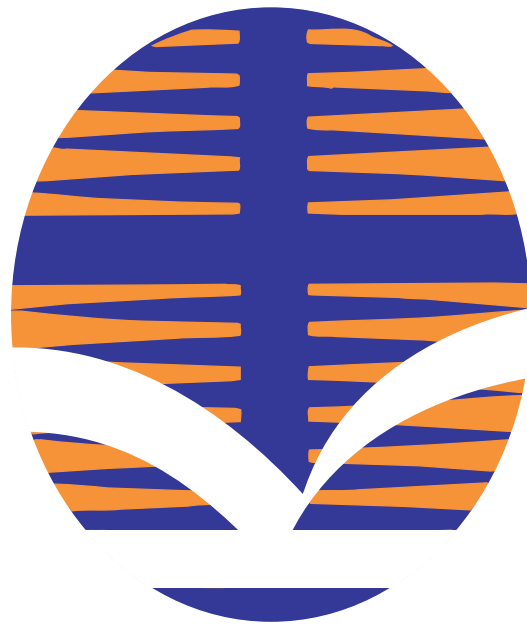


Office of
Vocation



Committee On Ministry
Advisory
Handbook



Produced by the
Office of Vocation

A shared ministry of the
General Assembly Council
and the Office of the General Assembly,
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

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PREFACE

Our goal in preparing this handbook is to assist Committees on Ministry (COMs) as they nurture healthy ministries in their presbyteries bringing pastoral sensitivity, hopeful faith, and openness to the surprises of God's transforming power at work.

The Committee on Ministry Handbook is an advisory handbook*, a guide for COM work to be used alongside the *Book of Order*. This is a compilation of resources and best practices for Committees on Ministry that represents the cumulative wisdom of many COMs in many places. However, nothing included in this Handbook supersedes the *Book of Order* or your own presbytery policies.

You will find other helpful resources at www.pcusa.org/ministers/com. This document is available online there with the intention that it may be easily adapted and utilized in the ways that are most helpful to your presbytery's ministry.

This *Advisory Handbook for Committees on Ministry* is produced by The Office of Vocation, a shared ministry of the Office of the General Assembly and the General Assembly Council, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). There have been many authors from across the church who have contributed in some way to this evolving document.

This handbook is dedicated to all of the members of Committees on Ministry who give so generously of their time, their energy, their wisdom, and their creativity to care for congregations and church professionals. You serve the church well and we are grateful.



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July 2007

“What is an “advisory handbook”?”

This document is advice for the church – the gathered wisdom from the experiences of persons across the church and those of us who serve you in the national offices. It is not mandatory or required. The advisory handbooks include best practices, recommended processes, and discussion of specific areas about which we frequently receive questions. It is intended to assist presbyteries as they develop policies and processes so that they can make public and consistent the ways in which the presbyteries fulfill the denomination’s standards and requirements.

This handbook is to be used alongside the *Book of Order* where you will find essential and foundational materials. National standards and requirements are found there.

The current *Book of Order* and the advisory handbooks are intended to encourage the church’s movement toward a more flexible, less regulatory polity. Such a polity recognizes that there may be many different and equally acceptable ways to uphold the national standards for preparation, ordination, installation, and the practice of ministry.

We recognize the diversity in the PCUSA and the wide variety of mission needs. It is expected that presbyteries and others will use this material as you see fit for your ministry context – adopting or adapting what is offered here, and creating your own policies and processes. As you do so, we invite you to share them with the Office of Vocation that we might share them with others.

Section 1

Healthy ministries: the goal of Committee on Ministry work

The Committee on Ministry's primary responsibility is "to serve as pastor and counselor to the ministers and Certified Christian Educators of the presbytery, to facilitate the relations between congregations, ministers, and Certified Christian Educators, and the presbytery, and to settle difficulties on behalf of presbytery when possible and expedient." (G-11.0501) The responsibilities of the COM are best fulfilled by fostering healthy ministries in the congregations of the presbytery.

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.

Characteristics of healthy ministry

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.
- 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.

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- 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.

In the language of another era the Preliminary Principles of the *Book of Order* tells us what the church is called to do.

The great ends of the church are the proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind; the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God; the maintenance of divine worship; the preservation of the truth; the promotion of social righteousness; and the exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world. (G-1.0200)

Congregations, like the people who are part of them, are gifted and flawed, faulty and faithful, often messy and always thoroughly human. No congregation will ever fully live up to the ideal of the great ends of the church. However, when congregations are healthy, they are able to devote their best energies to fulfilling God's call to them, as each congregation finds its way to respond to the claims of God on the people of God.

Committees on Ministry that are healthy devote their best energies to helping the ministries of the presbytery to be healthy. As they do, they partner with God in bringing to reality the Great Ends of the Church.

What is the COM?

The Committee on Ministry is that committee in each presbytery charged by the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to

...serve as pastor and counselor to the ministers and Certified Christian Educators of the presbytery, to facilitate the relations between congregations, ministers, and Certified Christian Educators, and the presbytery, and to settle difficulties on behalf of presbytery when possible and expedient. (G-11.0501)

Presbytery may delegate to the committee the authority to *... find in order calls issued by churches, to approve and present calls for service of ministers, to approve the examinations of ministers transferring from other presbyteries (G-11.0402), to dissolve the pastoral relationship in cases where the congregation and pastor concur, and to dismiss ministers to other presbyteries, with the provision that all such actions be reported to the next stated meeting of the presbytery." (G-11.0502h)*

The Committee on Ministry is responsible for the health of ministry in the presbytery, attending to the well-being of congregations and their faithfulness in responding to God's call to them as well as the nurture, support and professional

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development of church professionals, including ministers of the Word and Sacrament, Certified Christian Educators, and, in some presbyteries, Commissioned Lay Pastors.

Does every presbytery have a COM?

Yes. The *Book of Order*, in G-9.0902a, lists the Committee on Ministry as one of the structures required by the constitution for the presbytery. Other required presbytery structures are the Committee on Representation, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry, the Nominating Committee, the Permanent Judicial Commission, and “[a] council for the coordination of mission and program.”

What are the responsibilities of the COM?

The Committee on Ministry is “to serve as pastor and counselor to ministers; to facilitate relations between congregations, ministers, and the presbytery; and to settle difficulties on behalf of presbytery.” (G-11.0501)

The *Book of Order* further defines these areas of responsibility in G-11.0502.

- a. It shall visit regularly and consult with each minister in the presbytery; report to presbytery the type of work in which each minister of the presbytery is engaged; require an annual report of each minister performing work which is not under the jurisdiction of the presbytery or a higher governing body of the church.
- b. Make recommendations to presbytery regarding calls for the services of its ministers.
- c. Visit with each session of the presbytery at least once every three years.
- d. Counsel with churches and their Pastor Nominating Committees regarding calls for permanent pastoral relations.
- e. Counsel with churches regarding the advisability of calling a designated pastor.
- f. Counsel with churches regarding stated supplies, interim pastors, interim co-pastors, interim associate pastors, and temporary supplies, providing lists of available pastors, commissioned lay pastors, and qualified lay persons who have been trained and commissioned by presbytery to supply vacant pulpits.
- g. Provide for the implementation of equal employment opportunity for ministers and candidates, and report to presbytery the steps taken by each calling group to implement equal employment opportunity.
- h. If authorized by presbytery, find in order calls issued by churches, approve and present calls, approve examination of ministers transferring from other presbyteries, dissolve pastoral relationships in certain situations, grant permission to labor within or outside the bounds of presbytery, and dismiss ministers to other presbyteries.
- i. Promote the peace and harmony of the churches.
- j. Counsel with session regarding difficulties in the congregation, act as mediator in conflict situations, and/or act to correct difficulties in a conflict situation when asked to do so by the parties involved or when authorized by presbytery to do so.

Additional responsibilities of the Committee on Ministry identified by the *Book of Order* include work with ministers joining another denomination (G-11.0416) or ministers transferring to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) from other denominations (G-11.0404, G-11.0405) or from other presbyteries (G-11.0402), work with ministers seeking release

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from the exercise of ordained office (G-6.0600), and dissolution of pastoral relationships (G-14.0600), if authorized to do so by presbytery.

In some presbyteries the COM or a subcommittee of the COM may be assigned responsibility for working with commissioned lay pastors.

How does the COM deal with confidentiality?

Confidentiality about the work of the COM is crucial to the integrity of the Committee and the level of trust the members of a presbytery will place in it. Matters before the COM are sensitive and should be held in confidence unless the welfare of a congregation or the safety of an individual is in question. Even then, the COM must be extremely cautious about sharing information except with those who have a clearly identified need to know. Information learned through the COM should never, under any circumstances, be the subject of casual conversation, especially not with persons who are unaffiliated with the COM.

It is wise for the COM to have a policy that requires members of the COM to excuse themselves from any discussion of the congregation with which they work or of which they are members. A similar policy of excusing oneself when a discussion concerns a church professional who is a close friend will help avoid any appearance of favoritism.

Members of the COM hold an important position of trust and responsibility in the presbytery, a position that carries with it a significant degree of power, although sometimes the COM may be perceived as having more power than it actually does. Members of the COM must be mindful of both their actual power and their perceived power and strive to be above reproach in their dealing with confidential matters.

Is the COM the same in each presbytery?

Yes and no. The *Book of Order*, in G-11.0501b, specifies that the COM “. . . shall consist of equal numbers of elders and ministers with a membership of at least six.” While the minimum size of the Committee is stipulated by the *Book of Order*, there is no maximum number of Committee members. The presbytery determines how many Committee members (more than six) best meets its individual needs. However, whatever the size of the Committee, the numbers of elders and ministers must be equal.

COMs vary a great deal, as do the presbyteries they serve. Most have 12-24 members, all of whom are dedicated volunteers. Some members have a great deal of training and experience. Others are brand new and are trying to learn the jargon. Many COMs have to resource congregations spread over great distances and reflecting great diversity. Some COMs (those in compact presbyteries) are able to meet on a weekday evening, but most meet during a weekday. Most need to meet monthly for 4 or 5 hours.

Some COMs “co-opt” additional persons to assist with special kinds of work such as triennial visits, conflict response or pastoral support of church professionals.

The COM is staffed by the Executive or General Presbyter, an Associate Presbyter, and/or the Stated Clerk. Some COMs always have many churches without pastoral leadership, while others have only a few vacancies each year. Some COMs have the resources of a Presbyterian seminary, pastoral counseling centers, or many retired ministers willing to serve on an occasional basis. Others have to be especially creative to meet the needs of their churches and ministers.

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What are significant relationships for the COM?

The Committee on Ministry's responsibility to provide for healthy ministry means that members focus on building relationships of mutual trust and care within the committee, with congregations and with ministry professionals. Those relationships become the foundation on which all the other work of the committee is built.

The Committee members rely on each other as colleagues and partners in ministry. Their relationships with one another are characterized by the same mutual trust and care that is the goal of their work with congregations and church professionals.

The Committee on Ministry will work closely with a number of other people and committees in the presbytery and in the larger church. Those relationships include:

- The Executive/General Presbyter and/or other presbytery staff to coordinate the work of the COM and to respond to emerging needs
- The Stated Clerk of the presbytery who can advise and assist the committee
- The moderator of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry, especially in matters related to the ordination of candidates for ministry
- The Nominating Committee of the presbytery in finding new members of COM
- The Committee on Representation of the presbytery
- All committees of the presbytery as they relate to congregations
- Committees on Ministry and Committees on Preparation for Ministry in other presbyteries, especially in accepting or dismissing clergy and candidates
- Synod and General Assembly staff who relate to Committees on Ministry and provide resources and support for COM

How is the COM structured?

While each presbytery configures its COM to best meet its individual needs, four basic structures have been identified:

- **Functional Subcommittees**
The most common approach for structuring the COM is to divide responsibilities into groups according to function. Examples include sub-committees for triennial visits, for care of pastors, for conflict utilization, for work with PNCs, and, for Commissioned Lay Pastor training. Some presbyteries recruit persons who are not serving on the COM, but have particular skills and experience for some of those responsibilities.
- **Committee-of-the-Whole**
Smaller presbyteries are more likely to assign specific responsibilities to individuals rather than to a subcommittee. The individuals report back to the whole committee for committee action.
- **Geographic Subcommittees**
Presbyteries that cover large or diverse geographic areas often use this approach for structuring. The presbytery is geographically divided into as many areas as determined appropriate, and COM members who live within the bounds of each area serve as generalists in performing whatever COM activity is required in that area. Some presbyteries further identify functional subcommittees within the geographical areas. Some presbyteries divide their

Section 1 Understanding the Committee on Ministry

entire structure along geographical districts, thus requiring geographical structuring of the COM; other presbyteries choose geographical structuring of the COM with the remaining administration of the presbytery remaining presbytery-wide.

- ***Permanent Liaison Generalists***

In this approach, committee members – in teams of two or more with equal numbers of elders and ministers – are assigned specific churches and pastors within the presbytery. These teams serve as generalists in providing the full range of COM services to those churches and ministers assigned to them.

Other structures are possible. Whatever structure is adopted, it should be one that meets the specific needs of your presbytery and its congregations and minister members. As your COM considers how to fulfill its responsibilities, it is also essential to consider ways to facilitate communication and working connections between the COM and other presbytery committees such as Committee on Preparation for Ministry and the committee working with congregational development.

Some COMs have found it helpful to recruit a committee of people who are not serving on the COM to serve as specialists who can work with congregations that have special needs such as conducting an effective mission study or working with congregations that are experiencing conflict. Such committees should be carefully trained and have a clear understanding of their role and their accountability to the COM. This is especially crucial for persons who work with congregations in conflict. See section six for additional resources on dealing with conflict.

Additional assistance on structuring a COM is found in Section 8.

What resources are available for the COM?

Tools you will need:

- *The Bible*
- *The Book of Order* - (The Annotated Edition may be especially helpful for the COM Moderator)
- *Handbook for Committees on Ministry* available for download from www.pcusa.org/ministers/COM
- *On Calling a Pastor: a Manual for Churches Seeking Pastors* PDS#72214-05-004
- *On Seeking a Call: A Manual for Church Professionals Considering New Ministries* (Download Only.) www.pcusa.org/clc/resources
- Resources from the PC(USA) website, especially those for the use of the COM – www.pcusa.org/ministers
- Church Leadership Connection website – www.pcusa.org/clc
- Your Presbytery's handbook or guidelines for your committee
- *Guidelines for Session Personnel Committees* www.pcusa.org/clc "Resources"
- *Benefits Administrative Handbook* for presbyteries, synods, etc. (from Board of Pensions) www.pensions.org/publications
- *Standards for Ethical Conduct* --published by Office of the GA, available for download from www.pcusa.org/oga/publications/ethical-conduct.pdf.

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- Sexual misconduct policy of your presbytery
- *Sexual Misconduct Policy and Its Procedures* -- published by the Office of the GA, available for download from www.pcusa.org/oga/publications/sexual-misconduct-policy.pdf
- List of churches, ministers of Word and Sacrament, Certified Christian Educators and Commissioned Lay Pastors in the presbytery, with annually updated address, telephone, e-mail
- Name, address, phone, and e-mail of frequently used resources such as:
 - Your Synod staff person who resources the COM
 - Office of Vocation -
100 Witherspoon St., Louisville, KY 40202-1396
1-888-728-7228 – ext. 5503
www.pcusa.org/ministers
Church Leadership Connection – www.pcusa.org/clc
- Board of Pensions - 1-800-773-7752 or www.pensions.org
- Presbyterian Distribution Service - 1-800-524-2612 or www.pcusa.org/marketplace

Regarding Christian Educators:

- www.pcusa.org/christianeducators
- *Calling to Educational Ministry*, online at www.pcusa.org/christianeducators

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Glossary of Commonly Used Terms

Prepared and Shared by Diana Barber, Associate Executive, Synod of Lakes and Prairies.
Updated by Doska Ross (2007).

Term/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order Reference
AA/EOE or EEO	Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer or Equal Employment Opportunity. <i>The church and each governing body have a policy re: AA/EOE, which must be followed during any search process.</i>	G-9.0105e G-11.0502g G-14.0530-.0531
Annual Consultation	The annual conversation between a CPM and each of its Inquirers and Candidates to assess the progress of their preparation for ministry.	G-14.0421
Assistant Pastor	The position of Assistant Pastor is no longer approved (since December 31, 1985) and there are no longer any persons serving as Assistant Pastors.	The wording has been edited out of the Book of Order
Associate Pastor	A member of the pastoral staff of a congregation elected by the congregation and called and installed with the approval of presbytery (upon recommendation of COM). This is one of the permanent installed pastoral offices.	G-14.0511
At-Large Member	See "Member At Large"	
Bi-Vocational Pastor	A clergyperson who maintains a job in addition to 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.	
Book of Confessions	The part of the <i>Constitution</i> that 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 <i>Constitution</i> that defines the rules that govern our corporate lives as members and governing bodies. The 3 parts are the Form of Government, the Directory for Worship and the Rules of Discipline.	

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Terms/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order Reference
Boundaries	Geographically, the bounds of a governing body--the counties included in a presbytery, the presbyteries included in a synod, etc. Interpersonally, the limits of personal and professional space. Often referred to in relation to pastor-parishioner and intra-staff relationships.	
Call	Theologically, the sense that God has chosen one to engage in ministry as a layperson or clergy. Also referred to as "vocation." Also the term applied to the covenant between the congregation and pastor wherein the pastor responds to the "call" of the congregation in response to a larger vocation to ministry. This term also applies to the specifics of the contract or covenant established between the pastor and congregation including compensation, etc.	G-14.0533-.0534
Candidate	The status in the preparation for ministry process following Inquirer. 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 ministerial position.	G-14.0402 G-14.0405 G-14.0412
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 during the congregational meeting.	
Career Development Center	A term applied to the centers which provide career counseling services for church professionals. There are centers across the country. More information is available at www.ministrydevelopment.org/centers.html	

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Term/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order References
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 denomination certifies 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 candidate "ready for examination for ordination" or prepared to be commissioned as a lay pastor.	G-14.0700
Certified Christian Educator	A person serving in educational ministry who has completed the educational and examination requirements specified in the Book of Order for the status of Certified Christian Educator with "access" to the Committee on Ministry.	G-14.0710-.0731
Chaplain	A form of Specialized Ministry usually performed within an institutional setting (hospital, school, military, etc.) Such a position must be validated by presbytery.	G-6.0203 G-11.0403 G-11.0408
CIF	Church Information Form. The "dossier" or resume prepared by a congregation that is seeking a new pastor.	
Clerk of Session	The elder elected to serve as secretary and keeper of records and rolls for a session.	G-9.0203
CLP	See Commissioned Lay Pastor	
Candidate Assessment	Part of the preparation for ministry 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.	
COM	Committee on Ministry – required committee of a presbytery charged to “serve as pastor and counselor to the ministers and Certified Christian Educators of the presbytery, to facilitate the relations between congregations, ministers, and Certified Christian Educators, and the presbytery, and to settle difficulties on behalf of presbytery when possible and expedient.	G-11.0500

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Terms/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order Reference
Commission	The church establishes commissions to perform tasks and carry out responsibilities on behalf of the whole establishing body. Presbyteries establish commissions to install pastors, ordain ministers of the Word and Sacrament, and to carry out other administrative functions. A Permanent Judicial Commission is required to prosecute judicial cases brought before the governing body.	G-9.0500 D-5.0000
Commissioned Lay Pastor	An elder of the PC(USA) who is granted a local commission by the presbytery to lead worship and preach the gospel, watch over the people, and provide for their nurture and service; valid only in one or more designated congregations. The Book of Order defines necessary instruction and the process for examination. The commission to a particular lay pastor should include the specific functions that the person is authorized to perform.	G-14.0140 G-14. 0560-.0564
Continuing Members	All minister members of presbytery who serve in parish ministry or another "validated" ministry or are honorably retired or are members-at-large or inactive.	G-11.0403 G-11.0406
Cooperative Committee	Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates. This committee prepares the required ordination examinations and facilitates their grading.	G-14.0450d G-11.0103m
Co-Pastor	Pastors who are called and installed with shared responsibility for pastoral ministry in a particular church.	G-14.0512
In Correspondence	The status of formal relationship with and recognition of another denomination and the PCUSA. We are "in correspondence" with another denomination if we have had historical relations with it outside the U.S., are members of the ecumenical bodies in which the PCUSA holds membership, or if we are in full communion with them by ecumenical agreements approved by the General Assembly. Pending meeting the constitutional requirements in G-11.0404 -.0405, the ordination of minister members of a denomination in correspondence with the PCUSA will be recognized by the PCUSA.	G-15.0201-.0202 G- 11.0404-.0405

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Term/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order References
Covenant Relationship	The relationship established between the CPM and Inquirers and Candidates which defines their mutual responsibilities.	G-14.0401 G-14.0420
CPE	Clinical Pastoral Education. A special in-service opportunity, ordinarily for candidates, spent in an institutional setting under supervision. The purpose is to practice and hone one's pastoral counseling skills.	
CPM	Committee on Preparation for Ministry charged with guiding the preparation of those to be ordained as ministers of the Word and Sacrament	G-14.0400 - .0485
CPM of Call	The CPM of the presbytery to which a candidate is being called to a first ministry position.	G-14.0481-.0484
CPM of Care	The CPM of the presbytery under whose care a particular candidate or inquirer is enrolled.	G- 14.0450
Designated Pastor	A minister approved by the committee on ministry to be elected for a term of not fewer than two or more than four years by the vote of the congregation. The only designated pastoral relationships are pastor, associate pastor or co-pastor. They must be chosen from a list of persons approved and commended to them by the presbytery through its COM.	G-14.0520-.0523
Developmental Counseling	The program of a career development center that provides pastors with an opportunity to assess their ministries, examine their sense of vocation, and plan for their future ministry. The pastor is considered to be the "client."	
Directory for Worship	The part of the Book of Order that provides the guidelines for worship within the Reformed tradition and the liturgical and sacramental requirements for appropriate worship.	
Dissolution	The process of concluding a 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. The active relationship of an elder or deacon is dissolved when they resign or cease to be serving on the board.	G-14.0600-.0613 G-6.0500 G- 11.0103 i

Section 1 Understanding the Committee on Ministry

Term/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order References
Ecumenical Shared Ministry	Term applied to any one of several forms of pastoral ministries involving more than one denomination. This may be an ecumenical yoke or other form of cooperative ministry.	
Elder	The ordained office of the church with responsibility for the spiritual oversight and governance of a congregation. Ruling elders are currently serving on the session of a church.	G-6.0300
Pastor Emerita or Emeritus	An honorary status which may be awarded to someone honorably retired from a particular position by election of the congregation and upon approval of the presbytery. This status may include an honorarium but assumes no pastoral authority or duty.	G-14.0620
Entrance Exam	The process a presbytery uses to determine whether a minister will be accepted for membership in that presbytery. These are often conducted by the COM but may (also) be conducted on the floor of presbytery.	G-11.0402 G-11.0404
EP	Executive Presbyter. The chief administrative staff person for a presbytery. Similar to General Presbyter.	G-9.0701
Evaluating Counseling	The program of a career development center which provides a COM or Personnel Committee with feedback regarding the emotional and psychological health of a pastor and their current fitness for ministry. In this case, the "client" is the COM or Personnel Committee and they will receive a report if requested.	
Examination Services	The office in the Office of the General Assembly which resources the Cooperative Committee and CPMs related to ordination examinations.	
Exemption	When a candidate is given permission to meet an ordination requirement through some means other than completion of the normal process and/or passage of the standard examinations.	G-14.0470-.0474

Section 1 Understanding the Committee on Ministry

Term/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order References
Extraordinary	The term applied to circumstances during which the normal requirements for ordination are exempted or waived. This may include educational requirements, examinations, time.	G-14.0470-.0474
Federated Church	A formal ecumenical relationship established between a Presbyterian congregation and one or more congregations of another denomination in which the merged membership functions as one congregation but members ordinarily maintain their separate denominational identity and separate rolls may be kept. In all cases, there shall be a plan of agreement which defines the nature of their federation which shall be modeled on G-16.0201 insofar as possible.	G-15.0204 G-16.0201
Field Education	That part of the preparation for ministry process in which candidates participate 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. The placement of students in field positions is normally the responsibility of the seminary, but should be done in consultation with the CPM and, where appropriate, the COM of the presbytery where the placement will occur.	G-14.0412 G-14.0420
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 CPM certifying a candidate "ready for examination for ordination pending a call."	G-14.0450
Five Part Form	The form which a Stated Clerk must fill out in order to complete the transfer of a minister of the Word and Sacrament from one presbytery to another or to record reception of a newly ordained minister	
Form of Government	Form of Government	G-1.0000 – G – 18.000
GAC	General Assembly Council	G-13.0200

Section 1 Understanding the Committee on Ministry

Term/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order References
GP	General Presbyter. The chief administrative staff person for a presbytery. Also called EP or executive presbyter.	G-9.0701
Head of Staff	The pastor of a congregation who is the supervisor of other pastoral staff.	
Honorably Retired	The status which may be granted to a minister in good standing at the time of their retirement from active ministry.	G-11.0412
HR	Honorably Retired.	
Immigrant Fellowship/Bible Study Group	An international group of Christian people who are accepted by a Presbytery as part of their evangelistic outreach ministry. They maintain their language and cultural expressions in their worshiping experiences. Usually, their membership is not yet PC(USA). Also can be called Ethnic Specific Models.	G- 9.0503a(2)a-b
Inactive Member	A minister-member of presbytery or a member of a congregation who has ceased to participate fully in the fellowship of the congregation or governing body may be placed on the Inactive Role if the governing body is unable to contact the person or if the minister has been absent for one year and has failed to report to the presbytery during that time. A person on the inactive role may not be elected to any position in the governing body.	G-11.0406c G-11.0415a G-10.0302a (3) G- 5.0203
Inquirer	A person enrolled in the Inquiry Phase of preparation for ministry. (see Inquiry below.)	
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 Ministry of the Word and Sacrament to explore that call together to determine together one's suitability for that ministry.	G-14.0404
Installation	The act of the governing body which completes the call of a person to service in the church. Elders and deacons are installed by the congregation. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament are installed by the presbytery. A call is not complete and the person is not considered "hired" for legal purposes until the installation.	G-14.0501 G-14.0510 W-4.4000

Section 1 Understanding the Committee on Ministry

Term/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order References
Interim Pastor	A minister invited by the session of a church without an installed pastor to fulfill pastoral duties for a specified period not to exceed 12 months at a time, while the church is seeking a pastor. There are pastors who have been trained and certified as Interim Pastors but any pastor serving in that capacity is an interim. An interim pastor may not be called to be next pastor of the church served as an interim.	G-14.0550 G-14.0551 G-14.0553
Interim	Applies to the time between the dissolution of the pastoral relationship of one pastor and the installation of the next. May also refer to pastor during that time.	
Intern	A candidate for ministry may choose to extend his or her formal educational preparation by seeking a 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 for ministry process.	
Investigating Committee	The first phase of a disciplinary procedure 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-10.0201
Laboring Outside/Inside the Bounds	Permission granted by authority of the presbytery for a Minister of the Word and Sacrament to minister and/or work. In particular, if a pastor wants to perform any pastoral duty outside the bounds of their presbytery of membership and within the bounds of another, permission must be sought from both presbyteries prior to the exercise of that duty. A pastor cannot preach, celebrate the sacraments, etc. within the bounds of another presbytery without permission.	G-11.0401
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. See also yoke.	

Section 1 Understanding the Committee on Ministry

Term/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order Reference
Liaison	One who connects one group or person with another. COM assigns a member as liaison to a PNC. CPM may assign a member as liaison to the session of an inquirer or candidate under care or to a particular inquirer or candidate.	
Member at Large	A minister who has previously been admitted to the presbytery or another presbytery as an active member, 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-11.0403. A Member At Large may serve as a Parish Associate to maintain a relationship to a particular church.	G-11.0406b G-14.0570
Mentor	One who teaches or serves as a role model and confidant. A COM may assign a mentor to a newly ordained clergyperson to help them transition from seminary to the parish, and must assign a mentor to a CLP.	G-14.0564
Minister of The Word and Sacrament	The official title of the ordained office for clergy in the PCUSA. Initials are occasionally used in informal communications--MOWS.	G-6.0103 G-14.0120
Mission Study	Carried out during the interim period to evaluate a congregation's present and assess its future mission goals.	
Moderator	One of the two required officers of a governing body, the moderator convenes and adjourns the meetings of the body.	G-9.0202
Neutral Pulpit	The church in which a pastor being considered by a PNC preaches prior to candidating as one of the final steps in the selection process.	
NCD	New Church Developments	
OGA	Office of the General Assembly (Stated Clerk's office.)	

Section 1 Understanding the Committee on Ministry

Term/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order References
Ordination	Ordination is the act by which the church sets apart persons to be presbyters (ministers of the Word and Sacrament or elders) or deacons and is accompanied with prayer and the laying on of hands. Ordination to the office of Minister of the Word and Sacrament is an act of presbytery on behalf of the whole church.	G-14.0000 all G-14.0120 W-4.4000
Ords	See Ordination Exams.	
Ordination Exams	Standardized examinations required of all candidates in the areas of Bible Content, Biblical Exegesis, Polity, Theology, and Worship and Sacraments.	G-14.0431a-e G-14.0450
Organizing Pastor	An organizing pastor is a minister or commissioned lay pastor appointed by the presbytery to serve as a pastor to a group of people who are in the process of organizing a new Presbyterian church.	G-14.0552
Parish	A congregation or group of congregations involved in a cooperative ministry.	
Parish Associate	A minister who serves in some validated ministry other than the local parish, or is a member at large, or is retired, who wishes to define and maintain a relationship with a particular church.	G-14.0570-.0573
Parish Council	The coordinating body of a larger or cooperative parish, usually composed of representatives of each congregation in the parish. The council may have responsibility for calling the pastor(s) and carrying out personnel functions.	
Pastor	One of the permanent offices of Ministers of the Word and Sacrament. The pastor is the moderator of the session, the supervisor of the staff, the worship leader, the celebrant of the sacraments, and the theologian-in-residence for a congregation.	G-6.0202 G-14.0500 G-14.0510 See also the Directory for Worship
Pastor Nominating Committee	This term applied to the search committee for a pastor or associate pastor. Known as PNC.	G-14.0531
Pastor-Parish Relations Committee	The equivalent of COM in the United Methodist Church.	
Personnel Committee	The committee of a governing body (session, presbytery, synod, GA) with responsibility for the oversight of its staff and implementation of its personnel policies.	G-9.0404b

Section 1 Understanding the Committee on Ministry

Term/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order References
PIF	Personal Information Form. The dossier or resume of a pastor or other church professional.	
PNC	Pastor Nominating Committee.	
Polity	Term applied to the government of the church.	
Pulpit Supply	The person who preaches for a church on a one-time or very short-term basis. A list of qualified persons is to be maintained by the presbytery and provided to vacant churches to ensure the quality of proclamation.	G-11.0502f
Reformed Tradition	The theological tradition of the Presbyterian and other Reformed churches.	G-2.0000
Release from Exercise of Ordained Office	When an ordained officer of the church (elder, deacon, Minister of the Word and Sacrament) is removed from office, a person may seek to be restored to office by applying to the governing body from which they were released.	G-6.0600a-c
Renunciation of Jurisdiction	When a church officer 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-6.0700-.0703
Restoration	The act of being moved from inactive to active status in the governing body of membership, or of being restored to continuing ministry.	G-6.0600c G-11.0406c G-10.0302b (7)
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.	D-1.0000 – D14.0000
Second Career	A term applied to inquirers and candidates who have pursued one or more careers, other than being a student prior to coming under care.	

