

Manual of Operations  
Appendix C  
Handbook: Committee on Ministry

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Purpose

*G-3.0307 Pastor, Counselor, and Advisor to Teaching Elders and Congregations*

*Presbyteries shall be open at all times to communication regarding the life and ministry of their congregations. Each presbytery shall develop and maintain mechanisms and processes to serve as pastor and counselor to teaching elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and certified Christian educators of the presbytery; to facilitate the relations between the presbytery and its congregations, teaching elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and certified Christian educators; and to settle difficulties on behalf of the presbytery where possible and expedient.*

In Mission Presbytery it is the responsibility of the Committee on Ministry (COM) to fulfill the obligations of the presbytery stated in G-3.0307 as quoted above, and as follows:

*To facilitate the presbytery's ...reception and oversight of teaching elder members, approval of calls for pastoral services and invitations for temporary pastoral services, oversight of congregations without pastors, dissolution of relationships, dismissal of members, and its close relationship with both member congregations and teaching elders...All actions carried out as a result of delegated authority must be reported to the presbytery at the next regular meeting. (G-3.0307)*

### 1.2 Powers Delegated to COM by Mission Presbytery

Mission Presbytery By-Laws of June 8, 2012 confirm the Committee on Ministry remains a standing commission of Mission Presbytery. At the stated meeting of Mission Presbytery, October 26, 2012, the following commission powers were approved:

1. Approve pastoral relationships and terms for churches (G-3.0303a)
2. Dissolve pastoral relationships, except when an administrative commission has been appointed to resolve conflict or remove a pastor from a church (G-3.0303a)
3. Authorize teaching elders and specific ruling elders to administer or preside at the Lord's Supper for churches, church developments, fellowships, and non-congregational entities meeting within the bounds of Mission Presbytery (G-3.0303b)
4. Appoint administrative commission to ordain and/or install teaching elders (G-3.0303c) and to commission ruling elders (G-2.1003)
5. Appoint mentors and supervisors for commissioned ruling elder to particular pastoral service (G-2.1004)
6. Examine candidates certified to receive a call, certified ruling elders to limited pastoral service, and teaching elders transferring into the presbytery (G-3.0307)
7. Validate ministries within the bounds of the presbytery and authorize times and places the Sacraments may be celebrated (G-3.0306)

8. Designate teaching elders to work as teachers, evangelists, administration, chaplains, and in other forms of ministry recognized as appropriate by the presbytery (G-3.0306)
9. Approve teaching elder members of other presbyteries for temporary pastoral relationships and permission to celebrate the Sacraments (G-3.0306)
10. Approve teaching elders and ministers from denominations in common communion with the PC(USA) to celebrate the Sacraments (G-3.0306)
11. Appoint moderators of sessions (G-3.0303c)
12. Approve teaching elders honorably retired status (G-2.0503c)

### **1.3 Membership**

Members of the Committee on Ministry are elected to serve a three-year term. The member may service no more than two consecutive terms. The stated clerk serves as secretary of the COM with voice and no vote. The executive/general presbyter serves as staff support with voice and no vote. The chair of the Pastoral Care Committee is invited to attend meetings of the COM with voice and no vote. The chair of the COM is elected by the presbytery and serves on General Council. Nominations are made by the Nominating Committee of Mission Presbytery in accordance with the policies and procedures of the Nominating Committee and the Committee on Representation. *[The COM] shall be composed of ruling elders and teaching elders in approximately equal numbers, bearing in mind the principles of unity and diversity in F-1.0403. (G-3.0307)*

### **1.4 Meetings**

The COM meets in stated meetings ordinarily on the first Monday every other month. The location of the meeting is determined by the chair, with the approval of the COM. Called meetings may be called by the chair for a particular purpose. At the discretion of the chair an electronic vote (e-vote) may be taken in order to address a question in a timely manner. The stated clerk will advise the COM on all questions of polity and rules of order.

## **2 Regions and Liaisons to Congregations**

The Committee on Ministry of Mission Presbytery is organized in order to meet the unique needs of this large and diverse presbytery serving 30,000 Presbyterians in 150 congregations across the vast and varied landscape of South Texas.

The COM is divided into six regions: Austin, Corpus Christi, Hill Country, San Antonio, Valley, and Victoria. Each region consists of a regional chair and committee members in proportion to the number of churches in the region. Each congregation is assigned a liaison by the regional chair. The regional chair is also responsible for coordinating activities of the region and training of committee members.

