



**North Alabama Presbytery
Commission on Ministry (COM)**

Handbook 2024

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Commission on Ministry Responsibilities

The Commission on Ministry (COM) of North Alabama Presbytery serves as pastor and counselor to Teaching and Ruling Elders commissioned to particular pastoral service, as well as to Certified Christian Educators, in the Presbytery. The COM guides persons preparing to become Ministers of the Word and Sacrament and examines and recommends to the Presbytery ministers and candidates who accept calls to North Alabama Presbytery. The COM guides Ruling Elders who seek commissioning to particular pastoral service within the congregations of the Presbytery.

The COM works with congregations in transition, and through the pastoral search process. The COM, on behalf of the Presbytery, approves Temporary Pastoral relationships.

The COM counsels with churches in the pastoral search process, with ministers and sessions on an annual basis through liaisons, approves on behalf of Presbytery interim relationships, and examines and recommends to Presbytery those ministers seeking to accept calls to North Alabama Presbytery churches.

The COM works with churches in conflict, offering support and resources towards a healthy resolution of the identified conflict.

The COM is composed of 12 members, Teaching and Ruling Elders, representing the diversity of North Alabama Presbytery, in numbers as nearly equal as possible. COM members are elected by the Presbytery and serve a three-year term. No member shall serve more than two consecutive terms, or six years. The quorum of the COM shall be seven members. The Executive Presbyter and the Stated Clerk shall be *ex officio* members without vote.

The COM is empowered to act on behalf of the Presbytery to:

- Authorize sessions to call congregational meetings for the election of a pastor / co-pastor / associate pastor nominating committee, and to guide the search process for that position.
- Appoint a moderator for session and congregational meetings, in the absence of an installed pastor.
- Approve the dissolution of pastoral relationships.
- Negotiate severance packages between congregations and pastors.
- Approve the dismissal of Teaching Elders.
- Authorize Teaching Elders engaged in non-parish validated ministries to administer the Sacraments.
- Authorize Ruling Elders to administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper at specific times and places.
- Approve calls for installed pastoral service and contracts for Temporary Pastoral relationships, including the approval of the terms of call.

(Current Minimum Compensation Guidelines are found in Appendix C.)

(Annual Report on Terms of Call Forms for Installed and Temporary Pastors are found in Appendices Q.1 and Q.2)

- Approve Administrative Commissions for the purpose of ordaining and/or installing Teaching Elders.
- Approve Administrative Commissions to churches in serious conflict.
- Provide oversight of inquirers and candidates.
- To facilitate its work, the COM utilizes task forces and teams, composed of COM members, and other ruling and Teaching Elder members of the Presbytery as necessary. The COM utilizes liaisons to provide support of its member congregations and pastors.

The Commission on Ministry shall report all actions to the Presbytery.

The COM has many responsibilities, and attendance is expected at all COM meetings. Should a member have three unexcused meetings during a calendar year, this shall constitute a resignation and the member will be replaced. Exceptions to this attendance policy will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

CODE OF MINISTERIAL ETHICS

This Code of Ministerial Ethics is for the purpose of maintaining the high character of the Christian ministry. As a minister member of North Alabama Presbytery, you are asked to study this document, sign a copy for the COM records, and keep a copy for your file.

1. **Speech and Conduct**—Like all Christians, the pastor should try to shape their speech and conduct so that it is patterned after Paul’s counsel to think about whatever is honorable, pure, lovely, gracious, excellent and worthy of praise. Trying to act as God’s servant, the pastor should speak the truth in love. They should use understanding, tact, and discretion, with a sense of respect for all people, a spirit of fairness and decency, and a concern for Christian brotherhood and sisterhood. The pastor's motives should be honest and sincere in desiring to build up the body of Christ. In speaking of other pastors, it should be remembered that making disparaging statements is destructive of the peace, unity, and purity of the Church. At all times, pastors should strive to share faith, hope and love in all relationships.
2. **Service for Members of Another Church**—When a pastor is called upon to officiate at a wedding, funeral or baptism for families who are not members of their congregation, the pastor should ascertain whether the family is a member of a different church. If the family is a member of another congregation, the family should be urged to procure the services of their own pastor. If that effort fails, the pastor should seek to inform the family’s pastor to explain the circumstances and secure the concurrence of that pastor whenever possible prior to performing any services.
3. **Calling on Members of Neighboring Churches**—The pastor’s first responsibility is to their own flock, and they should concentrate calling on the members of their own congregation. Normally, the pastor should not call, either in the home or the hospital, on one who is a member of another church unless the initiative and interest shown by such a person requires it as a courtesy, or the circumstances indicate that it would be helpful. A useful guideline is to make only such calls as you would deem appropriate for another pastor to make on a member of your congregation.
4. **Multiple Staff Relationships**—In staff relationships, as in all intra-church relationships, the objective is to work together with a spirit of cooperation in building up the whole church. To this end, the pastors should be understanding toward one another, accept each other as persons, respect the competencies of each other, offer constructive suggestions to one another, forgive misunderstandings, and be tolerant of differences of opinion and style of operation.

A staff member should not aspire to succeed any other person on the staff. Innuendo and gossip should be avoided. A staff member should be encouraged to speak openly and frankly about their differences and problems to the individual with whom they differs, and only to that person. Loyal support for all other staff members is a tremendous help in building and maintaining good working relationships and in edifying the church. As members of the staff do their work with enthusiasm and confidence in each other, a strong team can be formed to carry forward the work of the church.

If a person on staff feels unable to manage relationships with other staff members in a creative and effective manner, then they should give serious consideration to relocating for their own sake and for the sake of the work of the church.

