

**POLICY #13 OF THE COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY
PRESBYTERY OF SUSQUEHANNA VALLEY**

Policy on Pastors entering, leaving, or TRANSFERRING
within the bounds of the presbytery

Preface:

In accordance with G-14.0602 the presbytery voted on March 15, 1986 to grant the Committee on Ministry (COM) the power to dissolve pastoral relationships under certain conditions. On March 17, 1990, the presbytery voted to grant the COM authority to execute pastoral calls and dismissals when there is common agreement among all parties to the call. The purpose of this policy shall be to outline the steps and procedures required of the COM related to the entrance to, exit from, or transfer of an ordained minister within the bounds of the presbytery. This policy shall establish the guidelines to be used when an ordained minister seeks to answer a call to a church within the bounds of the presbytery; to answer a call to a governing body or agency; to labor in a validated ministry; to labor outside the bounds of the presbytery as a member of SVP; to labor in the bounds of SVP as non-member of the presbytery; transfer membership into SVP or into a different presbytery; or move from one church within the presbytery to another church within the presbytery. These procedures shall be followed unless the COM provides a specific exemption by a majority of the total members of the currently elected COM.

I. ANSWERING A CALL TO A CHURCH:

- A. The Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) of a church in the process of searching for a permanent or temporary pastor shall be responsible for identifying potential candidates to the COM, working with a COM-appointed liaison.
- B. When the PNC identifies a candidate to whom it is seriously considering extending a call, or a candidate who must travel a significant distance for an interview, they shall notify their COM liaison requesting a COM interview.
 1. The PNC shall:
 - a. Notify the candidate of the need to meet with the COM and work with the candidate and the COM liaison to schedule a time and place for the interview.
 - b. Not extend a call or discuss terms of call with the candidate before receiving permission from the COM liaison or COM Co-chair.
 2. The COM Liaison shall:
 - a. Identify at least three members of COM in addition to the COM liaison to the PNC to meet with the candidate, and identify one member of COM to act as moderator of the interview team.
 - b. Notify the Executive Presbyter with an invitation to be present.
 - c. If the PNC has more than one candidate they wish to consider, seek to ensure that the same COM representatives meet with each separate candidate.
 - d. Ensure that the COM representatives represent both genders and parity between elders and ordained clergy.
 - e. Ensure that COM representatives are briefed on particular issues concerning the church.

3. The COM Liaison shall:
 - a. Request a written Statement of Faith from the candidate to be sent directly to the COM liaison in advance of the interview.
 - b. Ensure that the candidate receives all relevant information concerning the church, which would more fully inform her/his decision on whether or not to accept a potential call.
 - c. Ordinarily lead the interview of the candidate, and ensure that all areas of COM Manual Form 5 are covered during the course of the interview.
 - d. Excuse the candidate and allow for an appropriate level of discussion on the candidate's merits by the Interview Team.
 - e. Inform the chair of the PNC, the Co-chairs of the COM and the EP (if not present) of the decision of the Interview Team.
 - i.) If the members of the Interview Team endorse the candidate, allow the PNC to proceed in issuing a call.
 - ii.) If the members of the Interview Team fail to endorse or have more questions of the candidate:
 - Request additional references from the candidate to address specific areas of concern;
 - Arrange a 2nd meeting between the candidate and the Interview Team to address specific areas of concern; or
 - Arrange a meeting between the candidate and the COM as a committee of the whole.
 - f. Inform the Chair of the PNC, if the candidate is accepting a first call, of the COM requirement to attend the Early Ministry Institute of the Synod of the Northeast; or if the candidate is not accepting a first call, of the COM requirement to attend a New Pastorate Workshop (See Policy #24a and 24b).
 - g. Inform the Chair of the PNC, if the candidate is accepting a first call and the church is a small membership church, of the Board of Pensions seminary debt reduction program.
4. The COM Co-chair shall:
 - a. Inform the Stated Clerk when the COM interview is completed and a call is issued.
 - b. Set aside as "The Order of the Day" a time to interview a candidate by the committee of the whole, if requested by a PNC or COM liaison.
 - c. Forward an endorsement or non-endorsement of the candidate to the Stated Clerk to be included on the order of business at the next presbytery meeting.

