

**POLICY FOR
A JUST AND GRACIOUS DISMISSAL OF A CONGREGATION
TO ANOTHER REFORMED DENOMINATION**

PREAMBLE

This policy shall apply primarily to congregations that ultimately vote to leave the Presbyterian Church (USA) (the “PC(USA)”) as provided in paragraph XII below. However, the principles of mutual good faith and graciousness that underlie this policy, and the opportunities for discernment and negotiation that it encourages to arrive at that decision, are equally applicable to any congregation in which there is a significant group of members who are in such serious disagreement with the denomination as to consider leaving the PC(USA). Therefore, it is appropriate that the steps outlined below be undertaken in any such situation at least until a congregational vote is concluded.

Nothing herein shall abridge the right of any member of any congregation to ask for a transfer of membership to any other Christian church at any time. Any such request shall be handled in the usual and routine manner, as is the practice in the individual congregation, and consistently with the *Book of Order*.

This policy shall supersede and replace Grace Presbytery’s “Process for addressing churches seeking to withdraw from the Presbyterian Church (USA)” adopted by the Presbytery in February 2009. It shall apply from and after the date of its adoption by Grace Presbytery to dismissal processes that begin thereafter.

I. INTRODUCTION:

A. Division Over Matters of Conscience

1. Through careful study, prayerful processes and faithful discernment, Presbyterians of good conscience, deep devotion to Jesus Christ, and genuine commitment to the Word of God and our historic confessional standards have come to differing interpretive conclusions.
2. Over many years, there have been disagreements over whether particular matters are essential tenets of the Reformed faith (and therefore subject or not subject to individual freedom of conscience). Similarly, there are disagreements over the extent to which beliefs, decisions and actions are an appropriate exercise of the individual freedom of conscience.
3. The *Book of Order*, in its “Foundations of Presbytery Polity,” states that “... there are truths and forms with respect to which men [and women] of good characters and principles may differ. And in all these we think it the duty both of private Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other.” **(F-3.0105)**.
4. It lies within us as Presbyterians committed to differing positions to affirm together, “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.”

B. 218th General Assembly’s Recommendation

The 218th General Assembly (2008) of the PC(USA) urged that presbyteries and synods develop and make available to lower governing bodies and local churches a process that exercises the responsibility and power “to divide, dismiss, or dissolve churches in consultation with their members” (*Book of Order*, G-11.0103i [**now G-3.0303b**]) with consistency, pastoral responsibility, accountability, gracious witness, openness, and transparency. Believing that trying to exercise this responsibility and power through litigation is deadly to the cause of Christ, impacting the local congregation, other parts of the Body of Christ and ecumenical relationships, and our witness to Christ in the world around us, it urges congregations considering leaving the denomination, presbyteries and synods to implement a process using the following principles:

- *Consistency*: The local authority delegated to presbyteries is guided and shaped by our shared faith, service, and witness to Jesus Christ.
- *Pastoral Responsibility*: The requirement in **G-3.0303b** to consult with the members of a congregation seeking dismissal highlights the presbytery’s pastoral responsibility, which must not be submerged beneath other responsibilities.
- *Accountability*: For a governing body, accountability rightly dictates fiduciary and connectional concerns, raising general issues of property (**G-4.02**) and specific issues of schism within a congregation (**G-4.0207**). Even so, full accountability also requires preeminent concern with “caring for the flock.”
- *Gracious Witness*: Scripture and the Holy Spirit require a gracious witness from us rather than a harsh legalism.
- *Openness and Transparency*: Mutual good faith, as well as early, open communication, and transparency about principles and process of dismissal necessarily serve truth, order, and goodness, and work against any need to resort to civil litigation as a solution.

C. Presbytery's Authority to Dismiss Congregations

1. Presbyteries have the express power (a technical term meaning they are the **only** bodies who can take this action) to divide, dismiss or dissolve congregations in consultation with their members (**G-3.0303b & G-4.0207**) [PCUS, 1976, pp. 92-99, *Strong and Bagby v. Synod of Mid-South* (No.1-1976)].
2. Presbyteries continue to have the historic authority, and the mandatory duty, under the *Book of Order* (**G-4.02 and G-3.0303b**) to evaluate questions concerning property of a congregation in light of the particular circumstances presented in each instance and to exercise good judgment in accordance with Authoritative Interpretations of former *Book of Order* G-11.0103 made by the General Assembly in 1988, 1989 and 1990. Those Authoritative Interpretations are not affected by the new *Book of Order*.

