

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

Revised: January 21, 1993

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

## **IMPLEMENTING GUIDELINES FOR THOSE MAKING ALLEGATIONS**

### **For the Review Process**

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

**Step One of the Process -- Written Allegations:** The Department of Ministry in a Region has been given the task of governance over the (ordination process and) process of recognition of ordination and any review of such recognition.

- a. Any person making an allegation about the conduct of a ministerial leader which may call for a review hearing shall address those concerns to the Chair of the Department of Ministry (c/o the Region office) with a copy to the Executive Minister of the Region.
- b. The process of exploration of allegations and, potentially, a review hearing shall be 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 the 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.
- c. In order to be fair, any allegations about a ministerial leader must be made in writing (whether they are made by staff, other ministerial leaders, or lay persons). The allegations must be written in a clear and concise manner, signed, and fall in one or both of the following categories so that the nature of the allegations are clearly understood by all:
  - Delinquency of a moral, ethical, or financial nature which brings the church into disrepute.
  - Violation of expectations the church has about ethical behavior for its ministerial leaders as articulated in the Covenant and Code of Ethics for Professional Church Leaders of the ABC/USA.
- d. While these allegations need to be concise, they must also contain sufficient data for the Department of Ministry in the process of preliminary exploration. In this stage the person in question will be given an opportunity to respond to the written allegations. Those making the allegations will not be invited to make a presentation at this time, so the written allegations should contain enough detail for the Department to rule whether or not there is sufficient reason for calling a review hearing as well as to work for reconciliation.

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- e. At the time a person makes allegations about a particular ministerial leader, that person should receive a copy of these Implementing Guidelines and a copy of the Region's Process of Review for Ministerial Standing.

**Step Six of the Process -- The Review Hearing:** The individuals bringing the allegations have several responsibilities at the time of the Review Hearing. With all the persons involved in the review process, they must keep in mind that the spiritual health and vitality of the church and all of its people is the central concern. One of the hopes and goals of this process is reconciliation and healing. For this reason the hearing is to be conducted:

- in a spirit of prayer, seeking God's guidance,
- in a fair and impartial manner, consistent with the Golden Rule, and
- with high regard for confidentiality (that all persons involved agree to hold in confidence all that is said and done).

Those making allegations about the minister in question shall have three opportunities during the review hearing to address the issues. The first will include the presentation of evidence and calling of witnesses to support the allegations (#6). The second will be in the rebuttal time following the presentation of the person in question (#8). The third will be the closing summary statement on behalf of those bringing the allegations (#11). Because there are limitations of time, these presentations will need to be limited to the allegations made and the relevant evidence. Those who offer evidence or testimony may be asked questions by the Department of Ministry (#10).

Before the hearing, the Department of Ministry will notify all participants as to the particular time limits for each part of the hearing and any other ground rules that may be needed. The time limits are intended to be fair and yet move the process forward.

**Step Seven of the Process -- Notification of Decision:** Those making the allegations, or their representative, shall be notified of the decision by the Department of Ministry within fifteen (15) days of the review hearing.

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

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