

## CHURCHES

### **P-200.01**

### **GUIDELINES FOR PROPERTY SALE, PURCHASE, OR MORTGAGE**

(Revised May 2000 and October 2017)

"A congregation shall not sell, mortgage, or otherwise encumber any of its real property and it shall not acquire real property subject to an encumbrance or condition without the written permission of the presbytery transmitted through the session of the congregation." (G-4.0206a)

"A congregation shall not lease its real property used for purposes of worship, or lease for more than five years any of its other real property, without the written permission of the presbytery transmitted through the session of the congregation." (G-4.0206b)

- I. **Building, Remodeling and Purchase.** Any congregation within the bounds of the Presbytery of the Northern Plains which is initiating plans to build onto or remodel their current structure or to purchase any building additions or other real property shall:
  - A. Submit the proposal to the Stated Clerk prior to securing preliminary drawings or engaging the services of an architect, or contractor except as provided in paragraph 1D below. The proposal shall include the legal description of the property.
  - B. If the proposal is to involve a mortgage or encumbrance the total amount of the proposed mortgage must be included either in the original proposal or in a subsequent request for permission to mortgage the property. The actual amount of the mortgage may be less than the limit approved or may exceed the approved limit up to 10% if due to inflation or unavoidable delay. If the final amount of the mortgage is to exceed the approved limit by more than 10% a new request for a revised limit must be made to Presbytery through the Leadership Pod.
  - C. The Stated Clerk will submit the proposal to the Leadership Pod (see B-5.0400b) or to Presbytery.
  - D. Remodeling plans may be handled by the local church without Presbytery action unless the cost of the remodeling exceeds 25% of the appraised value of the building or the cost involves a mortgage or other encumbrances.
  
- II. **Sale of Property.** Request for permission to sell a manse or other real property shall include the following information:
  - A. The reason for selling a manse or other real property and if the sale involves a manse, what arrangement is to be made for the housing of the pastor.
  - B. The proposed minimum selling price or the words "at approximately the value set by a professional appraiser." The selling price may be as much over the minimum as it is possible to obtain and may be as much as 10% under the minimum if necessary to close the sale without additional approval of Presbytery. If the actual selling price must be more than 10% below the minimum a new approval must be obtained from Presbytery.
  - C. The proposed use to be made of the proceeds of the sale.
  - D. Whether or not there are any outstanding mortgages or encumbrances against the property and if so, the amount of the mortgage or encumbrance and the holder of such mortgage.

All requests to Presbytery for permission to buy, sell, build, or mortgage or whatever, a statement of what local actions have been taken by Session, Trustees, congregation or other, or a copy of these actions shall be included. The statement shall show how any votes were taken and the result of such voting and shall be up to date to the time the request is made.

The Stated Clerk and/or the Leadership Pod may request any other information it deems necessary for it to make

an informed recommendation to the Presbytery.

After the sale of any real property, a written report will be submitted to the Stated Clerk outlining the sale price, the reason for the sale, to whom it was sold and the proposed use of the proceeds. In case of a lease, the statement of the terms of the lease, the reason for leasing and the proposed use by the lessee should be reported to the Stated Clerk.

## **P-200.02**

### **POLICY ON CLOSING A CHURCH (October 1996. Revised October 2017)**

The primary task and responsibility of the Presbytery is to encourage the growth, nurture and vitality of its congregations. The Presbytery is also charged with the responsibility of protecting the assets of the churches within its bounds for the extension and outreach of the mission of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, when a congregation determines that it can no longer continue its ministry and mission it is the responsibility of the Presbytery to assist the congregation to move to its closing.

Presbytery has the responsibility for the following:

#### **A. Membership**

To provide for letters of transfer of the members to the Christian communities of their choice; or to continue, for a period of two years, their membership on the at-large roll of the Presbytery.

#### **B. Records preservation (see G-3.0107)**

#### **C. Property and Continuing Financial Responsibilities**

At the time discussions begin about closure the Presbytery is immediately involved to insure a faithful and adequate disposition of all its property (see G-4.0203). In particular:

1. The assets of a congregation can continue to assist in the mission and outreach of the whole church.
2. To provide for the sale of the building, other assets and all real property.
3. To insure that the building is used appropriately so that the original intention of the building is not desecrated or becomes an eyesore or other liability and hazard to the community.
4. Where possible, to return the property to the tax rolls.
5. Provide for the final year payment of the per capita apportionment.

#### **D. Procedures**

1. A request to close the church will come from the congregation itself. This request should be the outcome of a vote, taken by ballot, at a special meeting called by the session for this purpose. The report of this action shall be transmitted by the clerk of the session to the Stated Clerk.
2. Upon receipt of this information, the Stated Clerk shall consult with the Moderator of Presbytery, the Congregational Pod Leader, and the moderator of the session, concerning the appropriateness of the request. If the request is found to be in order, this group shall propose a list of nominees to the Presbytery for election to an administrative commission named for the purpose of responding to the request. Ordinarily, at least one member of the commission will be a ruling elder from the congregation making the request.
3. The administrative commission will be charged with the responsibilities described in Sections A, B, and C above. The administrative commission will also arrange a final worship service to be held by the Presbytery to complete the life of the congregation, and to provide for its members to rededicate their lives to continuing service to Jesus Christ.

Additional resources on closing a church located in Care for Congregations Pod Handbook.

**P-200.03****POLICY FOR GRACIOUS SEPARATION (2014)****I. STATEMENT OF VALUES THE PRESBYTERY OF THE NORTHERN PLAINS****A. Scripture Passages**

1. “When any of you has a grievance against another, do you dare to take it to court before the unrighteous, instead of taking it before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels – to say nothing of ordinary matters? If you have ordinary cases, then, do you appoint as judges those who have no standing in the church? I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to decide between one believer and another, but a believer goes to court against a believer – and before unbelievers at that? In fact, to have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?” (I Corinthians 6: 1-7) NRSV
2. “For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.” (Galatians 5: 13-14) NRSV
3. “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ! For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members of the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”

These scripture passages help to guide our work in the times when conversations about separation become necessary.

**B. Introduction**

The 218th General Assembly (2008) of the Presbyterian Church (USA) urged that presbyteries and synods develop and make available to lower councils and local congregations a process that exercises the responsibility and power “to divide, dismiss, or dissolve congregations in consultation with their members” (Book of Order, G-3.0303b) with consistency, pastoral responsibility, accountability, gracious witness, openness, and transparency. Believing that trying to exercise this responsibility and power through litigation is deadly to the cause of Christ, impacting the local church, other parts of the Body of Christ and ecumenical relationships, and our witness to Christ in the world around us, it urges congregations considering leaving the denomination, presbyteries and synods to 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. While each conversation with a local congregation will require

unique responses and sensitivities which are dictated by the circumstances encountered, we commit to act with consistency to provide a just and caring resolution for all parties concerned.