D. Statement of Values of Grace Presbytery

1. Grace Presbytery is committed to its congregations and acknowledges the good will of all parties in dispute. Grace Presbytery seeks to uphold one another, respect each other's integrity, and affirm freedom of conscience, even as we acknowledge significant differences in our views on what the Bible teaches about a number of issues. We desire to encourage peace and unity while minimizing confrontation between and among our congregations and members as we seek together to find and represent the will of Christ. In all that we do, it is our prayer to strive to be a church modeled on the body of Christ, a church made up of many different parts, all of which are necessary for its mission to the world, for its building up, and for its service to God and on our organic spiritual unity found in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

2. Presbyterians have always celebrated and recognized significant differences of opinion on issues that matter. This ethos is currently noted in the historic language found at **F-3.0105**:

- Our covenant demands that we strive to work together in peace and unity, even in the midst of our diversity. The duty is always to attempt to bring the estranged member back into the covenant community, and we promise to carry out that duty in our ordination vows.
- Through our theology, we understand that "Presbyters are not simply to reflect the will of the people, but rather to seek together to find and represent the will of Christ." (**F-3.0204**)
- Decisions shall be reached in governing councils by vote, following opportunity for discussion, and a majority shall govern." (**F-3.0204**) and (**F-3.0205**). At the same time, the church is committed to being open to voices sharing minority opinions.
- The Constitution of the PC(USA) recognizes "The church reformed, always to be reformed according to the Word of God and the call of the Spirit." (**F-2.02**).
- There are also times when members find it impossible to go along with the majority. The Presbytery encourages all presbyters and congregations to "actively concur with or passively submit to" the vote and wisdom of the majority. (**G-2.0105, footnote 1**). If their consciences will permit neither, the Presbytery will be generous in allowing congregations and presbyters with strong issues of conscience to pursue peaceable withdrawal through dismissal to another Reformed body in accordance with our interpretation of the Trust Clause as found below.

3. In order to achieve the goals of servant-hood, encouragement, and support, the Presbytery has historically seen its role as being a resource. The *Book of Order* of the PC(USA) (**G-3.0303**), challenges the Presbytery to order all resources ... for the mission and government of the church throughout its geographical district. It therefore has the responsibility and power to develop strategy for the mission of the church in its area consistent with and to coordinate the work of its member congregations, guiding them and mobilizing their strength for the most effective witness to the broader community for which it has responsibility.

II. HISTORIC PRESBYTERIAN POLITY REGARDING PROPERTY HELD IN TRUST AS EXPRESSED IN THE BOOK OF ORDER

All property held by or for a congregation, a presbytery, a synod, the General Assembly, or the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), whether legal title is lodged in a corporation, a trustee or trustees, or an unincorporated association, and whether the property is used in programs of a congregation or of a higher council or retained for the production of income, is held in trust nevertheless for the use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). (G-4.0203).

1. The Trust Clause, one of the most historic principles of Presbyterian polity, is meant to reflect the church's organic unity as it fulfills "The Great Ends of the Church," strengthening its ability to guide its member congregations into their witness to the broader community. "Unity is God's gift to the Church in Jesus Christ. Just as God is one God and Jesus Christ is our one Savior, so the Church is one because it belongs to its one Lord, Jesus Christ." (**F- 1.0302a**).

We believe our unity and our true connection comes from Christ, our Chief Cornerstone, and that our unity in Christ serves as an

essential basis for evangelism. (*John 17:20-23*) It is our prayer that we would all be one in Christ, just as Christ and the Father are one. Because the trust clause is meant as a means of witness to our unity in the covenant of common mission, it is incumbent upon the Presbytery to exercise forbearance, not coercion, to act graciously rather than adversely to its member congregations in regard to its provisions.

