and an honorarium. A minimum honorarium of \$75.00 for one service (\$100.00 for two services) shall be offered.

When convenient to do so, travel expenses for more than one purpose may be combined and costs pro-rated to the appropriate churches/committees.

6.08 Transfers of Pastoral Status

Four rolls are to be maintained by the stated clerk. They are: active members, inactive members, members-at-large, and a roll listing those who have been deleted from the other rolls (G-3.0104).

Procedure 1. At the request of a member, the Credentials Task Force of the Committee on Ministry (COM) will investigate the circumstances, take the necessary actions and make appropriate recommendation to the presbytery for a change in status.

Procedure 2. In the case of ministers who are engaged in an occupation that does not comply with all of the criteria in G-2-0503 (Categories of Membership), the presbytery may on its own initiative determine that the minister's category of membership is that of inactive after following the criteria give in paragraph G-3.0306.

It will be the responsibility of the ministers in the Presbytery of Wyoming to keep COM informed and up to date on what they are doing. To help and encourage this, the Credentials Task Force will send a form letter to every member that is on the rolls of the presbytery in December of every year asking that their work, etc. be noted on the form and the form be returned to the presbytery office prior to the first presbytery meeting of the ensuing year.

Oversight will be the responsibility of COM as required by the Book of Order, G-2.0803 of COM.

6.09 Dissolution of Pastoral Relationship

When either party requests, to the Committee on Ministry, a desire to dissolve the pastoral relationship, COM will act on behalf of the presbytery regarding the terms of dissolution.

Two months notice by either party will be considered normal notice for dissolution.

If a dispute arises in connection with the terms of dissolution, COM has sole discretion to determine the nature of the dispute and to facilitate a suitable severance package, based on the circumstances, that is equitable and just for the congregation and the pastor.

6.10 Guidelines for Transitional Ministry

Introduction

WE, the Presbytery of Wyoming, recognize the importance of transitional ministry in churches that are in the midst of a pastoral transition. We believe that transitional ministry can enhance and strengthen our congregations.

Basic Manual Approach

Interim Ministry is intentional transitional ministry. The five developmental tasks of the Interim Pastor or a discerned process agreed to by the PNC and COM will be utilized by the Presbytery of Wyoming while recognizing that various situations call for differing skills or emphasis from the Interim Minister.

Types of Transitional Models

We live in a world in which one size does not fit all. This is not only true in the general ministries of churches, but it is also true for Interim Ministry as well.

1. Models with Interim Ministers

a. A Healing Model: For congregations recovering from the trauma of a natural disaster, clergy betrayal, clergy death, or serious conflict, a person who is skilled in grief and trauma work with congregations may be called for. Usually such an interim would be contracted for 2 to 3 years.

b. A Revitalizing Model: For congregations that are in decline or are lethargic or static, an interim that is skilled in revitalization and helping a church discover God's plan for them is needed.

c. A Hospice Model: Some congregations are in the process of dying and are too tired or do not want to make the changes necessary to be revitalized. An Interim Minister skilled in helping a congregation celebrate its history and come to some degree of closure is needed.

d. A Collaborative Model: infrequently, yet recently occurring more often, a church may need an Interim Minister that can assist it in joining or cooperating with another Presbyterian Church or Protestant church in the area.

2. Models without Interim Ministers

a. **Succession Model:** A healthy, vibrant church that has over 150 people in worship services may not need an Interim Minister. A succession model may be very effective in such a situation. A newly called pastor would overlap the outgoing pastor so the church does not lose its momentum. If agreed upon by the Committee on Ministry, a succession model could be utilized. (This Succession Model was not previously recommended in the PC(USA) but is now possible under the new form of government).

b. **Vacancy Model:** Some situations may not use either succession or an interim. Instead, congregations may choose to continue ministry using pulpit supply and lay leadership. A retired Teaching Elder, CRE, Candidate, or Ruling Elder (or a combination of these) might assume responsibilities. (The new Book of Order states, *“When a congregation does not have a pastor, or while the pastor is unable to perform her or his duties, the Session, with the approval of Presbytery, may obtain the services of a teaching elder, candidate, or ruling elder in a temporary pastoral relationship.”*)

Securing an Interim Pastor The Interim Search Committee may acquire candidates to interview in one of several ways, or a combination of them, depending on the circumstances of the church, and as recommended by the COM and the General Presbyter, with the understanding that a shorter search time for an interim contributes to a shorter overall transition between called pastors. Whichever method is used or however long it takes, the ISC must remain focused on the Holy Spirit for guidance. The GP (and possibly the COM) should do a thorough background check on final candidates regardless of the process(es) used.

1. Candidates may be provided to the Interim Search Committee through the collaborative efforts of the General Presbyter and one or more COM members. A candidate is presented to the Session for approval, and is then presented to the COM for examination and approval.

