

POLICY
Dissolution of Pastoral Relationships

Pastor's Responsibilities and Requirements

1. Voluntary Separation (Voluntary Resignation)
 - a. Voluntary separation may take place after written notice from the pastor requesting a dissolution of a pastoral call is given to the session and to the Committee on Ministry, and this request has received concurrence from both the session and the presbytery. Resigning pastors will be paid the cash equivalent of their unused earned vacation, but not continuing education funds, at the official date of the dissolution of the pastoral call by the session and the presbytery.
 - b. The pastor shall send a letter to the congregation which should include:
 - A statement of appreciation for the opportunity to have served the congregation and the pastor's plans for his/her new call.
 - The effective date of the dissolution.
 - A reminder to the congregation that after the pastor's relationship is dissolved, no further pastoral services shall be provided including baptisms, weddings, funerals, hospital calls, etc.
 - c. Normally a pastor shall leave no sooner than one month and no later than two months after giving notice of resignation.
 - d. No severance allowance will be provided by the church/hiring agency.
 - e. The pastor 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 the person designated by the session. Arrangements for payment of any monies due to the pastor (salary, annuities, etc.) or repayment of any loan made by the church to the pastor shall be made by the effective date of dissolution unless stipulated in writing by both parties. Any funds in an existing "Pastor's Discretionary Fund" shall return to the church budget. When a pastor lives in a manse the session shall determine with the pastor the date by which the manse will be vacant.
 - f. The former pastor shall not provide pastoral services (baptisms, weddings, funerals, counseling, teaching, etc.) unless given permission by the current moderator and session. It is important that the congregation find its identity separate from the former pastor. Following the installation of a new pastor, the former pastor may provide pastoral services only at the invitation of the session ~~services~~ and in concurrence with the request of the new pastor.
2. Voluntary Separation (Retirement)
 - a. Retirement may take place after written notice from the pastor requesting a dissolution of a pastoral call is given to the session and to the Committee on Ministry, and this request has received concurrence from both the session and the presbytery. This notice shall contain the proposed date of retirement.
 - b. The pastor shall send a letter to the congregation which should include:
 - A statement of appreciation for the opportunity to have served the congregation and the pastor's plans for retirement.
 - The effective date of the dissolution.
 - A reminder to the congregation that after the pastors relationship is dissolved, no further pastoral services shall be provided including baptisms, weddings, funerals, hospital calls, etc., unless invited by the pastor with approval of the session.
 - c. Ordinarily, the period of time between announcement and retirement should be three to four months. Call the Board of Pensions, 1-800-773-7752, and ask for an application for Honorable Retirement, or download a form from the website, www.pcusa.pensions.org/Library/Forms/pen-001.pdf
 - d. The pastor 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 the

person designated by the session. Arrangements for payment of any monies due to the pastor (salary, annuities, etc.) or repayment of any loan made by the church to the pastor shall be made by the effective date of dissolution unless stipulated in writing by both parties. Any funds in an existing "Pastor's Discretionary Fund" shall return to the church budget.

- e. The former pastor shall not provide pastoral services (baptisms, weddings, funerals, counseling, teaching, etc.) unless there is no temporary, interim, associate or installed pastor. It is important that the congregation find its identity separate from the former pastor. Following the installation of a new pastor, the former pastor may provide pastoral services only at the invitation of the session and in concurrence with the request of the new pastor.

3. Reduction in Force (Layoff)

- a. Separation because of the elimination of a position, retrenchment in budget, or for other circumstances arising out of no fault of the pastor, is at the discretion of the session and the congregation with approval of presbytery.
- b. Written notice will come to the Committee on Ministry from the session after consultation with the pastor about the termination of the call.
- c. Six (6) months notice or pay in lieu of notice will be given. The pastor will be paid the cash equivalent of any unused annual leave.
- d. The pastor shall send a letter to the congregation which should include:
 - A statement of appreciation for the opportunity to have served the congregation and the pastor's future plans.
 - The effective date of the dissolution.
 - A reminder to the congregation that after the pastors relationship is dissolved, no further pastoral services shall be provided including baptisms, weddings, funerals, hospital calls, etc.
- e. The pastor 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 the person designated by the session. Arrangements for payment of any monies due to the pastor (salary, annuities, etc.) or repayment of any loan made by the church to the pastor shall be made by the effective date of dissolution unless stipulated in writing by both parties. Any funds in an existing "Pastor's Discretionary Fund" shall return to the church budget.
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4. Involuntary Separation

