



The Board of Pensions
of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

**Supporting Mid-Career Pastors
of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)**

To contribute to this discussion, please write to:

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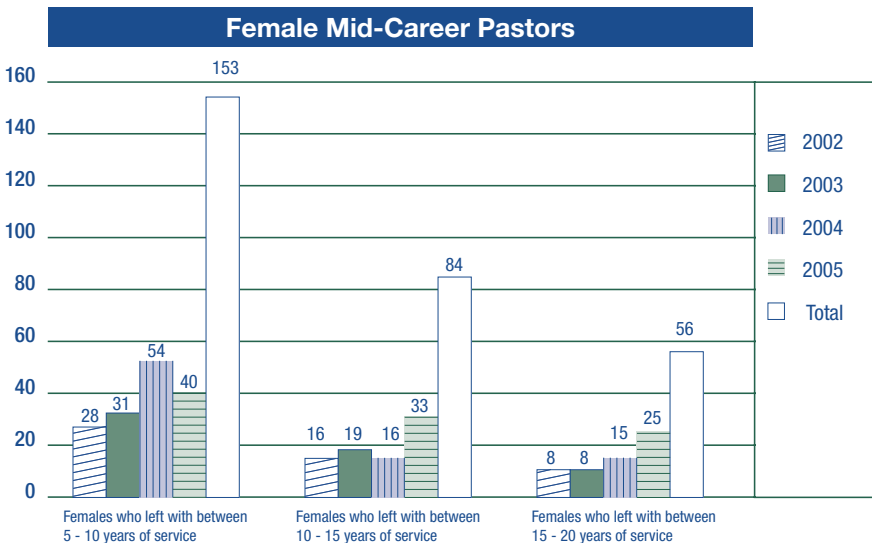
*Report on Clergy Recruitment and Retention to the 216th
General Assembly (2004) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
and
Conversations on Candidacy of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*

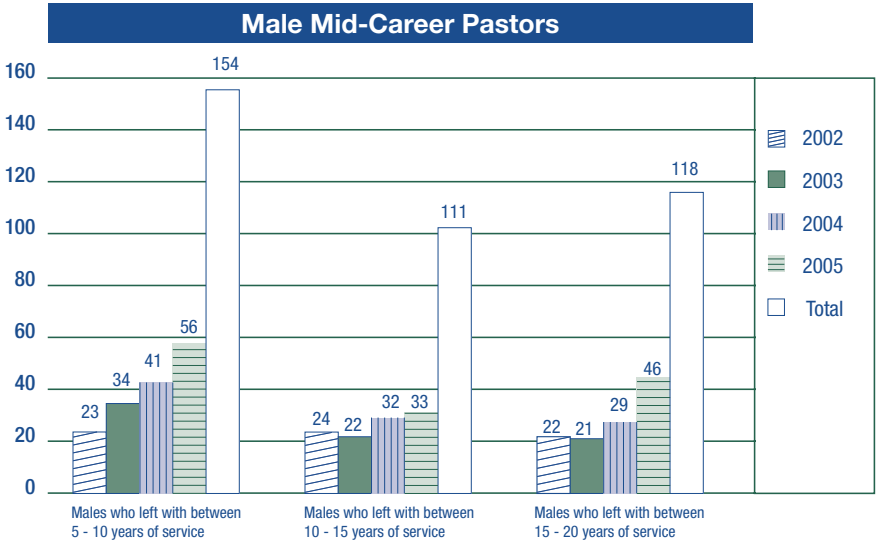
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Introduction

As the Board of Pensions continues its commitment to contribute to the provision and support of healthy ministers and ministry within the PCUSA, it was decided that a pre-conference session at the 2006 Regional Benefits Consultations would focus on Mid-Career Pastors. The special session marked the third time in as many years that the consultations featured an opportunity for dialogue on the topic of clergy support. More than 200 representatives of presbytery leadership enthusiastically and thoughtfully participated in the consultations in Atlanta, Georgia, Los Angeles, California, and Kansas City, Missouri. The immediate question arises: how does one define a mid-career pastor? A generation ago the answer to that question was simple. A pastor in mid-career was probably around age forty-five, almost certainly male, who had gone from college to seminary, had already served around twenty years in ministry and after another twenty or so, would retire. That answer is no longer adequate. With the increase in the number of second-career ministers, a person may not enter seminary until they are age forty-five or older and it becomes more difficult to find any common definition as to what constitutes being at “mid-career.”

In the gathering of data for this dialogue we created three bands: ministers who left with between 5-10 years of service, between 10-15 years of service and between 15-20 years of service. We studied data on both female and male ministers and these are persons who left not because of death, disability or retirement, and did not return to service. (It must always be borne in mind that Board of Pensions data refers only to ministers who are members of the Benefits Plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).





It is highly probable that some of these ministers continue to serve in another validated ministry such as a chaplaincy, but they are no longer participants in the Plan. However, I would emphasize the word “some,” for it is almost certain that most of these ministers are no longer engaged in active ministry.)

In the tables above, the reader should note that in the first cohort, 5-10 years, the number of men and women leaving is virtually equal. This ties in with the drop out rate in first-call pastors that has been the subject of much study by the Board and others in the church and academia. After ten years, the number of clergy leaving ministry declines in all cohorts but is not insignificant. Not surprisingly there are larger numbers of males leaving in the other two cohorts particularly in the 15-20 year group. However, it is likely that over time, as the years of service of female ministers increases, disparity will decrease and the numbers will closely resemble the first call and 5-10 year cohorts.

To lead and broaden the discussion, the Board invited the Rev. Ed Albright, Executive Presbyterian of Greater Atlanta Presbytery to share some of the programs designed to encourage mid-career pastors in that presbytery. The Rev. Deborah Fortel, the Associate for Ministry Support/COM in the Office of Leadership and Vocation shared the results of an informal survey of selected presbyteries across the country that asked what the presbyteries are doing to support mid-career clergy. Rev. Peter Sime, Vice President for Assistance, Retirement Housing and Funds Development, gave an update on the CREDO program that the Board recently introduced for mid-career pastors.

Summaries of their excellent and helpful presentations can be found in the Appendices of this booklet.

