

The Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy

**WHEN THE PRESBYTERY MUST END THE MINISTRY OF A CONGREGATION:
RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION**

HOW THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION IS ESTABLISHED:

1. Presbytery VOTES to concur with the recommendation that is brought by the Congregational Development Team, in consultation with the Committee on Ministry which has a pastoral oversight function. The recommendation is to request the presbytery to appoint an Administrative Commission to implement the recommendation that a particular congregation be dissolved. This commission is appointed to oversee the ending of the ministry.
2. The Chair and Members of the Administrative Commission are ordinarily elected by the Presbytery, or appointed by the Moderator of the presbytery.
3. If at all possible, the Commission should include an Elder on Session from the church being closed.
4. The Commission is convened in a timely fashion by the Chair.
5. Presbytery or its commission shall determine the date upon which services of worship shall cease and the date of dissolution, noting that the church is not dissolved until the conclusion of the final worship service.
6. The commission shall at its first meeting elect a clerk from among its members who shall work with the Stated Clerk to appropriately record and transmit the actions of the commission.
7. The Stated Clerk, by nature of the office, shall be an ex-officio member of all commissions of presbytery and shall be a resource person to the commission in the fulfillment of its responsibilities.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION

The membership of the commission should include presbytery members who have working knowledge of financial affairs, property management, congregational development, and pastoral care. Each of the following duties should be executed in consultation with the Session of the church which has voted to end its ministry, if possible.

I. ARRANGE FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF CHURCH MEMBERS

1. Work with the Session to identify where members wish their membership to be transferred.
2. Appoint a pastor in consultation with the Committee on Ministry to be responsible for pastoral care until membership is transferred or a clear decision is made to cease being an

- active member of any congregation.
3. The Clerk of Session shall affect the transfer by letter of members requesting transfer to corresponding churches until dissolution of the congregation.
 4. The Stated Clerk of the Presbytery shall affect the transfer by letter of any remaining members to corresponding churches for one year after the dissolution of the congregation.

II. PLAN A FINAL WORSHIP SERVICE CELEBRATING THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF THE CONGREGATION.

1. Set the date and the time for the service.
2. Allow ample time for the date to be publicized and invitations issued.
3. Decide what special features the service should include.
4. Determine whether the celebration of the Lord's Supper would be appropriate.
5. Consider structuring the service using the resources from the *Book of Occasional Services* which has a service on Vacating of a Church Building, including the dissolution of a church.
6. Identify a possible preacher and other participants.
7. Former pastors/preachers might be invited.
8. At least one representative from the church should be included.
9. At least one representative from the Commission should be included.
10. The Stated Clerk and the Executive Presbyter (or other Presbytery Representative) should be included.
11. Identify favorite hymns of church members.
12. Consider possibilities for special music, including: the church choir, if one exists; soloists from church, presbytery, or community; a community or presbytery choir; instrumentalists; or a bagpiper (if that is in the church's tradition).
13. Have the Session designate where the proceeds from the offering will go (generally a local mission such as a hunger program or woman's/homeless shelter).
14. Arrange for ushers, parking lot attendants, and elders to serve Communion (if needed).
15. Type and print bulletins.
16. Arrange for preparation of communion elements, if needed.
17. Arrange for any needed cleaning of facility before the service

III. PUBLICIZE THE SERVICE ENDING THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

1. Have church members make a "guest list" of relatives, friends, former members, etc. whom they wish to invite to the celebration.
2. Have invitations printed and give to church members to send out (stamps should be paid for out of the church treasury).
3. Design a flier or write a letter to be distributed to the churches and members of the Presbytery. Send flier or letter to the Presbytery office with ample time for duplication and distribution.
4. Arrange for local newspaper coverage and a photographer.

IV. ARRANGE FOR THE RECEPTION FOLLOWING THE WORSHIP SERVICE

1. Identify the location for a reception.

2. Decide how the food will be provided (Caterers? Church members?).
3. Determine what financial resources the congregation has to pay for this.
4. Appoint a group to take charge of decorating and other arrangements.
5. Gather memorabilia to display.
5. Plan any type of program, toasts, etc.