2. The Interim Search Committee may write a Mission Information Form which is approved by the COM and then posted on the PC(USA) online database with a specified time cutoff. The ISC then downloads the Personal Information Forms of applicants, reviews them, presents a final candidate to the Session for approval, and finally the candidate is presented to the COM for examination and approval.

3. An Interim candidate may be discovered in official PC(USA) “Face-to-Face” opportunities such as at General Assembly, Big Tent events, Synod events like WNLT or through other PC(USA) gatherings or interfaith contacts.

Reference and Background Checks for Interim Candidates Interim Search Committees and General Presbyters should be extremely diligent about primary references, secondary references (those not listed by the candidate but suggested by others because they are thought to have knowledge of the individual), and background checks of people we intend to place in positions of trust.

There needs to be as much accountability as possible, and we need to go beyond the judgment of a few professional Presbyters when doing the background checks of candidates. Inquiries should always be included which reach to the congregational level, a community that tends to be less transitory than the membership and leadership of the Presbytery. The PC(USA) guidebook “On Calling a Pastor” cautions that “under no circumstances should a PNC contact members of a prospective pastor’s present congregation without her or his permission to do so.” An Interim about to conclude time with a congregation should have no problem with this. A Teaching Elder serving a church might have concerns about his/her congregation knowing he or is seeking a new call, however, so prudence would be necessary. It is not necessary to ask permission of

the candidate to query leaders in middle level government (GPs/EPs). It is suggested that primary references be asked the question, "Are there other people that we might contact regarding this candidate?" These become the secondary references.

Training

We believe that adequate training for interim ministry is essential. Part One of Certified Interim Training offered by the Presbyterian Church (USA) will take place prior to application for an interim position within the Presbytery of Wyoming. An exception may be granted by the Committee on Ministry if an applicant can show good cause for being considered and a commitment to completing the training within six months of accepting an interim call with the presbytery. Ordinarily, Part Two of interim training should be taken no less than six months after the completion of Part One.

Presbytery Membership We expect Interim Ministers serving in the Presbytery of Wyoming to transfer or maintain their membership in this Presbytery and to be an active participant in the full life and ministry of the Presbytery. Upon request, the Committee on Ministry can make exceptions.

Theological Commitment *"Understanding that transitional ministry contains opportunities for growth and change, persons applying for interim positions should be committed to using such opportunities to encourage the church to reaffirm and reinforce their commitment to sharing with its members and surrounding community the gift of the reformed distinctions with which we are blessed,"* as described in the Foundation of Presbyterian Polity Chapter Two (F-2) of the *Book of Order* with special emphasis on F-2.04 and F-2.05.

Committee on Ministry Connection

Support and oversight will be a collaborative process involving the Session, the Interim Minister and the Committee On Ministry. We expect the Interim Minister to keep the Committee on Ministry informed of his/her ministry progress through written reports every six months and by phone or e-mail as necessary. At the end of the first year a consultation will be held with the Interim Minister, the Session, and the Committee On Ministry to consider a future course of action. At the conclusion of the interim process the Interim will produce a final report and COM will conduct exit interviews with the Interim and with the Session.

Terms

Interim Ministers within the Presbytery of Wyoming ordinarily will be compensated on the basis of the Terms of Call of the previous Teaching Elder. The terms of the contract should be consistent with the Standard Terms of Call form of the Presbytery. Some flexibility will be allowed by the COM, but in no case will the Interim Minister be paid less than the minimum salary required by the Presbytery. The COM liaison to a church seeking an interim should communicate to that Session the specific procedural steps to be taken before negotiations begin between the Session and the Interim Candidate. Session and the COM should agree on the Terms before they are shared with the Candidate. When the Session and the Teaching Elder have settled on a contract, then the Committee on Ministry will review and vote on the agreement. Specification of the content and duration of the interim task should be included in the contract.

Approval An Interim Pastor cannot begin work within the Presbytery without approval of the Committee on Ministry. The executed contract must be on file before the Interim can begin. Normally, a teaching elder employed in a temporary pastoral relationship is not eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor, but exceptions under extraordinary circumstances may be made according to the procedures described in the Book of Order under Temporary Relationships (G-2.0504).

