

# What's on your mind?

## Review of Ministry-Part 2

Don Muir, Associate Secretary, General Assembly Office

Please see the November 2012 Equipping for Elders for Part 1 of this two-part series. ([www.presbyterian.ca/elders/](http://www.presbyterian.ca/elders/))

Also see Book of Forms 324-344 for the Non-Disciplinary Case process including steps for a Review of Ministry.

A review of ministry does not mean every aspect of a congregation's ministry is to be assessed. The review is intended to focus on the areas of ministry identified in the complaint submitted. Clear terms for the review are to be prepared.

A good first step in preparing the terms of review is for the presbytery review committee to ask the minister and elders (perhaps others) how they can contribute toward a resolution of the complaint. Trial solutions should be put forward until some are chosen. The review is to last a minimum of four months to give all the parties ample time to achieve reconciliation.

Using the sample complaint described in Part 1, the terms of review (section 338) might include the following:

- The minister and others will find study guides that focus on themes of interest to members of the congregation. The minister will train others to lead Bible studies so study groups can take place at various times of the day on various days of the week.
- Elders and other members of the congregation will share hospital visitation responsibilities so the minister won't need to visit there as often.
- The presbytery review committee will communicate with the minister and the clerk of session on the first Wednesday of each month to monitor progress.

After four months, the review committee will assess the situation in light of the terms of the review and make one of three recommendations to the presbytery.

1. That the pastoral relationship is affirmed.
2. That a limited extension of the review is warranted under the same or revised Terms of Review.
3. That the pastoral relationship is deemed not viable.

This is a serious matter. While reconciliation is the goal, a review can lead to the dissolution of the minister's pastoral tie with the congregation. Sometimes elders are removed from session. A review can profoundly affect the life of a congregation.

Presbyteries need to follow our judicial processes. Sometimes well meaning attempts at other forms of problem solving between minister and congregation are made that do not succeed. It is then often necessary for the presbytery to follow our usual procedures to ensure everyone is dealt with fairly. If two procedures are followed, one right after the other, the minister and congregation may grow frustrated at the repetition and the pastoral relationship may deteriorate further. Starting with the correct procedure is best.

Furthermore, some presbyteries have conducted a review of ministry while the minister is on health leave. This is not really feasible since the minister is not present to be engaged in the review.

By the grace of God, there are a growing number of stories of ministries that are restored through a review of ministry.

Blessings,  
Don Muir