



**The Advisory Handbook for  
Ministry Committees/Commissions**  
*Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*

**2011 / 2013**

## *The 2011-2013 Advisory Handbook for Ministry Committees/Commissions*

The New Form of Government Adopted in 2011 is intentionally different in tone and purpose from recent earlier versions. Rather than a regulatory manual that provides guidance for all that we do as a church, it is a description of our common life. It begins with a new section of the *Book of Order* “Foundational Principles” that lay out the important theological and ecclesial principles for the church’s life. In the Form of Government which follows many of the details have been removed, leaving a broad framework within which councils of the church discern what is the best course of action based on their mission context and understanding of God’s will.

It is in accord with that approach that this “Advisory Handbook” is offered. It is designed for use by those who are called to presbytery work formerly called “The Committee on Ministry”. While many presbyteries will keep that name or become a “Commission on Ministry”, others will organize it differently with different names.

This handbook includes sections that are introductory to presbytery responsibilities (G-3.0307), offer guidance on particular functions of the work, and provide information and resources on a variety of topics. Each segment includes relevant *Book of Order* references, introductory information, questions for consideration of the designated presbytery body, and related resources.

This resource will no longer be published for purchase. It will be available without charge here in topical format (available by October 16, 2011) and as a complete document (available by November 1, 2011). Mid-councils should feel free to use the documents or adapt them for incorporation into their own documents.

Learn more about the [New Form of Government](#) and resources for transition in other areas of ministry.

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# Introduction

## Presbytery as Pastor, Counselor and Advisor

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- One of the ways a presbytery leads and guides the witness of its congregations, "...so that all congregations become communities of faith, hope, love, and witness," is through its role as pastor, counselor, and advisor.
- In this role a presbytery keeps the lines of communication open with its congregations and church leaders, enabling presbytery to better understand their lives and ministries and, in turn, to respond appropriately and in a timely manner when called for.
- In this role the presbytery is to:
  - serve as pastor and counselor to teaching elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and certified Christian educators of the presbytery;
  - facilitate the relations between the presbytery and its congregations, teaching elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and certified Christian educators;
  - settle difficulties on behalf of the presbytery where possible and expedient.
- There are particular responsibilities listed in **G-3.0301** and **G-3.037** which a presbytery will want to refer to as it determines how to fulfill its role as pastor, counselor and advisor.

Each presbytery is encouraged to determine how its role as pastor, counselor and advisor will be fulfilled within its unique ministry context and, then, to develop and maintain mechanisms and processes that will allow the presbytery to effectively fulfill this role.

### **Book of Order:**

#### **G-1.0101 The Mission of the Congregation**

*...The congregation is the basic form of the church, but it is not of itself a sufficient form of the church. Thus congregations are bound together in communion with one another, united in relationships of accountability and responsibility...*

#### **G-3.0301 Composition and Responsibilities**

*...The presbytery is responsible ... for assisting and supporting the witness of congregations to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that all congregations become communities of faith, hope, love, and witness...*

*...the presbytery has responsibility and power to:*

- a. provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard.*
- b. provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received.*
- c. nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ.*

#### **G-3.0307 Pastor, Counselor, and Advisor to Teaching Elders and Congregations**

*Presbyteries shall be open at all times to communication regarding the life and ministry of their congregations.*

*Each presbytery shall develop and maintain mechanisms and processes to serve as pastor and counselor to teaching elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and certified Christian educators of the presbytery; to facilitate the relations between the presbytery and its congregations, teaching elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and certified Christian educators; and to settle difficulties on behalf of the presbytery where possible and expedient.*

*To facilitate the presbytery's oversight of...it may delegate its authority to designated entities within the presbytery.*

# Presbytery as Pastor, Counselor and Advisor

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## Questions for presbytery consideration and discussion:

1. Considering that the intention of presbytery's governance of the church within its bounds is to assist congregations as they "become communities of faith, hope, love, and witness," how does this influence the way in which presbytery will work to fulfill presbytery's role of pastor, counselor and advisor?
2. What do the terms "pastor," "counselor," and advisor" imply about how presbytery would fulfill its role?
3. Being "open at all times to communication" about congregations is singled out for its very own paragraph. What are ways presbytery can improve on its ability to listen to all types of communications? How can it build into its structures an emphasis on openness to communication?
4. What are ways in which presbytery could provide for the receipt of clear and confidential communication about the life and ministry of its congregations? How can that openness be part of the continuing life of your presbytery?
5. How does fulfilling the responsibilities of presbytery listed in **G-3.0301** and **G-3.0307** fall within presbytery's role as pastor, counselor, and advisor?

## Resources:

See other segments in this handbook:

- What is Healthy Ministry?
- Building an Effective Ministry Together
- Appreciative Inquiry

## Serving as Pastor and Counselor

- Presbytery has a responsibility to serve as pastor and counselor to:
  - All teaching elders. Installed and temporary pastors; those engaged in validated ministry and members-at-large; honorably retired.
  - All ruling elders commissioned to particular pastoral service within the presbytery.
  - All certified Christian educators of the presbytery.
- In serving as pastor and counselor, presbytery develops mechanisms and processes which are most appropriate to their missional settings.
- Healthy relationships with teaching elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and certified Christian educators can be facilitated when presbyteries take the initiative to develop mechanisms and processes to make those relationships vital and caring.

# Presbytery as Pastor, Counselor and Advisor

## Questions for presbytery consideration and discussion:

1. What does it mean for presbytery to serve as pastor and counselor to teaching elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and certified Christian educators of the presbytery and how will this role be enacted in the presbytery?
2. What are ways in which your presbytery can actively nurture the relationship it has with its leaders? How will the presbytery organize its life and work in all areas so that these relationships may have constructive content, and provide energy to the support of Christ's mission?
3. What are the unique needs of presbytery's commissioned ruling elders and certified Christian educators that will affect how pastoral care and counsel is provided?

## Resources:

See other segments in this Handbook

- *Pastoral Relationships*
- *Validated Ministry*
- *Examining Teaching Elders*
- *Care and Certification of Christian Educators*
- *Commissioned Ruling Elders*
- *First Call Pastors*
- *Retired Teaching Elders*

## Facilitating Relations

- Presbytery has a responsibility to facilitate relations between the presbytery and its congregations teaching elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and certified Christian educators.
- Presbytery can play a role in facilitating relations among and between congregations and teaching elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and certified Christian educators who serve them.
- In its relations with sessions, presbytery has the responsibility to coordinate, guide, encourage, support, and resource the work of its congregations for the most effective witness to the broader community.
- In facilitating these relations presbyteries develop mechanisms and processes which are most appropriate to their missional settings.

### **G-3.0101 Councils as an Expression of Unity of the Church**

*The mutual interconnection of the church through its councils is a sign of the unity of the church.*

### **G-3.0202 d Relations with Other Councils**

*Sessions have a particular responsibility to participate in the life of the whole church through participation in other councils. It is of particular importance that sessions ...  
d. welcome representatives of the presbytery on the occasions of their visits;*

### **G-3.0303 Relations with Sessions**

*Presbytery, being composed of the teaching elders and commissioners elected by the session of congregations within its district, has a particular responsibility to coordinate, guide, encourage, support, and resource the work of its congregations for the most effective witness to the broader community.*

### **G-3.0109 Committees and Commissions**

*Councils may designate by their own rule such committees and commissions as they deem necessary and helpful for the accomplishment of the mission of the church...*

*A committee shall study and recommend action or carry out decisions already made by a council. It shall make a full report to the council that created it, and its recommendations shall require action by the body.*

*A commission is empowered to consider and conclude matters referred to it by a council.*

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# Presbytery as Pastor, Counselor and Advisor

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## Questions for presbytery consideration and discussion:

1. How does presbytery best facilitate the relations between the presbytery and its congregations, teaching elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and certified Christian educators?
2. What are some of the issues in which the presbytery must be aware as it seeks to serve as a pastor, counselor, and advisor? What are ways those issues may be addressed?
3. What are presbytery's options as it seeks to design mechanisms and procedures to effectively support its congregations and church leaders?

## Resources:

See other segments in this Handbook:

- *Building an Effective Ministry Together*
- *Annual Review of Ministry*
- *Revisiting the Triennial Visit*

## Settling Difficulties

- In fulfilling the task of settling "... difficulties on behalf of the presbytery where possible and expedient" the presbytery has wide latitude in creating entities and delegating its authority as it determines.
- Presbyteries may create committees or commissions to help facilitate the settling of difficulties in which the presbytery, in its role as pastor, counselor and advisor, has become aware.
- Presbytery may inquire into reported difficulties at its own initiative. Sessions and church leaders may also request presbytery assistance with difficulties.
- Presbyteries "...shall develop and maintain mechanisms and processes...to settle difficulties on behalf of the presbytery where possible and expedient." Having such mechanisms and process in place before difficulties arise, can hasten response and resolution.

## Questions for presbytery consideration and discussion:

1. How does a ministry committee/commission settle difficulties on behalf of the presbytery where possible and expedient?
2. Are there ways that presbytery can proactively engage in concerns before they become difficulties? Is there a way to regularize such engagement in presbytery mechanisms and processes?
3. What difficulties can you imagine would call for the creation of a commission by your presbytery? What procedures does your presbytery need to have in place so that if difficult circumstances call for it, the presbytery may in a timely manner constitute a commission to resolve the matter?
4. Within the broad scope of serving as pastor, counselor and advisor, what mechanisms and procedures does your presbytery need to put in places to follow up with congregations and with persons affected by the resolving of difficulties?



# Presbytery as Pastor, Counselor and Advisor

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## Resources:

[PC\(USA\) Peacemaking in Family and Congregation](#)  
[Lombard Mennonite Peace Center](#)

## Developing and Maintaining Mechanisms and Processes

- The role of presbytery as pastor, counselor, and advisor is broadly presented in the Book of Order, leaving the details of how a presbytery will live out that role being delegated to each presbytery.
- Each presbytery is called upon to develop mechanisms and processes which are most appropriate to its missional settings.
- Such mechanisms and processes will enable the presbytery to fulfill its responsibility to be pastor, counselor and advisor faithfully and effectively.
- Presbytery may choose to create and then delegate authority to designated entities, composed of equal numbers of ruling and teaching elders elected according to the principles of unity in diversity (**F- 1.0403**). Actions of these entities based on presbytery's delegated authority are reported to the next meeting of presbytery.
- The designated entities which are responsible for oversight of congregations and members are part of the larger design in which presbytery creates committees and commissions to carry out its mission (**G -3.0109**).

## Questions for presbytery consideration and discussion:

1. What mechanisms and processes does presbytery need to develop and maintain in order to be effective in its role as pastor, counselor and advisor?
2. In **G-3.03** the constitution outlines the work of the presbytery. How does this inform the role of presbytery as pastor, counselor, and advisor and the mechanisms and process presbytery needs to develop?
3. What mechanisms and procedures can it put in place to assure that presbytery has an open, welcoming approach to receiving information about its congregation's life and ministry?
4. What mechanisms and procedures need to take place so that presbytery's ministry of oversight of its congregations and members will best serve the mission of Christ? What designated entities should presbytery create and what authority should be delegated to them? How will they be accountable for the actions they take with delegated authority?

## Resources:

- [Advisory Handbook for councils for the Development of Policies and Procedures as required by the Form of Government](#)
- Various presbytery policies on [MGB Connect](#)

## Glossary of Commonly Used Terms

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The following terms have been used in the context of the work of presbytery committees and commission working as pastor, counselor and advisory to teaching elders and congregations as well as those dealing with preparation for ministry. Where references are in italics, there is no direct reference but an allusion may be inferred.

Term/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order Reference
AA/EOE or EEO	Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer or Equal Employment Opportunity. The congregation and each council must follow its policy re AA/EOE during any search process.	<i>F-1.0403</i> <i>G-3.0110</i>
Associate Pastor	A member of the pastoral staff of a congregation, elected by the congregation and called with the approval of presbytery. This is one of the installed pastoral relationships.	G-2.0504a
At-large Member	See "Member-at-large"	
Bi-vocational Pastor	A teaching elder who maintains a job outside of part-time pastoral ministry usually to enable the person to serve a congregation that could not provide full time compensation or work. Also called a tentmaker.	
Board of Pensions	The entity of the denomination which administers the benefits plan (pensions and health insurance) for pastors and other church employees whose employers enroll them.	
Book of Confessions	The part of the constitution which includes the historic creeds and confessions adopted by the denomination as containing the essential tenets of the Reformed tradition.	
Book of Order	The part of the constitution which includes The Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, the Form of Government, the Directory for Worship, and the Rules of Discipline.	
Boundaries	Geographically, the area encompassed by a presbytery and presbyteries included in a synod. Interpersonally, the limits of personal and professional space. Often referred to in relation to pastor-parishioner and intra-staff relationships.	
Call	Theologically, the understanding that God has chosen one to engage in ministry as a baptized member and/or in ordered ministry. Also the term applied to the covenant between a congregation and pastor wherein a teaching elder responds to the "call" of the congregation to serve as	

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## Glossary of Commonly Used Terms

Term/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order Reference
	pastor. This term also applies to the specifics of the contract or covenant between the pastor and congregation including compensation, etc.	
Candidacy	The period of preparation for ministry as a teaching elder when one is enrolled as a candidate.	G-2.0604
Candidate	The status in the preparation for ministry process following inquirer focused on support, guidance, and evaluation of the candidate's fitness and readiness for ministry as a teaching elder. Movement to candidacy requires approval of the session and presbytery of care. "Candidate" also is used to refer to the persons being considered during the search to fill a particular position.	G-2.0601-2.0602, 2.0604
Candidating	Term frequently applied to the final step preceding nomination for election to the pastorate in a congregation. Ordinarily refers to the day on which the candidate for the position preaches to the congregation and is presented to the congregational meeting.	
Certification	The process of authorizing a person as qualified for a particular form of service or ready for movement within a process. For example, the certification of Christian Educators. Other organizations certify persons serving in some specialized ministries (Administrative Personnel Association, Presbyterian Association of Musicians [PAM], Presbyterian Church Business Administrators Association, etc.) A presbytery can certify a ruling elder prepared to be commissioned to pastoral service.	G-2.11 G-2.10
Certified Ready for Examination for Ordination	The official action taken by a presbytery that allows a candidate, who has evidenced readiness to begin ordered ministry, to begin seeking a call as a teaching elder.	G-2.0607
Certified Christian Educator	A person serving in educational ministry who has completed the educational and examination requirements specified by the Educator Certification Council for the title Certified Christian Educator.	G-2.1103
Chaplain	A form of specialized ministry usually performed within an institutional setting (hospital, school, military, etc.)	G-3.0306
Church Information Form	The resume prepared by a congregation seeking a pastor or other church worker. Abbreviated "CIF."	

## Glossary of Commonly Used Terms

Term/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order Reference
Church Leadership Connection	The internet-based matching and referral system of the PC(USA). Abbreviated “CLC.” (See <a href="http://www.PC(USA).org/clc">www.PC(USA).org/clc</a> )	
CIF	Church Information Form.	
CLC	Church Leadership Connection.	
Clerk of Session	The ruling elder elected to serve as secretary and keeper of records and rolls for a session.	G-3.0104
Clinical Pastoral Education	An education program to learn pastoral care in a institutional chaplaincy setting. Often candidates engage in CPE to further discern their vocation and gifts for ministry.	
CLP	Commissioned Lay Pastor. Term is no longer used in the Book of Order. See “Commissioned Ruling Elder”	
COGA	Committee on the Office of the General Assembly.	
Commission	Established by a council, a commission is empowered to consider and conclude matters referred to it by a council. Presbyteries often establish commissions to install pastors, ordain teaching elders, and to carry out other administrative functions. A Permanent Judicial Commission is required to prosecute judicial cases brought before the council.	3.0109 3.0109a, b
Commissioned Lay Pastor	Old term used for Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE)  See “Commissioned Ruling Elder”	
Commissioned Ruling Elder	A ruling elder commissioned by a presbytery to particular pastoral service.	G-2.10
Committee on the Office of the General Assembly	The Committee on the Office of the General Assembly (COGA) oversees and supports the ministry of the Office of the General Assembly and partner with OGA in carrying out work assigned by the General Assembly.	
Cooperative Committee	Presbyteries’ Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates. The committee which prepares the standardized ordination examinations and facilitates their evaluations.	<i>G-2.0607d</i>
Co-Pastor	A pastor who is called and installed, along with other pastor(s), with equal responsibility for pastoral ministry in a particular church.	G-2.0504

## Glossary of Commonly Used Terms

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Term/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order Reference
Correspondence, In	The status of formal relationship with and recognition of another denomination and the PC(USA). We are “in correspondence” with the highest council or governing body of a number of denominations. The ordination of minister members of a denomination in correspondence with the PC(USA) may be recognized by the PC(USA)	G-5.0201  G-2.0505-2.0506
Council	The generic or collective word for the governing bodies of the PC(USA). Includes sessions, presbyteries, synods and General Assembly. Replaces the previous “governing body.”	G-3.0
Covenant Relationship	The relationship established between the presbytery and inquirers and candidates which defines their mutual responsibilities.	G-2.0606
CPE	Clinical Pastoral Education.	
CPM	Committee on Preparation for Ministry. Term is no longer used in the Book of Order.	
CRE	Commissioned Ruling Elder.	
Deacon	The ordered ministry of those ordained to the ministry of compassion, witness and service.	G-2.02
Designated Pastor	An installed pastoral position approved by the presbytery for a designated term. Term is no longer used in the Book of Order.	G-2.0805
Directory for Worship	The part of the Book or Order which provides the guidelines for worship and sacraments within the Reformed tradition as well as the theological foundation for the ministry of the congregation.	
Dissolution	The process of concluding relationship. A pastor’s relationship to a congregation is dissolved when he or she leaves the position. A church is dissolved when it is closed.	G-2.09  G-3.0301
Emerita or Emeritus	An honorary status which may be awarded to someone honorably retired from a particular position by election of the congregation.	
Entrance Exam	The process a presbytery uses to determine whether a minister will be accepted for membership in that presbytery.	G-3.0306

## Glossary of Commonly Used Terms

Term/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order Reference
EP	See "Executive Presbyter"	
Exception	When a usual requirement for ordination is waived by a three-fourths vote of the presbytery or when a candidate is given permission to meet the standard examinations requirement through an alternate means.	G-2.0610
Executive Presbyter	A term used for the chief administrative staff person for a presbytery. (There are many other titles applied to a presbytery's administrative staff.)	
Federated Church	See "Joint Congregational Witness."	G-5.05 G-3.0109b(4)
Field Education	The part of the preparation for ministry process in which candidates serve as a student in ministry under the supervision of a pastor or other staff leader and ordinarily as part of their seminary education. This is sometimes called Supervised Practice of Ministry or Contextual Studies. The placement of students in field positions is normally the responsibility of the seminary but should be done in consultation with the candidate's presbytery and, where appropriate, the presbytery where the placement will occur.	
Final Assessment	The examination of a candidate during the final year of theological education or when all other requirements for preparation are completed to determine the person's readiness to begin ministry. A successful final assessment results in the presbytery certifying a candidate "ready for examination for ordination, pending a call."	G-2.0607
Five Part Form	The form which a presbytery stated clerk must fill out in order to complete the transfer of a teaching elder from one presbytery to another.	
Form of Government	The part of the Book of Order that defines organization and governance of the denomination and the responsibilities and standards to which the whole church holds each council and congregation accountable.	

