

**CHAPTER 23***The Dissolution of the Pastoral Relation and  
The Procedure for Honorable Retirement*

**23-1.** When any minister shall tender the resignation of his pastoral charge to his Presbytery, the Presbytery shall cite the church to appear by its commissioners, to show cause why the Presbytery should or should not accept the resignation. If the church fails to appear, or if its reasons for retaining its pastor be deemed insufficient, his resignation shall be accepted and the pastoral relation dissolved.

If any church desires to be relieved of its pastor, a similar procedure shall be observed. But whether the minister or the church initiates proceedings for a dissolution of the relation, there shall always be a meeting of the congregation called and conducted in the same manner as the call of the pastor. In any case, the minister must not physically leave the field until the Presbytery or its commission empowered to handle uncontested requests for dissolution has dissolved the relation.

The associate or assistant pastors may continue to serve a congregation when the pastoral relation of the senior pastor is dissolved, but they may not normally succeed the senior pastor without an intervening term of service in a different field of labor. However a congregation by a secret ballot with four-fifths (4/5) majority vote may petition Presbytery for an exception which by a three-fourths (3/4) majority vote Presbytery may grant. Presbytery needs to determine if the dissolution of the pastoral relationship with the senior pastor was brought about in Christian love and good order on the part of the parties concerned.

**23-2.** The Presbytery may designate a minister as honorably retired when the minister by reason of age wishes to be retired, or as medically disabled when by reason of infirmity is no longer able to serve the church in the active ministry of the Gospel. A minister medically disabled or honorably retired shall continue to hold membership in his Presbytery. He may serve on committees or commissions if so elected or appointed.

**23-3.** A minister, being medically disabled or honorably retired, may be elected pastor emeritus by a congregation which seeks to honor his past earnest labors among them.