



The Presbytery of Newton
New Jersey

1. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian USA has asked each presbytery to provide a guiding policy in case a pastor and/or session and/or a congregation questions their on-going relationship with the PCUSA.

While there has not been a case of this questioning to come before the presbytery at this time, the Presbytery of Newton agrees a policy should be in place for clarity and the guidance of all.

As the Body of Christ in the Presbyterian Church USA we have agreed to affirm the vows we took as ordained elders, deacons and ministers. Seeking specifically to resolve conflicts by being governed by the polity of the church; abiding by its discipline, by working for the reconciliation of the world and working for the peace, unity and purity of the church. Furthermore, we agree to act in accordance with the Book of Order, appreciating our denominational tradition of church property being dedicated to the mission and ministry of the historic Presbyterian witness, *recognizing the historic and legal principle that churches hold their property in trust for the denomination.* ([Book of Order G.-8.0202](#)) We have agreed to be faithful stewards of our resources avoiding the expense of legal proceedings and to attend to the well-being of individuals and congregations while respecting and affirming the unifying witness to the love of God through Jesus the Christ.

2. Realizing that churches and pastors may choose to question their relationship with the PCUSA, we the Presbytery of Newton in New Jersey agree to follow these general guidelines.
 - a. The intent of the process is to find mutual reconciliation in the spirit of a reconciling God. It is also the intent of the policy to make clear an outline for The Presbytery of Newton's claim to all property for the use of the mission and ministry of the PCUSA.
 - b. When concerns are initially disclosed a **listening/review team** will be appointed by the Council. The team will engage the church and pastor/s in a prayer-centered conversation aimed at understanding and identifying the congregation's concerns and intentions. After fully discovering the nature and extent of the congregation's and pastor/s' concerns, the team will seek to find resolutions to the conflict and restore a full and healthy relationship with the church/pastor/s and the PCUSA.
 - c. If after this period of seeking reconciliation the team and church/pastor/s mutually discern there is no resolution, the team may move to advise the Presbytery to establish an **implementation team or administrative commission** to act on

behalf of the Presbytery's obligation to continue to use its property in the service of the mission and ministry of the Presbyterian Church USA.

Guidelines for mutual respect for and with each other:

1. Open and honest dealing
 2. Free and timely sharing of information
 3. Respect of the rights of all, especially the minority
 4. No unilateral, unauthorized handling of any church assets
3. The **implementation team or administrative commission** would be activated upon the discovery of any of the following:
 - a. A congregational meeting acts to move away from the PCUSA
 - b. A congregation/pastor/s move to sell or encumber Presbyterian property without Presbytery permission
 - c. A pastor/s or congregation takes any action that is out of compliance with the Constitution of the PCUSA
 4. The **implementation team or administrative commission** or in the case of the need for immediate action by authorization of the Council or the Stated Clerk will act to:
 - a. Freeze the assets of the church, including but not limited to the church building/s, equipment and any other property of the church.
 - b. Replace the session
 - c. Inventory the property of the church
 5. The Presbytery of Newton having claimed its property will on a case by case basis make decisions regarding how and when the ministry and mission of the church will be continued. This may include but is not limited to the following:
 - a. Work with a remnant congregation to find new leadership and reestablish the ministry and mission of the PCUSA
 - b. Value the property and assets by placing a monetary value on them and selling them to the highest bidder
 - c. Redistribute the contents of the church to other congregations in the Presbytery.
 - d. Seek a sale of the property to benefit a related social justice ministry
 - e. Use the proceeds of the sale in a new church development, or as Newton Presbytery deems most suitable.
 6. God's hope for all people is to find reconciliation and peace. In light of this we make our prayer and witness to the gift of Jesus as a reconciling gift to the world.

| [Approved by Newton Presbytery September 2009](#)