

Policy and Procedures for Validated Ministries

Every presbytery in the PC(USA) has the responsibility to develop criteria for the validation of all ministries carried on within its bounds.

In the Presbytery of Donegal, we are privileged to welcome as members those who meet the criteria for teaching elders engaged in a validated ministry. These ministries are under the oversight of the Connecting our Ministries Commission (COM), on behalf of the presbytery.

When the Connecting our Ministry Commission validates a ministry, it is reported to the presbytery in the COM Report of Actions for the Consent Agenda. The COM has been commissioned to validate a ministry, however COM actions are subject to review by the presbytery and the presbytery has the final jurisdiction on all matters pertaining to validated ministries.

This document covers policy and procedures for validating the ministry of teaching elders who are not serving as pastors in congregations or called to service on the staff of the presbytery.

Steps to Validation of a Ministry

Each of these steps is explained in detail below.

1. Understand the Book of Order (BoO) Criteria for Validated Ministry.
2. Submit required documentation.
3. Meet with COM for the “Fit Between Person and Position” Conversation.
4. Examination by the Examination Commission for membership in the Presbytery of Donegal as a Teaching Elder. (if needed)
5. Arrange to participate in the Presbytery Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Boundary Training, or submit alternate qualifications to waive this requirement. (if needed)
6. Decide whether to request that the COM validate the position for participation in a Board of Pensions plan.
7. Decide whether to apply for listing on the authorized Presbytery Pulpit Supply list.
8. Understand the annual reporting requirement to maintain validation.

Book of Order Citations: Validated Ministry

In order for a ministry to be validated, the ministry must meet the criteria defined in the Book of Order. The pertinent passages are quoted in this section. The first step is to review these criteria to decide if the ministry fits within these parameters. Please contact the Executive Presbyter or Stated Clerk for assistance in understanding the criteria.

G-2.0501 Teaching Elder Defined

Teaching elders (also called ministers of the Word and Sacrament) shall in all things be committed to teaching the faith and equipping the saints for the work of ministry (Eph. 4:12). They may serve in a variety of ministries, as authorized by the presbytery. When they serve as preachers and teachers of the Word, they shall preach and teach the faith of the church, so that the people are shaped by the pattern of the gospel and strengthened for witness and service. When they serve at font and table, they shall interpret the mysteries of grace and lift the people's vision toward the hope of God's new creation. When they serve as pastors, they shall support the people in the disciplines of the faith amid the struggles of daily life. When they serve as presbyters, they shall participate in the responsibilities of governance, seeking always to discern the mind of Christ and to build up Christ's body through devotion, debate, and decision.

G-2.0502 Presbytery and the Teaching Elder

As the Lord has set aside through calling certain members to be teaching elders, so the church confirms that call through the action of the presbytery. The presbytery shall determine whether a particular work may be helpful to the church in mission and is a call to validated ministry requiring ordination as a teaching elder. In the performance of that ministry, the teaching elder shall be accountable to the presbytery. Teaching elders have membership in the presbytery by action of the presbytery itself, and no pastoral relationship may be established, changed, or dissolved without the approval of the presbytery.

G-2.0503 Categories of Membership

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

a. Engaged in a Validated Ministry

A validated ministry shall:

- (1) demonstrate conformity with the mission of God's people in the world as set forth in Holy Scripture, The Book of Confessions, and the Book of Order of this church;*
- (2) serve and aid others, and enable the ministry of others;*
- (3) give evidence of theologically informed fidelity to God's Word;*
- (4) be carried on in accountability for its character and conduct to the presbytery in addition to any organizations, agencies, and institutions served; and*
- (5) include responsible participation in the deliberations, worship, and work of the presbytery and in the life of a congregation of this church or a church in correspondence with the PC(USA) (G-5.0201).*

When teaching elders are called to validated ministry beyond the jurisdiction of the church, they shall give evidence of a quality of life that helps to share the ministry of the good news. They shall

participate in a congregation, in their presbytery, and in ecumenical relationships and shall be eligible for election to the higher councils of the church and to the boards and agencies of those councils. The presbytery shall review annually the work of all teaching elders engaged in validated ministries outside the congregation.

G-3.0306 Membership of Presbytery

Each presbytery determines the teaching elders who are its members and validates the ministries in which they are to be engaged. It shall be guided in this determination by written criteria developed by the presbytery for validating ministries within its bounds (G-2.0503a). The presbytery shall examine each teaching elder or candidate who seeks membership in it on his or her Christian faith and views in theology, the Sacraments, and the government of this church. The presbytery may designate teaching elders to work as teachers, evangelists, administrators, chaplains, and in other forms of ministry recognized as appropriate by the presbytery. Those so designated may administer the Sacraments at times and places authorized by the presbytery.

Submission of Documentation

If it seems to the teaching elder that the ministry will meet the BoO criteria, the first step is to submit the needed documentation to the presbytery office. Electronic copies are preferred to the presbytery email address. Physical copies may also be presented by mailing or dropping off at the presbytery office.