Section 1 Understanding the Committee on Ministry

Term/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order References
Session	The "least inclusive" governing body which governs the life of the congregation. Composed of active elders and installed pastors.	G-10.0102 G-14.0511 G-14.0521
Sexual Misconduct	When a person violates the appropriate professional interpersonal boundaries with a subordinate or parishioner. Definition and disciplinary procedures are delineated in a governing body's Sexual Misconduct policy.	D-10.0401
Sexual Misconduct Response Team	The group elected by a governing body and trained to respond to an allegation of sexual misconduct during and after the investigation of allegations and, if appropriate, the prosecution of a disciplinary case.	
Solo Pastor	A minister serving a pastorate without associates.	
Specialized Ministry	Validated forms of ministry other than parish ministry. Includes Pastoral Counseling, Chaplaincy, Campus Ministry, governing body staff, etc.	G-11.0403 G-11.0408 G-11.0410 G-11.0411
SPM	Supervised Practice of Ministry. See also Field Education.	
Stated Clerk	One of the required officers of a governing body, the clerk is responsible for maintaining the minutes, records, and rolls of the governing body.	G-9.0201 G-9.0203
Stated Supply	One kind of temporary pastoral relationship of a minister of the Word and Sacrament provided to a church which is not seeking an installed pastor and appointed by the presbytery. The relationship is established by the presbytery and shall extend for a period not to exceed 12 months at a time.	G-14.0550
Student Pastor	A candidate who is serving in a temporary supply position as an intern, or during field education.	

Section 1 Understanding the Committee on Ministry

Term/Initials	Explanation	Book of Order References
Supervised Practice of Ministry	See "Field Education."	
Temporary Supply	One type of temporary pastoral relationship which may have these qualities: secured by the session with counsel from the presbytery to conduct services when there is no pastor or the pastor is unable to perform pastoral duties. A temporary supply may be a minister, or a commissioned lay pastor	G-14.0550
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 terms of compensation. A presbytery must approve any changes in the terms of call and may determine minimum levels of compensation.	G-14.0534
Transfer	The process of transferring the membership of the minister of the Word and Sacrament or the care of a candidate or inquirer from one presbytery to another.	G-11.0401-.0402 G-14.0461-.0462
Triennial Visit	COM is required to visit each session at least once every three years.	G-11.0502c
Union Church	When a Presbyterian Church unites with one or more particular churches which are members of other Reformed churches or of other Christian bodies. The union is accomplished under a plan of union as outlined in G-16.0200.	G-16.0000 G-15.0000
Validated Ministry	Each presbytery is required to have written criteria to determine which ministries outside of parish ministry will be considered "valid" for its minister of the Word and Sacrament members. Those whose ministry meet those requirements will be qualified to be "continuing members" of the presbytery.	G-6.0203 G-11.0403 d G-11.0411 G-11.0408
Vocation	See "call."	
Waiver	When a presbytery, on recommendation of the CPM, decides not to require a candidate to complete one or more of the ordinary requirements for ordination.	G-14.0470-.0474
Yoke	When two or more churches are served by one pastor they are said to be yoked.	

Section 2

Some theological reflections on the work of the COM

The “greater” church

The *Book of Order* gives to the COM the responsibility for the ministry of the presbytery to its congregations and church professionals. However, that care can never be limited merely to issues of wages, hours, and work rules or to consideration of the needs of the individual person or congregation unrelated to the needs and mission of the rest of the church. It involves concern for *personal and corporate* integrity, for matching personal leadership skills and commitments with the needs of the Church of Jesus Christ, and for applying the values and norms of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to particular persons and situations. This is the heart of Presbyterian “connectionalism,” which is provided for in the *Book of Order*.

...the several different congregations of believers, taken collectively, constitute one Church of Christ, called emphatically the Church; that a larger part of the Church, or a representation of it, should govern a smaller, or determine matters of controversy which arise therein . . .
(G-1.0400);

These governing bodies are identified in G-9.0100 as the session, presbytery, synod, and General Assembly; and,

All governing bodies of the church are united by the nature of the church and share with one another responsibilities, rights, and powers as provided in this Constitution. The governing bodies are separate and independent, but have such mutual relations that the act of one of them is the act of the whole church performed by it through the appropriate governing body. (G-9.0103)

Thus, the responsibilities given the COM are all “theological” responsibilities in the most basic and practical sense: they require a COM to engage constantly in reflection, judgment, and discernment of how God is present and what God’s will is for ministers and churches not only in particular situations but also in light of the work and will of the greater church.

The particular church

The Task Force on the Theology and Practice of Ordination to Office presented to the 208th General Assembly (1996) a report titled “A Ministry of Service,” which it identified as a guide to theological understanding of the church and its leadership. In what follows, elements are drawn from the guide which provide a checklist of the theological issues that are present, acknowledged or not, in the issues and situations that present themselves to a COM every time it meets.

Section 2 – Reflections on the work of the COM

1. *The Church as Divine Gift and Human Institution*
The church is a covenant community called into being by God, with Christ at its head, and is appropriately called the “body of Christ.” Just as Jesus Christ is human as well as divine, so is Christ’s body, the Church, both a divine gift from God and a human institution. Thus the church seeks to order its life not only by Scripture, but also by the best understandings of human institutions.
2. *The Church as a Fellowship of Believers and as a Missionary Community*
The Church exists not only for the growth and maturity in Christ of its members, but also has a mission to bear witness to the gospel and to God’s Reign through its proclamation and through its deeds of compassion and reconciliation.
3. *The Church as Being and Doing*
The Church must be clear first about what it is over against the demands of the culture, but it must also be clear about its responsibilities to engage in service to and for God.
4. *The Church as Local Congregation and as Presence of the Church Catholic*
The congregation is the primary form of the Church, where members worship, are nurtured, and receive pastoral care; however, the church in a particular congregation is also part of the church universal, or the church catholic. Similarly, those ordained are ordained “in the Church of Jesus Christ,” even though they function within the context of a particular congregation.
5. *The Church as a Present Reality and as a Foretaste and Sign of the Kingdom*
We may be conscious of the church’s past, and we are most often occupied by the Church in the present, but the Church is also the present sign of the coming rule of God.

Call and leadership

The “Final Report of the Advisory Group for the Call System” presented to the 209th General Assembly (1997) provides the church with theological convictions about both the call to serve in positions of leadership and about the nature of leadership itself.

In Regard to the Call

...God calls the Church into being. God calls certain people to leadership roles within the Church...Calls result in leadership within particular contexts.Calls to church professions are calls to leadership in calling bodies...Calls demand high expectations and accountability...

”

In Regard to Leadership

...God gives specific leadership facilities and styles to particular individuals...Leadership in the church is a particular kind of relating and communicating. Leaders of the church find their model for leading in the person of Jesus, who came ‘not to be served but to serve’ (Matthew 20:38).

Ethical considerations in the work of the COM

Since the Committee on Ministry is charged with the responsibility to provide pastoral care for church professionals and nurture and counsel for congregations, it is critical that the COM exhibit high ethical standards. In 1998 the General Assembly approved *Standards of Ethical Conduct* for all members of the Presbyterian Church (published by the Office of the General Assembly and available at 1-800-524-2612, and

Section 2 – Reflections on the work of the COM

is also available on the PCUSA web site www.pcusa.org/oga/publications/ethical-conduct.pdf). Many presbyteries have established a code of ethics for all its committees, or a COM may have established its own. COM members should covenant with each other to adopt a set of ethical standards that govern how they conduct their assigned responsibilities.

In considering what standards to adopt, it may be helpful to keep the following questions in mind:

- How is God honored by the code we produce and the behavior we envision?
- What is God's will and how is that will made known?
- Are the interests of Christ being served and, if so, how are they being served?

While each committee will identify areas that are important and appropriate to its effective ethical conduct of business, the following list of possible considerations can provide a starting point for discussion:

- How will information be handled with respect for confidentiality?
- How will committee members participate in decisions in which they have personal involvement such as dealing with minister friends or former congregations or the congregation of which they are members?
- How will fair and equal treatment of all ministers and congregations be maintained?
- What defines faithful committee service and involvement?
- How can committee members exhibit loyalty to and support of the wisdom of the majority when decisions are made that are contrary to the individual's judgment?

The spiritual dimensions of the work of the COM

The COM is charged with a long list of very important responsibilities on behalf of the presbytery and for the sake of Christ's church. The COM does not and cannot work in isolation from other groups and persons in the presbytery or in the church at large. This means that COM members, no matter how wise, talented, faithful, experienced or energetic they may be, are called to be partners. They partner with one another, with the church professionals and congregations they serve, with presbytery staff and with other committees of the presbytery, with synod and General Assembly, and, most especially, with God.

The work of the Committee on Ministry will be done best, most faithfully and most creatively when it is done in a context of prayer, discernment, and worship. The most important preparation for any encounter between a member of the COM and a church professional or a congregation is prayer for the individual, the congregation, the relationship and the coming meeting.

As partners in ministry, COM members enter into relationships with an attitude of respect and appreciation for the congregations and individuals they encounter. COM members bring significant authority and substantial resources to meetings with those people. Their authority and their assistance are most likely to be accepted if they are offered in a spirit of collegiality and in a context of ongoing relationships of trust and care.

Section 3

Nurturing relationships with congregations

COMs are so often caught up in responding to the urgent needs of congregations and ministry professionals in transition, in crisis or in conflict that it can be easy to lose sight of the important responsibilities to “serve as pastor and counselor” to church professionals and “to facilitate relations between them, congregations, and the presbytery.” (G-11.0500) But the COM that devotes a significant portion of its time, energy, and wisdom to building and nurturing relationships will find that when there is a transition, a crisis or a conflict, its presence will be more quickly welcomed and its offers of help will be more readily accepted. Nothing that the COM does is more important than nurturing good relationships with congregations and church professionals.

Resources for understanding congregations

Thinking systemically about congregational life

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 (See Section 6).

Ronald W. Richardson’s book, *Creating a Healthier Church, Family Systems Theory, Leadership and Congregational Life* (Fortress, 1996) and the companion volume, *Becoming a Healthier Pastor, Family Systems Theory and the Pastor’s Own Family* (Augsberg Fortress, 2004), are among a number of helpful introductions to systems thinking and congregational life and leadership.

The COM and congregations in transition

Like individuals, congregations tend to be more open to assistance at transition times. At such times the Committee on Ministry has an opportunity to be helpful in ways that nurture relationship and build capital for the future. The departure of a pastor is an obvious time when the COM’s help is essential. The COM shepherds a congregation through the complex process of saying goodbye to one pastor, securing temporary pastoral leadership, and preparing to welcome a new pastor. (See Section 4)

Section 3 The COM and congregations

But there are other occasions of transition when timely assistance from the COM and /or other presbytery committees can be welcome and extremely valuable. Among those occasions are:

- When the congregation considers adding a fulltime staff person or cutting back on staff support.
- When the pastor or a close family member is seriously ill.
- When a new building or addition to the building is planned or completed.
- When a significant new program of community outreach is begun.
- When a small town becomes part of metro-sprawl with the resulting influx of newcomers, new opportunities for mission, new members, and, sometimes, new problems.
- When a factory that once employed many workers in a community is closed.
- When the congregation has suffered trauma connected with sexual misconduct, violence, or the destruction of a building by fire or natural disaster.

Special care needs to be taken for congregations that are living with the aftermath of accusations of pastoral misconduct, especially when sexual misconduct has been alleged. While the COM is not involved in any way in the disciplinary process, the COM has a continuing responsibility to provide pastoral care for other church professionals, if any, in the congregation, and for the congregation as a whole. If such a situation arises, the COM moderator will need to work closely with the presbytery staff to provide assistance to the congregation.

Appreciative inquiry

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:

- 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

Section 3 The COM and congregations

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.

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

Life cycle issues

Just as human beings tend to behave differently at different stages in their lives, so congregations are likely to have different characteristics according to the stage of their lives. Like size-related characteristics, these are not sufficient by themselves to fully understand a congregation. But familiarity with the generalities of life cycle issues will be of significant help to a COM in working with a congregation and making initial hypotheses about what is likely to be of the most help.

In 1986 Martin Saarinen's book *The Life Cycle of a Congregation* was published. He described the life cycle of a congregation as moving from birth to formation through stability and, often, on to decline, and sometimes to death.

What may be most important for COM members is to recognize that once at or beyond the point of stability, congregations will need encouragement to engage in the processes of ongoing renewal and renegotiation of mission. If a congregation enters into the process of decline, revitalization or redevelopment (Presbyterians now call it transformation) is certainly possible, but will require a greater investment of time, energy and resources of all kinds than does ongoing renewal. Prevention is easier and often more effective than intervention!

An excellent description of life cycle issues is in the first chapter of Alice Mann's book *Can Our Church Live?* (Alban, 1999)

The COM and new church development

The primary responsibility for new church developments is not lodged with the COM. However, the COM should provide support and care for the pastoral leadership serving in NCD work, just as they do for other church professionals.

Some NCD congregations may need extra support in moving through the very significant transition times of chartering and the end of financial support from the denomination.

The COM and small congregations

Small congregations (usually defined as those with 100 members or less) have significant strengths. They are specialists in relationship: with each other, with God, with their pastor, with their community. Members refer with pride to the "family feeling" of their churches. Small churches are also places of high commitment. "You can't hide here," one member of a small church said proudly, "Everybody has to pitch in." In a small congregation everyone has – or can have – an important role to play. In this era when bigger is often assumed to be better, small congregations offer an important reminder of the value of each one of God's beloved children.

This is not to say that there are no problems! Small membership congregations that have a pastor often must devote the largest percentage of their budget to the costs related to compensation for a pastoral leader. Many of them worship in buildings that are rich in memory and tradition – and in needs for maintenance. Especially in urban and suburban areas, small churches may suffer from low self-esteem as they measure

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themselves against mega-churches with their array of services and programs, their new buildings, and their vast parking lots. Because of their financial limitations, small congregations sometimes assume that they are unable to participate in mission and so turn inward, focusing their energy and their resources exclusively on meeting the needs of their own members.

Small churches make up a large percentage of all congregations in the PC(USA). In 2005, 47.5% of all PC(USA) congregations were defined as "small"-- and the percentage is increasing. In 1990, 39% of all PC(USA) congregations were small. Many of them are without pastoral leadership. Some of those congregations do not have the financial resources to support a full-time, or even part-time, minister of the Word and Sacrament. Others are so geographically isolated that it is difficult for them to attract a pastor.

Pastors and Committee on Ministry members who have only experienced larger churches with several staff members and many programs often have difficulty relating to small churches. Because of the special needs of smaller congregations and their pastors, small churches are sometimes perceived as a "problem" for presbyteries to solve rather than a unique form of congregational life with both strengths and weaknesses.

"Small congregations," writes Carl Dudley, "are not organizational errors to be corrected, but intentional choices of members who put a priority on human relationship." (*Effective Small Churches in the Twenty-First Century*, Abingdon, 2002, p.11) All too often, church leaders focus so much attention on the problems and challenges facing small congregations that their strengths are overlooked.

The difference size makes...

Congregations come in all sizes, although the majority of all congregations in the PC(USA) are small. Slightly under half of all PC(USA) congregations had fewer than 100 members.)

Ministers and COMs can waste considerable energy and sometimes increase animosity by trying to make congregations of one size behave like congregations of another. While there are no absolutely certain predictors about congregational behavior, it will be helpful for COM members to have a working knowledge of the characteristics of congregations of different sizes.

Arlin Rothauge's book *Sizing Up a Congregation for New Member Ministry* began the discussion of the characteristics of congregations of different sizes. Since the publication of his book, many other church observers have used and modified his ideas. One way to describe four size groupings follows:

- *Family size congregations* have up to 50 adults and children at worship. They operate like an extended family, organized around one or two key leaders, who are often not elected to the session. Relationships are more important than anything else in the family size congregation, and the pastor often serves part-time, leading worship and offering pastoral care. Decisions are likely to be made informally by consensus so long as the key leaders of the congregation are involved.
- *Pastoral size congregations* have between 50 and 150 in worship. They are made up of several family and friendship groups, unified around the pastor who plays a key role in the decisions and ministry of the congregation. Decisions are likely to be made based on the pastor's interests and skills.

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- *Program size churches* have 151-350 in worship. They are organized around programs serving the needs of the members for nurture, involvement and mission outreach. Decisions are made by the session with involvement by the pastor and other staff persons. Committees are likely to play a key role in program-size congregations.
- *Corporate churches* have 350-1,000+ in worship. They are organizationally complex and the pastor in this size church often functions as a CEO. Staffing reflects the complexity of the organization, with a cadre of specialists providing excellent quality programs and services to a number of different constituencies. In order to provide opportunities for greater intimacy, corporate size churches often offer a variety of small group experiences focused on particular needs or stages of life. Decisions are likely to be made by the senior staff with the blessing of the session

Committees on Ministry can be helpful to small congregations in several very significant ways:

- By helping them as they seek caring, competent pastoral leadership. Sometimes smaller congregations will need to be encouraged to consider new or unfamiliar possibilities: a pastor of a different cultural background, a woman pastor where one has never served before, a commissioned lay pastor, or a tentmaking pastor.
- By working with small church pastors to stay with small church ministry, despite the pressures of debts incurred in seminary education and the expenses of family life. Research by Alban Institute indicates that congregations of all sizes do best with longer-tenured pastors.
- By recruiting a pool of people in the presbytery who have special skills they are willing to share with congregations other than their own. Accounting skills to assist small congregations with the annual financial audit required by the *Book of Order* is one example of the kind of help needed by many smaller congregations.
- By lifting up their strengths and celebrating their successes, and recognizing the variety of forms of ministry in small congregations. COMs are especially encouraged to focus not only on anniversaries and tradition, but also on innovative, creative, healthy ministry in small congregations.

Resources for working with small congregation

Helpful resources can be found at the Small Church Ministry Network, www.pcusa.org/smallchurch

The COM and shared ministry and larger parishes (yoked congregations)

A larger parish (sometimes referred to as yoked churches) is one that shares a pastoral leader with one or more other congregations. The most common reason for forming larger parishes is that one or all of the churches can no longer afford to pay a full-time pastor. In some situations the yoke has a long historic tie. In others the churches choose to work together, not only to share leadership, but also to share in ministry to their community and to share in programs such as a joint youth group or Bible study.

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Sometimes the presbytery approaches one or several churches to suggest a larger parish as an option for obtaining pastoral leadership. In other situations, members of one church initiate discussions with another and then invite presbytery to help them work out the details. Before seeking a pastor, the sessions of the churches work out a formal partnership agreement as to how they will share in ministry. A written covenant signed by the two or more clerks of session, the shared pastor, and the presbytery COM moderator is recommended so that the agreements are clear.

In considering the formation of a larger parish the following issues need to be considered:

- What are the needs of each church for the time and talents of a pastor? What will the pastor be expected to do with each congregation in a normal week or month?
- What proportion of full-time service will be expected by each church?
- Where will the pastor live?
- What assumptions are there about involvement of the pastor and family (if any) in the churches and communities? (It is not fair to expect spouses to attend two worship services or to expect pastors to attend football games in both communities each weekend.)
- When will worship services be held in each congregation? (This decision must take into account not only the preferences of each congregation, but also the need for the pastor to build significant relationships with the people of each congregation as well as practicalities such as the amount of time needed to travel from one church building to another.)
- How will planning be coordinated?
 - Three or four joint session meetings per year can be very valuable - one before Lent, one in late summer, one before Advent, one at annual review and budget time
 - This keeps communication strong and allows the sessions to share ideas and concerns without relying on the pastor as the go-between.
- What will the total cost of shared ministry be?
 - Cash salary
 - Housing allowance or manse maintenance
 - Utilities
 - Medical and pension dues
 - Continuing education allowance
 - Reimbursed professional expenses (travel, etc.)
 - Pastor Search expenses - (travel, lodging, meals, photocopying, telephone, and postage)
 - Moving expenses
 - Pulpit supply for six weeks per year (vacation and continuing education)
 - Shared administrative expenses (bulletins, newsletter, postage, etc.)
 - Costs of joint programming
 - Will the costs be shared in the same proportion as the time-sharing?
 - How much funding will each church provide each year or month?

In addition, congregations planning for a larger parish or for shared ministry should consider these questions:

- How will expenses be handled? Will there be a parish treasurer?
- What are our commitments to each other as partners in ministry?

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- How will our shared ministry be evaluated?
- How will we proceed if one church is dissatisfied with the arrangement?
- How will we proceed if the minister wants to leave one congregation but not the other?

It is usually helpful to discuss these matters in a joint session gathering with the moderator of session and Committee on Ministry representatives to help process the discussion and share information that may be constructive. An initial draft "Covenant for Shared Ministry" (See the end of this section for a model) might be drawn up from this discussion, then shared with all participants for review, amendment, and adoption. It is very wise to share the document with the congregations (for information) as well and have a well-informed elder respond to questions so that the relationship gets off to a good start.

Joint fellowship and worship celebrations should be encouraged among partner churches. Small church members love to see their pews filled and gather around good food! The wise COM will provide for a process in a policy that will ordinarily be followed when two or more congregations are deciding whether and how to share the services on one pastor.

The COM and large congregations

Corporate-size congregations are relatively rare. In 2004 only 215 congregations in the PC(USA) (about 2%) have 1,200 members or more, and only 15 PC(USA) congregations have 4,000 members or more. However, it is important for the COM and presbytery staff and the staff and leaders of large congregations to work well together and for COM members to have some clarity about how very large congregations are different from congregations of other sizes. Although large congregations differ from one another as much as congregations in general, they will tend to have a number of things in common.

Characteristics of corporate-size churches

- There is a major emphasis on shaping and preparing for Sunday-morning worship. The style of worship may be formal or informal, innovative or traditional, but excellent music and preaching are important and very highly valued.
- Except for the inner circle of congregational leadership, most members do not know the pastor well, although many may relate to an associate pastor or other staff person.
- The church offers a wide variety of specialized programmatic offerings.
- Many very large congregations invest considerable energy in small group ministries to create opportunities for intimacy within the larger community of faith.
- More than in smaller congregations, the pastor is likely to be a public person in the community, and the congregation will be closely identified with her or him. The pastor is the one who casts a vision and sets a tone for the entire congregation and for the staff.
- In most large congregations, the staff has considerable formal and informal power.

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- Alban Institute suggests that the success of the large congregation depends in large measure on the ability of the staff to work together collegially and effectively.

Factors in staff searches for larger churches

- Associate pastors are typically called to specialized ministries and will need to be comfortable in trading frequent preaching and visibility within the congregation for working deeply in a more narrowly defined set of responsibilities and with a particular constituency within the congregation.
- Many large congregations have found it helpful to use the services of a Ministry Development Center to work with PNCs to do an assessment of the final candidates to be called as pastor or associate pastor. Such assessments can help to ensure that the candidates to be called have the skills and personal attributes they will need to serve the congregation and work harmoniously and effectively with other members of the staff team.
- Because of the size of the staff many large congregations are almost always searching for at least one key staff person.
- The pastor of a large congregation, especially if she or he has just been called from a smaller congregation, may need to acquire more administrative and personnel skills, particularly in working with clergy colleagues. For many who assume such responsibilities for the first time, continuing education is essential, and they may also benefit from working with a consultant for the first years of their ministry in a large congregation.

Administrative/policy considerations

- Well-written job descriptions with clearly articulated lines of accountability and authority are especially important in large congregations.
- Carefully designed administrative policies are essential to guide the work of the session and the staff.

Resources and vulnerability

- Large congregations have significant resources that may be employed in the presbytery and for mission and outreach. Some presbyteries partner with large congregations in supporting mission projects and encourage partnerships with smaller congregations. Most large churches have retired members with skills that can be shared to support the ministry of smaller congregations.
- Although they often possess very substantial financial and people-resources, very large congregations can be surprisingly vulnerable if there is a conflict or other crisis within the congregation. Here, as in all congregations, prevention is far preferable to responding to crisis.

The COM and racial ethnic and multicultural congregations

As Committees on Ministry work with racial ethnic and multicultural congregations it is important to understand the history and cultures that have formed the congregations and their members. It is also important to remember that every congregation has its own unique identity and that racial ethnic and multicultural congregations may well differ from one another in significant ways.

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Building mutual trust between the congregation and the presbytery will be enhanced when members of the COM:

- participate in the worship life of racial ethnic and multicultural congregations;
- elicit stories from the life of the congregation and listen carefully and respectfully;
- remember that English is the native language of some members of immigrant or racial ethnic groups;
- recognize that socio-economic issues may have a different impact in some non-majority communities than in the dominant culture;
- support models of congregational structure, evangelism, mission and worship that are appropriate to the congregation and in their living out of the reformed tradition;
- encourage and foster participation by racial ethnic elders and pastors on presbytery committees;
- include racial ethnic ministers on the presbytery's pulpit supply list;
- appoint racial ethnic ministers as moderators of sessions in majority European-American congregations as well as racial ethnic congregations.

Additional resources for working cross-culturally can be found in Section Seven of this handbook.

The COM and immigrant ministries

Suggestions for the COM in dealing with new immigrant ministries

Committees on Ministry must be sensitive to the cultural differences related to ethnicity, nationality, and native language. This will include an awareness that even their own best efforts to be inclusive may not be as effective as they wish them to be. Working with members and leaders of Immigrant Fellowships requires care, attention, and sensitivity.

The COM may find it helpful to:

- Take Cultural Proficiency training. Sensitivity to welcoming strangers is a matter of attitude and intentional deeds.
- Be in contact with and look for advice from the Congregational Enhancement and New Immigrants offices of the Justice and Compassion area (National Ministries Division) when issues related to racial-ethnic constituents are being considered.
- Help the resource centers in presbyteries to add materials supporting this specialized ministry.

It is crucial for the presbytery to be accurately informed about immigration law as the law applies to leaders of new immigrant fellowships. Questions concerning immigration law may be directed to Julia Thorne, Manager, Immigration Issues at julia.thorne@pcusa.org or 888-728-7228, extension 5372.

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If the presbytery is considering a new immigrant fellowship or congregation, the following information will be helpful:

G-11.0404f. In the case of ministers for new immigrant fellowships and congregations, a presbytery may, if it determines that its strategy for mission with that constituency requires it, recognize the ordination of (G-15.0202) and enroll a new immigrant minister furnishing evidence of good standing in a denomination in correspondence with the General Assembly as a member of the presbytery, even though at the time of enrollment that minister lacks the educational history required by G-14.0450a–d. In the case of such a minister lacking such preparation, the presbytery shall undertake an evaluation of the minister's understanding of and proficiency in Bible, Reformed Theology, Sacraments, Presbyterian Polity, preaching, leading worship, pastoral care, and teaching. If the presbytery is satisfied as to the minister's preparation in and understanding of those areas, the presbytery may, by a three-quarters vote of those present, enroll that minister as a minister of the presbytery. Any presbytery taking such an action shall provide that minister with educational opportunities as seem necessary and prudent to the presbytery for that minister's successful ministry within the bounds of that presbytery. This section, when utilized, may result in exceptions to the procedures and requirements described in G-11.0403c, G-14.0450a–d, G-14.0470-.0474.

Enabling conditions

1. Existence of a New Immigrant Fellowship and/or Congregation,
2. Presbytery strategy for mission with the Fellowship and/or Congregation,
3. The minister must be in good standing in a denomination in correspondence with the General Assembly (G-15.0201).
4. Presbytery shall evaluate the minister's understanding of and proficiency in:
 - a. Bible,
 - b. Reformed Theology,
 - c. Sacraments,
 - d. Presbyterian Polity,
 - e. Preaching,
 - f. Leading worship,
 - g. Pastoral care, and
 - h. Teaching.
5. Presbytery should determine the pastor's immigration status. If the pastor is a citizen, an appropriate document to determine status is a U.S. birth certificate, U.S. passport or Naturalization certificate. If the pastor is a permanent resident, a resident alien card ("green card") should be available. If the pastor is a non-immigrant, a copy of an I-94 arrival/departure record should show which non-immigrant category the pastor had upon entering the U.S.

Enabling actions

1. The receiving presbytery confirms membership status of the minister via communication with the denomination of membership.

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2. The minister furnishes transcripts and other requested information to the receiving presbytery.
3. The receiving presbytery does background and reference checks on the minister.
4. The presbytery approves the recognition of the minister's ordination by $\frac{3}{4}$ majority of those present at that meeting.
5. If the immigrant pastor does not have an enabling work document, efforts can be made by the church or presbytery to sponsor the pastor for an immigration benefit allowing the pastor to work and receive a salary.

NOTES:

- Recognition of ordination ties the action to the time and location of service in that particular fellowship or congregation (G-11.0405).
- The minister may be enrolled as a member of presbytery and temporarily may be given the rights and privileges of membership for that period of service (G-11.0405).
- Recognition of ordination in a corresponding denomination is not equivalent to transfer into the PCUSA as Minister of Word and Sacrament.
- Questions regarding immigration may be directed to the Manager of Immigration Issues, Offices of the General Assembly at 888-728-7228, ext. 7372 or Julia.Thorne@pcusa.org.

The presbytery is committing to provide that minister with educational opportunities that are necessary and prudent for that minister's successful ministry within the bounds of that presbytery. To fulfill that responsibility the presbytery may use the following strategies:

- Assign mentor(s).
- Use the services of tutors in areas of deficiency (a rabbi for Hebrew, for example).
- Require enrollment in CLP training courses or in seminary lay education programs.
- Use experiential learning, such as attending session meetings in nearby congregations and presbytery committee meetings

The triennial visit

Among the best opportunities for building relationships with congregations is the Triennial Visit. This is essentially a pastoral visit by the presbytery to its churches.

When Triennial Visits are most helpful to everyone involved, it is likely to be because the COM goes to them with prayerful preparation, and a respectful, appreciative attitude to the mission and ministry of each congregation. Visitors to congregations who expect to find evidences of faithful ministry and mission are more likely to find them than those who go with a predisposition to be disappointed. Every congregation is doing something that is important and valuable to its members and pleasing to God!

If the Triennial Visit is to be received by sessions as more than a checking off of a *Book of Order* requirement, or an unpleasant intrusion by the presbytery, it will be because the COM takes the initiative to make the visit an occasion for pastoral affirmation and appreciation. When there are issues to be addressed or concerns to be responded to, it will be in a context in which some trust has been built.

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If these visits are truly to strengthen connections, then the conversation must flow two ways. Church leaders will want an opportunity to say what they need from presbytery and offer suggestions for strengthening the ministry of presbytery. Visitors must be good listeners!