Following the presentations, the attendees formed small groups to discuss these questions:

- 1) How does your presbytery encourage the self-care of clergy?
- 2) List the ten most effective ways in which a presbytery can support clergy.
- 3) What elements would be essential in a presbytery sponsored retreat to support clergy?
- 4) Describe the successes and frustrations you have seen or can foresee in a mentoring program for clergy in your presbytery.
- 5) What continuing education courses do you see as essential in supporting the continuing development of clergy?
- 6) What have been your most positive experiences in encouraging you as an individual in your ministry?

A summary of responses to these questions from the small group conversations appears on the following pages.

The Board extends thanks to all who participated in the lively and productive group discussions at each of the events. The level of energy, intensity and involvement was more than encouraging. You shared your visions, ideas, strategies, your success stories and hopes. These too appear on the pages of this booklet and our hope is that we have captured your enthusiasm along with your words. Thank you.



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Robert W. Maggs, Jr.
President and Chief Executive
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Supporting Mid-Career Pastors Dialogue

2006 Regional Benefits Consultation

How does your presbytery encourage the self-care of clergy?

- Pastors' report to COM on Continued Education
- Continuing Education events
- Board of Pensions Education opportunities
- Encourage participation in Board of Pensions seminars
- Provide a pastor to pastors
- Required study leave
- Referrals/financial support for respite, career counseling, crises counseling
- Scholarships for spiritual direction
- Ecumenical gatherings
- Sharing good news from churches
- Getting together as colleagues
- Accountability related to study leave
- Sharing good news from churches
- Retreats: Book, [Quiet Conversations](#)
- Building in fellowships and sharing at presbytery meetings
- Providing for developing relationships outside of the church (when retired)
- Providing for ecumenical gatherings where pastors feel free to share and receive support
- Establish the need to have the pastor accountable for study leave to the session of care
- Identify someone to lead the personnel function to support pastors
- Good news, newsletter
- Build in opportunities for sharing
- Promote taking continuing education
- Provide an annual leadership conference
- One day conferences: Theology, Bible Study, Spirituality, basic functions, administration, relationship, covenant groups, colleague groups
- Vacation Policy (this is not a guideline but part of terms of call):

Years of Ordination	Vacation Time
1 to 14	4 weeks
15 to 24	5 weeks
25 +	6 weeks

(The above table is provided by Lucille K. Rupe, EP of Winnebago Presbytery)

- Eight-day retreat for couples
- Affinity
- Gather clergy for lunch
- COMs directed to assess adequate compensation
- Mandatory clergy renewal leaves (like sabbatical)

List the most effective ways in which a presbytery can support clergy.

- Ministers and spouse gatherings or retreats with EP, funded from core general budget
- Promote clergy support groups
- Presbyterians clergy trained in counseling and psychiatry make themselves available
- Support groups; most successful are those organized around a common focus or need and have a strong leader
- Pastor-to-pastor role fulfilled by gifted retiree (3 year contracts)
- Informal quasi support groups, meet once a year or more
- Regional coordination separate from pastor-to-pastor program
- Mentoring of new ministers to the presbytery; a person to call when in need of guidance
- Exit interviews
- Exit interviews and ensure that a summary of the interviews be shared with the COM
- Issue- Continuity issues whenever things turnover
- Issue- New persons; interims; next pastor
- Support group just for educators
- Retreats
- Funding
- Support groups; common need-strong leadership
- Make counselors available
- Mentoring those new to presbyteries
- Book distribution to clergy on different topics
- Regional Coordination (Coastal Carolina)
- Adequate compensation
- Adequate continuing education opportunities
- Survey to identify needs
- Presbytery meeting; sense of community

**The session
needs to see
that clergy
are adequately
compensated.**

- Promote spirituality
- Promote vocational opportunities
- Promote opportunities to build relationships
- Promote family events
- Promote recreational events
- Promote emotional growth
- Care policy for study leave and sabbatical
- Provide pastor-to-pastor staff
- Building fellowship sharing at presbytery meeting
- Communicate good news from churches at presbytery meetings
- Encourage pastors and let them know they are competent
- Provide list/information about available events
- Work with other presbyteries to provide programming
- Have informal, ecumenical, lectionary, and excellence groups
- Visit clergy
- Synod school
- Clergy spouse group dinner during presbytery meeting
- Board of Pensions funding of collegial groups
- Mediation team
- Parental and disability policy
- Part-time consultant staff
- Encourage fiscal fitness seminars
- Provide scholarship support
- Visit; personal contact
- Colleague Group; 24 hour retreat every 2 months
- Sabbatical fund-1% a year (after 5 years) Stay a year after sabbatical. Talk about sabbatical during PNC talks
- Hire a sabbatical counselor

What elements would be essential in a presbytery sponsored retreat to support clergy?

- Identifying the issues facing the group
- Balance between structure and flexibility
- Setting
- Location
- Accessible family care
- Worship

- Leader from outside
- Challenge participants
- Well planned
- Family
- Education
- Retreats
- Give a book to read and then discuss among pastors with EP
- Recreation
- Fellowship
- Free time
- Subsidize so clergy feel that it's a gift
- Financial support
- Excellence in program
- Relevance
- Balance between recreation, fellowship and academics
- Just clergy
- Clergy families
- Spouses
- Balance of theme, books, controversial issues, academic, relationships and play
- Clergy family retreats
- Play
- Message
- Theme
- Two-day meetings
- Prayer
- Good music
- Getting them to come with spouse
- Funding
- Support for children and spouse
- Good speakers and leaders
- Confidentiality (safe place)
- Allow some free time incorporated
- Ensure support from congregations of attendees
- Mandate in terms of call
- Quality program
- Target participant to be on planning committee

The most successful support groups are those organized around a common need/focus and have a strong leader.

Describe successes and frustrations you have seen or can foresee in a mentoring program for clergy in your presbytery.