*Pastoral responsibility:* The requirement in G-3.0301a to consult with the members of a church seeking dismissal highlights the presbytery's pastoral responsibility that must not be submerged beneath other responsibilities. The pastoral responsibility of the Presbytery of Northern Plains extends to all parties affected by a request to separate from the PC(USA). This means that provision for pastoral care is made for both those desiring to leave, and those desiring to remain in the PC(USA) in any given congregation.

*Accountability:* For a governing body, 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”. Both the Presbytery of Northern Plains and the leadership within a local congregation are held to this standard of accountability. Particularly those who are ordained as presbyters (Teaching and Ruling Elders) are accountable to live within the restraints of the Constitution of the PC(USA). If they should find it impossible to live within those restraints it is their duty to renounce their ordination and withdraw while promoting the peace, purity, and unity of the church.

While the Constitution honors that “God alone is the Lord of Conscience” [F-3.0101], it immediately follows with a statement about the right of the larger church to govern [F-3.0102]:

That, in perfect consistency with the above principle of common right, every Christian Church, or union or association of particular churches, is entitled to declare the terms of admission into its communion, and the qualifications of its ministers and members, as well as the whole system of its internal government which Christ hath appointed; that in the exercise of this right they may, notwithstanding, err, in making the terms of communion either too lax or too narrow; yet, even in the case, they do not infringe upon the liberty or the rights of others, but only make an improper use of their own.

Further, we acknowledge that belief and behavior are distinguishable. Free expression of conscience is limited for officers and pastors under G-2.0105. Calling congregational meetings, moving churches to seek dismissal from the denomination or obstructing the constitutional governance of the church are actions, not expressions of free conscience. (For more on this see the GA PJC Remedial Case Decision and Order 219-03)

*Gracious witness:* Scripture and the Holy Spirit require a gracious witness from us rather than a harsh legalism. The calling to live with one another, particularly in times of disagreement extends to the presbytery and the local church community. We are instructed by the Constitution of the church “That truth is in order to goodness; and the great touchstone of truth, its tendency to promote holiness,” and “we also believe that there are truths and forms with respect to which [people] of good characters and principles may differ. And in all these we think it the duty both of private Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other” [F3.0104-0105].

*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.

Once again it is important to notice that this principal applies equally to both the presbytery and to the local congregation seeking dismissal. Only a cooperative spirit, and a collegial commitment to fairly assess the needs of all involved, and the assets available to meet those needs, will promote unity and peace within the church.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Our unity in Christ and the relational nature of our polity require dialogue between and among governing bodies... Dialogue requires participation by both parties...” (Johnston, et al. v. Heartland Presbytery, Minutes, 2006, p. 462, 466). This obligation and mutual responsibility for dialogue was made explicit by the 218th General Assembly when it adopted the Resolution for a Gracious, Pastoral Response (Minutes, 2008, Item 04-28, p. 49), expressing its will that all governing bodies and persons dealing with members of a church seeking dismissal act in a consistent and pastoral manner, with accountability and due consideration for fiduciary and connectional concerns, with open and transparent communication in the context of gracious witness to one another. Presbyteries and congregations have a **reciprocal**

### III. POLICY OF THE PRESBYTERY OF THE NORTHERN PLAINS: FUNDAMENTAL UNDERSTANDINGS AND COMMITMENTS OF THE POLICY

- A. The authority to dismiss congregations resides unambiguously in the presbytery. Basic to Presbyterian polity is the understanding that a more inclusive body has authority over a less inclusive body. “The larger part of the church, or a representation thereof, shall govern the smaller” (F-3.0203). It is only the presbytery that has authority to: “control the location of new congregations and of congregations desiring to move as well as divide, dismiss, or dissolve congregations in consultation with their members (G-3.0303b.).
- Holding a Congregational Meeting for the purpose of “voting” to leave the denomination is, at best misleading, and at worst out of order. (for more information see section II of GA PJC Remedial Case 219-03)<sup>2</sup>
- The Constitution of the PC(USA) carefully delineates the items which are subject to a congregational vote and voting to leave the denomination is not one of those duties given to a congregation [G1.0503]. While it is useful to determine the disposition of feeling within a local community about the question of dismissal - this policy discourages congregational meetings for the purpose of vote-taking in preference of other forms of information gathering.
- B. The rights of those who wish to stay within the PC(USA) will be guaranteed. An effort shall be made by the Presbytery to determine if there is a group who wishes to stay within the PC(USA) (G-4.0207) that is capable of maintaining the ministry of the congregation. Ordinarily, the property and assets may be retained by this group as a continuing congregation within the PC(USA).
- C. The presbytery holds all property “in trust” for congregations within the presbytery. Please consult the “FAQ” found in the resource section of this policy for further information regarding the trust clause. (G-4.0203)
- D. **PRESBYTERY GOALS IN THIS PROCESS:**
1. The presbytery’s goal in this process is to glorify God, and to work together to maintain a powerful witness to the love of Christ as we seek to discern God’s will.
  2. The presbytery has the responsibility to identify groups or individual members who wish to remain in the PC(USA) and shall guard their peace, strength and unity.
  3. The presbytery shall guard the peace, strength and unity of the group seeking dismissal.
- E. **GUIDING PRINCIPALS**
1. The presbytery is not bound to release real and personal property based solely upon the vote of a congregation regardless of the percentage of members who vote to leave (G-4.0207).
  2. The presbytery is bound by the Book of Order and the property clause (G-4.0203) to be certain that all property is held in trust for the denomination. The presbytery will consider the

**obligation** for this process (G-4.0302). Whether the presbytery’s power “to divide, dismiss, or dissolve churches in consultation with their members” (G-11.0103i) is retained or delegated to an administrative commission, it is to be exercised in a pastoral manner, with litigation seen as a last resort, “deadly to the cause of Christ” (Item 04-28, section 2).

Any privilege to seek dismissal is conditioned on the cooperation of the congregation, the session and the pastor(s) with the presbytery in a process that operates in the manner set forth in Item 04-28. There shall not be any secret or secretive acts by sessions, pastors or congregations; bylaw changes or transfers of assets effectively negating the Book of Order or diminishing a church’s connection to the PC(USA); or curtailment of communications with the presbytery as a prelude to dismissal. Congregational meetings called or conducted by sessions for the purpose of voting on dismissal without the involvement of the presbytery are improper and have no binding effect. *From: GA PJC Remedial Case Decision and Order 219-03*

<sup>2</sup> “In 2008, the 218th General Assembly adopted Item 04-20 (Minutes, 2008, p. 48), which refers to G-7.0304 and states, “Withdrawal from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is not a matter that can be considered at a congregational meeting.