It is the goal of the COM through the liaison to establish a relationship with the session and pastoral leaders of each congregation in the presbytery. Each COM liaison is responsible to notify the churches they are assigned that they are the liaison and provide contact information. The liaison is to be in communication with the session and pastoral leaders regularly, visiting at least once every three years. The liaison offers encouragement and

shares resources available in the presbytery. The liaison listens to the concerns of the session and leaders and conveys those concerns to the COM and to the presbytery.

## **2.1 Regional COM Chair**

Each region will be led by a regional chair appointed by the chair of COM.

The regional chair's responsibility will include:

- a) Maintain a list of region congregations, pastors, triennial visits, and current activities.
- b) Present the region's report at each COM meeting, including any motions for COM action.
- c) Conduct meetings of the COM region team as necessary.
- d) Assist liaisons in obtaining a session moderator when necessary.
- e) Review congregational Mission Study documents before submitting a motion to COM authorizing a PNC.
- f) Review Ministry Information Forms before submitting to the COM chair for approval on the Church Leadership Connection website.
- g) Act as point of contact for the Mission Presbytery office staff for COM matters within the region.
- h) Act as first point of contact for regional COM members needing advice or counsel.

## **2.2 Appointment of a Session Moderator When Needed**

The session is the governing council of the particular church. Healthy sessions are essential to healthy congregations. It is the goal of the COM to enable sessions to function fully. The pastor of the local church is the moderator of the session. Teaching elders are members of the presbytery and not members of the local congregation. The moderator is a member of the session and has voice and vote in all matters. As members of the presbytery, teaching elders and commissioned ruling elders, when so approved by the presbytery, represent the presbytery and support the connectional nature of the church. If the pastor is not a PC(USA) teaching elder or CRE so approved, or if the church is without a pastor, the COM will appoint a moderator of the session in order to maintain the connection to the presbytery.

## **2.3 Session Visitation**

A close relationship between the sessions and presbytery is a touchstone of Presbyterian polity. Setting a positive tone of welcome, mutual respect, appreciation, and encouragement is the responsibility of both the presbytery and the sessions. Well-planned visits can serve both session and presbytery as ways to handle emerging problems and issues before they become difficulties. A regular cycle of pastoral visits is an effective tool in promoting the health of congregations.

### **2.3.1 Triennial Visits**

The COM liaison will visit with the session at least once every three years and more often as needed. Ordinarily, a visit will be made at the end of the first year after a new pastor is

installed in the congregation. Triennial visits are then scheduled in three-year increments thereafter. Regular visits are not to evaluate the pastor or the session and its ministry, but rather to bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ and to work together to further his kingdom. The intention of these relationships is good communication, encouragement, and support, all of which lead to effective mission in the larger community.

The visit is ordinarily led by the liaison accompanied by an elder. The person accompanying the liaison does not have to be a current member of COM, but COM experience is helpful. If the liaison is a ruling elder, he or she should be accompanied by a teaching elder and vice versa. If the liaison is a male it is helpful if the other visitor is a female and vice versa. The liaison and the other person visiting should not be from the same congregation.

#### Sample Questions for Triennial Visits

These or similar questions may be asked. The questions may be shared with the session prior to the meeting. It is desired that the questions will generate conversation and open dialogue.

- Tell us about the life of your congregation. What is your story?
- Do you have a mission statement? How do you see your church supporting this statement?
- Tell us about your successes and what makes you proud of your church.
- What do you see as your vision of the church three years from now?
- What is one thing a visitor entering your church for the first time would notice about your church?
- Do you send elder commissioners to meetings of Mission Presbytery?
- Are there areas where you would like to request help from the presbytery?
- If you are giving to Mission Presbytery, thank you for your support. If you are not, what would Mission Presbytery need to do differently in order to receive your financial support?

#### Sample Letter Stating Purpose of Triennial Visit

Dear [Pastor]:

The Book of Order requires that the presbytery “develop and maintain mechanisms and processes to serve as pastor and counselor to teaching elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and Christian educators...” and “facilitate the relations between the presbytery and its congregations, teaching elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and certified Christian educators; and to settle difficulties on behalf of the presbytery where possible and expedient.” G-3.0307. Mission Presbytery gives this function to the Committee On Ministry and requires that the Committee on Ministry visit each church in the presbytery at least once every three years, discussing with them the mission and ministry of the particular church and encouraging the full participation of each session and congregation in the life and work of presbytery and of the larger church. This conversation should also include the quality of worship, the standards governing it, and the

fruit it is bearing in the life of God's people as they proclaim the gospel and communicate its joy and justice. (W-1.4002)

This is not an evaluation. Our purpose is to hear the story and witness of the local Presbyterian Church, to celebrate the life of this church and to be a resource to this session. We will need about an hour and a half for the visit, so a called meeting of the session would probably be advisable.