## Glossary of Commonly Used Terms

Term/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order Reference
Formula of Agreement	The agreement between the PC(USA) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the United Church of Christ (UCC), and the Reformed Church in America (RCA) which provides for mutual recognition of ordination of clergy. See also "Full Communion"	Book of Order, Appendix C
Foundations of Presbyterian Polity	The part of the Book of Order that provides the theological and historical foundation for the other sections of the Book of Order.	
Full Communion	An official relationship between the PC(USA) and those churches recognized by the General Assembly. Full communion includes the mutual recognition of baptism and the orderly exchange of ministers, as defined by ecumenical agreement.	G-5.0202
GAMC	General Assembly Mission Council	
General Assembly	The council of the whole church, representative of the unity of the synods, presbyteries, sessions, and congregations of the PC(USA). It consists of equal numbers of ruling elders and teaching elders elected by the presbyteries and reflective of the diversity within their bounds	G-3.05
General Assembly Mission Council	The General Assembly Mission Council is the ministry and mission agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Six ministry areas carry out our missional work: Compassion, Peace and Justice; Evangelism and Church Growth; Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries/Presbyterian Women; Theology, Worship and Education; Vocation; and World Mission.	
General Presbyter	A term used for the chief administrative staff person for a presbytery. (There are many other titles applied to a presbytery's administrative staff.)	
GP	See "General Presbyter"	
Head of Staff	The pastor of a congregation who is the supervisor of other pastoral staff.	
Honorably Retired	The status which may be granted by a presbytery to a teaching elder because of age or physical or mental disability.	G-2.0503c

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## Glossary of Commonly Used Terms

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Term/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order Reference
HR	Honorably Retired	
Inquirer	A person enrolled in the inquiry phase of preparation for ministry. (see Inquiry below)	G-2.0601-2.0603
Inquiry	The initial phase of preparation for ministry the purpose of which is to provide an opportunity for the church and for those who believe themselves called to ordered ministry as teaching elders to explore to explore that call together and determine the inquirers suitability for ordered ministry.	G-2.0603
Installation	The act of the council which completes the call of a person to service in the church. Ruling elders and deacons are installed by the congregation. Teaching elders are installed by the presbytery. A call is not complete and the person is installed.	W-4.4000 G-2.0403 G-2.0805
Installed Pastoral Relationship	Installed pastoral relationships are pastor, co-pastor, and associate pastor. A teaching elder may be installed for an indefinite period or for a designated term determined by the presbytery.	G-2.0504a
Interim Pastor	A temporary pastor who has special training for the unique ministry of serving churches in the midst of pastoral transitions.	
Intern	An inquirer or candidate for ministry may choose to seek placement in a congregation or other ministry setting as an intern. Such positions vary from a few months (e.g., summer intern) to year-long. They are ordinarily compensated and are often negotiated or arranged through the seminary. This is an optional component of the preparation process.	
Joint Congregational Witness	When a PC(USA) congregation partners with one or more congregations of another denomination through federation, union, or some other plan for cooperative witness approved by the presbytery.	G-5.05
Laboring Outside the Bounds	Permission which is granted by a presbytery for a teaching elder to minister (work) outside the bounds of presbytery of membership. All validated work of a teaching elder must be authorized by a presbytery.	G-3.0306



## Glossary of Commonly Used Terms

Term/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order Reference
Larger Parish	Two or more churches who wish to cooperate in ministry may be established as a larger parish. They may call a pastor(s) together, coordinate ministry through a parish council, coordinate finances, etc.	
Liaison	One who connects one group or person with another. Most often used when presbyteries assigns a liaison to a pastor nominating committee seeking a new pastor, to the session of an inquirer or candidate, or to a particular inquirer or candidate.	
Member-at-Large	A teaching elder who has previously been an active member of presbytery and who now, without intentional abandonment of the exercise of ministry, is no longer engaged in a ministry that complies with all the criteria in G-2.0503a and the presbytery's own policies.	G-2.0503b
Mentor	One who teaches or serves as a role model and confidant.	
Minister of Word and Sacrament	Another name for teaching elder.	G-2.0501
Ministry Development Centers	Centers that provide career counseling services for those serving or seeking to serve in church vocations.  (See <a href="http://www.ministrydevelopment.org">www.ministrydevelopment.org</a> )	
Mission Study	An in depth study carried out at times during the life of a congregation to evaluate a congregation's present and assess its future mission and ministry goals. Sometimes done during a pastoral vacancy.	
Negotiation for Service	Approval granted by a presbytery to a candidate under its care to negotiate for positions that will require ordination as a teaching elder. See "Certified Ready for Examination for Ordination"	G-2.0607
Neutral Pulpit	The congregation a pastor/candidate being considered by a pastor nominating committee preaches in prior to candidating as one of the final steps in the call process.	
Nominating Committee	See "Pastor Nominating Committee"	

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## Glossary of Commonly Used Terms

Term/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order Reference
Office of the General Assembly	The Office of the General Assembly serves as the ecclesiastical arm of the PC(USA). One of the six agencies of the PC(USA), it offers support in the areas of governance and structure.	
OGA	Office of the General Assembly. Sometimes referred to as the Stated Clerk's office.	
Ordered Ministry	The term applied to deacons, ruling elders, and teaching elders in the PC(USA). Ordered ministries "order" the life of the church "so that the ministry of the whole people of God may flourish."	G-2.0102-2.0105
Ordination	Ordination is the act by which the church sets apart persons to ordered ministry as teaching elders, ruling elders or deacons and is accompanied with prayer and the laying on of hands.	G-2.0102 W-4.4000
Ordination Exams	Standardized examinations required of all candidates as a prerequisite to being examined for final assessment. Currently exams are administered in the areas of Bible Content, Biblical Exegesis, Church Polity, Theological Competence, and Worship and Sacraments under the direction of the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates.	G-2.0607d
Ords	Shortened version of ordination exams	
Parish	A congregation or group of congregations involved in a cooperative ministry. If an ecumenical parish, see also "Joint Congregational Witness."	
Parish Associate	A teaching elder who serves in some validated ministry other than the local parish, is a member-at-large, or is retired, and who wishes to define and maintain a relationship with a particular congregation. This is no longer defined constitutionally but a presbytery may choose to define this kind of relationship.	
Parish Council	The coordinating body of a larger or cooperative parish, usually composed of representatives of each congregation in the parish.	
Pastor	The name given to a teaching elder called to serve a congregation.	G-2.0504

## Glossary of Commonly Used Terms

Term/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order Reference
Pastor Nominating Committee	The term applied to the search committee for a pastor or associate pastor.	
PCC	Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates. See "Ordination Exams"	<i>G-2.0607d</i>
Personal Information Form	The resume prepared by a teaching elder or other church worker. Abbreviated "PIF."	
PIF	Personal Information Form	
PNC	Pastor Nominating Committee.	
Polity	Term applied to the governance system of the church.	
Preparation Consultation	The conversation between a presbytery and each of its inquirers and candidates to assess the progress of their preparation for ministry.	
Presbytery	The council composed of all congregations and teaching elders within its district.	G-3.03
Presbytery of Call	The presbytery to which a candidate is being called to a first ministry position.	
Presbytery of Care	The presbytery under whose care a particular inquirer or candidate is enrolled.	
Psychological Assessment	Part of the preparation process ordinarily required of all those entering the process during which their psychological fitness for ministry and their sense of vocation is examined by a psychologist or other professional counselor.	
Pulpit Supply	The person who preaches for a congregation that does not have a pastor or whose pastor is away. A presbytery may provide a list of qualified pulpit supply to congregations.	
Readiness	The determination of one's preparedness to proceed to the next step in the preparation for ministry process.	
Reading Group	Persons elected by presbyteries to read and evaluate ordination exams.	
Reformed Tradition	The theological tradition of the Presbyterian and other Reformed churches.	F-1.0-2.0

## Glossary of Commonly Used Terms

Term/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order Reference
Release from Ordered Ministry	When a person ordained to ordered ministry (ruling elder, teaching elder, or deacon) is removed from office, either by their request or through disciplinary action of the council. If the release has occurred without prejudice, a person may seek to be restored to the office.	G-2.0406 G-2.0507
Renunciation of Jurisdiction	When a person ordained to ordered ministry communicates in writing their intention to renounce the jurisdiction of this church. In other words, leaves the church and refuses to be bound by its authority.	G-2.0407 G-2.0509
Restoration	When a presbytery or congregation takes action to restore one previously released from ordered ministry.	G-2.0406 G-2.0507
Rules of Discipline	The part of the Book of Order which outlines the procedures and processes by which the church responds to individuals and governing bodies who violate the constitution.	
Ruling Elder	The ordered ministry of those ordained for the spiritual oversight and governance of a congregation.	G-2.0301
Ruling Elder Commissioned to Particular Pastoral Service	A ruling elder, authorized by the presbytery, to provide limited pastoral service in one or more designated congregations or in a validated ministry of the presbytery. This position had previously been called "Commissioned Lay Pastor."	G-2.10
Second Career	A term applied to inquirers and candidates who have pursued one or more careers prior to coming under care (other than being a student).	
Session	The council for the congregation responsible "for governing the congregation and guiding its witness to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that the congregation is and becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness."	G-3.02
Sexual Misconduct	When a person violates the appropriate professional interpersonal boundaries with a subordinate or parishioner. Definition and disciplinary procedures are delineated in a council's Sexual Misconduct policy, which all councils are required to have.	G-3.0106
Solo Pastor	A pastor serving a congregation without associates.	

From 2011-2013 Advisory Handbook for Ministry Committees/Commissions

## Glossary of Commonly Used Terms

Term/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order Reference
Investigating Committee	The committee, appointed by a council, whose task is to determine whether or not there is justification for a charge to be formally made and a disciplinary procedure to be initiated.	D-10.0200
Specialized Ministry	Validated forms of ministry other than parish ministry. These are defined by presbyteries and may include pastoral counseling, chaplaincy, campus ministry, council staff, etc.	
Stated Clerk	One of the two required officers of a council, the clerk is responsible for maintaining the minutes, records, and rolls of the council. May also be the clerk of the permanent judicial commission.	G-3.0104
Student Pastor	A person under care in the preparation for ministry process who is serving in an approved temporary pastoral position, as an intern, or during field education.	
Supervised Practice of Ministry	See "Field Education"	
Synod	The intermediate council serving as a corporate expression of the church throughout its regions. "Synod is responsible for the life and mission of the church throughout its region and for supporting the ministry and mission of its presbyteries..."	G-3.04
Teaching Elder	The ordered ministry of those ordained to the ministry of word and sacrament in the PC(USA). "Teaching elders shall in all things be committed to teaching the faith and equipping the saints for the work of ministry."	G-2.0501
Temporary Membership	A minister of another Christian church, serving temporarily in a validated ministry of the PC(USA) or in an installed relationship under the provision of the Formula of Agreement, who is enrolled by a presbytery for a period of service.	G-2.0506
Temporary Pastoral Relationship	A pastor approved by the presbytery to serve in a position that does not carry a formal call or installation. Titles and terms of service are determined by the presbytery, but may not exceed twelve months though it can be renewed. Ordinarily a person serving in a temporary pastoral relationship may not be eligible to serve as the next installed pastor.	G-2.0504b

From 2011-2013 Advisory Handbook for Ministry Committees/Commissions

## Glossary of Commonly Used Terms

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Term/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order Reference
Tentmaker	See “Bi-vocational Pastor”	
Terms of Call	The specifics of the pastoral relationship extended by the congregation and approved by the presbytery which includes the nature of the ministry to be carried out and the terms of compensation. A presbytery must approve any changes in the terms of call and may determine minimum levels of compensation.	G-2.0804
Transfer	The process of transferring a ruling elder from one presbytery to another, the membership of a minister of another Christian church into the PC(USA), the care of a candidate or inquirer from one presbytery to another, or a member from one congregation to another.	G-2-5002 G-2.0505 G-2.0608 G-1.0303b
Triennial Visit	This phrase is no longer used in the Book of Order. It referred to the required presbytery visit with each congregation every three years. Presbyteries still have a responsibility to maintain relationships with their congregations and to be open to communication regarding the life and ministry of congregations.	G-3.0303 G-3.0307
Union Church	See “Joint Congregational Witness.”	G-5.05 G-3.0109b(4)
Validated Ministry	A ministry in which a teaching elder is engaged that meets the requirements of the Book of Order and presbytery’s criteria to be considered “validated.”	G-2.0503a G-3.0306
Vocation	See “call”	
Yoke	When two or more churches are served by one pastor they are said to be yoked.	

*A resource originally compiled by the Synod of Lakes and Prairies  
Updated by Office of Vocation 10/05/11*

# Christian Vocation, Commissioned Service, and Ordination

God has given each of us gifts and calls us to use them in a way that pleases and glorifies God. Our vocation is the way in which we respond to the many gifts God has given us; how we live our life. Vocation is not limited to those who serve the church, but each person has a calling to service. As we participate in the community of faith, Christian Vocation is about living into our baptismal identity, answering the call to demonstrate the gospel in all that we do and say.

Christian Vocation—God’s call to daily service in the world through our jobs, talents and interests—is a cornerstone of our lives as Christians.

A sense of Christian Vocation is what gives meaning to our daily routine. Without a true sense of God’s call in our daily lives, we will pass through life without direction to our work, and most of life will have no meaning.

Whether you are a butcher, a baker or a homemaker, your labors and talents are God’s gift through you to the world.

The resulting joy of accepting your labors as God’s work allows you to take life one step at a time—as it has been delivered to you, and to find meaning and worth in every moment of the day and in every encounter along the way.

God’s “Call” is more than a job—it is discovering the possibilities of oneself; it is insight into who one is, what one should do. Call is a powerful resource for confronting the uncertainty of life. It is a symbol of divine direction and divine acceptance, connecting one with the community in which one serves. Call makes sense of one’s Life.

## **From *This Call’s For You – a Christian Vocation Workbook***

### **Questions for consideration:**

1. How do we help individuals understand and live their baptismal call?
2. Discern their gifts?
3. Find ways to “honor and serve God in every aspect of human life”?

### **G-1.0304 The Ministry of Members**

*Membership in the Church of Jesus Christ is a joy and a privilege. It is also a commitment to participate in Christ’s mission. A faithful member bears witness to God’s love and grace and promises to be involved responsibly in the ministry of Christ’s Church. Such involvement includes:*

- *proclaiming the good news in word and deed,*
- *taking part in the common life and worship of a congregation,*
- *lifting one another up in prayer, mutual concern, and active support,*
- *studying Scripture and the issues of Christian faith and life,*
- *supporting the ministry of the church through the giving of money, time, and talents,*
- *demonstrating a new quality of life within and through the church,*
- *responding to God’s activity in the world through service to others,*
- *living responsibly in the personal, family, vocational, political, cultural, and social relationships of life,*
- *working in the world for peace, justice, freedom, and human fulfillment,*
- *participating in the governing responsibilities of the church, and*
- *reviewing and evaluating regularly the integrity of one’s membership, and considering ways in which one’s participation in the worship and service of the church may be increased and made more meaningful.*

### **W-5.6001 God calls a people**

- a) *to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior;*
- b) *to follow Jesus Christ in obedient discipleship;*
- c) *to use the gifts and abilities God has given, honoring and serving God*
  1. *in personal life,*
  2. *in household and families,*
  3. *in daily occupations,*
  4. *in community, nation, and the world.*

### **W-5.6002**

*A person responds to God’s call to faith in Jesus Christ through Baptism and through life and worship in the community of faith.*

*Persons respond to God’s call to discipleship through the ministries of God’s people in and for the world.*

*Persons respond to God’s call to honor and serve God in every aspect of human life*

- a) *in their work and in their play,*
- b) *in their thought and in their action,*
- c) *in their private and in their public relationships.*

# Christian Vocation, Commissioned Service, and Ordination

## Resources:

- See [Christian Vocation](#) website
- [“Called by our Baptism”](#) - Through images and superb narration, this 7 minute video clip explores the baptismal call. Created especially for presbytery ministry committees and congregations who help individuals discern their call, this media piece could also be used for church officers, membership classes, and Christian education classes.

Recognition and commissioning provides the church with a way to honor the many gifts and ministries being shared with the church and world by its members as they live out their call to discipleship. Commissioning of church school teachers, mission service personnel, community ministry volunteers, mission trip participants, and commissioners to presbytery, synod, or General Assembly are just a few opportunities for church to commission its members .

## Questions for consideration:

1. How might Christ’s mission be strengthened by more emphasis on forms of service other than the ordered ministries?
2. What ministries might be recognized through commissioning?
3. What council of the church would appropriately initiate the commissioning?

## Resources:

Book of Occasional Services, copyright 1999 by Geneva Press for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

### **W-4.3000 Commissioning for Specific Acts of Discipleship**

#### **W-4.3001**

*In the life of the Christian community God calls people to particular acts of discipleship to use their personal gifts for service in the Church and in the world. These specific acts may be strengthened and confirmed by formal recognition in worship.*

#### **W-4.3002**

*Discipleship may be expressed*

- a) *in the local church through service such as teacher in the church school, trustee, member of the choir, officer in a church organization, or adviser or helper with various church groups;*
- b) *on behalf of the local church through its ministry in and to the community;*
- c) *in the larger church as people serve in the ministries of presbytery, synod, and the General Assembly, and of ecumenical agencies and councils;*
- d) *beyond the church cooperating with all who work for compassion and reconciliation. (W-7.3000-.4000)*

#### **W-4.3003**

*Recognition and commissioning of people called to such acts of discipleship may occur in the Service for the Lord's Day as a response to the proclamation of the Word (W-3.3500) or as a bearing and following of the Word into the world. (W-3.3700)*

*Recognizing and commissioning for specific acts of discipleship may also occur in services of worship provided for this purpose or in other appropriate services. (W-3.5100; W-3.5300; W- 3.5600)*



# Christian Vocation, Commissioned Service, and Ordination

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## What is Ordination? - by Joseph D. Small

The church's ministry and mission are the calling of the whole people of God. In the Reformed tradition, ministry is not the domain of a particular group of people called "clergy," who lead a larger group called "laity." This un-Reformed clergy/lay distinction obscures the reality that all specific ministries of the church are particular expressions of the ministry of the whole body of Christ. All Christians are gifted for ministry, and there is a real sense in which all are ordained to ministry in their baptisms.