6.11 Dissolution of Pastoral Relationships

1. Pastor' Responsibilities and Requirements

a. Voluntary separation may take place after written notice from the pastor requesting a dissolution of a pastoral call has received concurrence from both the session and the presbytery. Resigning pastors will be paid the cash equivalent of their unused earned vacation, but not continuing education funds, at the official date of the dissolution of the pastoral call by the session and the presbytery.

b. The pastor shall send a letter to the congregation which should include:

the
relationship is
including
unless given
by the current

- * a statement of appreciation for the opportunity to have served the congregation and
- * the pastor's plans for his/her new call,
- * the effective date of the dissolution and
- * a reminder to the congregation that after the pastor's dissolved, no further pastoral services shall be provided baptisms, weddings, funerals, hospital calls, etc. permission by the moderator of COM and invited moderator of the Session.

c. Normally a pastor shall leave no sooner than one month and no later than two months after giving notice of resignation.

d. No severance allowance will be provided by the church.

e. The pastor will remove all personal items from the church property by the effective date of dissolution. All property in the pastor's possession belonging to the church will be returned to the Clerk of Session or the person designated by the session. Arrangements for payment of any monies due to the pastor (salary, annuities, etc.) or repayment of any loan made by the church to the pastor shall be made by the effective date of dissolution unless stipulated in writing by both parties. Any funds in an existing "Pastor's Discretionary Fund" shall return to the church budget. When a pastor lives in a manse the session shall determine with the pastor the date by which the manse will be vacant.

f. The former pastor shall not provide any pastoral services (baptisms, weddings, funerals, counseling, teaching, etc.) to that former congregation unless given permission by the moderator of COM and invited by the current moderator of session. The former pastor shall not attend worship or events at his/her former church for at least one year after dissolution unless given permission by the moderator of COM and invited by the current moderator of session. It is important that the congregation find its identity separate from the former pastor.

2. Voluntary Separation (Retirement)

a. Retirement may take place after written notice from the pastor requesting a dissolution of a pastoral call has received concurrence from both the Session and the Presbytery. This notice shall contain the proposed date of retirement.

b. The pastor shall send a letter to the congregation which should include:

- * a statement of appreciation for the opportunity to have served the congregation and
- * the pastor's plan to retire,
- * the effective date of the dissolution, and
- * a reminder to the congregation that after the pastor's relationship is dissolved, no further pastoral services shall be provided including baptisms, weddings, funerals, hospital calls, etc., unless given permission by the moderator of COM and invited by the current moderator of the Session.

c. Ordinarily, the period of time between announcement and retirement should be three to four months. (1) Call the Board of Pensions, 1-800-773-7752, and ask for an application for Honorable Retirement, or download a form from the website, www.pcusa.pensions.org/Library/Forms/pen-001.pdf.

d. The pastor will remove all personal items from the church property by the effective date of dissolution. All property in the pastor's possession belonging to the church will be returned to the Clerk of Session or the person designated by the session. Arrangements for payment of any monies due to the pastor (salary, annuities, etc.) or repayment of any loan made by the church to the pastor shall be made by the effective date of dissolution unless stipulated in writing by both parties. Any funds in an existing "Pastor's Discretionary Fund" shall return to the church budget.

e. The former pastor shall not provide any pastoral services (baptisms, weddings, funerals, counseling, teaching, etc.) to that former congregation unless given permission by the moderator of COM and invited by the current moderator of session. The former pastor shall not attend worship or events at his/her former church for at least one year after dissolution unless given permission by the moderator of COM and invited by the current moderator of session. It is important that the congregation find its identity separate from the former pastor.

3. Reduction in Force (Layoff)

a. Separation because of the elimination of a position, retrenchment in budget, or for other circumstances arising out of no fault of the pastor, is at the discretion of the session and the congregation with approval of presbytery.

b. Written notice will come to the Committee on Ministry from the session after consultation with the pastor about the termination of the call.

c. Six (6) months notice or pay in lieu of notice will be given. The pastor will be paid the cash equivalent of any unused annual leave.

d. The pastor shall send a letter to the congregation which should include:

- * a statement of appreciation for the opportunity to have served congregation and the pastors future plans,
- * the effective date of the dissolution, and
- * a reminder to the congregation that after the pastors relationship is dissolved, no further pastoral services shall be provided including baptisms, weddings, funerals, hospital calls, etc. unless given permission by the moderator of COM and invited by the current moderator of Session.

e. The pastor will remove all personal items from the church property by the effective date of dissolution. All property in the pastor's possession belonging to the church will be returned to the Clerk of Session or the person designated by the session. Arrangements for payment of any monies due to the pastor (salary, annuities, etc.) or repayment of any loan made by the church to the pastor shall be made by the effective date of dissolution unless stipulated in writing by both parties. Any funds in an existing "Pastor's Discretionary Fund" shall return to the church budget.

f. The former pastor shall not provide any pastoral services (baptisms, weddings, funerals, counseling, teaching, etc.) to that former congregation unless given permission by the moderator of COM and invited by the current moderator of session. The former pastor shall not attend worship or events at his/her former church for at least one year after dissolution unless given permission by the moderator of COM and invited by the current moderator of session. It is important that the congregation find its identity separate from the former pastor.