- Mentors for new pastors. The problem is that mentors don't do their jobs. They are too busy.
- Who coordinates?
- COM – need an arbiter to set goals
- Lack of interest
- Lack of trust
- Theological diversity
- To make this a priority with pressures of daily ministry
- Deal with self isolation
- Retired pastors stuck in old paradigm of ministry
- Finding people with time, energy and expertise
- They don't know they need one
- New to presbytery
- Meet quarterly
- Pre “set” in attitudes
- Partner, amigo, friend (less formal)
- Build trust
- Resistance to help COM in choosing mentors
- Extreme differences in theology
- Distance
- Set-up with no follow-through
- Lack of clarification on goals/objectives/strategies for monitoring
- Interims to be included – some benefits to occur
- Funding for mentors an issue
- Mandate to be in group
- More than on first call situations

What continuing education courses do you see as essential in supporting the continuing development of clergy?

- Renewing and reevaluating sense of call
- How to move a congregation to a new place
- Moving towards retirement through financial planning
- What will be helpful for the church that the pastor is serving?
- Clustering
- Book studies

- Encouraging self-care
- Functional skills-i.e. administrative skills
- Build self-confidence
- Build leadership skills
- Build Business Administration
- Spiritual direction and development
- Conflict management
- Effective leadership
- Church growth, redevelopment and evangelism
- GA attendance
- Courses on connectional church
- Practical basic areas
- Worship leadership
- Writing vision statement
- Leadership skills
- Building self confidence
- Theology
- Bible study
- Finding out where do you want to be in 15 years from now; strategic visioning
- Elder to be joined by Elder in some contexts
- Session involvement
- Minister to take study leave/continued education
- Overcoming isolation
- Alban institute
- Adapting to change
- Transitions for those new in presbytery
- Worship seminars for whole staff
- Medical issues
- Preaching
- Liturgy
- EP/GP as pastor to pastors
- Recreational support

What have been your most positive experiences in encouraging you as an individual in your ministry?

- Colleague-groups who share the journey
- Spiritual mentors
- Peer group support (prayer, study, fishing and others)
- Visiting pastors
- Monthly meetings
- Sharing of experiences
- Informal multi-denominational peer group
- Fellowship at presbytery, celebrations
- Pentecost retreat/rally
- Being a partner and helping to shape or make a contribution
- Availability to frustrated colleagues of mentors that listen and encourage
- Personal training with other pastors
- Triennial visits with pastors
- Sabbatical time (three months)
- Covenant groups
- Support groups
- Receiving permission to care for self with affirmation of work
- Regional benefit conferences and benefits consultation
- Adopting to new situations, growth
- Institute of positive thinking, supportive
- Pastors Sabbath (Salt Lake City event)
- Mixed experience relationship
- Interim training
- Presbytery recruiting of potential persons for specialized service in and to presbytery
- Presbytery orientation
- Experienced pastor mentors
- Electronic support, chat and email
- Wikirk movement
- Small group in Petosley
- Clergy couples small group support team
- Finding people you can trust
- No competition
- Love and care for each other
- Buddy support
- Breakfast group (6:30 am, two times a month)
- Active in presbytery
- I have never known of a pastor who is active in presbytery implode

Sessions should look at how they need to grow and ask the pastor to participate in continuing education that will help the pastor and the session.

Next Steps

There is consensus that the next steps are the responsibility of Sessions, Committees on Ministry, Presbyteries, General Assembly Agencies and most importantly responsibility of the individual pastor who must have the discipline to step back and take a deep breath in reflection on their own personal needs. While these clearly important (in general) observations don't clarify the challenges of serving parish ministry, each pastor needs to identify their own concerns and needs. This is especially true of persons who have devoted most of their labors to their vocation.

The Board of Pensions encourages all who read this booklet to challenge themselves and their church groups to take at least one small definitive step in active support of our dedicated clergy. One great opportunity for presbyterian clergy is the National Pastors Conference to be held at Snowbird, Utah, on June 28 - July 2, 2007.



Appendix A

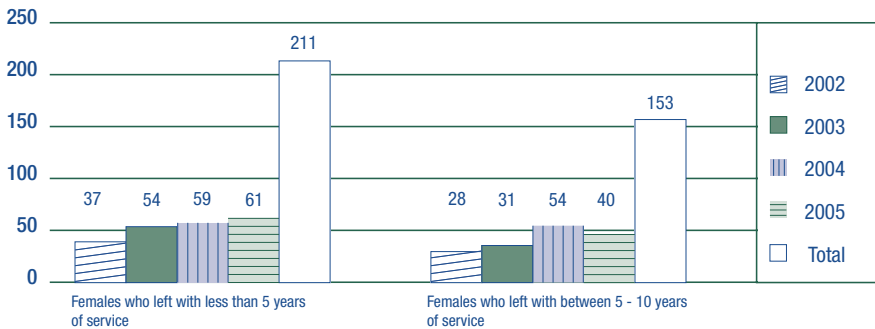
Rev. Alexander S. McLachlan
Special Assistant to the President, Board of Pensions

In the preparation of the *Report on Clergy Recruitment and Retention* which was presented to the 216th General Assembly (2004), the Board began to track the number of clergy who terminated and did not return to service.¹ Since the publication of that report, these numbers have been collected each year. The tables indicate the number of clergy, both female and male, leaving with less than five years of service and less than ten years of service.

