

IV. Policy on Other Validated Ministries

The COM carries, for the Presbytery, the responsibility of oversight and support of all ministers of the Word and Sacrament. COM is given responsibility for work with those ministers of the Word and Sacrament who have moved to positions, which lack the built-in accountability to the Presbytery that exists for pastors and church agency staff.

By definition in our Constitution, continuing membership is appropriate for those who see themselves and can be seen by Presbytery as being in ministry and who are willing and able to establish with Presbytery a relationship of positive support and accountability.

The primary goal of the Validated Ministry Criteria is to keep integrated into the mission of the Presbytery our ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are working in varied sectors of society. The pastors represent a valuable resource who can extend the ministry and help church members and pastors to be more effective in preaching and living the gospel in our social context.

“Each presbytery determines the ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are its members and validates the ministries in which they are to be engaged.” Book of Order, G-3.0306

“It shall be guided in this determination by written criteria developed by the presbytery for validating ministries within its bounds” (G-2.0503a).” Book of Order, G-3.0306

“These criteria shall be based upon the description of validated ministry in the Book of Order (G-20503a.) These five (5) criteria all shall be fulfilled to qualify for validated ministry.

A validated ministry shall:

- A. “Demonstrate conformity with the mission of God's people in the world as set forth in Holy Scripture; The Book of Confessions, and the Book of Order of this Church;”
Book of Order, G-2.0503a (1)

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

1. Ministry within its congregations;
2. 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;
3. 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;

4. 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. “Serve and aid others and enable the ministries of others;” Book of Order, G 2.0503a (2)

This criterion implies that the primary thrust of the work being validated is toward serving people and enabling them to serve other people. Conversely, it implies that its primary thrust is not toward profit-making activities. This does not suggest that a person in a profit-making position cannot perform ministry, many lay persons do. Nor does it imply that the pastor 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 the production of goods or of profit. In this way the special gifts and training of the minister of the Word and Sacrament provide a theological perspective.

It is essential that a distinction be made between validated ministry and the secular work that a tentmaking pastor might do to earn income to supplement salary from ministry. In the case of many tentmakers, a part-time ministry is validated, but secular work (such as being a farmer or teacher) is not.

The following may be helpful in applying this principle: If a minister of the Word and Sacrament were simply working as a truck driver, that pastor would not be serving in a valid ministry. If, however, the pastor was employed by the trucking company as a chaplain and counselor to drivers and other employees, either part time or full time, would not that be a valid ministry? Some pastors may drive a truck “full time” and also do pastoral counseling while on the road. To whom is that pastor accountable for this counseling? Is it part of his or her assigned responsibilities? Deciding such difficult cases is presbytery’s responsibility and each case should be faced directly, decisively and in a pastoral manner.

- C. “Give evidence of theologically informed fidelity to God's Word; Book of Order, G 2.0503a (3)

This will normally require the Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent and the completion of the requirements for ordination set forth in the Book of Order, G-2.0607.

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.

As an illustration, consider teaching math in a high school or in a university. The pastor doing this may argue that the way one teaches math can “articulate” the Christian faith and therefore this position should be approved as a valid call. Presbytery might respond that “articulate” as used in these guidelines implies clear and effective communication of the Word. The math professor’s claim, therefore, would appear to be invalid. If, however, the professor also teaches a Bible class for a significant amount of time or in some other form communicates the Christian faith then his ministry might be validated, but not the math teaching.

Committees on Ministry and Committees on Preparation for Ministry need to evaluate the relationship between the M. Div. 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. “Be carried on in accountability for its character and conduct to the Presbytery in addition to any organizations, agencies, and institutions served; and” Book of Order, G-2.0503a(4)

Accountability here implies that a member of presbytery is answerable to the presbytery for agreed-upon end results or activities. Character and conduct of one’s ministry requires that it must be clear from the outset what is expected in that ministry.

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 which enables the person to carry out the ministry with maximum effectiveness. (For pastors in congregations this support is provided in part through triennial visits to sessions and regular visits with pastors by the COM.) Such pastors should be given periodic opportunity to interpret their ministries to the presbytery so as to enlarge the presbytery’s horizons.

