

# Some Provisions Related to Congregational Dismissals in the Annotated Book of Order

<http://index.pcusa.org/NXT/gateway.dll/Constitution/BOC-30/title00000.htm?f=templates&fn=default.htm>

## G-3.03 The Presbytery

### *G-3.0301 Composition and Responsibilities*

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In light of this charge, the presbytery has responsibility and power to:

a. *provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard.* This responsibility shall include organizing, receiving, merging, dismissing, and dissolving congregations in consultation with their members; overseeing congregations without pastors; establishing pastoral relationships and dissolving them; guiding the preparation of those preparing to become teaching elders; establishing and maintaining those ecumenical relationships that will enlarge the life and mission of the church in its district; providing encouragement, guidance, and resources to congregations in the areas of mission, prophetic witness, leadership development, worship, evangelism, and responsible administration to the end that the church's witness to the love and grace of God may be heard in the world.

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GA ([2008, 14, 15, 544, 546, Item 07-13](#)): Dismissing pby must determine whether receiving body's organization is conformed to the doctrines and order of PC(USA), including satisfying itself about whether this is true of transitional pby of EPC.

GA (2) No congregation may be dismissed to independent status.

GA (3) Administrative commissions may not be empowered to approve dismissal.

GA ([2008, 49, 51, 284, Item 04-28](#)): Asked that presbyteries and synods develop and make available to lower governing bodies and local congregations a process that exercises the responsibility to divide, dismiss, or dissolve churches in consultation with their members with consistency, pastoral responsibility, accountability, gracious witness, openness, and transparency.

PJC ([2010, 219-03, 362, Sundquist v. Heartland Pby](#)): "Withdrawal from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is not a matter that can be considered at a congregational meeting."

(2) " ... it is the presbytery (or its duly appointed administrative commission) that has the responsibility to consult with the members of a church about dismissal. The presbytery is

required to afford all persons affected by a dismissal notice ... an opportunity to be heard on the subject." (see [G-9.0505b\(2\)](#))

(3) "These consultations (which may be in the form of listening sessions, hearings or other consultations) are for the benefit of informing the presbytery as it considers a request for dismissal, but are not meetings at which any business of the congregation may be conducted."

(4) "Presbyteries and congregations have a reciprocal obligation for this process ([G-4.0302](#)). Whether the presbytery's power 'to divide, dismiss, or dissolve churches in consultation with their members' ([G-11.0103i](#)) is retained or delegated to an administrative commission, it is to be exercised in a pastoral manner, with litigation seen as a last resort, 'deadly to the cause of Christ'."

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c. nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ. This responsibility shall include ordaining, receiving, dismissing, installing, removing, and disciplining its members who are teaching elders **!**; commissioning ruling elders to limited pastoral service; promoting the peace and harmony of congregations and inquiring into the sources of congregational discord; supporting congregations in developing the graces of generosity, stewardship, and service; assisting congregations in developing mission and participating in the mission of the whole church; taking jurisdiction over the members of dissolved congregations and granting transfers of their membership to other congregations; warning and bearing witness against error in doctrine and immorality in practice within its bounds; and serving in judicial matters in accordance with the Rules of Discipline.

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GA ([1988, 140, 12.229, Req. 9-88](#)): When dismissing a church with its property, a presbytery is required to give proper consideration to the interests of the PC(USA).

PJC ([2006, 217-2, Johnston, et.al. v. Heartland Pby](#)): "A presbytery's duty to 'provide pastoral care to churches' includes a duty to engage them in conversation about their efforts to participate fully in the mission of the larger church."

## Previous FoG:

GA ([1987, 144, 15.178, Com. 1-87](#)): The congregation must decide the name of the other Reformed body when voting on dismissal under Article 13 of Articles of Agreement (1983). Provision expired in 1991.

## Earlier References:

([UPCUSA, 1958, 60](#)) Deals with congregations wanting to withdraw at time of union of PCUSA and UPCNA.