

**THE PRESBYTERY OF WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA
COMMISSION ON MINISTRY**

REV. MICHAEL POULOS, CHAIR

October 28, 2025

FIRST SECTION

- I. RECOMMEND to Presbytery a first reading of the new Presbytery Policy on Anti-Racism. (COM Attachment 1)**
- II. RECOMMEND to Presbytery the approval of recommended changes to the Presbytery Policy Regarding Associate Pastor or Transitional Pastor to Installed Pastor. This was presented as a first reading at the July 2025 presbytery meeting. (COM Attachment 2)**
- III. RECOMMEND to Presbytery the approval of Dissolution of Terms of Call Policy. This was presented as a first reading at the July 2025 Presbytery meeting. (COM Attachment 3)**
- IV. RECOMMEND to Presbytery that Chad Smith be granted an exception from the requirement of taking the ordination exams. *(This requires 2/3 Vote of the Presbytery and would also move his membership from temporary to permanent. He was EPC.)***
- V. RECOMMEND TO PRESBYTERY MINIMUM TERMS OF CALL FOR 2026:**
 1. THAT the PWNC minimum effective salary be increased by 1.6% to 40,321.00 which represents 57% of the 2025 median \$71,100
 2. THAT congregations consider at least a 1.6% increase to effective salary for all ministers.

Rationale:

In 2021, COM adopted the following plan regarding annual recommendations to the Presbytery about increases in effective salary for ministers.

- (a) Beginning in July 2021 and continuing each following July thereafter, in order to provide adequate information for congregational budgeting for succeeding years, the COM will make recommendations to the Presbytery about minimum terms of call for the upcoming calendar year for decision and approval by the Presbytery. The recommendations will be based on a percentage of the church wide median effective salary, usually published in May of each year by the Board of Pensions.
- (b) Beginning in July 2021 and continuing each following July, the COM will make recommendations to the Presbytery about increases in all other (nonminimum) terms of call for the upcoming calendar year for decision and approval by the Presbytery. The recommendations will be based on the percentage increase between the current year and the coming year of the church wide median effective salary, usually published in May by the Board of Pensions.

In July 2025, the BOP report of the changes for 2026 in the church wide median salary indicated the following:

	Median Effective Salaries		% of Change
	for 2026	for 2025	2026 vs. 2025
Ministers	\$71,000	\$70,000	1.6%

The Commission on Ministry further recommends to Presbytery regarding health care coverage:

1. Regarding Health Care Coverage for Spouse/Dependents/ Family:
 - THAT for congregational pastoral leaders who were enrolled in Transitional Pastor's Participation in 2025, if family coverage is still needed, churches consider covering the entire cost of the **2026 Transitional Pastor's Participation** (pension/medical totals 47% of Effective Salary).
2. Regarding Alternative Health Care Coverage for Spouse/Dependents/Family:
 - THAT churches affirm that adequate medical coverage for pastors and their families should be considered a matter of justice, not optional, discretionary, or a negotiating point.
 - THAT churches acknowledge that compensation packages must include necessary benefits for the family and sufficient cash compensation for a basic standard of living.
 - THAT since pastoral family needs vary, flexibility in choosing health coverage is essential. These options could include
 - coverage through the Board of Pensions,
 - the health insurance marketplace,
 - or a spouse's employer.

Pastors and congregations should collaboratively explore these options for cost effectiveness:
 - THAT if dependent coverage is chosen through the Board of Pensions, in some cases, cost sharing could be appropriate.
 - THAT if coverage is obtained outside the Board of Pensions, the congregation should consider adjusting effective salary in consideration of the pastor's additional costs so that the basic standard of living can be maintained.
 - THAT if a congregation, in conversation with a pastor, cannot arrange for necessary family medical coverage, it must submit a statement to the Commission on Ministry (COM), including financial evidence demonstrating how providing coverage impairs the congregation's ministry and mission.

SECOND SECTION

The Book of Order provides (G-3.0307) that the Commission on Ministry may be given authority by the Presbytery to find in order calls issued by churches, to approve and present calls for service of ministers, to approve the examination of ministers transferring from other Presbyteries, required by G-3.0306, to dissolve the pastoral relationship in cases where the Congregation and pastor concur, to dismiss ministers to other Presbyteries, and to approve administrative commissions to ordain/install with the provision that such actions be reported at the next stated meeting of the Presbytery. This permission was granted to our Commission on Ministry; therefore, the following actions are hereby reported and are to be admitted to the record.