5. **When a Pastor Leaves a Church**—When the relationship between the pastor and the church is dissolved, they should announce publicly that they will no longer be the pastor, and that they will not be available to be called upon for pastoral services. A former pastor may be called upon for services only when unusual circumstances exist. Such an invitation should come only from the current pastor or moderator of the session after consultation with the parties concerned. It is understood that the former pastor would not conduct any services but would offer only to assist the pastor in such services as baptisms, weddings, funerals, or hospital visitation.
6. **The Transitional Pastor**--The purpose of a Transitional Pastor is to prepare a particular congregation for the coming of a new pastor and to provide essential and helpful services prior to the calling of a new pastor. To this end, they will not seek to glorify or to mold loyalties to themselves, but rather loyalties to the office of the pastor and, most of all, loyalties to Christ and to the Church, which is His Body on earth.
7. **The Pastor and Their Successor**—When a pastor is called to another parish or retires, they should exercise due care not to influence, by direction or indirection, by spoken or written word, the selection of their successor or the policies of that successor. The pastor should be especially discreet when visiting their former parish. In such cases, it would be proper to pay their respects and support to the successor. Frequent visits to one's former parish should be avoided.

During the transitional period before a new pastor is called, the former pastor may be called upon to conduct ministerial services. If there is a Transitional Pastor, they should be accorded the same courtesies as the new pastor. If there is no Transitional Pastor, the former pastor may serve as called upon only by the invitation of the session.

When a pastor leaves a church, they should exercise all care so as to have no further influence upon the congregation either by conversation, correspondence, or other action. They should seek to be supportive as comments are made regarding the new pastor, programs, policies, and activities of the former church.

The former pastor should not attend meetings or services of worship at their former parish except for possible special occasions or by occasional invitation.

8. **The Pastor and Their Predecessor**—The successor also has the responsibility to be courteous to their predecessor. The years may have built up loyalties that are strong, and though a predecessor may do everything possible to discourage a family from seeking their services, it would be gracious in certain instances for the successor to invite the family's former pastor to assist with pastoral care/services. The wise pastor will observe that such an attitude might do more to move people to accept their own ministry than would resistance. In all cases, the desire to minister to persons through the office of the Minister of the Word and Sacrament should take precedence over personal considerations.
9. **Other Pastors**—All pastors who have no pastoral relationship with a congregation should respect the position of the parish pastors regarding all ministerial functions within the community. Weddings, funerals, hospital visitation and administration of the sacraments should not be accepted by such ministers unless an invitation has been given by the pastor and/or the session of the church involved. Such ministers may fill the pulpit and/or administer the sacraments only at the request of the local pastor or session or by permission of the Presbytery. Such ministers ordinarily should not counsel with nor advise former members concerning problems in their churches but should encourage them to seek the counsel of their pastors or other duly constituted authorities in the Presbytery to which the church belongs.

10. **Questions and Violations**—All questions, concerns, and evidence of violation of this Code of Ethics should be privately submitted to the Moderator of the COM. In so far as it is possible, the COM should exercise pastoral oversight and counsel privately with any persons who may be involved. If a pastor who is a member of another Presbytery is involved, the COM and North Alabama Presbytery should communicate with the COM in that Presbytery.

ACTIONS

1. Presbytery has adopted the “Code of Ministerial Ethics.”
2. The pastors and Commissioned Ruling Elders of North Alabama Presbytery covenant with each other to follow this Code of Ministerial Ethics in a spirit of sibling concern for the welfare and success of each other and in the spirit of Christ.
3. Every pastor and Commissioned Ruling Elder in North Alabama Presbytery shall receive a copy of the Code of Ministerial Ethics.
4. Every clerk of session in North Alabama Presbytery shall receive a copy of the Code of Ministerial Ethics and shall read this statement to the session.
5. Each pastor and Commissioned Ruling Elder of North Alabama Presbytery shall prepare and sign two copies. The pastor or Commissioned Ruling Elder shall keep one signed copy, and forward one signed copy to the PRESBYTERY office for the COM files.

Pastor / Commissioned Ruling Elder [print name]

Signature

Date

A copy of this Code of Ethics for signatures is in Appendix A.

Liaison Responsibilities for Members of the Commission on Ministry

One of the most important duties a member of the Commission on Ministry (COM) has is serving as liaison to a congregation. The liaison represents both the Presbytery and the COM in working with congregations, sessions, and Teaching Elders. It is therefore incumbent upon the liaison to always act in the best interest of the whole Church, to speak the truth in love, to be knowledgeable of the *Book of Order*, the polity of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the policies and procedures of the COM, and to hold their congregation(s) in prayer.

The liaison is the first and primary interface between the COM and Presbytery and congregations, sessions, and Teaching Elders in all matters relating to the work of the COM. The liaison should be knowledgeable of where to refer issues that arise that are beyond that person's ability or beyond the scope of COM responsibility. Emphasis must be on supporting their assigned church(es).

Examples of how this support might be done are:

- A need for leadership training is expressed, but the church is not equipped to do their own, so the liaison provides resources (persons, materials, online training options, etc.).
- The church would like to initiate a mission project, but there are no funds in their budget to support it, so the liaison offers resources (grant money available for that purpose, etc.).
- A pastor is struggling with burn-out and needs some downtime; the liaison encourages the session to make it possible for the pastor to participate in some aspect of COM-sponsored pastoral care.

In relating to congregations, sessions and Teaching Elders, the liaison shall provide a pastoral presence and be available to listen to concerns and joys and provide assistance as appropriate.

The liaison shall be available to respond to conflict by assessing the level of conflict and determining whether to intervene or refer to the COM.

To facilitate a close pastoral relationship between the liaison and their congregation and Teaching Elder it is most important the liaison take an active interest in the life of these assignments. For example, attending worship services as able, receiving and reading newsletters and annual reports, keeping up with the church through social media, meeting with the pastoral leadership semi-annually at minimum, praying for the church, and meeting with the session on an occasional basis.

The liaison shall take special care to be available and assist congregations, sessions, and the Teaching Elders when a transition of leadership is occurring. Specifically:

- Counsel with the Teaching Elder in dealing with issues of disengaging specific to that situation. This will include an exit interview. **Sample Exit Interview Questions are found in Appendix B.1.**
- Meet with the session to help them deal with the issues of disengagement, grief, and transition. This too will require an exit interview. **Sample Exit Interview Questions are found in Appendix B.2.**
- Assist the session in developing a "transitional plan" for the transitional period including helping them locate Temporary Pastoral and pulpit supply, employing a Transitional Pastor (if appropriate), and dealing with congregational dynamics during the transitional period.
- Meet with the Transitional Pastor at least quarterly to give pastoral support, receive progress reports, deal with issues, help them disengage and prepare for the next pastor. This final step will include an exit interview with the Transitional Pastor and the session.