Within the ministry of the whole people of God, persons may be called to perform specific functions that are important to the life of particular communities of faith. However, some functions are considered to be necessary to the spiritual health and faithful life of every Christian community. The church gives order to these necessary functions by regularizing their shape, their duties, their qualifications, and their approval. These "ordered ministries," and the persons who are called to them, are established in ordination – the whole church's act of setting apart for particular service.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), following the development of Reformed ecclesiology, ordains persons to three ordered ministries: ministers, elders, and deacons. These three ministries represent two ecclesial functions: ministries of the Word performed by presbyters (pastors and elders) and ministries of service performed by deacons

Ministers, traditionally called "teaching elders," and elders, traditionally called "ruling elders" are both "presbyters." Identifying ministers by their teaching role emphasizes the primacy of the Word and the centrality of the "teaching church." The designation ruling elder is easily misunderstood, however. The historic understanding of the "ruling" exercised by elders has less to do with managerial governance than with ruling out or measuring the work of ministry, the fidelity of communal and personal lives, and the progress of the gospel in the church. The service of deacons is to lead the church in its ministries of compassion (distributing aid, caring directly for the poor, the sick, refugees, and prisoners), and justice (working for equity in society).

Ordination to one of the church's ordered ministries is not the simple recognition that a person possesses "gifts for ministry," or that an office suits a person's abilities. It does not follow naturally from a person's "sense of call." Ordination is certainly not about access to position, influence, and power in the church. Ordination is the church's act of recognizing the movement of the Holy Spirit in the interactions among the whole church's ordering of ministries, its standards for these ministries, and its current needs, together with prayerful discernment by persons, congregations, and presbyteries.

Ordination is a gift, not a right. The "spiritual welfare of the church" depends, in large measure, upon its recovery of an understanding of the ministry of the whole people of God, the ordered ministries of the church, and the gift of ordination.

### Questions for consideration:

1. How do the practices of your presbytery ministry committees/commissions support the Reformed understanding of ordination? Of the relationship among the ordered ministries?
2. How do you assess an individual's motives for seeking ordained service?
3. What constitutes a ministry requiring ordination?

From 2011-2013 Advisory Handbook for Ministry Committees/Commissions

# Pastoral Relationships

# Pastoral Relationships

## Pastoral Relationships are:

- Established by three partners - the presbytery, the congregation or session (for temporary relationships), and the individual serving in the pastoral role.
- Either installed or temporary

## Installed pastoral relationships:

- Are “pastor”, “co-pastor”, “associate pastor”
- May be for a designated term or indefinite.
- Have no requirement to be “full-time”.

## Temporary pastoral relationships:

- Session invites for service
- May be teaching elder (PC(USA) or other), PC(USA) candidate, or ruling elder
- Titles determined by presbytery
- Term may be up to 12 months, renewable
- Ordinarily not eligible to become installed

## Questions for consideration:

1. What positions are appropriate to be installed positions?
2. Which are better suited to temporary pastoral relations?
3. When might it enhance mission possibilities to install a pastor for a designated term?
4. How will you work with sessions to understand and consider the options for pastoral relationships?
5. How will you review term pastoral relationships?
6. Will you consider exceptions (**G.0504**). If so, what exceptions and under what circumstances?
7. What positions are suitable for a first call?

## Resources:

- See [New Times, New Call](#)
- [Resources are available online as you explore models for ministry.](#)

*G-2.0502 Teaching elders have membership in the presbytery by action of the presbytery itself, and no pastoral relationship may be established, changed, or dissolved without the approval of the presbytery.*

### *G-2.0504 Pastoral Relationships*

#### *a. Installed Pastoral Relationships*

*The installed pastoral relationships are pastor, co-pastor, and associate pastor. A teaching elder may be installed in a pastoral relationship for an indefinite period or for a designated term determined by the presbytery in consultation with the congregation and specified in the call.*

#### *b. Temporary Pastoral Relationships*

*Temporary pastoral relationships are approved by the presbytery and do not carry a formal call or installation. When a congregation does not have a pastor, or while the pastor is unable to perform her or his duties, the session, with the approval of presbytery, may obtain the services of a teaching elder, candidate, or ruling elder in a temporary pastoral relationship. No formal call shall be issued and no formal installation shall take place.*

*Titles and terms of service for temporary relationships shall be determined by the presbytery. A person serving in a temporary pastoral relationship is invited for a specified period not to exceed twelve months in length, which is renewable with the approval of the presbytery. A teaching elder employed in a temporary pastoral relationship is ordinarily not eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor.*

#### *G-2.0504 c. Exceptions*

*A presbytery may determine that its mission strategy permits a teaching elder currently called as an Associate Pastor to be eligible to serve as the next installed pastor or co-pastor, or a teaching elder employed in a temporary pastoral relationship to be eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor. Presbyteries that permit this eligibility shall establish such relationships only by a three-fourths vote of the members of presbytery present and voting.*

# Dissolving the Installed Pastoral Relationship

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There are three different ways that the dissolution of an installed pastoral relationship may be initiated:

- **At the request of the pastor, co-pastor or associate pastor.** Teaching elders often make the request for dissolution of the pastoral relationship because they have accepted another call for service or wish to retire. A teaching elder makes his or her request for dissolution to presbytery and informs the session so that session may call a meeting of the congregation for the purpose of considering the teaching elder's request for dissolution of the pastoral relationship. **(G-2.0902)**
- **At the request of the congregation.** The congregation may also request the dissolution of the pastoral relationship. Such a request is often due to difficulties between the congregation and the teaching elder and the teaching elder may or may not be in agreement with the request of the congregation. At the request of the congregation, the session shall call the meeting and request the presbytery to appoint a moderator for the meeting. **(G-2.0903)**
- **By presbytery action.** The presbytery may, on occasion, look into reported difficulties within a congregation. In the course of such an inquiry and after consultation with the minister, the session, and the congregation, the presbytery may find that the church's mission under the Word "imperatively demands" the dissolution of the pastoral relationship and take steps toward dissolution. **(G-2.0904)**

As soon as a request for dissolution of an installed pastoral relationship comes to the attention of the presbytery, presbytery should be prepared to assist the pastor and congregation through the process of pastoral transitions according to the Book of Order and presbytery policies and procedures.

## **G-2.0902 Pastor, Co-Pastor or Associate Pastor Requests**

*A pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor may request the presbytery to dissolve the pastoral relationship. The minister must also state her or his intention to the session. The session shall call a congregational meeting to act upon the request and to make recommendations to the presbytery.*

## **G-2.0903 Congregation Requests**

*If any congregation desires the pastoral relationship to be dissolved, a procedure similar to G-2.0902, above, shall be followed. When a congregation requests the session to call a congregational meeting to dissolve its relationship with its pastor, the session shall call the meeting and request the presbytery to appoint a moderator for the meeting.*

## **G-2.0904 Presbytery Action**

*The presbytery may inquire into reported difficulties in a congregation and may dissolve the pastoral relationship if, after consultation with the minister, the session, and the congregation, it finds the church's mission under the Word imperatively demands it.*

# Dissolving the Installed Pastoral Relationship

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## The Congregational Meeting

No matter who initiates proceedings for dissolution of the pastoral relationship, there shall always be a meeting of the congregation to consider the matter. At that meeting the congregation may act to consent, or decline to consent, to the dissolution. **(G-2.0901)**

Action at the meeting of the congregation should be sure to include the effective date of dissolution and any agreed upon final terms of compensation or severance.

Presbytery will want to ensure that an appropriate moderator has been appointed to moderate the meeting of the congregation, especially if the request for dissolution was initiated due to difficulties or conflict.

## Presbytery Action

While a congregation may consent or decline to consent to the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, an installed pastoral relationship is dissolved only by the presbytery. **(G-2.0901)**

As with the congregation, presbytery action on the dissolution of the pastoral relationship should also include the effective date of dissolution and any agreed upon final terms of compensation or severance. Presbytery should also be sure that appropriate action regarding the teaching elder's presbytery membership be taken. This might include:

- Any change in presbytery membership (validated ministry, member-at-large, honorably retired),
- Transfer to another presbytery,
- Exclusion or release from ordered ministry, or
- Any other appropriate actions.

## When Parties Do Not Agree on Dissolution

When all parties are in agreement, action to dissolve a pastoral relationship is not usually controversial. However, there may be times when certain parties do not agree with the request to dissolve the pastoral relationship, requiring the presbytery to hear from the disagreeing parties.

### **G-2.0901 Congregational Meeting**

*Whether the teaching elder, the congregation, or the presbytery initiates proceedings for dissolution of the relationship, there shall always be a meeting of the congregation to consider the matter and to consent, or decline to consent, to dissolution.*

### **G-2.0901 Congregational Meeting**

*An installed pastoral relationship may be dissolved only by the presbytery.*

## Dissolving the Installed Pastoral Relationship

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If the congregation does not concur with the request to dissolve the relationship, the presbytery shall hear from the congregation, through its elected commissioners, the reasons why the presbytery should not dissolve the pastoral relationship. If the congregation fails to appear, or if its reasons for retaining the relationship are judged insufficient, the request may be granted and the pastoral relationship dissolved. (**G-2.0902**)

If the pastor does not concur with the request to dissolve the relationship, the presbytery shall hear from him or her the reasons why the presbytery should not dissolve the relationship. If the pastor fails to appear, or if the reasons for maintaining the relationship are judged insufficient, the relationship may be dissolved. (**G-2.0903**)

Presbyteries are encouraged to consider and plan for particular ways to be pastor and counselor to affected parties and to facilitate relationships during and following any contested dissolution.

### The Pastoral Transition

During this time of pastoral change in the life of the congregation, the presbytery has the responsibility to oversee this transition by serving as pastor, counselor, and advisor to teaching elders and congregations. (**G-3.0301 & G-3.0307**)

There are a number of issues a presbytery may wish to address and plan for to assist in a smooth transition for congregations and teaching elders. These may include:

- Ethics for departing pastors
- Exit interviews
- Temporary pastoral leadership, including pulpit supply and session moderator
- Calling of the next installed pastor

#### **G-2.0902 Pastor, Co-Pastor or Associate Pastor Requests**

*If the congregation does not concur, the presbytery shall hear from the congregation, through its elected commissioners, the reasons why the presbytery should not dissolve the pastoral relationship. If the congregation fails to appear, or if its reasons for retaining the relationship are judged insufficient, the request may be granted and the pastoral relationship dissolved.*

#### **G-2.0903 Congregation Requests**

*If the pastor does not concur with the request to dissolve the relationship, the presbytery shall hear from him or her the reasons why the presbytery should not dissolve the relationship. If the pastor fails to appear, or if the reasons for maintaining the relationship are judged insufficient, the relationship may be dissolved.*

#### **G-3.0301 Composition and Responsibilities**

*...the presbytery has responsibility and power to:*  
*a. provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard. This responsibility shall include... overseeing congregations without pastors...*

#### **G-3.0307 Pastor, Counselor, and Advisor to Teaching Elders and Congregations**

*...oversight of congregations without pastors...*

# Dissolving the Installed Pastoral Relationship

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## Questions for presbytery consideration and discussion:

1. How does the presbytery handle uncontested pastoral dissolutions? What about contested dissolutions?
2. How are severance agreements negotiated? What does a standard agreement include?
3. How does the presbytery fulfill its responsibility to serve as pastor, counselor, and advisor to teaching elders and congregations during this time of transition for a congregation and a teaching elder?
4. When does the search for a new pastor begin?

## **Resources:**

- Exit Interviews
- Ethics for Departing Pastors
- Temporary Pastoral Relationships
- Calling an Installed Pastor
- Electing a Pastor Nominating Committee

# Exit Interviews

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Exit interviews, while not required at the dissolution of a pastoral relationship, may be a helpful tool for presbyteries to consider as a regular step in the departure of a pastor. This is true whether the person leaving the congregation is a temporary pastor who has served the church for a few months or an installed pastor who is leaving after a number of years.

Exit interviews can be an opportunity to reflect on the ministry the pastor and congregation had together, its strengths and weaknesses, and be one step in the process of closure in the relationship between congregation and pastor. Information gathered through an exit interview may also be helpful in informing the congregation's future direction for ministry, especially as they call their next pastor.

A presbytery that uses exit interviews will want to find and implement a process that is most effective for their particular ministry context.

## **An Exit Interview Model**

With the Departing Pastor. The presbytery conducts the exit interview with the departing pastor soon after the pastor announces his or her departure. Questions to be asked and topics to be covered may include:

1. Ask the pastor to talk about things she/he feels good about in ministry with the congregation.
2. Ask about barriers to effective ministry. These barriers might be in the congregation, or community, or with the pastor.
3. Ask about the relationship between the pastor, the session and the congregation, including any difficulties or conflict.
4. Ask about advice the pastor might want give to the next pastor.
5. Review with the pastor the presbytery's expectations regarding appropriate and inappropriate contact between the pastor and congregation after the pastor's departure. This is especially important if the pastor is staying in town or moving to a nearby location.

***G-2.0905 Officiate by Invitation Only***

*After the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, former pastors and associate pastors shall not provide their pastoral services to members of their former congregations without the invitation of the moderator of session.*



## Exit Interviews

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With the Session. The presbytery conducts the exit interview with the session after the pastoral relationship has departed. It is helpful for the moderator of session appointed by presbytery to be present for this interview. Questions to be asked and topics to be covered may include:

1. Ask about the positive growth in the life of the congregation during the pastor's time with the congregation.
2. Ask about barriers to effective ministry. These barriers might be in the congregation, or community, or the pastor.
3. Ask about the relationship between the pastor, the session and the congregation, including any difficulties or conflict.
4. Review with the session, the presbytery's expectations regarding appropriate and inappropriate contact with between the pastor and congregation after the pastor's departure. This is especially important if the pastor is staying in town or moving to a nearby location.
5. Begin discussion about maintaining regular worship and congregational life during the transition and search for new pastoral leadership.

**Resource:**

- Ethics for Departing Pastors

## Ethics for Departing Pastors

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The bonds of care and love which have been forged between pastor and congregation over the span of ministry together often leads to the desire to remain connected even after the pastoral relationship ends. While it is understandable when church members want the pastor “who knows us” to baptize their child, the bonds of care and love between the church members and the current pastor cannot be forged and strengthened if a former pastor steps in to provide this pastoral service.

When a teaching elder is leaving a particular congregation or ministry setting where he or she has served in a pastoral role, presbytery will want to ensure that expectations of departing pastors are communicated clearly to both the departing pastor and the congregation. The primary expectation is that when the pastoral relationship ends so does the pastor’s participation in any future pastoral service to members of the congregation. Presbytery may wish to elaborate on how this is lived out within the presbytery, especially regarding: **(G-2.0905)**

- Attendance at any church events, including weddings, baptisms, and funerals.
- Continuation of friendships, including future conversations about the church.
- Providing any leadership for congregational worship, education or fellowship events.
- How the pastor is to respond to requests from church members, so as to not to pass the responsibility for the decision on to the presbytery and/or the moderator of session.

**G-2.0905 Officiate by Invitation Only**  
*After the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, former pastors and associate pastors shall not provide their pastoral services to members of their former congregations... ..without the invitation of the moderator of session.*

While the Book of Order leaves open the possibility of providing future pastoral services at “the invitation of the moderator of session,” a presbytery may wish to engage the departing pastor in conversation about how to handle such invitations. **(G-2.0905)**

### Questions for presbytery consideration and discussion:

1. What are presbytery’s expectations about former pastors’ involvements in the life of congregations previously served?
2. Does the presbytery have an ethical standards policy? If so, are these expectations included?
3. How are presbyteries policies and/or expectations communicated to a departing pastor and congregation? What role is the pastor expected to play in communicating this to the congregation?
4. How does the presbytery handle any violations of this ethical standard?

### Resources:

- [Standards of Ethical Conduct](#). Approved by the 210th General Assembly (1998)
- Examples of [Presbytery Policies and Procedures](#) regarding Ethics for Departing Pastors From 2011-2013 Advisory Handbook for Ministry Committees/Commissions

# Temporary Pastoral Relationships

- When the pastor is unable to function, or when there is no pastor in position, presbytery and session have the opportunity to carefully describe a position which meets their very particular needs. Clearly no two situations are identical or have the same resources or expectations. This section of the Form of Government (**G-2.0504b**) provides the opportunity to both define the work and title the position in ways that are most appropriate to the setting.
- A temporary pastor is often secured by a session to serve as pastor, carrying on the ministry of the church, while the search for an installed pastor goes on. However, there is no requirement that pastoral vacancies must have a temporary pastoral relationship.
- Temporary relationships are established by the presbytery, do not last more than twelve months, and are renewable with presbytery's approval.
- Pastors who have had training to be an interim or transitional pastor may be available to serve as a temporary pastor. Often these teaching elders have had special training for the unique ministry of serving churches in the midst of pastoral transition. Some have special skills and experience in helping congregations recover from a time of conflict or after the disclosure of clergy sexual misconduct or other trauma.
- On occasion presbyteries may consider contracting with ministers of other Christian churches to serve as temporary pastors within the presbytery. A presbytery may temporarily enroll a minister of another Christian church to do so under **G-2.0506**.
- Temporary pastors are not, ordinarily, eligible to serve as the next installed pastor of the congregation they are serving.