This does not mean that a congregation is prohibited from requesting dismissal. However, it is the presbytery (or its duly appointed administrative commission or its Committee on Ministry) that has the responsibility to consult with the members of a church about dismissal (G-11.0103i). The presbytery is required to afford all persons affected by a dismissal notice and an opportunity to be heard on the subject (G-9.0503b(2); Item 04-20). These consultations (which may be in the form of listening sessions, hearings or other consultations) are for the benefit of informing the presbytery as it considers a request for dismissal, but are not meetings at which any business of the congregation may be conducted (id.; see also Gaba v. Presbytery of Eastern Virginia, Minutes, 2003, p. 269, (The purpose of this provision is not merely matter of fairness or information gathering, but also exercise of pastoral oversight of churches by the presbytery to facilitate reconciliation.))”

- congregation's financial position and valuation of property and take into consideration the PC(USA)'s use and benefit of the property in every decision concerning disposition of property. (Tom vs. Presbytery of San Francisco, November 1, 2012).
3. Decisions about property shall be determined on the basis of mission in the community. The presbytery may require financial compensation as a part of an agreement to dismiss a church with its property.
  4. The presbytery shall not ordinarily institute civil law suits regarding property issues, but shall defend its interests through mediation or other alternate dispute resolution if drawn into civil cases.
  5. In the case of a congregation that refuses to follow these principles and processes, the presbytery will take all steps necessary to defend and enforce the trust clause, and all other rights, defenses, and remedies afforded under the Constitution of the PC(USA).
  6. For a congregation that wishes to separate from the PC(USA), all debts owed to the PC(USA) and Northern Plains Presbytery must be fully satisfied and the presbytery and PC(USA) removed from all legal documents/agreements if a church is to be dismissed.
  7. Upon dismissal, all rights to use or display the seal of the PC(USA) are ended.
  8. The name of a dismissed congregation shall be negotiated with the negotiating team.
  9. Upon dismissal all original church records become the property of the PC(USA). A congregation being dismissed may arrange to have records copied at their expense.
  10. Ordinarily, the legal costs incurred by the presbytery to dismiss a congregation will be borne by the dismissed congregation, including preparation of deeds, appraisals, recording fees, etc. However, these costs may be negotiated between the congregation and the negotiating team.
  11. No congregation can be dismissed into "independence." Transfers can only be made to another denomination in the Reformed Tradition. (F.1.0303, G.3.0301).
  12. A congregation that is considering the possibility of separating from the PC(USA) should contact the Committee on Ministry of the presbytery as early as possible so that consultation, discernment and separation can be started with them. Discernment is a process that requires all parties to be involved - congregation and presbytery. However, discernment cannot take place if decisions have already been made.
  13. The process used to respond to a request for separation from the PC(USA) should be resolved in a reasonable amount of time, without acting too quickly or too slowly. This decision is of major significance for the congregation and the presbytery and adequate time needs to be taken to ensure that an appropriate process has been followed.

#### IV. **Outline of Process for Engagement with Presbytery**

- A. The session needs to vote 2/3 or more in the affirmative to request the Presbytery of the Northern Plains (PNP) begin the Gracious Separation (GS) process to leave the PC(USA).
- B. The process begins as a **Consultation**. The PNP will form an Initial Consultation Team (ICT) which will meet with the session over no more than a four-month period.
  1. The ICT should have no less than one Ruling and one Teaching Elder, but not more than three Ruling and two Teaching Elders.
  2. Members of an ICT should have strong experience in the polity of the PC(USA), working with or within a congregation, and be fully knowledgeable about the PNP process of Gracious Separation (GS).
  3. The ICT shall meet with the session corporately and separately to understand the position of the elders as to why they wish to leave.
  4. The ICT will fully explain the details of the GS and the implications for the church and the PNP.
  5. The ICT will then ask the session to confirm their desire to continue in the GS process by taking another vote. Only an affirmative 2/3 vote of session or more will constitute a valid request to continue to seek separation.
  6. If the ICT finds the request to be valid, they will recommend to the PNP that the church be allowed

to move to the next phase of GS. The ICT will be dissolved.

- C. The next phase of GS is ***Discernment***. The PNP will appoint members to a Discernment Team (DT), keeping one to two people from Initial Consultation Team, which will join with a like number of elders from the church. The purpose of this body is to meet with the leadership of the church and the church membership at large to understand the theological and/or polity reasons for seeking dismissal.
1. The Discernment phase will last no more than eight months.
  2. By engaging in the discernment phase, all parties are committing to avoid litigation.
  3. The PNP will appoint at least two Ruling Elders and one Teaching elder to the DT. This number can be expanded to three Ruling and two Teaching Elders at the discretion of the PNP.
  4. The church will appoint three to five people to serve on the DT. These appointees should represent the diversity of opinion within the congregation. The DT will elect two moderators, one from the PNP and the other from the church.
  5. The Co-Moderators will lead the DT.
  6. The DT will be responsible for setting up and carrying out listening sessions corporately and individually to understand the desire of the church membership to leave the PC(USA).
  7. The DT will be responsible for educating the church on the implications of leaving the PC(USA).
    - a. The DT will be responsible for designing a canvassing scheme to accurately and efficiently gauge the desire of the membership to leave.
    - b. Before canvassing commences, the DT will be required to develop a reconciliation plan, should the canvass fail. A part of that reconciliation plan should be a commitment by the church to not to seek GS again for at least two years.
    - c. A reconciliation plan will outline the next steps should the canvas fail or pass.
    - d. The DT will canvass the church active membership. Ordinarily, active membership is defined by the most recent statistical report filed with the General Assembly. If adjustment to that bare-number need to be made to account for deaths, transfers, and newly received active members, the DT may make those adjustments provided that there is consensus on the DT about the appropriateness of the adjustment. All church members on record will be canvassed. An affirmative reply of 60% or more of the active membership shall constitute a valid response to continue the GS process. Failure to respond to the canvass, an abstention, or a NO answer, shall be counted as a desire to stay with the PC(USA).
    - e. If the response of the canvass does not meet the 60% threshold, then the church will implement the reconciliation plan and the DT will be dissolved.
    - f. If the canvass exceeds the 60% threshold, then the DT will recommend that the PNP allow the church to continue to the next phase of GS. The DT will be dissolved.
  8. The next phase of GS is the ***Negotiation of Separation***. The PNP will appoint members to a Separation Negotiation Team (SNT) which will join with a like number of elders from the church. The purpose of this body is to meet with the leadership of the church and the church membership at large to develop the terms of separation.
    - a. The Negotiation of Separation phase will last no more than 10 months.
    - b. The PNP will appoint at least three Ruling Elders and two Teaching elders to the SNT. This number can be expanded to four Ruling and three Teaching Elders at the discretion of the PNP.
    - c. The church will appoint five to seven elders to serve on the SNT. The SNT will elect two moderators, one from the PNP and the other from the church.
    - d. The Co-Moderators will lead the SNT.
    - e. The SNT will be responsible for:
      - (1) Agreeing to a transparent protocol for valuing the assets of the church.
      - (2) Developing a fair, unbiased plan for taking a vote of the congregation to be conducted by mail.
      - (3) Creating a financial plan for separation which shall take into consideration the value