Two representatives from the Committee on Ministry will be present. We would like to see the church's mission statement if you have one. We would like to hear things about the church of which the session is proud and about concerns they have for the future of the church. We will take to the Committee on Ministry questions the session might have about our presbytery and areas in which the presbytery may be of help to the local church.

Please let me know when would be a good time. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours in Christ,  
COM Liaison

Note: A more informal e-mail is also perfectly appropriate.

#### *Begin and End with Prayer*

The visit should open and close with prayer. If it seems appropriate, the session moderator may lead the opening prayer and the liaison the closing prayer including thanksgiving and intercession for the life of the congregation.

#### Visit Report

During the visit it is often helpful for one member of the visiting team to lead the discussion and the other to take notes. Shortly after the visit a draft report should be sent to the session moderator to correct any errors and so the moderator and the session will know what was included. The corrected report of the visit is then forwarded to the moderator of the session and/or the clerk of session, the COM Triennial Visit Coordinator, and a copy is retained by the liaison.

#### **2.3.2 Visits in Times of Conflict & Transition**

Conflict is normal and healthy in any relationship. Before conflict escalates to unhealthy and destructive levels, it is the intent of the liaison to offer assistance to the session and pastoral leaders to resolve the conflict and to facilitate the ministry of the local church. The fundamental approach the COM takes in maintaining a healthy congregation is to empower the session. The liaison will work with the session to help the session make healthy, deliberate, and appropriate choices.

Pastoral transition is also a normal and healthy part of any church's life. When the COM learns pastoral transition is imminent, the COM liaison will visit with the session and

explain the pastoral transition process. (See COM Pastoral Transition Process. See also the Guide to Pastoral Relationships in Mission Presbytery and the Minimum Terms of Call.)

Pastoral transition is an opportunity for the church to discern anew the mission of that particular church and what God is calling that church to be and to become. When a pastor is about to leave, for whatever reason, the pastor should notify the COM or the stated clerk. The liaison will then begin a process by which the COM, through the liaison, walks beside the church throughout the transitional period.

### **2.3.3 Listening Teams**

Listening teams are teams of individuals sent by the presbytery, or by COM, to visit with ministers, sessions, and congregations to maintain open “communication regarding the life and ministry of their congregations.” (G-3.0307) The team that visits with the session during a triennial visit is a listening team. When the COM learns of conflict a listening team may be sent. A formal listening team is also sent as part of the Gracious Separation Policy. (See Policy: Gracious Separation 07/09/12.) The purpose of a listening team is to listen and to share information with the session that will be helpful to the life and ministry of the particular church.

### **2.3.4 2.3.4 Administrative Commissions**

The Book of Order defines administration as “the process by which a council implements its decisions.” (G-3.0106) “A commission is empowered to consider and conclude matters referred to it by a council. The designating council shall state specifically the scope of the commission’s power and any restrictions on those powers.” (G-3.0109) An administrative commission is given power necessary to complete the assigned work. Examples of administrative commissions are those commissioned to ordain and install ministers, those elected to act on behalf of the presbytery in Gracious Separation, and those sent to assist a congregation during times of conflict.

## **3 PASTORAL RELATIONS**

All pastoral relationships are a three-way covenant. Installed pastoral relationships are those of pastor, associate pastor, co-pastor, and designated pastor. Installed pastoral relationships are between the pastor, the congregation, and the presbytery. Temporary pastor relationships are temporary pastor and transitional pastor. A temporary pastor relationship is a covenant between the pastor, the session, and the presbytery. When the pastor is a teaching elder, a commissioned ruling elder or a candidate for ministry under care of Mission Presbytery the COM is commissioned by Mission Presbytery to approve the contract/covenant.

### **3.1 Contracts**

Temporary pastor relationships all require a covenant/contract. This contract is an agreement between the pastor, the session, and the presbytery. Current sample contracts for Temporary (Stated Supply) Pastor, Transitional (Interim) Pastor, Commissioned Ruling Elder, and Parish Associate can be found at the Mission Presbytery Website, [www.mission-presbytery.org](http://www.mission-presbytery.org), tab: Committees, Committee on Ministry. Contracts are for a specific period of time, not to exceed 12 months, and are renewable with the approval of COM.

