

**COMMISSION ON MINISTRY MANUAL  
2016**



**PART III: GUIDELINES**

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## **GUIDELINES AND HONORARIA FOR PULPIT SUPPLY & MODERATING SESSION**

For the congregations of Presbytery of Tampa Bay, the following is recommended:

- A pulpit supply list is maintained by the COM. Members of the Presbytery of Tampa Bay may request to be placed on the Pulpit Supply List. Members of other presbyteries or other denominations must be interviewed and approved by the COM. The pulpit supply list will be available on the Presbytery website at [www.presbyteryoftampabay.com](http://www.presbyteryoftampabay.com). A Session may choose supply ministers who are not on the pulpit supply list; however only Teaching Elder members of Presbytery may serve communion.
- A Session may have a minister serve as pulpit supply for 3 consecutive weeks. If additional is required, the Session shall request the permission of the Regional Liaison Team of the COM.
- In a pastoral vacancy, the Regional COM shall appoint a Moderator of the Session.
- Those appointed Moderator of a Session within the bounds of the Presbytery will receive support and instruction from the Chair of COM or the Regional Chair.
- Honorarium for Pulpit Supply: \$150 for one worship service; \$200 for two worship services.
- Honorarium for Serving as Moderator of Session (by appointment of the COM) is \$75.00 per stated meeting and any special called meeting (this includes a congregational meeting also).
- Mileage reimbursement is recommended for those providing Pulpit Supply, as well as for those who have been appointed Moderator of Session by the COM, at the IRS mileage rate: <https://www.irs.gov/tax-professionals/standard-mileage-rates>

## **ORDINATION/INSTALLATION GUIDELINES**

When the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) of a church has completed its task, the Commission on Ministry (COM) has completed a sustained examination for membership, and the minister has been called by the congregation, and when the pastor-elect has signified his/her intention to accept the call, it is time to plan a service of installation/ordination.

A Commission for ordination/installation will be elected by the COM and consists of five (5) or more persons having authority to act for the Presbytery. The pastor-elect and the calling church have the privilege to nominate the persons who will comprise the Commission in consultation with their COM Regional Team Chair. Members of the Presbytery staff will welcome invitations to participate in the Ordination/Installation service (W-4.4000).

1. Before the date of the service is set, the Moderator of the Presbytery should be consulted. The Moderator of the Presbytery (or designee) shall be the Moderator of the Commission.
2. There shall be at least 5 elders and clergy from the Presbytery in as balanced a ratio as possible. No more than one elder may come from a single church. The Commission shall include both men and women. Presbytery permits the pastor-elect to invite ministers and elders from another Presbytery to participate in the service as corresponding members. Expenses for such should be paid by the church, not the Presbytery. (See Form F-2 in Part IV)
3. Form F-2 shall be completed and submitted to the Regional COM for approval at least one month before the date of the service. The Regional Team will submit the approved form to the Presbytery office so that invitations can be mailed to Presbytery members.
4. The Commission gathers one-half hour before the service and is convened in prayer by the Moderator. It is dismissed by the act of Benediction at the conclusion of the worship service.
5. An order for the Ordination and/or Installation worship service can be found in the *Book of Occasional Services: A Liturgical Resource Supplementing the Book of Common Worship, 1994* prepared by the Office of Theology and Worship for the Presbyterian Church (USA). A condensed sample of an Order of Worship for an Installation Service includes:

Call to Worship includes the following introduction: (Moderator)

“Presbytery of Tampa Bay is assembled here in the persons of this Commission for the worship of God and the installation of the Rev. \_\_\_\_\_, as pastor (associate pastor of \_\_\_\_\_ Presbyterian Church.

Hymn

Prayer of Confession

Assurance of Pardon

Scripture Reading

Sermon

Offering: “The offering today will be used to help seminary students from Presbytery of

Tampa Bay who are preparing for ministry.”

Installation Questions (Moderator)

Questions to the Congregation

Prayer and Laying on of Hands (Laying on of Hands optional for Installation)

Charge to Minister/Congregation/Presbytery

Congregation Hymn

Benediction (Minister)

6. After the Ordination or Installation service is concluded, the Moderator of the Commission shall sign the F-2 and submit it to the Presbytery office.

## **CONGREGATIONAL CARE VISITS**

The goal of the biennial Congregational Care Visit is to:

- establish and nurture a relationship between Presbytery and its Sessions and Pastors;
- listen, discuss and encourage the mission and ministry of a particular congregation;
- share the resources of the Presbytery, and
- encourage full participation in the life of the larger church.

The Presbytery of Tampa Bay hopes to create a genuine sacred Christian community within its geographic bounds that acknowledges a desire to grow in our relationship with God and in the relationships we make with each other.

As Presbyterians, we state that this happens “with trust and love” and therefore our shared hope is that we will be disciplined in choices that reflect a desire to be community. Listening to and learning from one another, a goal of the biennial congregational care visit, will be an important choice in understanding the resources available to each and all of us, especially in the people we meet serving on the Session and within the congregations of our Presbytery.

What follows is a compendium of resources for the biennial Congregational Care Visit:

- Orientation for Visit
- Guidelines for Making Congregational Care Visit
- Questions for Ministers – Congregational Care Visit
- Some Suggestions for Questions – Congregational Care Visit
- Suggested Guide for Reflection – Congregational Care Visit

Note that Congregational Care visits are not usually done in years when COM is actively engaged with the Session, such as during pastoral transitions.

### **Orientation for Presbytery of Tampa Bay**

#### **THINGS THAT MIGHT BE ACCOMPLISHED BY THIS VISIT:**

(In other words, the important reasons to take the time to do a visit....)

