

35. VALIDATING THE MINISTRY OF CONTINUING MEMBERS
Presbytery of St. Augustine

NOTE: THE NEW OPERATIONS MANUAL SUPERCEDES THIS POLICY IN ALLOWING THE MEMBER PREPARATION AND CALL COMMISSION TO APPROVE VALIDATED MINISTRIES RATHER THAN RECOMMENDING THEM TO THE PRESBYTERY.

Preamble

The *Book of Order* requires that presbyteries develop written criteria for validating the ministries of continuing members. The principles that shape these criteria are drawn from the description of the office of Minister of Word and Sacrament and the description of the presbytery's responsibility for validating ministries:

While the ministry is one, specific forms of ministry may emphasize special tasks and skills and the ordering of the offices of ministry shall reflect this variety. There may be forms of ministry in which primary emphasis is given to proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments, forms that stress deeds of love and mercy, forms that are primarily educational, administrative, legislative, or judicial, and forms that are primarily prophetic (G-6.0104)

When ministers are designated as educators, chaplains, pastoral counselors, campus ministers, missionaries, partners in mission, evangelists, administrators, social workers, consultants, or in other specific tasks appropriate to the ministry of the church, they shall evidence a quality of life which helps to share the ministry of the good news. They shall exercise pastoral care of those for whom they are responsible and shall seek to fulfill their ministry by serving Christ and their fellow men and women, strengthening the church and equipping it for concern and service to the life of the human community. In addition to fulfilling the particular responsibilities to which they are called, they shall participate in a congregation, in their presbytery, and in ecumenical relationships, and shall be eligible for election to the higher governing bodies of the church and to the boards and agencies of those governing bodies. (G-6/0203)

A presbytery shall determine the ministers of the Word and Sacrament who shall be its continuing members. In making this determination the presbytery shall be guided by written criteria developed by the presbytery for validation of ministries within its bounds. 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:

- 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.
- b. The ministry shall be one that serves others, aids others, and enables the ministries of others.
- 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-14.0402.
- d. The ministry shall be carried on in accountability for its character and conduct to the presbytery and to organizations, agencies, and institutions.
- e. The ministry shall include responsible participation in the deliberations and work of the presbytery and in the worship and service of a congregation. (G-11.0403)

In addition to these references, the presbytery's own Mission and Values Statements shape its consideration of valid ministries within its bounds:

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Presbytery of St. Augustine is to serve Jesus Christ by strengthening our congregations in their ministries and enabling us to accomplish together what none could accomplish alone.

VALUES STATEMENT

In these early years of the 21st Century, the priorities of the Presbytery of St. Augustine are:

- Spreading the Gospel and founding new churches
- Educating people for discipleship
- Working for justice, righteousness, inclusiveness, and reconciliation
- Nurturing spiritual growth with theological integrity
- Developing creative forms of ministry while valuing our Reformed heritage
- Holding ourselves accountable to and responsible for one another
- Respecting our differences without sacrificing our unity in Christ. (*Manual of Operations*, Presbytery of St. Augustine)

I. Validation and Review of Ministries within Congregations

The approval by the Member Preparation and Call of a call to a valid ministry within a congregation (G-11.0409) shall be considered validation of that ministry.

The annual report of Member Preparation and Call Commission of the type of work and salary compensation of each minister in congregational service (G-11.0502, 11.0103n) shall serve as the annual review of the service of each minister so engaged.

The presbytery, acting through its triennial visit process, shall review the character and conduct of ministers engaged in service within congregations. Results of the triennial visit process are reported to the Member Preparation and Call Commission upon completion of the visit. The Member Preparation and Call Commission shall, at its discretion, recommend actions to the presbytery arising from the triennial visit report or other interactions undertaken in the execution of Member Preparation and Call Commission responsibilities (G-11.0502).

II. Validation and Review of Ministries in Other Service of the Church

The approval of a call to other service of the church, either as extended by the presbytery for service on its staff or recommended by the Member Preparation and Call Commission and consistent with the terms of G-11.0410, shall be considered validation of that ministry.

The annual report of Member Preparation and Call Commission of the type of work and salary compensation of each minister in other service of the church (G-11.0502, 11.0103n) shall serve as the annual review of the service of each minister so engaged.

For minister members of the presbytery staff, the annual and five-year reviews called for in the *Manual of Operations* and conducted by the Personnel Committee shall serve as annual and major reviews of the validation of that ministry.

III. Criteria for Validating Ministries Beyond the Jurisdiction of the Church

The standards of G-11.0403a-e shall serve as broad criteria for the validation of ministry beyond the jurisdiction of the church. In considering an application for validation of such a ministry, the Member Preparation and Call Commission shall determine whether or not these standards have been met. Applicants for validation shall demonstrate the validity of proposed ministries in the following specific ways:

A. 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.

This criterion shall be satisfied by the submission of a brief essay describing the ways in which the ministry proposed for validation is consistent with and/or embodies the mission and values of the Presbytery of St. Augustine as outlined in the Mission and Values Statements of the *Manual of Operations*. In addition, the ministry so described shall be assessed by the Member Preparation and Call Commission as to its consistency with Scripture and the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A).