- of the real property, any outstanding per capita payments, and the ability of a church and the remnant of the church to remain financially viable after separation. (Should there be any division of funds be made between those wishing to stay in the PC(USA) and those who wish to leave, the funds received by the PNP shall be held in trust to support the mission of that part of the church membership who do not wish to leave the PC(USA).)
- (4) The SNT will verify that the church has developed a plan to pay in full any loans outstanding to either the PNP or the PC(USA) and that they have also created a plan to address the satisfactory payment of other liabilities such *as* utility bills, payroll taxes, staff salaries, vacations accrued
  - (5) The SNT will require the church declare to what reformed body they wish to be dismissed.
  - (6) SNT will be required to develop a reconciliation plan with the members of the congregation, should the vote of the congregation fail. A part of that reconciliation plan should be a commitment by the church to not seek GS again for at least two years.
  - (7) SNT will be required to develop a membership care plan for those who choose to remain in the PC(USA) should the vote of the congregation pass.
- f. This plan shall include at least the following three areas:
    - (1) Provide space and time for worship.
    - (2) Coordinate with the Presbytery appointed leadership for pastoral care and leading worship.
    - (3) Provide a safe, open environment for those who attend these services or seek our pastoral care from the Presbytery appointed leadership.
      - (a) The SNT will be responsible for educating the church on the implications of leaving the PC(USA).
  - g. In the case of a multi-point parish, all parties must determine if they wish to remain in a multi-point parish. If there is any change to the current structure the SNT is responsible for negotiating the terms of dissolution of the parish and the impact on the financial viability of all parties. The SNT must contact Board of Pensions to determine the ramifications for the congregations and the minister, regardless of whether the parish is dissolved or the original agreement is modified.
  - h. The SNT will be responsible for carrying out a vote of the congregation. All church active members on record will be eligible to vote as determined in III.C.7c. An affirmative reply of 60% or more of the active membership shall constitute a valid response to leave the PC(USA). Failure to return a ballot, an abstention, or a NO vote, shall be counted as a desire to stay with the PC(USA).
  - i. If the response of the vote does not meet the 60% threshold, then the church will implement the reconciliation plan and the SNT will eventually be dissolved.
  - j. If the vote exceeds the 60% threshold, then the SMT will recommend that the PNP dismiss the church to the previously declared reformed body under the terms developed by the SNT and agreed to by the church. The SMT will eventually be dissolved.
  - k. Terms for the release of a congregation to another body. Consistent with the PC(USA) polity and General Assembly actions taken in *Anderson v. Synod of Florida*, and *Strong v. Bagby*, congregations seeking dismissal from the Presbytery may only be dismissed with their property to another Reformed body. If a congregation wishes to end its affiliation with the PC(USA) without transferring to another Reformed body, that congregation must seek to be dissolved as a congregation of the PC(USA), under the current policies for church closure of the presbytery, and would, as of any request to be dissolved, no longer be engaged in the dismissal process or subject to this policy. After such closure, the people of that community would be free to constitute themselves as a



- new congregation with non-Reformed affiliation or independent status.
- l. Once the PNP has received a report to dismiss, from the SNT, the PNP Moderator shall schedule a vote by the Presbytery to be held within three months. This can be a regularly scheduled meeting of presbytery or a special stated meeting of presbytery. A vote to dismiss, will require only a simple majority of presbytery.
  - m. If the PNP votes to dismiss the church, the church will have 60 days to fulfill the terms of the SNT report. Failure to do so will nullify the vote of the PNP and the church will not be allowed to leave the PC(USA).
  - n. If the PNP votes to NOT dismiss the church, the PNP will direct the SNT to review the terms of their report and submit appropriate revisions with a new request to dismiss within 60 days. Upon receiving a revised report, the PNP will again take up the request to dismiss as in point number five.

## RESOURCES

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS GRACIOUS DISMISSAL POLICIES AFTER TOM V. PBY OF SAN FRANCISCO**

**(GAPJC Remedial Case 221-03)**

#### **WHAT ARE GRACIOUS DISMISSAL POLICIES?**

In 2008, at the direction of the 219th General Assembly, the Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) sent a resolution to the presbyteries, synods and sessions, “indicating the will of the assembly that presbyteries and synods develop and make available to lower governing bodies and local congregations a process that exercises the responsibility and power ‘to divide, dismiss, or dissolve churches in consultation with their members’ with consistency, pastoral responsibility, accountability, gracious witness, openness, and transparency.”<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, Gracious Dismissal Policies may be used by councils to offer clarity and guide their process when discerning whether and how a particular congregation could be dismissed from the PC(USA).

#### **HOW DO GRACIOUS DISMISSAL POLICIES RELATE TO THE TRUST CLAUSE (G-4.0203)?**

In the recent General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GAPJC) case, Tom v. Pby of San Francisco, the GAPJC authoritatively interpreted how the Trust Clause found in the Book of Order at G-4.0203 interacts with Gracious Dismissal Policies.<sup>2</sup> The GAPJC held that while a presbytery has broad discretionary authority under the Book of Order to determine property rights [within the context of determining the mission of Jesus Christ in the world (G-4.0201) and in its district (G-3.0303a) to dismiss a particular congregation within its geographic region (G-3.0301a)], the presbytery must fulfill its fiduciary duty under the Trust Clause (G-4.0203) to consider the interest of the PC(USA) as a beneficiary of the property.

