

Warrant
for a
Standing Commission
of Elizabeth Presbytery
concerning
New Church Developments

June 26 MMVII

[Jesus said:] “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,
baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.
And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
Matthew 28:18b-20

G-9.0502

A commission is empowered to consider and conclude matters referred to it by a governing body. The appointing body shall state specifically the scope of power given to a commission. A commission shall keep a full record of its proceedings, which shall be submitted to its governing body to be incorporated in its minutes and to be regarded as the actions of the governing body itself.

G-9.0503a.

.... The functions ordinarily entrusted to an administrative commission are:

G-9.0503a.(2)

to organize churches. When such commissions are appointed by a presbytery to organize new congregations (G-11.0103h), the presbytery may authorize that commission to assume any or all powers and responsibilities of a session (G-10.0102) for the benefit and ministry of the new congregation. The presbytery may authorize the commission to delegate such powers and responsibilities to a committee of the new congregation;

G-9.0503a.(2)(a)

For immigrant fellowships with roots in the Reformed tradition, if the presbytery determines (1) that its strategy for mission with that constituency requires it and (2) that the chosen lay leadership of the immigrant fellowship is equivalent to elders and session, then the presbytery or its administrative commission may recognize that status as equivalent and proceed to recognize those leaders as elders. In making this determination the presbytery shall be guided by written criteria developed by the presbytery. These criteria shall be based upon the description of the nature of ordained office found in G-6.0100 and G-6.0300.

G-9.0503a.(2)(b)

For immigrant fellowships the presbytery may, if it determines that its strategy for mission with that constituency requires it, grant designated leader(s) of a fellowship voice and vote in the meetings of presbytery on an annual basis.

G-9.0505a.

The decision of an administrative commission shall be the action of the appointing governing body from the time of its completion by the commission and the announcement, where relevant, of the action to parties affected by it. Such decision shall be transmitted in writing to the stated clerk of the governing body, who shall report it to the governing body at its next meeting. A governing body may rescind or amend an action of an administrative commission in the same way actions of the governing body may be modified.

One responsibility and mission of presbytery is starting new churches. This is both joyful and hard work in responding faithfully to our present changing and challenging cultural context. We are conscious that America needs to be viewed as a mission field. In our presbytery we find ourselves increasingly surrounded by neighbors who do not know the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

In order to respond to our present urgency and opportunity to start new churches, the Evangelism and Church Vitality Unit and the Council recommend that the Presbytery of Elizabeth form an Administrative Commission to start and oversee the development of new churches in our presbytery. This commission shall be called the Elizabeth Presbytery New Church Development Commission (NCDC), and functions pursuant to G-9.0502. It shall have the services of a Clerk who shall keep minutes which shall become the minutes of the presbytery.

1. The NCDC shall educate itself and the presbytery in strategies of developing new churches in the complex, challenging, and changing context of New Jersey.
2. The NCDC shall actively do demographic and other research to discover potential NCD sites, paying close attention to communities and groups which are not served by existing congregations.
3. The NCDC shall be open to all groups and individuals who approach it with ideas for potential NCD efforts, target populations, or sites.
4. The NCDC shall take the initiative in reaching out to elements of the population which it identifies as potential NCD sites.
5. The NCDC shall communicate with other Christian denominations, particularly those with which we are in full communion (ELCA, UCC, RCA), to ensure that there is no wasteful duplication of efforts, and to engage in cooperative mutual endeavors when such opportunities present themselves and are viewed as beneficial. At the same time, the NCDC shall not regard resistance from an existing local congregation, no matter of what denomination, as a necessary obstacle to the development of an NCD in a certain area.
6. The NCDC shall be responsible for pursuing requests for funding of NCD efforts. Funding may be sought from sources within the denomination, or from sources outside the church. The NCDC's efforts in this area should not be thought to preclude an NCD seeking still other sources of support.
7. Any group of Christian believers with a minimum of seven committed members may apply to the presbytery for official status as an NCD of Elizabeth Presbytery. When it receives such an application, the NCDC shall consult with the group to determine an appropriate level of oversight and support. The NCDC will ensure that the group understands basic elements of the Christian faith and Presbyterianism, including the requirements and implications of being in the connectional system set forth in the Form of Government of the PCUSA. The group will be given a copy of this warrant. The product of this consultation may be that the NCDC assist the group's emerging ministry.

