

## **JOHN KNOX PRESBYTERY GUIDELINES FOR CONFLICT SITUATIONS**

The Committee on Ministry (COM) desires to offer positive and supportive counsel when conflict is present in a church. The following guidelines are offered to churches and pastors to facilitate any contact that might be necessary.

1. Any teaching elder or two active ruling elders may initiate a contact with the COM. Contact may be made with any member on this committee. A written record of all such contacts will be kept and reported to the chairperson of the committee. Such initial contacts will be confidential.
2. We urge an early contact be made in case of conflict.
3. The COM may contact any teaching elder or session if the committee deems that advisable.
4. Any visit by the COM with either the teaching elder or session or both, will be governed by the following policies:
  - A. A team of at least two persons, appointed by COM, will represent the COM.
  - B. This team comes to assist the session and the teaching elder in the resolution of the issue at hand. The team can be involved in negotiations that aim at the reconciliation of all parties.
  - C. Such meetings will be held in confidentiality.
  - D. Written records will be prepared which will be approved by all parties.
  - E. If such contact indicates that either an administrative or judicial commission should be recommended to presbytery, no member of the COM shall be a member of said commission.
  - F. It will be the responsibility of the COM to protect the interests of the local church, the teaching elder and the presbytery in each conflict setting.
  - G. If at all possible, it will be the intention of the COM to work for the resolution of conflicts without bringing them to the floor of presbytery.
  - H. If such conflicts do reach the floor of presbytery, the presbyters will be fully apprised of the issues at stake and given full opportunity for discussion before being asked to make any decision.

As far as possible the COM is committed to maintaining an objective stance. We do not believe that the best means of solving conflict in a local church is the automatic dissolving of the pastoral relationship. We're charged with doing our work within the boundaries of both the love and the justice of Jesus Christ. We will seek to fulfill that charge. We would like each teaching elder and church to remember that the COM has no decision-making authority by itself. We exist to assist ministers and sessions to resolve their own problems. We do have the right to make recommendations to the presbytery which represent our best judgment in a situation of unresolved conflict.