## **G-2.0504 Pastoral Relationships**

### *b. Temporary Pastoral Relationships*

*Temporary pastoral relationships are approved by the presbytery and do not carry a formal call or installation. When a congregation does not have a pastor, or while the pastor is unable to perform her or his duties, the session, with the approval of presbytery may obtain the services of a teaching elder, candidate, or ruling elder in a temporary pastoral relationship. No formal call shall be issued and no formal installation shall take place.*

*Titles and terms of service for temporary relationships shall be determined by the presbytery. A person serving in a temporary pastoral relationship is invited for a specified period not to exceed twelve months in length, which is renewable with the approval of the presbytery. A teaching elder employed in a temporary pastoral relationship is ordinarily not eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor.*

### *c. Exceptions*

*A presbytery may determine that its mission strategy permits ... a teaching elder employed in a temporary pastoral relationship to be eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor. Presbyteries that permit this eligibility shall establish such relationships only by a three-fourths vote of the members of presbytery present and voting.*

## **G-2.0506 Temporary Membership in Presbytery for a Period of Service**

*A presbytery may enroll a minister of another Christian church who is serving temporarily in a validated ministry in this church, or in an installed relationship under the provisions of the Formula of Agreement (Book of Order, Appendix C; G-5.0202), when the minister has satisfied the requirements of preparation for such service established by the presbytery's own rule.*

# Temporary Pastoral Relationships

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## Questions for presbytery consideration and discussion:

1. In what congregational situations would presbytery consider obtaining a temporary pastor? When would it be unnecessary?
2. If a temporary pastor is the way forward, what kind of conversations need to take place between presbytery and session about the particular needs of the setting?
3. In what situations would presbytery prefer to have a trained interim serving as a temporary pastor?
4. When might presbytery's mission strategy determine that the temporary pastor would be eligible to serve as the next installed pastor?
5. Under what circumstances would presbytery consider a minister of another denomination to serve as a temporary pastor?

## Resources:

- Dissolving the Installed Pastoral Relationship
- [Sample Contract for Temporary Pastoral Services](#)
- [Association of Presbyterian Interim Ministry Specialists \(APIMS\)](#)
- [Interim Pastors](#)

# Pastor Installed for a Designated Term

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With the adoption of the New Form of Government, “Designated Pastor” is no longer defined in the Book of Order. **G-2.0504** indicates that a presbyteries and congregations may work together to call and install a pastor for a designated term. The specific process by which they do that and the length of the term is to be determined.

## **Congregations that find benefit from having a pastor for a designated term**

Congregations go through life-cycles and critical events. There are times when a pastor installed for a designated term may be able to provide the kind of leadership needed:

- When a congregation is engaged in transformation and is redirecting its ministry
- When a congregation wants to test a new direction or new model of leadership
- When a congregation has been wounded by conflict or by a “revolving door” in the pastor’s office through which a number of pastors have come and gone in a relatively few years.
- When congregations are considering engaging in shared ministry.
- When a congregation needs a different pastoral leadership style.
- During a transition time, as when a founding pastor has left a new church development.

### ***G-2.0504 Pastoral Relationships***

#### ***a. Installed Pastoral Relationships***

*The installed pastoral relationships are pastor, co-pastor, and associate pastor. A teaching elder may be installed in a pastoral relationship for an indefinite period or for a designated term determined by the presbytery in consultation with the congregation and specified in the call*

## **Teaching Elders who might consider becoming a designated pastor**

- Persons who enjoy a challenge.
- Persons who have skills and interest in congregational transformation.
- Persons who are healthy - spiritually, physically and mentally.

## **Questions for Consideration:**

1. In what situations will you recommend the use of a pastor installed for a designated term?
2. What will be your process of working with pastor nominating committees for the call of such a pastor?
3. How will you determine the term to be specified in the call?
4. At what point in the term will you require review in order to allow the pastor and congregation to move forward together or have appropriate time to move in other directions?
5. How will you work with the pastor and the congregation to discern what will occur at the end of the designated term?

# Commissioned Ruling Elders

## What is a Commissioned Ruling Elder?

The particular role of commissioned ruling elder is an extension of the office of elder which is an ordained office of the church. The role was created in the mid 1980s in response to the mission needs of presbyteries which did not have enough ministers to adequately serve their churches. At first it was “Commissioned Lay Preacher”. A decade later, the role was expanded to give presbyteries the option for authorizing a CLP to administer the sacraments and other pastoral functions and the name was changed to “Commissioned Lay Pastor”. In the most recent revision of the Form of Government, the role’s title was changed to “ruling elder commissioned to particular pastoral service” to provide clarity about its place within the ordered ministries.

- Ruling elder in special service
- Service requires special equipping for responsibilities
- They are examined on personal faith, motives, and areas of instruction
- Commissioned in a service of worship during which they respond to constitutional questions.
- The role is limited – in time and place of service
- They must work under the supervision and mentoring of a teaching elder.
- Term to be specified up to 3 years, renewable.
- Must be reviewed annually.

### **G-2.10 Commissioning Ruling Elders to Particular Pastoral Service**

#### **G-2.1001 Functions**

*When the presbytery, in consultation with the session or other responsible committee, determines that its strategy for mission requires it, the presbytery may authorize a ruling elder to be commissioned to limited pastoral service as assigned by the presbytery.*

*A ruling elder so designated may be commissioned to serve in a validated ministry of the presbytery. Presbytery, in its commission, may authorize the ruling elder to moderate the session of the congregation to which he or she is commissioned, to administer the Sacraments, and to officiate at marriages where permitted by state law. This commission shall also specify the term of service, which shall not exceed three years but shall be renewable. The presbytery shall review the commission at least annually.*

**G-2.1002** *A ruling elder who seeks to serve under the terms of G-2.1001 shall receive such preparation and instruction as determined by the presbytery to be appropriate to the particular commission. The ruling elder shall be examined by the presbytery as to personal faith, motives for seeking the commission, and the areas of instruction determined by presbytery. A ruling elder who has been commissioned and later ceases to serve in the specified ministry may continue to be listed as available to serve, but is not authorized to perform the functions specified in G-2.1001 until commissioned again to a congregation or ministry by the presbytery.*

# Commissioned Ruling Elders

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In commissioning ruling elders to particular pastoral service the presbytery may authorize them to

- serve in validated ministries
- moderate session
- administer the sacraments.
- officiate at marriages if permitted by law.

## Mobility

This authorization applies only with the presbytery of their congregational membership and for the particular service to which they are commissioned.

While all Presbyterians may offer themselves for service to the church through Church Leadership Connection, there is no reciprocity for commissioning to pastoral service, so ruling elders are not eligible for pastoral positions in presbyteries other than their own. Should they relocate and move their church membership, they should consult with their pastor and new presbytery about mission needs for commissioned ruling elders

### **G-2.1003 Commissioning Service**

*When the presbytery is satisfied with the qualifications of a ruling elder to serve a congregation providing the services described above, it shall commission the ruling elder to pastoral service as designated by the presbytery, employing the questions contained in W-4.4000.*

### **G-2.1004 Supervision**

*The ruling elder commissioned under the terms of G-2.1001 shall work under the supervision of the presbytery. The presbytery may at any time withdraw the commission for reasons it deems good and sufficient. A teaching elder shall be assigned as a mentor and supervisor.*

## Questions for consideration:

1. What are the mission needs of your presbytery?
2. For what “particular pastoral service” are ruling elders needed?
3. What preparation and instruction is needed for that service?
4. How will you manage the tasks of selection and preparation? Examination? Deployment and supervision?

## Resources:

Resources are online at <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/clp/> and samples of materials from other presbyteries can be found at <http://oga.pcusa.org/mgbconnect/clp.htm>

Participate in a Google group for those who equip and deploy commissioned ruling elders. Contact [dosie.powell@pcusa.org](mailto:dosie.powell@pcusa.org) to be included.

## Ministers of Other Denominations

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Presbyterians are ecumenical and, as such, are involved with members of other denominations in ministry and mission. Christ's mission is furthered by such cooperation. In some places there are not enough PC(USA) ministers to lead PC(USA) congregations and ministers of other denominations are available to serve. In other areas, special mission needs are met by ministers of other denominations. Such relationships offer great possibilities and some pitfalls.

- Presbyteries have no obligation to allow ministers of other denominations to serve in their congregations.
- Pastoral service in PC(USA) congregations is open to teaching elder equivalents, not "lay pastors",

Ministers of other denominations may be considered for service

- **by transfer of membership** to become a PCUSA ministers (**G-2.0505**).
- **under "orderly exchange"** if a minister member of the United Church of Christ, the Reformed Church in America, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, or the Korean Presbyterian Church Abroad. (Soon Moravian Church ministers will also be eligible for "orderly exchange.") See <http://www.pcusa.org/resource/formula-agreement-and-orderly-exchange-information/>
- **in temporary pastoral relationships** employed by the session with approval of the presbytery for a period of twelve months or less (renewable)

### **G-2.0504b Temporary Pastoral Relationships**

*Temporary pastoral relationships are approved by the presbytery and do not carry a formal call or installation.*

*When a congregation does not have a pastor, or while the pastor is unable to perform her or his duties, the session, with the approval of presbytery, may obtain the services of a teaching elder, candidate, or ruling elder in a temporary pastoral relationship. No formal call shall be issued and no formal installation shall take place.*

*Titles and terms of service for temporary relationships shall be determined by the presbytery. A person serving in a temporary pastoral relationship is invited for a specified period not to exceed twelve months in length, which is renewable with the approval of the presbytery. A teaching elder employed in a temporary pastoral relationship is ordinarily not eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor.*

### **G-2.0506 Temporary Membership in Presbytery for a Period of Service**

*A presbytery may enroll a minister of another Christian church who is serving temporarily in a validated ministry in this church, or in an installed relationship under the provisions of the Formula of Agreement (G-5.0202), when the minister has satisfied the requirements of preparation for such service established by the presbytery's own rule.*



# Ministers of Other Denominations

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## Questions for consideration:

1. What mission needs of your presbytery might be met by inviting leadership from another denomination to serve?
2. What process will you employ to gather information as you consider ministers of other denominations for service? (“good standing”, background checks, references)
3. How will you assess their ability to serve in your ministry effectively?
4. What will you require of those seeking to transfer to become PC(USA) teaching elders? How will this vary depending on the denomination from which they are coming?
5. How will you orient newcomers to PC(USA), helping them to understand the history, polity, practices of ministry, and discipline of our church?

## Ministers Transferring to PCUSA

Ministers of other denominations who are interested in becoming a minister of the Word and Sacrament in the PC(USA) should begin the process of inquiry by consulting with the presbytery in which they seek to serve to determine whether there is a need for their service and if so, to be guided through meeting the requirements.

In order to become a PC(USA) minister, a minister of another denomination (including full communion partners) must meet the requirements in G-2.06 including education and ordination exams and have a call to a PC(USA) ministry.

Under certain circumstances, the requirements of G-2.06 may be waived by a three-fourths vote of the calling presbytery.

### ***G-2.0505 Transfer of Ministers of Other Denominations***

*a. When a minister of another Christian church is called to a work properly under the jurisdiction of a presbytery, the presbytery, after the constitutional conditions have been met, shall recognize the minister's previous ordination to ministry. Such ministers shall furnish credentials and evidence of good standing acceptable to the presbytery, and shall submit satisfactory evidence of possessing the qualifications of character and scholarship required of candidates of this church. (G-2.0607 & G-2.0610). In exceptional circumstances the following provisions will apply:*

*(1) In the case of ministers for immigrant fellowships and congregations, a presbytery may, if it determines that its strategy for mission with that group requires it, recognize the ordination and receive as a member of presbytery a new immigrant minister who furnishes evidence of good standing in a denomination, even though at the time of enrollment that minister lacks the educational history required of candidates, and provide such educational opportunities as seem necessary and prudent for that minister's successful ministry in the presbytery.*

*(2) A minister of another Reformed church who has been ordained for five or more years may be granted an exemption for some or all of the examinations required of candidates for ordination by a two-thirds vote of the presbytery.*

# Ministers of Other Denominations

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## Orderly Exchange with Formula Partner Churches

Recognizing our oneness in Christ, the PC(USA) has entered into agreements with sister denominations as “full communion partners”. Under these agreements, ministers of one denomination may be invited to serve a ministry of another full communion denomination. This is called “orderly exchange”. This process applies only to teaching elders and not to other ordered ministries or to locally authorized pastoral leaders such as ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service.

The first “Orderly Exchange of Ordained Ministers of Word and Sacrament” process was implemented by the Formula of Agreement churches in 1997. These churches are the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church (USA), Reformed Church in America, and United Church of Christ.

In 2010 we became full communion partners with the Korean Presbyterian Church Abroad and are in process of implementing orderly exchange with the Moravian Church in America.

Through adoption of A Formula of Agreement, our churches have been able to provide for the exchange of ordained ministers so that our common ministry and mission are enhanced and strengthened. Within each of our churches, congregations have been able to utilize the gifts that ordained ministers from other full-communion partner churches.

*Orderly exchange (provisions for availability) of ordained ministers is for the sake of participation by the churches in the mission of God, and can be an important sign of our unity in Christ. This particular provision of full communion seeks to allow and encourage the more effective use and deployment of our churches’ ordained leaders in order to enhance our shared ministry mission. It encourages those in our churches who are responsible for the deployment of ordained ministers to draw on the available ministers of the other participating churches to meet mission needs. - from [“A Formula of Agreement – The Orderly Exchange of Ordained Ministers of Word and Sacrament”](#)*

### **G-5.0202 Full Communion**

*The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is in full communion with those churches so recognized by the General Assembly. Full communion shall include the mutual recognition of baptism and the orderly exchange of ministers, as defined by ecumenical agreement. Councils of this church are encouraged to engage in opportunities to minister together in mutual affirmation and admonition with churches with which the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is in full communion.*

# Ministers of Other Denominations

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## Highlights of the Agreement and Orderly Exchange Process:

- The orderly exchange process begins with the identification of a ministry need by the appropriate regional body of the “inviting” church and the identification of an ordained minister from a full communion partner church who may serve in that ministry setting.
- The judicatory of the “inviting” church initiates the process of the orderly exchange between the congregation to be served and the ordained minister. The ordained minister does not initiate the process of exchange.
- The “inviting” church then should consult with the appropriate regional body of the ordained minister to determine the suitability of the potential service and to receive the concurrence of the “sending” body – presbytery, classis, conference and association or synod. The ordained minister remains accountable to the sending church for continuation of ministerial status.
- A ministry in a congregation of another church is not intended for a “first call” candidate; experience in and knowledge of one’s own tradition is seen as necessary before serving in a different tradition.
- This agreement applies only to persons who are ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament and does not apply to persons who are locally trained and authorized pastoral leaders.
- To be eligible to serve in the partner denomination, an ordained minister will demonstrate to the inviting presbytery knowledge of and an appreciation for the history, polity, practices of ministry, and discipline of that denomination.
- These ministries are intended for a designated extended period of time. Should an ordained minister of one church intend to serve permanently in another church then the process of the transfer of ministerial status should be followed.
- Should a disciplinary process be necessary, the ordained minister remains under the jurisdiction of the sending body, but the inviting body may be asked to participate as necessary.
- An ordained minister serving the partner denomination will continue to participate in the pension and benefits program of their denomination of membership.

See the complete documents guiding orderly exchange with full communion partners

[Orderly Exchange under Formula of Agreement with Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Reformed Church in America, United Church of Christ](#)

Covenant Agreement with Korean Presbyterian Church Abroad  
(see Book of Order 2011 / 2013, Appendix E)

## Immigrant Ministers

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- If the presbytery determines that its strategy for mission with an immigrant fellowship or congregation requires it, it may receive a new immigrant minister of another Christian church into the PC(USA) according to **G-2.0505a**.
- The immigrant minister must be a member in good standing in his or her denomination.
- If the minister lacks the educational history required of candidates, the presbytery shall provide necessary educational opportunities.
- The presbytery may also be able to secure the services of a minister of another denomination either temporarily in a validated ministry, or in an installed relationship under the provisions of the Formula of Agreement (**Book of Order, Appendix C; G-5.0202**) to serve an immigrant fellowship or congregation.
- A presbytery may establish its own requirements of preparation for such service.
- Issues about immigration status of non-citizen ministers or religious workers are best addressed with Julia Thorne, at [julia.thorne@pcusa.org](mailto:julia.thorne@pcusa.org) or 1-888-728-7228, extension 5372.

### **Book of Order References:**

#### **G-2.0505a. Transfer of Ministers of Other Denominations**

*(1) In the case of ministers for immigrant fellowships and congregations, a presbytery may, if it determines that its strategy for mission with that group requires it, recognize the ordination and receive as a member of presbytery a new immigrant minister who furnishes evidence of good standing in a denomination, even though at the time of enrollment that minister lacks the educational history required of candidates, and provide such educational opportunities as seem necessary and prudent for that minister's successful ministry in the presbytery.*

#### **G-2.0506 Temporary Membership in Presbytery for a Period of Service**

*A presbytery may enroll a minister of another Christian church who is serving temporarily in a validated ministry in this church, or in an installed relationship under the provisions of the Formula of Agreement (Book of Order, Appendix C; G-5.0202), when the minister has satisfied the requirements of preparation for such service established by the presbytery's own rule.*

# Immigrant Ministers

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## Questions for consideration:

1. How will the presbytery determine when “its strategy for mission with that group” requires it securing an immigrant minister?
2. When the presbytery’s mission strategy calls for calling a pastor for an immigrant fellowship or congregation how will the presbytery go about securing such a pastor? Are there presbytery policies and procedures that will guide this process?
3. If calling a pastor for an installed position using the Formula of Agreement, what are the presbytery’s requirements which must be met before the call can proceed (**G-2.0506**)?
4. For pastors who are received as a member of presbytery under the exception in **G-2.0505a**, what is the plan for the presbytery to provide support, encouragement and supervision for educational opportunities that are “...necessary and prudent for that minister’s successful ministry in the presbytery”?
5. If presbytery chooses to call an immigrant pastor, how will the presbytery plan for appropriate steps to be taken to confirm and document the legal immigration status of the individual?