The tools of appreciative inquiry found in this section are particularly useful for triennial visits.

The purposes of a Triennial Visit are:

- 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 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 help them deal with any problems which may exist.

Triennial visits can serve to strengthen the connection between the congregation and other governing bodies in the denomination, while helping the congregation to consider its ministry and mission not only within the local community but also throughout the world.

Three specific areas to be considered by the COM in triennial visits are identified in the *Book of Order*:

- the mission and ministry of the particular church (G-11.0502c)
- full participation in the life and work of the presbytery (G-11.0502c)
- the quality of and standards for worship, and the fruit it is bearing in the life of God's people (W-1.4002)

Triennial Visits may be structured in a variety of ways -- including visiting with sessions more often than every three years! Each Committee on Ministry will determine for itself the approach for triennial visitation it will use. While most presbyteries have a general framework for each visit, adaptations must be made with regard to the size and geographical location of the church, the present circumstances of the congregation, and its present attitude toward presbytery. Some committees have found it helpful to focus on different aspects of ministry with each successive triennial visit.

Planning for triennial visits

Purpose

The visit will be most constructive when the visitors and the church leaders are clear about the purpose of the visit. This should be communicated in writing to the pastor and session prior to the visit so that the church leaders are invited to prepare in an appropriate way for the visit. Rather than telling the church, "*The Book of Order* says we have to visit you every three years" (which sets up a feeling that no one wants to do this), it may be helpful to communicate one or more of the following purposes for your time together:

- Celebration of the ministry of this congregation
- Faith sharing
- Two-way information sharing: presbytery learning about the church, its ministry, challenges, and concerns, and the church hearing about presbytery, its activities, resources, and challenges;

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- Dealing with special issues of concern;
- Mutual ministry assessment process;
- Invitation to participate more fully in the life and ministry of presbytery;
- Inspiration and encouragement to reach out to changing community;
- Interpretation of the mission of the larger Church;
- Information gathering for presbytery planning;
- Invitation to strategic planning for future ministry in their area;
- Strengthening the pastoral relationship;
- Follow-up interventions at significant points in a pastorate;

Ethical issues

It is essential that everyone involved in triennial visits is clear 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 COM must state clearly who will be notified and how the information will be handled. In the case of triennial visits, as in all the work of the COM it is important to consider ahead of time how conflicts of interest will be avoided.

Who will be visited?

- Will churches which have had other significant COM intervention (in vacancy or conflict) be visited again?
- Who will be included in the visit?
 - Only the session and pastor(s)?
 - The session with other church members who wish to attend?
 - Other church staff?
 - The treasurer?
 - The pastor's spouse?

Scheduling

- What will be the basic format and time frame for the visit?
- Will a meal or refreshments be part of the visit?
- Will there be a worship component of the visit? If so, who will do this?
- Will sessions be asked to schedule a special meeting for this visit?
- Will a separate time with pastor or pastor and spouse be included?
- How will the COM involve the congregations in determining the schedule?

Personnel

- Will visits be scheduled during seasons set aside for this purpose or continually throughout the year?
- Who will conduct the visits?
- How many persons will be required for each visit? At least two persons should be assigned to each team. No one should make a visit alone. Both persons can listen actively to the session, the minister(s) and others.
- Will the visitation teams be made up on COM members or will non-COM persons be asked to assist?
- Will all COM members be expected to do triennial visits or will certain persons within the COM be assigned this responsibility?

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What paperwork needs to be created?

- Letters of notification of the proposed date of the visit with an invitation to negotiate the date if necessary
- A document to explain the triennial visit to the congregation and pastor
- A questionnaire to gather information, if the COM chooses this format
- A suggested agenda
- A list of questions or general script to help visitors prepare
- A packet of information for the visitors about the church
- General information about presbytery activities and resources
- Standardized report and feedback forms
- A follow-up letter to the pastor and the session
- An evaluation form for pastor and session to assess the visit

The COM must also decide who will be responsible for mailings, tracking completed visits and following up on referrals.

Training

How will the persons making triennial visits be trained? Who will conduct the training, and what topics will be covered? Some presbyteries have offered training in these formats:

- a one day or evening session in a central location
- several duplicate events scattered around the presbytery
- a retreat

These subjects may be helpful to include in training:

- listening skills
- basics of appreciative inquiry
- programs and resources of our presbytery
- basic consultation skills
- ministry assessment
- basic conflict management
- small church and corporate church dynamics
- life cycles of pastoral relationships and congregational life

Preparing for the visit

Having received their basic training the teams must make preliminary contact with the sessions of the presbytery. Each team will make its first contact, contracting for a date, and alternate date (in case of emergency), the amount of time needed for the visit, any preliminary requirements of the session (such as answering a questionnaire before the team's visit).

It is important to obtain some information about the particular church that will be visited:

- A look at annual statistical reports for the last few years. Research Services has these and other statistics including community demographics and maps readily available for your use at www.pcusa.org/research/help/htm
- Some information about the community in which the church is located.

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- Presbytery file material, such as the most recent CIF and the PIF of the pastor, mission studies, bulletins, newsletters, anniversary histories, etc.

The most important preparation you and your visitation team can make is to prepare spiritually for the visit.

- Pray for the congregation and its leaders.
- Pray for the visitation team.
- Consider scripture about visitation such as Romans 1:7-12

Encountering resistance

It is not unusual for some sessions or pastors to be reluctant to have the Committee on Ministry visit. They may feel such visits are a waste of time or they may resent or be fearful of the possibility of outside intervention. Usually a competent caring visitation team can dispel such feelings and build trust. If churches have had bad experiences with presbytery intervention in the past, it may be helpful to acknowledge their feelings about that experience (without judging previous encounters) and move on with a good experience

Some visiting teams have been met by stony silence. Wise teams will not rush in to fill the silence with small talk, nor will they leave early. They may ask, "What's going on here? We feel like you don't want to talk about something? Is there something you want to say to us that you are reluctant to say or have difficulty expressing?"

Sometimes a member of a visitation team will receive a phone call after the visit when an elder wants to share that which was left unsaid in the meeting. Information gathered this way should be considered carefully. There may be inappropriate secret-keeping or it may be that one unhealthy person wishes to cause trouble. Presbytery visitors should encourage open conversation among individuals in disagreement rather than reward triangular conversation among parties using the COM to get at each other!

After the visit

- **Report** - Some teams meet for coffee immediately after the triennial visit to collect their thoughts and to put together the report that will be made to the COM.
- **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 include a copy of the report that is given to the COM.

Congregational mission studies

Mission studies are especially appropriate:

- When the congregation does not reflect community changes.
- When there has been a congregational power shift or conflict.
- When membership has grown or declined significantly.
- When the congregation needs to consider a new strategy for pastoral leadership (such as a cooperative ministry).
- When a church is seeking a new pastor or when a new pastor has recently been called.
- When pastor and church want new direction.

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- At transition times in longer pastorates, every five to seven years.

The best mission studies involve everyone who wishes to be involved and ask these or similar questions:

- What are we doing as a congregation? What is God calling us to do in the next phase of our ministry?
- What are the needs of our community? What is God calling us to do to meet those needs?
- What specifically will we do to strengthen our congregational and community ministry in the next year?
- What must pastor and lay leaders do to help that to happen?

Tips about mission studies:

- Anxious or conflicted churches don't produce good mission studies. Deal with the problem first.
- Focus on what the congregation is doing well and faithfully. Use the techniques of appreciative inquiry. (See appreciative inquiry in this section.)
- Get participation and ownership by key leaders.
- Design and lead the study with lay leaders, adapting resource material to be appropriate for the particular congregation.
- Be respectful of the time of congregational members. Allow enough time to complete a mission study without making the process too long.
- Involve the whole congregation including children and youth (with an age-appropriate "track").
- Make it fun! Include music, Bible study, and food.
- Display a public time line and share highlights at worship.
- Share results with session for approval. Keep congregation informed of action.
- Keep for future use and pass on to the next pastor.

Resources for mission studies

One of the best resources for congregational mission studies is available through PC(USA) Research Services, <http://www.pcusa.org/research/help>. A list of simple, inexpensive tools for congregational self-study and mission study is available at <http://www.pcusa.org/research/help4.htm>. These resources can be downloaded at no cost.

In addition to demographic information about neighborhoods, congregations can purchase a complete report of Ten-Year Trends for a modest price. A short version of the Ten-Year Trends can be downloaded free. Congregations may want to consider contracting with Research Services to conduct a survey for them, as well.

There are a number of helpful books for planning mission studies. Among them are these:

Ammerman, Nancy T, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinley, *Studying Congregations, A New Handbook*, Abingdon Press, 1998.

Dudley, Carl S. and Nancy Ammerman, *Congregations in Transition, A Guide for Analyzing, Assessing, and Adapting in Changing Communities*, Jossey-Bass, 2002.

Mann, Alice, *Can Our Church Live? Redeveloping Congregations in Decline*, Alban Institute, 1999.

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Oswald, Roy M. and Robert E. Friedrich, Jr., *Discerning Your Congregation's Future, A Strategic and Spiritual Approach*, Alban Institute, 1996.

Rendle, Gil, *Leading Change in the Congregation, Spiritual and Organizational Tools for Leaders*, Alban Institute, 1998.

Rendle, Gil and Alice Mann, *Holy Conversations, Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations*, Alban Institute, 2003.

Congregational strategy

Working with congregations and, where appropriate, with other presbytery committees is another significant opportunity for the COM to build relationships of trust, care, and mutual accountability.

The Committee on Ministry may interface with a number of other presbytery committees. One of the most significant relationships is with the presbytery committee charged with congregational strategy. This may be a sub-committee of COM, a Congregational Transformation Committee, or an Evangelism Committee. Whatever its name, the people of that committee are essential partners for the COM as it cares for congregations and offers assistance to them.

The COM is intensively involved when a church is without a pastor. This is also an opportune time for church transformation issues to be raised and the expertise of the appropriate committee to be solicited. Many presbyteries find it helpful to utilize a team approach where one COM member and one Congregational Transformation Committee member go together to work with a church.

Other occasions for collaboration with other presbytery committees may be to follow up from a triennial visit or to deal with congregational strategy after a conflict. These are times when communication between the two committees is critical.

There are other times when Committee on Ministry and Congregational Transformation Committee responsibilities overlap and where combined resources and personnel can be very constructive:

- when small churches are stretched to financially support a full-time pastor
- when the presbytery is beginning a New Church Development
- when a church is considering the addition of staff
- when the community is changing and the church is declining or growing
- when a church seeks transformation following a serious conflict
- when a church is calling a designated pastor to work with them on transformation.

There are offices of the General Assembly Council dedicated to providing consultation resources and training related to New Church Development, Congregational Transformation, Small Church Ministry, Racial Ethnic and Multicultural Church Development. Consult www.pcusa.org and/or call 800-872-3283.

Sample Covenant for Shared Ministry

PASTOR.: _____ **DATE CALL EFFECTIVE:** _____

CHURCHES: _____ **and** _____

PASTORAL ACTIVITIES: (indicate activities for each congregation)

We understand this shared ministry to be approximately

_____ % for _____ **Church**

and _____ % for _____ **Church.**

COMPENSATION:

Cash salary

Housing

Utilities

Medical and Pension dues

Travel reimbursement @ \$0._____ per mile

Other ministry cost reimbursement (telephone calls, etc.) _____

Continuing education or book allowance _____

Vacation time _____ Continuing education time _____

Moving expenses _____ Other: _____

OTHER SHARED MINISTRY EXPENSES:

CONTRIBUTIONS OF EACH PARTNER CHURCH:

_____ CHURCH
\$ _____ FOR THE YEAR 20____, \$ _____ PER MONTH

_____ CHURCH
\$ _____ FOR THE YEAR 20____, \$ _____ PER MONTH

WE COMMIT OURSELVES TO SHARE IN MINISTRY, WITNESSING TOGETHER TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IN A MINISTRY TO OUR COMMUNITY AND SUPPORTING ONE ANOTHER AS WE LIVE AND GROW AS CHRISTIANS.

_____ **Pastor**

_____ **Clerk of Session**

date of session action: _____

_____ **Presbytery COM Moderator**

_____ **Moderator of Session**

Triennial Visit
MINISTRY AND MISSION REFLECTION
FOR SESSION

Please be ready to reflect on these questions with the Ministry and Mission Team.

1. The church is called to be the Body of Christ in the world. When has the church best resembled the Body of Christ for you?
2. When, in this church, was prayer most important and effectual for you?
3. What do you see as Christ's dream for the future of your ministry here?
4. What concrete steps have you taken to translate Christ's dream into reality in this church and in the community?
5. What concrete steps will you continue to take to translate Christ's dream into reality?
6. In what ways is your congregation in the presbytery?
7. Has there been a happening in the life of your congregation that you would like the presbytery to celebrate with you?
8. How could the Presbytery be more helpful to your congregation?
9. Do you have any comments or concerns you would like to share?

Triennial visit

MINISTRY AND MISSION REFLECTION

FOR PASTOR

Please be ready to reflect on these questions with the Ministry and Mission Team.

1. When has the church or the Presbytery best resembled the Body of Christ for you?
2. Describe the time when you felt the most spiritually fulfilled/excited during your time at the church you are now serving?
3. What do you see as Christ's dream for the future of your ministry here?
4. How can the Presbytery, session, COM, etc. help you to fulfill this dream?
5. Taking care of self...
 - a. Do you think you are adequately compensated and how do you feel about your financial stability?
 - b. Describe the quality of your relationship to the staff, the session, and to the congregation?
 - c. Do you take all of your vacation time and how have you been using study leave?
 - d. How many hours a week are you working?
6. What would you like to see happen in your congregation in the next 3-5 years?
7. Do you have any comments or concerns to share?
8. How could the COM support you and your ministry better?

Section 4

General comments

“On Calling A Pastor – A Manual for Churches Seeking Pastors”
www.pcusa.org/clc “resources is the primary resource for congregations during a pastoral vacancy. Each session member and PNC member will find this a helpful resource. It is available also in Spanish and Korean.

Congregations entering the transition time when one pastor has left and before another has been called are likely to be experiencing grief, anger, relief, confusion, anxiety, or a combination of some or all of those feelings. A COM liaison will be most effective in working with the congregation when she or he is:

- knowledgeable about the process of moving from the dissolution of one pastoral relationship to the initiation of a new one.
- able to be a “calm non-anxious presence “ (Edwin Friedman’s phrase).
- spiritually mature and respectful of the congregation with which he or she is working.

COM liaisons, (sometimes called vacancy consultants) are a key part of the connection between congregation and presbytery and an important part of creating healthy ministry in a congregation and in the presbytery as a whole.

Each COM has its own variations on the process of assisting congregations in the transition time. The outline included later in this section is a model that you may vary according to the needs of your presbytery. Other models are certainly possible.

A healthy “goodbye”

A good beginning with a new pastor begins with a healthy good-bye to the departing one. A celebration of the pastor’s time with the congregation helps both pastor and congregation to say goodbye. Appreciative sharing of good memories as well as honest recognition of difficulties will contribute to the significance of the closing weeks they share. It is helpful to create public opportunities for such sharing and recognition in board and committee meetings, worship services, wherever the faith community is gathered. Whatever the circumstances of the pastor’s departure, she or he, his or her family, other staff persons, and the congregation as a whole will benefit in very significant ways from opportunities to say honest and respectful thanks and goodbye.

The pastor’s farewell messages to the congregation should include clear statements of the ethical standards to which she or he adheres. Such messages must include recognition that the pastoral relationship is ending and that, as a former pastor, she or he will no longer perform pastoral services for members of the congregation.

If the departure of the pastor comes at the end of a time of difficulty and conflict, it is even more important for pastor and congregation to honestly, fairly and lovingly assess the relationship that is ending. It may be necessary in such cases for the COM liaison and/or presbytery staff to work with the pastor and the session to set guidelines for “telling the truth in love”.

Section 4 Relationships with congregations searching for pastoral leadership

Exit interviews

Exit interviews with the departing church professional and with the session are extremely helpful. These interviews help all parties begin to disengage and begin the process of moving forward into the future. This is true whether the person leaving the congregation is an interim pastor who has served the church for a year or so, or a long-term installed pastor who is leaving after many years of service.

Sometimes COMs or sessions decide that an exit interview “isn’t really necessary” or that “we know what the departing pastor will say.” However, exit interviews are almost always helpful for the departing church professional, the congregation, and the COM. In fact, COMs might want to consider encouraging a session to have an exit interview with any departing staff person.

Exit interview models

Exit interview with the departing pastor or departing interim pastor

The liaison or team of persons from the COM should conduct an exit interview with the departing pastor soon after the pastor announces his/her departure. The exit interview helps provide closure for the pastor and family. It also provides information that may be helpful to the COM as it works with the congregation during its search.

1. Ask the pastor to talk about things she/he feels good about their work 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 and session.
4. Ask about advice they might give to the next pastor.
5. Talk about appropriate and inappropriate contact with the congregation after the pastor, associate pastor or other staff person has left. This is important. It is especially important if the pastor is staying in town or moving to a nearby location. The *Book of Order* says “Former pastors, associate pastors, and ministers who do not have a pastoral relationship with the particular church as defined in this chapter may officiate at services for members of the church, or at services within its properties, only upon invitation from the moderator of the session or, in case of the inability to contact the moderator, from the clerk of session (G-14.0630 Officiate by Invitation Only).”

Exit interview with the session

It is best to conduct the exit interview with the session after the pastoral relationship has been dissolved. The interview helps the congregation begin to disengage from the pastor. The Moderator of session appointed by presbytery should be present for this interview.

1. Discuss positive growth in the life of the congregation during the pastor’s time with the congregation.
2. Discuss any difficulties there might have been in the relationship between the pastor and session/congregation.
3. Discuss ways the session might build a strong relationship with the next pastor.
4. Discuss appropriate and inappropriate contact with the congregation after the pastor has left. This is important. See (5) above.

Section 4 Relationships with congregations searching for pastoral leadership

5. Plan ways the session might lead the congregation to disengage with the former pastor, associate or other staff person.
6. Give a brief overview of the call process.
7. Begin discussion about maintaining regular worship and congregational life during the transition and search for new pastoral leadership.
8. Discuss the benefits of the session appointing a transition team consisting of session members and significant members of the congregation.

Ethics for departing pastors

With the session and COM representative the pastor should prepare a carefully worded announcement for the congregation. The statement should draw a clear distinction between honoring the friendships that will continue beyond the end of the pastoral relationship, and performing official pastoral functions or being involved in the future ministerial life of the congregation.

The departing pastor bears the primary responsibility for helping members of the congregation he or she formerly served understand that it is no longer appropriate for the former pastor to officiate at services for them. It is especially important and helpful for the departing pastor to take the responsibility for saying a clear and loving “no” to such invitations without putting the responsibility for the decision on the interim pastor or the new pastor serving the congregation.

A former pastor and his or her family should seek a new congregation in which to worship, even if they are staying in the same community in retirement or as the pastor begins another kind of service. This is essential during the transition time between installed pastors. However, former pastors should be cautious about assuming that they can return to the former congregation as soon as a new pastor is called. In order to support the formation of a strong bond between the new pastor and the congregation, a former pastor should wait an appropriate amount of time before re-entering the congregation formerly served, and then only after a careful conversation with the new pastor about her or his wishes in this matter.

A former pastor of a congregation is wise to avoid conversations about what has happened in the church after her or his departure. Under no circumstances should the former pastor indicate to church members disapproval or disappointment about the decisions or leadership of the interim pastor or the new installed pastor. The former pastor will inevitably have only partial information about any event or decision within the congregation he or she used to serve. In any case, for the former pastor to comment negatively about the current leadership of the church is unhelpful and inappropriate. The greatest tribute to the leadership of the former pastor is a congregation that continues to thrive with a new pastor.

Finding temporary leadership

The session is responsible for providing regular worship and other services for the congregation. During the time between the departure of the installed pastor and the arrival of the interim pastor, if one is used, the session will take a much more active part in every aspect of the leadership of the congregation. Among other responsibilities, the session finds guest preachers and pastors able to provide emergency pastoral care. Most presbyteries maintain a pulpit supply list of ministers and Commissioned Lay Pastors willing to conduct worship services and provide pastoral care on a temporary basis.

Section 4 Relationships with congregations searching for pastoral leadership

This is an especially good time for a Committee on Ministry to encourage congregations to consider women and/or racial-ethnic pastors as preachers or for a temporary pastoral relationship. Congregations that have not experienced the gifts of clergywomen or racial ethnic ministers may discover that they have a greater spirit of inclusiveness and openness than they have previously known. The COM may also want to appoint women and racial ethnic ministers to serve as moderators of sessions, and add the names of women and racial ethnic ministers and candidates to the pulpit supply list for the presbytery.

Options for pastoral leadership

Congregations, with the advice and consent of the COM, have a variety of options that they may consider for pastoral leadership. Their decisions will be based upon their needs and resources as well as their vision for future mission and ministry.

Some sessions will decide with the consent of the COM that their congregations are ready to proceed to call a minister of the Word and Sacrament as pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor. Those congregations should be encouraged to covenant with an intentional interim pastor who can provide pastoral services and specialized leadership for the transition time between called pastors.

Other congregations may not be ready to proceed to a full search. They may, with the assistance of the COM, opt to seek a designated pastor. During the time of the search for a designated pastor, they would benefit from the services of an interim pastor.

When a congregation is unable to provide the compensation for a full-time minister of the Word and Sacrament, a tent-making pastor or a commissioned lay pastor may provide pastoral leadership.

With the advice of the Committee on Ministry, still other congregations may opt for a stated supply pastor, temporary supply pastor, or student supply pastor. In some circumstances, with the consent of the COM, a session may choose to covenant with a minister of another denomination for temporary services.

Sessions in congregations that have an installed pastor may invite a minister of the Word and Sacrament who is not serving a congregation to become a parish associate, with or without remuneration.

New Times, New Call, A Manual of Pastoral Options for Small Churches, PCUSA, 2003, is a helpful resource. It is available from the Presbyterian Marketplace, <http://www.pcusa.org/marketplace/index> PDS # 7231203001.

Orderly Exchange with Formula Partner Churches

The “Orderly Exchange of Ordained Ministers of Word and Sacrament” process 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.**

Through adoption of *A Formula of Agreement*, our four 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.

Section 4 Relationships with congregations searching for pastoral leadership

Orderly exchange (provisions for availability) of ordained ministers is for the sake of participation by the four 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.

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 Formula of Agreement 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 ministers – commissioned pastors (RCA), commissioned lay pastors (PCUSA), licensed ministers (UCC), synodically authorized ministers (ELCA).
- 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.

The complete policy and process document, “A Formula of Agreement – The Orderly Exchange of Ordained Ministers of Word and Sacrament,” is available on the Web at: <http://www.elca.org/ministry/pdf/formula.pdf>

Ministers Ordained by Other Denominations

Ministers ordained by other denominations may, at the discretion of the presbytery, serve in temporary pastoral relationships with congregations. Except for ministers of Formula Partner churches, ministers of other denominations may not be installed in PCUSA congregations. Presbyteries have no obligation to allow ministers of other denominations to serve in their congregations. Thorough reference checking, examination, and mentoring are essential before beginning a relationship between a congregation and a minister ordained in another denomination. (G-11-0405c)

Section 4 Relationships with congregations searching for pastoral leadership

An Outline for Calling a New Pastor

For Committees on Ministry, Sessions, and Pastor Nominating Committees
Adapted from On Calling a Pastor, www.pcusa.org/clc "resources".

1. Dissolving the pastoral relationship

- Pastor notifies COM of his/her intention to accept another call or retire and discusses necessary steps and time line in relocation or retirement process
- Executive or General Presbyter or a member of COM is present in worship on the Sunday when the pastor's departure is announced.
- COM meets with the departing pastor for an exit interview.
- COM liaison consults with Clerk of Session when the pastor's intention to leave is known to the congregation, regarding the process for dissolution of the pastoral relationship (*Book of Order* G-14.0600-.0613).
- Session calls a congregational meeting to concur with the pastor's request to dissolve pastoral relationship with the congregation. Clerk of Session informs COM liaison of the congregation's action.
- Presbytery acts to dissolve the pastoral relationship.

2. Planning the transition

COM liaison meets with session and moderator (not departing pastor) for the purpose of:

- A pastoral visit to the session early in the transition time
- An exit interview with the session to share perspectives and feelings about the church's ministry during the departed pastor's tenure, and to assess church's present situation. (see appendix for resources)
- Sharing information and answering questions about the transition process
- Consulting about leadership for the transition:
Moderator of session
Immediate pulpit supply and pastoral care
- Sharing information about interim minister or other temporary pastoral leadership
- Discussion of types of pastoral leadership, called and temporary.
- Planning for the work of a transition team and/or an interim pastor Search Committee
- Discussing a congregational mission study

3. Engaging the congregation in a mission study

(Some presbyteries require a full mission study at the beginning of the search process. Others require a briefer mission study at the beginning of the search process and a full mission study to be completed sometime in the first three years of the new pastor's tenure.)

- Congregation participates in a mission study.

4. Assessing the congregation's finances

- Session considers the congregation's financial situation to determine whether there will be sufficient funds to support the pastor the church might call.

Section 4 Relationships with congregations searching for pastoral leadership

- The cost of housing in the community will be an important consideration for any potential candidates to be called as pastor. In some parts of the country it may be helpful for a session to consider shared equity in the pastor's purchase of a home.
- Pastoral search expenses as well as moving expenses for the new pastor must also be considered.
- Session reviews the options for pastoral leadership and decides whether to proceed to the election of a Pastor Nominating Committee to seek a called pastor.
- Session asks the Committee on Ministry for assistance in finding temporary pastoral leadership.

5. Electing the pastor nominating committee (PNC)

- After the departure of the pastor, after deciding that the congregation is ready and able to proceed to seek a new pastor, and after receiving COM authorization, the session calls a congregational meeting to elect a PNC
- The session recommends to the congregation the number of people to serve on the PNC, and ordinarily asks the congregational nominating committee to nominate members of the congregation to serve on the PNC.
- The PNC must be representative of the whole congregation.
Public notice of the time, place, and purpose of the meeting must be given on two successive Sundays. (G-14.0531 and G-7.0303b)
At the time of the congregational meeting to elect a PNC, nominations from the floor of the meeting are in order, provided that members so nominated have given their consent in advance.

6. Orienting and organizing the pastor nominating committee

Ordinarily the liaison meets with session, moderator and PNC for the purpose of:

- Reviewing the theology of call
- Reviewing the search process with the session present
Session members not serving on the PNC leave and liaison meets with PNC for the purpose of orienting the PNC to their work
- Organization of the PNC
 - Election of chairperson, secretary of the PNC, Internet Contact with CLC
 - Planning Communication and Resources
 - Scheduling PNC meetings
- Review of process

7. Writing and submitting the Church Information Form (CIF)

- PNC plans how it will develop the following and makes assignments:
 - Goals and Mission Statement (grows out of Mission study and requires consultation with Session)
 - Selecting and contacting references who know the congregation well.
 - Narrative section (composed by PNC)
 - Position description, qualifications, and pastoral skills
(developed in consultation with session and personnel committee)

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- Compensation package for new pastor (developed in consultation with session)

- PNC plans to ensure equal opportunity for service

The COM is responsible to assist the Pastor Nominating Committee to understand its role in implementing the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s commitment to equal opportunity employment. The presbytery may have its own requirements for PNCs as they consider candidates. All candidates should be considered based on the gifts they bring to ministry and not on cultural factors such as sex, race, ethnic background, age, disability, or marital status. The church of Jesus Christ is enriched when we welcome diversity in our leadership.

- PNC shares draft of CIF with COM liaison for helpful suggestions.
- PNC completes CIF and presents to session for approval.
- COM approves the CIF.
- PNC sends an original copy of C.I.F. to presbytery office.
- PNC submits CIF online through the Call Referral System or mails it to
Church Leadership Connection
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, KY 40202-1396.

8. Collecting and screening Personal Information Forms (PIF)

COM liaison meets with PNC for the purpose of:

- Learning how to evaluate potential candidates from PIFs
- Planning for communications with prospective pastors
- Considering the use of supplemental questions
- Learning how to do effective reference checking
- Learning how to do productive interviewing
- Planning for communication with potential pastors, keeping those in whom the PNC is interested informed of the committee's anticipated timeline and process, and informing those no longer under consideration of the committee's decision

Following the meeting:

- PNC develops procedures and criteria for evaluating PIFs
- PNC develops supplemental questions to be sent to candidates in whom they have a serious interest.
- PNC receives PIFs from matching process by Church Leadership Connection, recommendations of others, and self-referrals by interested ministers and candidates
- PNC screens PIFs to determine those it wants to consider further
- PNC communicates with potential pastors by telephone, email, or mail to determine which are interested in consideration
- If the COM requires it, the names of those who remain on the list are submitted to COM for an initial reference check. Then the PNC is cleared to proceed with conversation with the candidates.
- PNC sends supplemental questions to potential pastors and sets a firm date by which all must be received.

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- PNC screens the responses to supplemental questions and determines which potential pastors they wish to interview.

9. Interviewing potential pastors

- Initial interview process
 - check references
 - conduct telephone interviews
 - hear candidates preach in churches they presently serve (Always check to see if she/he is preaching and whether you can visit with pastor after worship)
- After initial interviews, rank the candidates in order of preference.
- Arrange for one or more to visit with PNC in your community.

10. Choosing the nominee

- PNC makes final choice of candidate including finalizing terms of call, and consults with COM liaison.
- PNC determines candidate's willingness to accept call if extended.

11. Making official decisions

- The nominee accepts or declines the call.
- The nominee meets with the COM for their approval.
- PNC asks session to call congregational meeting (notice to be given on two successive Sundays - G-14.0532).
- The PNC presents the selected pastor to the congregation for its approval. Suggestions for the congregational meeting to call a pastor:

Once the PNC has decided on its candidate of choice and the nominee and the COM have agreed, the PNC should notify the session to call a congregational meeting. Public notice of the meeting must be given on two successive Sundays. The moderator of the session or some other minister will preside. In some presbyteries the candidate will preach a sermon during the worship service before the congregational meeting.

At the meeting the PNC will present its nominee and the terms of call; these usually come in two separate motions. It is recommended that the vote for calling the pastor be by written ballot. A majority of the voters who are present and voting is required to elect.

Occasionally there is a minority voting against the motion to call this pastor. Some presbyteries have policies about how to handle such a vote and they may require a certain majority vote to proceed with the call. If there is no presbytery policy, the moderator may ask if the minority will concur in the call (this is not the same as asking for a unanimous consent). If the vote is nearly unanimous or if the majority insists on moving forward with the call, the moderator should send the call to the presbytery with the number voting for and against and any other facts of importance. The nominee should also be informed by the moderator or the PNC of the nature and circumstances of the decision.

- The PNC works with the session to assist the new pastor and the congregation in the transition to new leadership

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- The PNC participates in presenting the new pastor to the presbytery for approval

12. Installing the new pastor

The presbytery installs the new pastor during a worship service in the congregation. (See at W-4.4006) Often the congregation hosts a welcoming reception following the service of installation.