#### **WHAT MUST BE IN A GRACIOUS DISMISSAL POLICY?**

A presbytery has broad discretionary authority to determine the mission of Jesus Christ in its district and may take into account many issues such as the spiritual needs of the congregation and community as well as the Marks, Notes and Great Ends of the Church.<sup>3</sup> The presbytery must also consider a congregation’s financial position and valuation of property and take into consideration the PC(USA)’s use and benefit of the property in every decision concerning disposition of property. Accordingly, the Gracious Dismissal Policy should include this duty among the procedures listed within the Policy.

#### **MUST A GRACIOUS DISMISSAL POLICY OR IMPLEMENTATION OF A GRACIOUS DISMISSAL POLICY INCLUDE CONSULTATION WITH ANY OF THE NATIONAL ENTITIES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY?**

No, a presbytery has discretionary authority to determine the mission of Jesus Christ in its district when deciding whether to organize, merge, dismiss or dissolve a congregation. This discretionary authority includes the presbytery’s consideration of a congregation’s financial position and valuation of the property.

#### **HOW MUST A GRACIOUS DISMISSAL POLICY BE IMPLEMENTED?**

Even if the presbytery’s Gracious Dismissal Policy does not include the fiduciary duty under the Trust Clause, the presbytery should ultimately exercise this fiduciary duty before making its decision about dismissal. In Tom

v. Pby of San Francisco, the GAPJC stated that this would include exercising due diligence regarding the value of the property of the congregation seeking dismissal which would include doing a financial analysis of the value of the property.<sup>5</sup> The presbytery must be informed of this financial analysis before it votes on a dismissal. Providing this information gives the presbytery and congregation the information needed to make an informed decision regarding dismissal of the congregation. (This is not all that different from presenting the financial implications for decisions to be made at the General Assembly).

#### WHAT TYPES OF GRACIOUS DISMISSAL POLICIES WOULD NOT BE CONSTITUTIONAL?

Any Gracious Dismissal Policy that precludes a presbytery from taking into account the Trust Clause fiduciary duty before deciding whether to dismiss a congregation on a case-by-case basis would be unconstitutional.

Possible examples of policies that would preclude this analysis on a case-by-case basis are:

Policies that only require a percentage vote from the congregation for the presbytery's approval of terms of dismissal including only taking into account the spiritual needs or desires of current membership and not the breaking of the historic relationship of the members who came before.

Policies that only require the consideration of per capita and/or mission financial obligations are not sufficient to meet the fiduciary duty under the Trust Clause to consider the interest of the PC(USA) as a beneficiary of property.

Policies that require the payment by the congregation of a set percentage of assets prior to approval for dismissal. This would serve to preclude a case-by-case analysis.

#### UPDATED NOVEMBER 2012

1 GA (2008, 49, 51, 284, Item 04-28) The 218th General Assembly (2008) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

1. Directs the Stated Clerk to send this resolution to the presbyteries, synods, and sessions, indicating the will of the assembly that presbyteries and synods develop and make available to lower governing bodies and local congregations a process that exercises the responsibility and power "to divide, dismiss, or dissolve churches in consultation with their members" (Book of Order, G-11.0103i) with consistency, pastoral responsibility, accountability, gracious witness, openness, and transparency.
2. Believing that trying to exercise this responsibility and power through litigation is deadly to the cause of Christ, impacting the local church, other parts of the Body of Christ and ecumenical relationships, and our witness to Christ in the world around us, [the General Assembly] urges [congregations considering leaving the denomination,] presbyteries [,] and synods to 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-11.0103i 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 governing body, accountability rightly dictates fiduciary and connectional concerns, raising general issues of property (G-8.0000) and specific issues of schism within a congregation (G-8.0600). But, full accountability also requires preeminent concern with "caring for the flock."
  - Gracious Witness: It is our belief that 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.

2 PJC (2014, 221-03, Tom et al v. Pby of San Francisco)

3 See F-1.0302; F-1.0303; F-1.0304.

4 However, in considering each congregation on a case-by-case basis, it is important to recognize that one of the entities of the General Assembly or a synod may have created with the congregation and the presbytery a direct financial interest in the property or assets and thus must be consulted by the presbytery. For example, The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Investment and Loan Program (PILP) regularly extends loans to congregations which are secured by the property and/or guarantee of payment from a presbytery. A presbytery that is considering the dismissal or dissolution of a congregation with a secured or unsecured loan from PILP must, as a part of the presbytery's fiduciary interest under the Trust clause, consult with the Presbyterian Investment and Loan Program. See also Advisory Opinion: Trust Clause and Gracious Separation: Implementing the Trust Clause for the Unity of the Church for a more extensive discussion of this particular duty.

5 PJC (2014, 221-03, Tom et al v. Pby of San Francisco)

### **RULING ELDER CONDUCT IN A CHURCH CONSIDERING OR SEEKING GRACIOUS SEPARATION**

Two passages from the Book of Order, questions for Ruling Elders at ordination are especially relevant when a church is seeking Gracious Separation (GS) from the denomination:

G-14.0207e. *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?

G-14.0207i. *Will you be a faithful elder, watching over the people*, providing for their worship, nurture, and service? *Will you share in government and discipline, serving in governing bodies of the church*, and in your

ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

## **Two Essential Responsibilities**

Ruling Elders are called by God to be servants of the people. They share in the governance of the church and they do so under the framework of the rules of the Book of Order. Therefore, it is the obligation of the Ruling Elders to:

- Diligently and with energy educate themselves on the rules that govern the church. Ruling Elders are not typically formally trained in the polity of the church, but they are expected to abide by its discipline. In order to accomplish this, they need to study and work aggressively to know what the rules are and what authority they and others in governance have been given.
- The Presbyterian form of governance is based on Biblical principles dating back to the time of Moses. As in olden times and today, Elders are raised up from the people, to represent the interests of the people, before governing bodies of the church. Thus they must earnestly seek to understand the views and aspirations of all the people of the church, whether they are for, against, or conflicted about the necessity to leave the denomination.

## **The Necessity for Ruling Elders to Rule**

### **The Responsibility to Seek the Will of God**

God's will is supreme in the life of the church. So earnestly seeking to understand God's will for a congregation is critical. On the one hand, this seems to be a difficult goal to achieve. After all, God's reasons are often not knowable or understandable. But Ruling Elders have an obligation to try, especially in the case of a GS. Thankfully, God has given us the means to understand in part his will for our lives through pray, study, and contemplation. When praying, Ruling Elders should:

- Set aside a time each day to really focus on the God. Put aside the distractions and devote significant energy to prayer.
- Before you pray, remind yourself of what it is to be an Elder. Read passages from the letters Paul wrote to Timothy and Titus.
- When you pray, ask God to reveal His will for you and your church. Be patient. Do not expect an answer right away.

