

Date

Dear Partners in Ministry:

We are beginning to schedule triennial visits for 2005, and look forward to the opportunity for presbytery representatives to meet with your session. We want to be sure you know about a new way of conducting these visits. We hope you will be willing to take part in this exciting new visit model with us, even as we continue to develop and improve it. At the same time, you may choose to be visited in our more traditional way. Please read on!

The new model we are offering is that several sessions will be visited together on one evening. Over a shared meal at 6:00 pm leaders from the participating churches will have a chance to get acquainted. After the meal the Presbytery's Session Visit Team will offer an educational presentation and a time of discussion around issues facing leaders in today's church. This will be followed by an hour visit with each session. After a brief closing time together we will adjourn by 9:00 pm.

Representatives from the Committee on Ministry, the Leadership Development Ministry, the Church Development and Redevelopment Ministry, and of our presbytery staff will conduct the visit. In conjunction with your session visit, Committee on Ministry members will meet individually with your pastor or pastors.

This new model has been designed to fulfill our constitutional requirements for session visits. But we believe it also establishes a more relaxed environment for these visits, generates creative sharing of concerns and hopes, and enhances relationships between and among the churches and the presbytery.

We want your session to have the opportunity to experience this new model. At the same time you may have reasons that you would prefer a visit such as we've done in the past where Presbytery representatives meet with your session alone for about two hours.

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of this new model for visits, and to invite your session to give it a try. A member of the Presbytery's Session Visit Team will contact you soon to learn whether you will participate in the group visit or would prefer an individual visit. In the meantime, please contact any of us if you have questions or concerns. Once we've heard from everyone we will begin to put together a schedule for the year.

Thank you for considering this opportunity and request.

In Christ,

Presbytery's Session Visit Team  
Sara Gresh, Nona Holy, Dean Myers, Mary Kay Paisley, Roz Powell,  
Tom Robinson, and Sylvia Will

Conversation Starters for COM Triennial Pastor Visits

How are you experiencing God in the midst of your ministry?

Do you feel God is continuing to call you to your current ministry?

What brings you joy in this ministry? What is a struggle?

What feeds your soul? (at your church, in your ministry, elsewhere in your life)

How are you growing in this current position?

What are your growing edges in ministry? With this particular congregation?

What do you need to learn and what skills do you need to develop at this time in your ministry?

What are your frustrations? What are your hopes?

How does your congregation support your ministry – financially, spiritually, personally?

If these areas have not already surfaced, check in about family, health, finances, vacation, time-off, study leave, hobbies

# Questions to Guide Session Visits

These four “starter” questions will be sent to the participating Sessions ahead of the visit with the confirmation packet.

**What exciting things is God doing in your church?**

**What do you think keeps people coming back to your church?**

**What does your Session spend most of its time talking about?**

**How does your congregation interact with the community?**

These are suggested questions to evoke conversation about deeper issues in the life of the congregation – leadership, engagement with the community, planning, ability to adapt ministry.

**How would you describe your church’s mission and ministry to a visitor?**

**Does your church have a mission statement? If so, what is it? If not, what would you say the mission emphasis of your church is?**

**How are members learning the mission statement or how do members know what the mission emphasis of the church is?**

**How does your congregation nurture folks into leadership? How does your congregation help folks to hear and respond to God’s call in their lives?**

**In what ways is your congregation sharing the good news with the unchurched? How do you reach out to prospective members in the community? How do you decide which groups to target?**

**I'm going to offer you two words. Right of the top of your head, in the context of your congregation, what comes to mind? Expectations and accountability**

**5. How does your congregation care for its pastor(s)?**

**6. How do you as a Session troubleshoot, evaluate, adjust the course of the church's ministry? For instance, as resources shift or the community changes? Can you give an example? Or tell the story of how this happened recently?**

## Session Visit Process and Procedures

Letter to churches - Clerk and Moderator - early in year asking if they want to be part of group visit or would prefer the more traditional solo visit

Divide up the churches

Letter of Invitation

Process, who they are grouped with, all details

A Team Leader is assigned to each group of churches

Session Visit Team Leader for each group

Follows up on letter of invitation to coordinate date/time/location/meal

Finds enough Session Visit Team Members to conduct visit

(2 per participating church)

Coordinates roles among team members

Opening, Closing, Education Piece, Meals, Pastor visits, two to meet with each Session individually (scribe & discussion facilitator), Reports,

Reports these details back to Staff Assoc to General Presbyter and Stated Clerk, and Session Visits Coordinator for Committee on Ministry

*\*NOTE: as details develop, Team Leaders please include whole Session Visit Team by email in details so that we can all be checking our calendars and coordinating our efforts*