13. Follow up with support after installation

Both the congregation and the presbytery have the responsibility to build relationships of trust and care with the new pastor and her or his family.

Tools to assist the search

- The Office of Vocation (1-888-728-7228 ext 8550) offers two helpful resources for use by PNCs and COMs as they assist congregations during the search for new leadership.
- *On Calling A Pastor* (PDS# OGA-07-090 contains specific directions and information for a PNC during the process. It also contains step-by-step instructions and information about the new computer system and how to use it effectively. Obtain a copy for each member of the PNC you are assisting. It is available for purchase or download at www.pcusa.org/clc
- *On Calling a Pastor* Video. This ten-minute video is a companion piece to "On Calling a Pastor." Order from Presbyterian Distribution Services.(1-800-524-2612)
- Research Services can provide statistics about the church in transition and its community. Membership trends and other information, based on the Stated Clerk's annual report are available on the PCUSA web site at <http://www.pcusa.org/research/index.htm>.

Coordinating with CPM for first call candidates

Adapted from *A Handbook for Committee on Preparation for Ministry Moderators*, 2003
Office of Resourcing Committees on Preparation for Ministry,
100 Witherspoon St., Louisville, KY 40202

The preparation for ministry process

The process of preparation for the Office of Minister of the Word and Sacrament is found in G-14.0400 and may be further detailed in a presbytery's policies. In addition to having earned a degree from a theological institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools, those who wish to be ordained as ministers of Word and Sacrament in the PC(USA) must also fulfill other requirements.

Those who are ready to receive a call must complete the following:

- Time requirements

A person must have been under care for a minimum of two years, that time beginning on the date when she or he was enrolled by the presbytery as an inquirer. The person must have been a candidate for at least one year, that time beginning on the date when he or she was enrolled by the presbytery as a candidate.

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- Process requirements

The person must have progressed properly from church member to inquirer to candidate. The candidate must have had a final assessment by the CPM and certified by the presbytery as ready for examination for ordination, pending a call.

- Educational requirements

The person must have completed both college and seminary education with satisfactory grades, including the study of Greek and Hebrew and their use in exegesis.

- Ordination Examinations

The five Standard Ordination Examinations must have been successfully completed.

- Other requirements of the presbytery or the CPM

Most presbyteries require candidates to complete Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), and additional requirements may be added.

- Final Assessment

The CPM must have completed the final assessment and certified that the candidate has permission to circulate their PIF.

Only after all the requirements have been fulfilled may a candidate proceed to use the services of the Church Leadership Connection and seek a call.

When a PNC indicates their wish to extend a call to a candidate for ministry who has been certified ready to receive a call, the COM and the CPM will coordinate the interviewing process.

If the candidate is from another presbytery, The *Book of Order* (G-14.0481) now states that:

- It is ordinarily the responsibility of the presbytery of call to conduct the examination for ordination.
- Ordinarily, it is the presbytery of care that ordains a candidate. However, the

candidate may request his/her presbytery of care to permit the ordination service to take place within the presbytery of call, and that presbytery may grant such permission when requested by the presbytery of care. In these matters, coordination between presbyteries is critical. It should include not only the moderators of the CPMs and COMs but also the stated clerks. (G-14.0484)

These are steps for a candidate from your presbytery to follow when seeking a call in your presbytery:

- Complete a successful final assessment;
- Receive permission to circulate the PIF from your CPM;
- Go online to <http://www.pcusa.org/clc/forms.htm> and download a copy of a blank PIF;
- Submit completed PIF online to Call Referral Services and notify CPM moderator;
- Initiate conversation with the COM moderator;
- Make contact with the Pastor Nominating Committee through the COM;
- Review the process leading to a call with the COM moderator;
- Prepare for examination by presbytery;

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- The presbytery examines for ordination;
- Select and present names for the ordination and installation administrative commission who will ordain and install the candidate, to presbytery.

If the CPM is presenting a candidate for examination for ordination, and the COM is going to present the same person as a candidate for a position within your presbytery, be sure that the stated clerk puts the CPM on the docket BEFORE the COM. Otherwise, the CPM presentation seems a moot point, the decision to ordain and install already having been made.

These are steps when a candidate under the care of another presbytery is seeking a call in your presbytery:

- Establish ***in advance*** policies that deal with a candidate from another presbytery. You will need to have conversations with the candidate, the CPM in the candidate's presbytery, and the calling congregation;
- Evaluate the candidate's readiness for ordination before a visit to a congregation is made if at all possible;
- Review the policies of your presbytery and make certain she or he meets all the requirements of your presbytery;
- Review key time schedules;
- Before any commitments are made to the PNC or the candidate, initiate a conversation with the CPM of care to ensure the candidate's readiness and suitability for the call for which she or he is under consideration;
- Representatives of both the COM and CPM should be involved in interviewing the candidate.

Be clear who will bring the candidate to the floor of presbytery. The CPM will determine the candidate's readiness to be examined for ordination unless this responsibility is designated to another appropriate committee. The COM determines suitability for a particular call.

Caution: *Policies should be established jointly between CPM and COM and communicated to congregations in order to prevent congregations and candidates from developing unworkable expectations. Look especially carefully at the necessary time components. It is the candidate who suffers when communications between presbytery committees break down.*

Checking references

On what grounds do COMS or PNCs have the right to screen out candidates?

1. Employment as a Presbyterian minister is not a right. Courts have established that the ministries of the Church of Jesus Christ belong to the Church and tasks are assigned to particular persons for the service of its members and the world. The Church must make such assignment responsibly.
2. Our *Book of Order* states, (G-11.0502) "*The committee [on Ministry] shall serve the presbytery in the following ways:
It shall counsel with churches regarding calls for permanent pastoral relations, visiting and counseling with every committee elected to nominate a pastor or*

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associate pastor. It shall advise with the committee regarding the merits, availability, and suitability of any candidate or minister whose name is

contemplated for nomination to the congregation, and shall have the privilege of suggesting names to the committee. No call to a permanent pastoral relationship shall be in order for consideration by the presbytery unless the church has received and considered the committee's counsel before action is taken to issue a call....”

Are there prohibited questions?

Neither civil nor church law mandate prohibited questions. Many Presbyterians who serve on PNCs 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 search committees considering church professionals.

However, as Paul wrote, while all things are possible, not all things are wise. Interview and reference questions should focus on ministry effectiveness only. The PNC wants to know if the person would be appropriate for the position being filled. The COM and the EP or GP want to know if this person would be acceptable in the presbytery. Remember that the person being questioned is forming an opinion about you, the questioner. Think about the impression you want the person to have about your congregation and the presbytery as you decide which questions to ask. It is not unusual for a pastor to close conversation with a congregation as a result of inappropriate questions about non-ministry subjects.

What questions should a pastor nominating committee ask of a reference?

It is appropriate and important to ask questions related to the candidate's skills and experience that relate to the position being filled. Such questions might be:

1. Tell me about _____'s worship leadership.
2. How does _____ deal with conflict?
3. What are some of _____'s strengths and weaknesses?
4. Would you go to _____ seeking pastoral care?
5. Is there anything else about _____ that you would like to share?

It is important to ask references to respond only on the basis of first-hand knowledge. It is usually helpful to tell the reference a bit about the congregation, community, and position for which the candidate is being considered. *On Calling a Pastor* (free - PDS # OGA-07-090 contain additional information about interviewing prospective pastors.

Are there other questions that a COM member or Executive Presbyter should ask?

This reference check is about membership in presbytery (if the prospective pastor is not already a member) and about ministry capabilities in the specific location. The COM member or EP might ask:

1. Why is _____ leaving her/his present position?
2. Are there any things about _____ that negatively affect his ability to do ministry?

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3. Would you welcome _____ to serve in a similar position in your presbytery?
4. Do you know anything about _____ that would be embarrassing to the congregation and presbytery if it became public knowledge?

If you receive a PIF that does not contain the sexual misconduct sign-off section or Stated Clerk's attestation, ask the candidate for a complete PIF or do not consider them further.

What are secondary references?

These are persons who are not listed by the candidate, but are suggested by others or contacted because they are thought to have knowledge of the candidate. Executive Presbyters, Stated Clerks, COM Moderators, and CPM Moderators do NOT fall in this category. They are automatically used as references because of their roles and no authorization is needed from the candidate to consult with them.

Under what circumstances is it appropriate for PNC members to contact secondary references?

Secondary references should only be contacted when the candidate has given permission. **Under no circumstances should a PNC contact members of a pastor's present congregation without her or his permission to do so.**

When a presbytery check reveals negative information, what should COM or staff share with a PNC about a negative reference?

1. If the information leads the COM Moderator or staff to have serious doubts about the candidate's ability to do effective ministry in the particular calling church, they should share those concerns as a consultant, giving specific areas of ministry where they see potential difficulty.
2. If reliable information is of such a serious nature that the candidate should not be considered further the COM must determine whether they are willing to permit the PNC to continue consideration of the candidate. The COM should inform the PNC of its decision quickly.

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***, your state may require you or your presbytery to do a background check on the person you call. Check your state law.

Many presbytery COMs are requiring background checks of all incoming clergy. Churches often do background checks of all persons working with children. Now seminaries are considering background checks of persons entering seminary and CPMs are considering it as a step in the process of coming under care.

There are several types of background checks: criminal, financial, and motor vehicle. Criminal is the most common, but the others produce information that church organizations may find helpful. Each organization must analyze its own needs and concerns. It is important to consider what will be done with the information gathered.

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Some companies are willing to consider a volume discount for the PCUSA. Many presbyteries have negotiated arrangements with vendors. Church insurance companies may be able to get a discount for insured organizations.

Additional information for working with congregations seeking pastors

The importance of interim ministry

A skilled interim pastor not only serves in all pastoral capacities during the transition time, but also helps the congregation deal with the feelings that accompany the departure of a pastor, such as grief, relief, confusion, and anxiety. An interim pastor helps the congregation think carefully about its ministry in the past, present, and future. An interim pastor helps a congregation deal with problems before a new pastor is called so that the new pastor can have as happy and healthy a start as possible. Most important, an interim pastor understands that her or his most important responsibility is to help the congregation prepare to welcome the new pastor so that both the congregation and the new pastor can thrive as they serve together in ministry.

Sometimes multiple staff churches consider assigning head of staff responsibilities to an associate pastor. Sessions making such decisions should be advised that doing so creates role confusion within the congregation and for the associate. It almost inevitably creates difficulties within the staff and congregation upon arrival of the new head of staff.

Some sessions may see the transition time as an opportunity to save money by not using an interim pastor. There may be occasions when it is impossible for a congregation to afford to pay an interim pastor. However, those are congregations that should be encouraged to examine their finances very carefully to be certain that they have the financial resources to call a pastor.

There are congregations who cannot find a suitable interim pastor. In such cases the COM will need to provide extra assistance to the congregation as they move through the transition time toward calling a new pastor.

Sample Covenant For Temporary Pastor

Name of Church: _____

Name of Temporary Pastor: _____

Presbytery of Membership: _____

Service From _____ **To** _____

Review of this covenant prior to renewal or termination will be by the session, the Temporary Pastor, and the presbytery's Committee on Ministry.

Provision for termination of covenant relationship prior to expiration:

30 days notice by either party.

Responsibilities of Pastor (*check those which apply*):

- Lead worship and preach each Sunday
- Administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper
- Moderate session and congregational meetings
- Visit the sick and shut-in
- Lead funeral services upon request
- Other _____

Approximate Time Expectation:: _____ days per week

Compensation:: **Cash salary** \$ _____ for the term of the covenant.

Housing: _____ Free use of manse Yes No

Ministry expenses reimbursed including travel at IRS approved rate.

Vacation - 1 week per quarter

Continuing Education - 1 week every six months

Moderator of Session: _____ **Temporary Pastor:** _____

Date of Session Action: _____

COM Representative: _____

Sample Covenant With An Interim Pastor

This Covenant Between the Session of _____ (Name of Church, Town) and _____ (Interim Pastor) is for the purpose of providing interim pastoral services.

This relationship shall begin effective _____ (date) until _____ (no more than 12 months) at which time it may be renewed if necessary with the concurrence of session, Interim Pastor and Presbytery's Committee on Ministry.

(Name of Pastor) will become a member of (Name) Presbytery upon release from his/her present presbytery and acceptance by (Name) Presbytery.

It is understood that the Interim Pastor is accountable to the presbytery through the Committee on Ministry and will provide written reports about his or her ministry every _____ months and participate with this Committee and the Session in an evaluation of this ministry in _____ months.

It is understood that the Interim Pastor is not eligible to be called as Pastor.

It is agreed that this covenant may be terminated upon (30, 60, 90) days' written notice by either the Interim Pastor or by the session. If terminated by the session prior to the end of the covenant period, compensation will continue for _____ days after the date of termination of ministry.

Goals for this ministry are to work with the congregation on the five "developmental tasks" of interim ministry:

- 1) Coming to terms with history,
- 2) Discovering a new congregational identity
- 3) Facilitating shifts in lay leadership and changes in congregational power structures
- 4) Rethinking and renewing denominational linkages
- 5) Preparing for new pastoral leadership and a new future.

The Interim Pastor will fulfill the following responsibilities.:

- Provide spiritual and administrative leadership for the congregation.
- Lead worship and administer the sacraments.
- Officiate at weddings and funerals;
- Provide pastoral care for the congregation and for all who seek comfort and guidance through the church.
- Serve as moderator of the session;
- Serve as head of staff;
- Assist boards and committees in their ministry.

- Train newly elected officers and assist in preparing persons for membership.
- Participate in the presbytery.
- Assist the presbytery consultant in the conduct of a congregational mission study.
- Assist in the preparation of the Church Information Form.

The Interim Pastor will not be involved in the work of the Pastor Nominating Committee beyond providing opportunities for them to communicate with the session and congregation about their progress.

The compensation for this agreement shall be that in TERMS OF CALL below.

Salary\$
Housing\$
Pension and Medical BenefitsFull
Moving ExpensesFull
Vacation1 week per quarter
Continuing Education.\$ (reimbursed as used)

and 1 week every six months

Reimbursement of Ministry Expenses including

Automobile.....\$0. per mile (reimbursed as used)

(Name of Pastor), Interim Pastor	Clerk of Session
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For the Committee on Ministry	Date
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Pastoral Call Form

Presbytery of _____ Presbyterian Church (USA)

The _____ Presbyterian Church of

_____ (City, State),

Being well satisfied with your qualifications for ministry and confident that we have been led to you by the Holy Spirit as one whose service will be profitable to the spiritual interests of our church and fruitful for the Kingdom of our Lord, earnestly and solemnly calls you,

_____ to

undertake the office of _____ (Pastor, Associate Pastor) of this congregation, beginning _____ promising you in the discharge of your duty all proper support, encouragement and allegiance in the Lord.

That you may be free to devote full time (part-time) to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament among us, we promise and obligate ourselves to provide you the following annually:

Cash Salary	\$ _____
Supplement for Social Security Tax	\$ _____
Foregone interest on below-market loan	\$ _____
TOTAL income reported to IRS	\$ _____
Housing (manse and/or amt. of housing allowance)	\$ _____
Utilities Allowance	\$ _____
Full medical, pension, disability, and death coverage under the Board of Pensions	\$ _____
Other benefits:	
Deferred Compensation	\$ _____
Medical/Dental reimbursement allowance	\$ _____
Paid vacation leave of _____ weeks annually	
Paid continuing education leave of _____ weeks annually	
Cumulative up to _____ weeks	
Moving expenses	\$ _____

It is understood that the following expenses of ministry will be reimbursed through an accountable plan:

Travel expense at \$ _____ per mile (IRS allowable rate is recommended)	\$ _____
Continuing education reimbursement allowance	\$ _____

We promise and obligate ourselves to review with you annually the adequacy of this compensation.

In testimony whereof we have subscribed our names this _____ day of _____ (Year)

Having moderated the congregational meeting which extended this call for ministerial services, I do certify that the call has been made in all respect according to the rules laid down in the Form of Government, and that the persons who signed the foregoing call were authorized to do so by vote of the congregation.

(Signed) _____
Moderator of the Congregational Meeting

Certification of Call

By Presbytery of Call

By the Presbytery of _____

This call has been reviewed by the **Committee on Ministry**. The committee recommends that the presbytery approve this call.

Date of action _____ (Signed) _____
COM Moderator

This call was approved by the Presbytery of _____
(through action taken by its Committee as authorized by G-11.0502h)

Date of action _____ (Signed) _____
Stated Clerk

By Presbytery of Care or Present Call

This call has been reviewed by the Committee on (Ministry or Preparation for Ministry). The committee recommends that the presbytery find it expedient to release _____ to accept this call.

Date of action _____ (Signed) _____
Stated Clerk

By Candidate

This is to certify that I have received and accepted the call.

Date of acceptance _____
Signature

Section 5

ORDINATION - Joseph D. Small – Office of Theology and Worship

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.

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Ordination to other than installed positions

Probably most candidates are ordained as minister of the Word and Sacrament to an installed position as pastor in a congregation. But a presbytery may choose to ordain a person to a temporary pastoral position or to another type of validated ministry. Ultimately the decision should be based on what will advance the presbytery's mission and ministry. The call should be for service to a church or other work in the mission of the church that is acceptable to the candidate and the presbytery.

Membership in presbytery and validated ministries

Each presbytery must have a policy to guide its decisions about what constitutes a validated ministry

Membership designations

An active member (G-11.0406a) is a minister of Word and Sacrament who has been admitted to the presbytery in accordance with G-11.0401, and is now engaged in ministry that complies with all of the criteria in G-11.0403 without exception. An active member may be engaged in

- a validated ministry within congregations of the church (G-11.0409),
- in a validated ministry in other service of this church (G-11.0410),
- in a validated ministry in service beyond the jurisdiction of this church (G-11.0411),
- or may be honorably retired (G-11.0412).

An active member is entitled to take part in the meetings of the presbytery and to speak, vote, and hold office. (G-11.0406a)

A member-at-large (G-11.0406b) is a minister of the Word and Sacrament who has previously been admitted to the presbytery or another presbytery as an active member, 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-11.0403. A minister may be designated a member-at-large because he or she is limited in his or her ability to engage in a ministry fulfilling all of the criteria for a validated ministry because of family responsibilities or other individual circumstances which presbytery recognizes as important. A member-at-large shall comply with as many of the criteria in G-11.0403 as possible and shall be encouraged to become a parish associate in a congregation.

A member-at-large is entitled to take part in the meetings of the presbytery and to speak, vote, and hold office. The status of each member-at-large may be granted by the presbytery upon the minister's application and shall be reviewed annually. (G-11.0406b)

An Inactive member (G-11.0406c) is a minister of the Word and Sacrament who has previously been admitted to the presbytery or another presbytery as an active member, but is now voluntarily engaged in an occupation that does not comply with all of the criteria in G-11.0403. The presbytery may, at the minister's request or on its own initiative after notifying the minister in person or by certified mail at the last known

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address, determine that the minister's category of membership is that of inactive member.

An inactive member is not entitled to take part in the meetings of the presbytery or to speak, vote, hold office, or serve on committees, except that the inactive member may speak when the matter under consideration concerns that minister.

The continued status of each inactive member shall be reviewed annually up to three years. If at the end of three years the minister has not been restored to active membership or membership-at-large, the presbytery shall delete that person's name from the appropriate roll of presbytery. (G-6.0600)

A presbytery shall determine the ministers of the Word and Sacrament who shall be its continuing members (G-11.0403). This is an important assertion! The presbytery has the authority to decide its members. In making this determination the presbytery shall be guided by written criteria developed by the presbytery for validation of ministries within its bounds. Each presbytery (appropriately with involvement by Committee on Ministry) must develop criteria to guide decisions about membership. The process of developing criteria can be enriching to those involved as they grapple with theological and practical issues about ministry. These criteria shall be based upon the description of the nature of ordained office found in G-6.0100 and G-6.0200 and the following standards (G-11.0403):

a. *The ministry of continuing members shall be in demonstrable 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.*

A Presbytery mission statement is needed to determine if a particular ministry is in "conformity with the mission of God's people." This statement should be as comprehensive as possible, flexible, dynamic, periodically assessed and modified as new concerns emerge or new human resources become available. It should include:

- Ministry within its congregations;
- Mission projects and other forms of ministry that the presbytery believes it should address, for example, schools, day-care projects, chaplaincies and pastoral care, pastoral counseling and pastoral education services and health care facilities and services;
- Ministries in other service of this church that are related by organization, accountability, or structure to governing bodies, agencies, mission and ministry units or seminaries, and to interdenominational organizations such as councils of churches, CROP, and the Heifer Project;
- Ministries beyond the jurisdiction of this church such as nondenominational or other service, for instance organizations dealing with housing programs, the farm crisis, drug and alcohol addiction or marriage and family problems.

b. *The ministry shall be one that serves others, aids others, and enables the ministries of others.*

This criterion implies that the work being validated is oriented toward serving people and enabling them to serve other people. Conversely, it implies that a validated

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ministry is not primarily concerned with profit-making activities. This does not suggest that a person in a profit-making position cannot perform ministry; many laypersons do. Nor does it imply that the minister cannot be employed in a profit-making enterprise. The primary functions of one's work, however, should relate to the service of people rather than to the production of goods or of profits. In this way the special gifts and training of a minister of Word and Sacrament provide a theological perspective.

A distinction should be made between validated ministry and the secular work that a Tentmaking minister might do. In the case of many tentmakers, a part-time ministry is validated, but secular work (such as being a farmer or teacher) is not.

c. The ministry shall give evidence of theologically informed fidelity to God's Word. This will normally require the Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent and the completion of the requirements for ordination set forth in G-14.0482.

Presbytery needs to determine where theologically informed skills are needed to carry out its mission. This implies that work to which a continuing member is called makes active and effective use of the biblical and theological training that is required for ordination. Normally this means that such work should provide opportunities to articulate the Christian faith. If a proposed calling does not provide such opportunity, questions should be raised as to whether it can be a validated ministry.

Committees on Ministry and Committees on Preparation for Ministry need to evaluate the relationship between the Master of Divinity degree and the meaning of "theological fidelity." This should be done on the basis of the requirements of the ministry to be performed, and not on the basis of the individual under consideration. Being theologically informed and faithful to the theology need not be equated with possessing the M.Div. degree.

d. The ministry shall be carried on in accountability for its character and conduct to the presbytery and to organizations, agencies, and institutions.

Accountability here implies that a member of presbytery is answerable to the presbytery for agreed-upon end results. It is clearly inadequate for a presbytery to exercise its accountability relationship solely by collecting and reviewing annual report forms. At the very least, accountability to presbytery should involve a face-to-face review of the ministry of every continuing member not less than once every three years.

Presbytery should provide support that enables the person to carry out the ministry with maximum effectiveness. (For ministers in congregations this support is provided in part through triennial visits to sessions and regular visits with ministers by the COM.) Persons serving in validated ministries might be given periodic opportunity to interpret their ministries to the presbytery so as to enlarge the presbytery's horizons. They should be included in the COM's pastoral care for all ministers of the Word and Sacrament.

The presbytery should also decide whether it would validate ministries for which there is no compensation. While neither the amount of time spent in the particular ministry nor the amount of compensation should be prime considerations in applying the criteria for validation, it must be noted that lack of compensation and large time demands can be a means of misusing people and abusing the system of validation.

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e. The ministry shall include responsible participation in the deliberations and work of the presbytery and in the worship and service of a congregation.

This criterion suggests that some minimum standards should be established by presbytery for attendance at presbytery meetings. One who is never present at meetings can hardly be described as an "active" member. Attending a committee meeting or working on a task force of the presbytery is sometimes seen as an adequate substitute for attending a stated meeting of the presbytery itself. The working hours of some specialized ministers do not permit them to attend presbytery meetings. Some may lose money when they are not at work. These factors must be considered when requirements for presbytery attendance are decided.

Worship and service in a congregation also needs to be considered. Does this mean a congregation of this presbytery? Would work and worship in a church of another denomination qualify? Most presbyteries assume that a Presbyterian minister's participation should be in a Presbyterian (U.S.A.) congregation. Fair judgments about a minister's accountability and participation in the life of the church and the presbytery require establishing some standards by which to make these decisions. Our Form of Government properly leaves such matters to the presbytery itself.

If not validated ministry, what other options?

If one or more of the criteria cannot be met, the continuing member should ask to be designated either a member-at-large (G-11.0406 b) or an inactive member (G11.0406 c) of presbytery. If presbytery is unwilling to grant this, the continuing member should seek release from the exercise of ordained office (G-6.0600) until he or she receives a call to ministry that fulfills all five criteria.

Restoration to the exercise of the office is possible without re-ordination by:

- Application to and approval of the presbytery that granted release,
- Reaffirmation of ordination vows, and
- Resumption of a ministry that qualifies for continuing active membership in presbytery.

These steps provide for ease in movement and are in no way judgmental. They are permissive in that re-ordination is not necessary. People should be encouraged to use them.

Additional information about validated ministries is found in the Book of Order, G-6.0203 (Teachers, Chaplains, and Others), G-11.0409, (Service in Congregations of This Church) G-11.0410 (In Other Service of This Church) and G-11.0411 (In Service Beyond the Jurisdiction of The Church).

Examining ministers for membership

The Book of Order in G-11.0402 states:

The presbytery, through its appropriate committee, shall examine each minister or candidate who seeks membership in it on his or her Christian faith and views of theology, the Sacraments, and the government of this Church, except as provided in G-14.0481.

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In addition the following statement is found in G-11.0502h:

It (COM) may be given authority by the presbytery to find in order calls issued by churches, to approve and present calls for services of ministers, to approve the examination of ministers transferring from other presbyteries required by G-11.0402....

Thus the *Book of Order* is flexible in its approach, allowing an "appropriate committee" to do the examination, and in using the word "may" with regard to the Committee on Ministry's responsibility in this process.

Who does the examination?

In most presbyteries the COM or a sub-committee of COM does the examination. In some cases the Committee on Preparation for Ministry because of its expertise in the examination of candidates is given the responsibility. In other cases a separate Examination Committee carries this responsibility.

What different types of interviews are possible?

- The most common type of interview COMs face is **ministers from other presbyteries** who have or expect to have a call to a church within the bounds of the presbytery.
- A second common type of examination is that of **a candidate** who has or expects to have a call from a church within the bounds of the presbytery.
- **Ministers from other denominations**
- **Honorably retired** pastors may seek membership in another presbytery. Presbyteries differ on principles for handling the examinations of honorably retired ministers. Some reason that a more "relaxed" examination should be in order for the honorably retired. Others believe the examination should be consistent with examinations of other ministers since the honorably retired may later seek to serve as an interim, parish associate or other position within a church of the presbytery. Presbyteries may not discriminate against receiving honorably retired ministers as a class because they have too many trying to locate within their bounds.
- **At-large and inactive members of presbytery** may apply for membership in another presbytery if circumstances (position or residence) require it. Both sending and receiving presbyteries must approve the change. (G-11.0401,.0413) It is wise to examine these ministers as you would any other member of presbytery. In addition, for the care and well being of these ministers, the Committee on Ministry should ask about the circumstances leading to their at large or inactive status and help them to set goals for working toward active status. The COM should give special attention to their emotional and spiritual needs and is wise to assign a "friend" or "mentor" to work with them and to monitor their progress toward their goals. Care should be exercised to see that the examination before the COM or on the floor of presbytery does not become negative in its impact on their progress toward their goals.
- **Persons who have previously laid aside ordination** are required to re-enter through the same presbytery that granted release. (G-6.0600c) It is wise for the

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COM or other appropriate committee to hold a preliminary interview with the person, diligently search the record to objectively ascertain the circumstances leading up to the minister's release from office, and having satisfied itself that everything is in order, give that person permission and assistance in filling out a Personal Information Form and permission to circulate that form in search of a call.

When does the examination occur?

The examination usually takes place after the PNC has chosen a candidate who has responded affirmatively and a few weeks prior to the congregational vote upon the call. The call is not complete until the COM has approved the minister for membership in the presbytery.

How shall we determine what questions to ask?

The general categories mentioned in G-11.0402 are Christian faith, views of theology, sacraments and the government of the church. To consider more specific issues the COM may wish to design a process for reaching agreement about what specific questions will be asked and how to proceed.

Think together about the interview process

Who will sit where? Who will ask what? What additional written materials will be required of the applicant beforehand? Consider a core group of questions that may be asked of every minister. Consider some optional questions that may be asked in certain circumstances but not in all circumstances (such as of specialized ministers). Consider the advisability of allowing redirect questions and questions created by the specific situation.

In no case should members of the COM or other examining committee allow their egos to get in the way. Heated debate with an applicant is not called for. If there will be an interview on the floor of presbytery, counsel the applicant if you believe there are omissions in their statement of faith or phrases used that may trigger high intensity reactions from members of presbytery. The applicant may choose to do nothing about your warning, but at least you have shown them that you are concerned and helpful.

What additional papers might be required?

- Personal Information Form
- A Statement of Faith - usually one page.
- A Statement of Faith Journey - usually one page.
- Views on Sacraments and/or polity - sometimes this is required as part of the Statement of Faith.

A postscript about care in the examination process

Some ministers share “war stories” about bad personal experiences. Sometimes these experiences happen because of racism, sexism, theological exclusivity and numerous other reasons. Some men and women have misused the examination process as a means of advancing their own theological or social views or by asking some persons to prove their qualifications beyond what would be expected of others.

Be courteous, kind, thoughtful and fair in your dealings with examinations for presbytery membership, remembering that the person you are talking with is likely to

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become a presbytery colleague.

Ministers of other denominations

Formula partners – See Section 4

Transfer of membership to PCUSA

Ministers of other denominations who are interested in becoming a minister of the Word and Sacrament in the PCUSA should begin the process of inquiry by consulting with the COM in their area to determine whether or not there might be the possibility of a call for them in a PCUSA congregation within the presbytery. In order to become a PCUSA minister, a minister of another denomination (including Formula Partners) must:

- Be an ordained minister and provide evidence of being in good standing;
- Have a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university;
- Have a theological degree from an institution acceptable to the presbytery of call; and,
- Pass PCUSA standard ordination exams (see G-11.0404b for exception).
- It is only at this point that the minister of another denomination may enter a Personal Information Form online in CLC for referral.
- If a call to appropriate work within the PCUSA is extended, the minister of another denomination must then
 - Be examined and approved by the presbytery of call on their Christian faith, their knowledge of theology, and the system of government of the PCUSA, and, at the discretion of the presbytery, in other subjects
 - Answer the ordination questions (W-4.4003) in the affirmative;
 - Furnish evidence that they have been officially removed from the rolls of the other denomination.

Under certain circumstances, the requirements listed above may be waived. But only the presbytery of call can grant waivers to the requirements listed in the Book of Order.

Waiver of requirements (see G.14.0470 - .0473 and G-11.0404b.)

- The presbytery shall not waive any of the foregoing requirements except in extraordinary cases.
- It shall make an exception only by 3/4 vote of the members of the presbytery present.
- Ministers of other Reformed denominations (such as Reformed Church in America) may be exempted from taking standard ordination exams if they have been ordained for five or more years and if the presbytery approves by a 2/3 vote as above.