### **3.2 Associate Pastors and Temporary Pastors as Next Installed Pastor**

Associate pastors are called by the congregation in fulfillment of the mission strategy of the church. “The relationship of an associate pastor to a congregation is not dependent upon that of a pastor. An associate pastor is ordinarily not eligible to be the next installed pastor of that congregation.” (G-2.0504a)

A temporary pastor or transitional pastor is a covenant relationship between the pastor, the session, and the presbytery (COM). *“A teaching elder employed in a temporary pastoral relationship is ordinarily not eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor.”* (G-2.0504b)

*“A presbytery may determine that its mission strategy permits a teaching elder currently called as an Associate Pastor to be eligible to serve as the next installed pastor or co-pastor, or a teaching elder employed in a temporary pastoral relationship to be eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor. Presbyteries that permit this eligibility shall establish such relationships only by a three-fourths vote of the members of presbytery present and voting.”* (G-2.0504c)

Current Mission Presbytery policy regarding G-2.0504c of the Book of Order is that while under certain conditions, the temporary pastor may be considered to be next installed pastor, associate pastors currently serving that congregation may not. See Attachment C-3, Appendix C, Manual of Operations.

### **3.3 Mission Strategy**

*Mission determines the forms and structures needed for the church to do its work.*

*Administration is the process by which a council implements its decisions. Administration enables the church to give effective witness in the world to God’s new creation in Jesus Christ and strengthens the church’s witness to the mission of the triune God. (G-3.0106)* “Mission strategy” is the set of decisions councils make to accomplish the work of the church.

### **3.4 Ministers Coming into Mission Presbytery**

The COM is commissioned by Mission Presbytery to approve the covenant between a teaching elder or a commissioned ruling elder (CRE) and a particular church and to present him or her at the next meeting of the presbytery that is expedient.

A teaching elder who is a member of Mission Presbytery or a CRE who resides within the bounds of Mission Presbytery may, at the discretion of COM, be approved without other requirements. A minister or CRE who has been in the presbytery for more than 5 years will be required to have a criminal and financial history background check. The cost of the background checks will be paid by the particular church.

A minister who is coming in from another presbytery must provide his or her Personal Information Form (PIF) or the equivalent to the executive/general presbyter so that an independent reference check may be conducted. A release form for a criminal and a financial background check will be sent to the teaching elder. Once the background checks



and the reference checks have been cleared, the teaching elder must contact the chair of the COM sub-committee for examinations to schedule an examination. Only after all these steps have been completed successfully may the selection of the teaching elder be announced.

### **3.5 Ministers from Other Denominations**

A teaching elder who is a member of a denomination in which the PC(USA) is in full communion as listed in Appendix B of the Book of Order may serve in pastoral relationships within Mission Presbytery. In addition to the criteria listed in 3.4, ecumenical ministers must provide documentation that they are members in good standing in their own denomination. These denominations are:

Evangelical Lutheran Church of America  
 Reformed Church in America  
 United Church of Christ.

When these ministers are serving as pastor of a church in Mission Presbytery, the COM will appoint a member of Mission Presbytery to moderate the session. (See the section on Moderator of the Session.)

### **3.6 Examination Process**

#### *G-3.0306 Membership of Presbytery*

*“Each presbytery determines the teaching elders who are its members and validates the ministries in which they are to be engaged. It shall be guided in this determination by written criteria developed by the presbytery for validating ministries within its bounds (G-2.0503a).*

*The presbytery shall examine each teaching elder or candidate who seeks membership in it on his or her Christian faith and views in theology, the Sacraments, and the government of this church.*

*The presbytery may designate teaching elders to work as teachers, evangelists, administrators, chaplains, and in other forms of ministry recognized as appropriate by the presbytery. Those so designated may administer the Sacraments at times and places authorized by the presbytery.*

*Every teaching elder shall ordinarily be a member of the presbytery where his or her work is situated or of the presbytery where she or he resides.*

*A teaching elder who is serving in a church outside the United States may, with the approval of the presbytery, accept membership in that church for the period of such service without affecting his or her membership in a presbytery of this church.”*

#### **3.6.1 Exam Team Composition & Quorum**

- The exam team should be composed of an equal number of ruling elders and teaching elders. The standing members of the team shall be approved by the Committee on Ministry and may include both members of the COM and REs and TEs of Mission Presbytery who are not members of the COM but have been approved by the COM to serve on the exam team.

- The chair of the exam team may, at any time, invite currently active REs and TEs of the COM to serve on the exam team to help meet a quorum, to bring additional insight to an exam, or to facilitate conducting an exam away from San Antonio.
- The quorum for the exam team shall be 3 persons, at least one of which is a ruling elder and one of which is a teaching elder. Additionally, at least two of those present must be active members of the COM.

