

## **Congregational Withdrawal Process**

### **Stage 1 - Start Process and Clarify Congregational Issues**

This stage is designed to provide a formal starting place for a congregation to communicate to the District their wish for withdrawal from the denomination. Care will be taken to make sure that a clear majority of the congregation wants to enter the withdrawal process, and to provide clarity to make sure that everyone involved understands the reasons for the potential withdrawal.

1. The Church Board (or equivalent governing body) notifies District by letter of intent to begin withdrawal process.
  - a. District provides the Church Board full explanation of procedure.
  - b. The District provides resources to Board and Congregation to explain the process.
2. FIRST VOTE. Congregational vote scheduled to start the withdrawal process.
3. Vote by Congregation, attended by District personnel, to begin withdrawal process.
  - a. Two thirds needed to proceed to the next stage.
  - b. The vote is by paper ballot with affirmation of outcome signed by Church and District representatives. A copy of the documentation is given to the District Office.
4. Written explanation, signed by Board Chair and Board Clerk, of disagreements that necessitate withdrawal submitted by Congregation to District. This written explanation of disagreements will be held at the District Office and be available for public review and will be reported to delegates at the following District Conference.
5. Clarity Meeting between District personnel and Congregational representatives to discuss issues. Goal is clarity and understanding, not persuasion.

It is possible that the explanation of the process results in clarity that leads to the Congregation deciding that they want to stay within the denomination or a two thirds vote may not be reached. If that is the case withdrawal proceedings will be formally closed and the process is ended. A new process cannot be initiated within one year. If the Congregational representatives feel that they still want to proceed with the withdrawal process after the Clarity Meeting then the process will formally enter Stage 2.

### **Stage 2 – Explanation and Understanding**

This stage is designed to make sure that all members of the Congregation fully understand that the withdrawal process is taking place, why it is taking place, what withdrawal will mean for the Congregation, and what needs to take place to complete the withdrawal process.

1. District provides a written summary of Congregation's reason for withdrawal as explained in Congregation's written explanation and the clarity meeting with Congregation's representatives.

2. An Open Congregational meeting is held where District personnel answer questions in an open forum and present the following:
  - a. Written summary of Congregation's reason for withdrawal.
  - b. Explanation of consequences for Congregation.
  - c. Full description of process to this point and process remaining.
3. After Open Congregational meeting a final withdrawal vote must be scheduled no sooner than two weeks and no longer than six weeks from the open Congregational meeting. Failure to schedule a vote within this time period will result in the termination of the withdrawal process.

Once a vote is scheduled the process formally moves into Stage 3.

### **Stage 3 - Provide Feedback and Final Congregational Vote**

1. SECOND AND FINAL VOTE. The final vote is a full Congregational vote with District personnel present. The final vote meeting will include the following elements:
  - a. District personnel provides summary of reason for withdrawal and explains voting procedure. The voting procedure will include a paper ballot and a signed affidavit.
  - b. Congregation members complete an exit survey.
  - c. Final withdrawal vote is held. Three fourths majority required.
    - i. Counting of votes will follow the procedures of the ministerial call vote. Two congregational representatives appointed by the Congregation and a District representative shall be present.
    - ii. The vote is by paper ballot with affirmation of the outcome signed by Congregational and District representatives. A copy of the documentation is given to the District Office.

If the three fourths threshold is met the congregation will formally enter into Stage Four. The District will complete withdrawal procedures within 90 days, including releasing the District's interest in Congregation-owned property. If the three fourths threshold is not met then the Congregation will not leave the denomination, the withdrawal procedure is complete. A new process cannot be initiated within one year.

### **Stage 4 - Blessing Forward**

In this final stage all legal procedures are completed and the withdrawal becomes official.

1. All legal and final documents are prepared for signing during worship service.
2. A final worship service, organized by a joint worship planning team, is scheduled with District personnel present. This worship service is where District personnel will publicly state the withdrawal, sign the legal documents and pray for God's blessing on all going forward.
3. All legal procedures regarding property, personnel credentialing, etc. are completed.