

TRIENNIAL VISITS

The Committee on Ministry's responsibility "...to facilitate the relations between congregations, ministers, and Certified Christian Educators, and the presbytery..." (G 11.0501a) is accomplished in part through its triennial visit with each session of presbytery. **This is essentially a pastoral visit by the presbytery to its churches to affirm and support the good ministry being accomplished in the name of Christ, to ask questions and share information that will raise the vision of church leaders, to encourage them as they seek to respond to God's call, and to help them deal with problems which exist.** The intention is that of strengthening the connection between the local congregation and the other governing bodies in the denomination, while helping the congregation to consider its ministry and mission not only within the local community but also throughout the world.

Essentially, this visit is an opportunity to celebrate the ministry of the congregation. It is an opportunity for two-way information sharing: the presbytery learning about the church (its ministry, challenges, and concerns) and the church hearing about presbytery (its activities, resources, and challenges). The majority of the visit will be focused on listening to the elders of that particular congregation.

Visitation teams are comprised of one elder and one pastor. The elders and pastors of the Committee on Ministry Committee are the lead team member, who in turn are asked to recruit the partner of their choice (an elder recruits a pastor and a pastor recruits an elder). Visitation teams may want to prepare for their visit by looking at information such as annual statistical reports for the last few years, the church's website, previous visitation reports, etc. They are also encouraged to carry with them information about the Presbytery and COM, which will be provided.

After their visit, the visitation teams are asked to compile information about the visit and return that to the Presbytery Office, c/o COM Visitation Subcommittee, and the Clerk of the session visited.

Steps to be followed by visiting teams:

1. Committee on Ministry visiting teams, consisting of one pastor and one elder, send out letter to the Clerk of Session (include list of questions to be discussed during the visit);
2. Follow up with a phone call to schedule the visit;
3. Meet with Session, visit, listen, share/ask questions from the list or similar;
4. Complete the "Evaluation for Visiting Team" form and return it to the presbytery office, c/o COM Visitation Subcommittee, and send a copy to the session.
5. Mission accomplished for this year! Well done good and faithful servant! ☺

SAMPLE LETTER

Clerk of Session
«Church_Name»
«Address_Line_1»
«City» «State» «ZIP_Code»

March 1, 2005

Dear Clerk:

The Committee on Ministry of the Presbytery is charged with the responsibility of visiting each session once every three years. The purpose of the visit is to discuss “the mission and ministry of the particular church and encourage full participation of each session and congregation in the life and work of the presbytery and the larger church” (*Book of Order*, G-11.0502). These visits afford an opportunity for sessions and presbytery representatives to “listen and encourage” one another, and to celebrate the ministry that is occurring in and through your congregation.

We are the Committee on Ministry representatives who will be meeting with your session this year. You should expect a call from one of us soon to schedule the visit with your session. You may want to have a called meeting for this visit, or put the team early on the agenda at your stated meeting. Whatever works best for your session is the path you should follow.

We will pledge to use the time that your session gives us efficiently, and ordinarily the visit should not take more than one hour. As the visiting team, we will guide the discussion, and you are invited to raise any issues you consider relevant to your church; such as the health and life of your congregation, missions in the local church, concerns about church polity and governance, and your relationship with the presbytery and the larger church. We have attached the list of questions we would like to ask, which we would encourage you to share with all the members of session in advance.

The information shared by your congregation will be summarized into a report that will be shared with the Committee on Ministry, Presbytery staff, and your session. We hope that this visit will be a positive and creative time for your session and the presbytery. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact either of us at _____.

Sincerely,

(Elder)
(Pastor)

Committee on Ministry

VISITS WITH SESSIONS

INTRODUCTIONS

- A. Visiting team introduces themselves, states the purpose of the visit, and has opening prayer.
- B. Team assures session that it will use their time efficiently.
- C. Members of session are asked to introduce themselves and state their responsibility on the session.

FIRST QUESTION

If I were a visitor to your church, what would attract me to become a part of your community of faith?

SECOND QUESTION

What are the major accomplishments in the areas of mission and ministry of this session and congregation for the past year? What are you excited about?

THIRD QUESTION

What are the major challenges facing this session and congregation?

FOURTH QUESTION

In what ways do this session and congregation feel connected to the presbytery?

FIFTH QUESTION (two-part)

How can presbytery help strengthen the mission of your church?

How can your session and congregation help strengthen the mission of presbytery?

SIXTH QUESTION

Are there any suggestions and concerns that you would like for us to relay to the Committee on Ministry?

SEVENTH QUESTION

In what ways can the Presbytery staff and COM pray for you?

CLOSING

Summarize what the visiting team heard the session say; thank the session for its hospitality, and close with prayer.

EVALUATION FOR VISITING TEAM

Name of Church:

Name(s) of Pastor(s):

Date of visit:

- A. Describe your general feelings and observations about the visit.

- B. What are some ministries and missions of the church that the session is really excited about?

- C. Were there any major concerns that the session had about their church?

- D. What were the general attitude and knowledge of the session members about presbytery?

- E. What message did this session want to send to the Committee on Ministry?
(Be specific if there are questions/issues to which the COM should promptly respond)

- F. In what ways can the COM and Presbytery staff pray for this congregation?

- G. Other comments:

Visiting Team:

_____ Elder
_____ Minister

*This evaluation will be treated with respect and confidentiality by the Committee on Ministry.
Please return this form to: Committee on Ministry, Visitation Subcommittee, Presbytery of Eastern
Virginia, 801 Loudoun Avenue, Portsmouth, VA 23707-3216*