

Policy #04  
**PROTOCOL FOR AN EXIT INTERVIEW**

**COM approval:** March 20, 2014

**PGA approval:** N/A

**Background and Purpose:**

The purposes of exit interviews are several and often depend largely upon the conditions surrounding a pastor's departure. The Exit Interview 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. A separate interview with the Clerk of Session will also be held. Authentic sharing may also provide insights related to the challenges and opportunities in a given church, as well as point to appropriate qualities of its next pastor.

**It is emphasized that this Exit Interview is entirely separate from the contact via telephone or in person which may be made by the Pastor to Pastors. The firewall between these groups must be maintained to protect confidentiality in the Pastor to Pastors relationships.**

**Participants**

- I. Pastors, Associate Pastors, and Certified Christian Educators will be the focus of Exit Interviews.
- II. Two members of the Committee on Ministry (COM) will meet with the pastor/associate pastor/certified educator. It is felt that more effective listening is possible with two, especially where there are concerns/problems/hurts which need airing. They will meet separately with the Clerk of Session or designee of the Clerk.
- III. Exit Interviews are the responsibility of the Committee on Ministry Transitions Team and the Exit Interview Coordinator, including recruiting and training interview teams.

**Timing of Exit Interview**

As soon as the pastor/associate pastor/certified Christian Educator notifies the Congregational Consultant of his/her plan to leave the church, the Consultant will notify the Exit Interview Coordinator. The Coordinator will schedule the interviews with the pastor/associate pastor/certified Christian Educator and the Clerk of Session. The meeting with the Clerk of Session or designee can take place after the pastor has left the church.

**Interview Process**

The process of disclosure to Presbytery staff or anyone else should be defined at the beginning of the interview with the understanding that at the end of the interview the points recorded will be read back to the pastor/associate pastor/certified Christian Educator (or Clerk of Session) for clarification. There should be clear agreement about the information which the pastor/associate pastor/certified Christian Educator (or Clerk of Session) wants to be kept confidential and that which can be included in the written report before it is sent to the Consultant. Both the interviewee and the two members of the Committee on Ministry interview team will sign off on the written report at the end of the interview.

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The pastor/associate pastor/certified Christian Educator (or Clerk of Session) should be told that notes from the meeting will be sent to the Congregational Consultant; shared with the Executive Presbyterian, and filed in the church's file at the Presbytery Office. If there is information helpful to the Pastor Nominating Committee, it may be orally shared with the COM liaison while protecting the confidentiality of the pastor/associate pastor/certified Christian Educator and not naming the exit interview as the source of information.

**Sample Questions for Interviews** (Choose among these, but not limited to them.)

Tell us about your leaving.

What did you enjoy the most? Or what has gone particularly well?

What were your greatest challenges? Or what were your greatest disappointments?

What was your experience with staff relations? (Critical question for multiple staff churches)

What excites you about this church's future?

What concerns 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 did you grow during your ministry at \_\_\_\_\_?

How did you take care of yourself?

How can Presbytery best support this church?

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

What can we learn from you about this church or the Presbytery to increase our effectiveness?

Is there anything we didn't ask that you want to tell us?

**Note:** Sign A Covenant of Closure (included with Policy #03)

**Questions for Clerks of Session**

How do you (the church) feel about your pastor leaving?

What were the best things he/she did? Or, what do you feel worked especially well?

What did not work well or give you concern?

What do you think the church needs in its next pastor?

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

What is the one thing you most want your next pastor to know about your church?

What is the one thing you most want your next pastor to do?

What is the one thing you most want your next pastor NOT to do?

How can Presbytery best support your church?

Have you and the Session read and understand the Presbytery's policy on ETHICAL GUIDELINES GOVERNING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PASTORS AND THEIR FORMER CONGREGATIONS?

Is there anything we have not asked that you would like to tell us about the ministry of \_\_\_\_\_?

Note to Exit Interviewers:

Be sure you have a copy of the Presbytery's policy on *Ethical Guidelines Governing the relationship between pastors and their Former Congregations* to give to the Clerk of

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Session if he/she is not familiar with the policy of direct the Clerk to the Presbytery's website.

**Do not promise action on any concerns. Listen only. You may ask, "Would you like to put in the report that you'd like \_\_\_\_\_, or the Executive Presbyter, to call you?"**

**Congregational Consultant**