4. Involuntary Separation (Dissolution or Removal by Presbytery or an Administrative Commission)

a. The terms of all involuntary dissolutions will be negotiated between the pastor, the session and the Committee on Ministry, before the session decides to call for a congregational meeting to request dissolution of the pastoral relationship.

b. Normally a minimum severance package shall consist of one (1) month's salary and housing for every year of service, with a minimum of two month's severance provided, not to exceed a total severance package equal to six months of salary and housing. Accrued vacation pay shall also be paid. The Committee on Ministry must approve any other compensation. This package will be paid by the session/congregation.

c. The pastor will remove all personal items from the church property by the effective date of dissolution. All property belonging to the church will be returned to the Clerk of Session or the person designated by the session. Arrangements for payment of any monies due to the pastor (salary, annuities, etc.) or repayment of any loan made by the church to the pastor shall be made by the effective date of dissolution unless stipulated otherwise in writing by both parties. Any funds in an existing "Pastor's Discretionary Fund" shall return to the church budget.

d. The former pastor shall not provide any pastoral services (baptisms, weddings, funerals, counseling, teaching, etc.) to that former

congregation unless given permission by the moderator of COM and invited by the current moderator of session. The former pastor shall not attend worship or events at his/her former church for at least one year after dissolution unless given permission by the moderator of COM and invited by the current moderator of session. It is important that the congregation find its identity separate from the former pastor.

e. Responsibilities of Committee on Ministry to Pastors involved in involuntary separations:

* The COM may recommend that the pastor receive pastoral care from a professional therapist. The Presbytery will share the cost of this service if necessary. This shared cost, if necessary, will be negotiated between the Session and the Committee on Ministry.

*The COM will send a team of its members to meet with the pastor in order to discuss the pastor's future plans, current needs, and what was learned from the situation that led to the dissolution.

f. Responsibilities of Committee on Ministry to congregations involved in involuntary separations:

*The COM will send a team of members to meet with the Session of the affected church in order to explore what was learned from the situation that led to the separation and to assist in discerning plans for the future.

*The COM team will also review the pastoral call process and commit themselves to shepherding the church in its search for a new pastor.

While the above separation policies serve as a guideline for the dissolution of pastoral calls within The Presbytery of Wyoming, these policies assume that (a) pastors, sessions and congregations will respect the procedures outlined in the Book of Order of the PC(USA) regarding dissolution of pastoral calls and that (b) ministers, sessions and congregations will respect the authority of The Presbytery of Wyoming to adjudicate the terms of separation when pastors and sessions are unable to negotiate mutually acceptable terms.

5. Involuntary Separation (Disability)

In the event separation without cause is occasioned by the medical disability of the pastor, the congregation will continue full salary, housing, and benefits for a period of three months whereupon the Board of Pension disability coverage commences. In the event that the person does not qualify for disability, then an agreement will be negotiated between the COM, the Session, and the pastor.

6. Involuntary Separation (Death in Service)

In the event of the death of a pastor, the salary and allowable benefits of that person will be continued by the congregation to the spouse or dependent for up to three months from the date on which the death occurs or until the Board of Pension death and retirement benefits commence.

SESSION'S RESPONSIBILITIES AND REQUIREMENTS

1. Invite a representative of the Committee on Ministry to a meeting in order to

provide information concerning the dissolution process, the interim period, and the pastoral search process.

2. In the case of a voluntary separation:
 - a. receive a copy of the letter of resignation or request for retirement that will then be mailed to the congregation by the pastor.
 - b. call a special meeting of the congregation to vote on the pastor's request to dissolve the pastoral relationship.
3. In the case of an involuntary separation through the work of an administrative commission:
 - a. the session will receive notification from the Administrative Commission.
 - b. the session shall notify the congregation of the separation.

A Sample Agreement For Termination And Separation

TERMS OF DISSOLUTION BETWEEN THE REV. (Name of Person)
AND (Name of the Church), (Address/Location of the Church)

We, the members of the church Session agree to request dissolution of the pastoral relationship with the Rev. pastor / staff for the following reasons and on the following terms:

- 1 .List reasons for the dissolution:
2. List the terms:
 - A. Amount of salary continuation to be paid
 - B. Housing arrangements
 - C. Vacation to be paid
 - D. Pension\medical to be paid
 - E. Repayment of loans or any other special financial arrangements such as whether they be will be paid in lump sum or over a period of time.
3. Specify the time and date of separation:
 - A. The effective date that ministry duties will cease.
 - B. The relationship will end on a date set by the congregation and approved by the presbytery.
 - C. Date set for congregational meeting
 - D. Date for COM action and completion of the separation agreement.
4. Other terms to be specified:
 - A. Promise to seek remedies for grievances only in the Courts of the PC(USA).
 - B. Specify how or if the termination package will be affected by whether employment is full or part time.
 - C. Any other terms that may be required by the presbytery or by the state.

