

GUIDELINES FOR THE MINISTER IN QUESTION For the Review Process

(Note: the steps referred to below are the steps of "A Process for Review of Ministerial Standing.")

The intention of the review process is to build up the whole church. The process is guided by two principles:

- *Concerns for the spiritual health and vitality of the church are at the heart of the process. This means that the pastoral concern for both the minister in question and the church body may call for times in which such care may be given for either or both, the individual and the group.*
- *The hearing shall be fair, impartial, and confidential for the person in question, the persons making the allegations, and the wider church family. While this is a church process and not a civil or criminal proceeding, it is to be fair, impartial, and confidential. This means that the nature of allegations must be clearly understood, that the minister in question is given adequate opportunity for response, that all persons are aware of the process that will be followed, and that all people involved will maintain confidentiality.*

One of the intentions of "A Process for Review of Ministerial Standing" is to assure that the ministerial leader is not subject to unfair allegations or a process which may be unfair to him or her. While a structured process may seem at first to be threatening, some parts are specifically intended to provide fairness for the ministerial leader in question.

The insistence that allegations be written may seem to draw the lines between the involved parties very sharply. The intent of writing allegations is that some extraneous issues are eliminated and the real issues are (hopefully) brought into focus.

At all points, the process is intended to be fair to the person about whom allegations are made. It is also hoped that this process is surrounded by pastoral care for all persons.

Step Four of the Process -- Preliminary Exploration: The preliminary exploration is intended to be an informal process in which the Department of Ministry and the minister in question can explore the allegations made. In light of the guidelines above, the goal of the exploration is to seek a resolution to the issues raised. This is helpful to both the ministerial leader as well as to the church community. It is important to note that the Department of Ministry has five possible courses of action:

- a. The Department may discover that there is no warrant for a review hearing and exonerate the person.
- b. The person may acknowledge the truth of the allegations and work with the Department in deciding which of the actions (listed under #6c in the Review Process) will be followed.
- c. The Department may, in the event of an unusually grave or emergency situation, temporarily suspend recognition of ordination for a period of not more than ninety (90) days. During this period the Department shall convene a review hearing to consider the matter fully. Notice of this decision shall be given to the person in question and the appropriate denominational bodies.

Adopted by the National Commission on the Ministry, January 18, 1991

Revised: January 21, 1993

* Edited by the Ministerial Leadership Commission, March 15, 1995

- d. The person may dispute the allegations in full or in part, and yet work out with the Department a plan to deal with the situation without utilizing the full process of the review hearing.
- e. The person may dispute the allegations and the Department may decide to utilize the review hearing process to investigate and make a decision about the allegations.

It is important to note that the process has intentionally deferred the direct consideration of any action on the recognition of ordination for a more formal hearing. Having called for the preliminary exploration, the Department cannot go beyond these five options. It is hoped that this will help to create a climate in which resolution and reconciliation are possible. To this end, the Department will not be meeting with those making the allegations, but only with the minister in question. The Department will have the same written allegations which are to be sent to the minister in question. By the time the process has come to this point, the minister in question should have received:

- (1) "A Process for Review of Ministerial Standing"
- (2) A written statement of allegations

Once the individual receives notice of the allegations, it is their responsibility to inform the Department of Ministry as to their response to the allegations and whether or not they will be at the preliminary exploration. The response to the allegations may be in writing or by meeting in person with the Department of Ministry (or both). It should be noted that the Department of Ministry may proceed whether or not the individual chooses to appear or respond.

Step Six of the Process -- Review Hearing: If the Department of Ministry decides to proceed with a review hearing, there are several things which should be noted. The review hearing is not a court setting. The suggested process for a review hearing outlines a process which seeks to be fair, but is not adversarial. Those making the allegations will have an opportunity to present their side, without the interruption associated with American courtrooms. They will have a time limit to present the allegations. Then the minister in question will have the same opportunity, within time limits allowed, to present whatever evidence he/she may have regarding the allegations. In this format, with presentations by both sides, they may raise questions during your time. They will be in the form of a presentation to the Department of Ministry, rather than addressed directly to one of the persons making the allegations.

The minister in question will have three times during the hearing to present materials to the Department of Ministry. He/she may bring a person to be an advocate, friend, and/or support. This person may be clergy or lay. If you do not have someone to fill this role, you may request the Executive Minister or the Ministers Council to appoint one for you. As you may have noticed in the paper, "A Process for Review of Ministerial Standing," this is a church matter and not a civil or criminal procedure.

If you have any questions, please contact the Executive Minister or the Chair of the Department of Ministry.

*Effective January 1, 1994, the National Commission on the Ministry was renamed the Ministerial Leadership Commission.

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