Staff Associate to General Presbyter and Stated Clerk

Sends confirmation packet\* to all churches in group – Clerk and Moderator - and all Session Visit Team members assigned to that visit

Prints out 10 year statistical report for the churches

Prints additional materials from CDAR

Conveys all printed resources to Session Visit Team Leader

\*Confirmation Letter/Package contains:

Letter confirming details of visit/Evaluation form and Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope/Agenda/ Questions for elders to consider ahead of time

COM members of Session Visit Team

Set up and conduct pastor visits with participating churches

All pastors receive a visit (head of staff, all associates)

Confirm that visit was conducted with Lead COM Liaison to Session Visit Team and provide brief, ½ page report

Non – COM members of Session Visit Team

Set up and conduct visits with Educators, Youth staff

## **Following Each Visit**

### **Reports**

Scribe completes standard report format and circulates it to other Session Visit Team Member for that church

Within two weeks completed report is sent to Staff Associate to General Presbyter and Stated Clerk

### **Evaluations**

Team Leader makes follow up phone call to pastors

Thank you for participating, etc.

What did you (pastor) think of the session visit?

Was your visit with the COM rep helpful?

What did you hear from your Session about the visit?

Any evaluation to pass on from your discussion at the next regular Session meeting? (remind about returning evaluation form)

At the end of each visit, ask Clerk to complete the evaluation at the next regular Session meeting and return it in the attached stamped return address envelope.

### **Follow- Up**

Staff Assoc to General Presbyter and Stated Clerk distributes reports and evaluations to:

All members of Session Visit Team

PWR Staff

Moderators of COM, LDM, and CDAR

Moderators and Clerk of Session at each participating church,  
with letter of thanks

Team Leader

Makes sure any follow-up needed is attended to

Each pair that meets with an individual session sends a thank you note to the Clerk of Session within a week

**Session Visit Information**  
**Bethany, Bosworth Road, Faith, and Grace Presbyterian**  
**Churches**  
**Hosted by Faith Church**  
**Wednesday, July 27, 2005, 6 to 9 p.m.**

**Directions to Faith Church:** on the corner of Lakewood and Detroit Avenues in Lakewood, OH

*From the East:* Take I-90 West to W. 117<sup>th</sup> St exit. Turn right on 117<sup>th</sup> Street and go north a little over one mile to Detroit Ave. The church is 6 blocks west (left) on Detroit; or Take the Shoreway west to Clifton Blvd. Turn left (south) on Cove Ave (which is about 5 blocks west of 117<sup>th</sup> St). Go to the light on Detroit and turn right. The church is ½ block west.

The parking lot behind the church accommodates very few cars. Please park along the street if there is not enough space in the church parking lot.

The church's telephone number is 216-228-2210.

**Session Visits Team:** Representatives from Leadership Development Ministry, Presbytery Staff person, Representatives from Church Development and Redevelopment, Representatives from Committee on Ministry

**Schedule:**

6:00 Gather, Welcome and Community Building

6:15 Dinner

7:00 Educational Presentation: *A New Idea? The Missional Church*

7:45 Individual Session Visits

Bethany: two representatives to meet with each Session

Bosworth Road:

Faith:

Grace:

8:45 Closing Worship

9:00 Go in Peace

**Dinner Plans:**

Session members from each church and the visit team members are asked to bring a dish to share for our potluck meal.

Beverages and Set-up: Faith

Main Course: Grace

Vegetable/Salad: Bethany and Bosworth Road

Dessert: Visitation Team

If you have any questions, please contact (Team Leader) at 111-222-3333 or (COM Session Visits Coordinator) at 111-222-3333.

July 5, 2005

Dear (Please send to Moderator and Clerk of Session of participating churches, Session Visit team members),

The Session Visit Team is looking forward to our time together at the upcoming Session Visit with Bethany, Bosworth Road, Faith and Grace Churches. There is a wonderful energy present when the leaders of our churches gather to fellowship, pray, and share the blessings and challenges of their ministries.

On the attached page please find the details of our gathering, including directions to Faith Church, who has agreed to host us, and the specifics of our potluck.

We would appreciate it if you would ask your elders to please spend a few moments reflecting on these four questions in preparation for the visit. There is no need to provide anything written. We send them ahead of time to “prime the pump” of our conversation.

*What exciting things is God doing in your church?*

*What do you think keeps people coming back to your church?*

*What does your Session spend most of its time talking about?*

*How does your congregation interact with the community?*

As the visit nears, if questions arise, please feel free to contact me at 216-241-6145 or \_\_\_\_\_, the team leader for this visit at \_\_\_\_\_.

Grace and Peace,

Rosalind Powell  
Session Visits Team Coordinator,  
Committee on Ministry