

**PRESBYTERY OF ST. ANDREW**  
**COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY**  
**GUIDELINES FOR TRIENNIAL VISITORS**  
**January 6, 2009**

1. Please read the Committee on Ministry Handbook, 2006 Edition, pages 3-11 to 3-20 for details and resources on triennial visits. Please note an emphasis is on taking “the initiative to make the visit an occasion for pastoral affirmation and appreciation”, making the visit an opportunity “for building relationships with congregations”, “to connect the session with the resources of the presbytery”, to encourage minister and session, and “to help them deal with any problems that may exist”.
  
2. Enclosed are a sample letter of notification for a visit, a document with rationale and agenda for the session, questionnaires to be used for preparation by the session and pastor for the visit, and a report form to be turned into the COM Sub-Committee Moderator for Triennial Visits when the visit has been completed. You are welcome to use these samples as you will or generate your own versions of these documents for your visits with the exception of the report form. The Visit Report Form is the format you will need use and turn in after each visit. Two choices are available for the session questionnaires. Choose either option A or B for the session questionnaire to send with the letter to the church for the session’s preparation. Please carefully review each of the sample documents and the other guidelines prior to initiating a visit.
  
2. The COM representative is responsible for making the arrangements for the visit with each of their assigned congregations to include sending the letters and questionnaires prior to the visit. The visits for 2008 will need to be completed including the return of the Visitation Report Form no later than the end of November, 2008 to allow time for the Sub-Committee to review and update the COM visit list for the incoming 2009 Sub-Committee.
  
3. Your visit need not be separate from the stated session meeting as long as the pastor and session realize the importance of the meeting and recognize the amount of time that will be needed.
  
4. The COM expects that the committee representative will recruit and train a partner to accompany him/her on the visit. Elders are advised to recruit ministers as their partners and ministers are advised to recruit elders. The Visitation Team is entitled to be reimbursed for mileage and a meal the two of you may need. Turn in a green request form for reimbursement with your report. No other funds are budgeted for this ministry. At least one visitor team member will want to be the primary “scribe” or note-taker for the team. Any definite actions, concerns, or requests for referrals might become a part of the clerk of session’s records but the COM team must maintain their own records for timely completing their final report and any referrals. A copy of the final report should also be mailed to the pastor and session with appropriate editing for confidentiality as needed.

(continued on the next page)

5. Carefully review the section in the Handbook p. 3-13 “Ethical Issues“, the COM statement about confidentiality, and remember to make clear to the session and pastor the importance of confidentiality, to whom the team’s reports will be made, and how referrals will be handled. Matters that need referring to the COM or to other committees will be the primary responsibility of the Triennial Subcommittee. Please record this information in the appropriate section of the Visit Report Form. Remember “referrals must be handled faithfully”. so please contact the Sub-Committee Moderator or the Executive Presbyter for referrals, concerns, or issues that you believe need their immediate attention rather than waiting for them to review the written report.

6. Suggested items to review prior to the visit:

Prior Triennial Reports if available

10 Year Statistical Report, community demographics, and other data available on line at

[www.pcusa.org/research/help](http://www.pcusa.org/research/help)

Milton Winter’s Pictorial History and the old one page history of St. Andrew Churches

PW’s Church History (if recent copies are kept at Presbytery)

Presbytery’s Financial Reports by Church showing their financial participation

7. Suggested packet of resources to carry for the visit to give to the pastor and session

A copy of Milton Winter’s Pictorial History of St. Andrew Churches

A current Presbytery Director

A current copy of the Manuel of Operations

Hunger Action Grant request form and 2 Cents A Meal Brochure

Living Waters For the World/CWU materials

Tapestry Brochure (if available or a photo copy of the front page of most recent edition)

Promotional Material for Chip Arn’s DVD Program on Evangelism & Assimilation

Hopewell schedule poster and brochures including retreat info

PW Calendar of upcoming events

List of some of the online resources available to support churches @ [www.pcusa.org](http://www.pcusa.org)

Review other suggestions from the COM Handbook

Presbytery Nominations Committee’s List of Committees with Descriptions & Application

