

Policy #25
Policy on Churches Desiring to Relocate

COM approval: May 16, 2019

PGA approval: N/A

Any congregation which desires to relocate to another site will be expected to abide by the following procedures:

1. When a congregation, through its session, discerns that its ministry and mission would be better served in a different location than that where the congregation is currently located, the session will request that the Committee on Ministry appoint a Relocation Study Team (RST). The RST will consist of at least five people, including a member of the Committee on Ministry, who shall chair the RST, a member of the Property Subcommittee of the Operations Committee, a representative of the requesting congregation, selected by the session, the Congregational Consultant assigned to the requesting congregation, and an at-large member familiar with the geographic location(s) being considered for relocation. The purpose of the RST is to discuss with the session the advisability of such an action and the issues that are pressing the congregation to consider such a move, and to serve in an advisory capacity throughout the process outlined in this policy. Before entry into this process, if an exact location has not been determined, the session must designate a well-defined geographic area.
2. The session, in consultation with the RST, will prepare a Ministry and Mission Plan. The plan will include:
 - a. A detailed rationale outlining the reasons why the session believes that the ministry and mission of the congregation will be enhanced by the proposed relocation.
 - b. A complete history of the congregation.
 - c. Any current or recent grants, loans, or outstanding indebtedness from any entity.
 - d. A list of current programs and ministries of the church.
 - e. A list of current staff positions and salaries. This list should include all installed and/or contract pastoral staff, as well as other staff positions.
 - f. Financial statements for the current year and two previous years, balance sheets, budgets, reports of revenues and expenses and reports of any restricted or endowed funds.
 - g. A financial analysis of property being considered for purchase or rent, including construction, maintenance, and/or renovation costs.
 - h. A plan for new ministry in a new place, to include:
 - i. The anticipated process for training and preparing existing members for new ministry and membership growth,
 - ii. A detailed proposal of new ministries to be conducted in the new location which includes a clear understanding of whom the new neighbors will be and what are expected to be their needs and hopes (Mission InSite, available through the presbytery, may be helpful here),

- iii. A pastoral profile of the skills, gifts, and experiences that will be needed to move the congregation forward in the new context, including an honest assessment of how those skills, gifts, and experiences are present in existing pastoral staff and/or what steps will need to be taken to provide support, training, or additional personnel to be effective in new ministry, and
 - iv. An anticipated staffing model and a proposed operating budget to support such a model.
3. If there are existing chartered Presbyterian congregations or new worshipping communities within a five-mile radius of the proposed new location, the RST, along with the pastoral staff of the congregation seeking to relocate, will engage in conversation with the pastors and other leaders of the nearby congregations to discuss opportunities for shared ministry with a new neighboring congregation, as well as concerns about detrimental effects to the existing ministries. Results of these conversations will be included in the report provided in the report to the Committee on Ministry (below).
4. Once completed, the report of the RST and the Ministry and Mission Plan will be presented to the full Committee on Ministry for their approval. If approved, the matter may be presented to the congregation for a vote (below). If the plan is not approved by the COM, the matter will not proceed, although the process may be reinstated by the same congregation if a different location for relocation is identified.
5. The full report of the RST and the Ministry and Mission Plan will be presented to the full congregation in a congregational meeting duly called by the session. The details related to sale of the existing property will be presented to the congregation. The congregation will then vote on a motion to approve the sale of the property, and a two-thirds affirmative vote will be required for approval. Approval will also be required by the presbytery's Board of Directors (the Operations Committee), regardless of whether the congregation voted to take the property exemption found in the Book of Order, G-4.0208. Such approval may be sought either subsequent to, or concurrent with, the vote of the congregation.
6. Once a new property to purchase is identified, a congregational meeting will be called to vote on the purchase. (This may take place at the same meeting as the vote on the sale of the existing property (above) if both are known at that time.) A simple majority will be required for approval. Again, approval will also be required by the presbytery's Board of Directors (the Operations Committee). Such approval may be sought either subsequent to, or concurrent with, the vote of the congregation. No property obtained through the relocation process will be subject to the exemption found in the Book of Order, G-4.0208, regardless of whether the previous property was subject to such exemption.