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PRESBYTERY OF MIDDLE TENNESSEE

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

MANUAL

*Approved by the Committee on Ministry 01/14/2014
Revised 2017*

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65 **COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY MANUAL**
66

67 **SECTION 1**
68 **INTRODUCTION AND AUTHORITY**
69

70 **Introduction**

71 The Committee on Ministry is charged with building relationships and strengthening
72 the connectional church. Its primary purpose is to care for the churches within the
73 presbytery and the people who staff these churches. That includes teaching elders,
74 commissioned ruling elders, and certified Christian educators. The Committee on
75 Ministry is also tasked with caring for any of the above persons who are on the rolls of
76 the presbytery who do not have a call. That includes honorably retired, at-large
77 (persons who do not currently have a call), persons in other validated ministries (such
78 as hospital chaplains, professors at Vanderbilt Divinity School, etc.) and ruling elders
79 eligible to be commissioned to limited pastoral service.
80

81 **Authority**

82 Historically, the Committee on Ministry was authorized and required through the Book
83 of Order. The current Book of Order does not require presbyteries to have a
84 Committee on Ministry but does require presbyteries to develop and maintain
85 mechanisms and processes to serve teaching elders and congregations within their
86 bounds (G-3.0307). The Presbytery of Middle Tennessee has chosen to continue using a
87 Committee on Ministry. Therefore, the authority of the Committee on Ministry is
88 derived from the Book of Order and the presbytery's *Mission and Operations Manual*.
89 The *Mission and Operations Manual* of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee defines the
90 responsibility and authority of the Committee on Ministry as follows:
91

92 *The Committee on Ministry serves as advisor to teaching elders, ruling elders*
93 *commissioned to pastoral service, certified Christian educators, sessions, and*
94 *congregations of the presbytery. The Committee on Ministry oversees the processes for*
95 *congregations in transitions in pastoral leadership, and guides sessions seeking*
96 *temporary pastoral relationships.*
97

98 *The membership of the Committee on Ministry shall be 18 persons - nine ruling elders*
99 *and nine teaching elders, none of whom shall represent the same congregation.*
100 *Committee on Ministry members shall exercise appropriate confidentiality in the*
101 *committee's work. The Committee on Ministry may use teaching elders and ruling*
102 *elders not among its members for service in particular capacities. The Executive*
103 *Presbyter and the Stated Clerk shall serve as staff support to the Committee on*
104 *Ministry.*

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The Committee on Ministry is granted authority by the Presbytery to act on its behalf on the following:

- *Review and approve terms of call for teaching elders and commissioned ruling elders;*
- *Approve calls of teaching elder members of the presbytery within the presbytery;*
- *Annually review and approve temporary pastoral relationships, including Interims, as well as concur with the termination of temporary pastoral relationships when requested by sessions;*
- *Annual review and validate ministries of teaching elders not serving in congregations;*
- *Dissolve installed pastoral relationships when the teaching elder and congregation concur, and abolish pastoral positions when requested by the congregation;*
- *Dismiss teaching elders to other presbyteries, upon the request of the calling presbytery;*
- *Grant requests from teaching elders for release from exercise of ordered ministry with the reasons for such release recorded in the minutes of the Presbytery;*
- *Recommend to presbytery the initial commissioning of ruling elders to particular pastoral service;*
- *Review and renew commissions of ruling elders;*
- *Call meetings of sessions;*
- *Approve moderators of sessions for churches without an installed pastor;*
- *Designate persons to moderate session and congregational meetings;*
- *Designate members of the Committee on Ministry, the Executive Presbyter, or the Stated Clerk, to preside at meetings of the session and/or congregation; such person may not moderate the session of the church of which that person is a member;*
- *Grant status of Honorable Retirement to teaching elders;*
- *Grant status of Member-at-Large to teaching elders;*
- *Maintain the pulpit supply list and list of trained interim teaching elders;*
- *Responsible for Presbytery’s annual sexual misconduct training;*
- *Perform the initial in-depth examination of candidates seeking ordination by the Presbytery, after clearance of appropriate background checks;*
- *Perform the in-depth examination of all teaching elders seeking membership in the Presbytery, after clearance of appropriate background checks; if the teaching elder does not receive unanimous approval of the Committee on Ministry, a subsequent examination of the teaching elder must occur at Presbytery upon request; and*
- *The Presbytery of Middle Tennessee does not receive a teaching elder seeking membership in the Presbytery as a member-at-large unless the teaching elder is*

145 *the spouse of a teaching elder being received by the Committee on Ministry for*
146 *the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee, or a teaching elder pursuing post-graduate*
147 *study within the bounds of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee.*

148 Therefore, the Committee on Ministry’s primary mode of being in relationship – after
149 the model of Jesus Christ – takes the forms of pastor, counselor, facilitator, and
150 companion in the journey of faith and ministry with the congregations and persons
151 who are members of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee.

