

Plan of Assimilation for _____ Church

I. IDENTIFICATION FACTS

- A. Name of church:
- B. Meeting Site or Church address:
- C. Pastor:
- D. Project sponsors: [Presbytery and Missions Ministry Team]
- E. Date of this proposal:
- F. Pastor mentor: The Presbytery's Board of Missions recommends that Rev. _____ serve as mentor.

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

[Review of the process by which the congregation has come to seek affiliation with the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, its sense of mission and call, along with a brief history of the church.]

III. SUMMARY OF LONG RANGE GOALS

With the approval of this Assimilation Plan by _____ Presbytery, and with the acceptance of Pastor _____ as an ordained Cumberland Presbyterian minister under provisional status, and _____ Church under provisional status, the effort to establish a new Cumberland Presbyterian congregation under the guidelines of this plan will commence. General Assembly-approved resolutions explaining this provisional status are found in the Appendix of this plan. The primary goal is to incorporate this congregation into the Cumberland Presbyterian Church using a plan of assimilation during provisional status that will involve a process over a period of no less than two years, providing various opportunities for the congregation and members of presbytery to become well acquainted.

The presbytery, basically through its Board of Missions, the pastor mentor, and with assistance of the General Assembly Council's Missions Ministry Team, will implement this plan, so that progress toward assimilation can be objectively evaluated, leading toward the Church becoming a full member of _____ Presbytery and the denomination. It is anticipated that the church will continue outreach activities over the next two years that will increase the present size and ministries of the congregation.

At the same time, the _____ congregation will assist the presbytery in broadening its ministry. This assimilation process is regarded as a time of mutual sharing, growth in Christian love and bonds of unity. As Christians, each new partner is influenced, changed and encouraged by the other.

IV. EXPECTATIONS

A. The Congregation

It is expected that the church will:

- place Jesus Christ as Head of the church in all areas of ministry.
- be openly and avowedly evangelistic toward and receptive of all people, regardless of any artificial distinctions which separate people from one another.
- understand the Word of God to be the essential means through which the Holy Spirit works, and understand proclamation of the Good News of God's love in Jesus Christ to be necessary for bringing people to a saving faith.
- learn, during the provisional period, to be Cumberland Presbyterian in doctrine, practice, and polity as outlined in the 1984 Confession of Faith.
- be responsive to its ministry area, endeavoring to minister to the needs of people, always focusing mission on people and people-needs.
- be specifically sensitive to and appreciative of the needs, life issues, challenges, and opportunities of those of Korean heritage and/or whose primary language is Korean, particularly those who are first and second generation residents in the US, developing ministries and programs to address these persons.
- provide regular and special worship and study opportunities in the Cumberland Presbyterian tradition with sufficient flexibility to meet the worship and study needs of those it seeks to reach with its ministry.
- develop substantive programs of nurture for its members, giving special attention to opportunities for learning, socializing, serving, sharing substance and faith, and the development of a loving, caring fellowship (fellowship with God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and one another).
- make every attempt to participate in the life of the CPC on the presbyterial, synodical, and, when possible, the General Assembly level through participation, giving, and prayer.
- be willing to make sacrifices to develop a meaningful relationship with the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.
- participate enthusiastically in training activities that will result in the church, pastor and lay leadership becoming part of the CPC.

B. Pastor Mentor

The Pastor Mentor will be:

- an experienced ordained minister who is a member of _____ Presbytery.
- - able and willing to guide the pastor through the necessary steps to be recognized as a Cumberland Presbyterian pastor.
- willing to introduce the pastor to other CP pastors and leaders, thereby helping build collegial relationships within the CPC.
- available and able to answer questions the pastor will have concerning the CPC and _____ Presbytery.
- an advocate and friend of the new pastor, helping him/her represent concerns and ideas before the presbytery and its committees.

V. ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS OF ASSIMILATION

A variety of events, activities and opportunities for interaction will facilitate the congregation's progress toward full membership in the CPC. The following activities are indicative, but not exhaustive, of the kinds of involvements that will be helpful.

Presbyterial Participation

The pastor and, when possible, a lay leader of _____ Church will attend all presbytery meetings. When requested, the pastor and/or a lay leader will be available to meet with committees of the presbytery. Notices of all meetings will be sent to the pastor of the Korean congregation and a lay representative.

Presbytery may consider the pastor/lay leaders for service on presbyterial committees.

Communication with _____ Church

The pastor mentor and a member of the BOM of presbytery will stay in contact with the congregation. This will be done primarily through phone calls, e-mail, and visits.

Presbytery Assistance and Counsel

The _____ Presbytery BOM will facilitate workshops that will provide the _____ Church information about what membership means in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.

Arkansas Presbytery
Pulpit Supply Agreement

Guidelines for those serving as Pulpit Supply in Arkansas Presbytery who are ordained ministers or members of another denomination:

- Demonstrate an understanding of and the value of the history, theology, and ministry of the church you are serving.
- Support the governing structure, the Session, with the knowledge that you cannot moderate or conduct any meeting of this body.
- Support the knowledge that you are restricted from receiving members into the church or administering baptism under the authority of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church.
- Understand and support the knowledge that you serve as Pulpit Supply under the direction of the Session and Arkansas Presbytery.
- You will strive to attend meetings of Arkansas Presbytery.
- Provide written reports of your work in the church to Arkansas Presbytery or its designee as requested.
- You are serving the church for longer than six months.

