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**POLICY FOR GRACIOUS DISMISSAL
TO ANOTHER REFORMED DENOMINATION**

**San Gabriel Presbytery
September 27, 2011**

I. INTRODUCTION:

A. Division Over Matters of Conscience

1. 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 through careful study, prayerful processes and faithful discernment.
2. There have, over the years, been disagreements over whether particular matters are essential aspects of reformed faith (and therefore subject or not subject to individual freedom of conscience).
3. The Book of Order, in its Preliminary Principles, states that "... there are truths and forms with respect to which men 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." (G-1.0305) **(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 Presbyterian Church (USA) urged that presbyteries and synods develop and make available to lower governing bodies and local congregations 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) 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 church, 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-11.0103i **(G-3.0303b)** to consult
-

1 with the members of a church seeking dismissal highlights the presbytery’s
2 pastoral responsibility, which must not be submerged beneath other
3 responsibilities.
4

- 5 • *Accountability*: For a governing body, accountability rightly dictates fiduciary and
6 connectional concerns, raising general issues of property (G-8.0000) (**G-4.0000ff**)
7 and specific issues of schism within a congregation (G-8.0600). But, full
8 accountability also requires preeminent concern with “caring for the flock.”
9
- 10 • *Gracious Witness*: Scripture and the Holy Spirit require a gracious witness from
11 us rather than a harsh legalism.
12
- 13 • *Openness and Transparency*: Early, open communication and transparency about
14 principles and process of dismissal necessarily serve truth, order, and goodness,
15 and work against seeking civil litigation as a solution.
16

17 C. Presbytery’s Authority to Dismiss Congregations 18

- 19 1. Presbyteries have the express power (a technical term meaning they are the only
20 ones who can take this action) to dismiss a congregation (G-11.0103i).
21
- 22 2. Only a presbytery may dismiss a congregation (PCUS, 1976, pp. 92-99, Strong
23 and Bagby v. Synod of Mid-South (No.1-1976)).
24
- 25 3. Presbyteries have the authority under G-8.000 (**G-4.0000ff**) and G-11.0103i (**G-**
26 **3.0303b**) to evaluate questions concerning church property in light of the
27 particular circumstances presented in each instance and to exercise good judgment
28 in accordance with Authoritative Interpretations of G-11.0103 made by the
29 General Assembly in 1988, 1989 and 1990.
30

31 D. Statement of Values of the Presbytery of San Gabriel 32

- 33 1. The Presbytery is committed to its churches and acknowledges the good will of all parties
34 in dispute. The Presbytery of San Gabriel seeks to uphold one another, respect each
35 other’s integrity, affirm freedom of conscience, even as we acknowledge significant
36 differences in our views on what the Bible teaches about a number of issues. We desire to
37 encourage peace and unity while minimizing confrontation between and among our
38 congregations and members as we seek together to find and represent the will of Christ.
39 In all that we do, it is our prayer to strive to be a church modeled on the body of Christ, a
40 church made up of many different parts, all of which are necessary for its mission to the
41 world, for its building up, and for its service to God and on our organic spiritual unity
42 found in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the
43 Holy Spirit.
44

1 2. Presbyterians have always celebrated and recognized significant differences of opinion
2 on issues that matter. This ethos is currently noted in the historic language found at
3 G1.0305 (**F-3.0105**):
4

- 5 • Our covenant demands that we strive to work together in peace and unity, even in the
6 midst of our diversity. The duty is always to attempt to bring the estranged member
7 back into the covenant community, and we promise to carry out that duty in our
8 ordination vows.
9
- 10 • Through our theology we understand that “Presbyters are not simply to reflect the
11 will of the people, but rather to seek together to find and represent the will of Christ.
12 Decisions shall be reached in governing bodies by vote, following opportunity for
13 discussion, and a majority shall govern.” (G-4.0301d) (**F-3.0204**) and (G-40301e) (**F-**
14 **3.0205**). At the same time, the church is committed to being open to voices sharing
15 minority opinions. The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) recognizes
16 “‘The church reformed, always reforming,’ according to the Word of God and the call
17 of the Spirit.” (G-2.0200) (**F-2.0200**).
18
- 19 • There are also times when members find it impossible to go along with the majority.
20 The Presbytery encourages all presbyters and congregations to “concur with or
21 passively submit to” the vote and wisdom of the majority. (G-6.0108b, footnote 1)
22 (**G-2.0105 footnote 11**). If their consciences will permit neither, the Presbytery will
23 be generous in allowing congregations and presbyters with strong issues of
24 conscience to pursue peaceable withdrawal through dismissal to another Reformed
25 body in accordance with our interpretation of the Trust Clause as found below.
26