8. Materials to carry for Visitation Team’s use and note taking

Copy of the letter of notification, rationale and agenda mailed prior to the visit

(confirm and agree on the agenda and timing of the elements as the meeting begins

and then be responsible for following as the situation dictates-

remembering that the Visitation Team is leading the meeting)

Copy of the questionnaires (if used in prior mailing or if you plan to use in the visit)

Copy of the Visitation Report Form

9. Complete the Visitation Report Form and mail original and copies as noted on the form.

10. “The most important preparation you and your visitation team can make is to prepare spiritually for the visit. Pray for the congregation and its leaders. Pray for your visitation team and the ones from the COM for 2008. Consider the scripture for visitation such as Romans 1:7-12 especially remembering the purpose: “so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith...”

Sample Letter for Triennial Visit  
(Presbytery or Personal Letterhead)

Date

Pastor  
Church  
Address

Dear

Your presbytery's Committee on Ministry believes one of the best opportunities to strengthen the relationships in our presbytery is through the Triennial Visit Program. This program is designed to be a significant part of the presbytery's pastoral care for congregations and ministers and is thus an important occasion for a two-way conversation. As presbytery's representatives, (we or \_\_\_\_\_ and I, look forward to hearing the session tell the church's story of the last few years through the activities, ministries, mission, celebrations, concerns, and challenges you have experienced. Then the session will then have an opportunity to hear an update on the presbytery's recent activities, resources, and challenges.

The fact that the Book of Order requires triennial visits emphasizes what an important time this is for our congregations and our presbytery. I will call to find a mutually convenient date and time for the visit and to answer any questions that you may have. The visit usually involves an initial meeting for about an hour with the pastor followed by a visit with the session of about 45 minutes to an hour.

Enclosed are a Triennial Visit rationale with a proposed agenda, and questions for you and the session to use as preparation for this visit. The rationale and question sheets are designed to help focus our conversation but we do not have to limit our conversation to these questions. The questionnaire sheets are for personal use. They do not have to be returned to the Visitation Team.

We look forward to this opportunity as a time of affirmation, appreciation, encouragement, counsel, and support. We invite the session to join us in praying for one another as we prepare for this visit.

In Christ's Love and Service Together,

(Name), Member  
Committee on Ministry

**PPRESBYTERY OF ST. ANDREW  
COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY**

**TRIENNIAL VISIT**

***Rationale***

The Committee on Ministry for the Presbytery of St. Andrew believes one of the best opportunities to strengthen the relationships in our presbytery is through the Triennial Visit Program. This program is designed to be a significant part of the presbytery's pastoral care for congregations and ministers and is thus an important occasion for a two-way conversation. This conversation begins with COM representatives listening to a pastor and session tell their Church's story of the last few years through the activities, ministries, mission, celebrations, concerns, and challenges they have experienced. Then the session will then have an opportunity to hear the COM representatives provide an update on the presbytery's recent activities, resources, concerns, and challenges.

The fact that the Book of Order requires triennial visits emphasizes what an important time this is for our congregations and our presbytery. The Book of Order guidelines for COM triennial visits are listed in the Form of Government and Directory of Worship sections as follows::

G-11.0502c. (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.

W-1.4002 ... 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. (G-11.0502c)

***Agenda***

The COM visit usually involves an initial meeting for about an hour with the pastor followed by a meeting of about 45 minutes to an hour with the session . A proposed agenda for the meeting with the session would include opening and closing the meeting with prayer and the following elements:

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| 5 - 10 minutes  | Introduction of session members and Triennial Visitation Team        |
| 30 - 40 Minutes | Two-way conversation guided by questionnaires previously distributed |
| 10 - 15 Minutes | Wrapping up concerns and reaching consensus on actions and follow-up |

**TRIENNIAL VISIT  
MINISTRY AND MISSION REFLECTIONS (A)  
FOR SESSION**

Please reflect on these questions as preparation for the meeting with the COM Team .

1. The church is called to be the Body of Christ in the world. When has the church best resembled the Body of Christ for you?
  
