

Presbytery of Arkansas Steps for Closing a Congregation

1. When the session of a congregation determines that a church should be closed the Committee on Ministry (COM), in consultation with the Future of the Church Ministry Area (1), shall request that the Presbytery establish an Administrative Commission (AC) and state the powers that the Commission will have to close the church, transfer the membership, take possession of all monetary assets and real property and properly dispose of the property of said congregation.
2. The Administrative Commission shall take minutes of its meetings and actions and shall send these to the Stated Clerk with a final report. Members of the Commission shall ordinarily be nominated by the Committee on Ministry, in consultation with the Future of the Church Ministry Area (2), the Moderator of Presbytery, and the General Presbyter. The AC should first determine to which church the membership should be transferred, usually in consultation with the members of the church to be closed.
3. The Stated Clerk (3) shall distribute copies of this document, "Steps for Closing a Congregation," to the AC and the Session of the congregation.
4. A service of worship to celebrate the life and ministry of the church should usually be held. This service shall be planned by the pastoral leadership of the church (if such exists) and the Commission. The Moderator of Presbytery should take part in the leadership of the service. There is a service for the "Vacating of a Church Building (including the Dissolution of a Church) in the *Book of Occasional Services*, a supplement to the *Book of Common Worship* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It is appropriate to have a former pastor give the sermon and/or officiate at the Lord's Table on this occasion.
5. The Commission should make due diligence in finding the financial records of the church and turning all financial assets over to the Presbytery. This would include savings accounts, endowments, current checking accounts, and any and all investments.
6. The Commission should make an inventory of the moveable items in the church buildings and manse (if there is one). These items should be transferred to the Presbytery office for storage until a proper use for them can be found.
7. Contact a local appraiser to establish a proper price for the building(s) if they are to be sold.
8. Contact a realtor who can handle the sale of the property if this seems appropriate.
9. The money from bank accounts, investments, etc. is turned over to the Presbytery for its immediate use or investment. Having that money placed in the Presbytery Endowment Fund is often appropriate.

10. The money from the sale of the building(s) ordinarily goes to the Future of the Church Ministry Area for use in establishing new church developments or in helping with church redevelopment.
11. AC makes a final report to Presbytery, in consultation with the COM and the Future of the Church Ministry Area and the Stated Clerk. A recognition of the life of the congregation takes place at the next stated meeting of the Presbytery

(Note: The book *Ending with Hope* (Alban Institute) is available in the Resource Center and can be of great help to the AC. Also the website of the Presbyterian Historical Society (www.history.pcusa.org) can be most helpful.)

revised October 9, 2009
revised November 8, 2017