MINISTERIAL COMPENSATION GUIDELINES

MINIMUM COMPENSATION FOR FULL TIME PASTORS*

In G-3.0303(c) the Book of Order states that the Presbytery shall “*establish minimum compensation for pastoral calls....*” To that end, the Commission on Ministry (COM) regularly reviews and establishes compensation guidelines which include the following:

1. Minimum Effective Salary*
* *Effective Salary is Cash Salary plus Housing*
2. Professional Expenses through a reimbursable plan which includes but is not limited to:
Mileage Expense at the current IRS rate
Continuing Education, books, meals, lodging, and travel expenses for approved events
3. Four weeks vacation.
4. Two weeks study leave.
5. Full Pension & Medical benefits through the Board of Pensions

Current minimum compensation guidelines are included in Appendix C.

6. Family and Medical Leave Policy – Appendix R

7. Sabbatical Leave Guidelines – Appendix S

***Full-Time is considered forty hours per week. Compensation should be pro-rated for Part-Time Installed Pastors**

REMUNERATION POLICY FOR APPOINTED MODERATORS OF SESSIONS

The Commission on Ministry has established a policy for remuneration to those appointed as Moderators for Sessions.

The church served by the appointed Moderator will pay \$50.00 in compensation per meeting to the appointed Moderator. Should round trip mileage exceed 25 miles in addition to the \$50.00, mileage will be paid at the prevailing IRS rate. Payment should be made within two weeks after service.

PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS

Temporary Pastoral Relationships

The Commission on Ministry (COM) has established four types of Temporary Pastoral relationships, all of which will be under contract, written agreement, or covenant with the Session and approval of COM.

1. **Organizing Pastor** - This relationship as organizing pastor shall terminate when the new church is formally organized by the Presbytery.
2. **Stated Supply** - This relationship will be for a specified period not to exceed twelve months in length, which is renewable with the approval of the COM.
3. **Temporary Supply** – This relationship is short term, generally up to 90 days, but can be renewed. A Temporary Supply can become a Stated Supply or Designated Pastor.
4. **Interim Pastor** - When the COM and session determine that an interim pastor is necessary and helpful, the session may consult the COM and seek an interim pastor as soon as a date certain for departure has been announced by a pastor planning to leave.

Exception: Any of these four relationships may be called to an installed position if recommended by the COM, approved by the congregation, and approved upon three- fourths vote of the Presbytery.

Installed Pastoral Relationships

The COM recognizes three types of installed pastoral relationships all of which will be under contract, written agreement or covenant with the Session and approval of COM.

1. **Pastor** – Pastors are installed for an indefinite period of time.
2. **Associate Pastor** – Associate pastors are installed for an indefinite period of time. “The relationship of an associate pastor is not dependent upon that of a pastor. An associate pastor is ordinarily not eligible to become the next installed pastor of that congregation.” (*G-2.0504a.*)
3. **Co-Pastor** – Co-pastors are installed for an indefinite period of time; the duties of each pastor and the relationship between the pastors of the congregation shall be determined by the session with the approval of the Presbytery. When there are co-pastors, and the relationship of one of them is dissolved, the other remains as pastor. (*G-2.0504a.*)

Designated Pastor

This relationship is established by the COM for a designated term, not less than two years or more than four years. The congregation and the Teaching Elder must both have agreed to be considered for a designated relationship. Establishment of a designated relationship may be initiated (a) by the congregation as a request from the session for COM approval or (b) by the Presbytery as a request from the COM to the session. In either case, the session may be authorized by the COM to call a congregational meeting to approve a designated relationship and to elect a PNC that may consider only those candidates proposed by the COM.

The acceptability of such candidates, as determined by examination or other means, will ordinarily be equivalent to that of candidates typically presented by the COM for Presbytery examination. If the list of candidates presented by the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) includes any who have not been approved by the COM, the PNC shall be advised that the COM reserves the right to examine such a candidate further before approving him or her for nomination.

The candidate selected by the PNC and called by the congregation is then examined, approved, and installed by the Presbytery as the designated pastor who is a member and moderator of the session. The relationship may be renewed anytime during the last six months of the term. If no action is taken to renew the call within its specified term, the call will expire. The call cannot be changed or dissolved except by consent of the Presbytery, at the request of the pastor, or the church (by action of the congregation). The Presbytery may consent to changing or dissolving the call after consultation with the congregation and the designated pastor.

With prior COM approval, a designated pastor may be installed as a permanent pastor by the following process: The session, acting as a PNC, calls a congregational meeting at which the designated pastor is nominated and elected, and is then presented, approved, and installed by the Presbytery.

Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE)

This relationship is between a ruling elder and a session and is approved by the COM and recommended to the Presbytery for commissioning. If approved, the Presbytery commissions the ruling elder to particular pastoral service, for a period of two to four years. The commission is reviewed annually by the COM and can be renewed.

The application form to become a CRE is in Appendix L.

GUIDELINES ON TEMPORARY PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS

INTRODUCTION

These guidelines are to be used by sessions and the Commission on Ministry (COM) to assist congregations to have effective pastoral services in the absence of an installed pastor. The COM ordinarily recommends a congregation in transition seek Temporary Pastoral leadership, either full or part time, during the period between regularly installed pastors.

These guidelines have three purposes:

1. To help sessions of congregations without pastors understand their options for securing pastoral leadership during transitional periods.
2. To present a basis and guidelines for establishing Temporary Pastoral leadership.
3. To outline the COM's active partnership with these congregations.

OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO CONGREGATIONS WITHOUT INSTALLED PASTORS

When a congregation is between pastors, the session should obtain the services of a Teaching Elder in a Temporary Pastoral relationship. No formal call is issued, and no formal installation takes place. The session has the following options:

- A. **Temporary Supply / Stated Supply** (*G-2.0504b, c*): A Temporary Supply / Stated Supply may be a Teaching Elder, Candidate, Commissioned Ruling Elder, or Ruling Elder. Arrangements are made by the session for services as needed, not to exceed twelve (12) months at a time. The session shall seek the counsel of the COM before securing a Temporary Supply / Stated Supply. A Temporary Supply / Stated Supply may not be called as pastor or associate pastor of a church served as Temporary Supply / Stated Supply, except by three-fourths vote of Presbytery.
- B. **Interim Pastor**: The interim pastor is invited by the session for a specified period of time, not to exceed twelve (12) months at a time, while the church is seeking a pastor. Presbytery approval through the COM is required. The interim pastor is not ordinarily eligible to be called as the next regularly installed pastor, co-pastor, associate pastor (*G-2.0504b*). However, the interim pastor may be called as pastor or associate pastor of the church served by three-fourths vote of Presbytery.

The Code of Ministerial Ethics concerning former pastors applies to pastors in Temporary Pastoral relationships.

DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD

When the COM and session determine that a temporary/stated supply pastor, interim pastor, interim co-pastor, or interim associate pastor is necessary and helpful, the session shall consult the COM and seek Temporary Pastoral leadership as soon as a date certain for departure has been announced by a pastor or associate pastor planning to leave.

The COM shall then:

- A. Initiate meetings with the session to establish directions and methods of acquiring temporary pastoral relationship.
- B. Support the session in any needs that may arise whether physical, moral, or spiritual.
- C. Conduct all exit interviews with former pastor and the session.
- D. The Transitional Pastor, through the COM liaison, shall report on continuing progress of the-pastoral relationship. The COM liaison shall conduct exit interviews with the Transitional Pastor and the session upon termination of the contract.

Suggested questions for exit interviews with pastors and sessions are found in Appendices B.1 and B.2.

The current pastor cannot be involved in the search process for Temporary Pastoral leadership.

PRACTICALITIES OF ESTABLISHING A TEMPORARY PASTORAL RELATIONSHIP

A. Resources

- a. When a congregation is without a pastor, and in need of the services of a Transitional Pastor, the Clerk of Session shall contact either the Executive Presbyter, the chair of COM, or the COM liaison for recommendations of potential candidates.

B. Contracts/Covenants

- a. All contracts/covenants for Temporary Pastoral relationships must be in written form. The contracts must be explicit and detailed to avoid any misunderstanding. The contract must be approved by the COM. A sample contract will be provided by the COM. Ordinarily, an interim pastor should already be trained in Interim Ministry or shall take Phase I training during the first year of the interim, then Phase II training during the second year, then Advanced Training. The Presbytery encourages the interim minister to work toward certification.

A sample of Interim and Temporary Pastoral Service Covenants are in Appendices F and G.

Liaison Responsibilities When Working with a Pastor Nominating Committee

In the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) call process, the authority to search for a pastor is delegated to a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC). The PNC is representative of, and elected by the congregation, and its responsibility is to nominate a pastor to the congregation for election. The Presbytery, through the Commission on Ministry (COM), works with the PNC and advises on the merits, suitability, and availability of those being considered for the call. All pastoral calls involve the pastor, the congregation (or session for Temporary Pastoral relationships), and the Presbytery, through the COM.

The COM works with the session to determine when the election of a PNC will take place and gives permission to call a congregational meeting to elect a PNC. Election of a PNC can happen as early as the COM approves the effective date of the dissolution of the pastoral relationship.

The COM may take into consideration several factors in working with the session to determine when to elect a PNC:

- The type of temporary pastoral relationship a congregation will be seeking.
- The congregation's ability to meet pastoral terms of call responsibilities.
- The length of time the call process will take.

The liaison will work closely with the session, the PNC, and the Executive Presbyter, offering guidance and encouragement to the PNC.

Detailed Liaison Activity List During Transition

Dissolution of Pastoral Relationship (retirement, move, request of congregation)

- Liaison notifies COM Moderator
- The Liaison will provide procedural information to the session, including the celebration of the departing pastor's ministry.
- Exit Interviews (pastor, session) are scheduled.
- If exit interview occurs in a timely manner (at or before the next stated session meeting, for the session), Separation Ethics and transitional leadership should be discussed. If the exit interview is not scheduled for the next session meeting, the liaison should be present at the next session meeting to discuss those topics.
- The COM appoints a moderator for the session.
- The Liaison should be present at stated session meetings until Temporary Pastoral leadership is in place to provide information to the session and the COM.
- The Dissolution Policy is found in Appendix U.

Transitional Leadership Arrives

- The Liaison assures that the Litany of Welcome is carried out at the Transitional Pastor's first worship.
- The Liaison provides guidance to the session for conducting a Mission Study.
- The Liaison serves as a point of contact for the Transitional Pastor.
- The COM, in consultation with the Liaison, approves the election of a PNC.
- If possible, the Liaison should attend the congregational meeting when electing a PNC.

PNC is elected by the Congregation

- The Liaison should be present at the first meeting of the PNC to provide training and information need, to reinforce EEO guidelines, and to establish appropriate communication. The Liaison should not be present when the PNC organizes so as not to intrude on the autonomy of the PNC.
- The Liaison reports regularly to the Commission on Ministry throughout the process.
- The Liaison assists in preparing the Ministry Discernment Profile ("MDP").
- The Liaison provides assistance and guidance in the remaining steps of the call process – evaluating Personal Discernment Profile ("PDPs"), interviewing, checking references, etc.
- The Liaison should respond positively and in a timely manner to requests for their attendance at PNC meetings and requests for information.

PNC Selects the Candidate

- The Liaison contacts the Executive Presbyter for an EP-to-EP background check for the final candidate(s). [If there is not an Executive Presbyter, the Moderator of COM conducts this check.]
- Upon the selection of the final candidate, the Liaison schedules the COM examination (and serves on the Exam Team) and orders the criminal / financial background check.
- The Liaison seeks COM approval to call a congregational meeting to extend a call. The Liaison moderates the congregational meeting to extend the call and assists in validation of call form (Appendix B).
- The Liaison schedules exit interviews with the Transitional Pastor and session.
- The Liaison attends the service of ordination/installation of the new pastor, if possible.