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155 **SECTION 2**

156 **THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY**

157
158 The Committee on Ministry's work is divided into five categories and therefore into five
159 teams and task forces. The team tasked with caring for the people who are members
160 of the presbytery is the **Pastoral Care Team**. The task force charged with caring for
161 churches as they go through transitions in leadership is the **Transitions Task Force**. The
162 task force responsible for examination persons requesting membership in the
163 presbytery is the **Examinations Task Force**. Sessions, teaching elders, commissioned
164 ruling elders, certified Christian educators, and congregations and their roles of service
165 to the church, the **Calls and Contracts**, are reviewed by the Stated Clerk. The team
166 responsible for the presbytery's connection with churches including times of stress
167 and/or conflict is the **Mediation Team**.

168
169 The *Mission and Operations Manual* allows all committees within the presbytery to
170 function in the following ways:

171
172 *Committees may set their own meeting schedules, and may utilize*
173 *teleconferencing / videoconferencing (i.e., conference call, Skype, etc.) to*
174 *take action. Meetings shall ensure that all members can participate, a*
175 *quorum is present, and minutes are prepared and provided to members*
176 *within a reasonable period of time after the meeting. Committee minutes,*
177 *including team, task force, and work group reports, shall be provided to the*
178 *Administrative Committee, as well as to the presbytery office and the*
179 *Stated Clerk. The notice of the meeting shall include any motions and / or*
180 *documents or other information necessary for the committee's work. Any*
181 *action(s) taken shall be reported at the next regularly scheduled meeting of*
182 *the committee through its minutes, and to the next stated meeting of the*
183 *presbytery through its report. Non-members may participate in the*
184 *meeting, at the invitation of the committee chair and with the approval of*
185 *a majority of the committee members. Voting by electronic means on*
186 *committee matters shall be allowed as long as the vote is received within*
187 *the time limit set by the chair of the committee.*

188
189 *Regular attendance by members of committees is necessary and expected*
190 *for the effective work of the presbytery. When a person has unexcused*
191 *absences from three consecutive meetings of a committee, this shall*
192 *constitute an automatic resignation of the member. Any and all*
193 *resignations shall be reported to the chair of the Administrative Committee*

194 *and the chair of the Nominating Task Force in order to proceed with a*
195 *replacement.*

196
197 *The term of office for persons elected to serve on committees shall be three*
198 *years except for the Permanent Judicial Commission, whose members are*
199 *elected for one six-year term. Membership shall be arranged in three*
200 *classes. No person shall serve an aggregate of more than six consecutive*
201 *years on a committee. After six consecutive years of service, a member*
202 *must rotate off for one year before being eligible to serve another term on*
203 *that committee; the only exception to this rule is service as Moderator of*
204 *the presbytery.*

205
206 The Committee on Ministry normally meets monthly and all of its members are
207 assigned to one or more task forces or teams. The teams and task forces meet
208 separately as needed. The teams and task forces have chairs that coordinate with the
209 Chair of the Committee on Ministry and with the Executive Presbyter to insure that the
210 work is being accomplished. In addition to serving on task forces or teams, members of
211 the Committee on Ministry will need to serve as liaisons to churches, sessions and
212 staffs. Since some of the work of Committee on Ministry overlaps with the functions of
213 the Executive Presbyter and the Stated Clerk, the Executive Presbyter and the Stated
214 Clerk meet with the Committee on Ministry and serve as resources as needed.

215
216 Each task force and team of the Committee on Ministry will develop the necessary
217 resources to fulfill their functions. These documents must be approved by the entire
218 Committee on Ministry. These documents, attached as appendices to this manual, will
219 be updated as necessary by the presbytery staff, upon approval of the Committee on
220 Ministry. The presbytery office maintains files on congregations, teaching elders,
221 commissioned ruling elders, etc. The Committee on Ministry may have access to these
222 files through the COM Chair, and may have opportunity to provide information to be
223 placed in the file.

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SECTION 3 TRANSITIONS TASK FORCE

The Transitions Task Force works in conjunction with sessions, teaching elders, and congregations through training, resources, and support. The Transitions Task Force

1. guides sessions and congregations during times of transition from the announcement of a pastor’s departure until the time of the installation of new pastoral leadership;
2. makes recommendation for dissolution of pastoral relationship when pastor and congregation concur;
3. recommends establishment and dissolution of pastoral positions;
4. assists congregations without installed pastors in obtaining leadership, recommending the appointments of moderators of sessions without installed pastors;
5. approves Ministry Information Forms;
6. reports concerns affecting health of congregations to the Mediation Team; and
7. encourages and assists congregations in transitions with mission studies.