## Resources:

- Questions concerning immigration law may be directed to Julia Thorne, Manager, Immigration Issues at [julia.thorne@pcusa.org](mailto:julia.thorne@pcusa.org) or 1-888-728-7228, extension 5372.
- PC(USA) Cultural Proficiency materials  
<http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/culturalproficiency/steps/>

# Calling an Installed Pastor

The process outlined in the Book of Order for calling an installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor is rather brief and straight forward. (**G-2.0504**) The steps are as follows:

1. The presbytery, providing guidance to the congregation in the call process, grants permission for a congregation to fill a pastoral vacancy. (**G-2.0801**)
2. The congregation elects a pastor nominating committee whose responsibility is to nominate a pastor for election by the congregation. (**G-2.0802**)
3. According to the process of the presbytery, the pastor nominating committee shall receive and consider the presbytery's counsel on the merits, suitability, and availability of those considered for the call. (**G-2.0803**)
4. When the committee is ready to present the nominee to the congregation, the committee shall notify the session, which shall call a congregational meeting for the purpose of electing the pastor. (**G-2.0803**)
5. The terms of call shall always meet or exceed any presbytery minimum requirements. The call shall include participation in the benefits plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), including both pension and medical coverage. (**G-2.0804**)
6. The presbytery completes the call process by organizing and conducting a service of installation. (**G-2.0805**)

## **G-2.0504 Pastoral Relationships**

### *a. Installed Pastoral Relationships*

*The installed pastoral relationships are pastor, co-pastor, and associate pastor. A teaching elder may be installed in a pastoral relationship for an indefinite period or for a designated term determined by the presbytery in consultation with the congregation and specified in the call.*

## **G-2.0801 Pastoral Vacancy**

*When a congregation has a vacancy in a pastoral position, or after the presbytery approves the effective date of the dissolution of an existing pastoral relationship, the congregation shall, with the guidance and permission of the presbytery, proceed to fill the vacancy in the following manner.*

## **G-2.0802 Election of a Pastor Nominating Committee**

*The session shall call a congregational meeting to elect a pastor nominating committee that shall be representative of the whole congregation. The committee's duty shall be to nominate a pastor for election by the congregation.*

## **G-2.0803 Call Process**

*According to the process of the presbytery and prior to making its report to the congregation, the pastor nominating committee shall receive and consider the presbytery's counsel on the merits, suitability, and availability of those considered for the call. When the way is clear for the committee to report to the congregation, the committee shall notify the session, which shall call a congregational meeting.*

## **G-2.0804 Terms of Call**

*The terms of call shall always meet or exceed any minimum requirement of the presbytery in effect when the call is made. The session shall review annually the minister's terms of call and shall propose for congregational action (G-1.0501) such changes as the session deems appropriate, provided that they meet the presbytery's minimum requirements. The call shall include participation in the benefits plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), including both pension and medical coverage, or any successor plan approved by the General Assembly.*

## **G-2.0805 Installation Service**

*When the congregation, the presbytery, and the teaching elder (or candidate) have all concurred in a call to a permanent or designated pastoral position, the presbytery shall complete the call process by organizing and conducting a service of installation. Installation is an act of the presbytery establishing the pastoral relationship. A service of installation occurs in the context of worship. The order for that service of worship in the Directory for Worship (W-4.4000) shall be followed.*

# Calling an Installed Pastor

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It is the phrase, “According to the process of the presbytery...” that will give a variety of expressions to the way a presbytery’s call process is carried out.

The PC(USA) Office of Vocation makes available *On Calling a Pastor* a manual to assist participants in the pastoral call process. This manual outlines a more traditional call process and provides steps and suggestions which a presbytery may wish to adopt, adapt or discard in their own process. The pastoral call process outlined in *On Calling a Pastor* is divided into sections depending on with whom the primary responsibility for completing the steps resides. The steps are as follows:

## **Transition Beginnings: The Work of Session and Congregation**

1. Dissolving the Pastoral Relationship
2. Planning the Transition
3. Engaging the Congregation in a Mission Study (or not)
4. Assessing Congregational Finances
5. Electing a Pastor Nominating Committee

## **Searching for a Pastor: The Work of the Pastor Nominating Committee**

1. Getting Organized
2. Writing and Submitting the Church Information Form
3. Receiving Personal Information Forms
4. Reading and Screening Personal Information Forms
5. Contacting References
6. Narrowing the Search
7. Meeting Prospective Pastors Face to Face
8. Choosing the Nominee and Extending the Invitation
9. Preparing to Present the Nominee
10. Finishing Your Work

# Calling an Installed Pastor

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## Calling a New Pastor: The Work of Session and Congregation

1. Preparing for the Report of the PNC
2. Electing the Pastor
3. Picking Up Where the PNC Leaves Off
4. Ordaining and/or Installing the Pastor
5. Support for the New Pastor

This manual clearly states, “The policies and procedures of your presbytery will always take precedence over this manual.” Presbyteries are free to copy and use any or all sections of *On Calling a Pastor* for their adaptation and/or use.

### Questions for presbytery consideration and discussion:

1. What are presbytery expectations regarding the steps necessary for an effective call process? What steps should be changed or eliminated?
2. What are some ways presbytery can streamline the pastoral search process?
3. How will presbytery engage with congregations and PNCs in the pastoral call process?
4. Where is flexibility in the process and what is a non-negotiable within presbytery's pastoral call process?

### Resources:

- Dissolving the Installed Pastoral Relationship
- Election of the Pastor Nominating Committee
- Terms of Call
- Ordination and/or Installation of Teaching Elders
- Reference and Background Checks
- [On Calling a Pastor](#)
- [Church Leadership Connection](#)



# Election of a PNC

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In the PC(USA) call process the congregation gives authority to search for a pastor to a pastor nominating committee (PNC). The PNC, representative of the whole congregation and elected by the congregation, has the responsibility for nominating a pastor to the congregation for election.

The presbytery has a responsibility to work with the PNC and to advise them on the merits, suitability, and availability of those considered for the call. The presbytery is authorized by the Book of Order to be one of the decision making partners in all pastoral calls.

The presbytery has a responsibility to work with a session to determine when and in what manner the election of a PNC will take place and to give a congregation permission to elect a PNC. Election of a PNC can happen as early as when the presbytery approves the effective date of the dissolution of the current pastoral relationship.

A presbytery may want to take into consideration several factors in working with the session to determine whether and when to elect a PNC:

- the congregation's ability to meet pastoral terms of call responsibilities,
- whether a congregational mission study is necessary before calling a pastor,
- the type of pastoral relationship a congregation will be seeking,
- the length of time the call process may take, and
- whether there will be an intentional interim time with an interim pastor in place.

There is no defined process by which a PNC is elected. Some presbyteries have asked sessions to recommend the number of members to serve on the PNC and suggested that the congregation's nominating committee be tasked with proposing a slate of appropriate PNC nominees to the congregation. A presbytery can use any process it deems effective for ensuring that a PNC, representative of the whole congregation, is elected.

## **G-2.0801 Pastoral Vacancy**

*When a congregation has a vacancy in a pastoral position, or after the presbytery approves the effective date of the dissolution of an existing pastoral relationship, the congregation shall, with the guidance and permission of the presbytery, proceed to fill the vacancy in the following manner.*

## **G-2.0802 Election of a Pastor Nominating Committee**

*The session shall call a congregational meeting to elect a pastor nominating committee that shall be representative of the whole congregation. The committee's duty shall be to nominate a pastor for election by the congregation.*

## **G-2.0803 Call Process**

*...the pastor nominating committee shall receive and consider the presbytery's counsel on the merits, suitability, and availability of those considered for the call.*

## **G-2.0502 Presbytery and the Teaching Elder**

*...no pastoral relationship may be established, changed, or dissolved without the approval of presbytery.*

# Election of a PNC

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## Questions for presbytery consideration and discussion:

1. How do we determine when to give permission to a congregation to elect a PNC?
2. What unique congregational circumstances would influence a decision on when to elect a PNC? What circumstances would influence a decision to hasten or delay the election?
3. What, if any, suggested criteria do we offer to a congregation as they consider selecting nominees for a PNC?
4. How many PNC members are needed to effectively engage in and complete the work of a PNC? What influence does worship attendance or membership number have on that number?
5. Normally, what process for electing a PNC would presbytery recommend to a congregation?

## **Resources:**

- Terms of Call
- Congregational Mission Studies
- Calling an Installed Pastor

## Equal Opportunity for Service

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The unity of believers in Christ is reflected in the rich diversity of the Church's membership. In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God unites persons through baptism regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, disability, geography, or theological conviction. There is therefore no place in the life of the Church for discrimination against any person. The Presbyterian Church (USA) shall guarantee full participation and representation in its worship, governance, and emerging life to all persons or groups within its membership. No member shall be denied participation or representation for any reason other than those stated in this Constitution.

- The PC(USA) is committed to equal opportunity for service. This commitment is not based on secular law but on the higher standards of our constitution.
- In completing a church information form (CIF) to search for a pastor, the pastor nominating committee (PNC) of a congregation will be asked to affirm their commitment to undertake the search for a pastor in manner consistent with the standards of our constitution.
- The presbytery, which shall determine the process for calling a pastor within the presbytery, may wish to consider how this commitment to equal opportunity for service will be carried out in the pastoral search process.

### ***F-1.0403 Unity in Diversity***

*“As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:27–29).*

### **Questions for presbytery consideration and discussion:**

1. How will the presbytery help a congregations understand the church's commitment to equal opportunity?
2. What are ways the presbytery can assist a PNC to consider candidates based on gifts for ministry and not on factors such as race, ethnic origin, sex, age, marital status, or disability?
3. What expectations does the presbytery have regarding the transparency, monitoring and/or reporting of adherence to equal opportunity in the call process?

### **Resource:**

- [Equal Opportunity Report Form](#)

## Reference and Background Checks

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One of the ways that a presbytery, pastor nominating committee (PNC), or search committee gains information to assist in discerning whether an individual should be recommended for presbytery membership or called to a particular position is through reference and background checks.

### Reference Checks

Reference checks involve contacting those with first-hand knowledge and experience of an individual in order to learn more about that individual. Questions asked of references are intended to elicit reliable information, not rumors or impressions.

**Primary References.** Primary references are persons, often listed on an individual's personal information form (PIF) or resume who can speak to an individual's abilities and character. Primary references can also be provided by the individual under consideration when requested by the presbytery, PNC, or search committee. When provided by the person under consideration, no permission from the individual is necessary before contacting these references.

**Secondary References.** Secondary references are persons who are not listed by the individual but may be suggested by others for contact because of additional knowledge they may have about the individual. Secondary references should only be contacted when the individual has given permission to do so. Members of a pastor's present congregation should never be contacted without her or his permission.

**Presbytery to Presbytery Reference Checks.** Stated clerks, executive/general/regional presbyters, and certain presbytery committee or commission moderators routinely do reference checks with their counterparts in the presbytery where an individual is or has been a member or candidate. No authorization is needed from an individual for these presbytery to presbytery reference checks to take place.

### Questions

**Questions NOT to Ask.** Most Presbyterians are familiar with secular employment practices where it is illegal to ask certain questions of a prospective employee. Because the ministries of the Church belong to the Church the rules are different for presbyteries, PNCs, and search committees considering individuals for church employment. Neither civil nor church law mandate prohibited questions.

However, as Paul wrote, while all things are possible, not all things are wise. Questions posed to references should focus on ministry effectiveness and not be unnecessarily intrusive.

**Questions to Ask.** Presbyteries may wish to compile a list of suggested questions that would be appropriate to ask each reference to be contacted. These questions could be supplemented

### **G-2.0803 Call Process**

*According to the process of the presbytery and prior to making its report to the congregation, the pastor nominating committee shall receive and consider the presbytery's counsel on the merits, suitability, and availability of those considered for the call.*

### **G-2.0104 Gifts and Qualifications**

*a. To those called to exercise special functions in the church—deacons, ruling elders, and teaching elders—God gives suitable gifts for their various duties. In addition to possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world. They must have the approval of God's people and the concurring judgment of a council of the church.*

## Reference and Background Checks

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with questions related to the particular position to be filled and/or with questions that arise from the reading of an individual's PIF or resume or feedback from other references.

### **Background Checks**

Background checks are additional assessments of a candidate's character and fitness for employment. Each presbytery determines conditions under which background checks are performed. If this position will involve work with children, a state may require a background check on the person. Be sure that you know what your state law requires.

Many presbyteries require background checks of candidates, incoming teaching elders, and ruling elders commissioned to particular pastoral service. Congregations often do background checks of all persons working with children.

There are several types of background checks: criminal, financial, and motor vehicle. Criminal is the most common but the other ones produce information that may also be helpful. Each presbytery should analyze its own needs and concerns and consider what will be done with the information gathered.

There are a number of options for companies willing to provide background checks. Some companies are willing to consider a volume discount for a presbytery or synod; some presbyteries and synods have already negotiated arrangements with vendors. Insurance companies may be able to offer a discount to insured organizations.

### **Questions for presbytery consideration and discussion:**

1. What questions would be helpful to ask references which could elicit helpful information about individuals being considered for positions?
2. What processes will be followed regarding secondary references?
3. Who will be responsible for presbytery to presbytery reference checks? When in a search process would this be done?
4. What information is essential to receive in a background check? What other information would be helpful?
5. How will background checks be handled and how will they be paid for?
6. What will be done with the information gathered? What influence does this information have on a call?

### **Resources:**

- Examining Teaching Elders
- [Creating Safe Churches](#)
- [Background Checks; Preventing Sexual Misconduct in the Church](#)

# Validated Ministry

- The calls of teaching elders are to ministries supportive of the mission of the church and requiring ordination to that office.
- Teaching elders are accountable to the presbytery.
- In its discernment about a particular call, the presbytery must assess the ministry and the candidate or teaching elder
- Each presbytery must have written criteria for the validation of ministries within its bounds.
- In addition to other aspects being examined by presbytery, a determination must be made of the category of membership.

Presbytery members are

- Engaged in validated ministry
- Member-at-large
- Honorably retired

## Questions for consideration:

1. What information do you need about ministry to determine each of the criteria listed in **G-2.0503 a.**?
2. What kind of ministries meet the criteria; do not meet the criteria?
3. Give examples of ministries currently validated by your presbytery.
4. Is there a difference between validated ministries for which experienced ministers would be suitable and those suitable for a Candidate's first call?
5. How will you cultivate accountability of teaching elders?

**G-2.0502** .... *The presbytery shall determine whether a particular work may be helpful to the church in mission and is a call to validated ministry requiring ordination as a teaching elder. In the performance of that ministry, the teaching elder shall be accountable to the presbytery ...*

**G-3.0306** *Each presbytery determines the teaching elders who are its members and validates the ministries in which they are to be engaged. It shall be guided in this determination by written criteria developed by the presbytery for validating ministries within its bounds*

**G-2.0503** *A teaching elder is a member of a presbytery and shall be engaged in a ministry validated by that presbytery, a member-at-large as determined by the presbytery, or honorably retired.*

### **a. A validated ministry shall:**

*(1) demonstrate conformity with the mission of God's people in the world as set forth in Holy Scripture, The Book of Confessions, and the Book of Order of this church;*

*(2) serve and aid others, and enable the ministry of others;*

*(3) give evidence of theologically informed fidelity to God's Word;*

*(4) be carried on in accountability for its character and conduct to the presbytery in addition to any organizations, agencies, and institutions served; and*

*(5) include responsible participation in the deliberations, worship, and work of the presbytery and in the life of a congregation of this church or a church in correspondence with the PC(USA) (G-5.0201).*

## Validated Ministry

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6. How will you encourage and support participation described in **G-2.0503 a.(5)**.?
7. How will administration of the Sacraments be authorized for validated ministries not governed by sessions?
8. What might be examples of “quality of life that helps to share the ministry of the good news?”
9. How will you review the work of ministers engaged in validated ministries outside the congregation?
10. If not validated ministry, what other options?
  - Member-at large?
  - Release from ministry as a teaching elder (**G-2.0507**)?

**G-3.0306** *The presbytery may designate teaching elders to work as teachers, evangelists, administrators, chaplains, and in other forms of ministry recognized as appropriate by the presbytery. Those so designated may administer the Sacraments at times and places authorized by the presbytery.*

*When teaching elders are called to validated ministry beyond the jurisdiction of the church, they shall give evidence of a quality of life that helps to share the ministry of the good news. They shall participate in a congregation, in their presbytery, and in ecumenical relationships and shall be eligible for election to the higher councils of the church and to the boards and agencies of those councils.*

*The presbytery shall review annually the work of all teaching elders engaged in validated ministries outside the congregation.*

**Resource:**

- Examining Teaching Elders

# Examining Teaching Elders

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## What is examination and why do we do it?

- The presbytery approval is part of the confirmation of a call.
- Each presbytery determines its members.
- The presbytery must determine whether a call is to validated ministry requiring ordination as teaching elder.
- The presbytery is charged with examining particular aspects of an individual's suitability for ministry.

## Questions for consideration:

1. How do you help church members, search committees, candidates, and ministers understand the three partners in discerning call referenced in **G-2.0103**?
2. How will examination be carried out and by whom?
3. What process and criteria will you use for determining members of your presbytery?
4. What types of service will be helpful to your mission?
5. What types of service require ordination as a teaching elder?
6. What are your criteria for validated ministry?

**G-2.0103** *The call to ordered ministry in the Church is the act of the triune God. This call is evidenced by the movement of the Holy Spirit in the individual conscience, the approval of a community of God's people, and the concurring judgment of a council of the Church.*

**G-2.0502** *As the Lord has set aside through calling certain members to be teaching elders, so the church confirms that call through the action of the presbytery. The presbytery shall determine whether a particular work may be helpful to the church in mission and is a call to validated ministry requiring ordination as a teaching elder. In the performance of that ministry, the teaching elder shall be accountable to the presbytery.*

*Teaching elders have membership in the presbytery by action of the presbytery itself, and no pastoral relationship may be established, changed, or dissolved without the approval of the presbytery.*

**G-3.0306** *Each presbytery determines the teaching elders who are its members and validates the ministries in which they are to be engaged. It shall be guided in this determination by written criteria developed by the presbytery for validating ministry within its bounds (g-2.0503a)*



# Examining Teaching Elders

## For what do we examine?

- Strong Christian faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Christ
- Manner of life a demonstration of the Christian gospel
- Views in theology, the Sacraments, and the government of the PC(USA)
- Calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of ordered ministry.
- Ordination/installation questions

## Questions for consideration:

1. What questions will you ask, what information will you gather to help you assess these things?
2. How will you be “guided by Scripture and the confessions” in applying standards to individuals?
3. Recognizing that the PC(USA) represents a wide diversity of views, what would be “outside the bounds” for your presbytery?
4. How will we assess whether a person’s gifts, experience, and leadership style are well suited for a particular leadership position?

**G-3.0306** *Each presbytery shall examine each teaching elder or candidate who seeks membership in it on his or her Christian faith and views in theology, the Sacraments, and the government of this church.*

### **G-2.0104 Gifts and Qualifications**

**a.** *To those called to exercise special functions in the church—deacons, ruling elders, and teaching elders—God gives suitable gifts for their various duties. In addition to possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world. They must have the approval of God’s people and the concurring judgment of a council of the church.*

**b.** *Standards for ordained service reflect the church’s desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life (F-1.02). The council responsible for ordination and/or installation (G.2.0402; G-2.0607; G-3.0306) shall examine each candidate’s calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of ordered ministry. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate’s ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.4003). Councils shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates.*

# Examining Teaching Elders

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## Whom are we examining?