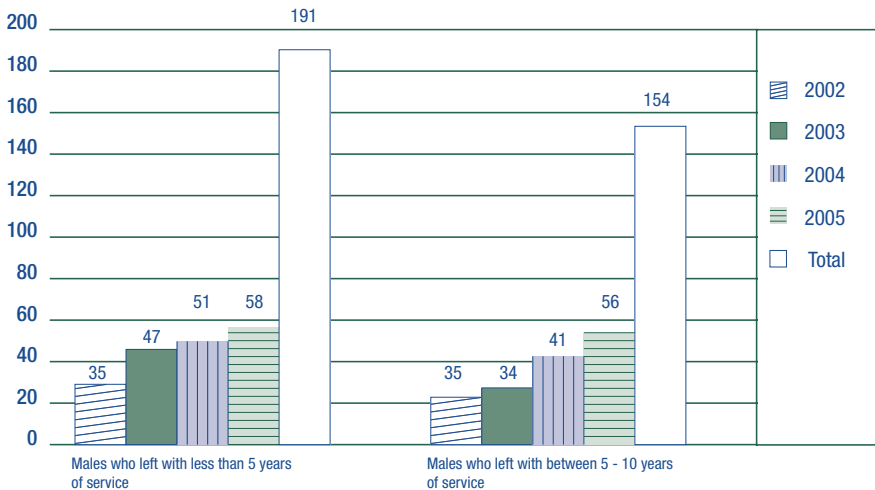
In the first cohort, less than five years of service, there has been an increase in each of the years 2002-2005 of those leaving. This increase is reflected in both female and male clergy and closer analysis of the data indicates it applies to both first and second career clergy. The Comparative Statistics report produced by Research Services of the PCUSA indicates that in the years 2002-2005 there have been a total of 1,360 ordinations with an average of 340 per year. The Board of Pensions data indicates that in the same time frame 402 ministers have left and this represents an average of 100 per year. Thus, in raw percentages we are losing around 30% of those being ordained within the first five years of their ministry. It has been rightly pointed out that other professions have a higher rate of “dropout” in the early years. Nonetheless the number leaving each year continues to increase. Can we as a denomination be complacent when 30% of the newly ordained are leaving within five years? What do these figures suggest about the effectiveness of our selection process, the adequacy of our training and preparation for the rigors of contemporary parish ministry and our care and nurture of pastors in the critical early years?

The second cohort, between five and ten years of service, again shows an almost equal exodus of male and female clergy. For the first time there was a drop in the number of females leaving in 2005 as opposed to the previous year. On the other hand, the number of males continues to increase each year. It should be noted that in this cohort the total number leaving is 307 as opposed to 402 in the first cohort and this represents a decrease of about 25%. These numbers surely underscore the importance of providing support for first call pastors that the Board and our colleagues in Leadership and Vocation in Louisville have been emphasizing to the whole church.

Terminated and Did Not Return to Service 1/1/02 to 12/31/05



Terminated and Did Not Return to Service 1/1/02 to 12/31/05



This year, a look at some of the changing demographics is added. It is indisputable that the PCUSA is a denomination that primarily consists of small churches. As congregations decrease in size and income, more and more find it difficult to afford the costs of a called and installed pastor. Board of Pensions data indicates that some 396 churches that formerly did so no longer pay dues on a called and installed position. It is not possible before the year 2002 to indicate in what year they ceased to pay dues. However, the number for each of the years 2002-2004 is indicated. Noteworthy is the fact that of these 396 churches, 83 are now served by Commissioned Lay Pastors.²

Changed Demographics

- **Churches who formerly paid dues on a called and installed position and are no longer paying these dues**
 - 26 ceased paying in 2002
 - 34 ceased paying in 2003
 - 32 ceased paying in 2004
 - 92 total
- **Of the 92 churches, 26* are now being served by a CLP**
- **Board of Pensions' records indicate that 396 churches no longer pay on a called and installed position**
 - 83* of these are served by a CLP

*These are Commissioned Lay Pastors for whom dues are being paid.

- ¹ They did not leave because of death or disability but again it must be emphasized that Board of Pensions data refers only to those participating in the Benefits Plan. Some of these persons may well be engaged in other validated ministries.
- ² These 83 Commissioned Lay Pastors (CLP) are members of the Benefits Plan. No doubt many of the other congregations are served by a CLP who is not enrolled in the Plan, and the Board, unlike the commissioning presbytery, has no record of them.

Appendix B

Supporting Mid-Career Pastors

Ed Albright

Executive Presbyter/Stated Clerk, Presbytery of Greater Atlanta

The following is the presentation given by Ed Albright at the three Regional Benefits Consultations sponsored by the Board of Pensions. He was assisted in the preparation by Joe Sandifer, coordinator of Presbytery of Greater Atlanta's Pastoral Team.

"I have been asked to share with you the best practices of the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta when it comes to supporting mid-career pastors."

I would like to discuss three things:

- 1. Our Pastoral Team**
- 2. Our financial support and resource help for counseling/therapy**
- 3. Our Sabbatical Leave policy**

#1. The Pastoral Team

In many ways this is one of those good ideas that presbyteries have thought about and/or tried and it is kind of like the shepherding program that sessions adopt as a way to care for the members, but it hardly ever works. Within the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta, by God's grace, we have a Pastoral Team that really works. We take a systems approach that involves seven people who are retired and represent the diverse makeup of our presbytery. I believe that this systems approach could be done on a large scale such as I am describing but also on a much smaller scale; the main point is that it is a team approach, as compared to a pastor-to-pastors approach involving one person. We have been using this team approach for almost five years. Each of our seven-team members has a particular focus/constituency but each is available to all clergy and Christian Educators who are members of our presbytery. The Pastoral Team is also a proactive way to provide pastoral care to all.

We do not ask for volunteers, but rather we identify persons who would be good members of this team and we recruit them. Our qualifications include: being a good listener, a person with lots of energy, a person who has been ministering within our bounds for a number of years and therefore knows the lay of the land, and a person who is known to be able to keep confidences.

We use a marketing brochure which is placed in church offices, distributed at every presbytery meeting, and other gatherings where clergy are present. Text from this brochure is found on pages 22-23. We receive an offering periodically at a presbytery meeting. This money is used to underwrite the expenses of the team as well as to be a discretionary fund that can be used by team members to help a pastor with special financial needs.

We provide our Pastoral Team with regular calling cards and stationery so that pastors and educators can view them as part of the presbytery team.

As I said earlier, we have seven members of our Pastoral Care Team, which include a Caucasian male, a Caucasian female, an African-American male, a Korean male, an educator, a specialized minister, and a retired minister.

The team meets once a quarter and is all-volunteer except for the coordinator of the team. The coordinator is paid a small stipend and prepares for and hosts each quarterly meeting. He fills in for others when they are out-of-pocket and there is a crisis within that constituent group. The coordinator prepares what we call the Weekly Pastoral Letter which I will discuss a bit later. The coordinator attends the new minister/educator orientations that we have two to three times a year. The coordinator meets with the appropriate staff members to talk in general terms about needs of pastors without reference to specific names.

