
DISSOLVING PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS

Procedures of Commission on Ministry, Winnebago Presbytery

WHEN REQUESTED BY THE MINISTER:

1. The pastor should notify the Moderator of the COM of his/her intentions to seek relocation or retirement. To avoid delay in processing pension benefits, six (6) months minimum notice is needed for retirement. The pastor should be in consultation with the COM during the relocation process.
2. The Commission on Ministry Moderator should be notified immediately of any impending call, including details for any anticipated action by the congregation or session.
3. The pastor may reveal the news of his/her resignation in the manner he/she desires. Often one shares one's plans with particular persons of the personnel committee or a committee of session if there is no personnel committee. The announcement is normally made first to the session. Sometimes a pastor asks other boards to sit with the session to hear the initial announcement. The pastor usually makes announcement to the congregation on the following Sunday and/or by letter.
4. As soon as practicable after a pastor has announced his/her resignation, the pastor should arrange with the Moderator of the COM for interaction of the session with representatives of the COM. The purpose will be to review the dissolution process, discuss the appointment of a moderator during the vacancy and to request the pastor to complete an "Exit Interview," normally in person, with the Commission. The Guidelines for Pastoral Changes tri-fold document is shared at this meeting with the session. (See B-1 "Exit Interview" and B-2 "Report of the Session Upon the Pastor Leaving the Church")
5. The pastor asks the session to call a special meeting of the congregation. Public notice of the meeting shall be given at regular services of worship prior to the meeting per the congregational policy for minimum notification requirements. (G-1.0502) The notice of this meeting should set forth the purpose in the follow manner: "The Session hereby calls a special meeting of the congregation of _____ Church on date at time to act upon our pastor's request that we concur with him/her in requesting Winnebago Presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relationship now existing between him/her and this church, effective date." As soon as practical after a pastor has announced his/her resignation, he/she should arrange with the Moderator of the COM for a meeting of the session with representatives of the Commission. (See A-1 "Congregational Meeting for Dissolution of Pastoral Relationship)
6. The moderator of this special meeting of the congregation will be appointed by COM. (Arrangements for this are made by the pastor with the chairperson.) After the pastor has presented his/her resignation to the congregation, he/she may, but need not, be excused by the moderator.

7. At the congregational meeting an elder commissioner(s) is elected to speak to the action of the congregation before Presbytery. These elders may or may not be the elder commissioner(s) to that meeting of Presbytery. The session should be prepared to make these nominations at the congregational meeting. The pastor also may be asked to speak to this dissolution at Presbytery. He/she should request Presbytery to concur in his/her request so that he/she might be free to accept the call to _____.
8. Immediately following the congregational meeting, the pastor should send a completed copy of the form "Request for Dissolution, Pastor, Associate Pastor, Relationship" to the Moderator of the COM.
9. Pension should be paid to the effective termination date of the Call. Each congregation shall pay vacancy pension dues based on the former pastor's salary (at the rate set by the Board of Pensions), during the first 12 months of vacancy or until another pastor for whom pension/medical dues are being paid is in place.

The pulpit is declared vacant at the close of the service by the pastor or whoever occupies the pulpit on the last Sunday of the installed relationship of the pastor.

10. No action is taken to elect a Pastor Nominating Committee until after Presbytery approves the dissolution of the current pastoral relationship (G-2.0801).
11. The following items will be included in the motion of the COM when recommending dissolution: (See A-2 "Request for Dissolution")
 - A. Name of person making the request.
 - B. Date of congregational meeting.
 - C. Attest to financial obligations being met by date of termination.
 - D. Effective date of dissolution.
 - E. Pulpit to be declared vacant on what date. (date initiates Board of Pensions vacancy dues)
 - F. Name of calling institution and presbytery.
 - G. Effective date of transfer.

WHEN REQUESTED BY THE CONGREGATION OR THERE IS CONFLICT:

1. When difficulties arise, the COM recommends the following procedures:
 - A. Any active ruling elder of any congregation has the right to a confidential interview with the COM for the purpose of advising and consulting. Any pastor in the Presbytery also has this right. Action of the COM in these instances is consultative and advisory and not judicial or administrative.
 - B. The COM has the responsibility to initiate conversation with any session or congregation where it is reported or rumored that trouble exists. Again, in such cases,

the Commission is acting in an advisory and consultative capacity. The COM also has the obligation to consult with the pastor or pastors involved.

- C. When difficulties arise in a congregation with the pastor or pastors, the Commission on Ministry is called upon to respond in a positive and creative manner. The COM should be guided by The Book of Order, G-3.0307.
- D. When a session feels it wise to ask the congregation to dissolve a relationship with a pastor or associate pastor, it shall consult with the COM. If it is determined at this consultation that termination of the pastor/associate pastor is the only option, a severance agreement will be negotiated between the session and the pastor/associate pastor and the COM. The congregation shall meet to consider the matter and consent to, or decline to consent to, the dissolution. G-2.0901

As clergy do not receive unemployment compensation, negotiations need to consider the following: (See A-2 Request for Dissolution”)

- salary compensation
- housing allowance, if applicable
- manse usage, if applicable
- pastoral office items (such as furnishings, computer, etc)
- Board of Pensions benefits
- unused vacation time
- cumulative continuing education time and allowance
- termination date of pastoral services
- date pulpit will be declared vacant

A suggested guideline would be continuation of the Terms of Call for a period of six months or until the date of new employment, whichever is earlier. A minimum of three (3) months compensation is required.

- 2. The following items will be included in the motion of the Commission on Ministry when recommending dissolution: (See A-1 “Request for Dissolution”)
 - A. Who is making the request?
 - B. Date of congregational meeting.
 - C. Attest to financial obligations being met by date of termination.
 - D. Effective date of dissolution.
 - E. Pulpit to be declared vacant on what date.
 - F. Name of calling institution and presbytery (if applicable).
 - G. Effective date of transfer (if applicable).

3. **COMMISSION AUTHORITY BETWEEN PRESBYTERY MEETINGS**

The COM may exercise the authority to dissolve pastoral relationships and dismiss ministers to other presbyteries when the dissolution has the concurrence of both the pastor and

congregation. All such actions must be reported at the next stated meeting of Presbytery, in accordance with the Book of Order, G-3.0307.

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