

Protocol for an Exit Interview

Background and Purpose

It is the intention of the Committee on Ministry (COM) of the Presbytery to schedule Exit Interviews with pastors leaving their called positions. The purposes of these interviews are several and often depend largely upon the conditions surrounding a pastor's departure. The Exit Interviews may simply provide closure and an opportunity for celebration and blessing for the pastor, the church, and the Presbytery. The Exit Interview may also serve as a kind of debriefing, or unpacking, of a pastor's experience with a particular church. Authentic sharing may also provide insights related to the challenges and opportunities in a given church, as well as point to appropriate qualities for its next pastor. It is suggested that exit interviews be conducted by a subcommittee of COM and the Session (the pastor would leave after the first 30-45 minutes). If possible, a separate exit interview with the pastor, COM representative/liaison, and a member of Presbytery staff should be conducted. (See below for sample questions).

Participants

Routine

The departing pastor, the COM liaison to the church's Pastor Nominating Committee (or on occasion the whole COM), and a member of the Presbytery staff.

Strongly suggested

It is suggested that a COM subcommittee also conduct an exit interview, accompanied by representatives of the Presbytery Staff, the departing pastor and the Session (or designated members). The group would meet at first with the pastor present, then after initial questions, the pastor would leave to provide the opportunity for additional conversation.

Rationale

For purposes of both candor and confidentiality, one-on-one conversations may prove most effective. No formal minutes of the meeting would be recorded apart from noting the date and place of its occurrence. (Note: It will be at the pastor's discretion what is confidential and what may be shared with the COM or the PNC.) The PNC liaison from COM would use his or her judgment as to what information to relay to the COM or Pastor Nominating Committee, but all information that will be helpful to the Presbytery (COM) should be shared with the General Presbyter and COM chair. The liaison may also become a resource for the interim pastor.

In the event of special concerns, the PNC liaison may also request another COM representative to attend the meeting. The same guidelines regarding confidentiality would apply.

When members of the Session are present, the questions need to be framed accordingly.

Sample Questions – For Pastor

*Why are you leaving?

*Tell us about your experience at _____.

*What did you enjoy the most?

*What were your greatest challenges?

*How did you grow during your ministry at _____?

*How did you take care of yourself?

*What was your experience of staff relations?

What excites you about this church's future?

What worries you about this church's future?

What, in your view, does this church need?

What do you think are the church's expectations of its next pastor?

How did your family experience the church?

How can Presbytery best support this church?

How can the Committee on Ministry best support the next pastor?

Sample Questions – For Session members

**What do you celebrate in _____'s ministry? What will be his/her own-going legacy and contribution to _____Presbyterian Church?*

**What do you wish might have been different?
Suggestions that could be helpful in _____ next call.*

In broad strokes, what do you think will be required of interim leadership? What issues and concerns will need to be addressed?

(* Indicates the kind of questions to be asked when Elders and Pastor are together in an exit interview.

DISSOLUTION & VACANCY

EXIT INTERVIEW

POLICY: Exit interviews shall ordinarily take place within a few weeks after a pastor has announced his/her dissolution/resignation request.

Suggested Questions:

1. What information does the Presbytery need to know as a new pastor is called to serve this church?
2. What is your assessment of the church you served as you leave and a new pastor is called?
3. What goals did you bring to the position? Were they fulfilled? How?
4. What did you see as good in the life and ministry of this church?
5. Where did you find “support” during the time of your ministry in this church?
6. Were you able to take reasonable “time off”,
Did you use your vacations, study leave, etc.?
7. In what ways was the job description clear and realistic? Hazy or impossible?
8. Are there changes needed in the job description/ expectations of the church?
9. How was the Presbytery helpful or not helpful, supportive or not supportive of you?
10. What could the Presbytery do better?