27 3. In order to achieve the goals of servant-hood, encouragement, and support, the Presbytery
28 has historically seen its role as being a resource. The Book of Order of the Presbyterian
29 Church (U.S.A.), (G-11.0103) (**G-3.0303**), challenges the Presbytery to order all
30 resources ...for the mission and government of the church throughout its geographical
31 district. It therefore has the responsibility and power to develop strategy for the mission
32 of the church in its area consistent with (G-3.0000) (**F-1.00**) and to coordinate the work
33 of its member churches, guiding them and mobilizing their strength for the most effective
34 witness to the broader community for which it has responsibility.
35

36 **II. SPECIFIC EXPOSITION OF WHAT “HELD IN TRUST” MEANS TO US**
37 **ACCORDING TO THE BOOK OF ORDER OF PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF**
38 **(U.S.A.):**
39

40 *All property held by or for a particular church, a presbytery, a synod, the General*
41 *Assembly, or the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), whether legal title is lodged in a*
42 *corporation, a trustee or trustees, or an unincorporated association, and whether the*
43 *property is used in programs of a particular church or of a more inclusive governing*
44 *body or retained for the production of income, is held in trust nevertheless for the use*
45 *and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). (G-8.0201) (**G-4.0203**).*
46

- 1 1. The Trust Clause is meant to reflect the church’s organic unity as it fulfills “The Great
2 Ends of the Church”, strengthening its ability to guide its member churches into their
3 witness to the broader community. “The unity of the Church is a gift of its Lord and finds
4 expression in its faithfulness to the mission to which Christ calls it.” (G-4.0200) (**F-**
5 **1.0302a**). We believe our unity and our true connection comes from Christ, our Chief
6 Cornerstone, and that our unity in Christ serves as an essential basis for evangelism.
7 (John 17:20-23) It is our prayer that we would all be one in Christ, just as Christ and the
8 Father are one. Because the trust clause is meant as a means of witness to our unity in the
9 covenant of common mission, it is incumbent upon the Presbytery to exercise
10 forbearance, not coercion, to act graciously rather than adversely to its member churches
11 in regard to its provisions.
12
- 13 2. Under the Trust Clause, a particular congregation’s church property, including land,
14 buildings, and fixtures, is held in trust for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The
15 congregation cannot sell, lease, or encumber it without the permission of Presbytery, nor
16 can it take property with it to another denomination unless Presbytery voluntarily releases
17 its claim upon the property.
18
- 19 3. The Trust Clause also reflects our understanding of the church as a communion of saints
20 across time, with responsibilities both to those who came before and those who will
21 follow. When a congregation seeks to leave the Presbytery, it is breaking what is often a
22 significant historic relationship; it is also departing from a fellowship in which its officers
23 have participated, by whose polity they have pledged to be governed, and with which
24 many members may feel bonds of affection. This policy therefore cautions any
25 congregation seeking to separate from the Presbytery to consider its actions carefully.
26
- 27 4. The Trust Clause should not be used as a weapon to threaten civil action against a
28 congregation. In considering enforcement of the provisions of the Trust Clause, it is
29 important that Presbytery and its member congregations act with grace rather than as
30 adversaries. Scripture calls us to seek in all humility to resolve our disagreements and
31 avoid the harm that is done to the Gospel and Christ’s body when Christians resort to
32 civil litigation and public disputes over property.
33
- 34 5. The Trust Clause should not be used to bind churches to the institution of the
35 Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) if a church genuinely desires to depart over matters of
36 conscience.
37
- 38 6. Presbytery will not preemptively initiate civil litigation based on the Trust Clause. If a
39 congregation initiates civil action, the Presbytery may take legal action to defend its
40 mission strategy for the Presbytery.
41

