

***Committee on Ministry***  
***Proposed Administrative Commission for Approval at the February 21, 2008 Special Meeting***

**MOTION:** That the Presbytery of Grand Canyon approve in accordance with Form of Government G-9.0503a (4) an Administrative Commission, made up of seven (7) members, to John Calvin Presbyterian Church which is reported to be affected with disorder for the purpose of inquiring into and settling the difficulties therein. That in accordance with G-11.0103(s) the Presbytery assume original jurisdiction of the session and appoint this Administrative Commission to act as the Session of John Calvin Presbyterian Church with the full power of a session with respect to all of the session responsibilities for mission and government outlined in G-10.0102 (a) through(s). The Presbytery authorizes the Moderator of the Presbytery to appoint the Members of the Commission.

Specifically the Commission is charged with the following:

1. to serve as an instrument of the presbytery for promoting the peace and harmony of the John Calvin Presbyterian Church congregation and session, especially in the matters outlined in the Report of the October 6, 2007 Investigating Committee which vindicated the installed pastor “from the rumors or gossip that may have injured him”
2. to mediate differences and reconcile persons, to the end that difficulties may be corrected if possible, that the welfare of John Calvin Presbyterian Church may be strengthened and that the unity of the body of Christ may be made manifest
3. to work with the installed pastor in his continuing ministry to the congregation
4. to work with and include the currently serving session elders as of the date of the assumption of original jurisdiction of the session in all aspects of the mission, government and spiritual oversight of the congregation
5. to work with and include the currently serving session elders as of the date of the assumption of original jurisdiction specifically in working through all of the areas highlighted in the Report of the October 6, 2007 Investigating Committee which vindicated the installed pastor “from the rumors or gossip that may have injured him”
6. to assist the congregation and “currently serving elders” in determining the future ministry direction for John Calvin Presbyterian Church and its most effective witness to the broader community

Notwithstanding the above specific charges this commission is empowered with wide discretion as to its manner of inquiry into and approach to settling the difficulties.

In completing its work the Commission shall comply with all of the applicable provisions of the Form of Government with respect to the work of Administrative Commissions. This Commission is directed to report on its work, findings, actions taken to settling the difficulties therein and any recommendations to the Presbytery at its June 7, 2008 Stated Meeting or at an earlier specifically called meeting of the Presbytery.

***Background and Rationale***

In the Consent Agenda for the November 10, 2007 Stated Meeting, the Stated Clerk reported that the Rules of Discipline D-9.0000 provide for a request for vindication which is a request made by a member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) who feels injured by rumor or gossip to investigate erroneous, inaccurate or inflammatory statements made about him or her in order to "clear the record." A request for vindication is a public process. The name of the person requesting vindication is reported at the time of the naming of the Investigating Committee (IC) which has the responsibility to make an inquiry into the facts and circumstances. The report of an IC formed as a result of a request for vindication includes

sufficient information to give a clear picture of facts and circumstances. On September 24, 2007 the Stated Clerk received a request for vindication from the Rev. Justin I. Schlesinger-Devlin in which he outlined that malicious and disparaging remarks about him were being made by an elder in his church who is not currently serving on the session. As a result of the request and in accordance with Presbytery of Grand Canyon Bylaw B-7.0200, the following four persons were appointed to an Investigating Committee: Rev. James Bruening (HR), Elder Amy Davis-King (Palo Cristi), Elder Carolyn McBurney (Mission del Sol) and Rev. W. Gale Watkins (Pastor – Westminster).

The report of the October 6, 2007 Investigating Committee in the matter of Rev. Schlesinger-Devlin's request for vindication was included as an Addendum to the Consent Agenda at the January 19, 2008 Stated Meeting as Paper (P-3). The report vindicated Rev. Schlesinger-Devlin from the rumors or gossip that may have injured him. The report also highlighted division that exists within the session on the matters outlined by the Investigating Committee. The Investigating Committee recommended the establishment of an administrative committee for the church.

On January 12, 2008 the Investigating Committee met with Rev. Shelly Moe, incoming Committee on Ministry (COM) Chair and the Stated Clerk to present their written report of January 8, 2008 with particular reference to their recommendation concerning an administrative committee.

As a result of the Investigating Committee's letter report and recommendations, the Committee on Ministry discussed the reported difficulties at its January 22, 2008 monthly meeting and took the following action: (1) Requested that a Special Meeting of the Presbytery of Grand Canyon be called at the earliest possible date for the purpose of the Committee on Ministry's recommending to the Presbytery the appointment of an Administrative Commission with original jurisdiction of the Session of John Calvin Presbyterian Church, and (2) Requested a Special Meeting of the Session of John Calvin PC be called for the purpose of meeting with representatives of COM to discuss the appointment of an Administrative Commission and the decision of COM in this matter.

A Special Meeting of the Session was held on Monday evening January 28, 2008 at which time Shelly Moe, COM Chair; Ken Moe, Executive Presbyter; Bud Engstrom, COM Partner / Cluster Representative and Dick Coffelt, Stated Clerk met with 8 of the 9 session members (the 9<sup>th</sup> elder who was not present sent her letter of resignation from the church and denomination with a request that the letter be read at the meeting). Following a time of questions, answers and discussion, the Session approved the following motion: "The session concurs with the Committee on Ministry recommendation to form an Administrative Commission assuming original jurisdiction to work with the Session of John Calvin Presbyterian Church to resolve conflicts within the Session."