Pastor Nominating Committee Orientation

Serving on a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) is an awesome but rewarding responsibility. Your congregation has placed its trust in you to discern God's will for your congregation and then to follow God's guidance in finding the pastor who can provide the leadership to help fulfill it. This is not an easy task, but it is one worthy of the time, effort, and prayer that you will devote to it.

Responsibilities

- **Prayer**

Prayer is a resource you must draw on continually. While the congregation cannot be involved in PNC activities, they can and should be encouraged to support you through prayer. Prayer should be a continuing part of PNC activities.

- **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is imperative. All activities, data, and conversations of the PNC should remain within the PNC, the Commission on Ministry (COM), and the Executive Presbyter (EP). You should not share PNC information with your spouses, your relatives, your best friends, the Session, or the Transitional Pastor. You will be dealing with personal information of many pastoral candidates, and this information should be maintained in strict confidence, including their names, positions, and the fact that they are seeking a new call.

- **Team Dynamics**

Your PNC will be meeting together for many months. It is important to take time at the beginning for group building activities, to get to know one another, and develop the trust and bonds that will be required to successfully complete your responsibilities. At times there will be differences of opinion. Always be good listeners and open to other points of view. Expressing differing opinions is appropriate and essential, but should be done in honest, clear, and courteous ways. Always be listening for God's wisdom in your own thoughts and the words of your fellow PNC members; do not let your egos get in the way of God's will. Encourage each other continually.

- **Organization**

Everyone cannot do everything well. Identify the gifts of your PNC and use them effectively by organizing with appropriate divisions of labor. At a minimum you will need: a Chair, who will serve as the PNC contact person, coordinate, and lead PNC activities, and manage the Church Leadership Connection (CLC) responsibilities; a secretary, who will keep records and correspondence with candidates; and possibly a Tech person who can manage technology needs; and any others that seem appropriate for the distribution of talents in your PNC. You may also find it helpful to have members lead prayer and devotion at each meeting.

- **Meetings**

Initially, the PNC should meet on a regular basis at a time mutually agreeable to all PNC members. There is much work to be done at various times, and PNCs may need to meet weekly at times and less frequently at other times. In between meetings, it may be helpful to communicate individually by phone or with the entire group by email. Use of social networking sites in this context should be avoided for confidentiality reasons. Also, always be aware of what information you are putting into emails and who might have access to it, or who might be within hearing of your phone conversations or Zoom meetings. Just be especially cautious when not meeting face to face.

- **Spread the Work Around**

Everyone cannot do everything. The old saying “many hands make light work” applies here. When reviewing Personal Discernment Profiles and watching or listening to sermons, there are likely to be too many for each PNC member to review everything. PNC members may not read all PDP’s, but at least two PNC members should read each PDP. All PNC members should participate. Prior to beginning, all PNC members should agree on what the review criteria are and what sort of grading scheme will be employed.

For initial screening, a simple 3-level grade can be effective, for example: “exciting prospect,” “possible match,” and “not a fit.” A brief summary of your reasons for the assigned category will make it easier to discuss. Whatever system you employ, you should test it by having all members review the same two or three items, assign the grades and then discuss the differences in those assignments and the reasons for the differences, until you all have a common understanding of how to employ your system.

Also decide how you will deal with the results. For example, if two members assign a candidate to the “not a fit” category, then that candidate is not considered any further, but if both assign the “exciting prospect” category, then all remaining PNC members will review that candidate. This should be decided before beginning the process and adjusted if necessary.

- **Communications**

Communications is a two-edged sword. “Confidentiality” would suggest that you should say nothing to anyone. But the congregation has given you a responsibility and you are accountable to them to let them know that you are carrying it out. It is important to give the Session periodic status reports and likewise the congregation. All such communications should be carried out only by the Chair, except when delegated by the Chair to another PNC member. For all other members of the PNC, there should be no communication with the congregation, relatives, friends, neighbors, pastors, etc. These status reports should include only the progress of the process, with no specific information.

The general exception to this rule regards communications with COM or the EP, which is always open. The calling of a pastor is a three-way agreement between the congregation, the pastor, and the Presbytery through the COM. Routine interactions with COM during the search process will be through the liaison. However, certain sensitive tasks are left with the EP, and the Moderator of COM is available as an additional resource.

Early in the PNC process, you should discuss with your Liaison how much or how little you would like them to be involved with your PNC, but do keep your Liaison informed of difficulties, questions, important events, and anything that might require COM involvement. The COM is your partner in this search process and is ready to support you in whatever ways are helpful to you.

- **Interactions with Pastor Candidates**

At some point in the process, you will go beyond dealing with data to interacting directly with a candidate. Once that happens you should be aware that you are dealing with an individual who is looking for a call. Both sides are hoping that this is reaching the end of the search. However, for many on both sides, this is not the case. If you discover at any point in the interaction that an individual just will not be a good fit for your congregation, please give that person the courtesy of letting them know quickly. It does not require a detailed justification but should be an unequivocal but sensitive indication that there will be no further consideration.

The more difficult cases are those in which you have several candidates whom you consider higher priorities, and do not wish to foreclose the possibility that any of these persons may be the one you are

seeking. At this stage of the process, timing becomes critical, and you will be trying to make decisions and get decisions from candidates as quickly as possible. Be sensitive to their needs, as well as your own, and try to be honest without closing any doors unnecessarily.

- **Final Stages**

As the saying goes, “it ain’t over until it’s over.” In many cases the search seems to be close to the end when it collapses for any number of reasons. Do not become discouraged – where God closes a door a window is opened somewhere else. This is one reason why confidentiality is so important and why it is important to keep options open, not just until the finish line is in sight, but until it has been crossed. This is also a time for prayer!

Success at Last

By the end of the PNC process your hope and prayer is that you have been as faithful in sensing the leading of the Holy Spirit as God has been in sending it to guide you, and that your new pastor has been similarly led. God bless you and keep you in this wondrous task.