- Candidates for first call
- Ministers transferring from another presbytery
- Formula partner ministers under “orderly exchange” (**G-5.0202**)

*“To be eligible to serve in another of the participating churches, an ordained minister will demonstrate to the appropriate regional body of the inviting church – knowledge of and an appreciation for the history, polity, theology, and liturgical identity, practices of ministry, and discipline of that church.”*

*(p. 2 A Formula of Agreement, The Orderly Exchange of Ordained Ministers of Word and Sacrament, Principles, Policies, and Procedures)*

- Ministers transferring from another denomination (**G-2.0505**)
- New immigrant ministers from another denomination (**G-2.0505a**)
- Honorably retired ministers moving into the presbytery
- Persons who have laid aside ordination and want to resume active ministry (**G-2.0507**)

## Resources:

Important information and sample policies on website at

<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/sampling-presbytery-processes-examining-candidates/>

GAPJC decisions, “Advisory Opinions”, and “Constitutional Musings” available from Constitutional Services at <http://oga.pcusa.org/constitutionalservices/>

# Terms of Call

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At the installation of a new pastor, the congregation is asked, Do we promise to pay him (her) fairly and provide for his (her) welfare as he (she) works among us...? Unfortunately, determining what constitutes paying a pastor “fairly” is often not always easy to do. While the Book of Order has an expectation that Presbytery will have established minimum terms of call which must be met for pastoral positions, terms of call that exceed the presbytery minimum are often more difficult to determine. As the search for a new pastor begins and at the time of the annual review of a pastor’s terms of call, sessions often seek guidance from presbytery in helping to determine the terms of call.

The phrase “terms of call” usually refers to more than salary, housing and participation in the Board of Pensions. Terms of call also includes additional items that a presbytery has identified as part of the minimum terms. This may include items such as: deferred compensation, dental insurance, SECA supplement, professional expenses including study leave, vacation and study time away, and sabbatical leave. The Board of Pensions publication “Understanding Effective Salary” can provide more detailed information about various parts of a compensation package.

## Calling a New Pastor

When a congregation begins the process of seeking a new pastor an understanding of the possible terms of call needs to be reached by the session. The salary range of the effective salary that will be used to seek a new pastor will be entered on the congregation’s Church Information Form (CIF). A couple of resources that may assist in determining possible salary ranges for position types can be found in the Salary Studies on the Board of Pensions Website and on other CIFs.

Extending the Call. While a salary range will be necessary to search for a pastor, once a call is extended the specific terms of call will need to be negotiated between the pastor and the PNC, usually within the parameters of the salary range listed on the CIF, including any presbytery required terms of call. The pastor, PNC and presbytery will all need to agree upon the terms of call.

### **W-4.4006 Installation of Teaching Elder**

*(3) Do we promise to pay him (her) fairly and provide for his (her) welfare as he (she) works among us; to stand by him (her) in trouble and share his (her) joys?*

### **G-2.0804 Terms of Call**

*The terms of call shall always meet or exceed any minimum requirement of the presbytery in effect when the call is made. The session shall review annually the minister’s terms of call and shall propose for congregational action (G-1.0501) such changes as the session deems appropriate, provided that they meet the presbytery’s minimum requirements. The call shall include participation in the benefits plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), including both pension and medical coverage, or any successor plan approved by the General Assembly.*

### **G-2.0502 Presbytery and the Teaching Elder**

*Teaching elders have membership in the presbytery by action of the presbytery itself, and no pastoral relationship may be established, changed, or dissolved without the approval of the presbytery.*

### **G-1.0503 Business Proper to Congregational Meetings**

*Business to be transacted at meetings of the congregation shall be limited to matters related to the following:*

*c. changing existing pastoral relationships, by such means as reviewing the adequacy of and approving changes to the terms of call of the pastor or pastors...*

# Terms of Call

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Voting on the Call. When a congregation votes to extend a call to a new pastor, the congregation will be asked to vote on the agreed upon terms of call for the new pastor. Presbytery must also approve the call and the terms of call.

## **Annual Review**

Once a pastor is in place, session's have a responsibility to annually review the minister's terms of call and to propose any changes to the congregation for their approval. The expectation is that any changes to the terms of call will continue to meet the presbytery's minimum requirements.

Any changes to the terms of call must be reported to the presbytery for approval since "no pastoral relationship may be established, changed, or dissolved without the approval of the presbytery."

## **Questions for presbytery consideration and discussion:**

1. What are minimum terms of call for the presbytery? How are those terms determined? Are these terms considered "fair"?
2. What items, other than salary, housing and Board of Pensions participation are to be included in the terms of call?
3. What guidance or policies does presbytery have to provide to sessions and teaching elders in determining and evaluating terms of call?
4. What role does presbytery have in negotiating terms of call between a congregation or session and a teaching elder?

## **Resources:**

- [Sample Pastoral Call Form](#)
- [Just Compensation](#)
- [Finances for Ministers](#)
- [Church Leadership Connection Opportunity Search](#)
- [Board of Pensions Understanding Effective Salary](#)
- [Board of Pensions Salary Studies](#)
- [Cost of Living Calculator](#)

# First Call Pastors

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## Managing a First Call

When a congregation is considering a first call candidate, special attention is needed to see that important information is shared between presbyteries about the individual's preparation for ministry, gifts for ministry, and needs for development. It is often challenging to coordinate dates for parts of the process to occur for an orderly transition between presbyteries. Candidates have little knowledge about planning ordination/installation services and the presbytery's key role in it or policies related to presbytery commissions, worship service leadership, and presbytery practices. It is very helpful to have a presbytery leader designated to coordinate between presbyteries and work with the candidate.

### Questions for consideration:

1. What process will you follow with candidates accepting calls in your presbytery who come from another presbytery of care? Who have been prepared by your presbytery?
2. What information do you need from the presbytery of care to assess the call and support this new minister?
3. What information will you share with other presbyteries where your candidates may be called?
4. Who will coordinate the transition for first call candidates coming to your presbytery (processing the call elements, planning the worship service)?

### **G-2.0702 Place of Ordination**

*The presbytery placing the call to the candidate for ministry shall ordinarily examine, ordain, and install the candidate.*

### **G-2.0703 Service of Ordination**

*The order for that service of worship in the Directory for Worship (W-4.4000) shall be followed.*

### **G-2.0704 Record of Ordination**

*The presbytery of call shall record the ordination and installation, along with written affirmation of the new teaching elder to the obligations undertaken in the ordination questions, and enroll the teaching elder as a member of the presbytery. The stated clerk of the presbytery shall report these actions to the General Assembly, the presbytery of care, and to the congregation of which the candidate was formerly a member*

## Mentoring and support

Experience has shown that there is great benefit to be gained by attention given to first call pastors as their pastoral identity and ministry habits are formed. Seminary education provides many essential skills and a body of knowledge that is invaluable as a foundation for pastoral ministry. However, seminary education cannot prepare every graduate for every eventuality in every congregation. The transition from seminary to pastoral leadership can be stressful, but is also a great opportunity for growth.

# First Call Pastors

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## Goals for new pastor learning include:

- Self-understanding in their role as pastor
- Help for understanding the congregation they serve in terms of history, ethos, programs, status in the community and relationship to the denomination
- Assistance in establishing an appropriate pastoral relationship and leadership style for their situation
- Support in dealing with conflict that may emerge in the congregation.

## New pastor support methods

Recognizing the importance of a good transition into ministry, many programs have been developed to support the continued learning of first call pastors. Some of these programs are described in the "[First Call Pastors](#)" section of the PC(USA) website.

One of the most effective and low-cost ways of providing support and guidance for first call pastors is through facilitated colleague groups and mentoring.

See <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/ministers/first-call-pastors> for resources to assist with support for first call pastors.

## Questions for consideration:

1. What issues, learning needs have you identified for first call pastors serving in your presbytery?
2. What programs are available for first call pastors in your presbytery?
3. What more is needed?

# Nurturing Healthy Ministry

## Building an Effective Ministry Together

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Pastors and congregations come into relationship with expectations and assumptions, but little knowledge of one another. The effectiveness of their ministry together depends a great deal on how well they build a relationship of understanding, appreciation, and trust.

The chart below describes patterns of pastoral relationships, a sequence of getting acquainted and sharing a ministry together. Ordinarily these phases fall in the first five years of a pastorate, but the sequence is more significant than a timeline.

The column on the left describes the experience of the congregation. It begins with a time of revitalization, new energy and activity that normally accompanies the arrival of a new pastor. As the relationship develops and new initiatives are accomplished, there is celebration of what “we” have done together. Then follows discernment and planning together about the church’s mission.

The right hand column describes the pastor’s entry process. The “honeymoon” period of welcome to “the new pastor” to times of testing which when navigated in healthy ways results in acceptance as authentically “our pastor”. Then ministry accelerates with activity and demands that may cause burn out or, when resolved well, ends in “particular authentication” that recognizes strengths and weaknesses of the pastor and utilizes the strengths in a shared ministry.

The center section includes some possible presbytery activities to nurture the healthy development of an effective ministry. Presbytery ministry committees/commissions often spend much of their time and energy on the call process and in dealing with conflicted pastoral relationships. This framework offers a tool for use with pastors and sessions and for planning presbytery ministry committee/commission work.

### **Resource:**

See <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/ministers/> for resources to support healthy, effective pastoral relationship



## Building an Effective Ministry Together

<u>REVITALIZATION OF MINISTRY</u>	<u>PRESBYTERY SUPPORT</u>	<u>PASTORAL AUTHENTICATION</u>
<p><b>AFFIRMATION</b></p> <p>Affirm Build Celebrate</p> <p><b>VICTORIES</b></p> <p><b><u>We</u></b> did it!</p> <p><b>VISIONING</b></p> <p><i>“What is God calling us to do?”</i></p> <p><b>PLANNING</b></p> <p><i>“How can we connect with our community, reach out to new people?”</i></p> <p><b>PROGRAMMING</b></p> <p><b>DOING MISSION TOGETHER</b></p>	<p>Welcome, Orientation</p> <p><u>Facilitated Colleague Group</u></p> <p>Regular Check-in with Pastor</p> <p>Assist with Annual Review of Ministry</p> <p>Presbytery Visit with Session</p> <p>Assist with Mission Study</p> <p>Regular Check-in with Pastor</p> <p>Assist with Annual Review of Ministry</p> <p>Pastor retreat</p> <p>Mission focused educational events</p> <p>Presbytery Visit with Session</p>	<p><b>HONEYMOON</b> “Our <u>new</u> pastor”</p> <p><b>BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS</b></p> <p><b>TESTING</b> “<u>Our</u> pastor??” <b>Potential for conflict and exit</b></p> <p><b>SPIRITUAL LEGITIMATION</b> <b><u>Our pastor</u></b>”</p> <p><b>WORK LOAD &amp; STRESS BUILD-UP</b> <i>“Pastor! Pastor!”</i></p> <p><b>Potential for Burn-Out &amp; Exit</b></p> <p><b>PARTICULAR AUTHENTICITY</b> <i>“You preach, we fix the roof”</i></p>

# Revisiting the Triennial Visit

- A close relationship between the sessions and presbytery is a touchstone of the Book of Order. Setting a positive tone of welcome, mutual respect, appreciation, and encouragement is the responsibility of both councils.
- While not mandated, an intentional, regular cycle of pastoral visits between presbytery and sessions can be fundamental in building healthy relationships between councils and significantly furthering the mission of the church.
- Well planned visits can serve both session and presbytery as ways to handle emerging problems and issues before they become difficulties. A regular cycle of pastoral visits is an effective tool in promoting the health of congregations in mission.
- The intention of these relationships is good communication, encouragement, and support, all of which lead to effective mission in the larger community.

## Questions for consideration:

1. When elements should be included in any presbytery session visitation process that would help bring the presbytery's affirmation and appreciation to the session?
2. What will presbytery bring into that conversation that will honor the unique life and ministry of the particular congregation?
3. What are the specific goals of presbytery as it considers a visitation process? What skills should presbytery representatives have in order to visit with sessions? How can the presbytery shape the goals for each visit to more fully address the situation and concerns of the particular church?
4. What available content can be shared early and help focus the visit? Does the congregation have a recent mission study? Does the session's Annual Review of Ministry provide helpful focus? Can "Appreciative Inquiry" strategies be useful in planning the visit?
5. What training will your team members need? How will they be briefed on the ministry setting?

### **G-3.0101 Councils as an Expression of Unity of the Church**

*The mutual interconnection of the church through its councils is a sign of the unity of the church.*

### **G-3.0202 d Relations with Other Councils**

*Sessions have a particular responsibility to participate in the life of the whole church through participation in other councils. It is of particular importance that sessions ...*

*d. welcome representatives of the presbytery on the occasions of their visits;*

### **G-3.0303 Relations with Sessions**

*Presbytery, being composed of the teaching elders and commissioners elected by the session of congregations within its district, has a particular responsibility to coordinate, guide, encourage, support, and resource the work of its congregations for the most effective witness to the broader community.*

### **G-3.0307 Pastor, Counselor, and Advisor to Teaching Elders and Congregations**

*Presbyteries shall be open at all times to communication regarding the life and ministry of their congregations.*

*Each presbytery shall develop and maintain mechanisms and processes to ...facilitate the relations between the presbytery and its congregations...*

## Revisiting the Triennial Visit

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6. Where will presbytery assign responsibility for the logistics of the visit? Will sessions be asked to call a special meeting or will only part of a stated meeting be allocated? Who is responsible for the visit agenda? Who will be responsible for follow-up?
7. What will be presbytery's plans if some resistance is encountered to a pastoral visit? Could leaders of the session be invited to be part of a planning team for the event? What are the possibilities of asking a session to plan the event agenda and let presbytery visitors focus on learning and listening?
8. What will your presbytery want to do with learnings from the pastoral visit? How will important communications and learnings from the visit get to the 'right' people in the presbytery? How will follow through happen on concerns expressed by session members or the pastor? What needs to be preserved so that future visitors can follow-up on important concerns?

### **Resources:**

- Looking at the Numbers: Our denominational Office of Research Services has session's statistical reports and other statistics including community demographics and maps readily available for your use at [www.pcusa.org/research/help/htm](http://www.pcusa.org/research/help/htm)
- Relationships with Pastors: Helping the session learn to care for its pastor: The Pastoral Care Network has a great tool box full of topical ideas and suggestions: [www.pastoralcarenetwork.org/](http://www.pastoralcarenetwork.org/)
- See segment in this handbook "Annual Review of Ministry"
- See segment in this handbook "Appreciative Inquiry"
- Publication from Alban Institute  
[Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change](#), by Mark Lau Branson, Alban, 2004.

### **Planning materials from previous Handbooks (revised):**

1. Discovering your presbytery's goals in planning a pastoral visitation program: Those in the presbytery charged with pastoral oversight should be clear about the intentions of their pastoral visit program:
  - to affirm and support the good ministry being accomplished in the name of Christ,
  - to connect the session with the resources of the presbytery, the synod and the General Assembly,
  - to invite the questions and communications of the ruling elders gathered as council about their congregation and relationships with the other councils,
  - to ask questions and share information that will raise the vision of church leaders,
  - to encourage them as they seek to respond to God's call,
  - to provide an opportunity to them to deal with any problems which may exist.

## Revisiting the Triennial Visit

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2. The challenges of planning a visitation program in a diverse presbytery: each presbytery will determine for itself the approach for pastoral visitation it will use. Presbyteries may have a general framework for each visit, but adaptations with regard to the size and geographical location of the church, the present circumstances of the congregation, and its experience with presbytery. It's possible to focus on different aspects of ministry with each successive pastoral visit.
3. Briefing and Training: Your visit will be most constructive when the presbytery visitors are clear about the purpose of the visit. What have you chosen for the content? Celebration of the ministry of this congregation? Faith sharing among the participants? Two-way communication: presbytery learning about the church, its ministry, challenges, and concerns, and the church hearing about presbytery, its activities, resources, and challenges; are there issues in which presbytery can act as an Advisor to session? Everyone involved in pastoral visits ought to have access to the online Research Services data about congregations: [www.pcusa.org/research/help/htm](http://www.pcusa.org/research/help/htm). Visitors could be trained about expectations regarding confidentiality, to whom will reports go, and how referrals will be handled. In addition, the session and the pastor will need to know what will happen if a visitation team uncovers serious problems. In such cases, the visitation team must state clearly who will be notified and how the information will be handled.
4. After the visit
  - Report - a team might meet for coffee immediately after the pastoral visit to collect their thoughts and to put together the report that will be made to presbytery's committee for pastoral oversight.
  - Refer - Referrals must be handled faithfully. If a session, for example, asks for presbytery's help with their stewardship efforts, it is essential that the referral is made promptly and help given.
  - Review - Completing the feedback loop is also important. Correspond with the pastor and session after a visit and share highlights from the report to the pastoral oversight committee.

# Annual Review of Ministry

Partnering and supporting pastors and congregations, presbytery's can encourage sessions and personnel committees to schedule regular or annual reviews of ministry. This is not a review focused solo on a pastor's performance. Rather, a ministry review broadly includes the work of the entire congregation and its leadership.

## Questions for consideration:

1. What ongoing resources and encouragement can presbytery provide congregations to help them regularly review their mission and ministry? How can presbytery help congregations learn to use the review process to contribute to the planning cycle for the future ministry of the congregation?
2. What training could presbytery offer to congregational leaders to assist them in planning their annual ministry review?
3. While regular annual reviews could be part of the cycle of the congregation's life, what resources and encouragement could presbytery provide congregations to discern God's call for the next a three to five years of the congregation's ministry?

## Resources:

- [Evaluating Ministry: Principles and Processes for Clergy and Congregations](#) by Jill M. Hudson, The Alban Institute, 1992.

Grounding evaluation in the theological and organizational context of mission (everyone a minister), Hudson describes case studies of four successful evaluation models that include the whole church. She suggests how “whole church” reviews might result in stronger pastoral ministry and new directions for mission. An important resource that will help clergy and laity explore mutual ministry, judicatory executives strengthen congregations, and new pastors get through their first congregational evaluation.

## **G-3.02 THE SESSION**

*(Please note: this display has been edited to emphasize some of the leadership activities of the session and pastor that would benefit from annual review. Please see the whole text of G-3.02 in the Book of Order.)*

### **G-3.0201 Composition and Responsibilities**

*The session shall have responsibility for governing the congregation and guiding its witness to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that the congregation is and becomes a community of faith, hope, love, and witness.*

...

