



Commission on Ministry Manual

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Contacts

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Regional Liaisons

See current listing [HERE](#) on the Presbytery website. Contact [Megan Hendrickson](#) at the Presbytery office for a password.

Overview

- The Presbytery of Chicago is divided into seven regions for the work of the Commission on Ministry. Each region will ideally have two COM liaisons—one ruling elder and one minister of Word and Sacrament or commissioned elder.
- As new pastors come into your region, you are asked to assist in helping them integrate into the area as they begin building their new network of colleagues.
- The COM liaisons have a wide variety of activities within the congregations, from building relationships to helping sessions navigate pastoral transitions, providing guidance for incoming transitional or called/installed positions, and more.
- You are requested to attend all COM meetings and be prepared to inform the commission about any issues for which you need advice or counsel.
- Please ask for help whenever you have questions. The best boundary training advice is to consult, consult, consult. The COM Moderator, Executive Presbyter, and Stated Clerk are here to guide and advise, so reach out when you have questions.
- You will want to contact the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery to receive a personal password to the Presbytery's Online Directory.

Value of meeting with COM

- Our role as COM is to build relationships with the pastor and the session/congregation, through conversations, occasional lunches, meeting with session, etc.
- We are here to support and help pastors, sessions, and congregations.
- COM desires to learn what the congregation is excited about, what good works are happening so we can share this with other congregations, and maybe connect congregations who are doing similar work.
- We hope to help the pastor/session know what funds may be available to assist the congregation's work, such as Mission funds, Training/educational opportunities, etc.
- COM will work with helping a new pastor get connected to the body of the presbytery and colleagues within the presbytery, along with walking alongside the session when a pastor leaves.

Regional Liaison and Congregations

- [COM Regional Liaisons](#)
- [Congregations by COM Region](#)

Building Relationships in Your Region – being pro-active in communication

- The primary role of the regional liaisons is to develop and maintain ongoing relationships with the session (pastor and clerk) as their connection for all COM work. Ongoing relationships provide this connection so when there are any particular needs, you already have a connection and can provide support.
- At least quarterly, check in with each pastor and/or clerk in person or electronically to discover how they are doing, what ministries they are excited about, or if they have any questions.
- Request to receive the congregation's electronic newsletter and annual report. (The annual report should be sent to the presbytery office.)

- Quarterly Regional gathering: Plan regional gatherings to get to know each other, build community, and share in this task of ministry. Funding often is available to assist with these regional gatherings. Be sure to include the COM Moderator, the Executive Presbyter, and the Director of Connectional Relationships in the email calling for the gathering.

Conflict

Conflict is inevitable within all groups of people. Opportunities for continuing education in conflict management/mediation training are available to help navigate and guide sessions through varying forms of conflict.

- When you hear about conflict in a congregation, here is the recommended order in which a response might occur.
 - The COM regional liaison consults with COM Moderator and/or Executive Presbyter.
 - The person with the complaint contacts their Personnel Committee, session, or Clerk of Session. The session manages the issue without COM involvement. (If there are sexual abuse or harassment complaints, they must contact the Stated Clerk of the presbytery.)
 - If the session is unable to resolve the issue on its own, the session or moderator invites the presbytery to be present through the regional liaison or COM Moderator/Executive Presbyter.
 - Do not go to a session meeting alone. It is good biblical precedence to have a companion and a witness.
 - If the COM Moderator and/or the Executive Presbyter need to be involved, they will always keep the regional liaison informed and will invite the liaison(s) to attend any meetings with them.

When a Pastor Leaves

- You are required to attend the session meeting when a pastor announces they are leaving the call. Do not go alone.
- Prior to the meeting, inform the COM Moderator and the Executive Presbyter of this upcoming transition in pastoral leadership as they may want to be in attendance with you.
- As regional liaison(s), be prepared to moderate the portion of the meeting when this is announced and plans are discussed. As a member of COM, you are empowered to moderate session meetings when needed.
- During the meeting assure the session COM will help them through this process.
- Details and specifics are in the [COM Transitional Manual](#).
- During the meeting with session, provide some of this guidance:
 - Form a team to celebrate the pastor's ministry with a good-bye reception.
 - Establish who will ensure that pulpit supply is arranged for worship and pastoral care coverage is secured.
 - Provide the clerk with the name and contact information of the Executive Presbyter. The session should put together a small group of people charged with updating the

Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP) and interviewing potential candidates in order to get moving quickly to locate an interim/transitional pastor.

- The Executive Presbyterian will provide training for the small group of people who will be updating the MDP.
- Covenant of Closure – There are three different Covenant of Closure contracts based on the particular situation. These are to be summarized by either the departing pastor or the presbytery representative at the final congregational meeting and signed by the pastor, the clerk, and the presbytery representative. You will find these documents here.
 - [Covenant of Closure – Ministers Moving to Other Service Opportunities](#)
 - [Covenant of Closure for Ministers Accepting a New Call](#)
 - [Covenant of Closure for Pastors Who Retire](#)

Exit Interviews

When a pastor--called/installed/interim/temporary--leaves a congregation, the regional liaison(s) will meet with both the pastor and the session (at different times) to discuss the ministries of the church during the tenure of the pastor. The exit interview typically happens within a month after the dissolution of call is finalized and signed.