2. Under the Trust Clause, a congregation's property, including land, buildings, and fixtures, is held in trust for the PC(USA). Generally speaking, a congregation cannot sell, lease, or encumber real property without the permission of Presbytery. A congregation may not take property with it to another denomination unless Presbytery voluntarily releases its beneficial interest in the property. The fact that a congregation may have exercised its limited right, created at the time of reunion, to be exempt from the requirement of Presbytery approval of certain property transactions (**G-4.-0208**) does not affect or supersede the general, historic polity of the Church that all property of a congregation is held in trust, as set out above, and does not create the right for a congregation to be dismissed from the PC(USA) and retain its property.

3. The Trust Clause also reflects our understanding of the church as a communion of saints across time, with responsibilities not only to those within the congregation today, but also to those who came before and, maybe even more importantly, to those who will follow. When a congregation seeks to leave the Presbytery, it is breaking what is often a significant historic relationship spanning centuries in some instances; it is also departing from a fellowship in which its officers have freely and joyously participated, by whose polity they all solemnly vowed to be governed (**W4-4.4000**), and with which many members may feel bonds of devotion and affection. This policy therefore cautions any congregation seeking to separate from the Presbytery to consider its actions carefully.

4. The Trust Clause should not be used as a weapon to threaten civil action against a congregation. In considering enforcement of the provisions of the Trust Clause, it is important that Presbytery and its member congregations act with grace rather than as adversaries. Scripture calls us to seek in all humility to resolve our disagreements and avoid the harm that is done to the Gospel and Christ's body when Christians resort to civil litigation and public disputes over property.

5. The Trust Clause should not be used to bind congregations to the institution of the PC(USA) if a congregation genuinely desires to depart over matters of conscience. At the same time, matters of conscience may not be asserted to contradict or nullify the general, historic polity of the Church that all property of a congregation is held in trust, as set out above.

6. Presbytery will not preemptively initiate civil litigation based on the Trust Clause. If a congregation initiates civil action, the Presbytery may take legal action to defend its mission strategy for the Presbytery and the interests of the whole Church.

III. COMMITMENT AND DIALOGUE WITHOUT THREAT OF PUNISHMENT

1. The goal of this Presbytery will always be reconciliation and continued engagement in relationship for all congregations within the presbytery without the threat of isolation, estrangement or blame. The Presbytery is to be a servant to the congregations God has entrusted to us, encouraging and supporting them toward becoming healthy, growing, congregations. This is especially true for those congregations for whom the bonds of unity are stretched and ecclesiastical connections frayed over issues of conscience to the point of considering disaffiliation.

2. *1 John 4:18 states "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love."* The Presbytery's commitment to this passage in how we dialogue with each other means that we are committed to engage either the leaders of the congregation or the congregation as a whole, as circumstances dictate, without threat of punishment. It is likewise incumbent upon the leaders of congregations wrestling with issues of conscience to share their concerns with Presbytery leadership in a timely manner, being assured that the response will not be hostile, but instead one of prayer, dialogue, and a commitment to act in love, and in the best interest of the congregation and all its members as well as the Presbytery's mission.

We encourage congregations wrestling with these issues to share their concerns with Presbytery leadership, knowing that the response will not be hostile, but rather one of prayerful dialogue and a commitment to act in love and in the best interest of that congregation and all its members.

3. Dialogue recognizes that our Reformed tradition includes broad historical differences between the great doctrines and themes of the church, and the specific theories and models which different communities have found useful in seeking to understand those doctrines in the practice of their faith. A Reformed stance always allows room for a variety of legitimate perspectives and valid models of "essentials" that lead to an understanding of underlying mysteries. Graciousness on both sides acknowledges this validity and seeks to honor rather than to demonize one another.