## **PASTOR CONDUCT IN A CHURCH CONSIDERING OR SEEKING GRACIOUS SERARATION**

Pastors (Ministers of the Word and Sacrament) play a unique and dynamic role in the life of any congregation. Primarily they are the spiritual leader of the local church. They preach and teach the Word. Next, they provide pastoral care to members and friends of the church who are seeking difficult answers to their faith, or are troubled by personal grief, sickness, or challenges from destructive behavior. Finally, they are appointed by the Presbytery to be the Moderator of the ruling body of the church, the Session. All the while, there are significant facts and or tensions involved in their relationship with the Congregation and the Presbytery:

1. The Pastor is not a member of the Congregation.
2. The Pastor's salary is covered by all the members of the Congregation whether those members desire to leave the denomination, stay in the denomination, or are conflicted.
3. The Pastor is, by the nature of the call, a transitory figure in the life of the Congregation.
4. The Pastor is a member of Presbytery and only the Presbytery can approve or dissolve a call.
5. The Pastor is appointed to be Moderator of the Session by the Presbytery.

6. The Pastor, as the Moderator of the Session, is responsible to see to it that the decisions of the Session are arrived at with the counsel and wisdom of the Holy Spirit, as well as conducting business within the bounds of decent and good order as described in the polity of the larger church.
7. The Pastor, as Moderator of the Session, does not have authority over the Session. The primary authority of the Session is in the hands of God and this is entrusted to duly nominated and elected representatives of the Congregation. These are the Ruling Elders and they are called Ruling, because they rule.

### **With these facts in mind, how should the Pastor conduct him or herself within a Congregation that is considering or seeking Gracious Separation (GS)?**

With probity and rectitude. Probity is the adherence to the highest principles and ideals and rectitude is the quality or state of being correct in judgment or procedure.

Pastors are humans and as such, they are sinful. Thus they must appeal to the Holy Spirit unceasingly to act in a Christ like way to all the members of the Congregation (whether those members are for, against, or conflicted about seeking dismissal). This is a tremendous burden especially as the Pastor will likely have strong opinions about GS. No matter what those opinions are, they need to be carefully and properly conveyed to the Session, the membership of the Congregation, and to the Presbytery. This will be an almost impossible task and one the Pastor should not shoulder alone. They should earnestly seek the counsel of the Holy Spirit and also advice, in confidence, with respected mentors and colleagues.

### **How should the Presbytery interact with the Pastor?**

The Presbytery should engage with the Pastor early on in the consultation phase of a GS to remind them of the facts above and to offer support and advice in navigating the rough waters he or she is passing through. Reminding the Pastor of his/her unique position in the local church should not be done in a threatening or chilling way. How to do that must be done delicately, privately, and in a non-threatening manner.

Once, the GS process moves beyond consultation. The stakes for the Pastor, the Congregation, and the Presbytery becomes much greater. Thus a Pastor should be discouraged by the Presbytery from participating as a member of the Discernment Team. If the process goes to the Separation phase, the Pastor will NOT be allowed to participate as a member of the Separation Negotiation Team. The reasons are obvious. At this point in the process, the Presbytery and the Congregation are at odds and the Pastor, who is not a member of the Congregation, and is a member of Presbytery, is inherently in conflict.

In sum, the Pastor is a transitory figure in the life of any Congregation. With the stakes being so high in a GS, it is the leaders of the Congregation, the Ruling Elders, who should be responsible for actions that will have consequences long after the Pastor has moved on to another call.

### **A comment on the responsibility of Ruling Elders to Rule**

Sadly, in many churches in the PNP, Ruling Elders are overly deferential to a called Pastor. The Pastor is formally trained in the faith, is often well spoken, and because of this, Ruling Elders, either consciously or not, often cede authority that they have been given to the Pastor. In the case of a GS, this is unacceptable for the reasons outlined above. Ultimately, the membership of the church will have to live with the actions taken in a GS long after the Pastor has moved on to another denomination or church. Thus, during the consultation phase of any GS, Ruling Elders should be reminded of the gravity of their responsibility and be encouraged to take the long view with respect to what God and the Congregation are calling and asking them to do.

### **Guiding Principles for the Development of a Reconciliation Plan**

- The Bible is full of diversity and conflict.
- Conflict is often an opportunity to learn something about God.
- Authentic peace requires both conversation and justice.
- Reconciliation is God's:
  1. Overriding concern for human beings throughout history.

2. Primary responsibility, not ours.
3. Gift to us. The church's role is not to make reconciliation happen (God does that), but to create an environment where God's reconciliation has a better change of happening.

People in conflict often behave like enemies...and scripture calls us to find ways of loving them, including our sisters and brothers in the church.

Example:

1. <sup>16</sup>From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view;<sup>[a]</sup> even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view,<sup>[b]</sup> we know him no longer in that way. <sup>17</sup>So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!<sup>18</sup>All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup>that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself,<sup>[c]</sup> not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. <sup>20</sup>So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup>For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:16-21)

<sup>15</sup>“If another member of the church<sup>[d]</sup> sins against you,<sup>[e]</sup> go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one.<sup>[f]</sup> <sup>16</sup>But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup>If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. <sup>18</sup>Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. <sup>19</sup>Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup>For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” (Matthew 18: 15-20)

## Forgiveness

<sup>21</sup>Then Peter came and said to him, “Lord, if another member of the church<sup>[g]</sup> sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” <sup>22</sup>Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven<sup>[h]</sup> times.

## How to Begin

God intends us to live in Peace. Peacemaking starts with our brothers and sisters.

1. Conflict is inevitable and normal.
2. The question is not IF we have conflict, but rather how we respond to it.
3. Direct communication is better than triangulating.
  - a. People are called to speak to one another rather than talking about one another or around the problem.
  - b. The process is not done in isolation; rather members join together in the process.
4. “if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.”
5. “for where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” Even in the face of conflict.
6. Jesus emphasizes abundant grace and forgiveness to Peter.
7. God is present for the purpose of helping people resolve their differences. Before a church can progress to the negotiation stage, they must formulate two concurrent plans for reconciliation that takes the following things into consideration:
  - a. Provide Space for worship for all members, which may mean holding two services, one PC(USA) and the other for those who wish to leave.
  - b. Coordinate with the Presbytery for pastoral care and leading worship for those wishing to remain within the PC(USA).
  - c. Provide a safe, open environment for those who attend these services or seek out pastoral care.

Two plans will need to be developed in order to anticipate two potential outcomes; 1) the canvass fails and the congregation remains within the PC(USA) or 2) the canvass indicates that a minority of members want to remain

within the PC(USA).