Nurture communication, respect, and understanding between Presbytery and Session, provide a constructive means for dealing with negative feelings about Presbytery, lessen "us" versus "them" images, develop the idea that Presbytery really cares about its churches and pastors, assist in helping the needs and concerns of local churches be heard by Presbytery, enable Presbytery to be responsive to the needs of its churches and pastors, provide an opportunity to address issues, concerns, needs, problems, earlier when more positive options are possible, encourage Sessions to take time to reflect on their life and work and their relationship to Presbytery, assist in the securing of persons with interests and skills for service on Presbytery, Commissions, etc.

**REASONS FOR SETTING UP THIS VISITATION PROCESS:**

- We are going because we want to, not because we have to. The Christ-centered collegial relationships we create together are a primary purpose of the biennial care visit.
- We are going looking for what's **right** with our churches not what's **wrong**. Support and encouragement, along with suggesting resources for vital ministry are another important purpose of the biennial visit.
- We are going to listen to the total Session, not just one or two vocal persons.

**KEYS TO GOOD LISTENING:**

- Attention, Awareness and Openness
- Use Your Eyes and Ears
- Listen for Feelings and Meanings; Avoid “Why” Questions
- Avoid Advice-Giving

**Guidelines for Making Congregational Care Visits**

1. COM Liaison confers with the pastor regarding dates for visits. Congregational Care Teams include the COM Liaison for the church and one additional COM member.
2. When the pastor responds as to the best time for the Team visit, the COM Liaison will arrange for details.
3. Teams inform the COM Chair and Presbytery Coach Coordinator when visits have been scheduled.
4. The spiritual, pastoral care of the COM should be demonstrated in the Congregational Care Visit, and the Team from the COM should be encouraged to pray with the pastor(s) in advance of the visit, and pray for the Session and congregation at the conclusion of the visit.
5. The Team will meet with the pastor before the Session meeting.
6. During the visit with the Session, the pastor will be asked to leave the room but will be invited back in for closure with Session.
7. Team members will report at Regional COM meetings about visits completed since the previous meeting. These will be recorded in the COM's minutes, and the written report will be filed in that church's file in the Presbytery office and referrals made to appropriate Commissions or individuals.
8. **Note:** If special messages or referrals need to be made following a visit (suggestion/criticism regarding specific Presbytery Commissions) these should be communicated to the Presbytery staff as soon as possible.
9. A letter of thanks should be sent to the Clerk of Session and the pastor by the Visitation Team, sharing appreciation for the visit and a copy of the report.

**Suggested Questions for Ministers during Congregational Care Visits**

1. What things in your personal ministry are most exciting to you right now?  
What things in the ministry of your congregation are currently most exciting to you?
2. What dreams do you have for this church in the next three to five years?  
What dreams do you understand the congregation has for itself?
3. Do you have particular concerns about your current ministry?
4. Are there obstacles in your current situation that keep you and/or the church from meeting your goals and objectives?
5. In what ways are you involved in the work of the Presbytery?  
Do you feel that your gifts and talents are being sufficiently utilized in this work? If not, what are other areas in which you would like the opportunity to work?
6. What did you do for Continuing Education last year and what are your plans for this year?
7. Describe your relationship with our denomination.
8. How does the congregation feel about its relationship with the Presbyterian Church (USA)?  
Are there ways the Presbytery could help them learn more about the many strengths of our denomination?
9. As you look to the future, do you feel hopeful about your ministry?
10. Are there any other things you would like to share with us?
11. List persons in your church with special gifts and skills that could be helpful to the Presbytery or other churches in your vicinity.
12. Is there anything else you would like to tell Presbytery at this time?

**Suggested Questions for Sessions during Congregational Care Visit**

1. As a congregation, what are your strengths?
2. What do you do best?
3. What has worked well for you here that other churches should know about?
4. What changes are taking place in the life of your church and community that impacts your ministry?
5. What is the area of greatest concern to you as a Session?
6. Describe ways the Presbytery could help your congregation feel more enthusiastic about and a part of the Presbyterian Church (USA)?
7. List persons in your church with special gifts and skills that could be helpful to the Presbytery or other churches in your vicinity.
8. Is there anything else you would like to tell Presbytery at this time?
9. How can the Presbytery as your partner in Christ's mission support the ministry of your congregation?
10. What programs of mission activities do you want to see Presbytery of Tampa Bay carry out on behalf of all the churches, recognizing that some ministries are beyond the scope of individual congregations?
11. How do you do church officer development?

**A Suggested Guide for Congregational Care Visitation Teams to Reflect and Report on Their Visits to Sessions and Pastors**

After your visit has been completed, it would be advisable to immediately meet together to reflect upon the visit. One member of the team should be designated to prepare a written report

The reflection and subsequent report should be clear and explicit if recommendations are included. The report should include, but not be limited to, answers to the following questions. These questions are intended for guidance only. A report in narrative form would be preferable.

1. What are the unique characteristics of this congregation?
2. What elements in the life of this congregation are cause for rejoicing and encouragement?
3. What elements are cause for concern and assistance?
4. What are the strengths and joys of the pastor; what are the concerns and sadnesses?
5. What are the strengths and joys of the Session; what are the concerns and sadnesses?
6. What strengths does the Session see in this congregation? What weaknesses? What can be improved?
7. What strengths does the pastor see in this congregation? What weaknesses? What can be improved?
8. How does the pastor, Session, and congregation interact with Presbytery and what needs are present that Presbytery could meet?
9. Any other information you feel would be helpful to the Commission on Ministry?
10. What do they do for church officer training?

**LABORING INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE BOUNDS OF  
THE PRESBYTERY OF TAMPA BAY**

According to the *Book of Order* (since the “nFOG” or new form of government), there is no provision for “Laboring inside or outside the bounds” of a presbytery. The Book of Order says only that: *“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.” (G-3.0306).*

In short, this means that it is not necessary for Teaching Elders to request or receive permission from the Presbytery when “visiting” and performing pastoral duties such as marriages or preaching. Individuals need no permission for one-time events. If performing a Sacrament, permission from a local Session would be required as usual.