The relationship between the coordinator and the Executive Presbyter is very important to define. I think of it much like a pastor of a church who has a relationship with a parish associate; according to our constitution it's the head-of-staff pastor who chooses the parish associate and nominates such a person to the session; it's the assumption that they have a very trusting relationship. Likewise, I choose the coordinator and other Pastoral Team members. I nominate these to the Committee on Ministry and I have full trust and constant communication, especially with the coordinator.

Confidentiality is a major issue. You will notice in the brochure that we have very carefully built a "firewall" between the Pastoral Team and the Committee on Ministry, Executive Presbyter/Stated Clerk. We honor that confidentiality in every way.

The Pastoral Team performs six tasks. They are as follows:

- a. The team members make regular pastoral visits with their constituent group. They are proactive in terms of calling their educator or clergy member and inviting them to lunch or dinner. Each team member makes somewhere between 40 to 70 visits a year plus many phone calls and emails. Also, the team member writes personal notes to one's constituent group members on special occasions such as birthdays, ordination anniversaries, etc.
- b. Crisis pastoral visits — as trust has grown, more and more ministers and educators make direct contact with team members and share the particular crisis. These crises could be a conflict between a pastor and a congregation, family problems, divorce issues, depression. Sometimes a member of the staff will call the appropriate Pastoral Team member asking them to make contact with a particular pastor/educator.
- c. The Pastoral Team organizes and supports clergy colleague groups. A team suggests/insists/requires (we never know the right word to use) clergy to get into a support group using a trained professional for leadership. We have some who have had a long life span — some that are ecumenical and feel especially safe — more recently we've organized a group such as this for women in ministry. The Board of Pensions has been very helpful with grants to get us started.
- d. Organize and support fellowship groups — these groups meet over a meal together. They tend to be geographical groups of clergy and educators within the boundaries of our presbytery. We attempt to have one member of the presbytery's program staff attend each one of these in order to be supportive.
- e. Weekly Pastoral Letter — This is sent out every Friday mostly by email, but anybody can get a hard copy mailed upon request. This pastoral letter is greatly appreciated all across our presbytery by clergy, educators, and many elders and lay people who are involved in the structures of the presbytery. This is different from our newsletter. It's all about pastors and educators. The Pastoral Letter describes concerns and joys, provides a prayer list of church professionals, and has a section entitled "Did you know...?" It is a wonderful instrument that helps all of us to be in touch with the news about each other.
- f. As a part of the Committee on Ministry report at presbytery meetings, often the coordinator or another member of the team will tell some positive true stories about the ministry they are having with our clergy and educators.

#2. Financial Support and Resource Help for Counseling/Therapy

We tried very hard to create an atmosphere where “seeking counseling” is the norm rather than the exception. We have identified good therapists and psychologists who have a proven track record helping the clergy and other church professionals. We also provide the resource of money in one of two ways:

1. Either we help with the person’s medical deductible if they are seeing someone who qualifies with the Board of Pensions and if it’s early in the year and the medical deductible is a barrier to one seeking help, or
2. we share a portion of the cost of each visit up to a certain number of visits, usually 20.

#3. We are Promoting Sabbatical Leave

(The policy that was adopted recently by our presbytery can be found on pages 20-21.)

We are attempting to create a culture where sabbatical leave is the norm after six or seven years of ministry.

Now I would like to talk about several more things that are on the drawing board and that we are thinking about for the future:

1. We are concerned in the presbytery about presbyterys’ role in our churches’ professional performance reviews. We are trying to be more proactive in suggesting/insisting/mandating annual reviews of pastors and educators. We are providing more training for Personnel Committees and we are attempting to provide a variety of tools and processes that might be used by Personnel Committees. The question that is on our mind always is “What is our role as a presbytery and as a Committee on Ministry in performance reviews?”
2. In every other helping profession there is what is called “professional supervision” or a way in which a peer review happens. The professions of medicine, law, education, and counseling have some sort of professional supervision with a colleague looking over one’s shoulder helping to keep the professional on track with one’s professional life as well as their personal life. The question we have is this: “Should peer review be a part of something that they do with mid-career clergy as a way of helping each other to stay on track?”
3. We are thinking about doing something that might be a mid-career seminar for selected pastors and educators. The seminar might be called “Looking Back/Looking Forward.”

It might have three parts, with facilitators from the seminaries and also other veteran pastors who have been involved in other structures of the church.

The parts might be:

- a. Looking Back/Looking Forward theologically
- b. Looking Back/Looking Forward in terms of the nature of the church
- c. Looking Back/Looking Forward in terms of one's career

The bottom line of such seminars would be that each individual participant would identify the high and the low points of one's career and set goals for the future.

4. To provide regular recognition to those who are in the mid-career stage. Often pastors in mid-career stage feel stuck or stale or not appreciated. We are interested in developing a proactive way for mid-career pastors to be given a strong pat on the back and recognition in the presbytery. As Executive Presbyter, I am considering taking two weeks in the summer to visit 50 mid-career pastors in a concentrated period of time and doing five such visits each weekday around breakfast, brunch, lunch, early afternoon, and late afternoon, and doing this in such a way that I carry no agenda but a great big "thank you" from the presbytery and the larger church.

Sabbatical Leave Guidelines

The Presbytery of Greater Atlanta

Introduction:

These guidelines are meant to help churches and professional staff implement policies for Sabbatical Leave. (We hope churches will develop and implement this to their own setting.) Sabbatical leave is beneficial, both to ministry professionals, and to the churches they serve. Sabbatical leave can help individuals to refocus their vision, and find renewed sense of call. Oftentimes, Sabbatical Leave is needed to find a new or intensive continuing educational experience not made possible in a two-week time period. Sabbath is the call from God in a busy world, and in the busy church. Sabbatical Leave can offer valuable refreshment and rejuvenation for those who labor continuously for God's people, new vision for continued service, and renewed compassion for the beloved children of God who comprise the church. Sabbatical offers the church a time to re-focus on their future, a time for members to find new gifts for service in the church, and for the church as a whole to renew its call as part of the priesthood of all believers.