REMEMBER:

1. Each Presbytery decides the circumstances for receiving ministers of other denominations.
2. A Presbytery is under no obligation to permit ministers of other denominations to serve within its bounds.

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3. The information below refers ONLY to ministers ordained in other denominations. A process to exempt candidates from passing ordination examinations may be utilized as described at G-14.0472.
4. Recognizing the previous ordination of a minister of another Christian denomination is referenced in G-15.0202.

Immigrant ministers

The increasing diversity of our nation means that many more presbyteries will be working with immigrant fellowships and their leaders. It is important that COMs are sensitive to the cultural differences related to ethnicity, nationality, and native language.

It is also important for the presbytery to be accurately informed about current immigration law. Knowing ahead of time that the potential pastor/leader has the necessary work documents can avoid heartache later.

Presbytery should determine the pastor's immigration status. If the pastor is a citizen, an appropriate document to determine status is a U.S. birth certificate, U.S. passport or Naturalization certificate. If the pastor is a permanent resident, a resident alien card ("green card") should be available. If the pastor is a non-immigrant, a copy of an I-94 arrival/departure record should show which non-immigrant category the pastor had upon entering the U.S. If the immigrant pastor does not have an enabling work document, efforts can be made by the church or presbytery to sponsor the pastor for an immigration benefit allowing the pastor to work and receive a salary.

Questions regarding immigration may be directed to the Manager of Immigration Issues, Office of the General Assembly at 888-728-7228, extension 5372 or Julia.thorne@pcusa.org. Information about working with New Immigrant Ministries is found in Section 3.

Pastoral care of church professionals

Committees on Ministry are well aware of stresses of ministry and the ways those stresses are visible in church professionals and in the congregations they serve. Board of Pensions statistics about clergy who suffer from stress-related illnesses are one proof of a reality that COMs know because of their work with individual ministers and congregations. Stress in ministry has multiple causes, some the result of changes in the larger culture, some stemming from an individual's own unique life experiences. A Committee on Ministry will not be able to address all causes of stress!

However, Committees on Ministry have the power and the responsibility to address one of the commonest causes of stress: a sense of isolation. Providing pastoral care for church professionals is not a luxury to be enjoyed if there is time when everything else is done; it is an essential component of the Committee on Ministry's goal of nurturing and supporting healthy ministry in the presbytery.

Regular visitation

Ministers are not members of a congregation but of the presbytery itself. They therefore look to presbytery for pastoral care. The Committee on Ministry needs to be visibly and explicitly concerned for the care and support of these ministers and their families as well as all other church professionals within its bounds and their families. The *Book of Order* says that the Committee on Ministry is to visit ministers regularly.

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While most executive presbyters and COMs take this regular pastoral contact with ministers very seriously, other pressing responsibilities often push to the forefront. The COM must plan for a systematic way to provide regular contact with all minister members of the presbytery and special support for those who are new in ministry or under special stress.

Key questions that must be asked in developing a strategy for visitation are:

- What has been our practice to date?
- How do we define the word "visit" and the word "regular"? Do all visits have to be face to face? Can some be made on the telephone?
- Who and how many persons will be involved with each visitation?
- Who will develop the assignment schedule? Will a report be made? If so, what form will this report take and to whom will it go?
- If there is no written report made, what means do we have of ensuring accountability?
- How will we protect confidentiality?

Models for pastoral care in the presbytery

Pastor to pastors

Some presbyteries have called a full time salaried professional to this position. Other presbyteries have invited one or more retired pastors to serve as volunteer Pastor to Pastors. In these situations the "voluntary" Pastor to Pastors is usually provided with a reimbursable travel and expense account. Typical expenses may be to take a minister of the presbytery out to lunch or for coffee while they talk things over, to send a greeting card, to travel to the hospital to visit a sick minister, etc. A variation of the Pastor to Pastors is the Pastor to Pastors' Families. In this case the emphasis is on supporting clergy families who often have no pastor other than the one who is a member of their own family.

Colleague-consultant

For all new ministers coming into the presbytery as well as newly ordained ministers, some presbyteries provide a Colleague-Consultant. This person should be experienced, know the area thoroughly and be able to help the newcomer to find his/her way around the area and the presbytery. This person may become a friend to the newcomer.

COM liaison

In presbyteries using the Permanent Liaison Generalist approach to COM organization each member of the COM is assigned responsibilities with certain particular churches. The Permanent Liaison becomes a source of care for the parish minister. By repeated visits to the particular church the Permanent Liaison becomes known to the pastor and a trust relationship is formed. Occasions such as the triennial visit may provide a framework through which needs of the parish minister may be discovered and met.

Friendship/support collegiums

This is an ad hoc group, which works under the direction of the COM. Their responsibility is to meet with all new members of presbytery, to be a friend to ministers on the fringe of presbytery or who are going through a conflict or malfeasance

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situations. Confidentiality is maintained and only general statistics and new project ideas are shared with the COM.

Newly ordained pastors

Newly ordained pastors can especially benefit from the pastoral care of the COM and of experienced ministers in the presbytery. 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. Becoming a pastor is the result of the holy relationship between God, the congregation, and the newly ordained pastor. The transition from seminary to pastoral leadership can be stressful. Extra attention to the needs of new pastor can be an important part of the COM's pastoral ministry, and a way to avoid longer-term problems for the new pastor and for the congregation she or he serves.

New pastor seminars

New Pastor Seminars are programs for newly ordained ministers. These are continuing education events focused on such issues as transitions, pastoral identity, understanding congregations, and balancing ministry and personal life. The new pastors gather periodically during their first years of ministry and, in so doing, develop peer support and make valuable connections with experienced mentor/pastors.

Some synods sponsor seminars for new pastors. In other cases presbyteries provide this service. If there is no synod- or presbytery-sponsored seminar available for newly ordained pastors in your presbytery, you may want to consider offering one, either for your own presbytery, or in partnership with other nearby presbyteries.

Mentors

In some presbyteries, the COM selects one or more experienced members of presbytery to act as an advisor or mentor to new ministers. Consultation with the minister as well as the session personnel committee is recommended. The mentor relationship may last for one or two years. Some remuneration and/or reimbursed expenses are allowed in some presbyteries for the mentors.

Partnering with pastors and sessions for entrance into the first call

It is in the best interest of the COM to help newly ordained pastors develop healthy and effective relationships with the sessions and congregations they serve.

- Assistance to candidates seeking a first call and to congregations considering calling a pastor in his or her first call are essential. Both candidates and congregations will benefit from help in discerning "appropriateness of fit."
- Intentional support and guidance at the beginning of pastoral relationships will help avoid painful dissolutions later.
- Pastoral care of all pastors is important. Pastoral care for those in their first call is essential. Newly ordained pastors are especially likely to report difficulties related to loneliness, alienation, conflicts in the congregations and financial problems.
- Newly ordained pastors need assistance in processing the learning that can only happen after some experience serving as a pastor.

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The 213th General Assembly (2001) approved the report and recommendations of a work group of the General Assembly Council regarding four elements of entry into ministry being faced by Ministers of Word and Sacrament in their first call. Those elements are:

- The minister—with hopes, fears, ambitions, hobbies, family, church background, spiritual disciplines, beliefs, lifestyle, moral standards, and image of self as leader;
- The congregation—with its history, ethos, programs, status in the community, relation to the denomination, and expectations of its pastor;
- The dynamic interaction of people within the congregation and with the pastor, which makes each church situation unique;
- The conflicts that arise as part of church life.

The COM would be wise to provide for participation of newly ordained Ministers of Word and Sacrament in a program that will help them build a healthy first pastoral relationship by addressing the four issues listed above. Many new pastors also find it helpful to have an experienced pastor as mentor who can provide wise counsel, careful listening, and practical assistance as the newly ordained minister learns how to be a pastor.

Recent research indicates that new pastors are most helped by regular, frequent (two or more times a year) meetings with their peers and with skilled, experienced teachers and/or mentors. These may be in regional seminars or local support groups. Opportunities to reflect on the realities of ministry and to learn together will help the newly ordained clergy gain:

- 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.

The Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Thanks to the Board of Pensions which prepared the following for inclusion in this Handbook.

A supportive resource to committees on ministry

Because the Board's mission is to provide benefits and financial assistance to Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) pastors, employees and their families, it can help the COM in its role as the steward of pastoral relationships. Both the Board and the COM are among those called to serve in times of transition or crisis when sickness, disability or death alters life's pattern for church workers.

You can help the Board by being sure that the Board receives appropriate information on time and that people know the services available to them. For example, you can

- assure that new pastors and their families are enrolled in the Benefits Plan,
- help family members receive death benefits when they need them,
- remind pastors in need that mental health counseling resources are available,
- share information with churches about Vacancy Dues that help support the Medicare Supplement for retired church workers, or

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- alert church treasurers to the resources for them on the Board Web site.

The Board of Pensions administers pension, medical, disability, and death benefits as well as optional benefits such as dental, additional death benefits, 403(b)(9) investment opportunities, long-term care insurance, and more. Members may use the employee assistance program, enroll in health and wellness programs, and attend educational programs including seminars on financial issues and planning for younger members and pre-retirement planning for members and spouses 50 years and older.

In addition, the Board's Assistance Program helps individuals cope with financial difficulties and pastors better serve their ministry. This program is funded entirely by gifts, legacies, endowment income and half of the Christmas Joy Offering.

The Board continues to design and test programs that support pastors and church workers in their ministry. The *Report on Clergy Recruitment and Retention* identified some issues that are of particular concern to the Board.

You are invited to use the resources of the Board:

- visit the Web site at www.pensions.org
- call the Board at 800-773-7752 (800-PRESPLAN), and
- call your Regional Representative as listed in the Presbyterian Planning Calendar.

The Board also has many publications you may want to request or download from www.pensions.org including

- *Understanding Effective Salary*
- *Information for Members Planning to Retire*
- *Social Security and the Benefits Plan for Ministers and Churches*
- *Tax Guide for Ministers and Churches, Richard R. Hammar, an annual publication*
- *Federal Reporting Requirements for Churches, Richard R. Hammar, an annual publication*

Compensation for ministers

A theological and polity reference framework

So our faith is robustly material, profoundly spiritual. It urges that enough of this world's goods be granted for the dignity of every human creature. It urges that we be weaned from the goods of this world to fix our life solely on the will of God. And however the Church settles the issue of "compensation," it must attend to those matters which must always be resolved in tension with each other. To glorify God is not a heavenly, spiritual or religious activity, as though the glory of God could be compartmentalized.

Report of the General Assembly Advisory Committee on Churchwide Compensation to the 213th General Assembly (2000),

An essay entitled "Theology and Principles of Compensation" is found in [A Study of the Theology of Compensation](#) (Study Guide Included), Office of the General Assembly, PC(USA), 1983,1985. Also included is the Report of the Task Force on the

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United Presbyterian Compensation Plan, Theological and Ethical Reflections on Compensation and several appendices. (Available on line. PDS #OGA88039)

The *Book of Order* enumerates the provision of equitable compensation as a responsibility of the Session (G-10.0102m) and directs the presbytery to *provide encouragement, guidance, and resources to its member churches in the areas of...equitable compensation...;* (G-11.0103f).

In addition presbytery has the responsibility and power “*to establish minimum compensation requirements for all pastoral calls*” (G-11.0103n) *and to see that all compensation “meets or exceeds any minimum requirements of the presbytery in effect when the call is made.”* (G-14.0534).

Compensation review

Each session is required to review the adequacy of a pastor's personal compensation and to establish full reimbursement of their professional business related expenses each year. (See also *Handbook* section “*Annual Reviews of Ministry*” to put compensation review in context)

Factors to consider in compensation:

- Presbyterian churches promise to pay their pastors fairly and to provide for their welfare as they work among the people of the congregation during the pastor's installation service. This varies according to geographic location.
- A merit percentage increase should be added to the cost of living to reflect the increased level of competence demonstrated in the pastor's job performance, years of experience in the ministry, years in the current pastorate, advanced degrees, special skills, and exceptional service.
- A pastor's compensation should compare favorably to other professionals in the community and throughout the larger church.
- In parts of the country where housing costs are exceptionally high, it may be necessary for the congregation to enter into a shared equity agreement with the pastor to allow her or him to purchase a suitable home.

Previous compensation plans generally accepted by the Presbyterian Church suggest that pastors have similar qualifications and work expectations to a high school principal, most members of the legal profession and many middle management positions.

In its concern and advocacy for adequate compensation for ministers, the Committee on Ministry should also consider the adequacy of compensation for other staff as well. The ministry of Christ's Church is not well served when serious inequities exist. The Committee on Ministry has the responsibility (G-11.0103n.) to establish guidelines for compensation and benefits for Certified Christian Educators employed by the churches of the presbytery. The session of a congregation has the responsibility “*to provide for... the annual review of the adequacy of compensation for all staff, including all employees.*” (G-10.0102n).

Housing arrangements

Ministers of the Word and Sacrament are one of the few groups for whom the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) allows a housing exclusion. This means that the portion of the minister's income that is used for housing expenses and/or a manse is not

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taxable income, but it is not exempt from social security tax. The amount of money allocated as Housing Allowance may not exceed the fair rental value of the housing including furnishings and utilities.

Resources:

Tax Guide for Ministers and Churches, Richard R. Hammar

Federal Reporting Requirements for Churches, Richard R. Hammar

Benefits Administrative Handbook

Understanding Effective Salary

Available from: The Board of Pensions (PCUSA) www.pcusa.pensions.org or 1-800-773-7752 .

Compensation components

Compensation for pastors should ordinarily include:

- Cash salary
- Manse value, if provided
- Housing and/or utility allowance
- Full medical, pension, disability and death benefits through the Board of Pensions
- Professional reimbursable expenses
 - Travel expenses
 - Continuing Education expenses
 - Other expenses
- Paid continuing education leave of 2 weeks annually, cumulative to 6 weeks
- Moving expenses, if the pastor is newly called to a position

Compensation for pastors may also include:

- Deferred Compensation (403b, section 125 plan)
- Social Security Offset, if any
- Other benefits, if any

Professional development

Helping ministers continue to grow

Presbyterians have always placed a high value on having a well-educated clergy. Ministers have a responsibility to continue to learn and grow after seminary graduation – intellectually, spiritually, and professionally. Committees on ministry will want to be especially attentive to the first five years of ministry, to pastors at mid-life, and to pastors in transition to retirement.

Committees on Ministry can help ministers grow by:

- Insuring that all calls contain both time and funds for professional development.
- Emphasizing the need and expectation for all ministers to engage in regular professional development.
- Monitoring the use of time and funds for professional development. Some COMs require a yearly report from all ministers as to their use of professional development time and funds. They then counsel with those who are not growing professionally, as well as sharing with the presbytery the use of this time and these funds.

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- Promoting the use of Sabbatical leaves. As pastorates grow longer it is more and more important to have a Sabbatical leave built into calls. Some presbyteries are insisting that ministers after seven years of service receive a three-month Sabbatical leave. Research is showing that these Sabbatical leaves are important for the health of long pastorates. Several publications from the Alban Institute (*Clergy Renewal: The Alban Guide to Sabbatical Planning* by Richard Bullock and Richard J. Brueshoff, 2000 and *Sabbaticals* by Melissa Bane Sever, 2002) may be helpful in preparing for sabbaticals. Among the issues congregational leaders need to address are:
 - Financing a sabbatical including funding temporary leadership for the congregation(s). Some calls include a provision for a certain amount of money to be set aside yearly and saved for this purpose.
 - Developing a plan for the use of the sabbatical by both the ministry professional and the congregation. A year is about the right time to plan a sabbatical.
 - Securing pastoral leadership for the congregation(s) during the sabbatical.
 - Planning for re-entry following the sabbatical.
 - Developing a plan and a timeline for reports to the session and the congregation by the ministry professional on the use of the sabbatical.
- Providing professional development events, to meet the needs of ministers as they move through the developmental continuum. It is important to work with providers of services to coordinate services.
- Encouraging ministers and their spouses to attend seminars sponsored by the Board of Pensions.

The above article was drawn from the work of The Advisory Committee on Professional Development.

Resources

Bullock, Richard and Richard J. Brueshoff, *Clergy Renewal: the Alban Guide to Sabbatical Planning*, Alban Institute, 2000.

Hands, Donald R. and Wayne Fehr, *Spiritual Wholeness for Clergy: A New Psychology of Intimacy with God, Self and Others*, Alban Institute, 1994.

A sample copy of a Sabbatical Leave Policy for presbyteries and congregations is included at the end of this section.

Annual reviews of ministry

In order to support and encourage healthy ministry, a COM can very helpfully encourage sessions and personnel committees to schedule regular reviews of ministry. These are not only an analysis of the work and accomplishments of the pastor and other staff. Rather, a ministry review includes the work of the entire congregation and its leadership.

Ministry is not a one-person show! No pastor, no matter how gifted, no matter how hard-working, no matter how spiritual, is able to do ministry all by herself or himself. Ministry is a collaborative effort in which a pastor plays an important role, but not the only important role. Therefore, it is important for a periodic ministry review of the work done by all parties, the pastor, other staff, session and congregation to be considered

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apart from annual performance reviews, which should also be considered apart from annual compensation reviews.

Ministry review

An important component of a healthy pastor-congregation relationship is the willingness to periodically assess the effectiveness of ministry with the recognition that ministry is a shared function of minister and members. Each year the pastor and the session need to evaluate how they have worked together to achieve their mutual goals for ministry during the preceding year. This facilitates a positive climate where the pastor and all church officers can make adjustments in allocating their energy and time as effectively as possible. Every three to five years, a session retreat or congregational mission study should be considered as a way to discern God's call to the congregation and the pastor for the next phase of their ministry together.

Performance review

An annual performance review of the pastor's service in the light of the ministry goals of the congregation should be conducted by the Personnel Committee of the Session. This is an opportunity for the pastor to get significant constructive feedback about his or her practice of ministry, to discuss weaknesses or new competencies needed, and to develop a plan for the minister's continuing education for the coming year that will address those issues. Ministry and performance reviews should take place before the compensation review or the unique purpose of each is lost. Too often money becomes the focus or the weapon and other issues are not dealt with constructively.

Compensation review

Each year the session (G-10.0102n) and the congregation (G-7.0302a) are required to review the adequacy of a pastor's personal compensation and to establish full reimbursement of their professional business related expenses. Both the congregation and presbytery must approve any changes in the terms of call before it is official.

Resources:

Jill M. Hudson, *When Better Isn't Enough, Evaluation Tools for the 21st Century Church*. The Alban Institute, 2004.

Interim pastors

Policy development:

One of the constructive things that a Presbytery can do is to develop policies as well as guidelines in relation to various aspects of support for interim ministry. In such development, it would be important to **involve trained Interim Pastors in the process**. Such guidelines and policies should address the expectations of the presbytery, for example, in terms of:

- The process for securing the services of an Interim;
- goals and objectives, particularly in light of developmental vs maintenance tasks during the interim;
- the Interim Pastor's relationship to the Session and staff, the Pastor Nominating Committee process or the congregational mission study; and

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- general expectations in terms of specific contractual arrangement such as base salary, professional expenses, moving expenses, vacation, study leave, contract termination or extension, and salary benefits when unemployed or in transition to a new interim assignment.

Assessment and evaluation:

The Committee on Ministry will want to consult on a regular basis with the Interim Pastor and the Session. The goals and objectives for the interim period will need to be monitored on some continuing basis and attention given to a mid-term assessment. If any modifications or an extension in an interim contract are needed, the Committee on Ministry would play an integral role in negotiating any changes that might be appropriate. An exit interview is also suggested to provide a basis for the Session's and Committee's continued working relationship with the new pastor and the Session.

Support systems and networking:

Given the level of stress that often accompanies interim ministry, personal support for interim pastors becomes even more important on a group and/or individual basis. It is helpful for the Committee on Ministry or related staff to facilitate both formal and informal support systems for interim pastors; this could apply to their families as well.

Leadership connections:

One of the complaints often heard from Interim Pastors is that they "feel cut off" from the presbytery or other governing bodies. Such a feeling may often be generated simply by the mobility involved in interim ministry. Presbyteries can assist in alleviating some of this concern by utilizing interim pastors as

- members of presbytery committees (even if temporarily and without vote),
- consultants in their particular area of specialty such as grief work or conflict management, or
- representatives to specialized conferences or events for sharing back with various presbytery leaders or program units.

Some interim pastors might appropriately be used in other interim situations within a presbytery, thus benefiting the presbytery and providing some stability to the pastors' lives.

Continuing education:

It is important for Interim Pastors to continue their skill development. The Interim groups that provide basic interim training also offer advanced seminars in such areas as conflict management, organizational dynamics, systems theory, nourishing spirituality, stress management, grief therapy, and leadership styles.

Designated pastors

A designated pastor or co-pastor is a minister elected for a term of not fewer than two nor more than four years by the vote of the congregation. A designated pastor is chosen by the congregation's pastor nominating committee only from among those designated by the committee on ministry of the presbytery. A designated pastor is

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installed by the presbytery for the agreed term and then, if the congregation and pastor both desire, may be eligible to be installed as pastor after two or more years have elapsed. (G-14.0520-.0523)

Churches that might benefit from having a designated pastor

Congregations go through life-cycles and critical events much as people do. When a congregation is experiencing a significant opportunity for new direction, a major trauma or unusually difficult transition, a designated pastor may be able to provide the kind of leadership needed. Among the times when a COM might suggest a designated pastor are:

- When a congregation is engaged in transformation.
- 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 can benefit from a different pastoral leadership style.
- During a transition time, as when a founding pastor has left a new church development.

Pastors who might consider becoming a designated pastor

The work of a designated pastor is often quite challenging. Those who would appropriately consider such a call are:

- Persons who enjoy a difficult challenge.
- Persons who have skills and interest in congregational transformation.
- Persons who need to live within a certain area.

Pastors that a COM would choose to recommend to a congregation as a designated pastor should be:

- able to serve effectively when properly matched to a position.
- healthy spiritually, physically and mentally.

Ministers serving in specialized ministries

The COM has responsibility to work with and provide pastoral care for all church professionals, 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 services they provide.

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. What follows is information for the COM in the process of ecclesiastical endorsement that is a required part of the certification process.

Ecclesiastical endorsement of ministers serving in specialized pastoral ministries

This information will assist the Committees on Ministry and Preparation in working with persons seeking ecclesiastical endorsement. Ecclesiastical endorsement

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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.

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

Validation - An official declaration by the presbytery of care/membership, that a ministry complies with all of the criteria enumerated in G-11.0403, without exception.

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

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- 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

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 is the work of the professional organizations. 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
- 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 of care/membership, that a ministry complies with all of the criteria enumerated in G-11.0403: See information later in this section.

Best practices

Ideas for supporting persons in specialized pastoral ministries

- Recognize persons in specialized ministries at Presbytery meetings and in Presbytery minutes
- Provide an annual review of ministry
- Visit the place of ministry by EP, pastor to pastor, mentor, and/or COM liaison
- Encourage persons with pastoral gifts to serve on Presbytery committees
- Encourage specialized ministers to serve as parish associates in local congregations

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- Install persons in specialized ministries as is done with ministers in congregational settings
- Provide friendship/support/peer-group for persons in specialized pastoral ministries
- Provide retreats and educational events for persons in specialized pastoral ministries
- Nominate certified professionals to sit on COM and CPM

Professional pastoral care organizations

The following professional organizations will provide information about their certification requirements:

American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC)

Fairfax Virginia
703-385-6967

www.aapc.org

Association of Professional Chaplains (APC)

Schaumburg Illinois
847-240-1014

www.professionalchaplains.org

Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. (ACPE)

Decatur Georgia
404-320-1472

www.acpe.edu

College of Pastoral Supervision & Psychotherapy (CPSP)

New York New York
212-307-1537

www.cpsp.org

National Institute of Business & Industrial Chaplains (NIBIC)

Houston Texas
713-266-2456

www.nibic.com

The following documents, found on the Association of Professional Chaplains (APC) web site, www.professionalchaplains.org, can be helpful as Committees on Ministry and Preparation consider the endorsement process:

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

Ministers serving as military or Veterans Administration chaplains

Presbyteries coordinate with the Presbyterian Council for Chaplains and Military Personnel (PCCMP) to provide endorsement for clergy seeking chaplaincies in the military and VA. The endorsements are sent to the Department of Defense (DoD) or Veterans Affairs (VA) after the PCCMP endorsement process is successfully completed. Part of that process is approval from the clergy's presbytery.

Most of the PCCMP endorsement information is posted on the web page: www.pccmp.org You can contact the PCCMP at

info@pccmp.org,

Phone: 202-244-4177 FAX: 202-237-0983

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Military chaplain endorsement provided by the PCCMP

The chaplain to the military is an ordained minister in uniform, "on loan" by the Church to the Army, Air Force, or Navy -- which also provides chaplains for the Marine and Coast Guard. Endorsement for military chaplains and VA chaplains is provided by the PCCMP with the assistance of the presbytery of membership.

Military chaplains may be:

- An officer in the Reserve of National Guard with a commitment of two days each month, and two weeks of annual training;
- An officer with an initial three years of active service. Chaplains on active duty may later apply for an indefinite extension serving up to 30 years if promoted.
- A Chaplain Candidate. This program allows individuals to explore the military ministry option while attending the seminary.
- A volunteer Civil Air Patrol Chaplain.

PCCMP endorsement for the Veterans Affairs chaplaincy

Veterans Affairs Chaplains (serving as spiritual counselors in moral and religious problems) are concerned primarily with providing for the religious needs of hospitalized veterans. The chaplain provides a pastoral, sacramental, and instructional ministry to patients and, when necessary, to their families.

Appointments to the VA Chaplain Service are made under the authority of the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs in accordance with Civil Service regulations. VA chaplain ministry is ordinarily within the bounds of a presbytery.

Process of endorsement

Applicants for endorsement by the PCCMP can find application forms on the website: www.pccmp.org. When those applications, with transcripts and other required attachments are received, the staff sends out letter of reference requests and requests for presbytery approval. When these are returned, the individuals are scheduled for interviews.

The focus of PCCMP interviews is not on theological competence but on aptitude and adaptability for ministry in a military or VA setting. Presbyteries are the only organizations that can set theological requirements and ordain.

When a presbytery votes to allow a minister to serve as a military chaplain it normally also approves labor outside of the bounds of presbytery.

Some applicants look toward military chaplaincy as an ordaining call. When that is the case, the PCCMP can endorse them pending ordination. The PCCMP seeks to work closely with presbyteries in such cases. The PCCMP is most concerned in these cases to have the individual demonstrate a history of ministry before ordination.

When an endorsement is made by the PCCMP, copies go to the military branch or VA chaplains' office, to the presbytery, and to the individual.

The COM can support the endorsement process and chaplains by:

- encouraging minister members to apply for endorsement with the PCCMP while applying for reserve or active duty chaplaincy in the service
- supporting only applications for military and VA chaplaincy of well trained and prepared ministers. Under normal circumstances, the minister should serve at

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least two years in an installed position after ordination before being considered for chaplaincy.

- sending regular communications to chaplains serving outside of your bounds. Chaplains often feel abandoned by their presbyteries.
- being aware that chaplains are also asked by the PCCMP to provide quarterly updates to the Presbytery and PCCMP on their ministry
- considering chaplains as commissioners to Synod and GA
- asking chaplains what special training they have. Many have extensive training in working with adolescents, suicide prevention, critical incident stress debriefing, and conflict resolution.
- being in touch with chaplains as they approach military retirement. They may be willing to serve congregations in the presbytery. Most military chaplains retire from the military with 10-20 years of pastoral service still available
- noting that military chaplains serve in leadership of congregations and have administrative skills and the ability to work cooperatively with other faith groups

The PCCMP can support COMS by:

- keeping in touch with military and VA chaplain recruiters and discussing with the COM the standards they expect of the chaplains
- letting you know what pay and benefits come to military and VA chaplains so you can assess whether their terms of call are sufficient
- helping you contact your military members or those from any of your churches
- informing the presbytery if/when chaplains face military discipline. This helps the COM in your oversight of their ministries
- making visits to military chaplains at least every second year, and to most chaplains every year. The PCCMP can carry your concern to them
- assisting your churches and presbyteries in understanding military life, the strains of deployment and separation, and support of military families. This may be especially important as we currently have reserve and National Guard military members deploying from most of our presbyteries
- assisting you in locating your member chaplains and in identifying chaplains of other presbyteries who may be laboring in your bounds. You can then utilize such chaplains in supply preaching, moderating sessions, and the like
- assisting your pastors with military funeral honors

In addition, The PCCMP director is in Washington DC and will gladly make visits to Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Bethesda National Naval Medical Center, and Arlington National Cemetery in support of your clergy and families, and all presbyteries are on the mailing list for the twice per year "Frontlines" newsletter. The PCCMP will gladly add to the mailing list those who request copies.

Chaplains and the Uniformed Services Employment And Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)

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

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- the continued accrual of seniority and the pay thereof for PCUSA clergy (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 clergy employment after return from the military.

Pensions for chaplains who do not earn military or VA pensions

PC(USA) active duty military and full-time VA chaplains are protected by the Chaplains Deposit Fund. The fund is commingled with the BOP investments and guarantees payment of pension dues at the median salary level for PCUSA clergy who do not vest in the military or VA pension plans. This benefit has been provided since the Vietnam War to minimize the risk to a chaplain's pension from any acts or words which cause him/her to be forced from the military.

Tentmaking ministers

There are times when a particular church may wish to call a minister who is able to find sources of support other than the particular church. The Apostle Paul, for example, made tents for a living so that he would not have to burden the small, struggling fellowships of believers during the first century A.D. From his example we have adopted the term "tentmaking" to describe a situation in which a minister of the Word and Sacrament works in a usually secular occupation and serves a particular church on a less than full time basis.

The Tentmaker's Manual defines tentmaking in the following way:

A tentmaker-minister is one who divides the week's working hours between two or more positions, one in service as a Minister of the Word and Sacrament in a congregation (or in a ministry defined by the presbytery as valid)(G-11.0403), and the other in a secular position.

It is important to remember that while usually the secular position is done for remuneration, there are a number of instances in which the secular position is a vocation for which a person does not receive monetary compensation. For example, both women and men have chosen to do child raising and home-making as their tentmaking vocation.

Why consider a tentmaker?

Often congregations will first consider a tentmaker because of the financial difficulties in supporting a full time minister, and thus may consider this alternative out of desperation and a sense that they do not quite "measure up". Yet congregations and ministers who have chosen the tentmaking path have found in many cases it is a very healthy and rewarding ministry for both pastor and congregation. Studies done by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and other groups have shown high levels of satisfaction among tentmaking ministers and the congregations they serve.

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The presbytery's role.

The presbytery, upon recommendation of its COM, must first validate the position that makes the minister a member of presbytery. (G-11.0403; G-11.0502b) Because of time constraints, calls for tent making ministers should be carefully worked out by the COM, the church and the minister who will fill the position. The time constraints will also affect how a minister participates in presbytery life, and this should be worked out carefully too.

