

To: Presbytery Council Members

Following the last General Assembly (GA), the Committee on Ministry (COM) began hearing concerns from a few churches in Yellowstone Presbytery regarding issues generated by some of GA's decisions.

As a result, late last summer, COM commissioned a team to begin developing a process for dismissal, in order to be ready, if one day a request for dismissal surfaced. This team was made up of Steven Lympus, George Goodrich, and John Grossenbacher.

In developing the dismissal process for Yellowstone Presbytery, the team wanted to focus on the following two standards:

1. Follow the instructions of the 218<sup>th</sup> General Assembly; that all Presbyteries work in a gracious way with churches seeking dismissal from the PCUSA.
2. Adhere to what Paul teaches us in 1Cor: 1-8; that Yellowstone Presbytery will do all it can to keep a dispute over dismissal out of the courts.

To find a good model, the team began reviewing dismissal processes already in place by other Presbyteries. The team finally settled on the process implemented by the Maumee Valley Presbytery in Ohio. Our research also showed us an interesting trend:

1. When a congregation seeks dismissal in a Presbytery without a dismissal process in place, the situation many times ended up in the courts. The courts then decide, in some cases in favor of the congregation and other cases in favor of the Presbytery.
2. When a congregation seeks dismissal in a Presbytery with a dismissal process in place, the situation usually is resolved in a gracious way and within the dismissal process.

When the team finally had a good draft, they asked Zane Buxton (Synod Executive) and Rick Ramler (attorney who has been assisting the Presbytery) to review the draft and respond with their feedback. Zane and Rick promptly responded and suggestions from them were incorporated into the document.

The COM approved the Dismissal Process for presentation and approval to the floor of Presbytery, on March 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> and presented to members of Council, an early copy of the Dismissal Process for your review. On February 11, 2009 we held a joint conference call with Council and COM to discuss the process and ask questions.

The conference call resulted in some suggested minor language changes which were made, reviewed and approved by COM.

Phil Maxwell  
Moderator of COM

**Committee on Ministry Report**  
**Presbytery of Yellowstone**  
**March 2-3, 2009**

**The Committee on Ministry took the following actions on behalf of the presbytery on January 23, 2009:**

1. COM approved Jackie Pinkowski's contract with 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian Church, Billings, as Stated Supply for one year (to March 22, 2010). It had been signed by Jackie and Session clerk on December 23, 2008.
2. COM voted to concur with West Yellowstone request to dissolve relationship with Steven Lympus effective December 31, 2008 (pending Congregational meeting).
3. COM voted to change Steve Lympus' status to Member at Large as of January 1, 2009.
4. COM voted to name John Grossenbacher Moderator of West Yellowstone session effective January 1, 2009.
5. COM voted to allow Chuck Denison to moderate annual meeting of West Yellowstone congregation.
6. COM voted to allow Steven Lympus to labor outside bounds (in Seattle Presbytery)
7. COM voted to dismiss Steven Lympus to Seattle Presbytery when the way be clear.
8. COM voted to release \$2,500 for 2009 (final) commitment to Presbytery of Inland Northwest.

**Process for Separation  
Response to Potential Requests for Dismissal  
from Yellowstone Presbytery**

(To be submitted to Presbytery for approval on March 2 or 3, 2009)

**Scripture:**

*The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. (1 Cor. 12: 12-13 NIV)*

*“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” (John 17: 20-23)*

“Christ gives to His Church its faith and life, its unity and mission, its officers and ordinances. Insofar as Christ’s will for the Church is set forth in Scripture, it is to be obeyed. In the worship and service of God and the government of the church, matters are to be ordered according to the Word by reason and sound judgment, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.” (Book of Order G-1.0100c)

“That God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his Word, or beside it, in matters of faith and worship” (Book of Order G-1.0300(1)a; Westminster Confession of Faith, 6.109 in Book of Confessions)

**Introduction:**

We affirm our essential unity as the body of Christ. We affirm our essential unity in the Presbyterian Church (USA), a part of the body of Christ. We believe that as Christ prays for all of His followers in every age to be one in Him, we are to pray and work for the same. However, we also recognize that there are times when separation may become an imperative of conscience either for an individual or a congregation. Given the present discussions within our denomination and within our own Presbytery, we believe that it is prudent to develop principles and processes for discussion of separation and any potential action before they become necessary. In this way, we seek to affirm a decision-making process that remains faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ and our common bond in Him.

