

As approved by Session on 2/16/2010

The Presbyterian Church, Sewickley (“TPCS”)

Session’s Action Plan for 2010-2011

As a result of the early retirement of the Senior Pastor, The Rev. Dana C. Jones, Jr., and pending the arrival of the new Senior Pastor who will be called to TPCS, the Session deems it necessary and appropriate to adopt and implement an Action Plan for TPCS for the expected transition period during 2010 and 2011.

**I. The Great Ends of the Church.**

(A) Session reaffirms the great ends of the Church:

- (1) proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind;
- (2) the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God;
- (3) the maintenance of divine worship;
- (4) the preservation of truth;
- (5) the promotion of social righteousness; and
- (6) the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world. (G-1.0300)<sup>1</sup>

(B) In recognizing its responsibilities and obligations to the Church and its constitution, confessions, mission and unity, and to TPCS in particular, within the greater body of the Church as a whole, Session will exercise its duties, individually as elders and jointly, to strengthen and nurture the faith and life of the congregation, encourage the congregation in the worship and service of God, equip and renew them for their tasks within the church and for their mission in the world, and visit, comfort and care for the people, with special attention to the poor, the sick, the lonely, and those who are oppressed. (G-6.0304)

**II Continuity, Change and Reform.** During this transition period, Session intends to accept and embrace change, consistent with the Church’s reformed tradition, while at the same time assuring continuity in the mission and governance of TPCS. Session will reform or make changes in policy, programs, leadership or approach after due deliberation and action in accordance with the *Book of Order*. In both change and continuity, consistent with our reformed tradition, Session will, with prayer and confidence in our Lord’s leadership, respond to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, follow the *Book of Order*, and seek the support of the congregation. Session’s actions will continue to be fully transparent except as confidentiality may be required for personnel or pastoral concerns.

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<sup>1</sup> References to Sections such as this one, as used in this Action Plan, are to The Constitution of The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part II, Book of Order (herein the “*Book of Order*”). Session will also refer to the Book of Confessions, Part I of the Constitution of our church, which is equally significant in our church governance. Session will look to the Book of Confessions as the authentic and reliable exposition of what Scripture leads us to believe and do.

**III. Book of Order.** The Session will faithfully and vigorously exercise its responsibility and authority under the *Book of Order* to lead the congregation in the mission and government of TPCS (Section G-10.0102). Session meetings will continue to be conducted regularly in accordance with the *Book of Order* (Section G-9.0300), including especially (i) the opening and closing of meetings with prayer, (ii) the active work of the Moderator, the Clerk of Session, committee chairs, and its members, (iii) the handling of dissents, and (iv) if required, the use of judicial process to assure church discipline (D-1.000 et. seq.).

**IV. Pastoral Leadership.**

(A) **Associate Pastors.** Session reaffirms the work and leadership of the Associate Pastors who are continuing in their roles, with increased responsibilities, during this transition period. Pending the arrival of an Interim Pastor, the Associate Pastors will alternate the responsibility of serving as Moderator of Session. Session reaffirms the agreement of TCPS, when each of the Associate Pastors was called, to encourage them, to respect their decisions, and to follow as they guide us, serving Jesus Christ, who alone is Head of the Church. (G-14.0510)

(B) **Interim Pastor.** Session will retain the services of an Interim Pastor, in addition to the Associate Pastors, to provide leadership that will prepare the way for a new Senior Pastor to be called by our congregation.

(C) **Pastor Nominating Committee.** Session will work with the duly elected Pastor Nominating Committee in its search for a new Senior Pastor, all as contemplated by the *Book of Order*.

Session will assure that the Moderating Pastor (whether Interim, Associate or other), at any given time during the transition period, and the Senior Pastor, once called to serve our church, will have and maintain the ultimate responsibility for the implementation and conduct of worship services. Such responsibility shall include, without limitation, funeral and memorial services, baptisms, weddings, and any other special services. Such responsibility shall be in addition to the normal and traditional responsibility the Senior Pastor has with respect to regular worship services. The exercise of these responsibilities shall be in accordance with the Book of Order.

**V. The Congregation.** Session will seek the congregation's active and continuing participation in support of the Lord's calling and the work of TPCS during this transition period and beyond. Session will assure its active support and leadership of the membership of our congregation as it remains vigorously engaged in mission, programs, and outreach.

**VI. Communications.** Session believes that regular, continuing and open communications between Clergy and Session and between Session and the congregation, through worship service announcements and bulletins, committee meetings, letters, the TPCS website, the monthly Interpretation newsletter, and personal contacts remain vital to the successful implementation of the TPCS mission during this transition period and beyond.

**VII. Stewardship of Property and Finance.** Session will actively and faithfully pursue and address the continuing and day-to-day needs of the church, including any and all matters relating to stewardship, finance, property and long-range planning. Session reaffirms its prior commitments in all areas of stewardship. Modification or amendments to the direction TCPS has taken in this area will only be made after due deliberation by the Session. In particular, in assessing any modifications to property plans, the annual budget, and the capital campaign, Session recognizes the increasing demands of a relatively young and growing church and the need to respond to the Lord's call through its ministry, leadership, and congregation.

**VIII. Discipline.** The Session remains deeply concerned about the actions of certain members of our church who, in recent years, have impaired, or attempted to impair, our mission, government, and leadership. During this transition period, the Session expects to affirm and acknowledge by its leadership the principles set forth in the *Book of Order*. If appropriate and necessary, the Session will take action, consistent with the *Book of Order*, to assure specifically that conduct injurious to the body of our church will be promptly confronted, compassionately handled, and suitably disciplined. After prayerful consideration and if deemed necessary, the Session will invoke the discipline procedures in the *Book of Order* to assure the cessation of conduct injurious to the body of our church as a whole.

**IX. Code of Conduct and Complaint Procedure.** During this transition period, the Session will consider, and expects to implement among other things, the adoption of:

(A) a "code of conduct" that contemplates and assures that all matters within the church will be open and transparent, with appropriate preservation of confidentiality regarding pastoral counseling and personnel issues; and

(B) a "procedure for complaints" that will provide an appropriate avenue for members who have concerns to share them with the Session.

**X. Responsiveness to the Congregation, Augmentation of Resources, and the Prayerful Seeking to Understand the Will of the Holy Spirit.**

(A) The Session welcomes any and all suggestions and support by communication orally or in writing to any member or members of Session. Any and all correspondence addressed to a Session member, the Clerk of Session, the Pastors, or the Session as a whole will be presented to Session at its next regularly scheduled meeting, except for correspondence with a pastor that the pastor deems is subject to confidential treatment such as pastoral counseling, church member privacy and personnel issues not affecting the general policy or governance of the church.

(B) In implementing the components of this Action Plan, Session will continue to evaluate whether or not to augment its resources, and those of TCPS and its members, for

**particular purposes or responsibilities, with professional or third-party counseling or assistance, as may be appropriate or necessary.**

**(C) In the worship and service of God and the government of TCPS as a member of Christ's Church, Session will strive to assure that all matters are to be ordered according to the Word by reason and sound judgment, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. (G-1.0100)**