B. Service and/or aid to others, or enables the ministry of others

"The primary thrust of the work being validated is toward serving 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 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." (PCUSA Handbook)

This criterion shall be satisfied by the submission of a brief essay describing the nature of the ministry for which validation is sought (or by the submission of a job description in which the responsibilities of the ministry are detailed). The essay shall make clear the specific aspects of the ministry through which others are served and/or encouraged to serve others.

C. Theologically informed fidelity to God's Word

"The work to which the continuing member is called [shall make] 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." (PCUSA handbook)

This criterion shall be satisfied by the submission of a brief essay indicating the specific ways in which theological education supports and nurtures the work of the ministry and/or the types of anticipated opportunities for articulating the Christian faith presented by the ministry. It is understood that not all articulation of the faith is verbal; Christian faith may be articulated in acts of compassion and self-sacrifice as well as through verbal proclamation.

D. Accountability for its character and conduct

This criterion shall be satisfied in both of the following ways:

- 1) Submission of a brief written statement (or attachment of separate documentation) indicating
 - a) the persons, entities, or agencies to whom the minister is accountable for the character and conduct of the ministry, whether or not the ministry is compensated, and/or
 - b) the ethical standards of any professional organizations or associations of which the minister is a member in connection with the exercise of this ministry; and
- 2) Regular review by the Member Preparation and Call Commission through
 - a) Annual written reports on the minister's place of residence and performance of the ministry, submitted to the stated clerk of the presbytery, and
 - b) At least one in-person interview with Member Preparation and Call Commission or its designees every three years, unless an exception is granted by the commission.

E. Responsible participations in the deliberations and work of presbytery, and worship and service in a local congregation

This criterion shall be satisfied by both of the following:

- 1) by attestation by the stated clerk of the presbytery that the minister has been in attendance at presbytery at least once in the year previous to application for or review of validation and that the annual report of residence and work has been received for that same year. If the minister seeking validation comes from another presbytery, the stated clerk shall request attestation from the stated clerk of the transferring presbytery. If the person seeking validation is a candidate, the stated clerk shall request evidence of certification of readiness for ministry from the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (or similar body) of the presbytery of care, and
- 2) by written affirmation from the applicant that he or she is a regular participant in the worship and service of a congregation of God's people.

IV. Process for Approval and Review

A. Approval of Application for Validation of Ministry

- 1) The minister or candidate seeking validation for a particular ministry shall complete the Application for Validation of a Ministry and submit the application to the stated clerk or Moderator of the Member Preparation and Call Commission no later than 2 weeks before the date of the Member Preparation and Call Commission meeting at which the application is to be considered.
- 2) The Member Preparation and Call Commission Moderator shall place the application on the agenda of the committee and, if deemed appropriate, schedule an interview for the minister with all or part of the Member Preparation and Call Commission.
- 3) The Member Preparation and Call Commission shall consider the application and recommend to the presbytery whether or not the ministry should be validated.
- 4) At its next stated meeting, the presbytery shall consider the Member Preparation and Call Commission recommendation and shall determine whether or not to validate the ministry.
- 5) If the ministry is validated, the minister or candidate shall be commissioned by action of the presbytery. A commissioning liturgy may be celebrated by the presbytery to mark the beginning of the ministry.
- 6) The stated clerk shall notify the minister or candidate in writing of the decision of the presbytery.

B. Review of Validation

- 1) Annual Review

The minister engaged in a ministry validated by the presbytery shall report annually concerning the following:

- Current mailing address, telephone number, and (if available) email address
- Character and conduct of the ministry accomplished in the time since validation or previous review
- Any changes in the character and conduct of the ministry anticipated for the coming year.

The report shall be submitted to the stated clerk no later than 30 April of each year, and shall be reviewed by the Member Preparation and Call Commission and reported to the presbytery, ordinarily at its stated fall meeting. The Member Preparation and Call Commission may, and in the case of recommendation to rescind validation shall, interview the minister concerning the report and the character and conduct of the ministry.

- If the Member Preparation and Call Commission recommends continuing validation of the ministry, this action may be included in the consent agenda for the presbytery meeting
 - If the Member Preparation and Call Commission recommends rescinding validation of the ministry, it shall report its findings and reasons for so recommending to the presbytery, and the minister shall be offered opportunity to respond.
- 2) Major Review

At least once every three years after the validation of a ministry, the Member Preparation and Call Commission shall conduct an in-person interview with the minister to inquire into the ongoing character and conduct of the minister. This triennial review shall replace the annual review for that year. The content of the interview shall include, but may not be limited to:

- Conduct and activity of the ministry
- Goals for the ministry
- Long-range plans of the minister for continuing education or other personal and professional growth
- Ways in which the presbytery can be of greater support to the minister.

On the basis of this interview, the Member Preparation and Call Commission shall recommend to the presbytery whether or not to continue the validation of the ministry, under the same terms as the annual review.

If being present in person for the triennial interview poses a significant hardship for the minister, the Member Preparation and Call Commission may, at its discretion, choose some other means by which to conduct a conversation about the character and accomplishments of the ministry (e.g., on-line electronic discussion, telephone interview, etc.)

Adopted 18 October 2005

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