42 **III. COMMITMENT AND DIALOGUE WITHOUT THREAT OF PUNISHMENT**

- 43 1. The goal of this Presbytery will always be reconciliation and continued engagement in
44 relationship for all congregations within the presbytery without the threat of isolation,
45 estrangement or blame. The Presbytery is to be a servant to the churches God has
46

1 entrusted to us, encouraging and supporting them toward becoming healthy, growing,
2 congregations. This is especially true for those congregations for whom the bonds of
3 unity are stretched and ecclesiastical connections frayed over issues of conscience to the
4 point of considering disaffiliation.
5

6 2. 1 John 4:18 states *“There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear*
7 *has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.”*
8

9 The Presbytery’s commitment to this passage in how we dialogue with each other means that
10 we are committed to engage either the leaders of the congregation or the congregation as a
11 whole, as circumstances dictate, without threat of punishment. It is likewise incumbent upon
12 the leaders of congregations wrestling with issues of conscience to share their concerns with
13 Presbytery leadership in a timely manner, being assured that the response will not be hostile,
14 but instead one of prayer, dialogue, and a commitment to act in love, and in the best interest
15 of the congregation as well as the Presbytery’s mission. We encourage congregations
16 wrestling with these issues to share their concerns with Presbytery leadership and know that
17 the response will not be hostile, but instead one of prayerful dialogue and a commitment to
18 act in love and in the best interest of that congregation.
19

20 3. Dialogue recognizes that our Reformed tradition includes broad historical differences
21 between the great doctrines and themes of the church, and the specific theories and models
22 which different communities have found useful in seeking to understand those doctrines in
23 the practice of their faith. A Reformed stance allows room for a variety of legitimate
24 perspectives and valid models of “essentials” that allow an understanding of underlying
25 mysteries. Graciousness on both sides acknowledges this validity and seeks to honor rather
26 than to demonize one another.
27

28 **IV. COVENANTAL PROCESS FOR THE PRESBYTERY AND CONGREGATION**

29

30 1. As a primary means for settling disputes, the presbytery covenants with its members and
31 congregations to settle property disagreements relationally, rather than through judicial
32 proceedings in the courts of the church, or by initiating settlement in civil court thereby
33 violating I Corinthians 6:1-11. In furtherance of this goal, both the presbytery and the
34 congregation covenant together to:
35

- 36 • refuse the temptation to love church property and assets too much (These are
37 important ministry tools, but they are not the most important aspect of our ministry.);
- 38
- 39 • be open, honest, and transparent, speaking the truth in love;
- 40
- 41 • exercise pastoral oversight in the spirit of I Peter 5:1-5, “...shepherd the flock of God
42 among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to
43 the will of God.... And all of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one
44 another....”;
- 45

- 1 • work pastorally with any pastor, session or congregation that seeks dismissal from the
2 Presbyterian Church (USA);
3
 - 4 • not take any preemptive action against the Presbytery, any pastor, session or
5 congregation who considers faithfully following the Great Ends of the Church (G-
6 1.0200) (**F-1.0304**) in another fellowship;
7
 - 8 • interpret “use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (USA)” in G-8.0201 (**G-4.0203**)
9 to mean solely whatever furthers the Great Ends of the Church (G-1.0200) (**F-
10 1.0304**);
11
 - 12 • interpret its express power “to coordinate the work of its member churches, guiding
13 them and mobilizing their strength for the most effective witness to the broader
14 community for which it has responsibility” (G-11.0103b) (**G-3.0301**) to allow that in
15 some cases, after careful and prayerful consideration, a congregation, with its
16 property and any financial assets, may be dismissed from the Presbyterian Church
17 (USA) without penalty.
18
- 19 2. Holding these covenants in mind, this does not abrogate provisions for judicial
20 proceedings described in D-2.0000 and following should those be determined to be
21 necessary after prayerful deliberation by the presbytery.
22
23