*In light of this charge, the session has responsibility and power to:*

*a. provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard. This responsibility shall include ... planning and leading ministries of social healing and reconciliation in the community in accordance with the prophetic witness of Jesus Christ; and initiating and responding to ecumenical efforts that bear witness to the love and grace of God.*

*b. provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received. This responsibility shall include ... exercising pastoral care among the congregation; in order that the Sacraments may be received as a means of grace, and the congregation may live in the unity represented in the Sacraments.*

*c. nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ. This responsibility shall include ...providing programs of nurture, education, and fellowship;... encouraging the graces of generosity and faithful stewardship of personal and financial resources; managing the physical property of the congregation for the furtherance of its mission; directing the ministry of deacons, trustees, and all organizations of the congregation; employing the administrative staff of the congregation; leading the congregation in participating in the mission of the whole church; warning and bearing witness against error in doctrine and immorality in practice within the congregation and community;....*

## Annual Review of Ministry

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- [\*When Better Isn't Enough, Evaluation Tools for the 21st Century Church\*](#) by Jill M. Hudson, The Alban Institute, 2004.

We must identify new criteria for success, and perhaps even for faithfulness, and hold ourselves accountable to them.” Approaching the postmodern era as a tremendous opportunity, Hudson identifies 12 characteristics by which we can measure effective ministry for the early 21st century.

Based on those 12 criteria, Hudson has created evaluation tools, “an early measuring stick” to help congregations evaluate their work in this new era. Not everything of the past is ineffective and best discarded, she says, nor will everything we try in the future be successful. But by faithfully listening for God’s guidance and carefully evaluating progress using Hudson’s tools, looking at the ministry of the whole people of God as well as that of the professional staff, congregations can improve their ministry, help members and staff grow in effectiveness, deepen a sense of partnership, and add new richness to the dialogue about the congregation’s future.

- *The Clergy Wellness Commission* website has [Guidelines for Mutual Ministry Review](#)

# Professional Development and Sabbatical Leave

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Presbytery's pastoral nurture of all persons in ministry involves clear anticipation for their renewal, reflection, spiritual and professional development.

## Questions for consideration:

1. What ways can presbytery address its pastoral concerns for the growth and development of its church leaders?
2. Does your presbytery have professional development and sabbatical leave policies? If so, what are the elements of those policies? If not, should there be?
3. What role should presbytery have in planning and/or approving plans for professional development or sabbatical leave?
4. What are ways presbytery could help congregations and other validated ministries understand and support their personnel with professional development and sabbatical leaves?
5. Are there differing needs for professional development and sabbatical leave at different stages of ministry: first five years? the middle years? the wise years?
6. What are various funding processes that could be developed to insure all of your ministry personnel have the opportunity for these helpful experiences?
7. In its role as pastor and counselor, what are ways your presbytery could helpfully consult with individuals as they plan for these experiences?
8. If presbytery should take a pro-active role in developing professional development and sabbatical leave opportunities, where are possible partners? Other presbyteries with similar interests? Synod? National or international mission partners? Seminaries?
9. As your presbytery thinks about professional development and sabbatical leave, what part should time for renewal, personal reflection, family time and recreation have in these plans?

**G-3.0307 Pastor, Counselor,  
and Advisor to Teaching Elders  
and Congregations**

*Each presbytery shall develop and maintain mechanisms and processes to serve as pastor and counselor to teaching elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and certified Christian educators of the presbytery;.*

## Resources:

See resources on Sabbatical Leave, Clergy Colleague Groups, and much more at <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/ministers/ministry-development-and-support/>

See resources from The Presbytery Pastoral Care Network at <http://www.pastoralcarenetwork.org/>

See sample Presbytery Policies on [MGB Connect](#)

From 2011-2013 Advisory Handbook for Ministry Committees/Commissions

# Professional Development and Sabbatical Leave

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Publications from [Alban Institute](#)

## ***Sabbatical Leave***

- [\*Clergy Renewal: The Alban Guide to Sabbatical Planning\*](#)  
by Richard Bullock and Richard J. Brueshoff, Alban Institute, 2000.
- [\*Journeying Toward Renewal: A Spiritual Companion for Pastoral Sabbaticals\*](#)  
by Melissa Bane Sever, Alban Institute, 2002.

## ***Professional Development***

- [\*Spiritual Wholeness for Clergy: A New Psychology of Intimacy with God, Self and Others\*](#)  
by Donald R. Hands and Wayne Fehr, Alban Institute, 1993.
- [\*Becoming the Pastor You Hope to Be: Four Practices for Improving Ministry\*](#)  
by Barbara Blodgett, Alban Institute, 2011.
- [\*A Lifelong Call to Learn: Continuing Education for Religious Leaders\*](#)  
by Robert E. Reber and D. Bruce Roberts, Alban Institute, 2010.



# Nurturing New Worshiping Communities

As the context of our ministry changes with growing numbers of new neighbors from overseas, persons of all ages yearning for deeper spiritual experiences and life purpose, the PC(USA) has a wonderful opportunity to respond to God's great commission to "Go therefore and make disciples..." This scriptural calling and the Book of Order invite presbyteries to think creatively to nurture new worshipping communities. This requires adaptively thinking and openness to asking "Why not?" instead of saying, "We haven't done it that way before." It also requires careful and prayerful coordination between the entity overseeing the new worshipping community and the entity overseeing pastoral leadership. Some presbyteries set up commissions empowered to make decisions about new worshipping communities. Now with the Book of Order many presbyteries will establish a commission to which decisions about pastoral leaders are delegated. There could be great benefit from one commission established to do both for new worshipping communities.

In the current landscape of church planting, many congregations are starting to plant churches. In order to foster such initiative, the presbytery is wise to give attention to good communication between the session of the initiating congregation and the appropriate presbytery entities. In order for the ministry committee/ commission to be supportive and make wise decisions about leadership for new congregations, fellowships or other faith communities, members should be oriented to the issues, tools, and strategies of church development. Support for leaders of new churches including resources and coaching are available from the [Office of Church Growth](#).

## What is a new church development?

New churches include newly forming worshipping communities of a wide variety of forms including a congregation meeting in temporary facilities while it builds a building, an immigrant fellowship nesting in a building with another congregation, and a community of mostly young adults who gather at a coffee shop for Bible study and worship. Read about some such [new worshipping communities](#).

### **G-3.0301 a.b.c.**

*In light of this charge, the presbytery has responsibility and power to:*

*a. provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard. ....to the end that the church's witness to the love and grace of God may be heard in the world.*

*b. provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received. This responsibility shall include authorizing the celebration of the Lord's Supper at its meetings at least annually and for fellowship groups, new church developments, and other non-congregational entities meeting within its bounds....*

*c. nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ.*

### **G-2.0505 a. 1.**

*(1) In the case of ministers for immigrant fellowships and congregations, a presbytery may, if it determines that its strategy for mission with that group requires it, recognize the ordination and receive as a member of presbytery a new immigrant minister who furnishes evidence of good standing in a denomination, even though at the time of enrollment that minister lacks the educational history required of candidates, and provide such educational opportunities as seem necessary and prudent for that minister's successful ministry in the presbytery.*

# Nurturing New Worshiping Communities

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There are a few definitions of what constitutes a New Church Development (NCD) and how long it remains a NCD before becoming “chartered”. Those are matters for presbytery discernment. It is the Presbytery that formally recognizes a gathering body as a NCD. Having status as a NCD allows the NCD to incorporate, obtain a denominational PIN, and to begin to operate with the powers of a session at the discretion of the Presbytery’s church development committee or commission. The Presbytery may also choose to designate a gathering group as a probe or fellowship. Special consideration should be given to immigrant and racial/ethnic NCD’s since their path toward sustainability may be longer than some other NCD’s.

## **Models of leadership for new worshipping communities**

With the current Book of Order presbytery has great freedom in determining how to meet its needs for missional leadership both for the organizing pastor/evangelist and for the first installed pastor.

**An organizing pastor/evangelist** is most typically a “temporary pastor”, but could also be a pastor installed for a designated term. (**See G-2.0504**).

The presbytery or a commission of the **presbytery may be the calling body** for the organizing pastor/evangelist, at which point the pastor may function as part of presbytery staff.

In other models, a large congregation or cluster of congregations may call an **associate pastor or evangelist** with the intention of that person becoming the organizing pastor of a new church plant.

**A commissioned ruling elder (CRE)** may also be called to lead a new church.

## **Calling pastors for new worshiping communities**

The presbytery or particular congregation will be helped by a careful assessment to discern whether or not the person being considered to lead a new church exhibits the skill-set and aptitude for the work of starting a new church. This may include a pre-screening assessment ([available through the Office of Church Growth](#)) as well as a more in depth assessment of skills.

Immigrant pastors will require special care regarding recognition of ordination from partner churches worldwide and transfer of membership to the PC(USA) and/or [visa/immigration issues](#). (**G-2.0505**)

Will the organizing pastor/evangelist be considered to be the first installed pastor? These expectations should be clarified at the beginning of the relationship.

## **Questions for consideration:**

1. What are the opportunities for new worshiping communities in your presbytery?
2. What kind of leaders will be needed?
3. How will you call them? Equip them? Support them?

## Nurturing New Worshiping Communities

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4. How can you create the conditions to birth and nurture new churches and fellowships?
5. Where will the roles and responsibilities related to new churches be lodged in your presbytery?
6. Where will roles and responsibilities related to leaders for new churches be lodged?

### **Resources:**

- See [New Church Development website](#) and [1001 New Worshipping Communities website](#).
- For more information please call the [Office of Church Growth](#) at 888-728-7228 ext 5266 or 5247
- (See “Ministers of Other Denominations” segment of this advisory handbook.)

# What is Healthy Ministry?

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One of the ways presbytery's role as pastor, counselor and advisor is best fulfilled is by developing and maintaining mechanisms and processes that cultivate both healthy congregations and healthy leaders who, together, are able to devote their best energies to fulfilling God's call to "become communities of faith, hope, love, and witness."

Health, wellness, wholeness, well-being: all these English words come from a common root word that connects to the Hebrew word, shalom. Shalom is variously translated as a greeting akin to "hello," as peace, and as wholeness, health and well-being. God's will for the shalom, the peace and health, of God's people is a theme found in every part of the Bible.

Yet, health in congregational life is not so easily defined as health in a human body. The shape of congregational life varies from one place to another. Not every church can or should engage in precisely the same forms of worship, Christian education, congregational fellowship, or service to the world beyond the church building. We might be tempted to say that healthy congregations, like beauty, are in the eye of the beholder. The marvelous diversity of healthy congregations might even encourage us to conclude that healthy congregations can only be known when we see them. However, there are some shared characteristics that are discernable in most healthy congregations.

Healthy congregations can be found in inner city settings, on the square in county seat towns, and nestled into suburban developments. Yet in all the variety of healthy expressions of ministry, healthy congregations are alike in sharing many of these norms and behaviors:

- Vibrant faith in God is expressed in lively, faithful worship and in a commitment to engage in ministries of justice and compassion.
- Caring response to the needs of people outside the church is as important as fostering relationships of friendship and caring within the congregation.
- Following God's intentions for the congregation is more important than maintaining buildings or merely balancing the budget.

## **G-3.0301 Composition and Responsibilities**

*...The presbytery is responsible ... for assisting and supporting the witness of congregations to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that all congregations become communities of faith, hope, love, and witness...*

## **G-3.0307 Pastor, Counselor, and Advisor to Teaching Elders and Congregations**

*Presbyteries shall be open at all times to communication regarding the life and ministry of their congregations.*

*Each presbytery shall develop and maintain mechanisms and processes to serve as pastor and counselor to teaching elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and certified Christian educators of the presbytery; to facilitate the relations between the presbytery and its congregations, teaching elders, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and certified Christian educators; and to settle difficulties on behalf of the presbytery where possible and expedient.*

## What is Healthy Ministry?

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- Respect for tradition and the past is balanced by flexibility and creativity.
- People of all ages are growing in wisdom and knowledge.
- Relationships of friendship and mutual accountability provide the context for inclusive hospitality and respectful evangelism.
- Respect, accountability and trust rather than control, individualism and secrecy characterize relationships within the congregation.
- Clear structures of authority and decision-making are coupled with open access to those structures by the entire congregation.
- Transparency and openness in regard to communication, information sharing and decision-making are balanced by appropriate and respectful treatment of confidential information.
- Respect for the authority of called and elected leaders is coupled with the awareness that leaders are only part of a very complex organism.
- Congregational self-confidence is balanced by appropriate humility.

Congregations, like the people who are part of them, are gifted and flawed, faulty and faithful, often messy and always thoroughly human. Few congregations may ever fully live up to the ideal of being “communities of faith, hope, love, and witness.” However, when congregations and their leaders are healthy, they are better able to faithfully answer God’s call and to respond to the claims of God on the people of God.

### **Questions for presbytery consideration and discussion:**

1. What does a healthy congregation look like? How will we know it when we see it?
2. What does a healthy teaching elder, ruling elder commissioned to pastoral service, or certified Christian educator look like?
3. Is there a way we can measure or assess health?
4. What mechanisms and processes can the presbytery develop and maintain that can promote and support the health of congregations and leaders?
5. How can presbytery ministry committees/commissions use resources of time, energy, and funding on support of health rather than reacting to illness in our church systems?

## Working Together Cross-Culturally

- A presbytery being pastor to teaching elders and sessions supporting God's mission carries with it a commitment that the community of the church becomes "...a visible sign of the new humanity."
- The language of the church should not deny emerging needs and identities of believers.
- The community in mission is not faithful to Jesus Christ when it excludes "...the expression of diverse cultures..."

### Questions for consideration:

1. What are some of the challenges people face in your presbytery that makes their full participation difficult? Discuss ways in which individuals can successfully participate in your presbytery without having to lose their own racial ethnic identity. Think through some ways in which presbytery can be a safe place for all individuals to participate.
2. What needs to happen as you help your presbytery community become "...a visible sign of the new humanity"?
3. Apart from specific conflicts, where are opportunities to learn from persons from a diversity of cultural settings about problems they have had with ministry procedures in your presbytery?
4. Who are people with intercultural skills you could co-opt to help your committee/ commission interpret and respond to conflictive incidents?
5. How can you use persons in your presbytery responsible for developing new communities of faith to update you on the changing demographics in your presbytery?
6. How can you help prepare your congregations and teaching elders for future changes?

### **F-1.0404 Openness**

*In Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all creation, the Church seeks a new openness to God's mission in the world. In Christ, the triune God tends the least among us, suffers the curse of human sinfulness, raises up a new humanity, and promises a new future for all creation. In Christ, Church members share with all humanity the realities of creatureliness, sinfulness, brokenness, and suffering, as well as the future toward which God is drawing them. The mission of God pertains not only to the Church but also to people everywhere and to all creation. As it participates in God's mission, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) seeks:...a new openness in its own membership, becoming in fact as well as in faith a community of women and men of all ages, races, ethnicities, and worldly conditions, made one in Christ by the power of the Spirit, as a visible sign of the new humanity;.....*

### **W-1.2006**

#### *a. Inclusive Language*

*Since the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is a family of peoples united in Jesus Christ, appropriate language for its worship should display the rich variety of these peoples. To the extent that forms, actions, languages, or settings of worship exclude the expression of diverse cultures represented in the church or deny emerging needs and identities of believers, that worship is not faithful to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

#### *b. Diverse Language*

*The church shall strive in its worship to use language about God which is intentionally as diverse and varied as the Bible and our theological traditions. The church is committed to using language in such a way that all members of the community of faith may recognize themselves to be included, addressed, and equally cherished before God. Seeking to bear witness to the whole world, the church struggles to use language which is faithful to biblical truth and which neither purposely nor inadvertently excludes people because of gender, color, or other circumstance in life.*

### **W-3.1003 Participation and Leadership**

*The ordering of worship should also reflect the richness of the cultural diversity in which the church ministers, as well as the local circumstances and needs of its congregations.*

# Working Together Cross-Culturally

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## Other Resources:

### 1. Books

- Augsburg, David. [\*Conflict Mediation Across Cultures: Pathways and Patterns\*](#)  
Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992.
- Curtiss, Victoria. [\*Discernment and Decision Making\*](#)
- Dresser, Norine. [\*Multicultural Manners\*](#)  
New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1996.
- Fong, Kenneth. [\*Insights for Growing Asian American Ministries\*](#)  
Rosemead, California: EverGrowing Publications, 1990.
- Law, Eric. [\*The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb\*](#)  
St. Louis, Mo. Chalice Press, 1993.
- Matsuoka, Fumitaka. [\*Out of Silence: Emerging Themes in Asian American Churches\*](#)  
Ohio: United Church Press, 1995.
- Sawyer, Mary R. [\*The Church on the Margins: Living Christian Community\*](#)  
Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 2003.
- Wilmore, Gayraud S. [\*Black and Presbyterian\*](#)  
Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998.
- Yancey, George. [\*One Body, One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches\*](#)  
Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

### 2. Resources

- See the file “[\*Discernment and Decision Making\*](#)” which can be read in Adobe Reader.
- [Office of Cross Cultural Ministries](#)
- [Eric Law's Kaleidoscope Ministry](#)

# Racial Ethnic and Multicultural Congregations

- Every congregation has its own unique identity. Increasing numbers of congregations may continue to be thought of as constituted of a single culture or single ethnicity, but that former “truth” may no longer be true.
- Presbytery will honor and work in partnership with congregations that differ from the presbytery majority, but also will help congregations themselves begin to deal with the diversity of their own membership in culturally sensitive ways.
- The particular history and cultural setting in the congregation’s early formation shaped the patterns and traditions of congregations, often in ways beyond their own self-knowledge. Sessions are challenged to think beyond the way “things have always been”; presbyteries grapple with working towards healthy relationships with a variety of congregations and their leaders, learning the dynamics of differing patterns of authority and expectations.
- Congregations of apparent racial ethnic and cultural similarity may often differ from one another in significant ways.

## Questions for consideration:

1. What are ways you can have the designated entities that deal with pastoral concerns representative of the diversities of your own presbytery?
2. How can presbytery work with Pastor Nominating Committees (PNC) to help them develop cultural proficiency as they understand their congregation and go through the search process? In what ways can you encourage congregations to form search committees fully representative of the diversity of the congregation?