The other implication of this change is that, ordinarily, pastors who wish to be in any pastoral relationship (Stated Supply, Interim, Parish Associate, Chaplain, etc.) with a church or validated ministry within our Presbytery should be members of our Presbytery or the Presbytery where they reside. So if a Stated Supply pastor is driving in from their residence in Peace River Presbytery to our south, it would be acceptable for them to have membership in either Presbytery.

There is one exception to this under our current polity which the COM should approve (on behalf of Presbytery): the Lord’s Supper administered by “non-congregational entities meeting within its bounds” (G-3.0301b). This is done on behalf of groups rather than individuals. For example, it is proper for the annual Evangelism and Church Growth conference of the Presbyterian Mission Agency to ask permission to celebrate Communion within our bounds.

## **GUIDELINES FOR SABBATICAL LEAVE**

**Rationale for Sabbatical Leave in the Presbytery of Tampa Bay:** The Presbytery of Tampa Bay encourages the Presbytery to be a place where: *Growing congregations passionately engage their community to make and mature disciples.*

The skills and training that clergy received in seminary and routine continuing education events may not fully equip pastors for the major components to this vision (congregational growth, community engagement, and disciple-making). Furthermore, the implementation of this vision on the local level will make additional demands of pastors that are beyond the ordinary requirements of parish ministry.

The Presbytery of Tampa Bay, therefore, has adopted Guidelines for Sabbatical Leave to be considered for all installed Pastors and Associate Pastors.

### **Introduction to Sabbatical Leave:**

Someone has compared the life of a minister with that of a taxi leaving an airport. It is so loaded down with passengers and suitcases and the other items that the car has a hard time even moving and is strained to the breaking point, yet the taxi may be only a few years old. So it is with clergy. They bear the burdens, the anguish, the pain, and hurt of their parishioners 24-7. That is 24 hours, seven days a week. As a result, many, if not all, experience to one degree or another symptoms of emotional collapse, stress related illnesses, and “burnout” adversely affecting the minister’s personal, family, and parish life, and greatly diminishing his or her effectiveness and well-being. For too long, this situation has been accepted, even tolerated as an inevitable part of the job.

A viable solution to the peculiar stresses and strains the clergy encounter is the Sabbath Leave, sometimes referred to as a Sabbatical. This solution has its roots in Scripture and in church tradition.

### **Sabbatical Leave Defined:**

Sabbatical Leave for pastors and church educators is a planned time of intensive enhancement for ministry and mission. Sabbatical Leave follows precedents in the academic community and among a growing number of private sector groups. This “extended time” is qualitatively different from “vacation” or “days off.” It is an opportunity for the individual to strategically disengage from regular and normal tasks so that ministry and mission may be viewed from a new perspective because of a planned time of focus.

Sabbatical Leave is an extension of the Biblical concept of a Sabbath day and a Sabbath year for renewal. It is both an act of faith that God will sustain us through a period of reflection and changed activity and an occasion for recovery and renewal of vital energies.

Sabbatical Leave is recommended for all full-time pastors and educators serving churches, who have served in their present position for six (6) continuous years. The recommended length of the Sabbatical Leave is three (3) months. Accrued vacation time and study leave may be attached to the Sabbatical Leave. It is further recommended that this Sabbatical Leave be built into the Call Process. Upon completion of the Sabbatical Leave, the incumbent pastor/educator would normally continue serving the same congregation for a period of at least four times the length of the Sabbatical Leave plus accrued vacation time. In addition, Congregations may limit Sabbatical Leave to one staff person per year, in multiple staff situations.

**Planning for Sabbatical Leave:**

To be eligible for a Sabbatical Leave, the pastor/educator shall present, in writing, to the Church Session for their approval, a program (“The Plan”) of activity for the Sabbatical Leave at least six (6) months prior to the proposed beginning of the Sabbatical Leave. This program of activity and meditation shall include a detailed description of the plan, the goals to be achieved and the expected end-product(s), together with a personal statement as to why this Sabbatical Leave would be valuable for both the pastor/educator and the church.

Upon approval by the Session in the six months prior to the Sabbatical Leave, the Plan shall be forwarded to the Regional COM for their review and recommendation. Included in this Plan will be the church’s plan for pastoral/educator services during the period of the Sabbatical Leave.

At the completion of the Sabbatical Leave, the pastor/educator should present to the next regular meeting of the church Session, a written report of activities and findings. This report also will be sent to the Commission on Ministry immediately following the Session meeting when it is presented.

**Funding:**

The employing church will continue the pastor/educator salaries, pension/major medical benefits, book allowance, and, at the direction of the Session, auto and continuing education allowances at the same level as those in effect at the time of the Sabbatical Leave.

The employing church will also contract for substitute pastor/educator services during the period of the Sabbatical Leave. Although on the face of it, the Sabbatical Leave may seem like yet another financial burden for the local congregation to bear, it is crucial for Session and congregation to recognize the long-term benefits they as a church will reap from granting Sabbaticals. For example, ministers/educators who have the opportunity to examine issues of professional growth and development as ministers within an existing pastorate are more likely to stay more years in a particular call. The sabbatical provision conveys a sense of support and caring on the part of the calling church. It also offers an incentive to both ministers and educators to commit to and think in terms of longer years of service in a particular church.

Clergy, churches and Presbytery are encouraged to set aside funds each year to available for providing Sabbatical Leaves. Those churches that would have financial problems in providing for the Sabbatical Leave could consult with their Presbytery. In addition, those churches that could not secure lay leadership within their own congregations might consider using elders trained as Commissioned Ruling Elders or Associate Pastors who might be willing to preach one Sunday without honorarium, etc.