II. ANSWERING A CALL TO A GOVERNING BODY OR AGENCY:

- A. The Search Committee (SC) of the presbytery in the process of searching for a permanent or temporary executive staff person shall be responsible for identifying potential candidates to the COM, working with a COM-appointed liaison.
- B. When the SC identifies a candidate to whom it is seriously considering extending a call, or a candidate who must travel a significant distance for an interview, they shall notify their COM liaison requesting a COM interview:

1. The SC shall:
 - a. Notify the candidate of the need to meet with the COM and work with the candidate and the COM liaison to schedule a time and place for an interview.
 - b. Not extend a call or discuss terms of call with the candidate before receiving permission from the COM liaison or COM co-chair.
2. The COM Liaison shall:
 - a. Identify at least three members of COM in addition to the COM liaison to the SC to meet with the candidate, and identify one member of COM to act as moderator of the interview team.
 - b. Notify the Executive Presbyter with an invitation to be present.
 - c. If the SC has more than one candidate they wish to consider, seek to ensure that the same COM representatives meet with each separate candidate.
 - d. Ensure that the COM representatives represent both genders and parity between elders and ordained clergy.
 - e. Ensure that COM representatives are briefed on particular issues concerning the church.
3. The COM Liaison shall:
 - a. Request a written Statement of Faith from the candidate to be sent directly to the COM liaison in advance of the interview.
 - b. Ensure the candidate receives all relevant information concerning the church, which would more fully inform her/his decision on whether or not to accept a potential call.
 - c. Ordinarily lead the interview of the candidate, and ensure that all areas of COM Manual Form 5 are covered during the course of the interview.
 - d. Excuse the candidate and allow for an appropriate level of discussion on the candidate's merits by the Interview Team.
 - e. Inform the chair of the SC, the Co-chairs of COM and the EP (if not present) of the decision of the Interview Team.
 - i.) If the members of the Interview Team endorse the candidate, all the SC to proceed in issuing a call.
 - ii.) If the members of the Interview Team fail to endorse or have more questions of the candidate:
 - Request additional references from the candidate to address specific areas of concern:
 - Arrange a 2nd meeting between the candidate and the Interview Team to address specific areas of concern;
 - or
 - Arrange a meeting between the candidate and the COM as a committee of the whole.
 - f. Inform the Chair of the SC, if the candidate is accepting a first call, of the COM requirement to attend the Early Ministry Institute of the Synod of the Northeast; or if the candidate is not accepting a first call, of the COM requirement to attend a New Pastorate Workshop (See Policy #24a and 24b).
 - g. Inform the Chair of the SC, if the candidate is accepting a first call, of the Board of Pensions seminary debt reduction program.
4. The COM Co-chair shall:
 - a. Inform the Stated Clerk when the SC interview is completed and a call is issued.

- b. Set aside as “The Order of the Day” a time to interview a candidate by the committee of the whole, if requested by an SC or COM liaison.
 - c. Forward an endorsement or non-endorsement of the candidate to the Stated Clerk to be included on the order of business at the next presbytery meeting.
5. The SC shall:
- a. Notify the candidate of the need to meet with the COM and work with the candidate and the COM liaison to schedule a time and place for the interview.
 - b. Not extend a call or discuss terms of call with the candidate before receiving permission from the COM liaison or COM Co-chair.
6. The COM Liaison shall:
- a. Identify at least three members of COM in addition to the COM liaison to the SC to meet with the candidate and identify one member of COM to act as moderator of the interview team.
 - b. Notify the State Clerk with an invitation to be present.
 - c. If the SC has more than one candidate they wish to consider, seek to ensure that the same COM representatives meet with each separate candidate.
 - d. Ensure that the COM representatives represent both genders and parity between elders and ordained clergy.
 - e. Ensure that COM representatives are briefed on particular issues concerning the presbytery.

III. ANSWERING A CALL TO A VALIDATED MINISTRY:

- A. Definition of a Validated Ministry: In accordance with G-6.0100 and G-6.0200, as well as specific references in the *Book of Order*, a Validated Ministry is defined as a ministry within the bounds of the presbytery which shall:
- 1. Evidence a quality of life which helps to share the ministry of the good news;
 - 2. Serve Christ and our fellow men and women;
 - 3. Strengthen the church and equip it for concern and service to the life of the human community;
 - 4. 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*;
 - 5. Serve, aid, and enable the ministries of others;
 - 6. Give evidence of theologically informed fidelity to God’s Word (which will normally require a Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent and the completion of the requirements for ordination set forth in G-14.0402.)
 - 7. Be carried on in accountability for its character and conduct to the presbytery; and
 - 8. Include responsible participation in the deliberations and work of the presbytery and in the worship and service of a congregation. (G-6.0203 and G-11.0403)
- B. COM responsibilities – In accordance with the *Book of Order*, a call to a validated ministry shall adhere to the following requirements, and shall also be the responsibility of the COM:
- 1. G-11.0410 – (Validated Ministry in other service of this church):
 - a. Before entering upon service, the minister shall request and obtain the approval of the presbytery of membership; and
 - b. Changes in the terms of the call or dissolution of the relationship shall be reported to the presbytery.

