

DISCUSSION STARTERS FOR TRIENNIAL VISITS

1. One place to begin is G-11.0502c: “[COM] shall visit with each session of the presbytery at least once every three years, discussing with them the mission and ministry of the particular church and encouraging the full participation of each session and congregation in the life and work of presbytery and of the larger church.”

Some questions which might help to fuel the discussion are:

- a. What are your current emphases in your mission and ministry?
b. What are some of the church’s most recent accomplishments that you feel best about?
c. What are some of the challenges that face the congregation?
d. Where do you see yourselves a few years from now?
e. What mission to you support locally, in the Presbytery, Synod, and GA?
2. Another avenue of discussion may be opened up by turning to W-1.4002: “...those responsible on behalf of presbytery for the oversight and review of the ministry of particular worshiping congregations should discussion with those sessions the quality of worship, the standards governing it, and the fruit it is bearing in the life of God’s people as they proclaim the gospel and communicates its joy and justice.” In this regard, you might:
 - a. Ask to visit the sanctuary or worship space to learn about the worship life of the congregation. Listen for the points of satisfaction and pride, as well as of frustration and concern, as elders talk about worship at their church.
 - b. Ask to see some recent bulletins or newsletters to learn about accomplishments and growing edges.
 - c. The Session visitor’s task here is not to act as a critic or consultant, but rather to be an interested person representing the presbytery’s desire to be supportive and understanding of the ups and downs of congregational life.
3. Be sure to leave time for the Session to ask any questions or raise any concerns that may be on their mind concerning Presbytery or PCUSA. Try not to be defensive; answer any questions you may be able to answer; be sure to promise that you will pursue answers that you may not have readily available. Then call, write, or email the pastor or clerk with any answers you may have been able to find after the meeting.
4. Try to make sure each person is invited to speak, and has time to be heard. One way to accomplish this is to say something like, “My main job tonight is to listen, and I’d like to hear from each one of you. We don’t have to go around the room, but I hope each of you will contribute in some way to the conversation.”