

Church Planting Through Steering Committees



Introduction

Ordinarily new Presbyterian churches will be planted by existing congregations. Occasionally a church planting proposal might come from a presbytery, the Ministry and Mission Committee, or an enthusiastic group or individual.

The Church does not want to hinder the work of God's Spirit by practices or requirements that are unnecessarily restrictive. Therefore, in addition to facilitating congregationally-motivated church planting, the Church has allowed for new congregations to be initiated by steering committees (Ref. *The Code II 4.08*).

The following guidelines have been prepared for the benefit of such steering committees.

Steering Committee Guidelines

- 1. Formation:** Steering committees are formed by presbyteries either in response to a notice of motion from a member of the presbytery, or in response to a petition from people who are not members of the presbytery. .
In either case, the notice of motion or the petition, with supportive justification, must be circulated to all members in advance of the meeting at which the proposal will be considered.
- 2. Recognition:** The role of a steering committee is to provide interim leadership that is flexible and adaptive to the quickly changing needs of a church plant in initial stages. The steering committee is a temporary leadership structure that will eventually lead to a more regular leadership structure in line with that of an established congregation governed by a session and served by a committee of management.
- 3. Composition:** A steering committee may be comprised of both men and women and must have at least five members over the age of 21 and. At least two of these members must be members of a presbytery or sessional elders in good standing.

All members of a proposed steering group must make and maintain a profession of faith that is considered by the presbytery to be credible.

- 4. Purpose:** The purposes for which a steering committee may be established include the following:
 - Facilitate the planting of a new congregation to minister to an area or a people group that is not being served by an existing congregation
 - Recruit people to work with the steering committee to pray and work for the planting of a new congregation in accordance with the Denominational Ministry Strategy focused on (i) prayer, (ii) proclamation and (iii) pastoral care
 - By winsome conduct and wise living, commend the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ
 - By evangelism and discipleship, bring people to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and promote their growth in grace towards Christian maturity
 - Provide for the regular, systematic and faithful teaching of the Bible as God's word in a variety of relevant mediums
 - Take all steps necessary to enable the presbytery, when appropriate (and pursuant to *The Code II 1.01*), to sanction a congregation comprised of persons within the steering committee's orbit of ministry

- Take all steps necessary to enable the presbytery, in relation to any newly-sanctioned congregation, to (i) have qualified persons ordained as elders and inducted to a session and (ii) appoint other qualified persons as a Committee of Management

5. Powers: Except as its power might be restricted by the relevant presbytery and this rule, a steering committee is empowered to take any action it deems necessary to publicise, promote and give effect to the formation of a new congregation of the Presbyterian Church. No member of the steering committee may administer the sacrament of baptism or celebrate the Lord's Supper unless that person be an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church appointed by the Presbytery to administer the sacraments within the steering committee's area of concern. For these services the steering committee shall be reliant on the support of a minister or an elder appointed by the Presbytery pursuant to *Constitution, Procedure and Practice*, 4.2.

6. Finances: The steering committee shall be responsible for the management and control of any and all funds contributed for its work. A bank account operated in accordance with the rules of the Church, shall be established in the name of the steering committee (e.g. Presbyterian Church – Tibooburra Steering Committee). Detailed income and expense statements must be provided to the presbytery on a quarterly basis in April, July, October and January and the books must be audited at the end of each calendar year with an audit report being sent to the presbytery and the Ministry and Mission Committee.

7. Financial Assistance: Steering committees, when recognised by presbyteries (and with presbyterial support), may apply to the Ministry and Mission Committee through its church planting sub-committee (PCP) for financial assistance. In doing so they must meet all of the requirements established by PCP for assessment of projects and personnel.

The Ministry and Mission Committee has only limited funds available and must apply those funds with care. Accordingly the Committee will not ordinarily provide financial assistance to any project not recommended by PCP. Equally, recommendation of a church planting project by PCP will not bind the Committee to provide financial assistance to that project.

8. Conduct Protocols: All members of the steering committee must maintain, at all times, the highest standards of Biblical and ethical conduct and uphold the principles and practices espoused by the Assembly's Conduct Protocol Unit as set out in *Breaking the Silence*.

9. Accountability: Because steering committees are recognised by the presbytery within whose bounds they operate, each steering committee must report faithfully and at least quarterly (in April, July, October and January) to the presbytery and the Ministry and Mission Committee concerning the progress and needs of the ministry being developed by the steering committee.

10. Insurance: The activities of each steering committee shall be insured through the Insurance Department of the Church's General Office. Each steering committee shall pay to the Insurance Department the premiums prescribed by that Department.

11. Meetings: Each steering committee will meet as often as it deems necessary. Where the date for the next meeting is not set at the preceding meeting, not less than 5 clear days' notice of a meeting shall be given to all members. (I.e. if notice is given on the first day of a month, the meeting may not be held before the 6th day of that month.)

When a motion is proposed, no seconder will be needed and the proposed motion may be immediately debated and determined.

12. Minutes: Minutes will be kept of each meeting. The minutes of any meeting will record the names of all persons in attendance, all decisions made at that meeting, and the fact that the meeting was opened and closed with prayer. (The content of discussions will not be recorded.)

13. Chairman: The Chairman of any steering committee shall be appointed by the presbytery. When a minister is appointed to a ministry being developed by a steering committee, that minister will, by that appointment, become the Chairman (See *The Code* II 4.08).

14. Operation: To the fullest degree possible, the Chairman shall ensure that the steering committee operates according to the rules of the Church, particularly those relating to Sessions and Committees of Management, it being acknowledged that for some time the powers of a session and a committee of management might both be exercised by the same body of persons while they act as a steering committee.