

PRESBYTERY OF EAST TENNESSEE

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

GUIDELINES FOR TRIENNIAL VISITS



March 2010

THE TRIENNIAL VISITS

I. PURPOSE OF THE VISITS:

The Committee on Ministry's responsibility"... to facilitate the relations between congregations, ministers, and the presbytery..." (*Book of Order* G-11.0501a) is accomplished in part through its triennial visit with each session of presbytery. This is essentially a pastoral visit by the presbytery to its churches to affirm and support the good ministry being accomplished in the name of Christ, to ask questions and share information that will raise the vision of church leaders, to encourage them as they seek to respond to God's call, and to help them deal with problems that may exist.

II. THE COMMISSION FOR THE VISITS:

To express the character of Scripture.

"For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that is, that we may be actually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine." (Romans 1:11-12 KJV)

To fulfill the mandates of the *Book of Order*.

"It [the Committee on Ministry] shall visit with each session of the presbytery at least once every three years, discussing with them the mission and ministry of the particular church and encouraging the full participation of each session and congregation in the life and work of presbytery and of the larger church." (G-11.0502c.)

To ensure that these guiding principles are being followed, those responsible on behalf of presbytery for the oversight and review of the ministry of particular worshipping congregations should discuss with those sessions the quality of worship, the standards governing it, and the fruit it is bearing in the life of God's people as they proclaim the gospel and communicate its joy and justice (W-1.4002.)

III. BASIC ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING THE VISITS.

- When will the triennial visits occur?

Ordinarily, the visit will happen as part of a stated session meeting, at whatever is the regular meeting of that church's session. The visit should last 45 minutes to an hour.

- Who will be visiting?

Ordinarily, a pastor and elder, at least one of whom is a current COM member.

- Will they also visit with the pastor(s)?

Yes, the pastors are members of the session.

- What will the visit include?

(See "outline of a visit" below)

- Will there be a written report of the visit?
Yes, a 1-page written report that will go to the COM and the session that was visited.
- Will our visitors join the congregation for worship?
Yes, if the session meeting happens near the time of regular worship services.
- Can the session have more visits with presbytery visitors?
Yes, COM representatives and presbytery staff will be glad to make additional visits to the session.

IV. THE VISIT

Open with prayer for the session, the church and the presbytery's "mission and ministry."

Introduction – visitors – session.

Explain the purpose of the visit. Refer to I and II – "Discussing the mission and ministry of the church."

The questions – page 5

Thank the session for meeting with the visiting team.

Close with prayer.

V. SUGGESTIONS FOR THE VISITORS

- The team should be comprised of at least two persons, a minister and elder, one should be a member of the Committee on Ministry.
- Arrangements to visit the session should be made in advance, preferably in writing.
- The team should be appropriately attired arriving on agreed time.
- If feasible, the team is encouraged to worship with the congregation.
- During the visit, it is essential that an atmosphere of sharing, caring and affirming be cultivated. Remember, this is a pastoral visit "to facilitate the relations between congregations, ministers and presbytery..."
- Remember we are there to LISTEN and LEARN.
- The session should be sent a letter of thanks within a week.

- The visitor(s) should report at the next COM meeting that the visit was made and if there are any significant concerns that require attention.
- A copy of the report (page 6) should be provided to the session visited and the COM Triennial Visit Coordinator.

TRIENNIAL VISIT
MINISTRY AND MISSION REFLECTION

“Discussing the mission and ministry of the church”

1. Share briefly your history with the congregation.
2. When did you become an active member of this church?
3. When did you first become an elder/minister?

“Highlight the ‘mission and ministry’ of this church”

1. Beyond Sunday worship, how does this congregation serve Jesus Christ?
2. What new ministries have begun in the last 2-3 years?
3. In what long-term ministries do you participate, and actively support?
4. Are you involved in our Presbytery’s ministries at college campus (UTC, UTK) and in community centers (Sunset Gap, Morgan-Scott, Newton Center)?
5. What national PCUSA ministries do you actively support?

PRESBYTERY OF EAST TENNESSEE
TRIENNIAL VISIT REPORT

CHURCH_____CITY_____

VISITATION TEAM_____

DATE OF VISIT_____

1. Describe the satisfactions, joys, values, dreams and other positive reflections the session shared during the visit

2. What major concerns were identified?

3. What areas were defined where presbytery may be of help to the session?