*NOTE: The Louisville Institute, a Lilly Endowment Program housed at Louisville Seminary, provides study grants for pastoral leaders. Contact Rev. David J. Wood at 1044 Alta Vista Rd., Louisville, KY 40205-1798. Their email address is [info@louisville-institute.org](mailto:info@louisville-institute.org). The website for the Louisville Institute is <http://louisville-institute.org/index.asp> and the website for the Lilly Endowment is <http://www.clergyrenewal.org/>*

**Re-Entry Into Ministry:**

Upon re-entry, it is strongly suggested that the clergy share with the entire congregation the details of the leave, as well as reflections on its value and benefit. The re-entry process provides a great opportunity to reflect upon the benefits that resulted from the Sabbath Leave. Such expected benefits as:

- Discovering the strength of lay leadership heretofore under-utilized;
- New understandings of the concepts of mission between clergy and congregation;
- Reaffirmation of calling to ministry on part of clergy and congregation with both being reinvigorated and rededicated to the work of God's people.

**The ideal result would be for the congregation to see this period of time not justas the clergy's Sabbath Leave but as the congregation's Sabbath Leave.**

**Sabbatical Leave Policy for Ministers: FAQ's**

**Why do we need a sabbatical policy for our Presbytery?**

Many Terms of Call for clergy entering Presbytery of Tampa Bay contain clauses providing for Sabbatical. This policy provides consistency and guidance for local churches.

**Is the sabbatical policy mandatory?**

This policy is recommended but is not a requirement; however, we foresee occasions when there will be either increased demand for including a sabbatical on the part of pastors or the proposal of sabbatical by Pastoral Nominating Commissions to recruit a candidate.

**Why do clergy and educators need more time off?**

The stress and pressure faced by church professionals is well documented. The time offered by Sabbath rest is not the same as "vacation" where one does not completely disengage from the parish. Sabbatical provides the type of time and space required for spiritual renewal and healing.

**How are we going to pay for this?**

This is a key part of the policy. Clergy and congregations are encouraged to find creative ways to fund the sabbatical. There also are ample grants for which church professionals and congregations may apply to financially support both the church and the individual during the sabbatical.

**How will this policy affect smaller churches?**

We believe that smaller membership churches will benefit immensely from this policy. We covenant to work with these congregations to secure temporary leadership at little to no cost.

**So what will my church "get" out of this?**

Sabbaticals are meant to increase long-term pastorates, which in most cases, are proven to strengthen congregations. It only makes sense that church professionals, who have been reinvigorated for ministry, are going to be more effective!

## **PARENTAL AND FAMILY LEAVE GUIDELINES**

The celebration, nurture, and encouragement of the family take place in many ways and on many levels in the life of a church. During times of joy and times of sadness the congregation has the opportunity and the responsibility of extending care for the pastor and the pastor's family.

The addition of children to a family is a gift and blessing of God. In the case of childbearing or adoption, the church should recognize and accommodate its special needs as it would any major illness. Specifically, the pastor, associate pastor or Christian education person would fulfill all normal duties until the physician decides to limit the pastor's normal activities, and would resume duties after the arrival of the child as the physician prescribes. While under the physician's care, all terms of the contract including salary, housing, and benefits, but excluding travel expenses and allowance, would continue without interruption. The Session is responsible to assume and implement the ongoing work of the church during the pastor's time of limited activity.

The following guidelines are recommended by Presbytery of Tampa Bay to aid in conversations between Session and pastor. An agreement may be negotiated at the time of call or as need arises.

### **Parental Leave**

When Christian parents give birth to or adopt a child, the celebration is shared by the whole family of faith. Timing, duration, and compensation of parental leave shall be mutually agreed upon between pastor and Session. Congregations are encouraged to provide:

- a) Maternity leave: An eight week minimum following birth of a child
- b) Paternity leave: An eight week minimum following the arrival of a child
- c) Adoptive leave: An eight week minimum following the arrival of a child.

The pastors shall give their Sessions as much advance notice of the need for the Parental Leave as possible, but ordinarily no less than 60 days.

Pastors, upon utilizing Parental Leave, shall discuss with their Sessions how best to schedule "re-entry" at the close of the leave.

### **Family Leave**

Family leave is appropriate in life altering circumstances wherein the pastor is called upon by reason of major life trauma or serious illness to be the primary caregiver for the pastor's spouse, child, parent, sibling, or other family member for whom the pastor bears primary responsibility. Timing, duration, and compensation of family leave shall be mutually agreed upon between pastor and Session, but congregations are encouraged at a minimum to provide full salary and benefits for up to four weeks. Other salary arrangements may be negotiated to extend the leave beyond the initial period. Upon completion of the leave, the pastor will be entitled to return to his/her position. The position will not be filled during the leave except on a temporary basis.

The pastors shall give their Sessions as much advance notice of the need for the Family Leave as possible.

Pastors, upon utilizing Family Leave, shall discuss with their Sessions how best to schedule “re-entry” at the close of the leave.

The Commission on Ministry (COM) should be informed when a Parental or Family Leave option is exercised by a pastor. The COM will provide consultation if asked.

The expectation is that the pastor will return to service.

The Session ought not to feel over-burdened by monetary considerations in negotiating leave. If a church desires to be supportive and generous but is unable to do so due to budgetary constraints, the Presbytery shall seek to assist the congregation when necessary to provide pulpit supply and pastoral services.