### **F-1.0403 Unity in Diversity**

*“As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:27–29).*

*The unity of believers in Christ is reflected in the rich diversity of the Church’s membership. In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God unites persons through baptism regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, disability, geography, or theological conviction. There is therefore no place in the life of the Church for discrimination against any person. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall guarantee full participation and representation in its worship, governance, and emerging life to all persons or groups within its membership. No member shall be denied participation or representation for any reason other than those stated in this Constitution.*

### **G-3.0103 Participation and Representation**

*The councils of the church shall give full expression to the rich diversity of the church’s membership and shall provide for full participation and access to representation in decision-making and employment practices (F-1.0403). In fulfilling this commitment, councils shall give due consideration to both the gifts and requirements for ministry (G-2.0104) and the right of people in congregations and councils to elect their officers (F- 3.0106).*

*Each council shall develop procedures and mechanisms for promoting and reviewing that body’s implementation of the church’s commitment to inclusiveness and representation. Councils above the session shall establish by their own rule committees or entities to fulfill the following functions: to advise the council regarding the implementation of principles of unity and diversity, to advocate for diversity in leadership, and to consult with the council on the employment of personnel, in accordance with the principles of unity and diversity in F-1.0403.*



## Racial Ethnic and Multicultural Congregations

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3. In your ministry committee/ commission's annual evaluation process take a bold and realistic look at your committee's performance around racial ethnic and multi-cultural teaching elders and congregations, and discuss what needs to happen in the next year.
4. If your presbytery has a planned visitation program with congregations how will matters of racial ethnicity and multi-cultural issues be brought up constructively?
5. Invite feedback from your racial ethnic and multi-cultural congregations about how your presbytery's ministry processes could be improved. Listen, and listen again. Then respond.

### **Resources:**

- [PC\(USA\) Multicultural Congregational Support](#)
- [PC\(USA\) Cross Cultural Ministry Office](#)
- [Guide to Resources for Multicultural Congregations](#)
- [PC\(USA\) Cultural Proficiency](#)
- Equal Opportunity for Service

## Endorsement for Specialized Ministry

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Teaching elders may be called to many forms of ministry of pastoral care in settings outside of a congregation such as hospitals, prisons, businesses, hospice programs, educational institutions military settings and more. In order to provide a high standard of care, there are a number of professional organizations committed to education and certification for those ministries. Presbyteries also have an important role in ecclesiastical endorsement and validation of ministries.

The presbytery has responsibility serve as pastor and counselor to all teaching elders, including those who are serving as chaplains or in other specialized ministries. Chaplains in hospitals and care centers, in the military, and pastoral counselors, as well as ministers serving in other validated ministries need and deserve pastoral care and expressions of interest in and appreciation for the important service they provide. All are accountable to the presbytery for their ministry, but it may be difficult for them to participate in the same ways as pastors of congregations especially for military chaplains who may be deployed overseas. Presbyteries that actively reach out to utilize the gifts of its specialized ministers are enriched by their gifts and perspective.

Most chaplains and pastoral counselors go through an extensive process of training and professional preparation in order to become certified. Military chaplains have a separate process for ecclesiastical endorsement and training. Ordinarily they are expected to have experience as pastors before serving as chaplains in a military setting.

Ecclesiastical endorsement is an official declaration by the presbytery of membership/care that a person seeking certification as a chaplain or pastoral counselor has the gifts of ministry for this special calling. It is not a statement of competency. **Endorsement is the responsibility of the religious body, while certification is the work of the professional organization.** The following information is intended as a resource. Additional information is available from the professional organizations or from certified chaplains and pastoral counselors serving in each presbytery.

### **Military Chaplains**

Those who offer themselves to serve as military chaplains need to work closely with their presbytery under the guidance of [The Presbyterian Council for Chaplains and Military Personnel](#). Information about this ministry, the qualifications for military chaplaincy and the process for ecclesiastical endorsement are outlined on their [website](#). The PCCMP has been authorized as the endorsing agent on behalf of the PCUSA. They do that in collaboration with presbytery ministry committees. Their Director should be contacted in any matter related to the service of teaching elders serving as military chaplains (active duty or reserve) or being considered for such service. Endorsement is given and may be withdrawn by the PCCMP in consultation with the presbytery.

# Endorsement for Specialized Ministry

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## **Military Chaplains and (USERRA)**

Through the Board of Pensions, the PCUSA has agreed to the terms of USERRA (the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act). They include, when the individual returns to service in a PCUSA entity (not necessarily the one he/she departed):

- the continued accrual of seniority and the pay thereof for PCUSA teaching elders (or laity) serving in the military for up to five years,
- the accrual of pension benefits for the same service,
- the guarantee of reemployment upon release from military service.
- Payments to the Board of Pensions are due after the individuals return from military service. The liability falls upon the sending church. This places a burden upon churches and presbyteries to find appropriate service opportunities after return from the military.

For more information about USERRA see the [Board of Pensions website](#).

## **Pastoral Counselors and Other Types of Chaplains**

What follows is information for the presbytery in the process of ecclesiastical endorsement that is a required part of the certification process for pastoral counselors and other types of chaplains.

Ordained ministers and others serving in specialized pastoral ministries are required to provide to their respective professional organizations, evidence of endorsement and validation of their ministries by their faith group. Endorsement and validation of the ministry by the faith group is a requirement for certification and for continuing membership in the professional organization.

The Leadership Team of the Presbyterian Association of Specialized Pastoral Ministries ([PASPM](#)), a network of the Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association ([PHEWA](#)), in conjunction with [the Office of Vocation](#), has prepared this information to assist both those persons who are seeking endorsement, certification, and/or validation of a ministry of pastoral care and those presbytery committees that have responsibility for endorsing persons and/or validating ministries of pastoral care.

This information will clarify terminology, summarize standards of the professional certifying bodies, incorporate recent statements of agreements between the professional organizations and the religious endorsing bodies, and encourage support for persons in specialized pastoral ministries.

## **Terminology**

**Endorsement** - An official declaration by the presbytery, that a person has met its criteria to serve in a ministry of chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, or clinical education.

**Certification** - The process whereby professional certifying agencies such as [APC](#) (Association of Professional Chaplains [AAPC](#) (American Association of Pastoral Counselors), [ACPE](#) (Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc.), [CPSP](#) (College of

## Endorsement for Specialized Ministry

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Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy), declare a person to be in compliance with professional standards as delineated by that professional organization.

**Validation of ministry** - An official declaration by the presbytery, that a particular ministry complies with all of the criteria enumerated in **G-2.0503**.

### **Description of processes**

**Endorsement** is the work of the faith group; therefore, the professional certifying organizations encourage presbyteries to establish a process for endorsement of persons seeking to enter, and/or persons serving in ministries of chaplaincy, pastoral counseling, or clinical education seeking certification. The professional organizations also encourage these persons to initiate a relationship with their presbytery early in their training so that the presbytery, through its committees, can provide guidance, discernment, and support. The declaration of endorsement addresses the following criteria through a process that might include written papers, interviews, and mutual discernment:

- Personal history
- Statement of faith
- Theological and clinical training
- Letters of reference
- Requirements for ministry
- Good standing and accountability within the faith community
- Ability to work collegially in diverse and pluralistic environments
- Willingness to adhere to a code of ethics prescribed by the institutions served, and by the certifying bodies

A letter of endorsement from the presbytery to the certifying body is continuous unless:

- The applicant has failed to successfully complete the membership or certification process
- There is a change in membership status or level in the professional organization
- There is a change in faith group affiliation, jurisdiction or standing
- The certifying body requests a new letter

(In the case of military chaplains, the PCCMP and presbytery may withdraw endorsement.)

**Certification** is the process whereby professional certifying agencies such as APC, AAPC, ACPE, and CPSP declare a person to be in compliance with the professional standards as delineated by that professional organization. Certification ordinarily addresses such core standards as:

- Clearly articulated professional standards
- Defined admission standards
- Articulated training standards
- Clinical supervisory responsibility and accountability
- Articulated certification steps and standards

## Endorsement for Specialized Ministry

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- Code of ethics
- Clearly published fees
- Sustained training and ongoing certification
- Defined disciplinary process
- Continuing professional formation and peer review

**Validation** is an official declaration by the presbytery that a ministry complies with all of the criteria enumerated in **G-2.0503**: See information later in this section.

### ***Ideas for supporting persons in specialized pastoral ministries***

- Supporting healthy and well- prepared persons for such service.
- Recognize them at Presbytery meetings with special attention to the beginnings of service, transitions in ministry, and retirements.
- Communicate often and if possible, visit the place of ministry.
- Ask for regular reports of their work.
- Encourage specialized ministers to serve as local congregations as appropriate and possible.
- Involve persons in specialized pastoral ministries in colleague groups and other learning opportunities.
- Nominate chaplains and counselors to sit on presbytery ministry committees

### **Professional Organizations**

<a href="#"><u>American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC)</u></a> Fairfax, Virginia 703-385-6967	<a href="#"><u>Association of Professional Chaplains (APC)</u></a> Schaumburg, Illinois 847-240-1014
<a href="#"><u>Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. (ACPE)</u></a> Decatur, Georgia 404-320-1472	<a href="#"><u>College of Pastoral Supervision &amp; Psychotherapy (CPSP)</u></a> New York, New York 212-307-1537
<a href="#"><u>Presbyterian Council for Chaplains and Military Personnel (PCCMP)</u></a> 4125 Nebraska Avenue, NW Washington, D.C. 20016 Phone: (202) 244-4177	<a href="#"><u>National Institute of Business &amp; Industrial Chaplains (NIBIC)</u></a> Houston Texas 713-266-2456

The following documents, found on the [Association of Professional Chaplains \(APC\) Web site](#) can be helpful as presbyteries consider the endorsement process:

- Common Code of Professional Ethics
- Common Standards for Professional Chaplaincy
- Professional Chaplaincy: Its Role and Importance in Healthcare.

# Care and Certification of Christian Educators

The Presbyterian Church has historically supported education and educational ministry in churches, communities, and our nation. Christian educators are, in many congregations, second only to parents in influencing Christian education for children and young people. In today's ministry context, Christian educators have an important role in discipling and Christian formation of adults.

The Book of Order **G-2.1103** describes a presbytery's role in working with Christian educators during their term of service.

- Establishes minimum requirements for compensation and benefits for Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators.
- Access to the presbytery ministry committee/commission.
- Entitled to privilege of the presbytery floor with voice.
- Certified Christian Educators who are ruling elders have voice and vote at presbytery.
- In addition the presbytery maintains a roll of Certified and Certified Associate Christian Educators (**G-3.0104**).

The General Assembly, through the Educator Certification Council has established an accrediting process that gives educators the chance to be fully prepared for educational work in the church no matter what their academic background.

The presbytery supports the certification process by

- Encouraging educators to seek certification (**G-2.1101**);
- Providing guidance through the Educator Certification Advisor;
- Encouraging sessions to make continuing education funds and time available to educators seeking certification (**G-2.1102**).

## **G-2.11 CERTIFIED CHURCH SERVICE**

### **G-2.1101 Forms of Certified Church Service**

*Persons may be certified and called to service within congregations, councils, and church-related entities, serving in staff positions. These individuals endeavor to reflect their faith through their work and to strengthen the church through their dedication. They should be encouraged by their session and presbytery to meet, or be prepared to meet, the certification requirements in a handbook provided by a national certifying body approved by the General Assembly. Names of those who have earned certification through a national certifying body shall be transmitted to the appropriate body of the General Assembly, which will forward them to the stated clerk of the presbyteries in which those persons labor.*

### **G-2.1102 Presbytery and Certified Church Service**

*The presbytery shall encourage sessions to make continuing education funds and time available to those seeking certification, and shall affirm the skill and dedication of these certified persons by providing a service of recognition at the time of certification. The presbytery may grant the privilege of voice at all its meetings to persons in certified church service.*

### **G-2.1103 Christian Educators**

#### **a. Skills and Training**

*Certified Christian educators are persons certified and called to service in the ministry of education in congregations or councils. They shall have skills and training in biblical interpretation, Reformed theology, worship and sacraments, human development, faith development, religious educational theory and practice, and the polity, programs, and mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).*

#### **b. Presbytery Responsibility**

*The presbytery shall establish minimum requirements for compensation and benefits for Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators and shall provide access to the area of presbytery that oversees ministry (G-3.0307). During their term of service in an educational ministry under the jurisdiction of the presbytery, Certified Christian Educators are entitled to the privilege of the floor with voice only at all presbytery meetings, and in the case of Certified Christian Educators who are ruling elders, the privilege of voice and vote at all its meetings.*

# Care and Certification of Christian Educators

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## In support of educators

These particular references in the Book of Order speak specifically to the place of the Certified Christian Educator in the structure of the church. Many educators are not certified. They also need care and encouragement.

### Questions for consideration:

1. How does the presbytery encourage and support all persons called to serve as educators in the churches within its bounds?
2. How does the presbytery encourage and support participants in the process of becoming certified Christian educators. See the [Christian Educator website](#).
3. How does the presbytery involve educators in presbytery meetings and committees?

### Resources:

The following resources are available to help you in your work with educators. They are available at [www.pcusa.org/christianeducators](http://www.pcusa.org/christianeducators). Contact Certification and Christian Vocation office at 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, Kentucky, 40202-1396. Call toll-free at 1-888-728-7228 ext #5751.

- [Educator Certification Advisors Handbook](#). This includes requirements for Certification and a page on the Role of Governing Bodies in the Certification process.
- Recognition Service for Certified Christian Educators.
- [Calling to Educational Ministry](#). Provides guidance to congregations and educators for their separate and mutual journeys toward providing the best leadership for the important task of Christian education. Includes “Suggested Compensation Guidelines,” “Sample Salary and Benefits Contract,” and “Sample Christian Educators Position Description”.
- See [models and sample materials from other presbyteries](#).

# Retired Teaching Elders

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- “Honorably Retired” is one of the categories of presbytery membership for teaching elders.
- An honorably retired member remains a full member of the presbytery with voice and vote and the privilege of serving, if elected, to a position.
- There are no other honorifics or titles provided by the constitution, such as emeritus/emeriti. Congregations or councils are free to honor former leaders in whatever way they choose.
- While a presbytery may designate a member of presbytery as honorably retired, criteria for retirement and disability benefits are within the purview of the Board of Pensions as reviewed by actions of the General Assembly.
- Without the invitation of the moderator of a session, retired teaching elders may not provide pastoral services to members of former congregations.

## **G-2.0503 Categories of Membership**

*A teaching elder is a member of a presbytery and shall be engaged in a ministry validated by that presbytery, a member-at-large as determined by the presbytery, or honorably retired.*

## **G-2.0503 c. Honorably Retired**

*Upon request of a member of presbytery, the presbytery may designate the member honorably retired because of age or physical or mental disability.*

## **G-2.0905 Officiate by Invitation Only**

*After the dissolution of the pastoral relationship, former pastors and associate pastors shall not provide their pastoral services to members of their former congregations without the invitation of the moderator of session.*

## **Questions for consideration:**

1. What are the elements the presbytery, retiring teaching elder and congregation should put in place to guide the transition from active ministry into retirement? What will each of those parties contribute to, and receive from a thoughtful process?
2. What presbytery provided programs of nurture and care should be in place for retired teaching elders and their spouses?
3. What policies might the presbytery put in place which would guide retired teaching elders, the presbytery and former congregations or councils concerning the retired teaching elder’s relationship with former congregations or councils of service?
4. Are there ways in which a presbytery might regularize various relationships between retired teaching elders and congregations or councils who might wish to use their services? What would be the elements of those understandings or agreements?

## **Resources:**

Publications from Alban Institute [www.alban.org](http://www.alban.org)

- [Called for Life: Finding Meaning in Retirement](#) by Paul C. Clayton, Alban Institute, 2008.
- [Clergy, Retirement, and Wholeness: Looking Forward to the Third Age](#) by Gwen Wagstrom Halaas, Alban Institute, 2005.
- See segment in this handbook – “Ethics for Departing Pastors”.

From 2011-2013 Advisory Handbook for Ministry Committees/Commissions



# Systems Theory and Congregations

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Since the publication of Edwin Friedman's book, *Generation to Generation, Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (Guildford Press, 1985) church leaders have increasingly used the insights of systems thinking to help them understand congregations more fully. Systems thinking encourages church leaders to let go of their Lone Ranger notions and Superman/Superwoman fantasies and recognize that congregations (and presbyteries!) are complex interlocking webs of connections.

Systemic thinking knows that there is no such thing as an isolated cause or agent for anything in a congregation's life. Praising the pastor when things go well may unhelpfully inflate the pastor's ego. Blaming the pastor when things go badly will be likely to make the pastor either defensive or depressed. Neither tactic is useful and neither is based on accurate assumptions. When things go well, as they do more often than not, it is because many different groups within the congregation are functioning together as a (more or less) healthy system. When things don't go well or when conflict erupts it is usually because the congregation as a whole needs to find its way or be helped to rediscover a point of new balance where God's creative power can be unleashed. In neither case is any single individual solely responsible or solely able to "fix things."

Systemic thinking is useful in individual's lives and in church life at every level. It is extremely helpful in dealing with congregational conflict.

## **Resources:**

- *How Your Church Family Works: Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems* by Peter L. Steinke
- *Creating a Healthier Church, Family Systems Theory, Leadership and Congregational Life* (Fortress, 1996) by Ronald W. Richardson
- *Becoming a Healthier Pastor, Family Systems Theory and the Pastor's Own Family* (Augsburg Fortress, 2004) by Ronald W. Richardson

More resources are available through the [Congregational Resource Guide](#)

# Appreciative Inquiry

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Developed for use in business leadership and increasingly a tool that is used in congregational life, the basic ideas of Appreciative Inquiry are deceptively simple. Appreciative Inquiry begins by creating interview questions that:

- encourage participants to remember the best of the past,
- encourage participants to have hope for the future,
- nurture community spirit,
- and encourage expression of feelings as well as recital of facts.

Appreciative Inquiry methodology could appropriately be used in a variety of settings, with groups of various sizes, for varying purposes. It is, however, especially helpful in the context of:

- triennial visits
- congregational mission studies
- congregations recovering from conflict or other trauma
- a newly called pastor getting acquainted with a new congregation.

The great value of Appreciative Inquiry is that it focuses on what is good and right and healthy, rather than on what is difficult, painful, or broken in congregational life. By focusing on the positive aspects of congregational life, Appreciative Inquiry strengthens what is healthy and whole.

Appreciative Inquiry is not a substitute for a clear-eyed evaluation of conflict or of the challenges a congregation faces. A congregation whose membership has declined from 500 in the 1950's to 75 in 2005 will still be dealing with the challenges posed by limited financial resources, a building that was intended for a much larger congregation, and, in all probability, a membership that includes a sizeable percentage of members past the age of 80. Appreciative Inquiry can, however, help the members be more creative in the use of their present resources and more hopeful in seeking God's call to them as a congregation.

**Resource:**

Mark Lau Branson's book, [\*Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change\*](#) (Alban, 2004) is a useful resource for those wishing to read further.