Pastor Nominating Committee Activity List

Initial Phase

- Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) is elected by congregation.
- PNC holds an initial meeting with the Commission on Ministry((COM) for orientation. The Transitional Pastor will have no involvement with the PNC.
- The Liaison provides information on the search process and relevant PRESBYTERY policies. The Liaison will be the primary point of contact between the PNC and the COM.
- PNC organizes itself and sets up its meeting schedule and ground rules.

Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP)

The MDP defines who your congregation is, how you see yourselves growing and developing in the future, and what kind of leadership you are seeking to facilitate that development. It is your church's resume and is the first impression that a pastoral candidate receives of your congregation. Your task is not to prepare the fastest MDP, but to prepare the most thorough and accurate description of who you are and who you are looking for to lead you in the years ahead.

- The Moderator of COM will generate the PNC Chair and Clerk of Session login IDs and passwords and send these to the PNC Chair.
- The PNC reviews MDP format and develops plans to find already available information in mission statements, mission studies, strategic plans, and the like. PNC chair should coordinate with Session and Transitional Pastor to assure that all existing information is current.
- If additional information is needed, PNC, through its Chair, should coordinate with the Session for congregational and smaller group surveys to be conducted.
- By the end of these activities, the PNC should have obtained, at a minimum, all information necessary to address every item on the MDP.
- One of the critical items to be obtained from the Session is the range of the financial package to be offered. The minimum must be at least the PRESBYTERY policy minimum, while the maximum (which candidates cannot see) must be an amount the congregation can afford.
- The PNC should use its best resources to polish the narratives and assure the accuracy of both the intent and the details.
- When the PNC has completed the MDP, it must be approved by the Session. Any disagreements with the Session must be resolved, so that the MDP approval can be authenticated on the CLC website by the PNC Chair and the Clerk of Session. The MDP is then submitted to the COM for approval.
- Following COM approval, the MDP will be authenticated on the CLC website by the Moderator of COM and the search begins in earnest.

The Search Process

- Pastors and candidates under care who are seeking calls complete a Personal Discernment Profile ("PDP"), which is analogous to the MDP the PNC prepared. This PDP is a standardized resume for the pastoral candidate which tells who they are, their background (personal, educational, and professional), faith journey, leadership style, personal gifts, and what type of ministry they are seeking. The PDP often includes a statement of faith, as well as links to sermons. This pastoral candidate has put similar thought and effort into this document that you have put into your MDP.
- The PNC should carefully review all PDPs which meet their search criteria (remember EEO directives). This can seem overwhelming if it is not organized; PNC members should apply a common set of standards in their evaluations. The result should be that all candidates be classified into one of several groups, such as "exciting prospect," "possible match," or "not a fit." How to determine these groups and how to proceed is up to the PNC.
- For those in the most promising category, the PNC can obtain additional information. Frequently, pastoral

candidates have sermons online. A review process for the sermons should be established to determine the level of interest / excitement for each candidate. Should the PNC wish to contact references not listed in the PDP, they should obtain a signed release form from the candidate.

- **A Reference Release Form is in Appendix D.**

- A next level of information might be an interview, frequently by telephone (group telecom) or Skype, Zoom, or Webex, in which a standard set of questions is asked of each candidate to elicit information of particular interest to the PNC which is not available on the PDP. These questions should be carefully thought through and constructed both to gather useful information and to see how the candidate addresses what could be “sticky” issues. These should not be “gotcha” sorts of questions; but you *are* looking at how candidates might provide spiritual guidance and counseling to members of your congregation (and you would like to not be surprised after your decision has been made and implemented). This is also an opportunity for the candidate to ask questions of the PNC (which should be encouraged), so someone should be prepared to respond or to lead the response.
- Another relevant source of information is the internet, whether it is documents, newspaper articles, social media, or social networking sites. The PNC may find information useful for your evaluation of the candidate’s potential for your call.
- When the PNC has identified a candidate about whom you are very serious, the Executive Presbyter or Moderator of COM should be consulted regarding the candidate and an EP-to-EP reference check performed by the Executive Presbyter or Moderator of COM. A copy of the candidate’s PDP should be submitted to the EP and Moderator of COM.
- If the candidate is still considered viable and is located reasonably close, it might be helpful to send one or two members to visit the candidate and hear their preach and have an extended discussion face-to-face. This is especially true if there are two or three such candidates.
- When the PNC has settled on a small group (two or three) of candidates, the top candidate should be invited to visit your city to preach at a nearby church (this can be coordinated through the PRESBYTERY office). The candidate can see the church but should not be introduced to members of the congregation; and they can also see the city and talk with a realtor. The PNC can have a social occasion for the candidate, as well as have an in-depth discussion of all issues surrounding the call. Depending on how the PNC and candidate have reacted to each other, the financial package, the duties and expectations, time frame for a potential transition, all questions that remain, can be explored; but no commitments, implicit or explicit, should be made. (If the candidate is in conversation with another PNC, it would be important to know what deadlines the candidate is facing, if they are also seriously considering your congregation).

The PNC Selects a Candidate

- Once the PNC has selected what you hope will be THE candidate, some due diligence is required.
- The COM is responsible for having criminal and financial background checks carried out, at the PRESBYTERY’s expense. **The Background Check Authorization Form is in Appendix E.**
- Following positive outcomes from the background checks, the PNC negotiates with the candidate on the terms of call. The PNC should ensure that the terms of the call negotiated are within the range approved by the Session.
- When the finalist is selected, and both the PNC and the candidate agree on the terms of the call, the PNC notifies the Liaison, who will notify the EP and the COM Chair of the desire to issue a call.
- With approval to proceed, the COM examines the candidate. For candidates already ordained, the COM gives approval to call a congregational meeting for purposes of issuing a call. When a call is extended to a candidate certified ready for call, the Presbytery will examine the candidate and vote on the call and terms of call.
- Following COM approval, the PNC asks that the Session call a congregational meeting for the purpose of

issuing a call.

- The Session gives its assent to the terms of call by calling the congregational meeting.
- The congregation agrees with the PNC's decision with the election of the pastor and the call is issued.
- After the pastor is ordained and / or installed, the PNC should destroy all PDPs, and any other documents related to the search process.