IV. COVENANTAL PROCESS FOR THE PRESBYTERY AND CONGREGATION

1. As a primary means for settling disputes, Grace Presbytery covenants with its members and congregations to settle property disagreements relationally, rather than through judicial proceedings in the courts of the church, or by initiating litigation in civil court thereby violating *1 Corinthians 6:1-11*. Congregations are similarly expected to be bound by this same covenant. In furtherance of this goal, both the Presbytery and the congregation covenant together to:

- Refuse the temptation to love church property and assets too much (These are important ministry tools, but they are not the most important aspect of our ministry.);
- Be open, honest, and transparent, speaking the truth in love;
- Exercise pastoral oversight in the spirit of *1 Peter 5:1-5*, "...shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God And all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another";
- Work pastorally with any pastor, session or congregation that seeks dismissal from the PC(USA);
- Not take any preemptive action against any congregation, session, ruling elder, or teaching elder, who, during this process, considers faithfully following the Great Ends of the Church (**F-1.0304**) in another fellowship;
- Interpret "use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)" in **G-4.0203** to mean only whatever furthers the Great Ends of the Church (**F-1.0304**);
- Interpret its express power and responsibility to "provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard ... provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received ... nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ" (**G-3.0301**) to allow that in some cases, after careful and prayerful consideration, a congregation may be dismissed from the PC(USA) with its property and any financial assets intact.

2. Holding these covenants in mind, this does not abrogate provisions for judicial proceedings described in D-2.0000 et seq should such proceedings be determined to be necessary after prayerful deliberation by the Presbytery.

V. OUTLINE FOR A PROCESS OF ENGAGEMENT WITH PRESBYTERY

1. When the leadership of the Presbytery becomes aware, either through formal session action or discussion, or through informal contacts with congregational leaders or members, that a significant number of members in a congregation are in serious disagreement with the denomination to the extent of considering leaving the PC(USA), a Presbytery Ministry Team (PMT), formed by the Presbytery Executive Committee and the Committee on Ministry for such a purpose, will meet with the session and jointly, or subsequently, with the congregation as the congregation tries to discern God's will for denominational affiliation. This process is meant to insure that the congregation is fully informed on the issues at hand, equipped with knowledge of this Presbytery's process, as well as the processes and values that have guided other congregations and presbyteries in their decision-making.

Nothing in this policy limits the discretion of the Presbytery, as the need arises, to create an Administrative Commission as permitted in *Book of Order*, G-3.0109b1, and the Presbytery, in its discretion, may determine that circumstances require that the PMT be constituted as an Administrative Commission. In such cases, all relevant provisions of the *Book of Order* shall be followed, and the Administrative Commission so constituted by the body of Presbytery shall exercise the power and authority given in the action creating it.

2. The persons named by Presbytery to the PMT will seek a time of prayer and conversation focused upon understanding the conflict and identifying potential steps toward reconciliation, including a sufficient time of prayerful discussion of differences and determination of possibility of reconciliation with the leadership of the affected congregation so as to fully comprehend their understanding of the position of the congregation.

3. The PMT will then attempt to "bridge the gap" with the congregation through discussion of possibilities for reconciliation and likely impacts in the case where dismissal is the course decided upon. The PMT will outline the process and likely consequences of the congregation requesting dismissal from the Presbytery, and will use the following principles to guide the PMT's dialogue with the congregation:

To engage either the leaders of the congregation or the congregation as a whole, as circumstances dictate, in a time of prayer and conversation aimed at understanding the issues of the session/congregation that desire that their congregation be dismissed, and also to hear from those congregation members who wish to remain within the PC(USA).

If the team determines that progress can be made toward reconciliation through continued and constructive dialogue, the session and the team will establish a mutually agreeable timeline of talks to be held and proceed to engage in such dialogue.

The team will encourage the sharing of faith stories, understandings of theological and scriptural issues, and to pray for God's guidance. Careful listening and mutual discernment are essential both for the PMT and for members of the congregation. The process is entered into with the expectation that God is present with the power to heal, transform, and guide.

Wherever appropriate, the PMT will engage in open meetings with members of the congregation invited to be present.

In its dialogue with the session and/or congregation, the team will share implications for a congregation considering leaving the PC(USA). The PMT will discuss with all minister members the likely impacts on their ordination status and benefits of the various options available to them, so that they fully understand the implications of their transfer to another Reformed body, or staying as a member of Presbytery, including what is expected of them if they decide to remain in the PC(USA).