In addition, the COM should be sure that the following matters have been considered before approving a tentmaking call:

- that the tentmaker is not over-extended.
- that there will be satisfaction in each position the tentmaker holds.
- that the congregation will find the secular position acceptable.
- that the needs of the church can be met by this ministry.
- that there is a plan for the regular review of the ministry.

Some presbyteries use tentmakers as Designated (term) and Temporary Pastors.

Terms of call for tentmaker pastors

The combined compensation, that is, the compensation from both the ministry and the other position should be adequate to meet the minimum salary requirements of the presbytery and the needs of the tentmaker. A carefully written covenant (contract) is important. A supplemental covenant form is included at the end of this chapter. At least one member of the COM should assist in the covenant-making.

This covenant should include:

- the number of hours or work units that will be expected of the pastor for the church
- the pastoral activities that must have priority
- the commitment(s) of lay leaders in the ministry of the church
- the length of service if not installed position
- the financial terms of call.
- vacation and study leave time

Such matters as the number of hours, the financial terms and benefits should be clearly spelled out. There are tax and benefit issues that are unique for tentmaking ministers. The Board of Pensions regional representative and the Association of Presbyterian Tentmakers can offer helpful guidance in these matters. Every minister of the Word and Sacrament must be given at least one-month vacation, whether full or less-than-full-time. It is not fair to expect a part-time minister to lead worship more Sundays than one who serves full-time.

Resource

Tentmakers Manual, available through PDS #305 92-950

Parish associates

A parish associate is a minister who serves in some validated ministry other than the local parish, or is a member-at-large, or is retired, but who wishes to maintain a relationship with a particular church or churches in keeping with ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. (G-14.0570)

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A parish associate:

- shall already be qualified as a continuing member of presbytery;
- shall be nominated by the pastor with agreement of the session and presbytery as well as the parish associate;
- shall be responsible to the pastor on an "as needed, as available" basis with or without remuneration;
- shall be under the supervision of the COM;
- shall not involve a formal call;
- shall be terminated upon due notice by the session when the call to the pastor is dissolved;
- may not be called to be the next installed pastor or associate pastor unless at least six months have elapsed
- shall be reviewed annually and changes in the relationship be approved by presbytery;

Book of Order G-14.0570-.0573)

Retired ministers

According to the statistical information provided by the Research Services of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), more than one-third of all pastors ordained in the PC(USA) are retired. Therefore, it becomes an important stewardship concern that the creative use of the skills and experience of retired ministers be facilitated in the Church.

Services of retired ministers

The call to the ministry is a life-long one and does not cease with retirement. Ways of fulfilling the call will probably vary in the retirement years. Some of the best Interim Pastors and Governing Body Staff in the Church are honorably retired ministers. Retirees may also choose to serve as parish associates or teach in a variety of places. More creativity needs to be used in determining how the accumulated talents and skills of retired ministers, their spouses and survivors may be used by the congregations with which they worship, the presbytery in which they reside, and in the Church as a whole.

Respecting the need for well-deserved rest and freedom

While retired ministers are valuable assets to any congregation and presbytery, after serving the church for many years, many retirees and their spouses cherish the freedom to travel, to visit grandchildren, and not to be "tied down" to regular Sunday commitments. Most COMS have a number of churches that are not being served by a minister of Word and Sacrament, and too few Interim Pastors, so it is tempting to pressure retirees into serving "just one more time". While this may meet the need of the COM and a church, it is not always fair to the retiree and his or her family. Post-retirement service opportunities should be offered and retirees contacted regularly to see about their welfare and their interest in service with the clear covenant to accept "no" graciously.

If a retired minister chooses to continue in some sort of ministry, that ministry will need presbytery approval. If the service is with a congregation, the COM must be a partner in the conversation and must give its authorization for the relationship to be initiated.

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Presbytery membership

"Honorably retired ministers are encouraged to transfer their membership to the presbytery in which they live and the presbytery is encouraged to receive them. If they are active in presbytery, additional elders may be elected to keep a proper balance between ministers and lay persons at the presbytery meetings." (G-11.0101b)
"Presbyteries should encourage honorably retired ministers to use their experience and skills in creative and meaningful ways. Those who are able and willing to re-engage in ministry and service to others should relate to a particular church or presbytery. For those who do not or cannot, the presbytery should provide nurture and support." (G-11.0412b)

Ministry of support and nurture

Retirees need consistent support by their presbytery. They need special care at the time just prior to retirement, during the first year of adjustment to retirement, and during critical life changes (such as death of a spouse, serious decline in health and mobility, move to retirement or nursing facility). The Board of Pensions provides excellent resources to assist COMS with both the emotional and financial support of retirees. Sometimes retired ministers move to a presbytery following retirement, but retain membership elsewhere so are unknown to the presbytery in which they live. The Board of Pensions can provide a presbytery with a list of retirees living within its bounds.

Services of retirement --at a presbytery meeting and in the local congregation or other place or service- are as significant as services of installation and should receive careful attention from presbytery. Many presbyteries have annual recognition events for retirees and their spouses. Some have regular gatherings for retirees to help them remain connected with other ministers and remain active in the life of the presbytery. This is especially important for retirees who have relocated upon retirement.

Boundaries and etiquette

In the Church we frequently talk about the relationship between pastor and people as one of "family" and, especially when pastoral relationships are long, the bonds of affection run deep between a congregation and the pastor who has been with them during times of crisis and of joy. It is especially difficult for church members to understand that the relationship must change significantly when a pastor retires and that they must share their faith journey with another pastor whom God has called to fill that role. It is also difficult for the retiring pastor who has devoted so much of his or her life to ministry. As retirement is a challenging transition for all working people, it is more so in a profession where work and identity are so closely bound.

As pastors and congregations struggle with this adjustment, sometimes problems of boundaries arise and the Committee on Ministry is asked for help (usually by the new pastor). Significant sensitivity is required in handling this matter. As the COM works with the retired pastor, the congregation and the interim or newly called pastor the following suggestions may be helpful:

- Assume good intentions unless evidence shows otherwise.
- Affirm both the retiree and the new pastor.
- Offer support and guidance to the new pastor as he or she takes the initiative to establish a mutually supportive relationship.

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- Help the retiree to find new appropriate uses for his/her gifts and energy.
- Establish a presbytery understanding about boundaries.
- Educate congregations about appropriate boundaries *before* the retirement occurs. (See Section 4)
- Affirm the legacy of the past and the leadership of the present in congregational celebrations in which the retired pastor is included

Care and certification of Christian Educators

G-14.0130 Certified Ministry

“Persons called to particular service in the church may be certified by recognized agencies affiliated with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as having achieved proficiency in their field of expertise. The congregation and presbytery, may recognize such certification (See G-14.0700)”

The Presbyterian Church has historically advocated and supported education and educational ministry in churches, communities, and our nation. Our Christian Educators are, in many congregations, second only to parents in influencing Christian education for children and young people.

The Book of Order (G-14.0710-.0731) describes a presbytery’s role in working with Christian Educators. The presbytery relationship with Christian educators is generally assigned to the Committee on Ministry.

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. (G-14.0720-.0730).

- a. The presbytery shall support the certification process by:
 - (1) Encouraging educators to seek certification;
 - (2) Providing guidance through the Educator Certification Advisor;
 - (3) Encouraging sessions to make continuing education funds and time available to educators seeking certification.
- b. The presbytery shall provide the following support to the Certified Christian Educator:
 - (1) Service of recognition; (G-11.0103n)
 - (2) Guidelines for compensation and benefits; (G-11-0103n)
 - (3) Access to the Committee on Ministry. (G-11.0503)
- c. The presbytery shall grant :
 - (1) the privilege of the floor to the Certified Christian Educator at all its meetings with voice.
 - (2) Voice and vote to certified Christian educators who are ordained elders

The Presbytery is given the responsibility ...

"To establish guidelines and benefits for Certified Christian Educators employed by the churches of the presbytery, to provide services of recognition for Certified Christian Educators.”(G-11.0103n)

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"The Stated Clerk shall maintain four rolls one listing all Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators within the bounds of the presbytery who are entitled to the privilege of the floor with voice at all presbytery meetings. (G-11.0407)

The committee [on Ministry] shall be open to communication at all times with the ministers, elders who are members of sessions, sessions of the presbytery, and Certified Christian Educators within the bounds of the presbytery. (G-11.0503)

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. In addition to implementing G-14.0730 presbyteries can:

- Encourage and support all persons called to serve as educators in the churches within the bounds of presbytery.
 - Determine a structure to provide for the care and nurture of educators.
 - Provide access to COM for educators upon entry into employment and for consultation if needed in regard to grievances.
 - Receive and process requests for scholarships for theological education from candidates for both ordained and non-ordained service.
 - Maintain an on-going relationship with all candidates in theological education including those pursuing calls to educational ministry.
 - Maintain, publish, and distribute a roll of educators residing within the bounds of the presbytery.
 - Encourage use of employment contracts, and make contract models available.
 - Provide and promote educational opportunities that include educators.
- Encourage and support participants in the process of becoming Certified Christian Educators www.pcusa.org/christianeducators
 - Include responsibility for enlistment and care of candidates for certifiable vocations in CPM.
 - Provide financial aid for continuing education for all educators in the process towards certification and beyond.
 - Maintain an Educator Certification Advisor's Notebook in the presbytery office and have it available for reference.
 - Designate Certification Advisor(s) and connect them to the presbytery in an appropriate way.
 - Hold service of recognition at each level of certification: Enrolled Educational Assistant, Certified Associate Educator, Certified Christian Educator, during stated presbytery meetings.
 - Sponsor colleague groups for educators working toward certification.
- Involve educators in presbytery meetings and committees
 - Provide a registration process for presbytery meetings that includes church educators as an identifiable group.
 - Include educators in all mailings and packets in advance of each stated meeting of presbytery.

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- Receive and disseminate information to educators from and to other governing bodies.
- Consider naming an eligible educator to the COM and/or CPM.
- Visit with educators in the triennial visits to sessions.

Resources

The following resources are available to help you in your work with educators. They are available at 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.
- *Educator Certification: Why? How? When? What?* Introductory Brochure for Educator Certification. Outlines requirements and levels of certification.
- "Proposed Compensation Guidelines" and "Advertised Salaries for Christian Educators".
- Recognition Service for Certified 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.

Presbyteries have chosen different ways to include educators in their structure. These models may give ideas to other presbyteries that are just beginning this process. If your presbytery has included educators in its structure, the Certification office would be glad to receive a copy of your model to share with others.

Commissioned lay pastors (CLPs)

G.14.0140 - Commissioned Ministry

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 and commissioning in worship. (W-4.3000)

Commissioning may be used to recognize many gifts and ministries such as church school teaching, mission service, community outreach ministries and service as commissioners to GA or synod. Since all Presbyterians are called to service, it is not necessary to commission or ordain persons in order to validate their sense of call (G-5.0102).

What is a Commissioned Lay Pastor?

The particular role of Commissioned Lay Pastor is an extension of the office of Elder which is an ordained office of the church. The CLP role was created in the mid 1980s in response to the mission needs of presbyteries which did not have enough ministers of the Word and Sacrament to adequately serve their churches. At first it was "Commissioned Lay Preacher". A decade later, the role was expanded to give

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presbyteries the option for authorizing a CLP to administer the sacraments and other pastoral functions and the name was changed to “Commissioned Lay Pastor”.

See G-14.0560 – G-14.0565 for the constitutional provisions regarding Commissioned Lay Pastors

Planning Your Presbytery CLP Program

As you consider the mission needs of your presbytery, you may find that CLPs are needed to serve churches that need a leader who is fluent in the language and culture of a new immigrant group, churches that are in isolated rural communities, or churches that cannot meet the minimum compensation for a minister. If you have ministers, educators, and others available to meet your mission needs, it is not required that a presbytery institute a CLP program. At this writing, at least one presbytery commissions only new immigrants as CLPs.

Many Presbyterians are excited about the educational program offered to CLPs and want to find new avenues of service. The PCUSA will be enriched if such individuals are encouraged to enroll in lifelong learning opportunities offered by seminaries, presbyteries, church-related colleges, and other organizations.

It is essential that presbyteries communicate their requirements for becoming a CLP so that individuals are not disappointed when they complete course work and find their presbytery does not need CLPs or that they do not meet the requirements.

Each presbytery that develops a CLP program has to determine where the parts of the program fit in its structure. Some presbyteries asks the Committee on Preparation for Ministry to oversee the application, screening, and education of CLPs, while the examination, commissioning, deployment, supervision, and support are tasks of COM. Other presbyteries create a special committee to work with CLPs. However it is structured, COM must work closely with the CLP process. Ordinarily, the COM works with congregations in deciding when and where a CLP can best provide the pastoral services that the mission requires and the COM supervises the work of the CLP through a minister of the Word and Sacrament who serves as a mentor/supervisor.

Application and Screening of Potential CLPs

To be eligible to become a CLP, a person must be a PCUSA elder in good standing with gifts and graces for pastoral ministry. Since CLPs will be serving congregations in the pastoral role, it is as important to screen CLPs as it is pastors, youth workers, or others who have access to persons in vulnerable life situations. Information should be sought from a pastor and others who know the CLP applicant well and background checks are recommended. It is important to examine the motives of the applicant. If the person is seeking personal status from the new role or full-time employment, that is not the intent of the program.

CLP Education

CLP education shall include Bible, Reformed Theology and Sacraments, Presbyterian Polity, preaching, leading worship, pastoral care, and teaching (G-14.0560). There are many models for CLP education. Some presbyteries have ministers, educators, or seminary or college faculty who teach the CLP courses. Other presbyteries partner with seminaries to offer a joint program in which graduates receive certificates from the seminary. Most of our PCUSA seminaries offer programs that meet

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the requirements for CLP education. Creative provisions are made to reach CLP candidates through evening and weekend courses and online education.

Go to pcusa.org/seminaries to see what is offered by PCUSA seminaries for CLP education. Some Presbyterian Colleges also offer CLP courses. Many of the Christian Educator certification courses meet CLP requirements. See pcusa.org/christianeducators for a listing of these course offerings.

Examination and Commissioning

After the educational program is completed, a committee of the presbytery examines the CLP candidate. Some sample examination materials are available in the Book of Occasional Services and online at pcusa.org/clp

The presbytery commissions a CLP for a limited period of time for service in a particular church. Based on the needs of that church, the presbytery may authorize the CLP to administer one or both of the sacraments, moderate the session under supervision, perform weddings (if the state allows), and vote at presbytery. These authorizations are not automatic and may be granted to some CLPs in a presbytery and not to others based on the ministry context.

It is advisable to have a written covenant of expectations between the CLP, the congregation served, and the presbytery. A sample covenant follows.

For information about compensation and tax concerns see the web sites cited.

A presbytery service of commissioning is held, using the materials in W-4.4000. There is a special question at W-4.4003. A sample service of worship is available on the website. Many presbyteries also have a service of celebration in the congregation to be served. This is a joyous occasion that gives visibility to the presbytery and starts the ministry off well.

Supervision and Support of CLPs

The CLP is accountable to the presbytery through the minister moderator of the session. It is important that a moderator be chosen who will work closely with the CLP in a supportive way. The presbytery also must assign a minister of the Word and Sacrament as a mentor and supervisor (G-14.0564). Since CLPs are often expected to carry out pastoral functions without the benefit of a full theological education, they benefit from ministers who have had the added education and experience. CLPs often are knowledgeable about the culture of the region and are able to share wisdom with the ministers with whom they work. Some of the most exciting ministries include CLPs and ministers working together as a team, sharing their gifts.

Just as minister pastors are strongly encouraged to be involved in lifelong learning, so it is important for CLPs to continue their education. Many choose to enroll in degree program through a PCUSA seminary.

It is common for CLPs to throw themselves into their ministry with great enthusiasm. Many of them have other employment as well. The potential for burnout is great. The presbytery should provide support and be alert to help the CLP monitor life balance.

What if a CLP Moves?

It should be carefully noted that the commissioning of a lay pastor is “local,” that is, for service in one or more congregations or other validated ministry, and is valid for

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up to three years. If the lay pastor ceases to serve a particular congregation, the commission is no longer valid. Because the use, training, supervision, and nurture of CLPs is determined individually by each presbytery, lay pastors are not eligible to use the PCUSA call system - Church Leadership Connection. The commission they have been granted is by one presbytery and is not transferable to another presbytery. Some neighboring presbyteries have established agreements for shared training and commissioning to serve across a presbytery boundary. If a CLP relocates outside the presbytery and joins a PCUSA congregation in their new area, they must contact the presbytery to see if there is a need for CLP services. If so, reference checks should be done and the new presbytery would determine whether the previous training meets their requirements.

Covenant with a Commissioned Lay Pastor

NAME OF CHURCH: _____

NAME OF Commissioned Lay Pastor: _____

Term of service:

RESPONSIBILITIES OF CLP

- Lead worship and preach _____ times each month

(Presbytery determines which are authorized)

- Administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper
 - Administer the Sacrament of Baptism
 - Moderate session meetings under the supervision of and when invited by the moderator of the session appointed by the presbytery.
 - Perform marriages (state law must allow)
 - Have voice at presbytery meetings
 - Have vote at presbytery meetings

 - Other duties:
attend presbytery meetings
- _____
- _____

TIME EXPECTATIONS (per week) _____

COMPENSATION as applicable:

Cash salary: _____ /week, month (circle)

Medical and pension benefits

Continuing education and/or book allowance _____

Vacation time _____

Continuing education time _____

Ministry costs to be reimbursed with documentation:

Travel reimbursement @ \$0.____ per mile

Other: _____

Presbytery COM

Moderator of Session

CLP

Date of session action _____

Review of this covenant prior to renewal or termination will be by the session and the Committee on Ministry. This relationship may be terminated prior to expiration with _____ days notice by either party and the concurrence of the Committee on Ministry.

A Sample Agreement For Designated Pastor

The following covenant is between the _____ Church of _____ and the _____. It is for the purpose of providing full time pastoral care as a Designated Pastor to serve for a period of _____.

Rev. _____ will become a member of _____ Presbytery upon release from his/her present presbytery and acceptance by _____ (Pby).

He/she shall serve the _____ Church as Designated Pastor beginning on _____.

The Designated Pastor will:

- Provide spiritual and administrative leadership for the congregation.
- Lead worship and administer the sacraments.
- Officiate at weddings and funerals;
- Provide pastoral care for the congregation and for all who seek comfort and guidance through the church.
- Serve as moderator of the session;
- Serve as head of staff;
- Assist boards and committees in their ministry.
- Train newly elected officers and assist in preparing persons for membership.
- Assist the session in the completion of a congregational mission study.
- Participate in the presbytery.

It is understood that the pastor is accountable to the presbytery through the Committee on Ministry and will provide quarterly written reports about his or her ministry and participate with this Committee and the Session in an evaluation of this ministry in _____ months.

Goals for this ministry are:

- To help the congregation examine their journey together and work through whatever feelings may have been generated by recent events.
- To enable the congregation to identify current issues they face and to develop ways of resolving them.
- To facilitate a process which will enable the congregation to develop a vision regarding the future mission and ministry of the church.
- To strengthen the congregation's connections to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The compensation for this agreement shall be that in the attached Terms of Call. It is understood that following the _____ month review, the Designated Pastor may be extended for up to _____ or, after _____ years will be eligible to be called as the installed pastor.

Should the pastoral relationship be dissolved before the designated period of time, the compensation shall be discontinued 30 days after that date.

Terms of Call

The _____ of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and belonging to _____ Presbytery, being well satisfied with _____ qualifications for ministry and confident that we have been led to him/her by the Holy Spirit as one whose service will be profitable to the spiritual interests of our church and fruitful to the Kingdom of our Lord, earnestly and solemnly call you, _____ to undertake the office of Designated Pastor of this congregation, promising you in the discharge of your duty all proper support, encouragement and allegiance in the Lord.

That _____ may be free to devote him/herself full time to the ministry of the word and sacrament among us, we promise and obligate ourselves to pay _____ the sum of \$ _____ a year in regular monthly payments. Further, we promise to provide him/her the following:

- Housing.....\$
- Automobile.....\$0.____ per mile (reimbursed as used)
- Pension and Medical Benefits-.....Full
- Moving Expenses.....Full
- Vacation.....one month
- Continuing Education.....\$_____ (reimbursed as used)
and two weeks leave per year

We shall pay regularly in advance to the Board of Pensions a sum equal to that requisite percent of your salary which may be fixed by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) for participation in its Benefits Plan, during the time of your being in the pastoral relationship set forth in this call to this church. We further promise and obligate ourselves to review with you annually beginning (*Date*) the adequacy of this compensation. In testimony whereof we have subscribed our names this _____ day of _____ A.D. (*Year*).

_____ For the congregation of _____ Church,
duly elected and authorized to execute this agreement.

_____ Designated Pastor

_____ For the Committee on Ministry

_____ Moderator of congregational meeting ____ (date)

Report Form for Non-Parish Ministers

_____ PRESBYTERY
COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY
SAMPLE ANNUAL REPORT FORM
MINISTERS IN VALIDATED MINISTRY REPORT

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip Code: _____

Telephone: _____ email: _____

Please complete this form and return to the Committee on Ministry at the presbytery office no later than _____.

* * * * *

What is the title of the position you currently hold? _____

Describe your current employment in detail.

List some of your strengths in your ministry.

Tell some exciting experiences you have had during this past year.

How has your faith in God been affected during this past year?

List any continuing education programs in which you have participated.

List books you have recently read that have strengthened your faith and ministry.

What Presbyterian groups or governing bodies have you been involved with in the past year?

How were you involved in them?

Identify the congregation in which you worship most frequently and describe the nature of your involvement in that congregation?

Are you available for pulpit supply in your presbytery of residence?

Did you administer either or both of the Sacraments this past year?

To help the COM determine validation for your ministry, describe in detail how your ministry meets the criteria in G-11.0403.

The ministry of continuing members shall be in demonstrable 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. The ministry shall be one that serves others, aids others, and enables the ministries of others. The ministry shall give evidence of theologically informed fidelity to God's Word. This will normally require the Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent and the completion of the requirements for ordination set forth in G-14.0482. The ministry shall be carried on in accountability for its character and conduct to the presbytery and to organizations, agencies, and institutions. The ministry shall include responsible participation in the deliberations and work of the presbytery and in the worship and service of a congregation.

If you do not live within the bounds of this presbytery, in which presbytery do you reside?

Are you available for pulpit supply within the bounds of your presbytery of residence?

Additional comments (family news, hobbies, and interesting trips).

Thank you,

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Sample Sabbatical Leave Policy for Presbyteries and Congregations

Rationale for Sabbatical Leave

Someone has compared the life of a minister with that of a taxi leaving an airport. It is so loaded down with passengers and suitcases and the other items that the car has a hard time even moving and is strained to the point breaking, yet the taxi may be only a few years old. So it is with clergy. They bear the burdens, the anguish, the pain, and hurt of their parishioners 24-7. That is 24 hours, seven days a week. As a result, many, if not all, experience to one degree or another symptoms of emotional collapse, stress related illnesses, and “burnout” adversely affecting the minister’s personal, family, and parish life, and greatly diminishing his or her effectiveness and well-being. For too long, this situation has been accepted, even tolerated as an inevitable part of the job.

A viable solution to the peculiar stresses and strains the clergy encounter is the Sabbath Leave, sometimes referred to as a Sabbatical. This solution has its roots in Scripture and in church tradition.

Definitions

Sabbatical Leave for pastors and church educators is a planned time of intensive enhancement for ministry and mission. Sabbatical Leave follows precedents in the academic community and among a growing number of private sector groups. This “extended time” is qualitatively different from “vacation” or “days off.” It is an opportunity for the individual to strategically disengage from regular and normal tasks so that ministry and mission may be viewed from a new perspective because of a planned time of focus.

Sabbatical Leave is an extension of the Biblical concept of a Sabbath day and a Sabbath year for renewal. It is both an act of faith that God will sustain us through a period of reflection and changed activity and an occasion for recovery and renewal of vital energies.

Sabbatical Leave is recommended for all full-time pastors and educators serving churches, who have served in their present position for six (6) continuous years. The recommended length of the Sabbatical Leave is three (3) months. Accrued vacation time and study leave may be attached to the Sabbatical Leave. It is further recommended that this Sabbatical Leave be built into the Call Process. Upon completion of the Sabbatical Leave, the incumbent pastor/educator would normally continue serving the same congregation for a period of at least four times the length of the Sabbatical Leave plus accrued vacation time. In addition, Congregations may limit Sabbatical Leave to one staff person per year, in multiple staff situations.

Planning for Sabbath Leave

Eligible Program Activity and Judicial Review

To be eligible for a Sabbatical Leave, the pastor/educator shall present, in writing, to the Church session for their approval, a program (“The Plan”) of activity for the Sabbatical Leave at least six (6) months prior to the proposed beginning of the Sabbatical Leave. This program of activity and meditation shall include a detailed description of the plan, the goals to be achieved and the expected end-product(s), together with a personal statement as to why this Sabbatical Leave would be valuable for both the pastor/educator and the church.

Upon approval by the Session in the year prior to the Sabbatical Leave, the Plan shall be forwarded to the church’s Committee on Ministry for their review and recommendation. Included in this Plan will be the church’s plan for pastoral/educator services during the period of the Sabbatical Leave.

At the completion of the Sabbatical Leave, the pastor/educator should present to the next regular meeting of the church Session, a written report of activities and findings. This report also will be sent to the Committee on Ministry immediately following up the Session meeting

when it is presented.

Funding

The employing church will continue the pastor/educator salaries, pension/major medical benefits, book allowance, and, at the direction of the Session, auto and continuing education allowances at the same level as those in effect at the time of the Sabbatical Leave.

The employing church will also contract for substitute pastor/educator services during the period of the Sabbatical Leave. Although on the face of it, the Sabbatical Leave may seem like yet another financial burden for the local congregation to bear, it is crucial for Session and congregation to recognize the long-term benefits they as a church will reap from granting Sabbaticals. For example, ministers/educators who have the opportunity to examine issues of professional growth and development as ministers within an existing pastorate are more likely to stay more years in a particular call. The sabbatical provision conveys a sense of support and caring on the part of the calling church. It also offers an incentive to both ministers and educators to commit to and think in terms of longer years of service in a particular church.

Clergy, churches, and presbytery are encouraged to set aside funds each year so that resources will be available during the time of Sabbatical Leave. Those churches that would have financial problems in providing for the Sabbatical Leave could consult with their Presbytery. In addition, those churches that could not secure lay leadership within their own congregations might consider using elders trained as Lay Pastors or Associate Pastors who might be willing to preach one Sunday without honorarium, etc.

NOTE: The Louisville Institute, a Lilly Endowment Program housed at Louisville Seminary, provides study grants for pastoral leaders.

Re-Entry

Upon re-entry, it is strongly suggested that the clergy share with the entire congregation the details of the leave as well as reflections on its value and benefit. The re-entry process provides a great opportunity to reflect upon the benefits that resulted from the Sabbath Leave. Such expected benefits as:

- Discovering the strength of lay leadership heretofore under-utilized
- New understandings of the concepts of mission between clergy and congregation
- Reaffirmation of calling to ministry on part of clergy and congregation with both being reinvigorated and rededicated to the work of God's people.

The ideal result would be for the congregation to see this period of time not just as the clergy's Sabbath Leave but also as the congregation's Sabbath Leave.

SABBATICAL LEAVE POLICY FOR PARISH MINISTERS AND EDUCATORS IN _____ PRESBYTERY

Policy Statement

The Presbytery of _____ recommends to the sessions of its churches that Ministers of the Word and Sacrament and Church Educators be granted a compensated sabbatical of at least three (3) months after six (6) years of service to an individual church.

Rationale

A sabbatical will enable the minister/educator to be renewed through the vital pursuit of continuing education, extended time spent in spiritual formation, and fresh mentoring by respected teachers. A sabbatical enables a minister/educator to return to the responsibilities of the parish with new energy, spiritual vision and effectiveness.

Committee on Ministry Responsibilities

1. Review the sabbatical timetable and usage plan as submitted by the minister.
2. Serve as mediator in any concerns of session, educator or minister relative to the sabbatical.
3. Determine who will moderate the session in the minister's absence.

Minister or Educator Responsibilities

1. Bring the sabbatical proposal before the session – at least in outline form - a minimum of six months before the intended commencement of the sabbatical.
2. Secure the approval of the session for the sabbatical proposal and work out the necessary coverage of pastoral and pulpit responsibilities.
3. Assure the session of continued service to the church for at least one full year from the conclusion of the sabbatical.
4. Bring up to date all pending responsibilities as determined in consultation with the session before departing on a sabbatical.
5. Submit to Committee on Ministry in writing the sabbatical timetable and outline of plans.
6. Upon return, present an overview of the sabbatical experience to the session and the Committee on Ministry.

Session Responsibilities

1. Receive "for approval" the minister's proposal for a sabbatical, at least six (6) months in advance of the intended commencement of the sabbatical.
2. Continue terms of call commitments to the minister during sabbatical leave.
3. Communicate to the congregation the importance and values to the church of a sabbatical.
4. Request a written overview of the sabbatical from the minister upon return.

Additional Responsibilities/Information

If agreed upon by session and the minister, the sabbatical might be combined with study leave for extended graduate study.

A SABBATH LEAVE POLICY FOR THE EXEMPT STAFF OF _____ PRESBYTERY

Policy: The Presbytery may grant Sabbatical Leave to the General Presbyter and Full-time Associate Presbyters. Sabbaticals shall be for no more than three months with pay, but vacation time may be added if necessary for the Sabbath leave designed. The leave will be for professional development and related to the life of the Presbytery. Only one presbytery program staff person may be on sabbatical leave at any given time.

Eligibility: The General Presbyter and full-time Associate Presbyters must have been employed with the Presbytery for a minimum of six (6) consecutive years and not interrupted by prolonged personal paid leave or leave of absence. A report on learning in relation to agreed goals must be reviewed with the Personnel Function Group and General Presbyter (when applicable, as with the Associate Presbyters) within one month after the completion of the leave,

Study Plan: A detailed written plan of study with clearly identified goals and expected end-products must be approved by the committee on Ministry and the Personnel Function Group long enough in advance so that budget and staffing needs may be met during the time the Exempt Staff is on Sabbatical Leave.

Sample Recommendations to Presbytery:

1. That _____ Presbytery approve the Sabbatical Policy outline for Ministers and Educators serving churches in _____ Presbytery and strongly encourage member churches to adopt it for their ministers and educators.
2. That the Sabbatical Leave Policy be presented to all Pastor Nominating Committees and commended to them for inclusion in the Terms of Call.
3. That _____ Presbytery approve the Sabbatical Leave Policy outlined for Exempt Staff of _____ Presbytery.

Supplemental Covenant with a Tentmaker

The Session of _____ Church and the

Rev. _____ hereby covenant together for the purpose of supplying pastoral services for this church.

The Rev. _____ will serve as

_____ of this congregation.

(Installed Pastor, Stated Supply, etc)

Pastor and session hereby covenant together to share the ministry of this congregation according to the following plans.

The Pastor's Share

The Pastor will serve this church for _____ units (hours) per week to be divided as stated below.

