

STANDING ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION FOR THE DISSOLUTION OF CONGREGATIONS

The work of the Church within our missional community is carried out through a variety of organized forms including but not limited to validated ministries, seminaries, new worshiping communities, and congregations. Congregations are the church “engaged in the mission of God in its particular context.” (G-1.0101) A congregation refers to a formally organized community chartered and recognized by a presbytery, and each of its members put themselves under the leadership of its session and the higher councils, including its presbytery of membership. (G-1.0103). Congregations, while possessing all the gifts necessary to the church are nonetheless not sufficient in themselves to be the Church. Rather, they are called to share with others both within and beyond the congregation the task of bearing witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the world. It is the particular responsibility of the presbytery as a council of the church to nurture, guide and govern those who witness as part of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), to the end that such witness strengthens the whole church and gives glory to God. (G-3.0101)

Presbyteries are responsible to ensure the Word of God is truly preached and heard, that the Sacraments are rightly administered and received, and that they nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ. They have a particular responsibility to coordinate, guide, encourage, support and resource the work of their congregations for the effective witness to the broader community.

After a season of discernment and partnered conversations with networks of support within the presbytery, it may be determined by a congregation that its church has entered into a season of conclusion and should move towards closure so that its ministry and members may find new life in new places. In these cases, a congregation may determine its legacy, choosing to dissolve.

The presbytery shall elect a standing Administrative Commission for the purpose to assist, care, and administer responsibilities for dissolution of congregations, as follows:

1. There shall be five members elected for terms of three years. Members may be reelected to serve no more than 6 consecutive years. If possible, within the membership of the AC there may be a wide range of experience and background, including pastoral and congregational care, church closures, knowledge of real estate and accounting/finance.

The presbytery, may from time to time, elect or remove members from this commission, ensuring that it continues to meet the requirements of G-3.0109b.

The Administrative Commission may invite at least one representative of the congregation to participate in its work with that congregation with voice but without vote.

2. The Commission shall be granted the following powers and responsibilities:
 - a. If appropriate, assume original jurisdiction of the session, on behalf of the presbytery, after providing members of the congregation an opportunity to be heard as set forth in G-3.0303e.
 - b. Undertake information-gathering and discernment as follows:
 - 1) Obtain all session and congregational minutes, records, documents, committees, employee and other material the commission deems necessary to do its work.
 - 2) Identify and assess the financial status and relevant outstanding financial obligations including per capita payments that may be owed by the church and:

- a) Conduct a financial review of the congregation's books.
 - b) Determine location and balance of all accounts.
 - c) With any endowment or memorial accounts, determine if there are any bequest stipulations.
 - d) Determine any outstanding debts/obligations.
 - e) Identify, inventory and assess the value of all real property and furnishings/contents owned by the congregation, including any deed restrictions or stipulations
- c. Dissolve the congregation, on behalf of the presbytery, at a date of its determination, with attention to the following tasks:
- 1) Obtain all Session minutes, church registers, and other records for transfer to the presbytery and eventual deposit with the Presbyterian Historical Society.
 - 2) Consult with the session and congregation to determine if they wish to memorialize their congregation and its history of Presbyterian and Reformed mission and ministry through gifts aligned with presbytery policy to particular Presbyterian mission and ministry, the Presbytery, Synod or General Assembly, making recommendations to the presbytery and its Trustees for the eventual dispersal of accounts and property.
 - 3) Following the dissolutions, transfer any remaining balances to the Presbytery and close all remaining accounts.
 - 4) Recommend to the Presbytery, if necessary, terms for the dissolution of the pastoral call. (Dissolution of a pastoral call may not be delegated to the commission.)
 - 5) Plan and, as appropriate, lead an appropriate final service of worship for the congregation in its place of worship.
 - 6) Plan and lead an appropriate celebration of the congregation and its ministry at the next stated meeting of Presbytery, during which the records may be symbolically handed to the Stated Clerk.
 - 7) Assist the congregation in selling the church property in consultation with the Board of Trustees, and in conversation with the Round Table.
 - a) Determine if any furnishings or contents might continue in Christian mission and ministry within the presbytery.
 - b) Arrange for the disposition of furnishings not needed by the presbytery and, in consultation with the congregation, determine if any furnishings are to be used to create a memorial to the work of the congregation at another location within the presbytery.
 - 8) Should the congregation be dissolved before acceptable purchasers of the building can be found, secure the legal rights to the properties and provide for its ongoing care, including:

- a) Secure a clear title to the property in consultation with the Trustees, determine if there is no obvious presbytery use of the properties, and list the properties for sale.
 - b) Transfer title of the property to the Coastlands Presbytery.
 - c) Have the property listed on the Presbytery's property and liability insurance coverage.
 - d) Assure the integrity of the legal corporate status of the church. If incorporated, secure the local Articles of Incorporation.
 - e) Determine which utilities should remain connected and which may be disconnected and make these arrangements with the proper companies.
 - f) Arrange with the Presbytery's financial administrator for any ongoing utility payments.
 - g) Secure the building and make provision for any continued use of the property by groups, previously hosted by or renting from the church.
 - h) Make provisions for a caretaker until the final disposition of the property, including mowing the lawn and maintenance of any sidewalks.
- d. Assist the members in transferring their membership to another PC(USA) congregation, if desired.
 - e. Consult, as necessary, with the Commission on Ministry at all stages of the outlined process.
 - f. Document all actions taken in detail in both its own minutes and, when exercising the duties of session, in the minutes of Sessions.
 - g. Report to Coastlands Presbytery all actions taken.

June 28, 2022