24 **V. OUTLINE FOR A PROCESS OF ENGAGEMENT WITH PRESBYTERY**

25 **A. Initial Contact and Dialogue**

- 26
- 27 1. When the leadership of the presbytery becomes aware, either through formal session
28 action or discussion, or through informal contacts with church leaders or members, that a
29 congregation is in serious disagreement with the denomination to the extent of
30 considering leaving the PC (U.S.A.), a Presbytery Engagement Team (PET), formed by
31 the Presbytery Council and the Committee on Ministry Team for such a purpose, will
32 offer to meet with the session and jointly, or subsequently, with the congregation as the
33 church tries to discern God’s will for denominational affiliation. This process is meant to
34 insure that the congregation is fully informed on the issues at hand, equipped with
35 knowledge of this Presbytery’s process, as well as the processes and values that have
36 guided other churches and presbyteries in their decision making.
37
- 38 2. The persons assigned to represent Presbytery will seek a time of prayer and conversation
39 focused upon understanding the conflict and identifying potential steps toward
40 reconciliation.
41
- 42 3. Prayerful discussion of differences and determination of possibility of reconciliation.
43
- 44 4. The PET will attempt to “bridge the gap” with the congregation through discussion of
45 possibilities for reconciliation and likely impacts in the case where dismissal is the course

1 decided upon. The PET will outline the process and likely consequences of the
2 congregation requesting dismissal from the Presbytery, and will use the following
3 principles to guide the PET's dialogue with the church:
4

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

10
11 • If the team determines that progress can be made toward reconciliation through
12 continued and constructive dialogue, the session and the team will establish a
13 mutually agreeable timeline of talks to be held and proceed to engage in such
14 dialogue.
15

16 • In its dialogue with the church session and/or congregation, the team will share
17 implications for a church considering leaving the PC (USA). The PET will
18 discuss with all minister members the likely impacts on their benefits and
19 ordination status of the various options available to them, so that they fully
20 understand the implications of their transfer to another Reformed body, or staying
21 as a member of Presbytery.
22

23 • The best goal of presbytery team conversations with congregations when there is
24 a group that desires to remain within the PC (USA) and a group that desires to be
25 dismissed to another Reformed body, is to discuss financial, property and other
26 issues that will enable both members of congregations (groups) to be as healthy as
27 possible in the aftermath of separation. If after a period of dialogue, the PET and
28 the leadership of the congregation are not able to establish a process for
29 reconciliation, the PET and the leaders of the congregation will begin the process
30 of negotiation of the terms of dismissal, and the validation of the true desire of the
31 members of the congregation with regards to denominational affiliation.
32

33 **VI. PROCESS FOR A CONGREGATION TO REQUEST DISMISSAL**

34 A. Negotiation of terms of dismissal

35
36 The dismissal of a church from the Presbytery will be a traumatic event in the life of the
37 congregation and the Presbytery. The actions of the Presbytery shall be truly focused on
38 the preservation and even the advancement of ministry through the process of negotiation
39 and after the congregation is dismissed. The PET will engage with a Special Committee
40 of the Congregation (SCC), selected by the Session of the congregation, to negotiate the
41 terms of dismissal. It is expected that once the process has reached this stage, the
42 negotiations should be able to progress relatively quickly and be able to be completed
43 within 60 days.
44

45 B. Terms for release to another body

1
2 Consistent with PC(USA) polity and General Assembly actions taken in Anderson v.
3 Synod of Florida, congregations seeking dismissal from the Presbytery may only be
4 dismissed with their property to another reformed body recognized by the PC(USA). It
5 cannot be dismissed to “independency.” Consistent with Strong & Bagby vs. Synod of
6 Mid South, congregations can only be dismissed by the formal action of the Presbytery.

7
8 C. Policy for releasing claims to property

- 9
10 1. If a church seeking dismissal has outstanding loans to the Synod or other PC(USA)
11 body, before the actual transfer of title occurs, the loans must be paid back or transferred
12 to another creditor as part of the loan being repaid. Since the church being dismissed will
13 no longer be under the authority of PC(USA), the denomination body that holds the loan
14 should not be placed in the position of being exposed to loss without having a position of
15 oversight of the church, or having the Presbytery being able to act as a guarantor of the
16 loan. This repayment does not have to be made before the Presbytery acts on the request to
17 dismiss, but must be made within 90 days of the Presbytery vote to dismiss. If the PET
18 does not believe a viable plan for repayment exists, the PET shall recommend to the SCC
19 that the process be put on hold before the congregational vote until a viable plan to repay
20 the loan is established.
21
22 2. Prior to the Presbytery voting on the dismissal, the SCC shall provide the PET details
23 regarding to whom the church property shall be transferred, such that the appropriate
24 legal documentation can be prepared. Such transfer should occur no later than 90 days of
25 the vote taken by Presbytery to dismiss.
26
27