The presbytery should also decide whether it will 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.

- E. “Include responsible participation in the deliberations and work of the Presbytery and in the life of a congregation of this church or a church in correspondence with the PC(USA) (G-5.0201).” Book of Order, G-2.0503a (5)

This criterion further defines criterion “D” - “accountability to presbytery.” It 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 pastors 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 worked out.

“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 pastor’s participation should be in a Presbyterian (U.S.A.) congregation. Will you state a minimum requirement for participation in a congregation’s worship? Most Presbyterian pastors will resist making such rules, and most will also resist being asked to observe them. Still, fair judgments about a pastor’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.

In working with these principles, it is the intent of the COM:

1. To encourage new and creative forms of Christian ministry appropriate to persons with theological training and faith commitment.
2. To establish clear means by which such persons can integrate their ministry with Presbytery and be accountable to Presbytery on a year-by-year basis for the ministry they undertake.
3. To approach each continuing member and their proposal for ministry with openness to dialogue and with the intent to take seriously the person, their ministry and Presbytery's role with them in mission.

Options upon termination of validated ministry

If one or more of the criteria cannot be met, the continuing member should ask to be designated either a member-at-large or an inactive member of presbytery. If presbytery is unwilling to grant this, then the continuing member should seek release from the exercise of ordained office (G-2.0507) 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 (1) application to and approval of the presbytery that granted release, (2) reaffirmation of ordination vows, and (3) 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.

Failure to engage in validated ministry

A minister of the Word and Sacrament (MWS) who is no longer engaged in a validated ministry nor fulfills the criteria for membership at large (G-2.0503b) and is not honorably retired (G 20503c) shall be moved to inactive status. Annually working with the stated clerk, the COM shall review the status of all MWS working in validated ministry. If the COM determines that the MWS no longer meets the criteria for a validated ministry or a member at large and is not honorably retired the COM shall ask the Presbytery to confirm the COM's findings. If confirmed by the Presbytery, the MWS shall be moved to the inactive roll and will lose voice and vote in the Presbytery except for matters concerning their relationship to the Presbytery.

Criteria for Validated Ministries in the Presbytery of Utah

The Committee on Ministry of the Presbytery of Utah, in compliance with the Book of Order, G-2.0503a, has developed the following criteria for validated ministries. Several different statements already in use in other presbyteries were used as models for this policy.

Pastor members of the Presbytery of Utah may be engaged in validated ministries within congregations (G-1.0101), within governing bodies of the church, ecumenical agencies, specialized ministries under control of the church, and interdenominational agencies; or engaged in validated ministries beyond the jurisdiction of the Church (G-2.0503a), provided the ministry meets the following criteria:

- F. The ministry shall be approved by presbytery before the member enters into such service.
- G. The ministry shall be in line with the mission of the presbytery.
- H. The ministry shall adhere to the essentials of the Reformed faith and polity as expressed in the Book of Order and The Book of Confessions and in conformity with the mission of God's people in the world as set forth in Scripture. (G-2.0105)
- I. The ministry shall exercise pastoral care to those for whom they are responsible. The ministry shall serve Christ and humanity, strengthen the church and equip it for service to the human community. (G-2.0501, Eph. 4:12)

- J. Those involved in validated ministries outside of a congregation shall participate in the worship of a local congregation (preferably a Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., unless valid reasons exist otherwise). They shall also participate in presbytery and should be available for service both within the presbytery and greater church. (G-2.0503a (5))
- K. Those engaged in validated ministry shall be accountable to the presbytery. (G-2.0503a (4))
- L. The ministry shall be accountable for its character and conduct to the presbytery and appropriate organizations or agencies. (G-2.0503a (4))
- M. The purpose of the ministry shall include the regular practice of the ministry of Word and Sacrament and prayer, though not necessarily at a given time or place. In some way, it shall intentionally share the good news. It is not enough to identify oneself as functional in one's profession in a Christ-like manner.