

Inland Northwest Presbytery
Procedure for Administrative Commission
(approved 9-13-2012)

Introduction

Responsibility of Presbytery

The Presbytery of the Inland Northwest (PIN) recognizes its responsibility in the division, dismissal or dissolution of churches in consultation with its members. The Presbytery is responsible for the mission and government of churches throughout its geographical district.

Churches in Disorder

It is the responsibility of a presbytery, to intercede in the affairs of churches, governing bodies, or other organizations of the church affected with disorder, and to inquire into and settle difficulties.

Dismissal

A congregation of presbytery can be dismissed or dissolved only by vote of presbytery.

Just Dealings

The PIN seeks to be just in its dealings with congregations seeking dismissal from the PCUSA and will meet with such congregations in an effort to deal with their stated issues. It is the aim of the PIN to find reconciliation and establish harmony.

Respect of Conscience

The PIN seeks to respect the integrity and conscience of its member congregations, even when in disagreement over issues that might lead to dissolution or dismissal from the PCUSA. Thus, the PIN will seek every resource and employ all recourse to affect equitable outcomes.

Process

Establishment of Administrative Commission

If no resolution is found between a congregation in disagreement with the denomination and/or the PIN, after the Communal Discernment Process has been followed, the Presbytery shall establish an Administrative Commission to conduct the business of Presbytery.

Determinant Percentages Reference Congregational Votes

If a vote of a congregation is conducted where 67% of the congregation's active members are present, and 75% of those active members present vote to request dismissal from the PCUSA, the PIN through its Administrative Commission may recommend dismissal to the PIN. The AC retains the right to make its determination regardless of any vote taken by a particular congregation, and the AC also retains the right to adjust those percentages as it sees necessary for a particular congregation.

Church Property

All property held by or for a member church, a presbytery, a synod, or the General Assembly of the PCUSA, is held in trust for the use and benefit of the Presbyterian Church (USA). It is the right of a congregation to request dismissal with its property to another reformed body, but such a request does not guarantee dismissal with property by the PIN. Other options include purchase of existing property by a dismissed congregation or the lease of the property by the PIN to a dismissed congregation.

Schism

If a congregation is in schism within its own membership and is unable to reach reconciliation the Administrative Commission of the PIN shall determine if one of the factions is entitled to the property as the recognized church within the PCUSA. This determination does not depend upon which faction received the majority vote.

Examination of Relevant Records

The Administrative Commission, or its designate may, examine all relevant records of the dissenting congregation and will through audit or proper verification determine the full value of assets and burden of debts of the withdrawing church. The value of real property will be determined by impartial commercial property appraisers. Title, by-laws, insurance, charters, and corporate documents will be reviewed. A review may be made of session minutes, records, newsletters, websites, letters, correspondence and any other relevant communication.

Conveyance of Property and Debt

If a congregation is dismissed from the PCUSA by vote of presbytery, the congregation must come to a fair agreement with the PIN concerning the value of the property. Property can be retained by the dismissed congregation only if the congregation is dismissed to another reformed body. Any agreement conveying property must be approved by the PIN. A congregation may not be dismissed from the PCUSA until all debt or encumbrance has been satisfied in such a manner that the PIN/PCUSA is not named in debt.

Obligation for Payment of Fees

All fees for professional services will be paid by the dissenting church.

Maintaining Remnant Congregation

If it is determined that a sufficient percentage of the dissenting congregation desires to maintain the life of the church within the body of the PCUSA the Administrative Commission has the right to assume original jurisdiction and assume the full power of the session.

Activities of Pastor

In the event of schism within the congregation an investigation may be conducted to determine if the pastor was involved in schismatic activities in violation of the Book of Order.

Terms of Settlement

The AC will work with the congregation seeking dismissal on the terms of settlement and the disposition of property, including real property.

Financial Obligation

As part of the Terms of Settlement, the financial commitment the PIN made while the dismissed congregation was part of the PIN and was relying on the Per Capita and Mission giving of said congregation must be considered. It is possible that a sustained mission commitment and per capita obligation for a dismissed congregation could be met in conjunction with the property settlement.

Long Term Concern

The Administrative Commission recognizes the long-term concern for the congregation and community and will shape outcomes in keeping with long-term goals. All who wish to retain membership in the PCUSA will be welcomed and nurtured by the PIN.

Bonds of Unity

Our bonds of unity in the Kingdom of God are respected acknowledging our relationship as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. It is the aim of the Administrative Commission to maintain continence in keeping with our call to be Christ's disciples. The process involving a congregation and PIN will be faithful to both entities.

Re-affiliation

Parting Service

If the PIN votes to dismiss a particular congregation it is suggested that a service of worship be conducted in which the PIN provides its blessing to the dismissed congregation acknowledging the Lordship of Jesus Christ in God's greater church.

Restoration

The Administrative Commission will conduct all settlements in the hope that at some point in the future the relationship between a dissenting congregation and the PIN will be restored and re-affiliation established with the PCUSA.