## **GUIDELINES FOR ANNOUNCING RETIREMENT**

1. As you consider whether God is calling you into retirement, contact the Board of Pensions to request their packet of materials for their retirement process. Be sure that you are fully aware of their process so that there is no unnecessary delay in the start-up of your pension benefits.
2. Determine the effective date you wish your retirement to be granted by the Presbytery.
3. Request (in writing) that the Commission on Ministry (COM) recommend to the Presbytery that the status of Honorable Retirement be granted to you, effective date-certain. This request may reach the COM through COM Chair or the Presbytery Staff. It is requested that the notification to the COM be received at least three months in advance of the effective date you wish your retirement to be granted by the Presbytery.
4. Determine when to tell your Session. In anticipation of that announcement, write a letter to your congregation announcing your expected retirement. Mail that letter so that it will be received in most homes of your congregation the day following the Session meeting where you make your first public announcement. (It may be appropriate to share the letter to be sent to the congregation with the Session before it is sent.)
5. Invite the presence of COM when you announce your retirement to Session. The purpose of this presence will be to help the Session receive necessary information about the pastoral transition process and the options for future pastoral leadership.
6. Recommend that the Session consider forming a **Congregational Transition Team** to begin work immediately. The purpose of this team will be to work with you and the other leaders of the congregation to ensure that the work and worship of the congregation will go forward with as few “hitches” as possible. This includes making arrangements for the congregation to celebrate with you your retirement; to continue further consideration of options for pastoral leadership, and the requisite recommendations to Session regarding leadership.
7. Recommend that the Session invite the presence of the COM liaison and Presbytery staff who can interpret the Presbytery’s pastoral transition process and who will also work with the Session as they consider how this vision can be an important part of the future of your congregation, especially as they consider options for future pastoral leadership.
8. Relax and enjoy the final months with your congregation, and may God’s blessings be showered down upon you as you prepare for this significant step in your personal and professional life as well as in your faith journey.

## **EXIT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND QUESTIONS**

An exit interview shall be conducted by members of the Commission on Ministry (COM) and Presbytery staff with all ministers retiring or leaving their current call. The purpose of these interviews is to:

- Celebrate the pastor's ministry,
- To bring closure to that person's ministry,
- To gain information that will help the Commission on Ministry regarding the Congregation's possibilities and challenges,
- To discover whether there is anything the pastor has shared that cannot be shared with the Commission on Ministry, and
- To review the ground rules regarding the relationship with the church the pastor is leaving by sharing the ethical guidelines from the COM Manual (previously referenced).

### **Background and Purpose**

It is the intention of the Commission on Ministry of the Presbytery to schedule Exit Interviews with pastors leaving their called positions. The purposes of these interviews often depend largely upon the conditions surrounding a pastor's departure. The Exit Interviews may simply provide closure and an opportunity for celebration and blessing for the pastor, the church, and the Presbytery. The Exit Interview may also serve as a kind of debriefing, or unpacking, of a pastor's experience with a particular church. Authentic sharing may also provide insights related to the challenges and opportunities in a given church, as well as point to appropriate qualities for its next pastor.

### **Participants**

The departing pastor, the COM liaison to the Session/congregation and another member of the Regional COM will determine a mutually convenient time and location for the exit interview.

The COM liaison would use his or her judgment as to what information to relay to the COM or PNC, but all information that will be helpful to the COM should be shared with the Presbytery staff and COM chair. (Note: It will be at the pastor's discretion what is confidential and what may be shared with the COM or the PNC.) The liaison may also become a resource for the interim pastor.

**Sample Questions -For Pastor**

1. Why are you leaving?
2. Tell us about your experience at \_\_\_\_\_
3. What did you enjoy the most?
4. What were your greatest challenges?
5. How did you grow during your ministry at \_\_\_\_\_?
6. How did you take care of yourself?
7. What was your experience of staff relations? What excites you about this church's future? What worries you about this church's future? What, in your view, does this church need?
8. What do you think are the church's expectations of its next pastor? How did your family experience the church?
9. How can Presbytery best support this church?
10. What information does the Presbytery need to know as a new pastor is called to serve this church?
11. What is your assessment of the church you served as you leave and a new pastor is called?
12. What goals did you bring to the position? Were they fulfilled? How?
13. What did you see as good in the life and ministry of this church?
14. Where did you find "support" during the time of your ministry in this church?
15. Were you able to take reasonable "time off"? Did you use your vacations, study leave, etc.?
16. Are there changes needed in the job description/ expectations of the church?
17. How was the Presbytery helpful or not helpful, supportive or not supportive of you?
18. How can the Commission on Ministry best support the next pastor?

## **PASTORAL LEADERSHIP TRANSITION SUMMARY**

The following process has been adopted by the Commission on Ministry (COM) of Presbytery of Tampa Bay.

1. When a Pastor intends to seek dissolution of the pastoral relationship, he/she will contact the COM liaison before notifying the Session. Such notification should be done at least 1 month before the anticipated resignation. If the pastor is retiring, the COM and Board of Pensions should be notified at least 3 months in advance.
2. The COM liaison should promptly arrange to meet with the Pastor to discuss the end of his/her relationship with the congregation. (See COM policy 9, "Separation Ethics.")
3. A representative from the COM and Presbytery Coach Coordinator or designee will meet with the Session when the Pastor announces his/her resignation or retirement. The F-3 form, Dissolution of Call, shall be completed after either this Session meeting or the subsequent congregational meeting, approved by the Regional COM, then submitted to the Stated Clerk.
4. Topics to be discussed in this meeting include obtaining pulpit supply, finding pastors to act as moderator, arrange for the Presbytery Coach and Coordinator to preach at the first Sunday following the transition, and the steps in the search process for an interim or stated supply.
5. The COM liaison, accompanied by another regional team member, shall conduct a confidential exit interview with the outgoing pastor to gather helpful information for ministering to that particular congregation. (Refer to the Guidelines for Exit Interviews in the COM Manual) A written summary of the interview will be shared with and approved by the Pastor prior to submittal to the Presbytery office.
6. The Presbytery Coach and Coordinator or a representative from COM shall be invited to fill the pulpit on the Sunday after the Pastor leaves in order to assure the congregation that the Presbytery will be a partner in their transition to a new pastor.
7. Although a congregation may wish to call a new installed pastor as soon as possible, it is strongly recommended that an interim pastor be hired to help the congregation determine its future mission and direction. The Session should appoint 3-5 current Ruling Elders to serve as the Interim Pastor Nominating Committee (IPNC.). The IPNC, with guidance from the COM Liaison, creates a Ministry Information Form (MIF) to be approved by COM and Session and then submitted on line to the Church Leadership Connection (CLC) for a national search or to the Coach and Coordinator for a local search.
8. The IPNC will review PIFs and conduct interviews to select the interim pastor. Presbytery staff and the Regional COM will assist in this process and shall interview and approve the IPNC's selection. The candidate's Personal Information Form and an F-1 with terms of call shall be presented when COM interviews the candidate.
9. The COM Regional Commission will inform the new Interim Pastor of its expectations of the position. The Pastor and the Session should complete the Interim Pastor Covenant form (F-5) that must be signed by the Regional COM chair and the Stated Clerk. The Pastor shall engage the Session and entire congregation in the specialized tasks of interim ministry, including the implementation of a Mission Study and Ministry plan, in order to provide guidance in developing and completing the final MIF for the pastoral search.