The best goal of PMT conversations with congregations when there is a group that desires to remain within the PC(USA) and a group that desires to be dismissed to another Reformed body, is to discuss financial, property and other issues that will enable both members of congregations (groups) to be as healthy as possible in the aftermath of separation. If after a period of dialogue, the PMT and the leadership of the congregation are not able to establish a process for reconciliation, the PMT and the leaders of the congregation will begin the process of negotiation of the terms of dismissal for those who wish to leave, and the validation of the true desire of the members of the congregation with regards to denominational affiliation. Final decisions as to property will not be made until after the congregational vote provided in Paragraph XIII below. Due consideration will be given to protecting both groups so that each may continue to be a viable congregation in the future.

VI. PROCESS FOR A CONGREGATION TO REQUEST DISMISSAL

A. Negotiation of terms of dismissal

The dismissal of a congregation, or of a group within a congregation, from the PC(USA) will be a traumatic event in the life of the congregation and the Presbytery. The actions of the Presbytery shall be truly focused on the advancement of ministry as well as its preservation through the process of negotiation and after the congregation is dismissed. The PMT will engage with a Special Committee of the congregation (SCC), selected by the Session of the congregation, to negotiate the terms of dismissal. It is expected that once the process has reached this stage, the negotiations should be able to progress relatively quickly.

B. Terms for release to another body

Consistent with PC(USA) polity and General Assembly actions taken in *Anderson v. Synod of Florida*, congregations seeking dismissal from the PC(USA) may only be dismissed to another reformed body recognized by the PC(USA). A congregation cannot be dismissed to "independency." Consistent with *Strong & Bagby vs. Synod of Mid South*, congregations can only be dismissed by the formal action of the Presbytery.

C. Policy for dealing with presbytery beneficial interest in property

1. If a congregation seeking dismissal has outstanding loans to any lender, either a lender related to the PC(USA), including the Presbytery, Synod of the Sun, PILP or the General Assembly of the PC(USA), or to a third-party lender and guaranteed by Grace Presbytery, before any actual transfer of title occurs, the loans must be repaid in full. If any loan is to be repaid by a new loan from another lender, the Presbytery must be affirmatively released from any liability for any indebtedness of the congregation to be dismissed with regard to any such loan. If a congregation seeking dismissal has outstanding loans to any third-party lender not guaranteed by the Presbytery, such a loan may remain outstanding, if the lender formally releases Grace Presbytery from any direct or indirect liability thereon, and acknowledges that the congregation is becoming a member of another denomination. If no such release can be obtained the dismissal will not be granted. Since the congregation being dismissed will no longer be a part of the PC(USA), neither the denomination body that holds the loan nor Grace Presbytery should be placed in the position of being exposed to potential loss without having a position of oversight of the congregation.

This repayment does not have to be made before the Presbytery acts on the request to dismiss, but must be made within 30 days of the Presbytery vote to dismiss, and before the formal dismissal takes place. Any action of the Presbytery approving dismissal that occurs before repayment occurs shall be specifically conditional upon satisfaction of the repayment obligation. If the PMT does not believe a viable plan for repayment exists, the PMT shall recommend to the SCC that the process be put on hold before the congregational vote until a viable plan to repay the loan is established.

2. Prior to the Presbytery voting on the dismissal, the SCC shall provide the PMT details regarding to whom the church property shall be transferred if dismissal is granted, such that the appropriate legal documentation can be prepared, at the expense of the congregation to be dismissed. Such transfer should occur concurrently with the repayment of any loans or, in the event that no loans are outstanding, upon satisfaction of the terms of dismissal agreed upon as set out below.