I. APPROVED APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO THE SEXUAL MISCONDUCT RESPONSE TEAM:

Beth Newman	Vanessa Pickett
Megan McMillan	David Bradley
David Germer	Rick Leissner
Clay Fouse	

II. RECEIVED INTO MEMBERSHIP OF THE PRESBYTERY:**A. Ron Tippens – Retired****From: ECO****(COM Attachment 4)****B. Craig Sumey - Member at Large****From: Presbytery of Central Florida****(COM Attachment 5)****III. PRESENTATION OF GUATEMALAN STOLE TO REV. MIKE MCCRACKEN****IV. APPROVED TEMPORARY PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS - TRANSITIONAL PASTOR:**

- A. Lance Perry and FPC-Morganton
Effective: August 25, 2025
- B. Beth Ann Miller and FPC-Newton
Effective: October 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025

V. APPROVED TEMPORARY PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS – STATED PASTOR:

- A. Pat Reid and Third Street Church
Effective: July 1-December 31, 2025
- B. Bill Neely and Siloam Presbyterian Church
Effective: July 20-December 31, 2025
- C. Bill Whiteside and Vians Valley
Effective: October 1, 2025 to September 30, 2026

VI. APPROVED CHANGE OF MEMBERSHIP STATUS

- A. Brad Simpson from Active to Retired
Effective: October 15, 2025

VII. APPROVED INSTALLATION COMMISSION FOR REV. MICHAEL MCCracken on August 10, 2024 at Banner Elk Presbyterian Church

Name	Min/Eld	Church/Presbytery
Michael Poulos	MWS	First Presbyterian, Spruce Pine, COM Chair
Wanda Neely	MWS	PWNC
Bob Todd	RE	Banner Elk Presbyterian
Bill Buchanan	MWS	PWNC
Heather Wood Davis	MWS	First Presbyterian, Hickory
Esta Jarrett	MWS	Canton Presbyterian
Bob Ayala	RE	Newdale Presbyterian
Guests:		
Will DeLaney	MWS	Foothills Presbytery

VIII. APPROVED VALIDATION OR REVALIDATION OF MINISTRIES THRU OCTOBER 2026:

- Bill Buchanan as Executive Director of Asheville Youth Mission through October 2026.
- Susan Verbrugge as Prison Chaplain for Ministry of Hope at the Western Correctional Center for Women, Black Mountain through October 2026.
- Amy Cantrell as Co-Director for BeLoved of Asheville through October 2026.
- Sarah Grace Montgomery as Pastor of Faith Formation and Family Ministries, First United Methodist Church, Brevard through October 2026.
- Lynn Webber as Chaplain for Black Mountain Neuro-Medical Treatment Center through October 2026.

IX. APPROVED DISSOLUTION OF PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS:

- First Presbyterian Church, Morganton and Lyndsay Haislip
Effective: September 1, 2025
- First Presbyterian Church, Morganton and John Hagmann
Effective: September 1, 2025
- First Presbyterian Church, Gastonia and Brad Simpson
Effective: October 15, 2025

X. RECEIVED COVENANT OF CLOSURE:

- Lyndsay Haislip and FPC Morganton
- John Hagmann and FPC Morganton
- Brad Simpson and FPC Gastonia
- Blake Daniel and FPC Sylva

XI. APPROVED MISSION STUDY

- Marshall Presbyterian Church
- Trinity Presbyterian Church
- First Presbyterian of Sylva

XII. APPROVED PNC

- Trinity Presbyterian Church

COM ATTACHMENT 1

WESTERN NC PRESBYTERY POLICY ON ANTI-RACISM Draft 7/29/2025

To be approved by COM, in 2025; edited at COM meeting August

OUR FAITH BACKGROUND

This policy is grounded in scripture and guided by our theological heritage. Because humankind has been created in God's image and is beloved by God, God's people are called by Christ to love one another; to be reconciled and reconcilers with no room for racism to ever be right.

Among many, these biblical texts undergird this policy:

Genesis 1:27

So God created humankind in his own image.
In the image of God, he created them;
male and female he created them.

