

ADDENDUM AND PROPOSAL TO SUPPLEMENT THE GRACIOUS DISMISSAL POLICY
Revised 6.15.15

BACKGROUND

During the work done by the Gracious Dismissal Policy Task Force [TF], the members recognized that implementing the policy could become more complicated than writing it. While the TF studied many similar policies and had confidence in the one it ultimately recommended, it acknowledged that changes in the policy would be likely be necessary as Presbytery “lived into it.”

The first use of the Policy resulted in the dismissal of Englewood Presbyterian Church in Rocky Mount. The next use of the Policy led to the dismissal of Hollywood Presbyterian Church in West Greenville. A third PET is currently involved with First Presbyterian Church of Washington. As of today’s date, there is a request for a fourth PET, from two yoked congregations.

Each request creates challenges that could not be anticipated by the original TF. Some churches are desiring to enter into a broad conversation with NHP about denominational concerns, while others are asking questions that reflect a more urgent desire to leave the denomination. In some cases the congregation may be extremely unified in their sense of direction, while others may be more deeply divided by the prospect of dismissal. And in some cases congregations and pastors have made assumptions and taken actions that have made the process more difficult. The current policy limits the ability of the PET to respond appropriately to the particular congregational context by requiring the same process for each circumstance.

Therefore, a study group of people involved in the creation of the Policy and service on PET Teams, in consultation with Ted Churn, propose that an Addendum to the Policy be adopted by Coordinating Body and affirmed by the Presbytery so that the Presbytery will have appropriate flexibility in dealing with requests for discernment that could lead to dismissal of a congregation. This addendum does not require any changes in the original policy.

ADDENDUM
(For Working with Sessions and Congregations
Considering Using the Gracious Dismissal Policy)

Out of a desire to learn from experiences in administering the Gracious Dismissal Policy [GDP] to date, a commitment to ensure the Gracious Dismissal Process has maximum effectiveness, and in affirmation of the Presbytery’s commitment to avoid use of Administrative Commissions in so far as possible, the Presbytery through the Coordinating Body [CB] offers the following guidelines to any pastor or session discerning whether to continue or discontinue relationship with New Hope Presbytery and the PCUSA.

The CB and the Committee on Ministry [COM] request that any time a pastor or a group within a session begins to consider any public process that may lead to utilization of the Gracious Dismissal Policy, the pastor and/or session shall notify the Presbytery Executive and the Chair of the COM.

The response to such notification may simply be to note the communication or it may cause the formation of a PRESBYTERY DISCERNMENT TEAM (“PDT”) composed of two or three ruling or teaching

elders, to be named by the Executive Presbyter with the approval of the Chair of the Coordinating Body and the COM.

The purpose of the PDT would be to consult with the pastor and session, seeking to resolve concerns that may be causing such an action or to recommend the next step toward dismissal. Such consultation may include advising the pastor and session of the ECO paper, ***Things to Consider Before Leaving the PC(USA)*** [attached] and requesting the session and congregation to move through the recommended steps of that paper before taking further action.

The PDT would then recommend to the Coordinating Body one of the following options:

- (a) Continuing with implementation of the Gracious Dismissal Policy;
- (b) Negotiated dissolution of the relationship, led by the PDT, requiring compliance with Parts IV-VII of the Gracious Dismissal Policy;
- (c) An option to be designed by the PDT and approved by Coordinating Body. [Any option recommended under (c) would be required to include a provision for approval as outlined in Parts IV-VII of the Gracious Dismissal Policy.]

(Endorsed by the following members of the GDP Committee and past chairs of completed PETS.
Felecia Hardy, Cader Howard, Lori Pistor, Allan Poole, Art Ross, Rocky Stone