Final Phase and Afterward

- PNC introduces the candidate to the congregation at an appropriate occasion.
- PNC helps the new pastor with transition from previous location to the new one.
- PNC helps in the installation activities.
- PNC helps the pastor adjust to their new call.
- PNC serves as pastoral support for the year following installation, meeting with them periodically to discuss how the transition is proceeding and to encourage and provide whatever support is needed.
- PNC members, as individuals, continue to support and encourage the pastor, reflecting their special relationship with the pastor that will last throughout the call.

Examination Procedure for Membership in North Alabama Presbytery

The Book of Order, G-3.0306 states: *“The Presbytery shall examine each minister of the Word and Sacrament or candidate who seeks membership in it...”*

The Manual of Administrative Operations of North Alabama Presbytery, 3.2312 states: *“The Commission on Ministry (COM) shall maintain a handbook stating its policies and procedures with respect to reception and oversight of Teaching Elder members, approval of calls for installed pastoral services and invitations for Transitional Pastoral services....”*

Ordinarily, North Alabama Presbytery does not receive a Teaching Elder seeking membership in the Presbytery as a Member at Large unless the Teaching Elder is the spouse of a Teaching Elder being received by the COM of North Alabama Presbytery, or a Teaching Elder pursuing post-graduate study within the bounds of North Alabama Presbytery. The COM will review any such request on a case-by-case basis and make a decision.

The COM has established an Examination Team to conduct in-depth examinations of candidates for ordination and Teaching Elders requesting membership in North Alabama Presbytery. The team consists of five members, two of which are current COM members (one of which will chair the team), and three additional members, equally divided between Ruling and Teaching Elders. A minimum of four members will be required for each examination.

This examination will be conducted in two phases:

- **Phase One** will be an in-depth examination by the Examination Team.
- **Phase Two** will be a brief examination at a meeting of the Presbytery.

This procedure is a blend of the traditional process and a more streamlined process with the intent of efficiency at the meeting of Presbytery.

Phase One: Examination by the Examination Team

1. If a Teaching Elder member of another Presbytery (Member at Large or Honorably Retired) seeks membership in North Alabama Presbytery, or a Pastor or Associate Pastor Nominating Committee has extended a call to a prospective candidate or Teaching Elder, the COM Liaison should inform the Moderator of the COM. The COM Moderator will contact the Examination Team chair to arrange a time and date for the examination with the Teaching Elder or pastoral candidate and the Examination Team.
2. The pastoral candidate shall submit a written autobiographical statement outlining their faith journey as well as a statement of faith, which will be reviewed by the Examination Team prior to the examination.
3. The Examination Team will meet with the pastoral candidate for an in-depth examination in the areas of Theology, Worship and Sacraments, PCUSA Polity, and Bible. [*G-3.0306: examination covers “their Christian faith and views in theology, the Sacraments, and the government of this church.”*]
4. The Examination Team will also review the proposed terms of call between the pastoral candidate and the Congregation to ensure compliance with the Presbytery’s requirements.

Minimum Compensation Guidelines are in Appendix C.

5. If the Examination Team approves the examination and the terms of call are in order, permission will be granted for the Session to call a Congregational Meeting for the purpose of presenting the call for approval.

6. If the Examination Team recommends additional conversation or study, the PNC will be notified of the recommendation. The PNC shall consult with the Examination Team to determine how best to proceed.

Phase Two: Examination on the Floor of Presbytery

1. Both the written statement of faith and autobiographical statement of the pastoral candidate will be included in the Presbytery Packet, along with the Terms of Call.
2. Candidates for ordination will be required to preach before the Presbytery.
3. The pastoral candidate will be introduced and asked to share something about their faith journey and their sense of call to this particular ministry.
4. The Chair of the Examination Team will review the examination process, and then ask one representative question to the pastoral candidate.
5. The COM Moderator will move that the examination of the pastoral candidate be sustained, and that the Presbytery approve the pastoral candidate, the Call, and the Terms of Call.
6. The Presbytery Moderator will then ask if there are questions from the floor and proceed accordingly.
7. The COM approves the service to ordain and / or install.

The Ordination/Installation Service Information Form is in Appendix H.

GUIDELINES FOR ORDINATION AND / OR INSTALLATION

An Administrative Commission to ordain and/or install is a commission of the Presbytery and therefore is representative of North Alabama Presbytery. The Administrative Commission acts as the Presbytery, setting apart a person to ordered ministry, and / or establishing the pastoral relationship. The members of the commission and the time and place for the service must be approved by the Commission on Ministry.

The Administrative Commission representing the Presbytery shall be composed of Teaching and Ruling Elders in numbers as nearly equal as possible and include at least one member of the Commission on Ministry. When the commission consists of an odd number of members, the additional member may be either a Teaching or Ruling Elder. The membership of the commission should be no fewer than five members, with no more than one of its Ruling Elder members from any one of its constituent churches. Ordained persons from outside the Presbytery invited to participate in an ordination and / or installation service will be in addition to the members of the Commission from North Alabama Presbytery and will be guests of the Commission.

The date and time of the service shall allow participation by the Presbytery, which is ordinarily not during Sunday morning worship time. The Presbytery Office shall be notified of the date and time of the service for the Presbytery calendar and newsletter.

The quorum of the Administrative Commission shall be a majority of its members.

The Moderator of the Presbytery (or their designee) is ordinarily the moderator of all commissions to ordain and/or install ministers of the Word and Sacrament. It is the duty of the moderator to preside and propound the constitutional questions to the minister. The Teaching Elder being ordained and / or installed will notify all the members of the Commission of the time and place of the meeting of the Commission and other arrangements.

It is the responsibility of the Teaching Elder being ordained and / or installed to plan the order of worship, in consultation with the session, with indications of how each member of the Administrative Commission will be involved in the service. The information shall be shared with the Administrative Commission in sufficient time for each member to prepare their part.