8. The NCDC is specifically authorized by the presbytery to assume any and all powers and responsibilities of a session for the benefit and ministry of the congregation with respect to any NCD of Elizabeth Presbytery, and is also specifically authorized to delegate such powers and responsibilities to a committee of the new congregation, all to the full extent permitted by the *Book of Order*. The NCDC is authorized to identify and train new leaders from within the NCD, and to form a Steering Committee within the NCD membership, which Steering Committee may be delegated by the NCDC the powers and responsibilities referred to in this paragraph, all to the extent determined by the NCDC.
9. The NCDC shall recommend to the Committee on Ministry (COM) candidates for the position of organizing pastor for a specific NCD, when, in consultation with the NCD (through its Steering Committee, if there be one) it determines that such an approach is appropriate. The NCDC shall recommend to COM the specific terms of an organizing pastor covenant, including details of how the position will be funded and for how long. The NCDC may recommend to the COM whether the organizing pastor may become the installed pastor of any new chartered congregation that results.
10. The NCDC shall recommend to presbytery that an NCD advance to the status of chartered congregation of this presbytery, overseeing all the foundational and organizational work necessary to accomplish this. The presbytery shall appoint a separate Administrative Commission (which may include members of the NCDC) to organize the worship service at which the chartering takes place. Once a congregation is chartered it passes out of the NCDC's responsibility.
11. If the NCDC determines that a particular NCD is not likely to become an ongoing congregation, it may ask presbytery to transfer responsibility for its work to another unit of the presbytery, or simply remove it from the set of groups it chooses to work with. This decision shall not preclude the groups reacceptance as an NCD at some time in the future.
12. If the NCDC determines that the emerging mission and ministry are not in harmony with the Reformed tradition or Presbyterian practice, it shall work with the group to bring it into a closer relationship and appreciation of our understanding of the Christian faith. The NCDC also has the option of encouraging the NCD to consider transfer to a branch of Christianity more in tune with its particular spirit. The NCDC may also decide to simply terminate its, and presbytery's, relationship with an NCD.
13. The NCDC may make a detailed report to any meeting of the Council and any Stated Meeting of the Presbytery of Elizabeth. It may inform the presbytery of the learnings of all research and note any conversations with potential groups and people which may lead to an NCD. When the NCDC has a set of NCD's with which it is working, it shall report on membership, worship attendance, leadership, budget, and other matters it deems useful for the presbytery to know. The NCDC shall report to presbytery no less than four times a year.

14. The NCDC shall require that all NCD groups with which it is officially working have a checking account at a bank and a person assigned to manage its money and financial affairs. This account may be managed by the NCDC on the group's behalf until it can be turned over to a responsible member of the group. Every NCD shall be required to keep a detailed account of its finances and report to the NCDC at least quarterly, or more frequently at the discretion of the NCDC. Money raised within a particular NCD shall remain with that NCD except for whatever the NCD determines to donate to other mission.
15. The presbytery gives to the NCDC the authority to permit qualified persons to celebrate the sacraments in a specific NCD.
16. The NCDC shall consult with the presbytery's Evangelism and Church Vitality Unit concerning its activities and strategies regarding NCDs within the presbytery.
17. The NCDC shall work with the Council regarding its annual budget.

Composition of the Administrative Commission.

The commission shall be made up of a minimum of seven people who understand and are committed to the development of new congregations and are familiar with basic concepts of evangelism and church growth. It shall reflect the diversity of the presbytery and follow the requirements of the *Book of Order* for Administrative Commissions. (G-9.0504b; G-9.0504b(3).) The commission may include organizing pastors among its membership.

Membership on this commission will be by appointment of the Moderator of Presbytery, with presbytery's approval. The presbytery will extend an invitation to all churches, referring interested people to the Moderator.

The commission shall be composed of ministers and laypersons who shall serve for two, four, and six year terms when it begins in 2007. Thereafter, six-year, non-renewable terms will be preferred for purposes of continuity of leadership on the commission with leadership of emerging congregations.

This commission shall begin its work as soon as its membership has been approved by the presbytery. This commission will cease to exist when it is dissolved and dismissed by a vote of the presbytery.

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First Reading, May 22, 2007

Second Reading and adoption, June 26, 2007