2. G-11.0411 – (Validated Ministry in service beyond the jurisdiction of the church):
 - a. The COM shall make a thorough review of the proposed ministerial function and report its recommendation to the presbytery.
 - b. The COM shall determine and report whether the service complies with all the criteria enumerated in G-11.0403, without exception.
 - c. Upon approval by the presbytery, the permission shall be subject to review and renewal annually.
3. G-14.0517 – (Call, Installation, and Recognition):
 - a. The validated ministry shall be in a form which includes:
 - i.) Description of the goals;
 - ii.) Working relationships;
 - iii.) Financial terms; and
 - iv.) Signatures of the minister, a representative of the presbytery, and where possible, a representative of the employing agency.
 - b. Installation and Recognition:
 - i.) It is appropriate for presbytery to conduct a service of installation similar to that found in G-14.0510, or
 - ii.) A service of recognition at the inauguration of this ministry.

IV. LABORING OUTSIDE THE BOUNDS OF THE PRESBYTERY IF A MEMBER, OR LABORING WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF THE PRESBYTERY IF NOT A MEMBER:

- A. In accordance with G-11.0401, the presbytery shall be responsible for approving all requests to labor outside the bounds of presbytery with respect to its members, or to labor within the bounds of the presbytery with respect to non-members.
- B. The COM shall coordinate, report, and offer a recommendation for all such requests to the presbytery, with the exceptions of requests made by candidates to ordained ministry, which will be coordinated and reported by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM).
- C. Laboring Outside the Bounds of the Presbytery if a member:
 1. A minister member of presbytery who seeks to perform specific and limited ministerial work outside the bounds of SVP, shall inform the COM Co-chair as soon as possible, to ensure that the request is reported and approved at the next scheduled presbytery meeting. Such work includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. Pastoral Care;
 - b. Weddings;
 - c. Funerals;
 - d. Leading and preaching at a Sunday morning worship; or
 - e. Counseling.
 2. A minister member of presbytery who seeks to perform long-term or unlimited ministerial work outside the bounds of SVP, and who does not wish to transfer his/her membership shall:
 - a. First seek permission to labor within the bounds of the other presbytery from the COM of the other presbytery.
 - b. Seek permission of the COM of this presbytery, as stipulated in C.1.

- c. Report on an annual basis the content of their ministry and their desire to continue to labor outside the bounds of the presbytery to COM.
- d. With the approval of the presbytery, may accept ministerial membership in a church that he/she serves that is located outside the United States, without affecting their membership in the presbytery.

D. Laboring Within the Bounds of the Presbytery if not a member:

1. Ministers seeking to serve pastoral roles as Pastor, Associate Pastor, Designated Pastor, Interim Pastor, Interim Associate Pastor, Stated Supply, or staff positions with governing bodies or agencies such as Executive Presbyter, Associate Executive Presbyter or Interim Executive Presbyter within the bounds of Susquehanna Valley Presbytery shall transfer their membership to the Susquehanna Valley Presbytery.
2. A minister of another presbytery who seeks to perform specific and limited ministerial work within the bounds of SVP, shall inform the COM Co-chair as soon as possible, to ensure that the request is approved and reported at the next scheduled presbytery meeting. Such work includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. Pastoral Care;
 - b. Weddings;
 - c. Funerals;
 - d. Leading and preaching at a Sunday morning worship; or
 - e. Counseling.
3. A minister member of another presbytery who seeks to perform long-term or unlimited ministerial work within the bounds of SVP and who does not wish to transfer their membership shall:
 - a. Request permission from presbytery, through COM.
 - b. Meet with COM as a committee of the whole to discuss ministerial work, and rationale for not transferring membership, and involvement within presbytery as a corresponding member.
 - c. Obtain permission from the COM of his/her presbytery of membership.
4. The COM shall:
 - a. Inform the minister in writing of its decision to endorse or not to endorse their request to labor within the bounds of presbytery.
 - b. Inform the Stated Clerk of its recommendation and ensure it is in the COM report for the next presbytery meeting.

