

Local congregations sometimes seek to do things to further or end their ministries that require consideration or actions by the Presbytery. These include but are not limited to: closing; merger; consolidation (closing of one church and moving the members and assets to another); yoking parishes. The Presbytery responsibilities, authorities, and powers when these matters are proposed are very broad and cover a wide range of issues.

When churches contemplate such an action, they shall contact the Executive Presbyter. The Executive Presbyter shall prepare and submit to the Coordinating Cabinet a proposal for the creation by Presbytery of a special committee, along with suggested members. The minimum number of this special committee shall be three.

The duties of the special committee will be to ensure that the steps and actions cited below are properly taken. It shall have the authority to solicit appropriate committees, teams, and staff of the Presbytery to advise the committee, churches, sessions, staff and pastors, to take such acts as necessary for facilitation, and to conduct such activities as necessary. When all steps have been properly addressed, the special committee shall propose the consummating act to Presbytery for its approval, which resolution shall include a report that the necessary steps have been accomplished according to this policy.

The matters that the special committee shall address shall include the following (as appropriate to the specific issue):

Presbytery strategy

- Do we want to maintain a church or other mission in the location?
- What will be the effect on surrounding churches?
- Is this an area that we believe needs development?

Property and legal issues

- State law matters:
 - Transfers and sales of property
 - Determination of corporate status. (Including ensuring that the name of the new entity is cleared before Presbytery votes on it.)
 - Filing of new articles of incorporation
 - Dissolutions of corporations
- Creation of new bylaws.
- Disposition of real property.
- Disposition of personal property.
- Disposition and use endowments, designated funds, gifts, memorial funds, etc
- Inventory and audit of the property
- Filing of proper documents; release of mortgages, bank accounts, etc.
- Disposition of the records of each church
- Agreement on the new entity: retain the name of one or create a new entity
- Disposition of liabilities—outstanding bills, debts, mortgages etc

Organizational issues

- Configuration of session to ensure fairness, continuity and preservation of memories.
- Conduct of nominations so as to ensure fairness, continuity and preservation of memories.
- Establishment of some way of addressing disagreements that emerge from the predecessor congregations
- Configuration of committees, roles, purpose, programs, assignments, etc.

Pastoral issues

- Addressing issues of loss and discomfort.
- In mergers, consolidations, and yoked parishes, ensuring that the end product works.
- Ensuring fairness and sensitivity.
- Promoting growing and unitary productive congregations.
- Organizing celebrations and transfers so that the congregations can see this as something positive rather than a defeat.
- Assisting in a way that the parties see Presbytery as being helpful.
- Ensuring the joining of congregational cultures works smoothly.

Pastoral leadership issues

- Dividing time, services and costs between congregations in the case of yoked parishes, or between congregational groups where churches are merged or consolidated.
- Where more than one pastor is involved, determining the status of each pastor.

Process

- Consultation with sessions and congregations individually and collectively.
- Creation and approval of the plan for union
- A rational sequence of meetings of sessions and congregations to ensure that all parties are sufficiently informed of all issues and freely agree to them.
- Approval by the sessions and then the congregations of each entity independently for approval of the plan of union, bylaws of the new church, and the corporate acts to create or dissolve.
- Proposing the final act to the Presbytery.

Definitions

Closing: The process by which a church dissolves as a congregation and a corporation. When a church closes, all its property reverts to the Presbytery. When a congregation shuts down, the session remains until the corporation affairs are fully concluded, frequently including the sale of the property. Members not transferred to other churches before closing are transferred to the Presbytery.

Consolidation: This is a term not found in the Book of Order. In a consolidation, a church closes but requests Presbytery to authorize the transfer of all property to a different Presbyterian Church. The church then closes using the ordinary procedures for closing. Before closing, the members who desire are transferred to the church with which they are consolidating. The transfer of the property to the receiving church requires approval of the closing congregation and Presbytery. If the transfer includes real property, the approval requires the vote of the congregation. Note: Under state corporation law, this process may be called a *merger*.

Merger: This is a term found in the Book of Order. In a merger, two congregations become one. Their membership, assets and property are joined. Each individual church is dissolved and a new corporation is formed. The General Assembly assigns a new PIN number to the new congregation. Note: Under state corporation law, this process is called a *consolidation*.

Plan of Union: When there is a yoking, consolidation or merger, the effect is to bring two congregations together. This requires significant planning and agreement about how it will happen: session configuration; use of endowments; worship styles; pastoral relationships, and a myriad of other considerations. In order to ensure that there is full

understanding and agreement for what will happen once the yoking/merger/consolidation occurs, the congregations of both churches must agree on a written *Plan of Union*.

Yoking: When two churches are of a size, configuration, geographical location, and financial situation that make it difficult for both to support a pastor, they may *yoke*. When churches yoke, they agree to share a single called pastor. This requires negotiation of how costs, worship time, pastoral scheduling, etc are to be configured.

Approved by Presbytery 10/25/11

P-22. ON AUTHORIZING THE COORDINATING CABINET TO APPROVE THE CELEBRATION OF THE LORD’S SUPPER:

When it receives a request for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper in sufficient time to submit it to Presbytery for approval, the Coordinating Cabinet shall do so. If the Presbytery will not meet in time to authorize the celebration, the Coordinating Cabinet is authorized to approve the celebration on behalf of Presbytery. In such cases, it shall report its action to the Presbytery.

Approved by Presbytery 4/27/13

P-23. VOLUNTEER DRIVER GUIDELINES.

Voluntary Background and Driving Checks.

Volunteers who are working with children and adults will be asked to undergo criminal record checks and other appropriate screening before assignment(s).

Insurance Coverage.

- Accident, liability and automobile insurance coverage are the responsibility of the volunteer.
- Insurance must be in effect and meet the minimum standards of the State of Michigan.
- You are encouraged to consult with your insurance agent regarding your personal insurance coverage relative to Presbytery related volunteer work. The volunteer should have the State of Michigan required minimum.
- It is a violation of Michigan automobile insurance regulations for an insurance company to raise your rates based on volunteer-related driving.

Additional requirements.

- All volunteer drivers must be at least twenty five (25) years of age.
- All volunteer drivers must undergo a driving license history check as part of the Presbytery criminal background check prior to serving as a volunteer driver for the Presbytery of Detroit.
- All volunteer drivers must have good driving records, with no record of careless, reckless, or alcohol-related violations on their driving record, and no more than 3 points within the last 2 years, and current proof of insurance. Any and all traffic violations are to be reported to the event leader.
- Copies of the volunteer driver's insurance and license shall be given to the event leader.
- In the event of any moving violation or accident during the transport of any youth or adult to Presbytery sponsored events, the driver shall file a written report with a factual description of the incident to the Detroit Presbytery. The event leader shall file the report at the Presbytery office immediately following the event.