10. Once each quarter the Interim Pastor shall submit a report on the progress of the transitional work to the COM Liaison. The reports are intended as a tool by which the interim is held accountable, and the liaison and Regional COM are kept informed of the status of the congregation's progress toward being ready to call an Installed Pastor.
11. After completion of the Mission Study and Ministry Plan and at the time when the Interim Pastor, Session, and the COM Liaison believe that the church is ready to begin the pastoral search, the Session shall request concurrence from the Regional COM for the congregation to elect a PNC.
12. Once the PNC is elected, the COM Liaison and Presbytery Staff shall provide training to the PNC regarding the search process, the responsibilities of the PNC, including developing the Ministry Information Form and evaluating candidates, and the need for the confidentiality of the process.
13. The MIF shall be developed by the PNC with assistance from the COM Liaison. The completed MIF must be reviewed and approved by the Regional COM and Session.
14. Once the MIF has been approved, The COM liaison will request a CLC login and password from the chair of COM to provide the PNC Chair access to the CLC to post the MIF. CLC staff will provide the PNC with Personal Information Forms (PIFs) that are appropriate to the size, location, skills desired, and various other indicators noted in the MIF.
15. The PNC will begin the process of reading and evaluating the PIFs of prospective pastors.
16. The COM liaison (and Presbytery Staff) will help the PNC design an interview process where they ask about capabilities, major relational skills and get to know each candidate.
17. After studying the PIFs, checking references, listening to sermon tapes, doing Skype/telephone/conference call interviews, etc., the PNC should select a priority list of the top three well-qualified candidates. When the PNC has reached this stage, they should send copies of the PIF's under final consideration to the Presbytery office and request Presbytery Staff to do an Executive reference check on the selected candidates. The candidates must complete an F-4 form to authorize a criminal background check. **(The Executive reference check and a criminal background check must be done before the PNC may arrange a face-to-face interview.)**
18. The PNC shall write a letter to each candidate with whom they have communicated once the candidate is no longer being considered so that the candidate will know their status with the Commission.
19. The top candidate/s will be invited to a face-to-face interview with the PNC and an introduction to the church facility and the community. It is extremely important that this process be kept confidential.
20. The PNC shall hear their final candidate preach and lead worship in person.
21. When the PNC has agreed to call a prospective pastor they shall:
  - A. Provide the Regional Commission on Ministry with a one page written statement setting forth the reasons the PNC thinks this particular pastor is the right person for their church and the terms of call which must meet the Presbytery minimum. A biographical sketch and

- a personal statement of faith should be included. The PNC will also have negotiated with the candidate the Terms of Call and will present an F1 to the Regional COM for review.
- B. The prospective pastor will then meet with the Regional COM at a convenient time with reasonable advance notice being given. The chair of the PNC will present the PNC's selection and their decision-making process. The PNC will be excused for an interview with the candidate. The interview will explore the candidate's suitability to minister to that particular church and for membership in the Presbytery of Tampa Bay.
  - C. The Regional COM will notify the PNC of approval or disapproval of the prospective pastor. The approval of the Regional COM must ordinarily be unanimous. The Terms of Call will be considered and approved at the same time.
22. If the candidate is approved by Regional COM, the PNC will proceed with the calling process by requesting the Session to call a congregational meeting to hear the report from the PNC and to approve the Terms of Call. (The Session itself does not receive the PNC's report, will not be informed of the identity of the candidate, and does not approve the PNC's decision.)
23. Upon the election of the pastor by the congregation, the PNC can be dismissed with thanks. Many churches have found it helpful to keep the PNC in place for the first six months of the new pastorate to serve as a support team and transition Commission for the new pastor.

## **GUIDELINES FOR SEVERANCE**

### **For Ordained Minister Members and Certified Christian Educators Serving in a Called Position within the bounds of Presbytery of Tampa Bay**

#### **Preliminary Understanding:**

Severance should be couched in our reformed understanding of compassion and grace, and thus should not be considered a reward for incompetence.

1. Severance is to be considered in those instances when a minister is forced/encouraged to resign without another call with no accusations of malfeasance or misconduct against him or her. When there are accusations or charges filed or pending against a minister consideration can be given to the needs of the family even though there may be an absence of sympathy for the minister.
2. Severance is considered in lieu of Unemployment Compensation.
3. Severance is considered appropriate in providing a level of transitional support to the minister and family.
4. Normally, severance will cease when the person obtains future employment comparable to or in excess of severance. However, if the minister obtains employment or receives a call that is not comparable to the former position then the church will make up the difference during the term of the severance package.
5. Ordinarily where the pastor has served the congregations for five years or more, the severance includes six months "effective salary" plus pension and health benefits (generally reported as Board of Pension dues). It may include medical deductible and/or dental insurance. All of these figures will be based on the most recent terms of call on file in the office of Presbytery of Tampa Bay. For those pastors who have served the congregation for less than five years, the recommended consideration for severance includes three months "effective salary" plus pension and health benefits (generally reported as Board of Pension dues). The Commission on Ministry of Presbytery of Tampa Bay shall serve as the final arbiter of all severance packages.
6. Due consideration should be given to the church's ability to pay severance.
7. Lump sum payments shall not be allowed.

