

**Presbytery of Lake Michigan Commission on Ministry
Request for the Appointment of an Administrative Commission for
The First Presbyterian Church of Allegan, MI
March 8, 2025**

Recommendation: The Presbytery of Lake Michigan Commission on Ministry recommends that the Presbytery appoint an administrative commission of three to five members to the First Presbyterian Church of Allegan, MI, and grant original jurisdiction to that administrative commission.

Rationale: The primary goal of the administrative commission will be to inquire into reports of disorder by congregational members, staff of the congregation, and members of the Commission on Ministry (G-3.0109b) and investigate the reported disorder and discern with the congregation in determining the capacity to continue the church's mission and ministry.

Background

The Commission on Ministry has been receiving reports of disorder since approximately August 2024. During the Presbytery's regular annual review of the session minutes, COM discovered that the session had not been meeting quarterly as required by the Book of Order. The pastor/moderator contacted the COM liaison and EP/SC on a number of occasions seeking advice about the clerk of session's demand that an additional member be added to the session. COM and the EP/SC provided polity advice to both the pastor and clerk of session. The clerk of session continued to demand that another person be "appointed" to the session even though the demand was out of order according to both Presbyterian polity and the bylaws of the congregation. There was also conflict surrounding the renewal of the pastor's Covenant Agreement with the Congregation. In January 2025, all members of the session resigned. In February 2025, the pastor gave a 30-day notice of resignation as required in the Covenant Agreement. Currently, the congregation has no session and no pastor, so it cannot exercise its authority or manage its affairs—the former clerk of session and those providing pulpit supply report that three people regularly attend worship.

Purpose

Therefore, the Commission on Ministry recommends to the Presbytery of Lake Michigan that an Administrative Commission of three to five members be appointed by the Moderator of the Presbytery, in consultation with the Executive Presbyter/Stated Clerk, for the following purpose:

1. To assume original jurisdiction of the session so that all PCUSA constitutional and State of Michigan corporate requirements are fulfilled.
2. To determine if the congregation has the capacity to engage in future mission and ministry or to recommend dissolution of the congregation.
3. If it is determined that the congregation has the capacity to engage in future mission and ministry, to assist the congregation in determining that engagement.

Scope of Authorities

1. This Administrative Commission has the full authority of the Presbytery of Lake Michigan, except where limited by provisions of the PC(USA) *Book of Order*, as regards the correction of the reported disorder listed in items 1-3 under Purpose.
2. In the assumption of original jurisdiction, the Administrative Commission will act with the full power and authority of the session.
3. The First Presbyterian Church of Allegan, MI, will be responsible for all fees incurred should a consultant be required to help resolve any areas of disorder, and for all costs of dissolution and sale of the property in the event the congregation is dissolved.

Presbytery Authorities Granted by the PCUSA Constitution in the Book of Order

G-3.0109b – Administrative Commissions are designated to consider and conclude matters not involving ecclesiastical judicial process, except that in the discharge of their assigned responsibility they may discover and report to the designating council matters that may require judicial action by the council.

- (5) by presbyteries visiting particular congregations over which they have immediate jurisdiction reported to be affected with disorder, and inquiring into and settling difficulties therein, except that no commission of presbytery shall be empowered to dissolve a pastoral relationship without the specific authorization by the designating body. (G-3.0901)

G-3.0303 Relations with Sessions

Presbytery, being composed of the ministers of the Word and Sacrament and commissioner elected by the session of congregations within its district, has a particular responsibility to coordinate, guide, encourage, support, and resource the work of its congregations for the most effective witness to the broader community. In order to accomplish this responsibility, the presbytery has authority to:

- d. counsel with a session concerning reported difficulties within a congregation, including:
 - (1.) advising the session as to appropriate actions to be taken to resolve the reported difficulties,
 - (2.) offering to help as a mediator, and
 - (3.) acting to correct the difficulties if requested to do so by the session or if the session is unable or unwilling to do so, following the procedural safeguards of the Church Discipline;
- e. assume original jurisdiction in any situation in which it determines that a session cannot exercise its authority. After a thorough investigation, and after full opportunity to be heard has been accorded to the session, the presbytery may conclude that the session of a congregation is unable or unwilling to manage wisely its affairs, and may appoint an administrative commission with the full power of session. This commission shall assume original jurisdiction of the existing session, if any, which shall cease to act until such time as the presbytery shall otherwise direct.