### 3.6.2 Action by Exam Team

- Candidate submits Statement of Faith (that includes belief on the Trinity, the Church, and the sacraments), PIF, & Statement of Personal Journey of Faith via email to be distributed to the exam team and to the GP and office manager of Mission Presbytery in advance of the examination.
- Candidate is excused from the room to allow final discussion and vote by the exam team.
- If the examination of a previously ordained TE is sustained (candidate passes), the exam team moves the COM that the exam be sustained and the person be enrolled as a member of Mission Presbytery, including transfer from previous presbytery.
- If the examination of a candidate for ordination as a teaching elder or for commissioning as a CRE is sustained (candidate passes), the exam team moves the COM that the exam be sustained and the person be enrolled as a member of Mission Presbytery, pending examination on the floor of Mission Presbytery at the next stated meeting.

[NOTE: Teaching elders who move to Mission Presbytery and/or who seek to serve in an installed or temporary pastoral position in Mission Presbytery shall ordinarily request transfer of the teaching elder's membership to Mission Presbytery (G-3.0306) and be examined by the exam team as described in this document.]

### 3.6.3 Types of Questions to Ask/Not Ask

These questions are only examples of the kinds of questions which could be asked and are not meant to prevent other questions from being asked. In general the following guidelines for examination may be drawn:

- persons SHALL be asked questions in the following areas:
  - one's personal Christian faith
  - theology
  - the Sacraments
  - polity (the government of the Church)
- persons MAY be asked questions in particular areas of doctrine, polity and practice, such as:
  - Sovereignty of God
  - Doctrine of the Trinity
  - Christology
  - Biblical and confessional authority
  - the Christian life

- persons MAY NOT be asked a set of standard questions which specify or imply particular responses are “essential,” such as:
  - substitutionary theory of atonement (vs other accepted theories of atonement)
  - inerrancy of Scripture (vs Scripture as our “infallible rule of faith and practice” – Westminster Confession)

Finally, two questions are always appropriate:

- “Are there any obstacles to your ordination or installation based on the standards for office contained in the *Book of Order*?”
- If a person identifies any “scruples” (areas of theological or philosophical reservation about Scripture or the Constitutional standards of the Church), it is appropriate for the examining body to ask, “Will you nevertheless abide within the discipline of the PC(USA) and the constitutional mandates of the *Book of Order*?”

### 3.6.4 Reception of Teaching Elders and Commissioned Ruling Elders

#### Process Notes:

- Steps that must be accomplished prior to scheduling an exam with the Examinations Team:
  - sustained **presbytery-to-presbytery reference checks**
  - sustained **criminal background check**
  - if being called to an installed position in a congregation, examined by the PNC (including reference checks by the PNC) and (ordinarily) extended a call
  - if being called as a CRE or to a temporary position in a congregation, examined by the Session and offered a contract
- Steps to be accomplished prior to presentation to the Presbytery:
  - been examined by the Committee on Ministry Examinations Team for theological competence
  - **Special Note:** The congregation is not to be given any information about who the PNC or session is interviewing until after the COM exam team has sustained the exam.
  - if being called to an installed position in a congregation, called by congregation
  - if coming for ordination or to receive a commission as a CRE, told one question that they will be asked on the floor by the chair of the Exam Team and told to expect additional questions from the floor.

### 3.7 Minimum Terms of Call

Directed by and consistent with Mission Presbytery policy approved by the body at the February 28 - March 1, 2003, meeting of Mission Presbytery, the minimum minister’s full time compensation package is to be adjusted by an amount equal to the “Consumer Price Index-All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) US City Average, All Items,” as listed by the US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics on October 1 of each year. The minimum terms of call for the current year can be found on the Mission Presbytery Website, Mission-Presbytery.org under Committee on Ministry.

### **3.8 Co-Pastors**

The Book of Order states that “When a congregation determines that its strategy for mission under the Word so requires, the congregation may call additional pastors. Such additional pastors shall be called co-pastors or associate pastors, and the duties of each pastor and the relationship between the pastors of the congregation shall be determined by the session with the approval of the presbytery.” (G-2.0504a) Mission Presbytery, while abiding by the Book of Order, has placed the following restrictions on the office of co-pastor:

1. Congregations are not allowed to initiate the position of co-pastor where the minister is nearing the end of his or her pastorate. This is to prevent a church from bypassing the usual interim and search process.
2. The only exception to this restriction is that a co-pastor position can be formed in situations in which an interim who speaks the language of the congregation cannot be found.