Matthew 22, Mark 12, Luke 10

Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
and with all your soul, and with all your mind.
This is the greatest and first commandment.
And a second is like it:
You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

2 Corinthians 5:18

All this is from God,
who reconciled us to himself through Christ,
and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

In our Confessions of Faith, we read:

God's reconciling love breaks down every form of discrimination
based on racial or ethnic difference. (Confession of 1967)

We believe...that God's lifegiving Word and Spirit has conquered
the powers of sin and death, therefore also of irreconciliation
and hatred, bitterness and enmity, that God's lifegiving Word
and Spirit will enable the church to live in a new obedience which
can open new possibilities of life for society and the world....
(Belhar Confession)

COM ATTACHMENT 1

OUR COMMITMENT

The Presbytery of Western North Carolina believes in, stands for, and works for human dignity, respect for all people, the value that diversity brings to our churches and our communities, the attainment of a quality of life for all, empowerment, integrity, equity, and inclusion. In short, we aspire to what Jesus called the abundant life for all of God's children.

Racism is a practice or system of racial prejudice exerted by those in power — institutionally, and individually, consciously and unconsciously — that is deeply ingrained in our history. Racism benefits people in the dominant culture socially, economically, and politically while disadvantaging people of color and people from minority cultures. We also acknowledge that racism is not limited to those in power but may exist among any individuals or groups of people who practice prejudice, discrimination or antagonism based on their membership in a particular racial or ethnic group. For all persons, any racism corrupts the image of God within us.

PROCEDURE AND COMPLAINT

The discrimination of an employee or other person participating in any ministry of the Presbytery of Western North Carolina based on race, color, or national origin, or other protected classes as named above is prohibited.

An employee may be subject to disciplinary action for such a violation, up to and including dismissal. Similarly, a minister member, inquirer, candidate, certified Christian Educator, Commissioned Ruling Elder, or member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) who engages in this type of behavior may be subject to disciplinary action as is detailed in the Rules of Discipline section of the Book of Order. The Presbytery of Western North Carolina also reserves the right to take other disciplinary or remedial actions as imposed by the Personnel Committee, Commission on Ministry (COM), the Commission on Preparation for Ministry, or the Presbytery itself.

Complaint Procedure: Any Presbytery professional or presbytery volunteer who believes an incident of discrimination has occurred shall promptly notify the Stated Clerk in writing. The Stated Clerk, in collaboration with other appropriate parties, shall determine the next steps, including whether the offense rises to the level of an official complaint.

If the incident involves the Stated Clerk, the General Presbyter shall be notified.

Retaliation: Anyone filing a discrimination complaint or assisting in the investigation of a complaint shall not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment nor discriminated against in any manner because of the complaint.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

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When the activities or conduct of any member, staff, or other church leader is considered to be contrary to the policies and expectations of the Presbytery of Western North Carolina or is considered to be disruptive to the operations of the Presbytery of Western North Carolina, its programs, or ministries, the procedure for potential corrective action outlined above and/or in the Rules of Discipline shall be followed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge that I have read the above Anti-Racism Policy and will present any questions I have to the General Presbyter of the Presbytery of Western North Carolina. I understand that I am responsible for adhering to the Anti-Harassment policy.

Printed Name

Signature and Date

To be submitted to the Stated Clerk of the Western North Carolina Presbytery

COM ATTACHMENT 2

ORIGINALLY APPROVED OCTOBER 27, 2012 BY PWNC IN STATED MEETING

Proposed Revision of POLICY re ASSOCIATE PASTOR or TRANSITIONAL PASTOR (Minister of Word and Sacrament/TEACHING ELDER) TO INSTALLED PASTOR
Presbytery of Western North Carolina

**APPROVED AT APRIL 30, 2019 MEETING OF PWNC
and FURTHER REVISED (at IV.A.) AT JULY 30, 2022 MEETING OF PWNC**

Proposed revisions are in underlined italic.

Preamble

The function of this policy is to provide procedural guidance for allowing a congregation's Associate Pastor to be installed as its Pastor or Co-Pastor, and to allow installing a Transitional Pastor as Pastor, Co-Pastor, or Associate Pastor. Relevant Book of Order (2023-2025) guidance for this policy is:

"a. Installed Pastoral Relationships

... The relationship of an associate pastor to a congregation is not dependent upon that of a pastor. An associate pastor is ordinarily not eligible to be the next installed pastor of that congregation. (G-2.0504a)

b. Temporary Pastoral Relationships

Temporary pastoral relationships are approved by the presbytery and do not carry a formal call or installation. When a congregation does not have a pastor, or while the pastor is unable to perform her or his duties, the session, with the approval of presbytery, may obtain the services of a minister of Word and Sacrament, candidate, or ruling elder in a temporary pastoral relationship. No formal call shall be issued and no formal installation shall take place.