28 **VII. STATUS OF MINISTER MEMBERS OF PRESBYTERY**

- 29
30 1. If a congregation is dismissed by Presbytery, one of the paramount concerns of this
31 process is to assure that the rights and status of minister members are considered and
32 handled properly.
33
34 2. Ministers may request transfer to the Reformed body to which the congregation is
35 requesting dismissal, or they may remain as members of Presbytery. Transfers may be
36 requested concurrently with the congregation’s request or they may occur separately. If
37 transfer is not requested concurrently, the minister will be placed on inactive status by
38 Presbytery, which will allow the minister to continue to seek calls within the Presbyterian
39 Church (U.S.A.), or to become a member-at-large if their call at the church ends.
40
41 3. Transfers to another reformed body will normally be approved, unless the minister
42 member is subject of pending judicial or investigative action. Members under discipline
43 of the Presbytery may not be transferred until the administrative process is complete and
44 any required remedial actions completed. At that point the transfer may be completed,
45 but a record of IC or PJC must be transmitted to the other body prior to the transfer being
46 requested so proper disclosure on any issue can occur.

1
2 **VIII. STATUS OF MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION BEING DISMISSED**

3
4 It is important that, throughout the dismissal process, both the SCC and PET
5 communicate carefully so that divisiveness is minimized between those in the
6 congregation who wish to withdraw and those members who want to remain in the
7 Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). After formal voting by the congregation and Presbytery
8 has been completed, all members will be contacted regarding their membership status.
9 Members being dismissed who serve on Presbytery committees will have their terms end
10 officially on the day Presbytery votes to dismiss the congregation. However, the
11 Presbytery will always welcome former elder
12 Commissioners' participation at Presbytery meetings as a way of continuing shared
13 ministries and mission in the community, although such participation will be as visitors.
14

15 **IX. STATUS OF MEMBERS UNDER CARE OF PRESBYTERY**

16
17 Special attention should be given to members of the congregation who are preparing for
18 ministry and are under the care of Presbytery. Each member under care, together with
19 his/her liaison from the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM), should be advised
20 immediately of the congregation's desire to seek dismissal. The member under care will
21 be given the option of being dismissed with the congregation or transferring their
22 membership to another congregation within Presbytery and/or the Presbyterian Church
23 (U.S.A.). If transfer to another congregation within Presbytery/the Presbyterian Church
24 (U.S.A.) is requested, PET and the CPM liaison will assist the member in seeking a
25 waiver of the usual six-month requirement for church membership in order to maintain
26 care status.
27

28 **X. GOAL OF THE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE PRESBYTERY AND**
29 **CONGREGATION**

30
31 Just as this process is designed to aid in Presbytery's ability to respectfully deal with the
32 congregation's desire to be dismissed, and to have that happen in a way that minimizes
33 the impact to that congregation's ministry, it is also important for the congregation to act
34 in such a way as to minimize the impact on the mission and ministry of the Presbytery.
35 Recognizing that the Presbytery's ability to sustain ministry is related to its financial
36 health, it is assumed that the congregation that is being dismissed would want to
37 minimize the financial impact of its departure on Presbytery.
38

39 **XI. NEGOTIATION OF TERMS OF WITHDRAWAL**

40
41 The decision of whether or not to release the Presbytery's claim to property used by a
42 particular congregation will be made by the Presbytery, bearing in mind its responsibility
43 to deploy assets of people, real estate and financial resources for the furtherance of the
44 mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) within its bounds and the need of the church
45 to carry on its mission for the cause of Christ. Therefore, if the congregation is seeking
46 to withdraw and retain its real property, the PET and SCC will negotiate terms whereby

1 Presbytery will gift the property to the congregation in exchange for an agreed
2 compensation. These terms should reflect the mission strategy of Presbytery and should,
3 to the greatest extent possible, facilitate successful ongoing ministry by both the
4 Presbytery and the congregation. Thus, the Presbytery Evaluation Team (PET) and the
5 Special Committee of the Congregation (SCC) will negotiate the terms of Dismissal, each
6 giving particular attention to the needs of the other.
7
8
9