VII. STATUS OF MINISTER MEMBERS OF PRESBYTERY

1. If a congregation is dismissed by Presbytery, one of the paramount concerns of this process is to assure that the rights and status of minister members are considered and handled properly.
2. Teaching Elders who wish to seek ordination in another Reformed body should take the necessary steps with that body to satisfy its processes and requirements. Such steps may be requested concurrently with the congregation's request or they may occur separately. If a Teaching Elder does not concurrently seek ordination in another Reformed body, the Teaching Elder will be placed on inactive status by Presbytery, which will allow the minister to continue to seek calls within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), or to become a member-at-large.
3. If a Teaching Elder seeks ordination in another Reformed body, and if it is appropriate, Grace Presbytery will provide a letter certifying "Good Standing" to be sent to the new body; provided, no such letter will be issued for any Teaching Elder who is the subject of pending judicial or investigative action, as provided in #4 below.
4. Members under discipline of the Presbytery may not be certified as in good standing until the administrative process is complete and any required remedial actions completed. At that point, the letter of good standing may be issued, but a record of IC or PJC actions must be transmitted to the other body so proper disclosure on any issue can occur.

VIII. STATUS OF MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION

It is important that, throughout the process, both the SCC and PMT communicate carefully so that divisiveness is minimized between those in the congregation who wish to withdraw and those members who want to remain in the PC(USA). After formal voting by the congregation and Presbytery has been completed, all members will be contacted regarding their membership status. The terms of office of all members being dismissed who serve on Presbytery committees will end officially on the day Presbytery votes to dismiss the congregation. However, the Presbytery will always welcome former Ruling Elder Commissioners' participation at Presbytery meetings as a way of continuing shared ministries and mission in the community, although such participation will be as visitors, without privilege of speaking except upon specific motion.

IX. STATUS OF MEMBERS UNDER CARE OF PRESBYTERY

Special attention should be given to members of the congregation who are preparing for ministry and are under the care of Presbytery. Each member under care, together with his/her liaison from the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM), should be advised immediately of the congregation's desire to seek dismissal. The member under care will be given the option of being dismissed with the congregation or transferring their membership to another congregation within Presbytery and/or the PC(USA). If transfer to another congregation within Presbytery and/or the PC(USA) is requested, PMT and the CPM liaison will assist the member in seeking a waiver of the usual six-month requirement for church membership in order to maintain care status.

X. GOAL OF THE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE PRESBYTERY AND CONGREGATION

Just as this process is designed to aid in Presbytery's ability to respectfully deal with the congregation's desire to be dismissed, and to have that happen in a way that minimizes the impact to the ongoing ministries of the dismissed congregation and the surviving PC(USA) congregation if there is one, it is also important for the congregation to act in such a way as to minimize the impact on the mission and ministry of the Presbytery.

Recognizing that the Presbytery's and the surviving PC(USA) congregation's ability to sustain ministry is related to its financial health, it is assumed that the members of the congregation that is being dismissed would, in good faith, want to minimize the financial impact of its departure on Presbytery and the surviving PC(USA) congregation. That assumption of good faith underlies and supports the entire process of gracious dismissal.

XI. NEGOTIATION OF TERMS OF WITHDRAWAL

The decision of whether or not to release the Presbytery's beneficial interest in property used by a congregation will be made by the Presbytery, bearing in mind its responsibility to deploy assets of people, real estate and financial resources for the furtherance of the mission of the PC(USA) within its bounds and the need of the Church to carry on its mission for the cause of Christ. Therefore, if the congregation is seeking to withdraw and retain its real property, the PMT and SCC may negotiate terms whereby Presbytery may transfer the property to the congregation in exchange for an agreed compensation. The terms should reflect the mission strategy of Presbytery and should, to the greatest extent possible, facilitate successful ongoing ministry by both the Presbytery and the congregations. Thus, the PMT and the SCC will negotiate the terms of dismissal, each giving particular attention to the needs of the other.

XII. VALIDATION OF CONGREGATION'S DESIRE AND DISCERNMENT TO REQUEST DISMISSAL

After the PMT and the SCC have met, the next step in the process is to validate the congregation's desire for dismissal, and to ascertain the congregation's unity in that decision. That validation must be accomplished through a congregational vote. The PMT shall set the number for the quorum at the congregational meeting (ordinarily 50% of the active members of the congregation, but fewer if the PMT determines that number to be unreasonable), the notice to be given, and the method of voting including writing the form of the ballot.

Every action should be taken to maximize the participation of the all members of congregation in this meeting. It is also expected that representatives of the PMT would have an opportunity to address the congregation and be able to discuss specific issues that would enable the congregation to make an informed decision based on the facts of the situation and after prayerful discernment.