Departing Pastor Exit Interview Questions

- What are the major strengths/accomplishments (a) and challenges/struggles (b) of the congregation?
- What are the major strengths/accomplishments (a) and challenges/struggles (b) of the community?
- What are the major strengths/accomplishments (a) and challenges/struggles (b) of the session?
- What are the major strengths and weaknesses of the pastor's ministry as you look back upon it: Your dreams when you came (fulfilled or not), your achievements, your problems, any recommendations you would like to make your successor?
- Are there any critical problems that, in your judgment, should be dealt with before the congregation proceeds to look for a new pastor?
- Have you any special recommendations to make to the COM?

A written report from the exit interview with the departing pastor shall be submitted by the regional liaison(s) to the COM Moderator and the Stated Clerk of the presbytery for retention in presbytery files.

The Session Exit Interview Questions

- What are the major strengths (a) and weaknesses (b) of the congregation?
- What are the major strengths (a) and weaknesses (b) of the community?
- What are the major strengths (a) and weaknesses (b) of the session?
- What are the traits you would recommend for the next pastor?
- What are the critical problems which need to be addressed before the search for a new pastor?
- What recommendations do you have for COM?

A written report from the exit interview with the session shall be submitted by the regional liaison(s) to the COM Moderator and the Stated Clerk of the presbytery for retention in presbytery files.

Boundary Training

All newly ordained Ministers of the Word and Sacrament and/or Ministers of the Word and Sacrament new to the Chicago Presbytery are required to take Boundary Training in the same year of ordination/installation or moving into the presbytery. Thereafter, an annual training recertification is required for all Ministers of the Word and Sacrament. Please contact the Stated Clerk of the presbytery for information and registration.

Criteria for Validation of Specialized Professional Ministries

G-2.0502 in the *Book of Order* gives to each presbytery the determination of who will be its minister members.

As the Lord has set aside through calling certain members to be ministers of the Word and Sacrament, 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 minister of the Word and Sacrament. In the performance of that ministry, the minister of the Word and Sacrament shall be accountable to the presbytery. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament 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.

In G-2.0503 the *Book of Order* identifies the categories of membership.

A minister of the Word and Sacrament 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.

The presbytery is required to develop written criteria for the validation of all ministries carried on within its bounds which are not pastoral positions related to a particular congregation or are not presbytery staff positions. 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 the 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. The *Book of Order* gives us help in defining validated ministry in G-2.0503a.

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;*
- 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 ministers of the Word and Sacrament 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 ministers of the Word and Sacrament engaged in validated ministries outside the congregation.

What this means for Chicago Presbytery

- The ministry shall demonstrate conformity with the mission of God's people set forth in scripture and the constitution of the PC(USA), in both the *Book of Confessions* and the *Book of Order*.
- It is to be a ministry that serves others and fits within the definitional parameters set by G-3.0306: educators, evangelists, administrators, chaplains, pastoral counselors, campus ministers, missionaries, social workers, consultants, or other specific tasks appropriate to the ministry of the church.
- It shall give evidence of theologically informed fidelity to God's Word. In effect, this means the teaching elder shall have a degree from a seminary approved by the Association of Theological Schools and have met the requirements for ordination if not already ordained.
- The ministry shall be carried out in accountability to the presbytery and other organizations, agencies, or institutions. Accountability to the presbytery is routinely achieved by the annual filing of a Specialized Ministers Report. The minister of the Word and Sacrament employed in a specialized ministry shall be accountable to and under the auspices of a clearly defined corporate body that assumes supervisory and legal responsibility for the ministry and for the person who functions within it.
- The ministry will have a clear and discernable relationship to the general criteria for ordination, and the position itself will be related to or clearly further the mission directions of the Presbytery of Chicago and the Presbyterian Church (USA).
- The minister of the Word and Sacrament will be a responsible participant in the life of the presbytery to the extent possible and will be part of the worship life of one of the presbytery's congregations. Parish associate relationships are encouraged for all specialized ministers and specialized ministers are commended to the attention of pastors and sessions for consideration as parish associates.
- This policy may apply to candidates who have been certified ready to receive a call and are seeking validation of a specialized ministry. Permission to be ordained to specialized ministry will be on a case-by-case/person-by-person basis. The ministry being considered shall include proclamation of the Word and administering Sacraments.

The Process

- The presbytery shall examine each minister of the Word and Sacrament or candidate who seeks membership in it on his/her/their Christian faith and views in theology, the Sacraments, and the government of this church.
- The presbytery may designate ministers of the Word and Sacrament 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.
- Every minister of the Word and Sacrament shall ordinarily be a member of the presbytery where his/her/their work is situated or of the presbytery where he/she/they reside.
- A minister of the Word and Sacrament who is serving in a church outside the United States may, with the approval of the presbytery, accept membership in that church for the period of such service without affecting his/her/their membership in a presbytery of this church. (G-3.0306).

All Documents Can be Found [HERE](#).

- [2024 Compensation Guidelines:](#)
- [Commissioned Pastor Manual:](#)
- [Congregations by COM Regions:](#)
- [Covenant with Commissioned Pastor:](#)
- [Covenant with Temporary Pastor:](#)
- [Family Leave Guidelines:](#)
- [Guidelines for a Statement of Faith:](#)
- [Guidelines for Ordination & Installation:](#)
- [Guidelines for Sabbatical Leave:](#)
- [New Worshipping Communities Presbytery Policy:](#)
- [On Calling a Pastor from the PCUSA:](#)
- [Pastor Support Grant Application:](#)
- [Policy and Sample Dissolution Agreement \(includes Severance Agreement\):](#)
- [Terms of Pastoral Call:](#)