10 **XII. VALIDATION OF CONGREGATION'S DESIRE AND DISCERNMENT TO**
11 **REQUEST DISMISSAL**
12

13 After the PET and the congregation's SCC have met and negotiated the terms of
14 dismissal, the next step in the process is to validate the congregation's desire for
15 dismissal, and to ascertain the congregation's unity in that decision. That validation must
16 be performed through a congregational vote. While the quorum for congregational
17 meetings is set by the Book of Order and by the bylaws of particular congregations, the
18 PET should expect at least 50% of the active members of the congregation be in
19 attendance for a congregational meeting where the vote to accept the terms of the
20 dismissal agreement are voted on and thereby voting to leave the PC(USA). This should
21 be relatively easy for a smaller congregation, but may be impractical for a larger one, and
22 the PET can negotiate a more practical number if 50% is deemed unreasonable. Such a
23 called meeting of the congregation must be noticed at least 30 days in advance, and every
24 action should be taken to maximize the participation of the congregation in this meeting.
25 It is also expected that representatives of the PET would have an opportunity to address
26 the congregation and be able to discuss specific issues that would enable the congregation
27 to make an informed decision based on the facts of the situation and prayerful
28 discernment. If the results of the vote to request dismissal and to accept the terms of the
29 negotiated agreement is 75% or greater, the dismissal request is considered validated and,
30 and then will be scheduled for a vote at an upcoming Presbytery meeting.
31

32 **XIII. PROCESS FOR THE PRESBYTERY TO VOTE TO DISMISS A**
33 **CONGREGATION**
34

35 A. Procedure for Vote of Presbytery on Settlement Agreement
36

- 37 1. Once the congregation has formally voted to request dismissal from Presbytery/the
38 Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and has accepted the terms of the negotiated agreement for
39 dismissal, Presbytery will vote on accepting the terms of the agreement and dismissing
40 the congregation to another Reformed body. The written record of dismissal terms
41 proposed by the congregation, written counter-proposals by the PET, and the written
42 settlement agreement including the mission strategy and impact study and Trust Clause
43 considerations, will be made available to all members of Presbytery for their review well
44 in advance of the meeting at which the Presbytery vote will be taken.
45

- 1 2. It should be noted that renegotiation of the terms for dismissal through use of
2 amendments from the floor of Presbytery would invalidate months of work between the
3 PET and the congregation. Therefore, the proposal should be presented as a whole, with
4 the understanding that the final agreement has been reached by good faith negotiations
5 between the PET and the congregation. The motion to accept the terms of the settlement
6 and dismiss the congregation should be preceded by a two-thirds vote required to limit
7 amendments and debate.
8
- 9 3. It should be assumed that if Presbytery then votes down the proposed dismissal of the
10 congregation on the terms that have been negotiated, the outcome may be initiation of
11 civil litigation regarding ownership of the property. It is our prayer that, by all parties'
12 committing to follow the above process in good faith, we can resolve our differences
13 reasonably and civilly, without resorting to litigation.
14

15 B. Determination of Members' Desire for Transfer
16

17 Within 30 days of the Presbytery's vote approving dismissal of the congregation to another
18 reformed body, Presbytery will prepare a letter to members of the church informing them of
19 their option to be dismissed with the congregation or to remain in the Presbyterian Church
20 (U.S.A.) by transferring their membership to another congregation in the area. The church
21 will mail the letter to all active members of the congregation promptly and will bear all costs
22 associated with this mailing. The letter will direct that responses are to be returned to
23 Presbytery. The Presbytery will then ensure that contact is made with those members wishing
24 to remain in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and that they are assisted in joining a new
25 congregation of their choice.
26

27 C. Completing the Dismissal
28

29 Recognizing that the departure of valued colleagues in ministry will be a matter of pain
30 for all parties, it is appropriate for the Presbytery to hold a service of worship giving
31 thanks for prior shared ministry and prayers for the ongoing witness of both the departing
32 congregation and of all the other congregations in the Presbytery and the Presbyterian
33 Church (U.S.A.).
34