The Pastor agrees to follow the Presbytery Policy: *Memorandum Of Understanding Statement of Ethics For Former Pastors*, adopted by the Presbytery of Wyoming. Attach a signed copy to the contract.

We the undersigned have negotiated this agreement in good faith and have every intention of being faithful in fulfilling it.

Approved by the Session of Church of _____
Moderator of Session _____ Date _____
Clerk of Session _____ Date _____
Committee on Ministry Representative _____ Date _____
Signed by other members of Session: _____,

Date approved by congregation: _____
Date approved by COM: _____
Date approved/disapproved by Presbytery: _____

Copies to: The Minister, Executive Presbyter, Clerk of Session, Stated Clerk of Presbytery, Moderation of COM

6.12 Policy for the Presbytery of Wyoming Concerning Gracious Separation

Preamble to Policy Regarding Churches That May Be Disaffected

With joy in the Lord Jesus, even with sorrow in the divisions within the body of Christ, we, the Presbytery of Wyoming, commit ourselves to the following understandings and policies in dealing with the congregations of the Presbytery of Wyoming that are so disaffected that they are considering leaving the membership of the Presbytery of Wyoming and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

We first acknowledge and affirm that Jesus Christ is head of the Church (F-1.02). Scripture teaches, and our polity has always recognized, that Jesus Christ is head of the Church, His body. "Almighty God, who raised Jesus Christ from the dead and set him above all rule and authority, has given to him all power in heaven and on earth, not only in this age but also in the age to come. God has put all things under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and has made Christ Head of the Church, which is his body. The Church's life and mission are a joyful participation in Christ's ongoing life and work." (F-1.0201) The property of the Church is "a tool for the accomplishment of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world." (G-4.0201)

"Christ calls and equips the Church, giving it everything necessary for its mission in the world. Christ alone rules, calls, teaches, and uses the Church as he wills." (F-1.0202)

"Christ gives to the Church its faith and life, its unity and mission, its order and discipline. Scripture teaches us of Christ's will for the Church, which is to be obeyed." (F-1.0103)

With all Christians of the Church catholic, we affirm that the Church is "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic." Unity is God's gift to the Church in Jesus Christ. Just as God is one God and Jesus Christ is our one Savior, so the Church is one because it belongs to its one Lord, Jesus Christ. The Church seeks to include all people and is never content to enjoy the benefits of Christian community for itself alone. There is one Church, for there is one spirit, one hope, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all." (Eph 4:5-6)

"Because in Christ the Church is one, it strives to be one. ... Division into different denominations obscures but does not destroy unity in Christ." (F-1.0302a)

The church strives to be faithful to the good news it has received and accountable to the standards of the confessions. The Church seeks to present the claims of Jesus Christ, leading persons to repentance, acceptance of Christ alone as Savior and Lord, and new life as his disciples.

"Where Christ is, there is the true Church. Since the earliest days of the Reformation, Reformed Christians have marked the true church where the Word of God is truly preached and heard, the sacraments are rightly administered, and ecclesiastical discipline is uprightly administered." (F-1.0303).

In working with churches considering separation from the PCUSA, the Presbytery of Wyoming shall implement a process using the following principles:

- Consistency: The local authority delegated to presbyteries is guided and shaped by our shared faith, service, and witness to Jesus Christ.
- Pastoral Responsibility: The requirement in G-0303b to consult with the members of a church seeking dismissal highlights the presbytery's pastoral responsibility which must not be submerged beneath other responsibilities.
- Accountability: For a council, accountability rightly dictates fiduciary and connectional concerns, raising general issues of property (G-4.02) and specific issues of schism within a congregation (G-4.0207). But, full accountability also requires preeminent concern with "caring for the flock."
- Gracious Witness: Scripture and the Holy Spirit require a gracious witness from us rather than a harsh legalism.
- Openness and Transparency: Early, open communication and transparency about principles and process of dismissal necessarily serve truth, order, and goodness; and work against seeking civil litigation as a solution.

The *Book of Order* (G-4.0203) states "All property held by or for a congregation, a presbytery, a synod, the General Assembly, or the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), whether legal title is lodged in a corporation, a trustee or trustees, or an unincorporated association, whether the property is used in programs of a congregation or of a higher council or retained for the production of income, is held in trust nevertheless for the use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The trust Clause is meant to reflect the church's organic unity as it fulfills "The Great Ends of the Church," strengthening its ability to guide its member churches into their witness to the broader community. Because the trust clause is meant as a means of witness to our unity in the covenant of common mission, it is incumbent upon the presbytery to act ministerially rather than adversarially to its member churches in regard to its provisions. It is also the right of a congregation to seek and to request dismissal with its property to another Reformed denomination.