Titles and terms of service for temporary relationships shall be determined by the presbytery. A person serving in a temporary pastoral relationship is invited for a specified period not to exceed twelve months in length, which is renewable with the approval of the presbytery. A minister of Word and Sacrament employed in a temporary pastoral relationship is ordinarily not eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor. (G-2.0504b)

c. Exceptions

A presbytery may determine that its mission strategy permits a minister of Word and Sacrament currently called as an Associate Pastor to be eligible to serve as the next installed pastor or co-pastor, or a minister of the Word and Sacrament employed in a temporary pastoral relationship to be eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor. Presbyteries that permit this eligibility shall establish such relationships only by a three-fourths vote of the members of presbytery present and voting. (G-2.0505c)

COM ATTACHMENT 2

MISSION OF THE PRESBYTERY OF WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

SEE, We Are The Body Of Christ

We Covenant to...

Strengthen Congregations

Equip Disciples

Engage in Mission

Guiding Principles to achieve the mission of our Presbytery:

Coordinate, guide, encourage, support, and resource the work of the congregations for the most effective witness to the broader community and partner with a particular congregation in carrying out its Mission in accordance with the Book of Order (2023-2025).

Oversee the transition during a time of pastoral change in the life of the congregation by serving as pastor, counselor, and advisor to teaching elders and congregations. G-2.0504b-c

Based on these Presbytery guiding principles the Presbytery will work in partnership with congregations to ensure that procedures are followed which will provide appropriate pastoral relationships for a particular church at a particular time.

I. Procedure at the beginning of a pastoral vacancy:

A. Congregations which normally have an installed Pastor, Co-Pastor or Associate Pastor are strongly encouraged to be led by a trained transitional pastor who intends to devote him/herself to the interim task through the interim period between installed pastors.

1. The work of such a transitional pastor is important to any congregation which has experienced a pastoral vacancy, regardless of the cause, as all such vacancies generate some level of grief and anxiety. Moreover, the work of a transitional pastor becomes increasingly valuable where there has been a long-term pastorate or where the conclusion of the prior pastorate has been sudden and/or accompanied by conflict.

2. Interim ministry requires particular personal skills and specialized training which equip the transitional pastor to lead the congregation through the specific tasks of the interim period as well as provide for the normal pastoral functions that are a part of any pastoral ministry. If the transitional pastor has not previously received specific interim training, he or she must do so within six months after beginning this pastorate or otherwise satisfy the Presbytery of his/her fitness for the role. Such transitional pastors are not merely place-holders or caretakers, but rather are agents of stability and change and preparation for the church's future under new pastoral leadership.

3. To be effective and to accomplish the tasks that should be completed during a pastoral transition, a transitional pastor must be objective and maintain his/her independence from influences that would compromise his/her judgments and autonomy, including but not limited to the possibility and perceived benefits of the interim relationship being converted to an installed pastoral position. Therefore, it is important that the person serving as a transitional pastor or a transitional associate

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pastor ordinarily is not eligible to be called to as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor in that congregation.

4. Normally, Associate Pastors fulfill a specified, limited role in a congregation's mission, life, and witness. As such, congregations and Associate Pastors acknowledge—at least implicitly—that their relationship is mutually beneficial and would not necessarily be enhanced if the Associate Pastor were to be called as installed Pastor or Co-Pastor. Exceptions may be considered, however, only under clearly-defined circumstances, as described below.

B. In compliance with the Book of Order (2023-2025) the Presbytery affirms that a Minister of Word and Sacrament/Teaching Elder who is installed as an Associate Pastor or employed in a temporary pastoral relationship is ordinarily not eligible to serve as the next installed Pastor, Co-Pastor, or Associate Pastor. Only when the Presbytery determines such action is appropriate will the Presbytery consider allowing an Associate Pastor or a transitional pastor to become the next installed pastor.