### **3.9 Parish Associates**

All teaching elders are encouraged to be connected to a congregation. This can be done by serving as pastor or other teaching or leadership role in the congregation, either in a temporary or an installed position. Another role is as a parish associate. A parish associate may be compensated or non-compensated and may have duties as agreed to by the session and the teaching elder. Background checks apply as in other ministry positions. A sample contract, as well as other contracts, may be found on the Mission Presbytery website, Mission-Presbytery.org under Committee on Ministry. The contract is renewable and must be approved by the teaching elder, the session and COM. When the installed pastor leaves, contracts with all parish associates serving that congregation will be reviewed.

### **3.10 Dissolution of Pastoral Relations**

There are a number of reasons why a pastoral relationship may be dissolved. The pastor may take another call or retire. The dissolution may not be voluntary. The COM liaison is prepared to walk beside the minister and the local congregation and session during this time. The COM should be informed as soon as possible. The policy for Dissolution of Pastoral Calls can be found in Attachment C-1, Appendix C, Manual of Operations.

### **3.11 Ending Ministry Well**

The COM has provided pastors resources to assist them to end their ministry in a particular congregation well. These resources include:

- Ministerial Practices in Relation to a Former Parish
- Covenant of Closure
- Guidelines and Assistance for Departing Pastors
- Sample letter from the minister to the congregation.

*Ending Ministry Well* may be found as Attachment C-4, Appendix C, Manual of Operations.

### **3.12 Pastoral Transition Process**

The process will be as follows:

#### **1) Pastor Resigns or Retires**

- a) Pastor advises COM or stated clerk of the presbytery
- b) Liaison is contacted
- c) Liaison contacts pastor to find out timeline, including notifying session, & sets up exit interview with pastor
- d) Liaison meets with session
  - i) lays out the process
  - ii) explains it is intended to be deliberate (methodical)
  - iii) explains this is the time to celebrate the ministry of departing pastor
  - iv) conducts exit interview or sets date for exit interview with the session
- e) Congregation votes to concur with pastor's request for Presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relationship
- f) COM acts on behalf of Presbytery and approves dissolution
- g) Pastor departs

## 2) Transitional Minister (TM) Search

- a) Region Chair appoints a Session moderator (if needed) in consultation with COM
- b) Session appoints Transitional Minister Search Committee (TMSC)
- c) Liaison meets with TMSC at their first meeting
- d) EP & COM Transitional Ministry Resource Person gives committee several names to consider which have cleared EP-to-EP reference check.
- e) If search committee receives names from another source, there must be an EP-to-EP reference check prior to any contact being made.
- f) Search Committee checks references and initiates contact (phone, skype, request for sermons). Before face-to-face meeting, a criminal/financial background check is required.
  - i) Search committee contacts liaison with request for background checks.
  - ii) Search committee or liaison contacts TM about a release form being sent.
  - iii) Liaison contacts Presbytery office requesting criminal/financial background check for TM candidate(s).
  - iv) TM sends signed release to Presbytery office (not faxed).
  - v) Presbytery office arranges for background checks and bills the church and reports results to liaison
  - vi) Liaison contacts search committee who moves forward with face-to-face meetings.
  - vii) TMSC chooses candidate
  - viii) Contract (found on website) is between Session, TM & Presbytery (not to exceed 12 months, G-2.0504b)
  - ix) TM Candidate examined (if necessary) last Tuesday of each month by COM examinations

- x) Session votes to approve contract and signs along with TM. The identity of the TM being considered has been kept confidential up to this point. The congregation may only be informed of the TM being selected following all parties' approval of the contract.
- xi) Contract is approved by COM acting as commission (on behalf of Presbytery)
- xii) TM name and biographical information is announced to the congregation.

### **3) Transitional Ministry**

- a) Transitional minister and congregation work on Five Developmental Tasks
  - i) Coming to Terms with History
  - ii) Discovering a New Identity
  - iii) Shifts of Power/Leadership Changes
  - iv) Strengthening Denominational Linkages
  - v) Commitment to New Leadership and to a New Future
- b) Mission study is completed
- c) Report of mission study is reviewed by liaison & region chair
- d) Permission is granted by COM to elect a PNC
- e) Session calls congregational meeting to elect PNC
- f) During this time of transition the TM sends semi-annual reports to Stated Clerk