If the congregation determines that it is called into a continued or transformed relationship with Grace Presbytery, the PMT will create and conduct a process for continuation/transformation of fellowship and reaffirmation of the Presbytery-congregation relationship. The following are presented as guidelines for marking and sealing that reaffirmation:

The PMT will assist the session in writing a covenant of reaffirmation articulating the nature and specifics of the future relationship between the congregation, Presbytery, and the PC(USA).

Conducting a public service of worship and reaffirmation to shared fellowship and ministry, with participation from Presbytery and congregation.

Sharing of story and testimony from members of the PMT and congregation at the congregation and Presbytery level (and beyond, if appropriate).

If the results of the vote to request dismissal is 90% or greater, the dismissal request is considered validated and the PMT will then engage in further negotiations with the SCC as to the financial terms by which the Presbytery's beneficial interest in the property will be satisfied. Once that occurs and final agreement is reached, then a vote seeking Presbytery approval will be scheduled at an upcoming Presbytery meeting.

If the results of the congregational vote is less than 90%, but more than 50%, the PMT shall determine how to proceed from that point, considering the wishes of the members seeking dismissal, the wishes of the members who wish to remain in the PC(USA), and the mission strategy of the Presbytery in the affected geographic area. It may elect to proceed to negotiate financial terms under which the members seeking dismissal will be allowed to acquire the property of the congregation, or it may elect to allow the surviving PC(USA) congregation to retain the property. In that case, the members seeking dismissal may proceed to seek dismissal as a group, or as individuals.

If the results of the congregation vote is less than 50% no further action will be taken by the PMT.

XIII. PROCESS FOR THE PRESBYTERY TO VOTE TO DISMISS A CONGREGATION OR MEMBERS THEREOF

A. Procedure for Vote of Presbytery on Settlement Agreement

1. Once a formal vote to request dismissal from the PC(USA) has occurred, and the group seeking dismissal has accepted such terms of the negotiated agreement for dismissal as have been agreed upon by the PMT and the SCC, Presbytery will vote on accepting the terms of the agreement and dismissing the congregation or members thereof to another Reformed body. The written record of proposed dismissal terms, written counter-proposals by the PMT, and the written settlement agreement including the mission strategy and impact study and Trust Clause considerations, will be made available to all members of Presbytery for their review well in advance of the meeting at which the Presbytery vote will be taken.

2. It should be noted that renegotiation of the terms for dismissal through use of amendments from the floor of Presbytery would invalidate months of work between the PMT and the members of the congregation. Therefore, the proposal should be presented as a whole, with the understanding that the final agreement has been reached by good faith negotiations between the PMT and the congregation. The motion to accept the terms of the settlement and dismiss the congregation or members thereof should be preceded by a two-thirds vote required to limit amendments and debate.

3. It should be assumed that if Presbytery then votes down the proposed dismissal of the congregation or members thereof on the terms that have been negotiated, the outcome might be initiation of civil litigation regarding ownership of the property. It is our prayer that, by all parties committing to follow the above process in good faith, we can resolve our differences reasonably and civilly, without resorting to litigation.

B. Determination of Members' Desire for Transfer

Within 30 days of the Presbytery's vote approving dismissal of the congregation or members thereof to another Reformed body, Presbytery will prepare a letter to members of the congregation informing them of their option to be dismissed with the congregation or to remain in the PC(USA). The congregation will mail the letter to all active members promptly and will bear

all costs associated with this mailing. The letter will direct that responses are to be returned to Grace Presbytery. The Presbytery will then ensure that contact is made with those members wishing to remain in the PC(USA) and that they are assisted in joining a new congregation of their choice, if there is to be no surviving PC(USA) congregation.

C. Completing the Dismissal

Recognizing that the departure of valued colleagues in ministry may be painful, it is appropriate for the Presbytery to hold a service of worship giving thanks for prior shared ministry and prayers for the ongoing witness of both the departing congregation, the surviving PC(USA) congregation and of all the other congregations in Grace Presbytery and the PC(USA).