Pastoral Activities

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
5. Service to presbytery
6. etc. etc.

(Activities selected from part 4 of the Church Information Form are listed in order of priority and units or hours for each are assigned above as agreed by pastor and session.)

Church Officers' and Members' Share

Church officers and members of the congregation will share fully in this ministry according to the following plans.

Church Activity	Person(s) Responsible
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

Church activities may be selected from Part 4 of the CIF but may also include work on specific committees or programs, secretarial or other kinds of support services in the church office or in building and grounds as well as pastoral support of the pastor and the pastor's family if any.)

Frequency of Review

The pastor and the _____ Committee of the Session will meet _____ times per year to evaluate the performance of each party to this covenant and to suggest adjustments and revisions as desired.

Annual Review of the Covenant

a. The _____ Committee of Session, in consultation with representatives(s) of COM will meet at least annually to review the terms of the covenant. This review will focus on both the satisfaction of the pastor and the church or session with this covenant agreement.

b. At each such review the interrelation between the pastor's work in the church and the secular work of the pastor shall be evaluated and any appropriate adjustments made.

C/ This covenant becomes effective on _____ (date)

Signed: Pastor: _____

Clerk of Session: _____

COM Representative: _____

Date signed: _____

The call form included in Section 4 should also be completed for Tentmakers who are called to their positions.

Section 6

Emphasizing Congregational Health

The Committee on Ministry is given the responsibility for promoting the peace and harmony of the church and to assist congregations in the prevention or utilization of destructive conflict.

People who are trained, skilled, and experienced in dealing with church conflict should always be the ones chosen to lead conflict interventions. Some Committees on Ministry recruit a team of conflict interventionists who are accountable to the COM but are not necessarily all members of the COM. This frees the COM to focus on building healthy ministry rather than expending much of its time and energy on dealing with conflict. If the COM chooses to deal directly with conflicts in congregations, an understanding of systems theory applied to congregational life and thorough training in conflict intervention are essential. **COM members who become involved in working to resolve a conflict in a church must do so only with the knowledge and consent of the COM, as part of an intervention team, and after training in conflict intervention.**

Although church members and leaders are often disturbed by conflict, especially in churches, conflict is a universal experience and can be both normal and healthy. In fact, the ability to disagree openly and engage in creative conflict is one of the indicators of a healthy organization. Whenever there are disagreements, wherever opinions are divided, wherever a church wrestles with alternatives in mission, conflict will be present. It is healthy as long as its energy is focused on issues rather than personalities; on equitable solutions rather than "winning"; on seeking what God is calling the church to be and do rather than what is desired for an individual, organization or program.

Work on prevention rather than intervention

As in healthcare for individuals and communities, prevention of problems is far preferable to intervention, requiring less energy in the long run and freeing churches and the presbytery to focus on mission and ministry.

Committees on Ministry that wish to focus on fostering healthy ministry should:

- Assist both pastor and congregation to a "good goodbye" when a pastoral relationship is dissolved.
- Assist both departing pastors and the congregations they are leaving to be clear about the new boundaries on their relationships.
- Encourage and support the use of well-qualified intentional interim ministers, especially with congregations that have experienced conflict or are saying goodbye to a long-term pastor.
- Provide excellent support to Pastor Nominating Committees through the deployment of well-trained COM liaisons to the PNC.
- Be attentive to the need for reference checking in the pastoral search process and assist PNCs to be effective in their own reference checking.
- Offer the same services to pastors seeking calls, especially candidates seeking their first call.

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- Establish and support healthy pastoral relationships.
- Assist congregations and pastors to be clear about role and task expectations.
- Provide good pastoral care for all ministry professionals.
- Encourage pastors to take their full vacation time and study leave annually.
- Support the provision of sabbaticals for ministry professionals.
- Use the opportunity of the Triennial Visit to create a climate of trust and pick up early warning signs of conflict.
- Be alert to the times when congregations and pastors are likely to be open to assistance from the COM.
- Be intentional in following up with pastors and congregations at key points in the life of a pastoral relationship. Alban Institute research about pastoral authentication would suggest that key points are entry, 1 year - 18 months, then again at the 3rd, 5th and 10th years.

Equip your COM

When conflict becomes destructive, enormous energy is expended that is taken away from the goals and mission of the church. Then conflict becomes divisive and injurious to the peace and harmony of the church. The COM needs to be prepared and equipped to intervene effectively so that conflict does not become destructive.

Conflict Utilization Training and Consultants are available through Alban Institute (1-800-486-1318 or www.alban.org) and the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center (www.lmpeacecenter.org). Some presbyteries bring conflict management trainers into the presbytery to train COM and other interested persons. Others provide scholarships for COM members to go to a conflict management training event.

Resources

Augsburger, David. *Conflict Mediation Across Cultures: Pathways and Patterns*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992.

Cosgrove, Charles H. & Dennis D. Hatfield, *Church Conflicts The Hidden Systems Behind the Fights*, Abingdon, 1994.

Lott, David B., ed., *Conflict Management in Congregations*, Alban, 2001.

Richardson, Ronald W., *Creating a Healthier Church, Family Systems Theory, Leadership, and Congregational Life*, Fortress Press, 1996.

Steinke, Peter, *How Your Church Family Works; Understanding Congregations as Emotional Systems*, Alban 1993.

Thompson, George B., *How To Get Along With Your Church, Creating Cultural Capital for Doing Ministry*, Pilgrim Press, 2001.

Intervene effectively when trouble arises

There are many potential sources of conflict in a congregation. Conflicts often arise within ministerial staff, among members of a session, between individuals with positions of responsibility and between the pastor and member(s) of a church. The changing role of the church in mission, changes in the community in which the congregation is located, disagreements over worship style, or the presence of disruptive personalities may also trigger conflict. Almost any situation where choice and decision are involved has the potential of escalating into destructive conflict.

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Four Changes that Can Lead to Conflict in Congregations

from Edwin Friedman, *Generation to Generation*, The Guilford Press, 1985, pp.203-204.

1. Changes in the family of the spiritual leaders, either clergy or lay, such as a birth, death, illness, divorce, change of address, marital problems or acting out of a child, or problems in the extended family of the pastor or the pastor's spouse.
2. Changes in the professional life of the clergy or lay leaders such as personal advancement, achievement of a degree or involvement in a civic project.
3. Changes in the long-term constituency of the parish, or the size of the congregation.
4. Changes in the staff of the congregation, such as the hiring, firing, or resignation of key staff leaders.

A COM may become aware of a conflict or potential conflict in a congregation through one or more sources. The pastor, a member of session, or a presbytery staff person may alert the COM. The *Book of Order* provides helpful guidance about the use of that information:

G 11.0502 j. It [COM] shall exercise wise discretion in determining when to take cognizance of information concerning difficulties within a church, proceeding with the following steps:

(1) It may take the initiative to bring the information which has come to it to the attention of the session of the church involved, counseling with the session as to the appropriate actions to be taken in correcting the reported difficulties.

(2) It may offer its help as a mediator in case the session either finds itself unable to settle the problems peaceably or takes no steps toward settlement.

(3) It may act to correct the difficulties if requested to do so by the parties concerned, or if this authority is granted by the presbytery for the specific case. When so doing, the committee shall always hold hearings which afford procedural safeguards as in cases of process, following the procedures outlined in the Rules of Discipline.

The COM may take the initiative in bringing to the attention of the session of the church involved any information that has come to it regarding difficulties and may offer its help as mediator where appropriate. In all conflict interventions by the COM, there should be at least two members of the COM or the Intervention Team participating.

Conflict interventions should never be undertaken by one person working alone.

Steps for conflict utilization

1. Taking cognizance:

The COM may hear about difficulties in a congregation through any of several channels

- a. From annual consultations with minister members of the presbytery (G-11.0502a)
- b. From triennial visits with congregations (G-11.0502c).
- c. From communication from any ministers, sessions, elders who are members of sessions, or Certified Christian Educators from the presbytery (G-11.0503).

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- d. From other presbytery staff members or committees that are working with congregations.

The COM discerns when and whether to “take cognizance” of such information based on its understanding of the needs and resources of a congregation, taking care not to act too hastily and also avoiding undue delay.

When the COM decides to become involved in a conflicted situation, a team is assigned to the task and the authority and accountability of that team is reviewed (see paragraph 2 above).

2. Initial assessment:

An initial assessment is necessary in order to identify both the presenting issues in the conflict and possible deeper systemic concerns behind the conflict. The initial assessment also identifies the extent to which the parties to the conflict are able and willing to enter into constructive conversations. Conversations with the key identified parties in the conflict are important in this initial assessment to avoid skewed perceptions. The COM has particular responsibility toward the ministers or educators involved and the sessions of congregations.

NOTE: The COM must take especial care to avoid unhealthy “triangling” in this initial assessment.

3. Communication:

Prior to any intervention, the parties involved should be notified in writing of the response of the COM to the request or complaint and meetings with the parties involved confirmed with date, time and place clearly designated. Agreements regarding initial interventions should be spelled out, but need not be publicized beyond those immediately affected by the intervention, e.g. the session, the pastor, the session member. Copies of all communication should be kept in the confidential files of the COM

4. Looking, listening and learning

The conflict team next engages in careful observation and collection of information about the church’s situation with particular attention to the systemic nature of the congregation.

- The team will assume a posture of partnership and learning with the parties in the conflict, assuring fairness and even-handedness, and also holding a clear sense of its role as representing the COM as counselors, mediators, and/or interveners [G-11.0502j (1), (2), and (3)].
- The team will lay out a plan for meeting with pastors, educators, elders, a personnel committee, and the session to look at the way the church has organized itself around the conflict, to listen to the stories people tell about the church’s situation, and to learn from the symptoms that are evident.
- If the team deems them helpful, meetings or interviews with other groups or individuals may proceed after the initial meetings with the core leadership of the congregation.
- Often the observation period can also serve as a “cooling off” period for the congregation. If the conflict escalates during this time, that becomes another piece of information about the reasons for the difficulty.

5. Provisional hypothesis

With information about the congregation and the parties in the conflict, the team creates a provisional hypothesis about the nature of the conflict. The hypothesis frames the conflict in terms of the way the congregation as a system functions and the role the

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conflict plays in the changes it is experiencing. The hypothesis also raises the question of the presence of God in the situation.

6. Action plan, and report

Based on the hypothesis, the team devises an action plan designed to strengthen the healthy functioning of the congregation and channel the energy from the conflict to a constructive response to the difficulties and changes in the congregation's life. The action plan may offer specific resources, suggestions for action by the church's leaders to move toward constructive and healthy functioning, or interventions by the team, by outside resource persons, or by an administrative commission.

Depending on the original mandate for the team, a report is made to the COM and another report is made to the session, either for information, for approval, or for action.

Action by the COM might take one of two forms:

- **Advisory interventions**

The Committee on Ministry may respond to a request by a session member, pastor, session or church educator to be a resource for a potentially destructive conflict. The purpose of an advisory intervention is to assist the session or governing body to reduce the intensity and destructive effects of conflict. An Advisory Intervention assumes a voluntary relationship between COM and the session and is ordinarily applied where the hypothesis is relatively simple and there is good cooperation from the parties involved.

- **Authoritative interventions**

The action may require work by the team given authority by the session or the presbytery for specific interventions (G-11.0502j(3)). The team may act as negotiator, mediator or arbitrator in a conflict when invited to do so by the parties involved. Provisions of the Book of Discipline for due process shall be followed wherever appropriate in all cases of authoritative intervention and appropriate records will be kept of all actions and recommendations arising from the intervention

7. Evaluation and follow-up:

An evaluation of the process followed, along with recommendations for further work should be included as part of the COM's continuing responsibility. This evaluation, along with recommendations for future action(s) should be included in the permanent record of the COM with the responsibility for follow-up assigned to a person or sub-committee of COM

Review of conflict utilization techniques

This handbook does not include simple how-to-do-it steps for initiating the conflict utilization method. It assumes an acquaintance with the roles of leadership on the part of the reader. Of course in a conflict situation, a leader sometimes gets pulled into the emotions and has temporary amnesia about good processes of interpersonal and group life. The following list is a review for the leader in a difficult conflict situation.

1. Leaders need to make a choice on whether to intervene in a formal or informal way.
2. Before acting, however, leaders reflect and pray about their own motivation in taking a lead. They ask if they feel responsible to fix or to save the church from its conflict. If so, further prayer is needed. On the other hand, if leaders are

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willing to guide and assist a group or a church in finding its inner wisdom, without taking responsibility for what is truly the church's own responsibility as a whole, then one has the right heart for the work.

3. An early strategy is to invite people to a conversation about the difficulties in their church with the hope that everyone can learn more about what the conflict is about and what it means. If the conflict partners are not willing to have a conversation, either separately or together, there will be little a leader can do to directly manage the conflict.
4. Leaders seeking to find hope in the midst of a congregational conflict need to follow basic good communication methods such as using "I messages" and "active listening."
5. It will be important for the conflict utilization leader to encourage everyone involved in the situation to commit to giving each other a fair chance to give their thoughts and feelings in a safe environment.
6. Refusing to take sides in the conflict is of course essential. However, in cases of clear injustice or oppression, leaders may be helped by remembering Desmond Tutu's comment that if the elephant has its foot on the tail of the mouse, the mouse will not particularly appreciate a friendly observer's neutrality. But fairness and carefulness are always appreciated, even in the toughest of conflict situations.
7. Some initial ground-rules are important to the task of finding hope in an apparently hopeless situation. It may be helpful to adopt rules for keeping the conflict "clean" and fair such as those below from Sawyer, *Work of the Church*, 1986, pp 95 ff.
 - a. *Listen to each other and "say it back."* Before parties can rebut an opponent's statements, they must first repeat the statement in their own words.
 - b. *Stick to the issues and stay away from personalities.*
 - c. *Stick to the present; do not bring up past conflicts.*
 - d. *The best offense is a good defense.* State clearly your own position rather than attack an opposing position.
 - e. *If your position prevails, thank God. If your position is defeated, accept the majority decision and be patient.*
 - f. *Remember that it is Christ's church, not yours or mine, and we are seeking God's will first.*
8. One way of helping a group move to a constructive look at their congregation is to talk about finite and infinite games. This concept comes from the work of philosopher James Carse in his book, *Finite and Infinite Games*, (Ballantine Books, 1987) Games are played to either win or lose. In the most serious of finite games, the winners have final power over the lives of the losers. Frequently church members take on the competitiveness of finite games strategy, assuming that it is all-important for them to win and for their opponents to lose. Carse teaches that infinite games are played for the purpose of continuing a relationship. Openness, fairness, and diminishing competition are ways to play at church difficulties in infinite ways, in order to maintain the relationships among the people on every side of an issue or argument.

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Pastoral care during a conflict

When there is conflict in a congregation, the COM is encouraged to remember its charge to provide pastoral care for congregations and church professionals, and to approach their work with a pastoral attitude. Care for all parties in the conflict is essential: the session, the pastor and other church staff, and church members.

If the pastor has a family, they may well be among those who suffer most acutely from the conflict, but with little ability to affect the outcome. Attention to the needs of the family of the church professional or other church staff is always appropriate. It is especially important if there is a conflict in the congregation. Some COMs call on members of the presbytery who are not serving on the Com to provide that pastoral care.

Ministerial misconduct issues

When ministers engage in misconduct it is extremely damaging to everyone involved. It is far preferable for the COM to work at preventing misconduct by promoting and supporting healthy behaviors by church professionals and in congregations. Dealing with the aftermath of ministerial misconduct is inevitably difficult, painful, and time-consuming.

Misconduct is behavior that is unethical and damaging to the ministry and the congregation. It usually falls into one or more of these categories:

- sexual misconduct
- drug and alcohol abuse
- misuse or misappropriation of church funds.
- misuse of power, role, or position

Refer to your presbytery's policies on clergy misconduct and see also *Standards for Ethical Conduct*, available from Office of General Assembly at www.pcusa.org/oga/publications/ethical-conduct.pdf

Misconduct issues are not new. It may seem that there is more malfeasance today, but there are no statistics that bear this out. What is known, however, is that sexual misconduct and other malfeasance issues are being reported more often today than ever before. Since 1985 churches have suffered numerous lawsuits related to various types of misconduct and numerous ministers have been removed or furloughed from their positions. While sexual misconduct gets the most attention, abuse of office related to financial matters also does great damage to Christ's church.

If the Rules of Discipline must be invoked, everyone involved will do well to remember the purpose of church discipline (D-1.0101). A harsh punitive attitude is not appropriate. Care for those who have been harmed is essential, as is a commitment "to achieve justice and compassion for all participants involved". It is helpful to recall that

The power that Jesus Christ has vested in his Church, a power manifested in the exercise of church discipline, is one for building up the body of Christ, not for destroying it, for redeeming, not for punishing. It should be exercised as a dispensation of mercy and not of wrath so that the great ends of the Church may be achieved, that all children of God may be presented faultless in the day of Christ. (D-1.0102)

Understanding misconduct

Most church professionals have very significant role power. Some people see them as interpreters of right and wrong and of God's will. The trust of other people is a sacred responsibility given to church professionals who are subject to temptations and

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self-centered behavior just as are all human beings. These temptations may become harder for some church professionals to resist if they have not been attentive to appropriate self-care including taking time for vacations and study leave as well as a regular time off from work every week.

When misconduct occurs, COMs and others find themselves in the position of having responsibility both for the congregation that is deeply wounded as a result of the misconduct and for the church professional suffering shame and loss, and for her or his family, as well.

What is sexual misconduct?

From the General Assembly Sexual Misconduct Policy and Its Procedures:

“Sexual Misconduct is the comprehensive term used in this policy and its procedures to include:

- Child sexual abuse, as defined in the Policy, “includes but is not limited to, any contact or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the adult person or of a third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered forced whether or not consented to by the child. No upper age limit for child sexual abuse has been given in this policy because the age of adulthood varies from state to state. The upper age limit is intended to be that recognized in the state in which the act was committed.” (p. 12)
- Sexual harassment, as defined in the Policy, is as follows:
“Unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when
 1. submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or a condition or an individual’s employment or their continued status in an institution;
 2. submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual; or
 3. such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.” (p. 13)
- Rape or sexual contact by force, threat, or intimidation;
- Sexual conduct (such as offensive, obscene or suggestive language or behavior, unacceptable visual contact, unwelcome touching or fondling) that is injurious to the physical or emotional health of another;
- Sexual malfeasance defined as sexual conduct within a ministerial (e.g., clergy with a member of the congregation) or professional relationship (e.g., counselor with a client, lay employee with a church member, presbytery executive with a committee member who may be a layperson, a minister, or an elder). Sexual conduct includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. This definition is not meant to cover relationships between spouses, nor is it meant to restrict church professionals from having normal, social, intimate, or marital relationships;
- Sexual abuse as found in *Book of Order* D-10.0401.”

D-10.0401b. **Sexual abuse** of another person is any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to

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- any person under the age of eighteen years or anyone over the age of eighteen years without the mental capacity to consent; or
- any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation, or misuse of office or position.

The Role of the COM in dealing with misconduct

When there has been misconduct or malfeasance, the COM has two responsibilities:

- to deal with immediate situations of misconduct as they arise, and
- to help church professionals and congregations develop as healthy individuals in healthy relationships.

These are demanding and difficult tasks, but there are some resources and resource people available to help.

- Pastoral Counseling Centers are a source of pastoral care guidance.
- The Office of the General Assembly Constitutional Services staff is available by telephone and e-mail to respond to inquiries about intervention and judicial process. Contact Laurie Griffith, Laurie.Griffith@pcusa.org or 1-888-728-7228, ext. 5432.

Some recommendations to help your COM deal with ministerial misconduct

- Become familiar with the Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedures of your presbytery. If your presbytery does not have such a policy, see that one is developed using models from other presbyteries or use the General Assembly Policy.
- Recognize that Sexual Misconduct Response Teams (usually established by presbytery misconduct policies) and The Rules of Discipline were created to provide a system for dealing with this outside the work of the COM.
- Once formal allegations are made, you have no choice about the response that must be made. The COM has no formal role at this point in the judicial process.
- Work out agreements ahead of time with the Permanent Judicial Commission of your presbytery about the role of the COM--particularly when it will re-enter a church or work with the pastor. When permissible keep open lines of communication between the two bodies.
- Check the presbytery's insurance coverage to be sure that it includes adequate liability insurance that covers officers and volunteers.
- When an outside attorney is going to be present in discussion, be certain that an attorney representing the presbytery is present.

Caring for the congregation after misconduct

For years Committees on Ministry would wonder why some churches acted so strangely. They witnessed the termination of one minister after another for minor or inconsequential reasons. They saw churches with a long history of conflict. The sides in the conflicts seemed to remain fixed even when the issues changed.

Research done by Nancy Myer Hopkins and the Parish Consultation Service and published in an Alban Institute Research Report (*The Congregation Is Also a Victim: Sexual Abuse and the Violation of Pastoral Trust*, 1992) sheds light on some of this observed behavior. Here is a list of behaviors that emerged frequently in churches where there had been malfeasance (sexual or other) on the part of a previous pastor:

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- Some group members isolating and withdrawing from the group. (It is usually the healthy members who withdraw.)
 - Blaming and distortions of responsibility for the event.
 - Seeking a quick fix without thoughtful reflection.
 - Division within the group.
 - Anger displaced onto unrelated issues or out of proportion.
 - A loss of energy, a feeling of paralysis.
 - Despair about the group's future.
 - Distrust of leadership often projected onto future leadership.
 - A conspiracy of silence about the traumatic event.
 - Difficulty in making the decisions that are normal and necessary.

Although these symptoms may have their origins in situations other than malfeasance, when seen, they should elicit concern and response from the COM. Ministering to congregations following the removal of a pastor for reasons of malfeasance must be a high priority.

Wherever possible the congregation should be informed about the nature of the perpetrator's misconduct (especially in cases of pedophiles) and the legal and ecclesiastical ramifications. Members should be given the opportunity to ask questions and expect the presbytery to help by providing opportunities for promoting healing. Someone representing the presbytery should meet with them and listen to their concerns and questions. This will aid the healing process.

Working with "afterpastors"

Because of damage done to congregations when a pastor or a key staff person is guilty of sexual misconduct or other malfeasance, and because sometimes congregations have patterns of pastoral misconduct that extends back for several generations, the reality of the congregation's life after the pastor leaves is likely to be complex, difficult, and chaotic.

"Afterpastor" is a term often used to describe pastors who are called following pastors found guilty of malfeasance. About fifty percent of these "afterpastors" seem to be able to cope with the extra stresses that come with the experience. Others resign the call or are involuntarily terminated. Many leave with their self-esteem badly damaged. For these pastors, therapy, pastoral counseling, a support network and even career counseling may be helpful options.

For those whose call to the congregation did not survive the experience of being an afterpastor, it is wise to provide as many of these resources as possible before they transfer to another presbytery.

For those whose call appears to have survived, some of these same options or resources may be advisable, if they have not already been utilized. In any case, the COM should continue to monitor the situation and keep lines of communication open with the pastor as well as the congregation.

Interim ministers who are intentional "afterpastors"

A second group of ministers who call themselves "Afterpastors" are experienced intentional interim pastors who have had specialized training in dealing with congregations after misconduct or malfeasance. They can be very helpful to congregations recovering from significant trauma, including the trauma of pastoral sexual misconduct. The Association of Presbyterian Interim Ministry Specialists

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(APIMS, www.apims.org) can provide COMs and presbytery staff with the names of such interim pastors.

What can a COM do when it realizes that they have passed on without comment a pastor who has been guilty of malfeasance in a church or other professional setting?

If years have passed, there may be little a COM may do. There may no longer be any members of presbytery who know all of the facts of the situation. You may only be able to deal with the symptoms. There are no easy answers.

The legal issues have become very clear as a result of court cases. Any governing body that passes along an individual who has been guilty of malfeasance in their employ and fails to comment may have to face charges in a court of law. Any governing body that accepts an employee without proper reference checking may have to answer for their negligence in a court of law at some future time. In addition, that negligence may be costly to other governing bodies as well.

Caring for the minister

An intervention with a minister caught in the spiral of malfeasance is essential. In the case of someone new to ministry, involved in misconduct for the first time, or one who is confused about the issues and ethics involved, competent counseling and an explanation of the professional ethics involved may be sufficient. In some cases, however, by the time the situation comes to light, an addictive process has taken control of the individual. Then specialized counseling and participation in a twelve-step group are the minimum of what will be necessary for healing to occur.

Until there has been healing and repentance, the person found guilty of misconduct must not be passed along to another situation where the person may continue to engage in misconduct, abuse of others, or malfeasance. When the presbytery's Permanent Judicial Commission has become involved, their decision on how to deal with the person accused and/or found guilty of misconduct will determine when or if the person may return to the exercise of ordained office.

About prevention

Helping church professionals have healthy personal lives

Misconduct usually, although not inevitably, occurs when church professionals neglect self-care. Misconduct is more likely to occur when family relationships are unhealthy, when stress in ministry is overwhelming, when spiritual connections are neglected, when self-esteem is low, and when overwork is a pattern. Most church professionals see themselves as ethical people and believe "It won't happen to me". The Bible tells us that even Jesus was tempted. Clergy malfeasance is a reality. It does happen with tragic consequences for the minister, the minister's family, and for the congregation

Awareness is part of the prevention. Many presbyteries offer orientation seminars for pastors new to the presbytery. This is an opportune time to talk about self-care. COMs can help create a presbytery climate where self-care is encouraged and expected.

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Dealing with stress and burnout

Regular contact with church professionals is critical. COM members can be on the alert, watching for early signs of neglected self-care and connect the church professional with resources to help.

Workshops on boundaries and ethical issues

Such workshops are required in most presbyteries and church-related institutions. They are helpful in raising consciousness and presenting clear expectations of ethical behavior. They will not eradicate clergy misconduct.

Dissolution of church employment

Under the best of conditions it is difficult to end a relationship, a ministry or a mission. Dissolution of the pastoral relationship is an occasion when COM members and presbytery staff may experience the most pain, hurt and potential for destructive behavior. In the PCUSA we are experiencing a growing number of terminations of pastoral and support staff relationships. Terminations involve separation and severance agreements that often are the result of intense conflicts, a change in ministry, or direction of mission. It is important for your presbytery to have a procedure for dealing with such terminations and separations.

G-14.0610

The pastoral relationship between a pastor, associate pastor, and a church may be dissolved only by presbytery. Whether the minister or the church or the presbytery initiates proceedings for a dissolution of the relationship, there shall always be a meeting of the congregation to consider the matter and to request, or consent, or decline to consent to dissolution, as provided in G-7.0304a(3).

Prevention

The presbytery should have a program for developing the health and well-being of pastoral relationships. It should include:

- ***Solid financial support*** for new pastoral positions. Too many positions are created on the optimistic assumption that “the right pastor will bring in new people who will help to pay the bills”. A careful and realistic evaluation of financial resources of a congregation must be done during the vacancy process before a Church Information Form is developed. This is also important for presbyteries planning to call New Church Development Pastors.
- ***Clarity of role and task expectations*** are essential at all points in the relationship between pastor and congregation, but are particularly important as a potential pastor and a PNC are in conversation. Every congregation has a number of informal and usually unspoken and unexamined expectations of their pastor. To the extent possible, those expectations should be surfaced, explored, and acknowledged. Some will need to be challenged; others simply need to be made clear to all parties. The personnel committee, the session, and the pastor must agree on role and task expectations. They should be clearly communicated to the congregation.
- ***Intentional interventions*** in the life of a pastoral relationship at key points can be very helpful. Alban Institute research about pastoral authentication would

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suggest key points are entry, 1 year - 18 months, then again at 3rd, 5th and 10th years.

When a relationship must be dissolved

It is helpful if at the beginning of negotiations that there is a clear understanding of the part that each player has in the process. COM is responsible for making sure that the conditions for separation are compatible with the *Book of Order* and the termination policy of the presbytery. COM may play a variety of roles during this process. COM needs to pay special attention to the care of the pastor, the pastor's family, and the congregation while being a voice for justice, fairness and healing for all parties.

There are at least three parties in each severance agreement: the presbytery, the pastor and the session/congregation. The COM assists the pastor and the session as a severance agreement is negotiated. The congregation and the presbytery must approve the severance agreement.

Principles for dissolution

The following are some principles that you may wish to use as they apply to your presbytery.

- All conditions for separation shall be compatible with the provisions of the Book of Order and the termination policy of the presbytery.
- All matters regarding separation of a pastor shall be documented in writing by the Session with copies to the Committee on Ministry. In addition all costs (including benefits) need to be cited. (See example of a Termination agreement at the end of this section,)
- The separation process shall be considered incomplete until the congregation and the presbytery vote on the dissolution of the call and any severance terms.
- All separation agreements will be preceded by an appropriate process of review, evaluation, or conflict resolution. The process of review can be initiated in writing to the Moderator of COM, Stated Clerk or the Executive/General Presbyter of the presbytery by either the pastor or the Session.
- All costs related to the termination and separation process need to be decided at the beginning of the process or be spelled out in the policy. Options to be considered could include the presbytery paying the expense, having the session be responsible or sharing in the costs.
- Once the presbytery has taken its action all agreements are final. The presbytery will be responsible for monitoring the completion of the agreements made. No further negotiations, changes in the agreement or alterations may be made after the vote of presbytery unless the presbytery approves them.
- The termination policy and agreement are to be written so that the parties involved will waive any further right to sue or take legal action related to the severance agreement unless the agreement is not fulfilled and then such action shall take place only before the appropriate judicial commission. (See model at end of this section.)

Each presbytery will have its own principles and policy for the dissolution of pastoral relationships. Care for the individuals, congregation and presbytery needs to be expressed not only in the technical sense but also in ways that will demonstrate mutual respect and trust for each other.

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G-14.0611 Request by Minister

The minister 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 presbytery. The presbytery may grant authority to its committee on ministry to dissolve the pastoral relationship and to inform the presbytery in cases in which the congregation and the pastor concur. If the congregation does not concur, the presbytery shall hear from the church, through the congregation's elected commissioners, the reasons why the presbytery should not dissolve the pastoral relationship. If the church fails to appear, or if its reasons for retaining the relationship are judged insufficient, the request of the minister may be granted and the pastoral relationship dissolved

Parameters for separation

Separations are either **voluntary** or **nonvoluntary (forced)**. *The Book of Order* identifies a number of types or reasons for separation which can be helpful in determining the direction of the separation and the format for the agreement.

Voluntary dissolution

Resignation

Voluntary separation may take place after written notice to the Session, the vote of the congregation, and the vote of the Presbytery. Resigning clergy will be paid the cash equivalent of their unused earned annual vacation at the official date of separation. No severance allowance will be paid. After giving notice of resignation, the pastor should make arrangements to leave the position as soon as possible. As a general rule the pastor needs to leave the situation within 30-60 days (an exception to this may be in cases of retirement which needs to be negotiated with COM).