II. Procedure for ordinary replacement of Pastor, Co-Pastor, or Associate Pastor

A. Interim Period

To ensure that the interim period will be effective and the interim tasks will be accomplished the Committee on Ministry (COM) will partner with the Session and congregation from the time the departing pastor announces his/her intention to end his/her pastorate. A member of the COM will speak to the entire congregation about the nature of the transition time. A COM member will counsel with the Session about the options for ministry during the vacancy period and will be a resource during their journey, whatever decision is made.

B. Transitional Pastor Search Committee

If there is a Session search committee for a transitional pastor they will consult with the COM with regard to possible candidates. After a candidate is chosen by the search committee the COM will meet with the candidate to assess his/her fit with the mission and needs of the congregation. After the approval of the COM, the Presbytery will approve the candidate being accepted into the Presbytery as a transitional pastor for the congregation.

C. COM Relationship with Transition Pastor

The COM will build a relationship with the transitional pastor and stay apprised of the status of the congregation through regular meetings with him/her and also through written reports from the transitional pastor.

D. Installed Pastor Nominating Committee

The COM will meet with the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) as they begin their work to discuss the Presbytery's guidance for the calling of a new pastor and to build relationships with the committee members. The COM will meet with the PNC at others times at the request of the committee or to assess their progress. As soon as a PNC is aware that the congregation's Associate Pastor will seek to be considered as the next installed Pastor, the PNC will notify and confer with the COM.

III. Procedure for allowing an exception.

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A. The congregation will have completed several transition steps:

(1) It will have done a Mission Study

(2) The Associate Pastor or the transitional pastor and the PNC ~~each~~ both will have been in close contact with the COM to keep Presbytery informed of the situation at the particular church.

(3) The skills and interests of the Associate Pastor or transitional pastor will match the skills and interests indicated by the PNC in the relevant part of the Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP).

B. The Session and the Presbytery will have determined that there are conditions which justify an exception. Therefore, Presbytery can conclude that its mission strategy will be served by permitting the Associate Pastor or transitional pastor to be called as the installed pastor. Some examples of such circumstances are a congregation recovering from the untimely death of a pastor, an unfortunate situation such as pastoral sexual harassment, an out of control environmental issue such as a changing neighborhood or declining population, a split in the church involving some members leaving to join with another denomination, a general attitude of contentiousness, and/or a history of conflict.

C. When a Minister of Word and Sacrament/Teaching Elder who serves the congregation as an Associate Pastor or is employed in a transitional relationship becomes an installed Pastor, Co-Pastor or Associate Pastor it shall be for a designated term of two years. The rationale for this approach is that the two-year period will give the Session, the congregation, the teaching elder and the Presbytery an appropriate time frame to optimize resolution of **any named, specific** issues and to assess the match of pastor to congregation and to the achievement of Presbytery and congregation mission strategies.

IV. Options for concluding a designated term.

As the end of the designated term approaches:

A. The pastor with a designated term can be installed for an indefinite term as pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor. In this case, with the approval of Presbytery through COM a congregational meeting shall be held to call the pastor for an indefinite term which, if favorable, will be followed by COM recording a transition to installed for an indefinite term in its minutes.

B. The designated period shall be extended by one or two years if recommended by the congregation and Presbytery

C. The pastoral relationship can be terminated by the pastor's resignation, the non-renewal of the call by the congregation, or by action of the Presbytery.

COM ATTACHMENT 3

Dissolution of Terms Policy for Teaching Elders Presbytery of Western Carolina

Date adopted: ?

Per Book of Order section G-2.08, any pastoral call is a three-way agreement between the congregation and the Pastor with the concurrence of the Presbytery, and, as such, a call may not be dissolved without the concurrence of the Presbytery.

Per Book of Order section G-2.0804, under certain circumstances, following the dissolution of call, the Pastor may be entitled to continued pay and benefits to support them as they transition into a new form of service.

The following situations **are not eligible** for continued pay and benefits.

- The Pastor chooses to accept another pastoral position or form of full-time employment.
- The Pastor chooses to retire (G-2.0503c)
- The Pastor is no longer eligible to serve as Pastor (G-2.0507, G-2.0407, G-2.0508)
- The Pastor chooses to resign for “personal reasons” without providing additional information.

In these situations, a Pastor’s final date of service is their last date of employment, and there should be no further compensation or reimbursement of expenses after that day.

The following situations **are eligible** for continued pay and benefits.