## **SEPARATION ETHICS: WHEN PASTOR AND CONGREGATION SAY GOODBYE**

(Background and guidelines for pastors, Sessions, and congregations concerning relationships and responsibilities upon the dissolution of the pastoral relationship)

### **I. THE BACKGROUND TO THESE GUIDELINES**

The pastoral relationship is very important, often deeply personal, and, in some cases, life-saving to people in a congregation. This relationship evolves through study, teaching, preaching, administering the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, weddings, funerals, presence in crises, and praying with and for members of the congregation. With the leadership of a congregation and particularly with the elders, the pastor works to encourage the people in the worship and service of God, equipping them for their tasks within the church and their mission in the world. In all of these dimensions of the pastoral relationship there are the elements of trust, confidence, admiration, affection, fondness, caring, and love.

The ending of the pastoral relationship is often a trying and traumatic experience for both the pastor and the members of a congregation. It always means change for the life of the pastor involved and the congregation. Because of the sensitivity of the pastoral relationship, it is imperative that the departing pastor assume particular responsibilities and observe necessary modes of behavior. This will allow the congregation to be free in all respects, without the departing pastor's influence to make the adjustments necessary to changes of leadership, interim and permanent.

The guidelines which follow are to provide assistance to those who find themselves facing the situation of pastor and congregation saying "Goodbye."

### **II. THE GUIDELINES**

#### **A. SAYING GOODBYE**

The need to say goodbye to a congregation occurs for one of several reasons. A pastor may receive a call to another field of service. A pastor may decide to retire. A pastor may decide to leave the pastoral ministry and enter another area of service. The Presbytery may, for cause, take the initiative to dissolve the relationship. This break can be a difficult time for both the pastor and the congregation. Whatever the cause, it becomes the occasion when pastor and congregation find they must say goodbye.

#### **1. Saying Goodbye to Accept a Call a Distance Away**

When a pastor accepts a call to a ministry a distance from the congregation which she or he is leaving, the opportunity for contact with members of the former congregation is quite limited, often non-existent. However, there frequently arise certain circumstances which pose questions for the departing pastor as to what is appropriate and what can be most helpful to the congregation and the interim and following pastors. **It is always incumbent upon the departing pastor to make sure that parishioners know that her or his relationship with the congregation will come to an end. It is important that parishioners understand that this change of relationship is necessary in order that the congregation be free, in all respects, to make**

**the adjustments necessary for changes of leadership, interim and permanent without the departing pastor's influence.** (See Section B, "Responsibilities in Saying Goodbye," below.)

## **2. Saying Goodbye But Remaining a Neighbor**

When a pastor says goodbye and remains nearby, there are particularly sensitive aspects of separation which require careful attention on the part of the departing pastor.

The experience of pastors and congregations over the years has led many to believe that when a pastor ends a ministry with a congregation, it is best for the pastor to move out of the community. However, this is not always possible or advisable. **Thus, it is particularly important when a departing pastor remains in the community and in proximity to the former congregation, that he or she, with care and forethought, pay particular attention to what is said below with reference to a departing pastor's responsibilities to the congregation, individual members of the congregation, and to the interim and subsequent installed pastors** (Section B, "Responsibilities in Saying Goodbye").

The departing pastor and his or her immediate family should not be a part of the worshipping or fellowship life of the congregation except upon the initiative and invitation of the interim or installed pastor. If such an invitation is extended, normally it should not occur until the next installed pastor has had an opportunity to establish relationships with the congregation.

A retiring pastor who remains in the proximity of the congregation from which he or she has retired will need to give careful consideration to the responsibilities that follow below in Section B, "Responsibilities in Saying Goodbye".

## **3. When One is Elected Pastor Emeritus**

When a pastor retires, the congregation may bestow upon him or her the title of **Pastor Emeritus**.

To elect one as pastor or associate pastor emeritus:

- is evidence of a long and loving, mutually caring pastoral relationship.
- is a congregation's way of saying to the church-at-large and to the world that they love this person and are thankful for his or her time with them.
- is a gift to the retired pastor which says something special to him or her.

**However, the pastoral relationship has been dissolved. The relationship of pastor to people has ended and the pastor has a responsibility to act according to the guidelines for separation below (Section B, "Responsibilities in Saying Goodbye"). All expectations related to the former pastor of a congregation apply to a pastor emeritus (see Section B below).**

## **B. RESPONSIBILITIES IN SAYING GOODBYE**

This paper speaks of "Separation Ethics." The use of the term "ethics" implies certain values which are important to consider during this often highly charged experience of the dissolution of the pastoral relationship. Such values include:

- effective leadership;
- congregational health and stability;
- the growth of pastor and members in dealing with the pain, the problems, and the possibilities of separation; and,
- the ability of the Session and congregation to move positively and effectively toward the next phase of their life together.

These values instruct the conduct and responsibilities of both the pastor and the congregation regarding their separation.

The material which follows is addressed to pastor, Session, and congregation as appropriate, and finally, the Regional COM of the Presbytery. However, **the pastor is the one in the professional leadership role and, therefore, the one who has the responsibility for making sure that the separation that occurs is anticipated and carried through with foresight and effectiveness.**

### **1. Responsibilities of the Departing Pastor**

Because of the sensitivity of the pastoral relationship, it is important that the departing pastor, in any dissolution, assume certain responsibilities to the former congregation, to individual members of that congregation, and to the interim and next installed pastors.

#### **a. To the Congregation:**

When the date has been set for the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, the departing pastor must take the lead in beginning to prepare the congregation for their separation. Certain things will need to be communicated clearly to the congregation in order to avoid confusion on the part of members in the days ahead.