### **4) Search is Conducted**

- a) Liaison meets with PNC at their first meeting for training and meets periodically with them thereafter
- b) PNC prepares a Ministry Information Form (MIF) using the mission study as a basis
- c) Session determines compensation package
- d) Session approves MIF
- e) Liaison & region chair review MIF & contact COM chair when they are satisfied it reflects the congregation appropriately & compensation meets minimum terms of call
- f) COM chair generates code for PNC chair & clerk of session
- g) PNC uploads MIF to Church Leadership Connection (CLC) site & matches are generated by CLC
- h) PNC reviews PIFs and initial contacts are made (phone, Skype, request for sermons)
- i) Field is narrowed as PNC identifies its top prospects
- j) Names of top prospects are given to liaison who forwards to EP for reference checks and background check (churches are responsible for the cost of the background check)
- k) After reference and background checks, face-to-face interviews (visits) take place which can include preaching at a neutral site
- l) PNC extends offer and negotiates terms of call with selected candidate

- m) If not a current member in good standing of Mission Presbytery, candidate is examined by COM examinations committee. If candidate is to be ordained, he/she is also examined on the floor of Presbytery.
- n) PNC, candidate and COM agree on terms of call; COM (or Presbytery) votes to receive candidate as a member of Presbytery

#### **5) Search is Concluded**

- a) PNC informs Session that they have a candidate and requests a congregational meeting to make its report
- b) Session calls a congregational meeting
- c) Congregation meets and votes on candidate and terms of call (G-1.0502) and dismisses the PNC. Forwards terms of call to Stated Clerk
- d) Pastor begins (usually 6-8 weeks after vote)
- e) Administrative Commission (AC), appointed by Presbytery, or COM acting on its behalf, ordains and/or installs new teaching elder

**Confidentiality must be maintained during entire process!**

## **4 COORDINATION WITH VARIOUS MINISTRIES**

### **4.1 Christian Educators**

The Coordinator for Christian Educators will:

- Maintain a list of Certified, Certified Associate, and Enrolled Educational Assistant Christian Educators known to be in the bounds of Presbytery
- Help liaisons to identify educators so they may be included in triennial visits and in conversation during pastoral transition
- Provide assistance, support, counseling, and resources to persons, sessions, and churches in search of effective educational and teaching ministry
- Provide encouragement, counsel, professional and personal support for those called to and serving in ministry in Christian Education within the bound of the Presbytery
- Be available to counsel with sessions and personnel committees regarding job description, benefits, and study leave for Educators
- Conduct exit interviews with every Certified or Certified Associate Christian Educator on the termination of their employment/position

### **4.2 Commission Ruling Elders to Particular Pastoral Service**

The COM works with Education and Christian Nurture Division to train, certify, and commission ruling elders for service in a particular validated ministry. *“When the presbytery, in consultation with the session or other responsible committee, determines that its strategy for mission requires it, the presbytery may authorize a ruling elder to be commissioned to limited pastoral service as assigned by the presbytery. A ruling elder so designated may be commissioned to serve in a validated ministry of the presbytery. Presbytery, in its commission, may authorize the ruling elder to moderate the session of the*

*congregation to which he or she is commissioned, to administer the Sacraments, and to officiate at marriages where permitted by state law. This commission shall also specify the term of service, which shall not exceed three years but shall be renewable. The presbytery shall review the commission at least annually.” (G-2.1001)* The contract for CRE may be found on the Mission Presbytery website, Mission-Presbytery.org under Committee on Ministry.

### **4.3 Specialized Ministry**

*“When teaching elders are called to validated ministry beyond the jurisdiction of the church, they shall give evidence of a quality of life that helps to share the ministry of the good news. They shall participate in a congregation, in their presbytery, and in ecumenical relationships and shall be eligible for election to the higher councils of the church and to the boards and agencies of those councils.*

*The presbytery shall review annually the work of all teaching elders engaged in validated ministries outside the congregation.” (G-2.0503)* The COM coordinator for specialized ministry keeps an updated log of all teaching elders in ministry beyond the parish and receives their annual report.

### **4.4 Transitional Ministry**

Transitional pastor or interim pastor is a specialized form of ministry in the local congregation that guides the church through the transitional period between pastors. More than simply filling the gap, the trained transition specialist helps the church discern God is calling through the *Five Developmental Tasks of Interim Ministry*. The COM transitional ministry coordinator works with sessions and trained transitional specialists to match churches and transitional specialists. The contract for transitional ministers may be found on the Mission Presbytery Website, Mission-Presbytery.org under Committee On Ministry.

### **4.5 Working Collaboratively**

The COM works with all the presbytery to meet the mission of Mission Presbytery. Because of the nature of the work the COM works particularly closely with Pastoral Care, Church Development and Evangelism, Education and Christian Nurture, and Preparation for Ministry.

