

1 Report of the **Committee on Departing Congregations** to the 2026 Synod

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3 Dear Fathers and Brothers,

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5 The Committee on Departing Congregations gives this update. At the 2025 Synod, the
6 Committee received feedback regarding the procedure we had drawn up which gives
7 guidelines on what steps must be taken for a congregation to depart the RPCNA. Synod then
8 recommitted the report. (For background such as RPCNA precedent, NAPARC procedures,
9 and our theological reflections, please refer to our 2025 report to Synod.) We took Synod's
10 feedback, sought legal advice, and reworked the procedure as you will see below.

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12 Given that this subject breaks new ground, the Committee recommends taking a year to
13 further consider the proposal. During the year, we recommend that the procedure be sent to
14 each presbytery for discussion and input. A member of the Committee will present the
15 communication and be given up to 20 minutes on the floor to interact with the members of
16 the court, recording input to bring back to the Committee for improvement.

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18 While not required, such a process gives a wide exposure to a new procedure in order to
19 improve it as much as possible before asking Synod to adopt it.

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21 With that, the Committee recommends:

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- 23 1. That the attached procedure be received for information and shared with each
24 Session.
 - 25
26 2. That each Presbytery receive the procedure as a communication to their Presbytery,
27 schedule up to 20 minutes on the floor to discuss it and give feedback, and then work
28 with the Committee to arrange for a member to be present to interact and record the
29 input.

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31 In Christ,

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33 Daniel Howe, David Merkel, Martin Monteith, Bruce Parnell, ch., Phil Pockras

1 **Proposed Process Governing Departing Congregations (2026)**

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3 (Possibly to be placed as new #12 at the end of *Directory for Church Government*, Chapter
4 2.)
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8 Should a congregation desire to withdraw from the RPCNA, the following procedure shall be
9 followed:

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- 11 1. *First vote to withdraw.* To initiate the process of withdrawal, a congregation must
12 vote to withdraw, and this vote must pass by a two-thirds majority.
 - 13 a. At least two thirds of elders eligible to vote in a congregational meeting must
14 certify that they voted with the majority.
 - 15 b. Eligibility to vote shall be governed by the usual rules regarding
16 congregational meetings and votes.
 - 17
18 2. *Notification of the presbytery.* If two-thirds or more of the membership of any
19 congregation, including two-thirds of its local elders, have voted to withdraw, the
20 presbytery shall be so advised in writing at its next regular meeting. This notification
21 shall include:
 - 22 a. the plan of the congregation and its elders to affiliate with another body (and
23 what body) or else independence following withdrawal, and
 - 24 b. a good-faith inventory of the congregation’s assets and liabilities, together
25 with a professional written valuation of any real estate (the cost of the
26 valuation to be borne by the congregation).
 - 27
28 3. *Response by the presbytery.* At this meeting, the presbytery shall appoint a
29 commission to counsel, advise, and mediate with the congregation and local elders in
30 order to effect reconciliation or else an orderly withdrawal.
 - 31 a. At no point in this process shall the presbytery neglect the pastoral oversight
32 and, if needed, discipline of members of the church pursuing withdrawal.
 - 33 b. Neither the church nor its elders may be prosecuted merely for pursuing
34 withdrawal.
- 35

- 1 4. *Plan for disposition of assets.* The Trustees of Synod, in consultation with the
2 presbytery, shall consider a plan for the equitable and fair disposition of assets in
3 case of withdrawal, and convey that plan in writing to the congregation. They shall
4 consult with other boards, commissions, committees, agencies, as needed, as well as
5 any other interested parties, and take into consideration such factors as:
- 6 a. outstanding debts and liabilities
7 b. previous contributions or support by the presbytery, the synod, or their
8 boards, agencies, committees, or commissions
9 c. the percentage of the membership of the local congregation voting in favor of
10 withdrawal.
- 11
- 12 5. *Second vote and notification of the presbytery.* If, after consultation with the
13 commission and review of the plan for disposition of assets, the congregation still
14 wishes to withdraw, it shall conduct a second vote under the supervision of the
15 session, who shall certify the results thereof to a regular meeting of the presbytery.
- 16 a. At least two thirds of elders eligible to vote in a congregational meeting must
17 certify that they voted with the majority.
18 b. Eligibility to vote shall be governed by the usual rules regarding
19 congregational meetings and votes.
20 c. This vote and notification shall take place at least one year but no more than
21 two years after the presbytery meeting upon which the application for
22 withdrawal was received.
- 23
- 24 6. *Determination whether to release.* If two-thirds or more of the membership as
25 certified by its session have voted a second time in favor of withdrawal, the
26 presbytery shall determine whether to release the congregation from the RPCNA,
27 based on the following:
- 28 a. If the congregation seeks transfer to a NAPARC member denomination, or
29 any body with whom the RPCNA has full intercommunion or fraternal
30 relations, the presbytery shall transfer it without undue delay, and in accord
31 with the law and order of the receiving body.
32 b. If the congregation intends to join with a body with whom the RPCNA does
33 not have full fraternal relations, or to become an independent congregation, it
34 may be permitted to withdraw only by a majority vote of the presbytery.
- 35
- 36 7. *Financial settlement.* Upon withdrawal, the congregation shall pay to the Trustees of
37 Synod an equitable financial settlement, in line with the plan proposed above in step

1 4. Not being formally organized congregations, mission churches do not hold their
2 property in trust for the RPCNA.

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4 8. *Reduction of time requirement.* The presbytery may, at its discretion, reduce the
5 time required for withdrawal, provided that:

6 a. the commission has been able to meet with the congregation and present the
7 presbytery's case for remaining,

8 b. all members of the congregation have had an opportunity to speak with the
9 commission,

10 c. due diligence has been done to investigate matters of sin and any other
11 concerns the commission may have, and

12 d. the presbytery judges that it is in the best interest of the congregation, the
13 Kingdom of God, and the glory of Christ to expedite this process.

14
15 9. *Care for any remaining minority.* If a congregation withdraws, both the
16 withdrawing body and the presbytery must recognize their responsibility for the
17 spiritual care of the minority that remains in the denomination.

18
19 10. *Assets of withdrawing churches held in escrow.* Assets received by the Board of
20 Trustees from a withdrawing congregation shall be held in escrow for a period of up
21 to five years, so that the presbytery may decide how to use them for future ministry.
22 Assets not used within five years shall belong to the RPCNA without qualification.

23
24 11. *Retention of assets in case of noncompliance.* If a local congregation withdraws but
25 does not comply with the procedures set forth above, the Trustees of the Synod of the
26 Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America shall retain all right, title, and
27 interest in and to the property.