

## Presbytery of Nevada – Triennial Visits

### *Why conduct Triennial visits?*

\*A close relationship between the sessions and presbytery is a touchstone of the Book of Order (See below). Setting a positive tone of welcome, mutual respect, appreciation, and encouragement is the responsibility of both councils.

\*While not mandated, an intentional, regular cycle of pastoral visits between presbytery and sessions can be fundamental in building healthy relationships between councils and significantly furthering the mission of the church.

\*Well planned visits can serve both session and presbytery as ways to handle emerging problems and issues before they become difficulties. A regular cycle of pastoral visits is an effective tool in promoting the health of congregations in mission.

\*The intention of these relationships is good communication, encouragement, and support, all of which lead to effective mission in the larger community.

(From 2011-2013 Advisory Handbook for Ministry Committees/Commissions)

### Book Of Order principles that reinforce the purpose of Triennial Visits:

#### **G-3.0101** Councils as an Expression of Unity of the Church

The mutual interconnection of the church through its councils is a sign of the unity of the church.

#### **G-3.0202 d** Relations with Other Councils

Sessions have a particular responsibility to participate in the life of the whole church through participation in other councils. It is of particular importance that sessions ...

d. welcome representatives of the presbytery on the occasions of their visits

#### **G-3.0303** Relations with Sessions

Presbytery, being composed of the teaching elders and commissioners elected by the session of congregations within its district, has a particular responsibility to coordinate, guide, encourage, support, and resource the work of its congregations for the most effective witness to the broader community.

#### **G-3.0307** Pastor, Counselor, and Advisor to Teaching Elders and Congregations

Presbyteries shall be open at all times to communication regarding the life and ministry of their congregations. Each presbytery shall develop and maintain mechanisms and processes to ...facilitate the relations between the presbytery and its congregations...

### *Who conducts the Visit?*

Ordinarily, visits will be made by a team of two. When possible, one minister and one Ruling Elder. Ideally, both should be members of COM, but other ministers and elders may be co-opted if necessary. Whenever possible, the co-opted team member should have previous COM experience. Ideally the visiting team should not be from the same church. They may not be members of the church that is being visited.

### ***Before the Visit***

1. Contact the Moderator of the Session to schedule a one-hour visit with the Session and a meal with the Moderator and spouse (where applicable) prior to the Session meeting. Include Associate Pastor or arrange to meet with them at a separate time.

Confirm the date, time and location of meeting with teammate.

2. Once arrangements have been made with the Moderator, communicate with the Session, via the Clerk of Session, in writing, with the details of the Triennial Visit (see sample letter and questions). Communication with the Clerk may be through email or regular mail.

Instruct the Clerk to share the letter and sample questions with Session members prior to the meeting.

3. One week before the meeting, confirm the time and place of the meeting with the Moderator.

Use the sample questions to guide the conversation.

### ***The Triennial Visit***

1 The Moderator may introduce members of the COM and explain that they are here for the Triennial Visit. The Moderator then excuses him/herself from the meeting with the Session.

2. The COM member explains the purpose of the meeting and opens with prayer.

3. Session members introduce themselves (name, years on session, committee assignments, etc.)

4. Discussion using the questions previously sent to session members. COM members encourage all to participate and watch the time to keep the visit within the promised hour.

5. At the close of the meeting, the COM member offers thanks to Session members for their service and for their participation in the Triennial Visit. S/he makes any announcements/updates from the Presbytery of Nevada, such dates and location of next Presbytery meeting, etc.

6. Triennial Visit is closed with prayer by COM member.

### ***After the Visit***

1. COM member sends note of thanks to the Moderator and to the Clerk of Session via email or regular mail.

2. COM member prepares report of the Triennial Visit (See sample Report Form as a guide). Report is sent to Chair of COM, Moderator of the Session, and the Session (via the Clerk of Session).

Committee on Ministry  
The Presbytery of Nevada

Date

TRIENNIAL VISITS CONFIRMATION LETTER

*(This is a sample draft of letter to be sent after telephone call to pastor setting up a triennial visit. It should be sent to the clerk of session with a copy to the pastor.)*

Dear (Name of Clerk of Session):

This is to confirm that after consulting with the Moderator, a Triennial Visit has been scheduled with your Session on (date) at (time). (Name of team member) and (name of team member) from Committee on Ministry will attend your session meeting. We anticipate meeting with you for approximately an hour to share conversation and fellowship.

The Triennial Visit is an opportunity to hear how things have been going, to let you know we care about you, and to offer any help that you might need from the Committee on Ministry.

We are looking forward to celebrating your joys and hearing about any challenges you may be facing as you fulfill your mission within the Presbytery of Nevada. Enclosed is a list of possible questions we may be addressing during our time together.

Please contact (name of team member) at (phone number)/ (email address) if you have any questions before the above meeting. Thank you.

In Christ,

\_\_\_\_\_

Committee on Ministry

## **Suggested/Sample Questions for the Pastor/Moderator**

1. What brings you the most joy in this ministry? What have been your most satisfying experiences as Pastor in this church?
2. What are your dreams for this church?
3. What are the most pressing needs facing this church?
4. Is the ministry of this church sustainable? What is the church doing to make it sustainable?
5. What are your mission directions/goals?
6. Where are the tensions, if any?
7. How have you used continuing education time? What benefits has it brought to the congregation?
8. How are you taking care of yourself?
9. Do you feel you are being adequately compensated?
10. How can the COM be of support and/or assistance to you?

## **Suggested/Sample Questions for the Session**

1. What are some of the exciting ministries through your church?
2. If you were a visitor to this church, what would be your first impression?
3. Where do you see your greatest challenge as a church?
4. What has been the most difficult issue you have dealt with in the past year?
5. Where is the Lord leading your congregation – what is God’s vision for the future of your church?
6. What would you like to see in the future – “wishes” for your congregation?
7. Are you aware of the workload of your staff? Are you providing the necessary time for renewal and recreation?
8. What would you like the Committee on Ministry to understand about your church and ministry?
9. What would enrich the connection between your congregation and the Presbytery of Nevada? How can the COM support you?
10. What other topics/joys/concerns would you like to share?

Presbytery of Nevada – Triennial Visit Report Form

Church \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Visit \_\_\_\_\_

COM Visiting Team

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Number of Session Members \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Elders Present \_\_\_\_\_

Others Present

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1. Give a brief overview of the visit, highlighting congregational ministry to members, the community, the wider church, and the world.

2. Give an overview of the relationship between the pastor(s) and the session, and the pastor(s) and the congregation.

3. Are there ways the Presbytery can assist?

4. Any additional comments or information?

Report of the Triennial Visit will be shared with the Moderator and the Session (via the Clerk) and may be kept on file with the COM and the Presbytery office.