

**POLICY #9 OF THE COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY  
PRESBYTERY OF SUSQUEHANNA VALLEY**

**DISSOLUTION OF A PASTORAL RELATIONSHIP  
Retirement or Resignation**

Whenever a minister is planning to retire, or whenever a minister is planning to accept a call to a new work, the following procedures shall be followed:

1. The minister shall consult the Executive Presbyter and the Committee on Ministry BEFORE the session or other members of the church are notified.
  - a. Retirement: Ordinarily, when an announcement of retirement is made, the period of time between announcement and retirement should be three months.
  - b. Acceptance of a New Call: Ordinarily, when an announcement of a resignation is made, the period of time between announcement and departure should be four to six weeks.
2. Ordinarily, the minister should write a letter as the first form of announcement concerning retirement or resignation. It is not advisable to make the first announcement during worship or at a congregational meeting. The letter should be shared with the session at a regular or specially-called session meeting (see Item #3 below) and mailed to the entire congregation on the day following that meeting:
  - a. A statement of appreciation concerning the opportunity to serve the congregation during the years of pastoral tenure should be included.
  - b. If it is a resignation to accept another call, the name and location of the new call should be indicated.
  - c. The date of the minister's last day at work should be noted.
  - d. A reminder should be included that after the pastoral relationship is dissolved, no further pastoral services should be requested (funerals, hospital calls, weddings, etc.).
3. The session meets for the following purposes:
  - a. To receive a copy of the letter of resignation (see Item #2 above).
  - b. To call, in writing, a special meeting of the congregation in order for the church to vote upon the dissolution of the pastoral relationship. This letter

- should include a statement of appreciation for the pastor's time of service.
- c. To allow the Executive Presbyter and/or a representative of the Committee on Ministry to provide information concerning the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, the interim period, and the new pastor search process.
  - d. If desired at this time, to elect whether or not to seek an Interim Pastor and to designate a Search Committee (or Interim Associate Pastor Search Committee) from the elders serving on the session or others (see Policy #10). (These decisions may be postponed to a subsequent session meeting.)
  - e. To discuss terms of dissolution (if any), and to prepare Form F-4 for the congregational meeting.
  - f. To prepare a letter to the congregation that will accompany the pastor's letter (see #2).
4. The minister will remove all personal items from the church property by the effective date of dissolution. All property belonging to the church will be returned to the Clerk of Session or person designated by the session. All property belonging to the Presbytery will be returned. Arrangements for payment of any monies due to the minister (salary, annuities, etc.) or repayment of any loan made by the church or the Presbytery to the minister shall be made by the effective date of the dissolution unless stipulated in writing by both parties.
5. Severance terms (when necessary) may include the following: cash salary, housing allowance or free use of the manse, deferred income or annuity, and pensions dues until an agreed upon date following the effective date of dissolution. Severance terms may include pro-rated vacation days but do not include study leave or continuing education allowance.
6. All pastoral services (weddings, funerals, counseling, etc.) in the future must have prior permission of the moderator of session, who may be the next pastor. (See Policy #26, "Ministerial Ethics.")
7. CONFLICT: whenever the dissolution of a pastoral relationship is due to conflict within the church, the steps outlined in the "Policy on Conflict Resolution" (Policy #30) must be followed. After the steps in Policy #30 have been completed, steps 2-6 above should be followed.