This form established a Pulpit Supply relationship between _____
And _____ the Cumberland Presbyterian Church as set forth in these guidelines.

Minister address: _____

Phone number: _____ Email address: _____

Denomination of Ordination (if ordained): _____

Signatures:

_____ Minister	_____ Date	_____ Session Clerk	_____ Date
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Moderator of Church Session

Date

**** The session and session clerk will assure this form is completed and forwarded to the Stated Clerk and chair of the Board of Missions of Arkansas Presbytery.**

APPENDIX I

SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT For Presbyterian Appointed Church Session Moderators

Date _____

Report from Rev. _____

Moderator of the _____ Church Session

Has communion been served at least once during this quarter? Yes ____ No ____

Has the church had preaching at least once each month? Yes ____ No ____

Brief statement of your activities with the church and other information you care to share with the Board of Missions.

(This report is to be sent to the stated clerk, prior to the presbyterial board meetings, for referral to the Board of Missions from the date of your appointment. If you are the appointed moderator of more than one church, please use a separate form for each church.

Please copy this form to have additional copies.)

RELATIONS BETWEEN MINISTERS, LICENTIATES, OR CANDIDATES AND CHURCHES

The Pastoral Relationship

The relationship between a pastor and congregation is special and holy. In addressing this relationship there are a few things of great importance.

First, everything about this relationship is explained in the Confession of Faith. The Confession of Faith is the authority for this relationship within the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. This is elaborately addressed in Article 7 of the Constitution.

Second, it is the belief that the Confession of Faith expresses the relationship based upon scripture, tradition, and practice.

Third, the language of the Confession of Faith is church language, not the business nor professional language of our day. While this is so, we will describe it using a business or professional term: it is *binding*.

An example of this is reflected in the language of the business and professional world that speaks of *hiring, employing, firing, etc.* The church speaks of *the call, approval of the relationship, dissolving the relationship, etc.* Emphasis is on the *relationship*. The church would do well to remind itself of this and be careful in the language we speak and write in reports and minutes.

The Confession of Faith states "A person may be **called** to a particular church to one of four relationships: pastor, associate/assistant pastor, stated supply, or interim pastor" (7.01, the Constitution).

The Call

The Confession of Faith states in the Constitution, "God calls persons and sets them apart for this ministry [Minister of the Word and Sacrament]" (2.61). The entire process of setting apart persons for this office is the charge of the presbytery.

"The presbytery is charged with pastoral oversight and has the responsibility to:

- a. Receive, examine, dismiss, and license candidates and ordain them to the ministry (5.6, the Constitution).

The Presbytery receives candidates based on the examination of "... personal religious experience, motives leading to the seeking of the office of the ministry and **the internal call to it**, and plans for education" (The Constitution, 6.14). The presbytery continues to oversee the candidate's progress through licensure and ordination. Through ordination, the presbytery is saying that it confirms **the call of God** for this person.

The constitution gives the right of pastoral oversight of a congregation to the session. This does not mean oversight of the pastor. Rather it means,

The session is charged with pastoral oversight of the particular church and has the responsibility to:

- a. **Call** a pastor (also an associate/assistant pastor) **subject** to the approval of presbytery;¹
- b. Receive members into the church;
- c. Resolve questions of doctrine and discipline in the congregation;
- d. Admonish or suspend members found guilty in a disciplinary hearing, subject to appeal to presbytery;
- e. Urge upon parents the importance of presenting their children for baptism;
- f. Grant letters of dismissal, which when given for parents shall always include the names of their baptized children;
- g. Ordain and install elders and deacons when elected and require these officers to devote themselves to their responsibilities;
- h. Examine the proceedings and supervise the work of the deacons;
- i. Establish and give oversight to church schools, Bible classes, fellowship and other organizations within the church, with special attention being given to nurture of the children;
- j. Encourage the stewardship of church members, order and supervise collections for Godly purposes, and in general, oversee the finances of the church;
- k. Assemble the congregation and provide worship when there is no minister;
- l. Initiate and coordinate the best measures for promoting and extending the work of the church;
- m. Elect representatives to the higher church judicatories, and require on their return a report of their diligence and decisions of the judicatory;
- n. Observe and carry out the injunctions of the higher judicatories (the Constitution, 4.5).

The **call** when issued, accepted, and approved by presbytery is binding. In other words, it is *contractual*. Sessions should not send contracts to presbytery for approval. In essence, the call is the contract. The **call** is *three-partied*: the session, the minister, and the presbytery. The next section elaborates upon this three-party acceptance.

The Approval of Presbytery

The session has the responsibility to **call** a pastor, “. . . subject to the approval of presbytery” (the Constitution, 4.5 a). In the business and professional world, most contracts are between two parties. In the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, the **call** which serves as the contract is between three parties. All three must agree and approve the **call**.