It is essential that the congregation consider the needs and emotions of their brothers and sisters who do not agree with the outcome of the canvass. The goal of the reconciliation plan is to find a way forward for the congregation and ALL of its members.

The session will formulate a reconciliation plan in collaboration with the Separation Negotiation Team. The following resource is from the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center. Their model heavily emphasizes the use of “Interest Based Bargaining” for situations such as this. The following outline is not comprehensive and should not be treated as such. It is offered as a guideline to assist the session and the SNT in the process of developing a reconciliation plan.

#### INTEREST BASED BARGAINING:

1. Principled negotiating style
  - a. Parties are the expert on their congregation and come to the table as problem solvers.
  - b. Goal is a wise outcome; reached efficiently and amicably.
2. Separate the issues from the people.
  - a. Be hard on issues, soft on people.
  - b. Clearly define your concerns in a non-reactive way.
  - c. Listen actively.
3. Focus on interests, ignore positions.
  - a. Explore the underlying interests of both parties.
  - b. Highlight shared interests.
4. Invent options for mutual gain.
  - a. Brainstorm alternatives, without premature evaluation. (AKA; ‘oh that will never work’)
  - b. Creatively search for alternative ways of meeting both parties’ interests.
5. Insist on using objective criteria.

Reach agreement based on fair standards, seeking to satisfy the interests of both parties.

### **P-200.04**

#### **THE FORMATION OF LARGER PARISHES (October 1996, Revised October 2017)**

A larger parish may consist of two or more congregations from either Presbyterian or other denominations with whom we are in correspondence. Each congregation maintains its own identity, organizational structure, and denominational relationship. In addition, each congregation agrees to cooperate with the other congregations as a member of the parish in certain aspects of ministry. The parish responsibilities may include, but need not be limited to, the support and oversight of a pastor.

When a session wants to consider becoming part of a larger parish, it will invite the Congregational Pod to assist with the process with the Parish Formation Guidelines.

### **P-200.05**

#### **COMPENSATION OF MODERATORS (Revised October 2017)**

- A. All sessions are required to compensate moderators who serve them and who are not called or otherwise contracted by the congregations or sessions.
- B. Compensation will be \$50 per hour (for meeting and phone time but not travel time) plus mileage according to the IRS rate to and from meetings.

**P-200.06****POLICY FOR CHURCHES WITH A MANSE**

Many of our churches in the Presbytery of Northern Plains own manses. Committee on Ministry is eager for session and those living in the manse to share mutual goals and views on the maintenance of the manse and any improvements which may be required. This can be accomplished with open and continuing communication between all involved.

Enclosed is a Manse Appraisal Form which shall be filled out annually and sent to the Presbytery Office, 5555 S. Washington St., Suite A, Grand Forks, ND 58201. This is particularly important at the beginning of a new pastorate, when it is a critical and opportune time for conversation about the manse. Committee on Ministry suggests that session and the newly called pastor have conversation even before moving into the manse. Here are questions to consider:

- What committee is responsible for any matters regarding the manse? Who is the contact person for that committee?
- Typically, the church pays for heat, electricity and water. Are there any other utilities for which the church pays? What are the emergency phone numbers for the utilities services?
- Does the church insurance policy cover the contents of the manse belonging to the pastor? If so, what is the coverage? If not, can someone suggest the name of an insurance agent who can write a tenants' policy? Does the church insurance policy cover the pastor's books and other things which would be kept in an office at the church? If so, what is the coverage? If not, what can be done?
- What is the Session's expectation as to what condition the manse will be left in at the end of the pastor's service?
- Will the pastor's family have any pets housed in the manse? Does the Session have any reservations about that?
- Does the Session have any expectation about any meetings or social events which should take place in the manse, perhaps because of tradition?
- Other than the pastor and his/her family, who will have access to the manse? With what notice?

The pastor and the Session should agree to meet at least annually, usually in the fall prior to the budget process, to discuss needed manse maintenance and ideas for improvements.

A formal inspection by a certified inspector shall occur prior to an occupancy change, and such formal inspection would be encouraged every ten years. Otherwise an annual inspection by the occupant and a church representative should occur.

**MANSE APPRAISAL FORM - PRESBYTERY OF NORTHERN PLAINS**

**Care for Congregations Pod**

**Church** \_\_\_\_\_ **Location** \_\_\_\_\_

**Manse Address** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Occupied by** \_\_\_\_\_ (pastor, vacant, rental, purpose of other use)

**House Type** \_\_\_\_\_ **Number of Bedrooms** \_\_\_\_\_ **Year Built** \_\_\_\_\_

**Value of Manse \$** \_\_\_\_\_ **How determined?** \_\_\_\_\_ **By Whom?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Inspected by (please print name)** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone #** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

The annual inspection is to be conducted by II person jointly chosen by the Pastor/CLP and Session. Inspection upon any change of occupancy is to be a formal, certified inspection and the same is recommended every ten years.

**Pastor's/CLP's signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH ISSUES**

Who replaces **light bulbs**? \_\_\_\_\_ Are they being replaced with fluorescent bulbs? \_\_\_\_\_

**Radon Testing** No/Yes When? \_\_\_\_\_ Results \_\_\_\_\_

**Thermostats?** Manse zoned for heating/cooling? **Yes/No** Do the thermostats work? **Yes/No**

**Filters on furnace?** Changed quarterly **Yes/No/Not Applicable**

**Insulation?** Is it installed throughout the house? Yes/No

Any evidence of **lead paint** inside or outside? **No/Yes** If yes, where? \_\_\_\_\_

Manse  **fueled** by?  **Gas/Oil** Yearly cost to **heat** the manse \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Furnace last professionally cleaned and inspected? \_\_\_\_\_ Efficiency \_\_\_\_\_%

Is there a fuel tank in the ground? **Yes/No** Age \_\_\_\_\_ In use? **Yes/No** If yes has it been inspected? \_\_\_\_\_ When? \_\_\_\_\_ Is it insured? **Yes/No.**

If not on city sewage, when was the septic system last pumped out? Date \_\_\_\_\_

Source of drinking water? **City/Well** If well water, date of last analysis? \_\_\_\_\_

Please list the location of all **smoke detectors** \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,

Do they all work (fresh batteries) **Yes/No** Location of **CO detectors** \_\_\_\_\_

Does the **basement** ever have water in it? **Yes/No** Smell of **mold** Yes/No If yes, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Is there a sump pump? **Yes/No** Is it in good working order? \_\_\_\_\_

Any sign of friable (flaking, crumbling) **asbestos**? **Yes/No** If yes, where? \_\_\_\_\_