We affirm these principles that will guide the presbytery's use of the Trust Clause:

- It will not be used to shackle churches to the institution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) if a church genuinely desires to depart.
- It will not be used as a weapon to threaten civil action against a congregation over issues of conscience (F-3.0101).
- It reflects a tangible exhibition of the inter-connected relationship organically existing between the presbytery and its congregations.

Policy Regarding Churches That May Be Estranged

From time to time in the life of a particular church, its members may disagree with each other on points of theology, policy, practice or procedure. These disagreements can lead to the development of a division within that congregation. In the same way, particular churches may disagree on points of theology, policy, practice or procedure with governing bodies within the denomination, which can also lead to division. These

disagreements may be resolved by mediation and compromise or by dissolution of the relationship. While dissolution is the least desirable outcome, at times it is the only solution possible in order for the differing parties to move on. It is the desire of the Presbytery of Wyoming to craft guidelines for mediation or dissolution when conflict arises within or between congregations in this Presbytery. It is also the desire of this Presbytery that these guidelines provide an avenue of ministry for and to all the affected parties so that if we disagree we can do so in love.

1. Outline of Process for Engagement with Presbytery

a. Initial Contact and Dialogue

When the leadership of the Presbytery becomes aware, either through formal session action or discussion, or through informal contacts with church leaders or members, that a congregation is in serious disagreement with the denomination to the extent of considering leaving the PC (USA), a committee will be formed, hereafter called the Presbytery Engagement Team (PET), consisting of ruling and teaching elders and shall include at least five people, one of which will be either the General Presbyter or Stated Clerk, one of which will be either the Moderator of Presbytery or the Moderator of Council, a member of the Committee on Ministry, and an at large representative appointed by presbytery council, in order to provide pastoral care and oversight to the disaffected congregation. Persons appointed to the PET shall remain as members of the PET until the PET has completed its task and is dismissed. In the event of any conflict of interest on the part of any of the above persons, presbytery council will appoint a replacement through a process and person agreed upon by both parties. If at all possible it would be desirable that one member of the PET have knowledge of mediation techniques. The PET will meet with the session and jointly, or subsequently, with the congregation as the church works to discern its mission in its location and God's will for denominational affiliation. This process is meant to insure that the congregation is fully informed of the issues at hand, and equipped with knowledge of the Presbytery's process, as well as the processes and values that have guided other churches and presbyteries in their decision making. In doing so, the Presbytery hopes to creatively engage the concerns of the congregation, and enable them to make decisions based on facts and not assumptions. The PET will regularly report to the Presbytery Council and to other Presbytery committees as needed.¹

b. Prayerful discussion of differences and determination of possibility of reconciliation

The PET will attempt to "bridge the gap" with the congregation through discussion of possibilities for reconciliation and likely impacts on local mission and ministry in the case where dismissal is the course decided upon. The PET will outline the process and likely consequences of dismissal from the Presbytery, and will use the following principles to guide the PET's dialogue with the church:

- To engage either the leaders of the congregation or the congregation as a whole, as circumstances dictate, in a time of prayer and conversation aimed at discerning the mission of the particular congregation, past, present and future, understanding the issues of the session/congregation which prompt them to desire that they and their congregation be dismissed, and also

¹ Because of the infrequency of Presbytery meetings it is important that the PET keep the council and other committees apprised of progress or lack thereof in a timely manner.

hearing from those congregation members who wish to remain within the PC (USA).

- If the team determines that progress can be made toward reconciliation through continued and constructive dialogue, the session and the team will establish a mutually agreeable timeline of talks to be held and proceed to engage in such dialogue.
- In its dialogue with the church session and congregation, the team will share implications for a church considering leaving the PC (USA). The PET will discuss with all teaching elder members the likely impacts on their benefits and ordination status and the various options available to them, so that they fully understand the implications of their transfer to another Reformed body, or staying as a member of Presbytery.
- When there is a group that desires to remain within the PC (USA) and a group that desires to be dismissed to another Reformed body, the best goal of Presbytery team conversations with congregations is to discuss financial, property and other issues that will enable members of both groups to be as healthy as possible in the aftermath of separation. If after a period of dialogue, the PET and the leadership of the congregation are not able to establish a process for reconciliation, the PET and the leaders of the congregation will begin the process of negotiating the terms of dismissal, and the validation of the true desire of the members of the congregation with regards to denominational affiliation.
- Acting on behalf of the Presbytery, the PET working with a disaffected church may be granted the following powers;
 - To counsel with the session and any subordinate boards or committees of the church concerning reported difficulties within the congregation, (G-3.0303e),
 - To interview the pastor(s) and employed staff,
 - To receive comments from individual members of the congregation,
 - To require the production of session minutes, church rolls, financial records and any other documents the commission deems relevant in conducting its work,
 - To call a meeting of the session when necessary (G-3.0203),
 - To call a congregational meeting and consult with the church's membership about the congregation's future, (G-1.0502),
 - To provide the moderator and secretary for a congregational meeting, if the installed pastor is unable to moderate and/or to name another moderator, (G-1.0504),
 - To determine if and when a vote of the congregation is appropriate for the purpose of advising the Presbytery concerning the relationship of the church to the PC(USA),
 - To report the results of the congregational vote to Council and other appropriate bodies, and
 - To propose to the Presbytery the recommendation for the dissolution or dismissal of the church and the disposition of the property held by or for the church.