## **5 OTHER POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

### **5.1 Sabbatical Leave for Pastors and Christian Educators**

The Presbytery of Mission recommends to the sessions of its churches that teaching elders and Christian educators be granted a compensated sabbatical of at least three (3) months after each six (6) years of service to an individual church.

*(This sabbatical is not mandated as part of the minimum terms of call. Any sabbatical, of any length, is based upon negotiations between the pastor and the session.)*

Rationale



The purpose of a sabbatical is to enable the pastor/educator to be renewed through the vital pursuit of continuing education, extended time spent in spiritual formation, and fresh mentoring by respected teachers. A sabbatical enables a pastor/educator to return to the responsibilities of the parish with new energy, spiritual vision and effectiveness. Also sabbaticals can allow a pastor/educator to commit to a longer term of service, which will benefit the life and mission of a congregation.

### The Process for Developing a Sabbatical Leave

#### *Pastor or Educator Responsibilities*

1. Bring the sabbatical proposal before the session – at least in outline form - a minimum of six months before the intended commencement of the sabbatical.
2. Secure the approval of the session for the sabbatical proposal and work out the necessary coverage of pastoral and pulpit responsibilities.
3. Assure the session of continued service to the church for at least one full year from the conclusion of the sabbatical.
4. Bring up to date all pending responsibilities as determined in consultation with the session before departing on a sabbatical.
5. Upon return, present a written and oral report of experiences, learnings and recommendations growing out of the sabbatical experience to the session. A written report shall also be sent to the Committee on Ministry.

#### Session Responsibilities

1. Receive “for approval” the pastor/educator’s proposal for a sabbatical, at least six (6) months in advance of the intended commencement of the sabbatical.
2. Continue terms of call commitments to the pastor/educator during sabbatical leave and budget for any additional, necessary pastoral leadership.
3. Communicate to the congregation the importance and values to the church of a sabbatical.
4. Submit to Committee on Ministry in writing the sabbatical timetable and outline of plans. These plans will include, for pastoral sabbaticals, the names of persons who will provide pastoral leadership and care for the congregation in the pastor’s absence.
5. Receive a report of experiences, learnings and recommendations growing out of the sabbatical experience from the pastor/educator upon return.

#### Committee on Ministry Responsibilities

1. Review the sabbatical timetable and usage plan as submitted by the pastor/educator.
2. Serve as mediator in any concerns of session, educator or pastor relative to the sabbatical.
3. Appoint a moderator for the session during the pastor’s absence.
4. Receive a report from the pastor/ educator, through the session

#### Additional Responsibilities/Information

1. It is expected the pastors/educators will return to service for a minimum of one year following their sabbatical.

2. If agreed upon by session and the pastor, the sabbatical may be combined with study leave.

## 5.2 Sexual Ethics

Because of the nature of their spiritual and moral authority ascribed to persons in positions of pastoral leadership (as teaching or ruling elders in temporary or installed pastoral relationships and as Christian educators and those serving in validated ministry outside the local congregation) they have entered into a sacred trust. All pastoral leaders in Mission Presbytery are expected to abide by the following code of ethics. (See Manual of Operations, Appendix A1, Attachment A-1.2)

All teaching elders, commissioned ruling elders, and Christian educators serving within the bounds of Mission Presbytery are expected to sign a statement verifying they are aware of this code and to attend sexual misconduct and boundary training at least every 5 years when available.

## 5.3 Assessment and Appraisal of Pastors

It is Mission Presbytery policy that each congregation will conduct an annual appraisal of all installed, designated, or stated supply pastors serving them, including a review of compensation. Details are provided in Attachment C-2, "Assessment and Appraisal of Pastors."

## 5.4 Confidentiality

*"Presbyteries shall be open at all times to communication regarding the life and ministry of their congregations."* (Book of Order G-3.0307)

Central to open communication is an assurance that concerns shared will be held in confidence. A basic component of communication is confidentiality. All parties must be absolutely confident that COM will keep all business strictly confidential. This cannot be over-emphasized. Conversations concerning matters related to ministers and congregations are not to be held in public places or where they may be overheard. The work of COM is not to be shared with family and spouses and not to be conducted on open communication sites such as shared email addresses.

### Attachments

**Attachment C-1:** [Dissolution of Pastoral Calls](#)

**Attachment C-2:** [Assessment and Appraisal of Pastors](#)

**Attachment C-3:** [Temporary Pastor/Associate Pastor Becoming Installed Pastor](#)

**Attachment C-4:** [Ending Ministry Well](#)

Approved by Committee on Ministry  
February 1, 2016