Definition:

Sabbatical Leave is a planned time of study and renewal by which one seeks personal and professional growth. It is an opportunity for an individual to disengage from regular and routine tasks so that their ministry may be viewed from a new perspective, and their soul renewed to serve refreshed. It is not a prolonged vacation. Through reflection, prayer, rest, study and travel, one finds through this temporary vocation, the promise of God who sustains us through a period of reflection, leading to the renewal of energy upon the return to the permanent call.

Suggestions:

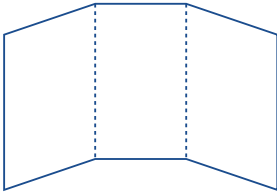
Churches and their professional staff (ordained clergy and Christian educators) are encouraged to dialogue together to come up with suitable forms of leave that will benefit all involved, and not place too much of a burden on the church, nor ignore the full need of the staff member.

- 1. Eligibility:** Sabbatical Leave is a benefit offered at the discretion of the church, by the authority of the Session (G-10.0102n), and not an automatic entitlement. For ministers of the Word & Sacrament and certified Christian Educators, Sabbatical Leave involves a change in the Terms of Call, and as such, is subject to the approval of the Session, the congregation (G-7.0300) and the presbytery (G-14.0501b). Full time staff should be eligible for Sabbatical Leave after seven (7) years of service. The Session may decide to

give credit for previous full time service by the staff member at other positions, should it see fit to do so.

2. The staff member should bring a proposal to the Personnel Committee and/or the Session at least six months prior to the beginning of the proposed leave. Proposals prior to approval of the church budget for the calendar year when leave is to be taken are preferred. The proposal should include details on how the time will be used, proposed arrangements for covering the staff member's congregational duties, and any cost associated with the proposed leave.
3. Continuing Education money that has accrued for up to three (3) years may be used for the cost of Sabbatical.
4. The time of Sabbatical should be no less than three (3) months. The year it is taken shall include continuing education time, so that the staff member's continuing education time is the Sabbatical time. It should not include vacation time, so that the staff member's vacation time shall be intact.
5. Before the leave begins, the staff member and the Personnel Committee/ Session should inform the congregation about the leave. The leave needs to be approved by the Congregation as change in Terms of Call if it has not already been done as suggested in "Eligibility." An explanation of the policy and the accepted plans for the leave period is appropriate. The timing and execution of this communication should be determined at the time of approval.
6. The church, no matter its size, should feel encouraged to contact the presbytery office (404-898-0711) for encouragement and for support before and during the time of the leave. It is possible that there may be grants available, either through the presbytery, the Board of Pensions, or others. The Louisville Institute (502-895-3411) offers grants, as does the Lily Foundation (317-916-7302). The presbytery is a resource for helping with staffing issues, pulpit supply, and pastoral care.
7. Upon completion of the Sabbatical Leave, at an acceptable time, the staff member should report to the Session/Personnel Committee about the leave, including the value of the leave.
8. Not more than one staff member should take a leave per calendar year. In the event that two or more staff members are eligible during the same year, the staff members shall converse openly with the Personnel Committee to determine an acceptable resolution.

Brochure Text



Who will pastor the pastors and educators? ...and their families?

*Who will pastor the pastors and
educators of our presbytery?*

Ministers and educators and their families are special people. Yet, like the proverbial “shoemaker’s children who have no shoes,” many of those who minister to others have no pastor themselves. Of course, most have spouses, family, friends, and colleagues who care for them. And many who are in specialized ministries, are part of multiple staffs, or retired do have their own pastor.

Nevertheless, your presbytery would like to be more available to you and more involved in your pastoral care. Therefore, we have created a *Presbytery Pastoral Team*. The team represents some of the rich diversity that we have in our presbytery.

The Pastoral Team will ...

Be responsive to your needs.

If there is a crisis, illness or need for a confidential conversation about personal matters, please call one of the Pastors to Pastors and Educators.

Initiate contact and visits with you.

It is our goal to initiate contact with each of our 400 ministers and educators. If you don’t hear from us right away and have a need, please call a member of the team.

The Pastoral Team will not...

Betray the pastoral relationship.

Total confidentiality will be maintained.

Serve as a relocation helper or reference.

Presbytery staff can help with relocation issues. The team’s function is pastoral.

The Pastoral Team

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Together, We are Christ's Body

Appendix C

“We’re Not Really Doing Anything, Except...”

RBC Presentation on Support for Mid-Career Pastors, April, May 2006

Deborah G. Fortel

Associate for Ministry Support/COM, National Ministries Division

That’s what almost all of them said: “We’re not really doing anything.” I talked with Executive and General Presbyters in every synod. (It was a distinctly non-scientific survey, but it had the virtue of being at least geographically representative, and included both larger and smaller presbyteries.) I also checked in with the network of COM Resource Specialists.

“Not really doing anything,” they said, at least not doing anything that was specifically labeled for pastors in the middle of their vocational lifetime, in the way that we have programs for pastors who are in their first call, and pre-retirement seminars for church professionals who are nearing that significant change in their lives.

“Not doing anything.” But they were too modest. Here’s a sampling of what I heard about programs that support pastors in the middle of their vocational lifetime:

- At least one presbytery encourages pastors to participate in seminars for long pastorates. These are mostly pastors in middle years of their service to the church.
- Many presbyteries have a mentoring program for pastors in their first call. Although intended to support newly ordained pastors, those programs very often benefit the mentor (a more experienced pastor) as well as the mentee.
- In most presbyteries, pastors who are in crisis are referred to ministry development centers or similar organizations for vocational discernment and/or “career assessment.” These are most likely to be pastors who are neither in their first call nor nearing retirement age.

In addition, most presbyteries have a variety of ways of supporting all pastors, including those in mid-career. Such support includes:

- Built into calls to pastors are at least two weeks of study leave a year, cumulative to six weeks. Some presbyteries are talking about how to build in accountability for the use of study leave time. Some are working with pastors and personnel committees and/or sessions to be aware that study leave is for the sake of the congregation’s ministry, and therefore it is more than “taking a book to the

beach.” All of these things benefit pastors in the middle or their vocational life as well as the congregations they serve.