2. Process for a congregation to request dismissal

a. Negotiation of terms of dismissal

The dismissal of a church from the Presbytery is a traumatic event in the life of the congregation and the Presbytery. The actions of the Presbytery are truly focused on the preservation and even the advancement of mission and ministry through the process of negotiation and after the congregation is dismissed. Actions to dismiss an ecclesiastical entity involve transferring ecclesiastical jurisdiction to another reformed denomination, and can only be effected by action of both bodies under a mutually acceptable plan of dismissal. All actions of the session, the Presbytery, and their individual members to dissolve a particular church shall be conducted according to the Constitution of the PC(USA) and the laws of the state of Wyoming. Ordinarily, the Presbytery should not dissolve a church as an ecclesiastical entity without dissolving its civil corporation as well. The PET will engage with a special committee of the congregation (SCC) to negotiate the terms of dismissal. The team may not enter into any binding agreement on behalf of the Presbytery. The Presbytery strongly recommends that the congregation's committee be comprised of a mixture of pastoral leadership and ruling elders, with representatives from the congregation's finance, property, and personnel committees, and should be selected with a goal of being representative of the congregation. If any members desire to remain with the PC(USA), every effort should be made to include their representative as well. The goal is to be respectful of all points of view and for the process to be minimally divisive. The normal process from initial conversation about dismissal to the vote of the presbytery will be no less than one year.

b. Status of members of the congregation being dismissed

Members of the church being dismissed shall be notified by mail after the vote by Presbytery to dismiss, of the action being taken, and the church shall inform those wishing to continue membership in a PC(USA) church of the process available to them to have their membership transferred. Each member desiring to be dismissed with the church must request such dismissal in writing to the Presbytery. The church being dismissed must provide to the PET a list of all active members. This list should be provided within 30 days of the vote by Presbytery to dismiss the congregation. It is important that throughout the process that both the PET and SCC communicate well so that both the members who transfer out of PC(USA) and the members who remain are properly ministered to, the level of divisiveness and conflict can be minimized, and that the ministry of both groups may continue. Members of the church being dismissed who are on Presbytery committees shall have their terms of service end on the day the Presbytery votes to dismiss the congregation. The Presbytery welcomes former elder commissioners' participation at Presbytery meetings as a way of continuing shared ministries and mission in the Presbytery, but such participation will be only as visitors without standing or voice.

c. Status of Teaching Elder members of Presbytery

One of the paramount concerns of this process of dismissal is to assure that the rights and status of teaching elder members are considered and properly handled. Teaching elders may choose to remain as members of Presbytery and not transfer to the other reformed body that the church is being dismissed to, or to request transfer along with the congregation. Such transfers may be requested concurrent with the church requesting dismissal, or may occur separately. If the teaching elder chooses to remain a member of presbytery and to pastor the congregation being dismissed, presbytery may approve this Call as

a validated ministry. If the transfer is not requested concurrently, the teaching elders shall be placed on inactive status. This allows them to continue to seek calls within the PC(USA) during the period of inactive status, or request to become members at large if their call at the church ends. At the end of 3 years of inactive status, the COM will normally remove the member from the rolls of the Presbytery. Transfers to another reformed body shall normally be approved, unless the teaching elder member is the subject of a pending judicial or investigative action. Members under discipline of the Presbytery may not be transferred until the administrative process is complete and any required remedial actions completed. At that point the transfer may be completed, but a record of judicial or investigative actions, if any, must be transmitted to the other body prior to the transfer being requested so proper disclosure of any issues can occur.

d. Policy for releasing claims to property

If a church seeking dismissal has outstanding loans to the Synod or other PC(USA) body, before the actual transfer of title occurs, the loans must be repaid or transferred to another creditor as part of the loan being repaid. Since the church being dismissed will no longer be under the authority of PC(USA), the denominational body that holds the loan should not be placed in the position of being exposed to loss without having a position of oversight of the church, or having the Presbytery being able to act as a guarantor of the loan. [This repayment does not have to be made before the Presbytery acts on the request to dismiss, but must be made within 90 days of the Presbytery vote to dismiss. If the PET does not believe a viable plan for repayment exists, the PET shall recommend to the SCC that the process be put on hold before the congregational vote until a viable plan to repay the loan is established.] Prior to the Presbytery vote on the dismissal, the SCC shall provide the PET details regarding to whom the church property shall be transferred, so that the appropriate legal documentation can be prepared. Such transfer should occur no later than 90 days of the vote taken by Presbytery to dismiss.

