

Policy #11 – Dissolution of Pastoral Relationship
Committee on Ministry – Presbytery of Tampa Bay

Whenever a minister is considering retirement, planning to accept a call to a new work, or considering resignation, the following procedures shall be followed:

1. Before a pastor, co-pastor, associate pastor or Commissioned Lay Pastor announces a resignation or retirement to members of the church, the Presbytery Committee on Ministry (COM) and presbytery presbyter should be notified.
 - a. **Retirement:** Ordinarily, when an announcement of retirement is made, the period of time between announcement and retirement should be three months. It is the responsibility of the minister to consult with the COM before retirement plans are announced.
 - b. **Acceptance of a New Call:** Ordinarily, when an announcement of a resignation is made, the period of time between announcement and departure should be four to six weeks.
- 2) Ordinarily, the minister should write a letter as the first form of announcement concerning retirement or resignation. It is not advisable to make the first announcement during worship or at a congregational meeting. The letter could be sent to the entire congregation before the session is notified, or it could be mailed immediately after the session meeting. The letter should contain the following:
 - a. A statement of appreciation concerning the opportunity to serve the congregation during the years of pastoral tenure should be included.
 - b. If it is a resignation to accept another call, the name and location of the new call should be indicated.
 - c. The date of a special congregational meeting should be included.
 - d. The date of the minister's last day at work should be noted.
 - e. A reminder should be included that after the pastoral relationship is dissolved, no further pastoral services should be requested (funerals, hospital calls, weddings, etc.).
- 3) Representatives of the COM ordinarily meet with the session when the announcement is made. The session meets for the following purposes:
 - a. To receive a copy of the letter of resignation.
 - b. To call a special meeting of the congregation in order for the church to vote upon the dissolution of the pastoral relationship.

- c. To allow representatives of the Committee on Ministry to provide information concerning the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, the interim period, and the new pastor search process.
 - d. To elect a three-member Interim Search Committee from the elders serving on the session.
 - e. To discuss terms of severance (if any), and to prepare Form F-3 for the congregational meeting. Severance terms (when necessary) may include the following: cash salary, housing allowance or free use of the manse, deferred income or annuity, and pensions dues until an agreed upon date following the effective date of dissolution. Accrued vacation leave compensation will be paid to the minister following the effective date of dissolution. Accrued vacation leave compensation includes salary, housing allowance, and deferred income which has accrued during the current fiscal church year only, not previous years.
- 4) The COM Area Chairperson appoints a special moderator for the congregational meeting, a COM liaison for the pastoral search, and a temporary moderator for the session.
 - 5) When the congregational meeting is held, a COM representative gives information concerning the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, the interim period, and the new pastor search process. Form F-3 is signed. Ministers may not moderate meetings in which the dissolution of their pastoral relation is discussed. The COM will appoint a moderator.
 - 6) The COM Area Committee conducts an exit interview with the minister resigning. With concurrence of the session, the COM conducts an exit interview with other staff and key lay leaders.
 - 7) The minister will remove all personal items from the church property by the effective date of dissolution. All property belonging to the church will be returned to the Clerk of Session or person designated by the session. Arrangements for payment of any monies due to the minister (salary, annuities, etc.) or repayment of any loan made by the church to the minister shall be made by the effective date of the dissolution unless stipulated in writing by both parties and approved by the COM.
 - 8) A representative of the session contacts the presbytery presbyter (or a representative of the COM) who ordinarily supplies the pulpit the first Sunday after the pastor leaves.
 - 9) All pastoral services (weddings, funerals, etc.) and pastoral contacts (hospital visits, counseling, etc.) in the future must have prior written permission of the session.

Conflict: Whenever the dissolution of a pastoral relationship is due to conflict within the church, the steps outlined in the “Policy on Conflict Resolution” (Policy #10) must be followed. After Policy #10 has been completed, Steps 2-7 above should be followed.