We acknowledge the difficulty of these issues and recognize our responsibility, whether in agreement or disagreement, to act and to treat one another in a Christian manner that honors our God. Difficult decisions of conscience may need to be made, but they must not be allowed to be driven by selfishness, by a struggle for power, or by vindictiveness. In disagreement, we must seek the good of God’s Kingdom and follow the example of Jesus in setting the interests of others above our own.

Additionally, individuals, congregations and the Presbytery should be given opportunity to discuss and prayerfully consider options without fear of sanction or punitive action. Care should be taken in such discussions to ensure that all voices are heard and that historic decisions are made cautiously and deliberately and result from seeking prayerful guidance. In our disagreements, we should seek always to honor God's image in one another and treat each other with respect, as sisters and brothers in Christ. ***My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires (James 1: 19-20 NIV).***

While tangible issues of property and assets enter into any real consideration of possible requests for dismissal, we affirm that we are stewards of God's resources intended to be used for His honor and glory. Consequently, while we note the constitutional principle of church property "held in trust," we desire neither to make property the focal point for the congregation nor to use the threat of its seizure as a coercive instrument of the Presbytery. Further, respecting our oneness in the body of Christ, every effort should be made to discuss and process towards a peaceful, God-honoring solution apart from reliance upon settlement in civil court (refer to: **1 Corinthians 6: 1-9**).

The intent of the following document is to lay out a process that is fair, clear, and easily understood. While final decisions concerning requests for dismissal must be made by the Presbytery, we believe these guidelines will prove helpful to all parties concerned, and hope that they will encourage openness and trust as we seek the will of Christ together.

**Process:**

When the Session of a particular congregation docket to consider and vote to present its membership with a request for dismissal, the Clerk of Session shall notify the Stated Clerk of Yellowstone Presbytery immediately. Presbytery representation shall be invited to that session meeting through the Stated Clerk.

If the vote at the session meeting is to present a request for dismissal to the membership, the Presbytery shall invite the Session to enter into a covenant with the Presbytery for the purpose of prayerful discernment. Under the covenant, the Session shall commit to scheduling a congregational meeting for consideration of dismissal between two months and a year after their initial notification. The Presbytery, with nominations from the Committee on Ministry, shall elect a team of Presbyters (known as the "Pastoral Team") to represent the Presbytery and to work alongside the Session in consideration of any action. Together, the Session and the Pastoral Team shall engage in mutual and shared prayer seeking God's guidance and direction.

Should the Session be willing to enter into the covenant relationship, its responsibilities shall include:

- 1.) The development of a “plan of mission,” describing the church’s ministry outside of Yellowstone Presbytery and the Presbyterian Church (USA), should the congregation choose to withdraw from the Presbytery. This plan shall include specific intentions of joining another denomination or governing body in the Reformed tradition, as well as show potential of receptivity by that body.
- 2.) Commitment to an open process of congregational discernment, in which minority voices are heard and respected.
- 3.) The development of a plan to minister to any minority constituency after the congregational vote is taken, including invitations for these members to join other PC(USA) churches.

The Session shall invite members of the Presbytery Pastoral Team to address their regular meetings and join them in prayer.

The Presbytery Pastoral Team shall be nominated by the Committee on Ministry and elected by the Presbytery with Presbytery staff (GP and Stated Clerk) serving “ex-officio” (voice, but not vote). No more than five members shall be elected to the Pastoral Team. Every effort shall be made to assemble a team that is perceived as fair and representative. While representing the Presbytery for prayer, information and advice, the team is not an administrative commission. It has no authority to take any action regarding the property held in trust, pastoral leadership, Session membership nor the moderator of the Session. The responsibilities of the Pastoral Team shall include:

- 1.) Prayer for and with the Session and congregation.
- 2.) The provision of an open channel of communication with Presbytery bodies, including (but not limited to) the Committee on Ministry and Presbytery Council.
- 3.) Advocacy for the Presbytery and the PC (USA) denomination.
- 4.) Recommendation to Committee on Ministry and Presbytery as to separation and dismissal.
- 5.) Seeking guidance from the Committee on Ministry when deemed necessary.

The Session shall invite members of the Pastoral Team to attend the congregational meeting at which dismissal is considered. The moderator of the congregational meeting shall offer Pastoral Team members and Presbytery Staff the opportunity to speak. The congregational meeting to consider dismissal shall be conducted according to the Book of Order. All active members of the congregation shall be encouraged to attend and participate in the meeting. Inactive members and non-member attendees shall also be invited to participate in the meeting – but informed that they will not be allowed to vote.