The use of any assets transferred to the Presbytery by dissolution or dismissal of a particular church should be prioritized as follows: (1) to empower those who wish to remain in the PC(USA) to continue as a congregation; (2) to develop and realize a strategy for mission in the subject church location, which may include new church development or redevelopment of the existing church; (3) to reimburse the Presbytery for any costs incurred in the defense of its rights and exercise of its responsibilities regarding the particular church; (4) to facilitate church development or redevelopment elsewhere in the Presbytery; and (5) to further the mission of the Presbytery and/or PC(USA).

e. Validation of Congregation's desire and discernment to request dismissal

After the PET and the congregation's SCC have met and negotiated the terms of dismissal, the next step in the process is to validate the congregation's desire for dismissal, and to ascertain the congregation's unity in that decision. A congregational meeting may be called, where a non-binding vote may be held to discern the will of the congregation. Every action should be taken to maximize the participation of the congregation in this meeting. It is also expected that representatives of the PET would have an opportunity to address the congregation and be able to discuss specific issues that would enable the

congregation to make an informed decision based on the facts of the situation and to engage in prayerful discernment. If the results of the vote to request dismissal and to accept the terms of the negotiated agreement is 75% or greater of the active members of the congregation present at that meeting, the dismissal request is considered validated, and then will be placed on the docket of the next scheduled Presbytery meeting for a vote to accept the terms to dismiss and dissolve. If the vote is less than 75%, the PET, at its own discretion, may request presbytery council to take the request for dismissal to presbytery.

f. Process for the Presbytery to vote to dismiss a congregation

Once the congregation has voted to request dismissal from Presbytery and has accepted an agreement on terms of dismissal, the Presbytery will vote on accepting the terms of the negotiated agreement and the dismissal of the congregation to another reformed body, and dissolution of the pastoral relationship(s) if requested. To do this and maintain the trust and integrity of the process, it's essential that the motion be a "thumbs up or thumbs down" vote. Renegotiation of the terms of dismissal through the use of amendments on the floor of Presbytery would essentially invalidate months of work between the PET and the congregation, and destroy any trust built between the Presbytery and the congregation. Therefore, the following steps shall be taken by the Presbytery to avoid this outcome:

- The vote shall be scheduled at a regular meeting of Presbytery.
- Voting on the PET proposal will be preceded by a 2/3rds vote required to limit debate and amendments or tabling.
- The PET proposal will be presented as a whole, with the understanding that the agreement was arrived by good faith negotiations between both the PET and the congregation.

It should be assumed that after following through the steps of this process if the Presbytery votes down the proposal, the outcome would be the initiation of a process to force a separation. Our prayer above all, through the above process is to attempt to resolve differences reasonably and civilly in good faith. At this point the PET would be granted additional authority in conducting its work related to the congregation in question. That additional authority could include the authority:

- To retain legal counsel,
- To consult with appropriate committees of Presbytery or its representatives in the process of doing its work and preparing its recommendation, and
- To have a budget and to authorize expenditures from those funds up to the limit of that/those accounts to do its work.

3. Mitigation of financial impact on mission and ministry of the Presbytery

Just as this process is designed to aid in Presbytery's ability to respectfully deal with a congregation's desire to be dismissed, and to have that happen in a way that minimizes the impact on that congregation's members, mission and ministry, it is also important for the congregation to act in a way as to minimize the impact on the mission and ministry of the Presbytery. G-4.0203 of the Book of Order says 'All property held by a particular church, a presbytery, a synod, the General Assembly, or the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), whether legal title is lodged in a corporation, a trustee or trustees, or an unincorporated association, and whether the property is used in programs of a particular

church or of as more inclusive governing body or retained for the production of income, is held in trust nevertheless for the use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). On a case by case basis, the PET and the SCC will evaluate the assets of the church seeking dismissal – cash, investments, endowments, receivables, real property, intellectual property, etc. and determine a faithful, just and equitable proposal for dismissal.

The payment of per capita and mission financial obligations for a set number of years may also be a part of the dismissal proposal. The PET needs to ask the question, “How does this dismissal affect the mission of Jesus Christ and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?” The use and benefit of the property and assets of the Presbytery of Wyoming must be taken into account. In the entirety of this process the first concern will be to do no harm to the proclamation of the Gospel or to the witness of any part of Christ’s Church. At all stages and in all places of the process care shall be taken to continue to seek possibilities for reconciliation and to assure that all persons are treated with care and respect by anyone representing the Presbytery of Wyoming or the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).