- Negotiated Dissolution - The pastor or the session may request that the Commission on Ministry assist in negotiating a mutually agreed upon end of the Pastoral relationship under the following circumstances.
 - The position can no longer be financially sustained at the present level of service, or the church is closing.
 - Conflict and disagreement between the pastor and members of the church make it prudent for the pastoral relationship to end.
 - Any other situation that brings the viability and sustainability of the Pastoral relationship into question.
- Medical Disability or Incapacitation - **The PWNC Policy and Guidance Regarding Family and Medical Leave shall take precedence.** If a Pastor becomes physically or mentally impaired **to the point she/he is unable to function**, the Pastoral relationship may need to be dissolved. In these situations, the Pastor and Session should work closely with representatives of the Commission on Ministry as well as the Board of Pensions to ensure that all applicable guidelines are adhered to and benefit opportunities considered.
- Dissolution for Cause - A Pastoral relationship may be dissolved by the Presbytery as a result of either judicial action or because the church’s mission demands it (G-2.0904).

In these situations, the Pastor shall be entitled to the following:

- A minimum of three months of full pay, defined as effective salary, benefits, and SECA offset (hereafter defined as severance) following their final date of active service.
- Any reimbursable accounts may only be utilized before the final date of service, and continued use of these funds is not included in the terms of dissolution.
- The Pastor and Session may agree to a longer period of continued pay and benefits, but this is subject to subsequent approval by the congregation at a duly called congregational meeting.
- If the Pastor receives full-time or comparable employment, including any form of Pastoral service at a similar number of hours, prior to the end of the severance period, the severance terms and final dates of coverage shall be prorated accordingly.

Process for Dissolution of Terms:

1. The Session, Pastor, or Administrative Commission notifies the Commission on Ministry in writing of their desire to have the call dissolved and provide a brief overview of the primary reasons for seeking dissolution.

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2. If the Pastor does not wish to request additional severance terms beyond those described above, the Pastor shall notify the Session in writing of this request, ask that the Session concur with the request that the call be dissolved, and call a congregational meeting for the purpose of dissolving the call.
3. If the Pastor wishes to request more than the minimum terms described above or the Session believes that the situation at hand is not eligible for severance:
 - I. The Commission on Ministry shall appoint individuals, including members of the Presbytery staff, active members of COM, and/or other members of Presbytery to meet with all relevant parties.
 - II. The COM team shall supply a copy of this document as well as any other related documents to all parties **before** their first meeting.
 - III. The Session or Administrative Commission, Pastor, and COM negotiate and agree to the terms of dissolution.
4. A signed dissolution agreement, including the severance terms and other stipulations and parameters, shall be prepared and agreed to, in principle, by all relevant parties.
5. The agreed-upon terms shall be included in the call for the congregational meeting, and the complete agreement shall be made available to all attending the meeting in person.
6. For the congregational meeting to dissolve the call:
 - I. Someone other than the Pastor shall moderate the congregational meeting.
 - II. The terms of dissolution shall be shared, and if the Pastor is only receiving the minimum terms of dissolution, the congregation should be informed that those terms are a matter of policy. In no circumstance may the terms be amended or re-negotiated during the meeting.
 - III. The meeting shall include **a quorum of the congregation's membership**, time for questions, and speaking for and against the motion.
 - IV. The vote shall be taken by written ballot, with tellers being identified before hand and the appointed Moderator or other representative of COM serving as observer for the counting.
 - V. The motion requires a simple majority to pass.
7. If the motion passes, the parties shall sign the agreement (which shall be retained by COM), with copies furnished to other parties.
8. If the motion does not pass, the Commission on Ministry shall intervene per G-2.0903-4.

COM ATTACHMENT 4

Ron Tippens

Faith Journey

I recently sang (in place of the anthem) for the Presbyterian Church in Marion. The song was "His Eye Is on the Sparrow". I first heard that song when I was a red headed freckled face boy growing up on a dairy farm in Georgia. Running through the house one early evening, my mother was watching Billy Graham on TV. "Sit down and listen", she said. I watched as Ethel Waters (the famed African American actress) came to the podium and she sang "His Eye Is on the Sparrow." Sixty plus years later I was singing it before a congregation. My mother knew in her heart that by watching this crusade I would hear the love of God proclaimed boldly and with compassion. And I did. Such was the Christian community that welcomed and shaped me. This farm was located only seventeen miles from the dairy farm where Flannery O'Connor lived. However, it would be years before I learned of this great southern Catholic author. This awakening along with so many others came through education. I was privileged to attend Wheaton College, Duke Divinity School, and Union Presbyterian Seminary. All of these schools (albeit with different perspectives) were an invaluable gift to me.