If a session does not issue a **call**, there is no relationship to approve. If the minister does not accept the **call**, there is no relationship. If a presbytery does not approve the **call**, there is no relationship. All is void. The relationship between a pastor and congregation exists only with the *approval of presbytery*.

“A person shall enter into one of these relationships [pastor, associate/assistant pastor, stated supply, or interim pastor] with a particular church **only** with the *approval of the presbytery* in the bounds of which the particular church is located. The presbytery may authorize its board of missions to act on its behalf in examining the **call** and to give tentative approval to a relationship between a particular church and a minister, licentiate, or candidate, subject to *formal approval at a meeting of the presbytery*” (the Constitution, 7.06).

There are three parties involved in this **call**, and the role of presbytery is vital and imperative. Actual approval of the relationship can only be given by presbytery. Equally so, the role of the presbytery is vital and imperative in dissolving the relationship, whatever the reasons.

The Dissolution of the Relationship

There are three parties involved in the approval of the relationship, and there are three parties involved in the dissolution of the relationship. BUT, **only** presbytery may dissolve the relationship. The session and pastor may request the relationship be dissolved, but they do not have the power nor the authority to dissolve the relationship. If “sufficient reasons” are presented, the relationship may be dissolved upon request of one of the parties. If the well-being of the particular congregation demands the dissolution according to the opinion of presbytery, the presbytery may dissolve the relationship (the Constitution 7.07).

This may be one of the more abused items of the Constitution. In the normal flow of changing pastors, many pastors move out of the bounds of presbytery before the dissolution of the relationship. The dissolution has become a *rubber stamping* process that is taken for granted until there is a problem. Then, we forget what the Constitution says.

Interestingly, Article 7.06 of the Constitution allows that, “The presbytery may authorize its board of missions to act upon its behalf in examining the call and to give tentative approval of a relationship between a particular church and a minister, licentiate, or candidate, subject to formal approval at a meeting of the presbytery.”

The Constitution does not grant this authority to the presbytery’s board of missions in the dissolution of the relationship. According to the Constitution, only the presbytery has this power (see article 7.07).

It is often assumed that the board of missions can tentatively grant dissolution because the board of missions is granted the authority to tentatively approve the call. Approval of the relationship and dissolution of the relationship ultimately belongs to presbytery according to the Constitution.

In Conclusion

"The presbytery is charged with pastoral oversight and has the responsibility to: . . . Establish the pastoral relation and dissolve it at the request of one or both parties, or where the interests of religion imperatively demand it;" (the Constitution 5.6 g.). This task should never be taken lightly!

It is very easy for us to forget our connectional nature and a particular church's relationship to the presbytery. In a presbyterian system, power is always with the presbytery, not the congregation. Our congregations are not autonomous! Our government is not congregational! We are connected and the presbytery is responsible for oversight of all of our congregations and pastors. As congregations and pastors, we are only part of the process and are given the opportunity to participate in it. Ultimately, the presbytery has such oversight to empower congregations, not control them.

Hopefully, this explanation is helpful.

The Board of Missions,
Arkansas Presbytery

¹ *In calling a minister to be the pastor or associate/assistant pastor of the church, the session should endeavor to ascertain the will of the membership, and should select the minister it believes will best serve the interests of that particular church. The **call** should be presented to the minister as follows:*

*Church, being satisfied of your ministerial qualifications and being confident of your ability to minister to the diverse needs of this congregation extends to you a call to serve for an indefinite period of time as pastor (or associate/assistant pastor) of this church and to join with us in a ministry to the entire community. We commit ourselves to provide the support, cooperation, and encouragement necessary to enable you to fulfill this **calling**. We pledge to pay an annual salary of \$ _____.*

*The **call** may then detail other considerations such as vacation arrangements, sick leave, travel costs in serving the congregation, and terms regulating the termination of the contract. The **call** in its entirety will be subject to the approval of the presbytery (Appendix 4, the Constitution).*

THE CALL OF THE REVEREND (Mrs, Miss, Mr.)

As Pastor of the

Cumberland Presbyterian Church

The _____ Cumberland Presbyterian Church, being satisfied of your ministerial qualifications and being confident of your ability to minister to the diverse needs of this congregation extends to you a call to serve for an indefinite period of time as pastor (or associate/assistant pastor) of this church and to join with us in a ministry to the entire community.

We commit ourselves to provide the support, cooperation, and encouragement necessary to enable you to fulfill this calling.

We pledge to pay an annual salary of \$_____.

In addition we agree to provide:

- _____ weeks of vacation for you and your family,
- _____ days off per week,
- \$_____ travel costs in serving this congregation,
- ⇒ the congregation's proportion of health insurance and disability insurance to cover you,
- ⇒ a manse (or a housing allowance of \$_____),
- ⇒ and a utility allowance of \$_____.

The termination of this call will be issued by either party with a notice of _____ days and approval of Arkansas Presbytery.

(The call may then detail other considerations such as sick leave, periodic review of the call, etc.)

Signed:

_____, Stated Clerk

_____, Minister being called

- ⇒ The call in its entirety will be subject to the approval of the presbytery (Appendix 4, the Constitution).