V. TRANSFERRING MEMBERSHIP INTO THE PRESBYTERY, OR TRANSFERRING MEMBERSHIP INTO A DIFFERENT PRESBYTERY:

- A. Transferring membership into SVP:
1. The COM, acting for the presbytery, and in accordance with G-11.0402, shall examine and approve each ordained minister, who seeks membership in the presbytery on his/her understanding of:
 - a. Christian Faith;

- b. Reformed Theology;
 - c. The Sacraments; and
 - d. The Government of the church.
2. The minister seeking membership in the presbytery shall be honorably retired as defined in G-11.0412, or have a call:
 - a. To a pastoral relation within the presbytery; or
 - b. From a governing body or agency as defined in G-11.0410; or
 - c. To a validated ministry as defined in G-11.0411.
 3. The Stated Clerk, at the COM's direction, shall:
 - a. Send approval and relevant material to the Stated Clerk of the minister's presbytery requesting the transfer; and
 - b. Ensure the COM's endorsement or non-endorsement is reported at the next presbytery meeting, with recommendations, if any.
- B. Transferring membership into a different presbytery:
1. The minister seeking membership in a different presbytery shall inform the COM Co-chair upon receiving a call from a different presbytery:
 - a. To a pastoral relation with the presbytery; or
 - b. From a governing body or agency as defined in G-11.0410; or
 - c. To a validated ministry as defined in G-11.0411
 2. The COM, acting for the presbytery, shall approve all such requests if there are no disciplinary charges or judgments pending on the individual. If there are such charges or judgments, then the COM shall not approve the transfer until an understanding is reached with the new presbytery on how the charges and judgments shall be settled.
 3. The COM Liaison shall:
 - a. Arrange for an Exit Interview using Form 12 ("Questions to the Pastor During an Exit Interview"), following the stipulations set forth in I. B., 2.a, b and d, above.
 - b. Submit a written report of the Exit Interview to:
 - i.) The COM Co-chair
 - ii.) The Executive Presbyter; and
 - iii.) The minister seeking transfer of membership.
 4. The Stated Clerk, at the COM's direction, shall:
 - a. Respond to all relevant material sent by the Stated Clerk or COM of the incoming minister's presbytery.
 - b. Ensure that the COM's recommendation is reported at the next presbytery meeting.

VI. MOVING FROM ONE CHURCH WITHIN THE PRESBYTERY TO ANOTHER CHURCH:

- A. An ordained minister of the Word and Sacrament, in good standing and with no disciplinary charges pending, may move from one church within the presbytery to another church within the presbytery.

- B. The COM responsibilities shall be to:
1. Determine if the minister is in good standing and has no disciplinary charges pending against him/her.
 2. Ensure that all of the appropriate procedures involved in the call process, as outlined in the *Book of Order* and the COM Manual are followed.
 3. Meet with the minister member/candidate, as a committee of the whole, and discuss:
 - a. Appropriate match between the congregation of call, as well as reasons for leaving the congregation of departure;
 - b. Decision to seek a call within the presbytery and how it may impact both congregations involved; and
 - c. Ways to ensure that appropriate boundaries are set between the minister and the congregation he/she is leaving.
 4. Deliberate, without the minister member/candidate present, as a committee of the whole, on the appropriateness of the call, in light of the discussion with the minister member/candidate, and recommend approving or not approving the call to presbytery.
 5. Communicate to the minister member/candidate, PNC Chair, and Stated Clerk the recommendation to approve or not approve the call, with such recommendation to be included in the COM report to the next presbytery meeting.
 - a. A recommendation to approve the call is to be reported as information at the next presbytery meeting; and
 - b. A recommendation to not approve the call is to be reported as a motion at the next presbytery meeting, if the receiving congregation continues to wish to call the minister member/candidate.
- C. The minister's responsibilities shall be to:
1. Adhere to all appropriate procedures involved in the call process, as outlined in the *Book of Order* and the COM Manual.
 2. Make him/herself available to meet with the COM as a committee of the whole.
 3. Develop a transition plan to move from being a pastor to the congregation he/she is leaving to being a pastor to the congregation he/she is entering that will take into account:
 - a. The desire of some members of the departing congregation to follow the pastor;
 - b. The possible request for continuing pastoral services; and
 - c. Elements of grief or anger on the part of the members of the departing congregation.
 - d. Any other considerations relevant to the particular situation.