The journey led me to ordination in the Presbyterian Church in 1979. Since then, I have served three congregations. One of these three I served for thirty-one years. "The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places" (Psalm 16:6). Many mistakes, disappointments and heartaches woven through these years, but still beautiful. I am now retired yet still longing to tell the "old, old story that I have known so long". It is a story that through God's grace I've become a part of. "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit". Amen (BC, 11.6 pg. 80)

COM ATTACHMENT 4

Ron Tippens

Statement of Faith

Theology: God has always been, is and will be. Holy Scripture offers no proofs, constructs or arguments for God's existence. Only faith in God is sufficient "Faith is the gift of God". (BC, 5.112). God's Word and Spirit alone ultimately reveal God unto us. (BC, 7:112). For me there is no more encompassing insight into who God is than found in the Larger Catechism (BC, 7.117) "God is a Spirit, in and of Himself infinite in being, glory, blessedness and perfection; all sufficient...most merciful and gracious." "God is love" (1 John 4:8). This love was/is made fully known in Jesus Christ. This sovereign love is a mystery beyond our intellect (BC, 9:15) Therefore I believe in the Holy Spirit who makes this love known.

Bible: We are people of The Book. God is made known to me and therefore I know who I am through the Holy Spirit speaking through Holy Scriptures. Astounding ..." the preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God." (BC, 5.004) This is what it means for me to be a teaching elder, a minister of Word and Sacrament.

Sacraments: I believe the Sacraments instituted by our Lord are indeed "visible signs of an invisible grace." Baptism and Holy Communion. Our Directory for worship mandates that Communion be part of worship on each Lord's Day (BO, W-3.049) I deeply feel that to do so would greatly enrich our worship. In baptism we die and rise to a new life that is sustained in the faithful preaching of the Word and celebration of Holy Communion.

Polity: I believe in One Holy catholic and apostolic church. (BC, 1:3, 2:3) I love this church that exists through all aeons, languages, and cultures. In life after death, it is triumphant. I celebrate the expression and form this church takes in the Presbyterian Church. I celebrate that we do not see ourselves as the only church but as a part of THE CHURCH diverse and full of colour and joy. The Church is yet and not yet. In its worship and service, it is a living sign of the reign of God, a present reality and a future promise (BO, w-50401).

Rev. Craig M. Sumey - Faith Journey

My story of faith begins with my parents, who were committed to raising my brother, sister, and me within the fellowship and nurturing of a church family. My home congregation was Village Church, a large Presbyterian church in suburban Kansas City, Kansas, where I was baptized, confirmed, and disciplined. My parents each served on the Session, and we were encouraged to both attend and volunteer in the life of the church throughout our growing-up years.

When I was in college, a job as a summer youth intern at Village gave me my first experiences in ministry. Through an inward call of the Holy Spirit, confirmed by the encouragement of mentors, God gave me a vision of a life of service within the church. I was excited to get started and enrolled in Princeton Seminary right after graduation. During my time there, my understanding of the depths of theology, my passion for the Scriptures, and my respect for the Church's complex history deepened. My field internship experiences during seminary broadened my pastoral imagination beyond youth ministry.

In my first few years as a pastor, serving both in associate and solo roles, I became increasingly aware that changes in the North American Church's cultural context were having significant impacts, bringing it to a historic tipping point. New models were needed to present the Gospel afresh in a changing world; so as time went by, I looked for ways to explore and experiment. I served as a new church development pastor and then, at another church, spearheaded the creation of a new worshiping community. I led two 'turnaround' congregations as they moved from stagnation to vitality. I developed coaching relationships with emerging church leaders, both for ordination and as lay pastors. Several years ago, I used a Louisville Institute grant to explore ways existing congregations can better use their resources to support church planting and community engagements.