- a. Involuntary dissolution of a pastoral relationship may occur under several circumstances: (1) Negotiated Termination: either the pastor or session may request that COM assist in negotiating a peaceful and appropriate end to a relationship which either the pastor or session believe is no longer workable; (2) Medical Disability: Medical impairment of a permanent or progressive nature may be a cause for dissolution; (3) Cause: a judicial action or administrative commission may initiate an involuntary dissolution.
- b. COM will facilitate negotiation of a dissolution agreement between the pastor and the session. As a guideline, a minimum severance package should include one month of salary and housing for every year of service to the congregation, up to six (6) months, although longer continuation may be appropriate in some situations. Benefits continuation should also be considered. Financial compensation should end when the pastor has obtained comparable employment. When an agreement has been reached by the pastor and session with the concurrence of the COM liaison, the terms should be made available upon request to members of the congregation. The terms may not be amended during the congregational meeting to dissolve the call. Should the

- congregation not approve the terms, the pastor, session, and COM shall resume negotiations and a further congregational meeting shall be necessary. COM must approve all dissolution agreements. The package will be paid by the session/congregation.
- c. The pastor 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 the person designated by the session. Arrangements for payment of any monies due to the pastor (salary, annuities, etc.) or repayment of any loan made by the church to the pastor shall be made by the effective date of dissolution unless stipulated otherwise in writing by both parties. Any funds in an existing "Pastor's Discretionary Fund" shall return to the church budget.
 - d. The former pastor shall not provide pastoral services (baptisms, weddings, funerals, counseling, teaching, etc.) unless given permission by the current moderator and session. It is important that the congregation find its identity separate from the former pastor. Following the installation of a new pastor, the former pastor only at the invitation of the session may provide pastoral services in concurrence with the request of the new pastor.
 - e. Responsibilities of Committee on Ministry to Pastors involved in involuntary separations:
 - The COM will remind pastors of the resources available through Mission Presbytery's Pastoral Care Division
 - The COM will recommend that the pastor receive pastoral care from a professional therapist. The Presbytery will share the cost of this service if necessary. This shared cost, if necessary, will be negotiated between the session and the Committee on Ministry.
 - The COM will send a team of its members to meet with the pastor in order to discuss the pastor's future plans, current needs and an exploration of learnings arising from the situations that led to the dissolution.
 - f. Responsibilities of Committee on Ministry to congregations involved in involuntary separations
 - The COM will send a team of its members to meet with the session of the affected church in order to explore learnings from the separation and to assist in discerning plans for the future.
 - The COM team will also review the pastoral call process and commit themselves to shepherding the church in its search for a new pastor.

While the above separation policies serve as a guideline for the dissolution of pastoral calls within Mission Presbytery, these policies assume that (a) pastors, sessions and congregations will respect the procedures outlined in the Book of Order of the PCUSA regarding dissolution of pastoral calls and that (b) ministers, sessions and congregations will respect the authority of Mission Presbytery to adjudicate the terms of separation when pastors and sessions are unable to negotiate mutual terms.

Session's Responsibilities and Requirements

1. Receive a copy of the letter of resignation or request for retirement that will be then be mailed to the congregation by the pastor. In the event of an involuntary separation through the work of an administrative commission, the session shall notify the congregation of the separation.
2. Call a special meeting of the congregation to vote on the pastor's request to dissolve the pastoral relationship.
3. In the case of an involuntary separation through the work of an administrative commission the session will receive notification from the Administrative Commission.
4. Invite a representative of the Committee on Ministry to a meeting in order to provide information concerning the dissolution process, the interim period, and the pastoral search process.