This communication should be accomplished in several ways. A letter should be addressed to the members of the congregation spelling out clearly the matters below which are part of the separation and the time that follows.<sup>1</sup> A sermon might contain references to the approaching separation and speak to these matters. In casual conversation one-on-one or in groups, in public presence, in newsletters, in all contacts with people of the congregation, it is important that these matters be communicated and every effort made to have them understood. These matters are:

1. that all pastoral and professional relationships and responsibilities of the pastor with the congregation will end as of the effective date of the dissolution;
2. that the pastor will not be involved in any way in the selection process of either the interim pastor or the next installed pastor. Neither will he or she be involved in any way with the selection of any search team or pastor nominating Commission.

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<sup>1</sup> "Leaving the Pastorate: Staying in Town" by Rod Reinecke, in Saying Goodbye, A Time of Growth for Congregations and Pastors, an Alban Institute Publication by Edward A. White.

3. that the pastor, after leaving, will not become engaged in conversations which, in any way, offer opinions or criticism about the life of the congregation or the performance of the interim or any subsequent installed pastors;
4. that any desire on the part of members of the congregation for the departing pastor to participate in congregational life or services should be discussed not with the departing pastor, but with the interim pastor or subsequent installed pastor;
5. that the departing pastor may participate in a wedding or funeral of the congregation, after the date of dissolution, only by invitation of the interim pastor or installed pastor, who shall be the officiate. Baptisms, because they are part of regular worship of a congregation, are not permitted.

**b. To Individual members of the Congregation:**

It is important that, with particular friends, it be made clear that the pastoral relationship will come to an end. This does not mean that friendships must come to an end. Friendships are priceless and are to be preserved, but there is a special responsibility on the part of the departing pastor to prevent friendships from becoming confused with the pastoral relationship. The pastoral functions of counseling, calling, conducting weddings, funerals, or baptisms are not appropriate. Neither is the rendering of opinions or judgments about the ministry of the former church or its pastor.<sup>2</sup> **It is the departing pastor's responsibility to see that this really happens.**

If the former pastor receives a request to return to the congregation for a particular occasion, it is important for her or him to remind those making the request that the present pastor is the one to whom the request should be made.

In any social context, where the former pastor is with friends or other members of the former congregation, it is the responsibility of the former pastor to be sure that he or she voices no criticism or evaluative comments about the new leadership of the congregation. It is not appropriate for the former pastor to comment on the "state of the congregation" or to be involved in any way in the selection of a successor, once she or he has departed.

**c. To the Interim and Subsequent Installed Pastors:**

The former pastor has a responsibility to the interim pastor and to subsequent installed pastors to make sure that any requests that come to him or her for services in the former congregation be redirected by the requesters to the interim pastor or installed pastor. It is important that, when any request comes to the former pastor, she or he be in touch with the current pastor to let it be known what contacts have been made with him or her. This is a courtesy which is important to be extended to the current pastor. There should be no pastoral functions of any kind performed by the former pastor without the prior invitation or request of the current pastor.

Should any community, non-church function call the former pastor back into the community for public appearance of whatever nature, as a courtesy, the former pastor should inform the current pastor of the fact and the nature of the occasion.

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<sup>2</sup> "My Friend, the Former Pastor" by Joan Mabon, in Saying Goodbye. A Time of Growth for Congregations and Pastors, an Alban Institute Publication by Edward A. White.

Upon departure of the interim pastor from a congregation, he/she will be expected to maintain the same responsibilities as cited above in “1. Responsibilities of the Departing Pastor”, sections a, b and c.

## **2. Responsibilities of the Session**

### **a. To the Departing Pastor:**

Following the pastor’s decision to request dissolution of the pastoral relationship, the Session can give support and encouragement to the pastor in the implementation of the decision.

It will be helpful for the Session to support and assist the pastor in interpreting the meaning of the end of the pastoral relationship to the congregation and, if need be, to the wider community.

As a caring expression of closure, it is appropriate for the Session to arrange for an occasion when the congregation and pastor may formally say goodbye.

### **b. To the Congregation**

The Session will want to be sensitive to the feeling of loss experienced by members of the congregation while demonstrating through their actions the meaning of the end of the pastoral relationship.

Additional Session leadership may be needed in the transition period so that worship, congregational life, and fellowship may continue.

The Session can help the members of the congregation by encouraging them to see this time as an opportunity for growth and change. It can be a time for listening to individuals and groups in the congregation. It can be a time for examining present life, ministry, and service, and to be open to new possibilities. It is important that the congregation be prepared for change for new pastoral leadership.

With the help of the Regional COM, the Session should interpret the role of the Commission on Ministry of the Presbytery during the transition period. This will involve the naming of a Session moderator, the process of obtaining an interim pastor, and the process of calling an installed pastor.

## **3. Responsibilities of the Regional COM Teams**

### **a. To the Departing Pastor:**

Upon learning of the pastor’s intention to retire or resign, a representative of the Commission on Ministry shall meet with the pastor to discuss these guidelines.

### **b. To the Session and Congregation:**

A Regional COM representative will be present at the meeting of the Session when the pastor announces his or her resignation. The purpose of this meeting is to inform the Session fully of these guidelines and to orient the Session to the process of seeking

pastoral leadership following the departure of the present pastor.

A representative of the Regional COM shall be present at the meeting of the congregation when the pastor requests concurrence in her or his plans to leave, to inform the congregation of the process for obtaining subsequent pastoral leadership.

When a congregation plans to elect a retiring pastor as Pastor Emeritus, an interpretive statement on the meaning of Pastor Emeritus will be sent to the Session for use in the congregation.

**c. To the Interim and Next Installed Pastors:**

It will be important for the Regional COM to review these guidelines with the interim pastor and the next installed pastor and to be available for counsel should any difficulties arise regarding relationships with the former pastor.

This paper has been prepared in the hope that it will provide guidance, support, and encouragement to pastors, Sessions, and congregations in those situations in which a pastor and congregation discover that they must say goodbye.

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