### **Guidelines:**

When the congregation considers the question of requesting dismissal, it shall be understood and communicated clearly that responsibility for the division, dismissal or dissolution of churches lies with the Presbytery, “in consultation with their members.” It is also the responsibility of the Presbytery to develop a strategy for the mission and witness of the church in this geographic region. As a result, any final decision on a request for dismissal or dissolution must be taken by Yellowstone Presbytery as a whole.

Without abdicating its constitutional responsibility, Yellowstone Presbytery designates a Pastoral Team in order to work cooperatively with a local church considering a request for dismissal. This Team will report to the Presbytery and may recommend action on any congregational vote to request dismissal with church property.

In order for the Presbytery Pastoral Team to consider supporting such a request, the following guidelines shall be followed:

- The covenant between the Session and the Presbytery, committing each to prayerful reflection and fair and open discussion, shall be kept.
- Any congregational meeting to vote on a request for dismissal shall be scheduled to provide sufficient time for deliberate reflection, education and participation by all active members of the congregation.
- With the scheduling of the congregational meeting, a letter from the Pastoral Team shall be sent to the active membership of the congregation introducing the team and explaining the process.
- While the quorum for congregational meetings is set by the Book of Order, and by the bylaws of particular congregations, the Presbytery requires that a minimum of fifty percent of the active membership participate in the meeting. In order for the active members to feel free to act based upon conscience, a written ballot for voting is required.
- The tally of the vote shall be attested by the congregation and the Pastoral Team.
- Requests for dismissal to another church body shall specify a denomination or governing body in the Reformed tradition. Becoming independent, congregational, or non-denominational is not an option. There shall be a plan of mission in place for the continuation of the work of Jesus Christ in the geographical area of the congregation.
- An assessment and projection shall be made by Session and the Presbytery Pastoral Team as to the effect the congregation’s departure might have on the life and mission of the Presbytery. Session shall also obtain and provide an estimate of the church’s property value to the Pastoral Team. The Pastoral Team and session shall work out an agreement for separation to include financial, pastoral and other transitional considerations.
- There shall be a plan to support any substantial group, voting in the minority, that desires to continue local ministry in the Presbyterian Church (USA).

- At least seventy-five percent of the active members voting shall be in favor of dismissal. If the vote passes with a majority less than seventy-five percent, the Presbytery Pastoral Team shall not recommend support for such action on the floor of Presbytery. If a majority of seventy-five percent or greater votes to seek dismissal, the Presbytery Pastoral Team shall report and may recommend consideration of dismissal of the congregation with property to the floor of Presbytery. This report and recommendation shall be made based upon resolution of any outstanding debts and dedicated endowments. The merits of a higher vote percentage will be looked upon favorably in the recommendation.

If these guidelines are fulfilled, the Presbytery Pastoral Team shall support and recommend the proposed request to Yellowstone Presbytery. The Pastoral Team will seek to make a unanimous recommendation regarding the fulfillment of “spirit” and “letter” of this process. The Pastoral Team’s vote shall be reported with their recommendations to the Presbytery.

Actual decision-making on a request for dismissal by a congregation, the continuing ministry of the Presbyterian Church (USA) in that region, and any property “held in trust” shall be made by Yellowstone Presbytery at a properly announced meeting. At that meeting, representatives of the congregation shall be given opportunity to explain their request and members of the Pastoral Team shall make their recommendations. Any decision shall be made by Yellowstone Presbytery based upon its understanding and commitment to the ministry of Jesus Christ as expressed in the Holy Scriptures and prayerfully understood through the Presbyterian Church (USA). If the Presbytery votes to permit the congregation’s request for dismissal, that dismissal shall be provisional pending actual reception by the judicatory of another denomination responsible for receiving the congregation.