- In addition, many presbyteries encourage congregations to provide sabbaticals for pastors who have served the congregation for six or seven years. Some have sabbatical policies. None that I know of require congregations to offer a sabbatical.
- Most presbyteries have retreats for pastors. Many have retreats for pastors and their spouses. Usually the presbytery underwrites at least part of the cost of the retreat.
- Most presbyteries have pastor support groups, some with professional leadership that is through the Board of Pensions Clergy Colleague Groups program. Most presbyteries also have informal colleague groups.
- Some presbyteries have a Pastor-to-Pastors program. Some have a network of peer support with funding from the presbytery to pay for lunches; others have a part-time staff person who provides pastoral care to church professionals.
- At least one presbytery sends the Executive Presbyter and a representative of the COM to make a pastoral call and meet with the pastor and session when the pastor has been in a new call for six months.

And do not underestimate the importance of presbytery meetings! Especially in presbyteries where the geography is challenging, and Presbyterian congregations are far from each other, presbytery meetings are an important occasion for support of ministers and other church professionals. Coming together at presbytery meetings is a celebration of friendships and a way to build relationships as much as or more than it is a matter of getting business done.

Several of the EPs I talked with were willing to reflect on what problems they see.

Some of the problems are related to the presbytery’s ability to provide programs and support for ministers.

- One EP said, “Smaller presbyteries can only do this (support for mid-career pastors) on an as-needed basis.”
- Another said bluntly, “We’re using all our resources just to keep the presbytery afloat.”

A recent report is available at <http://www.pcusa.org/mgbconnect/pubs/pbycrunch.pdf> by Gary Torrens suggests that this is by no means an unusual problem. Many presbyteries are facing financial difficulties and the attendant stress for presbytery staff and leaders, as well as diminishing ability to provide “extras,” even necessary “extras.”

Some of the difficulties for pastors have to do with the economic pressures and/or geographic isolation in some parts of the country. In some of the cities of the “rust belt” pastors who were called to serve a congregation when the economy in the city was strong are facing economic changes that impact the ability of the congregations to do ministry – and in some cases, to even continue to exist. Those pastors often struggle with depression that relates to the difficulty of doing ministry in a changing context where the people of the congregation are angry, fearful, grieving, and depressed.

Another EP, reflecting on the presbytery in which she serves, could be speaking for much of the PCUSA:

“People are stuck, knowing we need to behave differently, but not having enough energy to learn new ways... Clergy are in desperate need of renewal ...so that they can reconnect with themselves and their sense of call...we need a new paradigm that can bring a renewal of passion and vision...”

With that perceptive executive, we might all be asking the question behind the question of the day: What can re-energize our church professionals, especially our pastors?

There are no easy answers that are worth hearing, of course, especially in the increasingly complex and changing culture we are in. Rapidly accelerating change is putting rapidly accelerating pressure on leaders of every sort. Pastors are among those who are likely to feel those stresses the most acutely. Presbyteries are doing significant things to support pastors of all kinds, and in some cases are providing extra support for the kinds of difficulties that typically occur at mid-life, in the middle of a life of service to God’s people. There are ways to be helpful to each other, even where geography and finances are challenging. Be aware of what you do offer, be creative in thinking about options, reach out in whatever ways you can to the pastors of your presbytery. We need each other!

Support for Mid-Career Pastors - Notes

- Need for definition of healthy ministry
- And what judicatories can do to nurture pastors/ministers toward greater health
- In a time when leadership is always under fire, what does it mean to support pastors who at mid-career are experienced, past both the first honeymoon with ministry and initial disillusionment – and serving as pastoral leaders?
- Jackson Carroll study: 70% very satisfied with current position... We found older clergy to be more satisfied with their lives than younger ones.
Carroll:
 1. grounded in sense of call, sustained by regular spiritual disciplines (co of pastors one way to that...many others including CREDO, spiritual direction, support groups)
 2. work at being a good preachers
 3. care for people genuinely
 4. have a sense of humor and be resilient
 5. find support beyond the congregation
- Avoid cynicism
- Have appropriate boundaries that keep you open to folks and protect you
- Identifies loneliness as big issue along with financial stress
- Intentionality is essential
- Needs of racial ethnic pastors, especially women
- For many, the need for the second or third call or the way to continue to be faithful and creative... always saying yes again...

- Renewing vocation
 - Conviction that
 - What I do is valuable
 - Is valued
 - Is consistent with who I am
 - Is pleasing to God
- Avoiding burnout
 - Self-care
 - Connections to Sabbath
 - To sexual misconduct
- For some:
 - Concerns about retirement
 - Or about paying for college for children
- Health and mental health
- Support systems
 - Spiritual direction
 - Colleague groups
 - Peer friendships
- Need for Sabbath time
 - Days off
 - Time off each day
 - Sabbatical: have a policy
 - Vacation
 - Study leave, consider asking for reports on use of study leave time
- Kirk Byron Jones:
 - Rest in the Storm, quotes Miles Davis: “I am not what I do; I do what I am.”
- Pastoral care: avoiding the sense of abandonment
 - Cultivating a continuing sense of the wonder, joy – and sheer fun – of ministry (at least most days in most churches)
- Judson Edwards, *The Leadership Labyrinth, Negotiating the Paradoxes of Ministry*

- From Dean R. Hoge and Jacqueline E. Wenger, *Pastors in Transition, Why Clergy Leave Local Church Ministry* (Eerdmans, 2005)
 - Pastors who leave local church ministry do not leave because of financial and health-related concerns or because of their positions on doctrinal issues (abortion, gay rights).
 - They leave because of “more mundane problems, the kind most people deal with day in and day out.”
 - Conflict
 - Burnout
 - Feeling unfulfilled
 - Experiencing family and marital problems
 - Ministers experience a lack of support and support systems, especially when dealing with conflict. (page 198)
 - They need support from other ministers (complicated by competitive spirit, unwilling to share weaknesses as freely as successes)
 - They need backing from judicatories (but are afraid of being branded as “problems”)
 - Ministers do not leave because of one factor, but because of the combination of stresses and difficulties (that finally moves past the tipping point)
 - Conflict leads to burnout or exacerbates marital problems
 - Sometimes burnout, lack of self-care, other points of vulnerability leads to sexual misconduct
 - There are points of (helpful) intervention:

Entrance into ministry:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seminaries might offer more practical First Call programs
Beginning a new call:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves the call process more honesty in Church Information Form (CIF) • More clarity about the real expectations • More realistic expectations
Settling in to the new call:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discovering clay feet – all around • Renegotiating the covenant
Emergence of problem/ conflict:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of factors: money, community change • Growth in congregation • Adding/deleting a staff position... • Personal issues: congregations to be more graceful, pastors need to be more honest

- Provide ongoing support for pastors
- Page 219: What is most striking about the recommendations is how often the pastors asked for trust and forthrightness. They too often feel isolated and afraid to confide in their fellow clergy or denominational officers. Both in everyday life and in times of severe conflict, pastors need support systems that will help them cope with the pressures that are inherently part of their vocation. They want very much to minister effectively, and we hope that denominations and congregations will help them to do so.” (Page 220)
- Support: *Who ministers to ministers?* Alban, Barbara G. Gilbert, 1987
 - Page 22 Pierce and Coger: comfort, clarification, confrontation
 - People we can trust with our pain and uncertainty
 - People who can ask the right questions and point us to significant resources
 - People who care enough to help us/confront us to see what we have been hiding/avoiding
- Clowns, collaborators, celebrators...
- Recognize the context of ministry that is everywhere more stressed and stressful
- Leadership is under fire everywhere (Heifetz and Linsky)

Appendix D

Regional Benefits Consultation 2006 Presbyterian CREDO

The Rev. Peter C.S. Sime

*Vice President, Assistance, Retirement Housing and Funds Development,
the Board of Pensions*

Certainly, one of the major issues that comes to mind when we think about mid-career pastors who are serving the church is: how do we help them to be energized, healthy, committed, and faithful in the midst of what, at times, is exhausting and demanding ministry? Furthermore, when we view these concerns within the context of the lower salaries of pastors relative to other professions, the number of small churches and the personal and family concerns that are part of pastors' lives, it is not surprising to find pastors who feel their ministry is one of swimming upstream or treading water.

The Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is obviously concerned about the well-being of pastors who serve the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). In recent years, we have all become more aware of the fact that work or financial stress can have a profound effect on a persons physical and spiritual well-being and on their holistic health. Research that the Board has conducted has also shown that spiritual, vocational, physical and financial issues are of particular concern to pastors serving our congregations. With this in mind, the Board of Pensions has been exploring the program that the CREDO Institute, Inc. of the Episcopal Church developed for their clergy and which they have successfully run for over ten years. The enthusiastic response of their clergy and the well-developed conference curriculum has encouraged the Board to use the Episcopal CREDO (Clergy Reflection Education Discernment Opportunity) as a model for a pilot conference for pastors of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Description of Program:

CREDO Mission Statement: To provide opportunities for clergy to examine significant areas of their lives and to discern prayerfully the future direction of their vocation as they respond to God's call in a lifelong process of practice and transformation.

There are four focus areas to the conference curriculum that encourages participants to reflect on their personal and professional well-being:

- Spiritual Component
- Vocational Component
- Health Component
- Financial Component

During the course of the conference, the conference participants reflect on the questions:

Who am I? – Identity

How am I changing? – Transformation

Who is God calling me to be? – Discernment

How am I responding to God's call? – Practice

The conference process involves guided reflection, introspection, and dialogue lead by a “faculty team.” The participants meet in plenary sessions, small groups and have time for individual reflection. Through discernment and a visioning process, each participant develops a CREDO Plan. The CREDO Plan provides a personal baseline and strategy for effective implementation.

Selection process: Participation in a CREDO conference is by invitation. Those receiving invitations are randomly selected from the Board of Pensions’ database using age and length of service as criteria.

Conferences: Eight days in length; approximately 25 to 30 participants; a faculty team of eight professionals provides leadership. There is an intentional effort to ensure that the facilities are comfortable and the participants are well cared for. They are “lavished with love.”

Faculty: Each conference has a faculty team of eight comprised of a conference leader, and a least one health professional, financial planner (familiar with the benefits plan), vocation professional, and spiritual leader. In addition, each conference has a conference administrator. The faculty teams agree to conduct two conferences a year.

Evaluation: An evaluation process assesses the effectiveness of the CREDO program and its impact on participants over time. There are both pre- and post-conference evaluations done by the participants. CREDO has also contracted with an outside consultant to do quantitative and qualitative longitudinal evaluations of the program.

Participant’s Cost: Participants contribute \$500 toward the costs (scholarships are available for cost and travel).

First Pilot CREDO Conference:

The first pilot Presbyterian CREDO conference was held November 7 – 14, 2005, at Lake Logan Conference Center in Canton, North Carolina. Thirty-three randomly selected pastors between the ages of 40 and 55 with a minimum of seven years of service to a congregation attended the conference. (Ninety invitations were sent. Attendees were selected on a first come, first served basis.) The faculty for the conference was a blend of six experienced Episcopal CREDO faculty and three Presbyterians. Both the attendees and the faculty were extremely positive about the conference experience.

The post-conference survey of attendees gave an overall rating to the conference of 6.53 (on a scale of 1 to 7). The average for all of the Episcopalian CREDO conferences is 6.11. The enthusiastic response to the conference and the ratings demonstrate the value of the CREDO conferences to the pastors who attend. Among the initial comments from participants following the conference were statements such as “This week was an incredible gift!” “This was a wonderful experience that will bless me for many years.” “My expectations were met and all exceeded.” “Absolutely without parallel in quality in the 14 years I’ve served in ministry.”

Based on the excellent response to our first conference, the Board of Pensions has planned two additional pilot conferences for 2006. One conference in June was for pastors selected randomly as they were our first pilot. The second conference will be in early December and will be a development conference for future faculty. A blended faculty of Episcopalians and Presbyterians will lead both of these conferences. Funding for 2006 will come from the Joslin Funds and assistance program funds.

As we look to 2007, we anticipate expanding the Presbyterian CREDO program to four conferences. We hope that through fundraising and other financial resources we will continue to expand the CREDO program in future years. We believe that the CREDO conferences will strengthen the pastoral leadership and the ministry of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) by providing the opportunity for pastors to prayerfully discern the future direction of their vocation in service to God.



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