- A resume or Personal Information Form (PIF) listing education and previous employment. This must include a master of divinity from a seminary accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). At its discretion, the COM may request a transcript from the seminary.
- Attestation from the presbytery of membership of good standing as a teaching elder member or certification of readiness for examination for ordination as a teaching elder
- A faith statement and spiritual biography
- Position description
- Validated Ministry application form, explaining how the position meets the criteria for validated ministry
- Letter from employer or board certifying employment and requesting that the position be validated for ministry as a teaching elder in the PC(USA)
- Clearances mandated by the Presbytery of Donegal and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
- Any other requested background checks
- Board of Pensions Validated Ministry Enrollment Form, if intending to enroll in any BoP plan
- Any other forms your employer requires that need certification or signatures from the presbytery

Com Fit Between Person and Position Conversation

When all the documentation has been submitted, the person seeking validation should contact the presbytery office to request that the COM Fit Between Person and Position Conversation be scheduled.

The conversation will follow the standard Fit Between Person and Position process, which can be obtained from the presbytery website, or from the presbytery office.

In addition, the conversation will be tailored to looking at the specifics of the position, as opposed to pastoral service in a congregation. It will cover:

- Conversation about how the requirements for validated ministry of the Book of Order can be met, as set forth in G-2.0503 (a).
- A plan for participation in the Ministry of Word and Sacrament, either through preaching and or administration of the sacraments as part of job duties, or through affiliation with a congregation as a Parish Associate (or other similarly titled position), or by active participation in the worship life of a congregation.
- Plan for accountability to a supervisor, a Board of Directors, etc..
- Requests for endorsement, certification or any other requirements from your employer that need COM signatures or action
- Adequacy of Compensation: The compensation agreement of a minister in validated ministry is not subject to minimum salary requirements of the presbytery or approval by COM, unless the minister is a staff member of presbytery, synod, or GA. COM will still offer the support of a conversation on whether to compensation meets the financial plan of the teaching elder
- Housing Allowance Regulations: Either the teaching elder in validated ministry or the employer may submit to COM a request for designation of a Housing Allowance for income tax purposes.

Examination by the Examination Commission of the Presbytery of Donegal

Unless the teaching elder is already a member of the Presbytery of Donegal, the next step after the COM conversation is Examination by the Examination Commission of the presbytery for membership in the Presbytery of Donegal. This process is available on the presbytery website or from the presbytery office.

Participation in Presbytery Boundary and Sexual Misconduct Prevention Training

All teaching elders who become members of the Presbytery of Donegal must participate in the Presbytery Boundary and Sexual Misconduct Prevention Training within one year of beginning the position. If a teaching elder in a validated position has participated in a training offered by the employer, the process to request a waiver may be followed. A signature form signifying receipt of the presbytery Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response policy and acknowledgement of responsibility for conduct in accordance with the policy must be filed with the Stated Clerk prior to action on validation. All teaching elders must renew Boundary Training in accordance with presbytery policy every three years.

Validation of Ministry for Board of Pensions (BoP) Participation

Those enrolling as participants in a plan of the Board of Pensions as a Validated Ministry may request documentation from the presbytery in accordance with the process stipulated by the Board of Pensions.

Pulpit Supply List

Teaching Elders in validated positions may submit an application to be placed upon the presbytery authorized Pulpit Supply list. This process involves a conversation with the pulpit supply task group, in addition to the application. The list is reviewed annually.

Yearly Review of Validated Ministry

All teaching elders in validated ministries must submit a yearly Validated Ministry Review form, in accordance with the deadline provided by COM.

Validated ministers who do not report on their work annually may lose their status as validated teaching elder members of the presbytery and may apply for member-at-large status instead.

Participation in The Life of The Presbytery and in a Local Congregation

The teaching elder is welcomed and encouraged to participate in the life of the presbytery, to the extent possible. Ways to connect and engage will be discussed as part of the COM conversation. An ongoing relationship with a one of presbytery's congregations is encouraged. COM is glad to be a participant in identifying roles for validated teaching elder in the life of a congregation.

Candidates Seeking Ordination to a Validated Ministry Position

This policy may apply to candidates who have been certified ready for examination for ordination and are seeking validation of a ministry. Permission to be ordained to a validated ministry will be on a case by case/person by person basis.

Validation of Volunteer Ministries

Recognizing that it is God who calls to ministry, and that the call is not always to a position that includes financial compensation, this process may be followed to validate a volunteer ministry position, including a call to service in the mission and ministry of the presbytery.

Validation of Ministry is Not Transferable to a New Ministry

A teaching elder engaged in a validated ministry who has been received based on a particular ministry may not take up a different ministry without participating in the validation process for the new ministry. In other words, validation attaches to an approved work of ministry and is not a status conferred on the teaching elder

Ending the Validated Ministry

When a teaching elder engaged in a validated ministry leaves that position, he/she will be offered the opportunity to apply for status as an Member-At-Large member of the presbytery