Almost four years ago, my passion for new expressions of church and leadership development led me into a conversation with ministry colleagues in Scotland, from which emerged a vision for a new way of training next-generation, global church leaders. This idea quickly became a program called Launch, and I was invited to join Scottish colleagues on the leadership team to work together on its development and rollout with our first cohort last year. My wife, Lynn, brought her gifts to the team, and it wasn't long before a call to a new chapter of ministry emerged as one we would share: using our combined experiences to come alongside a new generation of church leaders as mentors, trainers, and coaches. In addition, I look forward to continuing my membership with the Presbyterian Church USA and being used by God to bring helpful insights on leadership and church growth from what we learn in post-religious Europe.

Threads that weave through my ministry are both inward and outward: contemplative prayer practices for personal spiritual vitality and local engagement to come alongside and actively associate myself with the laments, hurts and hopes of my neighbors.

My wife, Lynn and I have been married for 32 years this September and have two grown children living in Orlando and Chicago. We are big sports fans (though not always for the same teams), we love to explore our surroundings, and we can often be found on a mountain trail.

Rev. Craig M. Sumey - Statement of Faith

My faith is rooted in the great theme of God's revelation story: God's special love and passion for God's children and overwhelming desire to welcome them home.¹

I believe in the one God that is a Trinity, personifying and sharing perfect love and truth.² God created all things, both visible and not, with goodness and mercy, and gave life as a gift to be obediently and gratefully enjoyed. Humanity received God's image to bear and God's creation to steward. But humanity, instead, walked the path of prideful self-love and fearful domination.³ The wide chasm that resulted between God and humanity, humanity with itself, and humanity and creation has grieved God beyond imagination. However, the magnitude of God's love could not allow sin and evil to have the last word.

Jesus Christ is God's true Son, the incarnate second person of the Trinity, and God's greatest gift to creation.⁴ Jesus' way of life, miracles, and teaching are a faithful embodiment of full humanity. Jesus' death on the cross and triumphant resurrection reveal God's glorious victory over sin and death, and the triumph of God's will over evil. It is through the rescuing faith and knowledge of Christ, revealed and inspired by the Spirit, and lived out in maturing discipleship,⁵ that humanity can once again be reconciled to God, walk in freedom, and claim the promise of eternal life.

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, and my guide and companion for faithfulness and fullness of life in Christ.⁶ Each passing moment, as the Spirit grows the fruits of faith within me, I experience an intimate relationship with God through Spirit-motivated prayer, servanthood, and worship. As the Spirit gives me every gift⁷ I need to follow and serve Christ, I am filled with power so I can freely and joyously seek a life of obedience governed by God's love. My greatest desire is to know God more intimately, be connected in a reconciled relationship with others, and make joining God's great mission within creation my calling.

The Bible is the living Word of God and the true, trustworthy source of knowledge about God, God's perfect love in Jesus Christ, and God's desire for my life in the Spirit.⁸ Interpreted by the Holy Spirit through prayerful study and the teaching and preaching of the Church, the Bible is useful in every way and is meant to be a source of power, life and hope both individually and collectively.

God ordained and established the church so that the reign of God's love established in Christ might be announced and demonstrated by God's people in the world, and so that disciples of Jesus might experience fellowship, encouragement, and nurturing in the faith. God has made the church to be diverse in gifts, but united in the Spirit under Jesus' lordship. The church experiences unity through prayerful proclamation of the scriptures, the shared observance of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and the grace-filled discipline of its mutual polity.⁹ The church is one, catholic and universal,¹⁰ and in its creative diversity finds its voice and power in the testimony of God's Word and by embedding itself in a neighborhood to incarnate God's great love to those around it. The church is inwardly strong to be outwardly focused, revealing the Kingdom of Christ through its call to prophetically proclaim God's justice and mercy for all people, and in its gracious opposition to powers that perpetuate the diminishment of God's children and destruction of God's creation.

Finally, God's redeeming work has an ultimate destination and completion: a promise to dwell eternally in God's presence, free of the struggles, temptations, and griefs of life on this side of the veil.¹¹ This is not only a future to hope for but a present reality to inhabit, overshadowed by God's love, grafted as a branch into Jesus the True Vine, and filled with God's enduring presence in the Spirit.

¹ BOC, 4.001

² BOC, 6.011-.013

³ BOC, 9.11

⁴ BOC, 1.2

⁵ BOC, 4.086

⁶ BOC, 6.051-.054

⁷ BOC, 11.4

⁸ BOC, 7.002

⁹ BOC, 3.18

¹⁰ BOC, 1.3

¹¹ BOC, 4.058