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SECTION 4 EXAMINATIONS TASK FORCE

The Examinations Task Force conducts the in-depth examination of Teaching Elders requesting membership in the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee, as well as candidates, and Ruling Elders for commissioning to particular pastoral service. The Examinations Task Force

- performs the in-depth examination of all teaching elders seeking membership in the Presbytery, after clearance of appropriate background checks; if the teaching elder does not receive unanimous approval of the Committee on Ministry, a subsequent examination of the teaching elder must occur at Presbytery upon request;
- performs the initial in-depth examination of candidates seeking ordination by the Presbytery; as part of the examination by the presbytery, the candidate will be required to present a sermon / homily at the presbytery meeting.
- works with the executive presbyter and stated clerk to insure that all required background checks are performed prior to the examination;
- reviews the statement of faith and autobiographical statement of the person being examined. Upon approval of the examination by the COM, these documents will be presented to the presbytery at the time of the examination by the presbytery.

The Presbytery of Middle Tennessee does not receive a teaching elder seeking membership in the Presbytery as a member-at-large unless the teaching elder is the spouse of a teaching elder being received by the Committee on Ministry for the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee, or a teaching elder pursuing post-graduate study within the bounds of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee.

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SECTION 5 CALLS AND CONTRACTS

The Stated Clerk works with congregations and people who are members of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee to support sessions, teaching elders, commissioned ruling elders, certified Christian educators, and congregations. In conjunction with the presbytery office, the Stated Clerk

- maintains contact and reviews status with all teaching elders, commissioned ruling elders, and certified Christian educators;
- reviews the initial terms of call to insure the terms meet the presbytery's minimum terms of call;
- reviews annually the adequacy of terms of calls of all full time installed teaching elders and full time commissioned ruling elders;
- reviews and recommends annual renewals of temporary pastoral relationships and contracts;
- reviews and makes recommendations regarding the status of Teaching Elders who are members-at-large;
- reviews and makes recommendations regarding teaching elders and validated ministries outside congregations (G-2.0503);
- reports to the COM any teaching elders who are not in a validated ministry and do not fulfill the requirements of member-at-large;
- works with presbytery staff to maintain a roster for pulpit supply and interims (posted on the presbytery website); and
- works with presbytery staff to maintain a roster of teaching elders within the presbytery who have successfully completed Week I of Interim Training and who are open to serving as interims.

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SECTION 6
PASTORAL CARE TEAM

The Pastoral Care Team will work with the Executive Presbyter and Committee on Ministry to ensure teaching elders in the presbytery are provided with pastoral care. This team, composed of a minimum of seven (7) people, will include members of the Pastor-to-Pastor Program and others who may be recruited to extend care. The convener of the Pastoral Care Team shall be a member of the Committee on Ministry. The Executive Presbyter shall serve as staff to the Pastoral Care Team.

The Pastoral Care Team will carry out the COM’s support of commissioned ruling elders and teaching elders who are making the transition from theological education to ordered ministry. This support is facilitated by appointing mentors and by overseeing and supporting these relationships.

The Pastoral Care Team will appoint a mentor, who is an experienced teaching elder member of the Presbytery of Middle Tennessee. The mentor shall be assigned for a period of two (2) years to teaching elders entering their first call, and indefinitely for commissioned ruling elders. If for any reason the relationship needs to be dissolved, the two should first discuss the need with each other and then confer with the convener of the Pastoral Care Team, to facilitate the dissolution and assignment of a new mentor.

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355 **SECTION 7**
356 **MEDIATION TEAM**
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358 The Mediation Team works with congregations, sessions, teaching elders,
359 commissioned ruling elders, and certified Christian Educators to provide congregational
360 care and to facilitate the resolution of any conflict.

361
362 The Mediation Team, composed of 12 members (teaching and ruling elders), will be
363 responsible for inquiring into difficulties within congregations. Members of the
364 Mediation Team will work with the Stated Clerk, the Executive Presbyter, and the chair
365 of the Committee on Ministry to address concerns that arise within the presbytery.
366 Ordinarily, investigating committee members shall be appointed from the Mediation
367 Team. Mandatory training will be provided for the Mediation Team. The convener of
368 this team shall be a member of the Committee on Ministry. The Executive Presbyter
369 and Stated Clerk shall serve as staff to the Mediation Team.

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