V. ASCERTAIN THE FINANCIAL STATUS AND OUTSTANDING FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS OF THE SESSION

1. Conduct a financial review of the Treasurer's books for the last 12 months.
2. Determine location of checking accounts, savings accounts, endowment accounts, Sunday School accounts, Women's group accounts and any other financial resources.
3. On endowment or memorial accounts, determine if there are any bequest stipulations.
4. Have all accounts closed, transferring any balances to the primary checking account of the Session (to meet any outstanding obligations) or to the presbytery.
5. If any church accounts remain open, submit new signature card(s) for accounts with at least two officers of the presbytery designated as signatories (usually the treasurer and stated clerk).
6. Determine any outstanding debts/obligations.
7. Publish in local paper a public notice to the effect:
The _____ Church of _____, MO/IL will end its ministry on or about (date). Any outstanding debts/financial obligations must be submitted in writing to the church treasurer at (address) by the close of the business day (date).
8. Authorize the payment of all financial obligations.
9. Provide a "statement of contribution" to all current year contributors.
10. If the church owns any stocks, bonds, certificates, or other financial instruments have ownership of such transferred to the Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy.
11. Following the dissolution, transfer all remaining account balances to the Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy and close any remaining church accounts.

VI. SECURE THE SESSION RECORDS

1. The History Team of the Presbytery will resource the Administrative Commission and the Session as they review items of historical significance.
2. Locate all Session minutes, the church register, and other financial and legal records to be submitted to the Stated Clerk of the presbytery for appropriate disposition.
3. The Clerk of Session will hand these symbolically to a representative of the Stated Clerk at the conclusion of the Presbytery's recognition of the ministry of the church.

VII. SECURE THE LEGAL RIGHTS TO THE PROPERTY (The Property Committee of Mission Council will assist with these functions under the direction of the commission)

1. Secure a Clear Title to the property;
2. Provide a copy of the deed to the Presbytery Board of Trustees (Mission Council) through the Property Committee. A copy of the deed may be obtained from the County Courthouse;

3. Ascertain if there are any deed restrictions or stipulations;
4. Transfer title of the property to the Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy;
5. List the property on the Presbytery's property and liability insurance coverage, terminate any other current insurance coverage;
6. Notify the County Assessor's Office that the property is no longer used as a church as of the dissolution date;
7. Discover if the congregation is incorporated; if so:
 - a. Locate the Articles of Incorporation;
 - b. Publish a public Notice to Dissolve a Corporation in the local newspaper;
 - c. Adopt and publish the following motion:
"Pursuant to Chapter 8, Section 0401 (G-8.0401) of the Book of Order (The Constitution) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy is the legal successor of the _____ Presbyterian Church in, _____ MO/IL.

VIII. SECURE THE BUILDING AND PROPERTY

The Congregational Development Team will make a recommendation about the appropriate use of the real property consistent with the presbytery's strategy for mission in the area. This recommendation will be forwarded to the Administrative Commission. If it is determined that the building and land will serve no ministry purpose, and is to be sold the following steps will be followed:

1. Arrange for the disposition of furnishings. The Session, with the concurrence of the Administrative Commission and in consultation with the History Team, may arrange for the disposition of furnishings, communion ware, hymnals, Sunday School supplies, pulpit, lectern, and communion table, etc. These may be given away, sold by the piece, or bids may be received for the entire lot of furnishing. The History Team of Presbytery shall be consulted and concur with the decision to dispose of any item thought to be of historic value. It is recommended that at least one appraisal by an antiques dealer/estate assessor be obtained before accepting any bids.
2. These decisions should be documented in detail in both Session and Commission minutes.
3. Ascertain which utilities should remain connected and which may be disconnected and make these arrangements with the proper companies. Transfer the billing for the utilities to the Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy effective on the dissolution date. It may be necessary to maintain heat during the winter to avoid damage. Electricity and water should remain on. Arrangements should be made to drain the water pipes if the utilities can be turned off.
4. Secure the building and recover keys from anyone who does not need access.
5. If distribution of keys is widespread and any contents are valuable, consider having the locks changed.
6. Make provisions through the Property Committee for a caretaker until the final disposition of the property, including mowing of lawn and maintenance of any sidewalks.
7. After the closing worship service remove any identifying signage and the cornerstone, if possible (checking for a time capsule).

IX. DISSOLUTION OF THE COMMISSION

1. Commission is dissolved upon the completion of its work.
2. Commission reports to Presbytery in writing all actions taken.
3. Commission submits all minutes to the Stated Clerk for inclusion in the minutes of presbytery.