**Presbytery of Yellowstone - Bozeman MT  
Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2008**

Checking Account		97,119.38
Petty Cash		22.18
Money Market		121,361.85
St Timothy MM #1		1,502.67
St Timothy MM #2		1,502.13
Beartooth Electric Coop		1,337.70
	<b>Total Current/Other Assets</b>	<b>\$ 222,845.91</b>
St Timothy Chapel #1		161,458.64
St Timothy Chapel #2		80,709.37
Bozeman Campus		69,590.30
Partnership Fund MM		44,585.46
	<b>Total Principal Restricted</b>	<b>\$ 356,343.77</b>
	<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$579,189.68</b>
Advance Pledge Payment		2,500.00
Payroll Liabilities		782.00
	<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$ 3,282.00</b>
Unreserved Fund Balance		36,971.65
General - Administrative		51,448.64
General - Program		25,453.05
General - Restricted Administrative		58,853.81
	<b>Total General Fund Balance</b>	<b>\$ 172,727.15</b>
Designated Funds	<b>Total Designated Funds</b>	<b>\$ 47,422.51</b>
	<b>Total Unrestricted Balance</b>	<b>\$ 220,149.66</b>
Bozeman Campus Foundation		69,590.30
St Timothy's #1 (PC USA) Found		161,458.64
St Timothy's #2 (PC USA) Found		80,709.37
Partnership Fund Principal COM		43,999.71
	<b>Total Restricted Fund Balance</b>	<b>\$ 355,758.02</b>
	<b>Total Fund Balance</b>	<b>\$ 575,907.68</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Fund Balances</b>		<b>\$ 579,189.68</b>



**Presbytery of Yellowstone - Bozeman MT**  
**Designated Fund Balances 12/31/08**

Camp Scholarship Camp. & Youth	1,425.00
Christian Ed Resources Mission	2,014.74
Clergy Emergency Fund COM	345.00
Continuing Education COM	9,203.69
Equal Exchange Coffee Mission	462.60
Linda Hofer COM	3,001.08
Mission Marketplace	173.00
New Church Development	3,093.34
Parish Development	1,406.02
Partnership - Available COM	585.75
Heifer Mission Trip	760.90
Pastor's Discretionary Fund	2,500.00
Peace Making Offering Mission	1,054.09
Pentecost Offerings Mission	335.32
Special Offering Other	769.13
Restoring Creation Mission	1,165.07
Revamp Camp - Camp. & Youth	1,693.12
St. Timothy's MM #1	1,502.67
St Timothy's MM #2	1,502.13
Mission Connection	-500.00
Transformation Fund (COM)	7,888.00
Vanuatu Mission	0.31
Yellowstone Prov. 28:8 Mission	4,754.55
Hunger Program	2,218.33
2 Cents a Meal Project Mission	68.67
<b>TOTAL DESIGNATED FUNDS</b>	<b>\$ 47,422.51</b>

**Presbytery of Yellowstone - Bozeman, MT**

<u>Administrative</u>	Actual 2008	Budget 2008
Per Capita	99,764.00	105,830.00
Synod Partnership Funds	62,000.00	60,000.00
Administrative Support	57,137.89	44,000.00
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>218,901.89</b>	<b>209,830.00</b>
Camping and Youth	4,232.81	2,004.00
Committee for Administration	0.00	0.00
Committee for Judicial	167.70	3.00
New Church Development	0.00	48.00
Committee on Budget & Finance	113.10	249.00
Committee on Higher Education	24.70	246.00
Committee On Ministry	2,030.17	5,150.00
Administrative Commissions	8,586.37	4.00
Committee on Missions	1,247.62	1,300.00
Committee on Nominations	154.00	438.00
Committee on Personnel	821.89	438.00
Committee on Representation	0.00	25.00
Com. On St Timothys Chapel	252.50	200.00
Committee on Vocations	401.37	825.00
Delegates to Other Bodies	681.62	799.00
Mt. Association of Churches	0.00	9.00
Payroll Taxes	5,207.36	2,631.09
Per Capita	31,999.65	31,999.65
Personnel	127,321.22	131,667.55
Presbytery Council	2,295.01	3,500.00
Presbytery Expense	8,638.48	11,075.00
Presbytery Office	15,233.21	22,089.00
St Timothy's Chapel #1	0.00	0.00
Search Committee	0.00	0.00
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>209,408.78</b>	<b>214,700.29</b>
<u>Program</u>	Actual 2008	Budget 2008
Pledge	48,001.93	39,510.00
Camp Income	14,982.50	28,002.00
Synod Partnership Funds	9,932.00	10,932.00
Clerigy/Spouse	0.00	3,000.00
Transformation	0.00	11,000.00
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>72,916.43</b>	<b>92,444.00</b>
Camping & Youth	22,013.58	36,265.00
New Church Development	0.00	0.00
Committee on Higher Education	19,863.96	21,864.00
Committee on Ministry	662.60	3,950.00
Committee on Mission	4,535.12	7,500.00
Committee on Vocations	192.00	2,075.00
Mt. Association of Churches	3,610.00	3,600.00
Presbytery Expenses	2,407.99	2,501.00
Transformation	0.00	11,000.00
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>53,285.25</b>	<b>88,755.00</b>