Has the manse been inspected for termites/carpenter ants/rodents/bats? **No/Yes** Date \_\_\_\_\_

Results \_\_\_\_\_



**EXTERIOR OF MANSE**

**Roof:** Type \_\_\_\_\_ Last Replaced \_\_\_\_\_ Siding Type \_\_\_\_\_ Asbestos tiles? \_\_\_\_\_  
 If yes to asbestos tiles, condition \_\_\_\_\_

Manse last painted/power washed \_\_\_\_\_

Dry wells: Any present? **Yes/No** If so, do they work? **Yes/No**

**Landscaping:** Neat and clean appearance? **Yes/No**

Are trees and shrubs trimmed regularly? **Yes/No** Comments? \_\_\_\_\_

Any areas of the yard constantly wet or damp? **Yes/No**

All roof surfaces, rain, gutters and down spouts: Do they lead away from the manse? **Yes/No**

Is the manse inspected annually for potential leaks, water damage or water back-up, and are necessary repairs promptly made? **Yes/No** Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Condition:

Doors **Good/Poor** Windows and Sills **Good/Poor** Storms and Screens **Good/Poor**

Porches **Good/Poor** Railings and Steps **Good/Poor** Lead Paint **Yes/No**

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

**GENERAL PLUMBING**

All pipes, boilers, valves, water heaters, dishwashers, sinks and plumbing fixtures checked at least annually for potential cracks, leaks, or related problems.

Comments \_\_\_\_\_ Are the

clothes washer and dryer energy efficient? **Yes/No** (older than 10 years)

Are the hoses to the clothes washer metallic reinforced? **Yes/No**

Is the dryer exhaust pipe metal? **Yes/No** Clear of lint? **Yes/No**

Is there central air conditioning? **Yes/No** Wall unit(s)? **Yes/No** Is the AC working? **Yes/No**

**Electrical Service (amps)** Circuit Breakers: **Yes/No** Circuit Labels: **Yes/No**

Sufficient Circuits: **Yes/No**

**Water Pipes** Valves: **Good/Poor** (corroded or leaking; able to turn off and on)

Clearly marked? **Yes/No** Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

**Master Bath** GFCIOutlets: **Yes/No** Tile: **Good/Poor** Walls: **Good/Poor**

Floor/Ceiling: **Good/Poor** Any leaks? \_\_\_\_\_

Any recommendation/comments: \_\_\_\_\_

**2nd Bath** GFCIOutlets: **Yes/No** Tile: **Good/Poor** Walls: **Good/Poor**

Floor/Ceiling: **Good/Poor**

Any recommendation/comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Baths? Condition? \_\_\_\_\_

**3RD FLOOR/ATTIC**

**Bedroom** Grounded Outlet: **Yes/No** # Outlets \_\_\_\_\_ Floor/Carpet: **Good/Poor**

Ceiling: **Good/Poor** Heated: **Yes/No**

**Hallway** Grounded Outlet: **Yes/No** # Outlets \_\_\_\_\_ Floor/Carpet: **Good/Poor**

Ceiling: **Good/Poor** Heated: **Yes/No** Bannister firm and secure: **Yes/No**

**Stairway** Carpet/Treads: **Yes/No** Condition: **Good/Poor** Lighting: **Good/Poor/None**

Any recommendations/comments \_\_\_\_\_

**2ND FLOOR**

**Master Bedroom** Grounded Outlet: **Yes/No** # Outlets \_\_\_\_\_ Floors: **Good/Poor**  
 Ceiling: **Good/Poor** Heated: **Yes/No**

**Bedroom 2** Grounded Outlet: **Yes/No** # Outlets \_\_\_\_\_ Floors: **Good/Poor**  
 Ceiling: **Good/Poor** Heated: **Yes/No**

**Bedroom 3** Grounded Outlet: **Yes/No** # Outlets \_\_\_\_\_ Floors: **Good/Poor**  
 Ceiling: **Good/Poor** Heated: **Yes/No**

**Bedroom 4** Grounded Outlet: **Yes/No** # Outlets \_\_\_\_\_ Floors: **Good/Poor**  
 Ceiling: **Good/Poor** Heated: **Yes/No**

**Hallway** Grounded Outlet: **Yes/No** # Outlets \_\_\_\_\_ Floor/Carpet: **Good/Poor**  
 Ceiling: **Good/Poor** Heated: **Yes/No**

**Bannister** Firm and Secure: **Yes/No**

**Stairway** Carpet/Treads: **Yes/No** Condition: **Good/Poor** Lighting: **Good/Poor/None**

**1ST FLOOR**

**Living Room** Grounded Outlet: **Yes/No** Floors/Carpet: **Good/Poor** Ceiling: **Good/Poor**  
 Heating: **Good/Poor**

**Dining Room** Grounded Outlet: **Yes/No** Floors/Carpet: **Good/Poor** Ceiling: **Good/Poor**  
 Heating: **Good/Poor**

**Hallway** Grounded Outlet: **Yes/No** Floors/Carpet: **Good/Poor** Ceiling: **Good/Poor**  
 Heating: **Good/Poor**

**Kitchen** GFCI Outlets **Yes/No** Floor Type: \_\_\_\_\_ Condition: **Good/Poor**  
 Kitchen Last Updated: \_\_\_\_\_ Stove Exhaust System Type: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Working? **Yes/No** Is vent interior clean? **Yes/No** Fire Extinguisher? **Yes/No**

**Add') rooms** Grounded Outlet: **Yes/No** Floors/Carpet: **Good/Poor** Ceiling: **Good/Poor**  
 Heating: **Good/Poor**

**BASEMENT**

Any finished rooms? **Yes/No** Grounded Outlet: **Yes/No** Floors/Carpet: **Good/Poor**  
 Ceiling: **Good/Poor** Heating: **Good/Poor**

Is the foundation in good condition? **Yes/No** Comments \_\_\_\_\_

Are the walls "bowing?" **Yes/No** Comments \_\_\_\_\_

Is there mold? **Yes/No** Comments \_\_\_\_\_

**GARAGE**

Attached: **Yes/No** Lights: **Yes/No** working? \_\_\_\_\_ Clean: **Yes/No** Termites/Rot: **Yes/No**

**CHIMNEY (please provide answers for each chimney)**

Date last cleaned \_\_\_\_\_ Never Hood: **Yes/No** Metal Liner **Yes/No** Exterior: **Good/Poor**

**FIREPLACE**

Type \_\_\_\_\_ Working: **Yes/No** Damper works: **Yes/No** Brickwork ~ any damage? \_\_\_\_\_

**RETURN COMPLETED FORM TO THE PRESBYTERY OFFICE**