Most of the following reasons appear in the *Book of Order* for voluntary separation:

- Pastor accepts another call (G-14.0610 - .0611).
- Pastor chooses to lay aside ordination/ask for release from ordained office (G-6.0600).
- Pastor may renounce jurisdiction because of theological or relational differences with our denomination (G-6.0701).
- Minister joins another denomination (G-10.0302; G-11.0416) This may also happen in conjunction with renunciation.
- Minister may choose to become inactive and is removed (G-11.0415; G-11.0406c) from the roll of presbytery.
- Minister is honorably retired. (G-11.0412)
- "Personal Reasons" rather than a specific reason may be cited by the Pastor or Associate Pastor for leaving. This may be a polite way of covering a forced termination.

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Involuntary dissolution Reduction in work force

Separation because of the elimination of a position, retrenchment in budget, or for other circumstances arising out of no fault of the pastor, is at the discretion of the Session and the congregation with the approval of the Presbytery. Written notice will come to COM from the Session after consultation with the Pastor. Six months notice or pay in lieu of notice is usually given. The Pastor will also be paid the cash equivalent of any unused earned annual leave.

In such cases the Session and COM in consultation with the pastor need to be sensitive to issues of placement, housing and the physical needs of the minister and family. This may call for other items to be included in the settlement such as the use of the manse. COM is encouraged to check with state law to make sure that the agreement meets the standards for such cases in that state.

Separation for cause

Separation for cause shall include, but is not limited to:

- unsatisfactory performance
- abuse or misconduct
- insubordination
- neglect in the care and use of church property or funds
- conduct inconsistent with Presbytery standards or ordination vows

The Book of Order identifies separation for cause in the following manner:

- *When requested by a congregation and approved by the presbytery (G-14.0612).*
- *Forced termination may lead to a minister asking for release from ordained office (G-6.0600; when no inquiry has been initiated D-7.0200, 7.0800).*
- *Separation for cause may lead to another call (G-14.0501, G-14.0511.) It may be a call to another denomination (see G-11.0411).*
- *Dissolution of a relationship in other service of this church shall be reported to the presbytery (G-11.0410).*
- *If a new call is not forthcoming, a minister may become inactive and even be removed from the roll of presbytery. (G-11.0415; G-11.0406c; G-6.0600).*

When the minister is involved in a judicial process the minister may be temporarily or permanently excluded from office or membership. This results in the dissolution of the call. (D-12.0104, D-12.0105)

- *When the minister is involved in a judicial process the minister may renounce jurisdiction (D-5.0300, G-6.0700). This rules out possibility of appeals and terminates the existing call.*

Separation for cause must be clearly documented and thoroughly substantiated. It is extremely important that the presbytery have a clear policy for separation with cause and that the policy is followed in a consistent manner. All meetings, conversations and agreements in this process need to be documented in a written form and kept at the presbytery office.

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The following is a suggestion of how your presbytery might deal with unsatisfactory performance:

- Issues regarding the performance of clergy and staff shall be addressed by the personnel committee or the Session in the annual performance review. This review is to be conducted each year at the same time and the results are to be communicated in writing to the pastor or staff person.
- If the session needs assistance in developing and implementing a process for evaluation and review they can contact the COM. (Resources for evaluation are included in the Section 5.) COM is also available for consultation and counsel in conflict situations. Only after reasonable attempts at resolution have failed should termination negotiations begin.

Process and plan

It is imperative that a presbytery have a process and plan for dealing with terminations. Without a process that is followed and documented, the presbytery and the congregation could experience legal difficulties and incur unnecessary costs for all of the parties involved in the termination.

Each presbytery needs to determine those items that are negotiable and state those up front with all parties.

Each presbytery needs to identify the length of time for which severance pay is given. As a general rule in most cases for unsatisfactory performance it is two to six months and is terminated if the minister finds other employment.

The termination process needs to include the following steps:

- The session or pastor communicates in writing to COM the need for assistance in resolving a conflict, dissatisfaction, or evaluating an unsatisfactory performance review.
- COM will respond with the appropriate resource persons and the liaison to meet with all parties to bring about resolution and inform all of the parties of the presbytery's policy on termination and separation.
- The session, pastor and COM negotiate, approve and sign a written severance agreement negotiated.
- COM approves the written severance agreement.
- Copies of the written severance agreement are made available to members of the congregation no later than the date of the first call for the congregational meeting at which the dissolution of the call and the written severance are to be considered.
- The congregation votes on the dissolution of the call and the written severance agreement. This is most easily done in two separate motions. This meeting of the congregation is to be moderated by a member of the presbytery appointed by COM.
- The Presbytery approves the dissolution and the written severance agreement. The agreement is not effective until the Presbytery has voted to approve the agreement.

The termination agreement should contain the following items: (others may be added depending upon the situation and any specific state laws that may apply)

- identification of the parties (name of pastor, church and presbytery)

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- The specific reason(s) for separation / termination
- The dates for:
 - end of ministry responsibilities
 - termination of call
 - final compensation and benefit payments
 - vacating of office/manse
- All financial agreements including but not limited to:
 - salary continuation,
 - benefits continuation,
 - loan repayment or shared equity arrangement (where applicable),
 - manse use (where applicable)
 - compensation for unused earned annual leave (vacation),
 - provision for use of office, equipment, etc.
 - terms and time limits on physical presence
- The agreement shall specify that if a pastor finds full-time employment prior to the end of the term of the agreement, the church's financial obligations end as of the date said full-time employment begins. Part-time employment will result in appropriate prorated adjustments in financial payments.
- A clause that releases each party from legal action unless the agreement is not fulfilled, and then only through the Courts of the PC(USA).
- A statement regarding the limited liability of the presbytery. For example, whether the presbytery will participate in the agreement and to what extent.
- If it is wise to prevent unnecessary contact between the former pastor and the church, financial arrangements be conducted through the Presbytery office after the pastor's departure from the church.
- A statement of the specific amounts to be paid if a lump sum payment is to be made.
- Date and signature of all 3 parties: the session (on behalf of the congregation), the pastor and the presbytery.
- The statement is to be put in the presbytery minutes, the pastor's file and the church's file. The pastor also receives one.

A Sample Agreement For Termination And Separation

TERMS OF DISSOLUTION BETWEEN
THE REV. (Name of Person) AND (Name of the Church), (Address/Location of the Church)

We, the members of the _____ church Session agree to request dissolution of the pastoral relationship with the Rev. _____ pastor / staff for the following reasons and on the following terms:

1. List reasons for the dissolution:

2. List the terms:

- A. Amount of salary to be paid
- B. Housing arrangements
- C. Vacation to be paid
- D. Pension\medical to be paid
- E. Repayment of loans
- F. Any special financial arrangements such as this will be paid in lump sum or over a period of time.

3. Specify the time and date of separation:

- A. The effective date that ministry duties will cease. _____ date
- B. The relationship will end on a date set by the congregation and approved by the presbytery on _____ date.
- C. Date set for congregational meeting _____.
- D. Date for presbytery action and completion of the separation agreement. _____

4. Other terms to be specified:

- A. Promise to seek remedies for grievances only in the Courts of the PC(USA).
- B. It is understood that all benefits for Rev. _____ [name of pastor] will be discontinued at any time before _____ (payoff date) should he / she receives another call for full time employment.
- C. Any other terms that may be required by the presbytery or by the state.

We the undersigned have negotiated this agreement in good faith and have every intention of being faithful in fulfilling it.

Approved by the Session of _____ Church of _____

Moderator of Session

Date

Clerk of Session

Date

Committee on Ministry Representative _____ Date _____

Signed by other members of Session:

Date approved by congregation _____

Date approved by COM _____

Date approved/disapproved by Presbytery _____

Copies to: The Minister, Executive Presbyter, Clerk of Session, Stated Clerk of Presbytery, Moderator of COM

Section 7

Our denomination is currently 7% non-White. While there have been increasing efforts to be more inclusive, our processes still reflect our predominantly White denomination. This section raises questions and offers resources to you as you work with non-White pastors and congregations.

Working together cross culturally

- *Know your own culture and cultural bias.*

What is your cultural background? What values, norms and traditions have shaped and formed who you are? Have you taken cultural proficiency training?

- *Develop relationships with people from other cultures and learn more about them.*

How well do you know the people in your presbytery who come from cultural groups different than your own? Have you participated in the life of their church? Have there been attempts made to cultivate mutual trust between the church and the presbytery? Racial ethnic persons don't need to surrender their identity to become Presbyterian. The presbytery needs to respect the culture of any group if they are interested in doing ministry with people of different races and cultures.

- *Have an understanding of our denominational decision-making process and the inherent cultural bias it has within it.*

How are decisions being made? Much of our business is completed through use of direct, face-to-face communication. The advantage to clear, direct communication is that issues are handled quickly, decreasing the possibility of miscommunication. Some cultures use indirect communication. This is often misinterpreted as lack of courage to confront, unwillingness to deal with the issue, and lack of commitment to solve the problem

Our decisions are usually accomplished through voting and allowing majority to rule. Some cultures value consensus over majority rule, thus allowing all participants to feel included and not "lose face." The 217th General Assembly encouraged the church to explore new possibilities for decision-making that rely upon consensus and group discernment, rather than parliamentary procedures. See materials online at:

www.pcusa.org/peaceunitypurity/resources/discernment_and_decision_making

- *Support new models for reaching racial ethnic and multicultural communities*
- *Encourage and empower leadership from diverse groups of people to be involved in decision-making processes*

How are persons of color currently involved in your presbytery? If there is not enough involvement on the committee level, consider utilizing racial/ethnic persons as consultants for specific tasks. Review recruiting practices and training of new members.

Individual and congregational considerations

Committees on Ministry will be more helpful to racial ethnic individuals and congregations when they become more familiar with their distinctive cultures, traditions and histories.

Section 7 Racial ethnic/multicultural considerations and resources

When working with an individual understand:

- How long has this person lived in the United States? (An immigrant person will be quite different than someone whose family has been in this country for several generations. It is also not unusual for someone who has been in this country for several generations to carry cultural values from their roots.)
- What are normative assumptions for his/her culture? For example: male/female roles, concept of time, traditions, physical proximity, decision making, conflict management, leadership style, communication style?

When working with congregations understand:

- What is the history of the congregation?
(What are their roots? What has been their experience of oppression in this country or in their homelands? What has been their experience with this denomination?)
 - What languages are spoken?
 - Are multiple generations present?
 - What are the people like? (Age, socio-economic, etc.)
 - What are the identifiable units in the congregation?
(A couple of large families? All individual family units?)
 - Do they identify with the local community? Do they participate in activities in the larger community that reflect their ethnic heritage?
 - Who are the formal and informal leaders in the congregation?
- What is their theology?
 - What stage is their congregation? Newly formed or long established?
 - What is the congregation's relationship with the denomination?
 - How might their practices in the church be different than other churches?
(For example: theological syncretism that includes Roman Catholic, Episcopal congregational and other theological approaches, liturgical expressions during worship, ministerial dress codes, ministry centered in the family and the fellowship with a strong social service approach to members of the worshiping community and others in the wider community)

COM and racial ethnic pastors and congregations

Racial/ethnic pastors seeking calls

- Many racial ethnic pastors are open to serving a church that is different from their own cultural background. Presbyteries need to be supportive by enforcing EEO guidelines, use of racial/ethnic pastors in all types of positions (temporary, designated, etc)

Churches seeking pastors

- While completing a Church Information Form can be a wonderful tool, this form does not work well within our call system for some racial ethnic churches, particularly the non-English speaking congregations seeking pastors who speak a non-English language
- There are few racial ethnic pastors in our call referral system. Churches seeking racial ethnic pastors may need to rely upon existing informal and formal networks outside the matching system.

Section 7 Racial ethnic/multicultural considerations and resources

- Racial ethnic pastors are sometimes interviewed by congregations who are only interested in fulfilling their EEO requirements. PNCs should only pursue racial ethnic candidates if they are serious about hiring them, not only to fulfill requirements.

Church conflict

- The COM will need to consider alternate ways of dealing with conflict in a racial/ethnic church. Two thirds of the world does not place a high value on direct, face-to-face confrontation to solve a conflict. The preservation of smooth, interpersonal relationships, maintaining harmony, and minimizing conflict are important.
- In some racial/ethnic churches much of the conflict is not just between individuals, but involves whole family units.
- It is important to utilize resources and resource people who are familiar with that church's particular dynamics and history.

There are many resources available to help those who seek to enlarge and strengthen their multi-cultural awareness. Among those that a COM may find helpful are:

Augsburger, David. *Conflict Mediation Across Cultures: Pathways and Patterns*.

Louisville: 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.

Section 8

Thank you!

Thank you for accepting the very important, very demanding, and very difficult – and very rewarding-- role of Moderator of the Committee on Ministry!

You are probably already familiar with the scope of the work of the Committee on Ministry. The resources compiled in this section are intended to help assist you as you build relationships of trust with your colleagues on the COM and in the presbytery, structure the COM for its work, do on-going training with the COM, and enhance sensitivity to cross-cultural issues. Your role as moderator is primarily to help the COM nurture and support healthy ministries in the presbytery.

Fostering healthy ministries begins with nurturing a healthy COM

Building a healthy Committee on Ministry happens as moderators and committee members depend upon God for their strength and direction. With a huge list of tasks to do many committees fall into the trap of solving problems. A first step in engaging the mission of a Committee on Ministry is to center the work and energy in spiritual practices. Times of worship, reflection on scripture, prayer and retreats build a foundation that allows us to address the question, “What does God want to have happen here?”

The actions of those who serve the church as members of a Committee on Ministry are prayerful and grow out of a desire to serve God. The traps and entanglements are many, but we need to understand we are not called to defend the Presbytery or the church. We are called to listen and tell the truth. It is not our responsibility to solve problems; the best we can do is hold up a mirror that others may see themselves and their part in creating and continuing dysfunctional behavior. We bring to churches and pastors the resources of procedures and processes to enable them to do their ministry.

What matters most is keeping our focus on the larger purpose of “serving God with all our hearts and minds and strength and loving our neighbor.” When we lose this perspective we may discover that we have become the enemy and not the resource for ministry. The reality is, “When people in leadership positions begin to serve a vision infused with a larger purpose, their work shifts naturally from producing results to encouraging the growth of people who produce results.” (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, *Presence, Human Purpose and the Field of the Future*, Currency Doubleday, 2004, p.141)

Healthy Committees on Ministry do not happen because the right people are elected to serve, but because we have a vision which is compelling and inspiring and they take seriously their ministry of resourcing congregations and church leaders.

*This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose you consider a mighty one, the being a force of nature, rather than a feverish, selfish clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy. (George Bernard Shaw, “Dedicatory Epistle,” *Man and Superman*. New York: Penguin 1950)*

Organizing for successful ministry within presbytery

Suggestions for the COM Moderator

As a beginning point, consider the following:

- Familiarize yourself with chapters 11 and 14 of the *Book of Order*.
- Ask the Executive/General Presbyter or Stated Clerk what authorities the Presbytery has delegated to the COM.
- Plan an annual orientation and planning retreat for the entire COM.
- Develop a COM mission statement in consultation with the Executive/General Presbyter, the goals and evaluation entity (council, bylaws) of presbytery and members of the COM. The Mission Statement will inform the structure of the COM and guide the organizational structure for accomplishing its mission. The mission statement will help the COM prioritize its work and know when to say “yes” and “no”. This is especially important in a climate of increased demands, external pressures and limited time.
- Work with the members of the committee and presbytery staff who regularly meet with the committee to develop norms and standards for the committee’s work.
- Become cross-culturally proficient.
- Develop a COM leadership team. If you use a sub-committee structure, the chairpersons of the sub-committees of the COM can be the leadership team.
- Work closely with other Presbytery Leaders (i.e. CPM chair, presbytery moderator).
- Seek out continuing education for yourself to enhance your skills and knowledge of COM-related topics.

Important relationships for the COM moderator

With the Executive/General Presbyter or other presbytery staff

1. Setting the Meeting Agenda. Decide together what issues must be discussed and what decisions must be made during the meeting. These may include:
 - Responding to correspondence or other communications received by either party that need COM attention.
 - Sharing information about congregations and church professionals
 - Hearing reports from subcommittees or persons assigned to work with certain church professionals or congregations.
2. Responding to communications to the EP that relate to the COM’s work. Good communication between the EP and the COM Moderator provides a unified message to congregations and helps both the EP and COM avoid becoming involved in unhealthy indirect or three-way conversations.

With the Stated Clerk

1. Consulting regarding correspondence received for COM action that will require Book of Order interpretation.
2. Consulting for assistance in wording motions so that actions comply with the Constitution.
3. Seeking advice about whether an action being considered is constitutional or is questionable constitutionally -- or when an action being considered might be possible but not wise (based on her/his experience).

Section 8 Resources for the COM moderator

4. If the Stated Clerk does not meet with the COM, reporting actions taken that require the attention of the Stated Clerk.
5. Coordinating with the Stated Clerk to provide pastoral care for congregations dealing with allegations or charges against the pastor or other professional staff. The COM has pastoral responsibility for the congregation and would be involved in dissolution of a pastoral relationship. The COM is NOT involved in an investigative or judicial procedure.

With the chairpersons of the COM sub-committees

1. Before each meeting inform each chairperson of new items their group will need to consider and provide available information they will need.
2. Between meetings check with each chairperson about the status of actions approved during the previous Committee meeting.

With the CPM moderator

1. Coordinating of receiving first call candidates/pastors into the Presbytery.
2. Determine which Committee will examine the candidate.
3. Determine which Committee will request the candidate's file from the presbytery of care when appropriate.
4. Determine which Committee will examine candidates from your Presbytery who are being called to congregations in your Presbytery.
5. Determine which Committee will examine candidates from your Presbytery that are being called to congregations in other presbyteries.
6. Coordinating of ordaining first call pastors who will be installed in other presbyteries.

With the presbytery nominating committee

1. Building healthy committees begins with the nominating process.
2. Give the Nominating Committee information about what your committee does, when it meets and where.
3. Suggest the names of persons who may serve well on the COM.
4. Give this information to your Nominating Committee and staff

What skills are needed by your committee?

Some examples...

Interpersonal skills	Strong faith and ability to articulate it
Conflict management	Ability to nurture and mentor others
Spiritual discernment	Collaborative leadership style
Analysis and strategy	Human Resources experience
Counseling or chaplaincy experience	

What other personal qualities are required?

Such as:

- Ability to maintain strict confidentiality
- Strong understanding of Reformed theology
- Ability to be a “non-anxious presence” under fire
- Willingness to devote time to the work of the COM

Section 8 Resources for the COM moderator

What diversity is needed?

The COM, like all committees in the presbytery must be balanced in terms of :

- gender
- elder or minister
- race, ethnicity

Other factors should also be considered:

- age
- geographical location
- size of church
- theological diversity that is reflective of the presbytery

Recruiting elders and pastors who reflect the diversity present in the presbytery to work on the COM is an important witness to our shared commitment to be a fully inclusive denomination and an opportunity for the gifts and skills of all the people of the presbytery to be used for the sake of Christ's church.

What activities are expected outside of meetings?

Some examples:

- driving at night as part of a team of 2 to consult with sessions or candidates
- keeping regular contact with assigned churches, pastors, candidates
- regular phone or e-mail consultation about pending issues
- attending annual Synod or multi-presbytery training
- annual committee retreat
- participation in specialized training in mentoring, conflict management, etc.

How much time is expected per month?

When and where are meetings usually held? Is there enough flexibility to include new people on the committee?

Working laity, especially non-exempt employees and bi-vocational pastors and commissioned lay pastors cannot participate in daytime meetings without great sacrifice. CPMs and COMs often benefit greatly from the insights of psychologists and social workers. In order to include more diversity of age, ethnicity, experience or skills, you may find it valuable to consider whether meetings can be held in the evenings or weekends or whether there are ways that persons who cannot serve on a standing committee could be involved in supporting your work

With the Synod and General Assembly

- Become familiar with online resources
(<http://www.pcusa.org/ministers/com/index.htm>)
- Become familiar with PDS resources for Committees on Ministry
- Get to know Synod Staff and other COM Moderators in your Synod
- Call on the Office of Ministry Support at the Presbyterian Center: 1-888-728-7228 extensions 5503 or 5381

Section 8 Resources for the COM moderator

Working with congregations seeking pastoral leadership

A 2001 survey of COM Moderators indicated that, on average, a COM spends about 24% of its time assisting congregations during their search for new pastoral leadership. Close contact with congregations seeking new leadership is important. Helping congregations locate good leadership that matches well with a congregation not only helps congregations serve more effectively, it also reduces the time and energy that the COM spends responding to conflict in congregations. (In most presbyteries, at least one-fourth of COM time is spent later dealing with congregational conflict.)

Most COMs use a trained liaison who is assigned to a church seeking pastoral leadership. This person is the primary contact between the congregation and the COM and should be involved as soon as the COM knows that a pastoral relationship will be dissolved. The liaison begins work by conducting exit interviews with the person(s) leaving and the session. They shepherd the congregation through the search process, and conduct a six to twelve month, and a three-year check-up of the new relationship that the Presbytery has established. More information on the search process can be found in Section Four of this handbook.

Structuring the COM for healthy ministry

COM responsibilities

The Book of Order identifies the primary responsibilities of the COM in G-11.0501a.

Each presbytery shall elect a committee on ministry to serve as pastor and counselor to the ministers and Certified Christian Educators of the presbytery, to facilitate the relations between congregations, ministers, and Certified Christian Educators, and the presbytery, and to settle difficulties on behalf of presbytery when possible and expedient.

Many COMs spend so much time dealing with crises and conflicts that they have little time or energy left for nurturing relationships with church professionals and congregations. If COMs are going to support, nurture and encourage healthy ministries they will need to adjust the amount of time they spend on each of their responsibilities so that the COM can include a focus on knowing congregations and their leaders and caring for church professionals. When they do, COMs may begin to think of themselves as planning commissions rather than fire departments. To do that it will be helpful to aim for one-quarter of COM resources going to each of these areas:

- Caring for pastors, minister members of presbytery, and Certified Christian educators and congregations
- Assisting with finding pastoral leadership for congregations
- Managing conflicts in pastoral relationships
- Acquiring the skills to do the first three

Structuring the COM to care for pastors, minister members of the presbytery, and Certified Christian Educators

- Create a COM Pastoral Care Team to
 - provide welcome and hospitality when church professionals arrive in the presbytery
 - assign mentors from similar congregations and the same geographic area
 - encourage Bible study, book study, social groups
 - encourage first call pastors to participate in conferences offered for them
 - provide on-going care for all church professionals

Section 8 Resources for the COM moderator

- Create opportunities for church professionals to gather at COM or presbytery sponsored lunches or dinners for people in the same area or with similar needs and interests or in similar work. You might consider offering:
 - educational evenings, conferences, pre-presbytery events, continuing education events
 - family picnics, gatherings at presbytery/synod camp
 - annual clergy and spouse retreat
- Encourage all church professionals to be part of a covenanting peer group
- Establish an Annual Reports Coordinator to
 - receive reports from clergy in validated ministries, members at large, and retired pastors
 - monitor end of term dates for interim pastors, temporary pastors, designated pastors, and parish associates
- Recruit a Certified Christian Educators coordinator who will be responsible for knowing and communicating with the Certified Christian Educators and where they are in ministry. This person will share Educator concerns of COMs or create a sub-committee to offer services.
- If possible add a Pastoral Caregiver to the Presbytery Staff
- Create a Training Team to offer opportunities for training
 - Ethics Training in a three-year cycle addressing sexual, money, and power issues
 - Sexual Misconduct Prevention Training mandated for all church professionals
- Create Presbytery Policies, such as
 - sabbatical leave policy
 - parental leave policy
 - ethical standards for ministry professionals
 - policy for dealing with ministerial misconduct
 - severance policy
 - separation ethics for pastors and congregations they have served
 - expectations after retirement for church professionals

Facilitating the relationships between congregations, ministers, and Certified Christian Educators, and the presbytery

- Recruit a Triennial Visits Coordinator who will organize Triennial Visits in which all members of COM will participate. Focus the Triennial Visits on mission and consider using Appreciative Inquiry as a model for forming questions and topics for discussion. (Resources for Triennial Visits and a brief discussion of Appreciative Inquiry are found in Section 3)
- Establish a COM Transition Team that
 - Is knowledgeable about the process of dissolving a pastoral relationship, pulpit supply, interim ministry, AAEEEO requirements, and PNC resources.
 - will conduct a follow-up review six to twelve months after the pastor is in the congregation, and another follow-up interview at the three-year point.
- Have a Presbytery Membership Team to interview candidates and ministers regarding their suitability to serve in the positions to which they are being invited.

Section 8 Resources for the COM moderator

- Develop a Mission Studies Team to coordinate mission studies for congregations in transition. Consider recruiting knowledgeable ministers and elders who are not currently serving on the COM for this responsibility.
- Ask each member of COM to become more knowledgeable about a certain number of congregations and to resource those sessions. Ask those people to be part of the records review for “their” churches and to receive and read the newsletters of those churches.

Settling difficulties on behalf of presbytery when possible and expedient.

- Consider recruiting a Conflict Utilization Team to deal with the more difficult and destructive conflicts. Use the skills of pastoral counselors, and wise, experienced elders and pastors in a team of specialists not serving on the COM. These people should be knowledgeable about systems theory as it applies to congregational life and should embody calm, non-anxious presence.
- Have a cadre of COM members who have a working knowledge of systems theory and conflict management in a variety of cultural contexts, the ability to communicate clearly, and the capacity to remain calm in the midst of conflict. Deploy them for the less intense congregational conflicts.
(Review the information on Conflict in Section 6 and cross-cultural awareness in Section Seven)

Learning skills to do the first three

- Highlight examples of healthy ministries at each meeting
- Make training a priority
 - 20-30 minutes per meeting
 - All-day retreat once a year
 - Use case studies
- Pair first-year members with more experienced members for on the job training.
- Provide conflict utilization training for a few members and interested others or provide scholarships for training events held by organizations such as Alban Institute or the Lombard Mennonite Peace Institute.

Empowering the COM to say “No”

In the interests of building relationships with congregations and church professionals, members of COM are often reluctant to say no, especially to a PNC presenting its chosen candidate to be called as pastor. However, there are times when the COM may need to say no about:

- The suitability of a pastoral call because of concerns regarding “goodness of fit” or because of issues that have been uncovered in an executive reference check.
- Membership in the presbytery for a minister who has a record of difficulties in another presbytery or for other reasons.
- Validation of ministry. Not every possible form of employment of a minister can be considered a validated ministry.
- Ministers of other denominations may not be good members of presbytery because of theological convictions that are at odds with Reformed faith or because of lack of education and preparation for ministry.
- Potential Commissioned Lay Pastors may not always have the necessary gifts for pastoral ministry. The presbytery may not include congregations enough for

Section 8 Resources for the COM moderator

everyone who wishes to serve as a Commissioned Lay Pastor. (COMs should remember that the commission of a Lay Pastor is based on the mission of the presbytery, is specifically and is not automatically transferable to another congregation.

- Terms of Call must be sufficient to enable a potential pastor to live in dignity and reasonable comfort in a particular area. COMs are wise to inquire about educational debt as they consider the Terms of Call for newly ordained pastors.
- Congregational viability is sometimes not sufficient to permit a congregation to call a full-time pastor. Such congregations should be counseled early in the vacancy process, and when appropriate, encouraged to consider a tentmaking (bi-vocational) pastor, a part-time pastor, or a Commissioned Lay Pastor.

While saying no is seldom easy, and hearing no is never welcome, a “no” will be better received when the COM

- Has a strong positive relationship with the parties involved in order to make a sound decision and have credibility in that decision. Continuing connection after the “no” and a sense of being partners in ministry will mitigate the initial pain of the negative response.
- Makes a decision that is based on complete information, is fair and just, and grows out of Christian principles, including telling the truth in love.
- Can say “no” but then offer another option.
- Is consistent, treating decisions carefully and prayerfully for all congregations, no matter how large or how small, and for all ministers, even those perceived as being “difficult.”

Moderating meetings

It is important for the moderator to prepare and mail or email the agenda and other information to COM members at least one week prior to the scheduled meeting. Agendas should include time for spiritual nurture, educational modules and time for relationship building as well as “action items.” It is wise to put issues that will require the COM’s best energy and attention early in the meeting rather than at the end when members are tired and attention may wander.

The agenda should include:

- Opening Worship/Devotional for which Committee members rotate responsibility.
- Prayer for the congregations and church professionals in the presbytery and for members of the COM.
- A group-building exercise or time of personal sharing to help the committee members and staff know each other more deeply.

As you moderate meetings be alert to opportunities to:

- Articulate the vision of supporting healthy ministries.
- Tend to relationships within the committee.
- Foster communication, discernment, and deliberation.
- Be alert to issues that require cross-cultural sensitivity.
 - Assure that all issues are fully discussed before a vote is taken. Be open to deferring a decision until members are satisfied that the decision is ready to be made.

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- Guide decision-making by keeping the discussion on task. Although a certain amount of free discussion is good for COM morale, continued detours into subjects not related to the matter before the Committee will have a demoralizing effect on the members.

In addition, it is helpful for the moderator to:

- Exercise care in expressing her or his own opinion on a matter under discussion. Moderators often choose to invite others to express their opinion on matters before inserting their own.
- Devote time at retreats and at every meeting to building relationships of trust and care among the members of COM. Make it a goal to ensure that all members feel that they are respected, invited to participate and have important work to do for the sake of Christ's church.
- Monitor assignments and business between meetings.
 - Make certain actions and people are connected.
 - Contact persons responsible for actions to discuss progress or difficulties, and emerging needs for assistance.

Training for members of the COM

- Many COMs begin their meeting with a 30-minute training experience. These experiences can be rotated with group-building experiences during meetings.
- Training in particular portions of the COM's work is often included in the annual retreat.
- Synod sponsored leadership-training events, where they are available, often provide excellent opportunities for a COM to learn together.
- The Office of Vocation welcomes opportunities to assist your COM with education. We regularly provide leadership for regional COM training events and we nurture a cadre of persons with COM experience and skills available to work with you. We also sponsor a biennial conference for CPMs, COMs, and seminary staff. Please call us at 1-888-728-7228 ext 5503 and let us know how we can support you in your important ministry.

The COM and the AAEO Policy of the General Assembly

One of the major responsibilities of the Committee on Ministry is to insure the implementation of equal employment opportunity for ministers and candidates. The Book of Order states: It shall provide for the implementation of equal opportunity employment for ministers and candidates without regard to race, ethnic origin, sex, age, or marital status. In the case of each call, it shall report to the presbytery the steps in this implementation taken by the calling group (G-11.0502g).

The COM can assist PNCs to fulfill their good intentions to be inclusive in their consideration of candidates to be called as pastor. Consider connecting them with the Associate for Administration and Racial Ethnic Referral in the Leadership and Vocation Goal Area. (888-728-7228, ext. 5748). Encourage them to consider racial ethnic persons as potential pastors and help them to remember that pastoral excellence is not determined by or limited by racial ethnic background. It may be also be helpful to encourage a PNC to consider women as candidates to be called as pastor.

Office of *Vocation*

To Order call
1-800-524-2612

PDS# OGA-07-052

The most current information
is available free to download at
www.pcusa.org/ministers/com



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