2. When, in this church, is prayer most important and effectual for you?
  
3. What do you see as Christ's dream for the future of your ministry here?
  
4. What concrete steps have you taken to translate Christ's dream into reality in this church and in the community?
  
5. What concrete steps will you continue to take to translate Christ's dream into reality?
  
6. In what ways is your congregation involved in the presbytery?
  
7. Has there been a happening in the life of your congregation that you would like the presbytery to celebrate with you?
  
8. How could the Presbytery be more helpful to your congregation?
  
9. Do you have any comments or concerns you would like to share?

**TRIENNIAL VISIT  
MINISTRY AND MISSION REFLECTIONS (B Page 1 of 2)  
FOR SESSION**

*This questionnaire is for your personal use in preparation for your session's upcoming Triennial Visit with representatives of the presbytery's Committee on Ministry, and you will not be asked to give it to the visitation team. Each elder and minister on the session is asked to answer the questions prior to the visit.*

1. Place a check mark beside two of the following aspects of ministry that you think are currently your congregation's greatest strengths. Then circle the two aspects that you think need the most attention:

- |                 |                     |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| Worship         | Local Mission       |
| Evangelism      | Fellowship          |
| Care of Members | Christian Education |
| Global Mission  | Stewardship         |
| Other _____     |                     |

2. Think of an important decision that the session has made over the course of the last few years. How did session members work together in reaching the decision? Were there any hurt feelings or other problems that arose from the decision, and how were they dealt with?

3. What would you consider to be your congregation's greatest need at this moment, and in what way(s) could the presbytery or any of its entities help you meet that need?

**TRIENNIAL VISIT  
MINISTRY AND MISSION REFLECTIONS (B Page 2 of 2)  
FOR SESSION**

4. What are some “relational” words (distant, divorced, cooperative, etc.) that describe your congregation’s relationship with the presbytery?

5. What are some factors (either positive or negative) that have led to that kind of relationship?

6. What are some ministries of the presbytery, synod, and General Assembly in which members of your congregation have participated, or from which they have benefited?

7. Are there any specific questions about the *Book of Order*, the presbytery, or its policies or programs you would like answered, or suggestions you would like to make?

**TRIENNIAL VISIT  
MINISTRY AND MISSION REFLECTION  
FOR PASTOR**

Please reflect on these questions as preparation for the visit with the COM Team.

1. When has the church or the Presbytery best resembled the Body of Christ for you?
  
2. Describe the time when you felt the most spiritually fulfilled/excited during your time at the church you are now serving?
  
3. What do you see as Christ's dream for the future of your ministry here? How can the Presbytery, session, COM, etc. help you to fulfill this dream?
  
4. Taking care of self...
  - a. Do you think you are adequately compensated and how do you feel about your financial stability?
  
  - b. Describe the quality of your relationship to the staff, the session, and to the congregation?
  
  - c. Do you take all of your vacation time and how have you been using study leave?
  
  - d. How many hours a week are you working?
  
5. What would you like to see happen in your congregation in the next 3-5 years?
  
6. Do you have any comments or concerns to share?
  
7. How could the COM support you and your ministry better?

**PRESBYTERY OF ST. ANDREW  
COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY  
Triennial Visit Report Form**

**Date of visit** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time Began** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time Ended** \_\_\_\_\_

**COM Rep** \_\_\_\_\_ **Partner** \_\_\_\_\_

**Church Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Pastor** \_\_\_\_\_ **Clerk** \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Describe the kind of reception you received, the number of people present, and the general climate of the meeting you experienced:** (use additional pages as necessary)

**2. General Summary of Church situation:**

**3. Referrals for help from Presbytery that are requested or that you might suggest**  
(note which is which - theirs or yours)

**4) Specific concerns, challenges, or issues that might need follow up by the COM or EP**  
(Remember to contact them if immediate attention is needed)

(For 2009 mail the original to Rev. Bill Connolly P.O. Box 556 Ripley, MS 38663 and include any materials that you believe will be helpful for the file. Mail copies of the report to Clerk of Session and Pastor of the Church visited.)