Suggestions for Commission members:

- Moderator of the Presbytery (or their designee) who should be asked to preside; if either is unable to attend, another member of the Commission shall be asked to serve as Moderator.
- Chair of the Pastor Nominating Committee or a member of the PNC
- Commission on Ministry Liaison
- Teaching and Ruling Elders from churches within the Presbytery
- The Executive Presbyter
- The Stated Clerk

The worship service shall include the following:

- Greetings from the Presbytery and Statement of Purpose (moderator of the commission)
- Constitutional Questions to the Pastor / Associate Pastor-Elect (moderator of the commission)
- Constitutional Questions to the Congregation (propounded by a ruling elder)
- Prayer of Ordination / Installation and Laying on of Hands
- Statement of Ordination / Installation (moderator of commission)

- Welcome to the Pastor / Associate Pastor-Elect (chair of commission)
- Charge to the Pastor / Associate Pastor-Elect (commission member)
- Charge to the Congregation (installation; commission member)
- Benediction propounded by the newly ordained / installed Teaching Elder

Sample orders of worship can be found in the Book of Occasional Services, as well as the Book of Common Worship. The service should reflect the solemnity and joy of the occasion.

The Commission convenes before the service of ordination / installation (usually 30 minutes in advance of the service), and the meeting is opened with prayer by the Moderator of the Commission. A member of the Commission shall be elected to serve as clerk with the responsibility of completing the Presbytery's form for the minutes of the Commission and returning the form to the Stated Clerk. The Commission reviews the details of the service, and the meeting is recessed for the service of ordination / installation. The benediction closing the service is the prayer closing the meeting of the Commission.

A reception or time of celebration is ordinarily held after the service to honor the newly ordained / installed Teaching Elder and their family. This should be announced in the service, so all present know they are welcome to attend.

Resources related to the service of ordination / installation are in Appendices H, I, J and K.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION for Ordination/Installation Candidates

1. A Commission shall consist of at least five Ruling Elders and Teaching Elder members from North Alabama Presbytery in numbers as nearly equal as possible (two of one and three of the other) [G-3.0109b] with no more than one Ruling Elder from any church. The Commission may include a member of the Commission on Ministry.
2. Please note that a Ruling Elder must ask the congregation the constitutional questions.[W-4.0404].
3. Please note that Installations require the same questions as Ordination [W- 4.0404].
4. It is your responsibility to ask the Teaching and Ruling Elders of the Commission if they will be willing and able to serve on the date set. This must be done prior to the meeting of Presbytery.
5. **YOU** will be responsible for advising each member of the Commission:
 - i. that they have been appointed by the Committee on Ministry to serve on the Commission,
 - ii. of the part which has been assigned, and
 - iii. of the place and hour at which the Commission will convene (usually at least one-half hour before the service begins).
6. If you need any help or suggestions of Teaching and Ruling Elders who might be available, the COM liaison, Executive Presbyter, or Stated Clerk will be glad to assist.
7. You must provide a statement of faith and an autobiographical statement. This will be distributed at the Presbytery meeting, so it is important that it is legible and concise.
8. **THIS FORM MUST BE IN THE HANDS OF THE COM LIAISON BEFORE YOU CAN BE RECEIVED BY NORTH ALABAMA PRESBYTERY**

COMMISSIONED RULING ELDER PREPARATION POLICY

- A. Persons seeking service as a Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) in North Alabama Presbytery shall be experienced Ruling Elders in a member church of the Presbytery. They shall present a completed CRE application form (**Appendix L**) along with a letter of endorsement from the session of their church to the Commission on Ministry (COM). The letter will address the elder's faith in Jesus Christ, the maturity of their faith, their judgment, and their commitment to the Church and to the PCUSA and its mission, as well as any other information requested by the COM. The COM may request or be invited to meet with the session if deemed appropriate as part of this process.
- B. After receiving the required documentation from a CRE applicant, the COM will schedule an interview with the applicant to assess their fitness for this ministry, including a mental health evaluation. When the COM has approved an applicant for the CRE program, it will assign a mentor [or mentoring team] who will guide, nurture, and communicate with the applicant on a regular basis. The applicant will proceed with the prescribed education and training program.
- C. A CRE applicant will complete the following required courses: Introduction to the Old Testament, Introduction to the New Testament, Church History, Reformed Theology, Reformed Worship and Sacraments, Introduction to Preaching, Presbyterian Polity, and Pastoral Care. Family Systems Theory Training and Parliamentary Procedure are not required but are recommended.
- D. A CRE applicant may complete required courses via online courses from the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary (<http://udts.dbq.edu>), equivalent courses from approved and accredited educational institutions, and educational opportunities or guided study offered or arranged by the COM and/or North Alabama Presbytery.
- E. A CRE applicant may submit a transcript of previously completed coursework from an accredited educational institution. The COM will evaluate the transcript as to its suitability to substitute for any of the courses described above and may prescribe additional study in areas it deems necessary. Decisions of the COM in this regard will be reported in writing to the applicant.
- F. The CRE applicant will preach a sermon to or arranged by the COM, and will provide the COM, in advance, a written exegesis of the passage/passages upon which the sermon is based.
- G. CRE applicants will meet at least annually with the COM for progress, consultation, and discernment. CRE applicants will submit an annual written report to the COM prior to this meeting indicating their forms of service to the church during the past year, education completed, and a statement of their desire to continue as CRE applicants.
- H. After a CRE applicant has completed all requirements and successfully preached a sermon required by the COM, an examination will be scheduled. When the COM has granted final approval to a CRE applicant, it will report to the Presbytery their readiness for commissioning to particular pastoral service. Until commissioned by the Presbytery, CRE applicants will continue in their relationship and responsibility to the COM and their church of membership.
- I. CRE applicants who are eligible to be commissioned may be authorized to perform the sacrament of the Lord's Supper by the COM, if requested by a session.
- J. Once commissioned to particular pastoral service, each CRE shall be assigned a Teaching Elder who will serve as mentor and supervisor.
- K. When the commission to particular pastoral service ends, the person is no longer a CRE and cannot perform any pastoral tasks unless approved to do so by the COM.

PULPIT SUPPLY LIST POLICY

The procedure for adding or deleting pulpit supplies is as follows:

If the request comes from North Alabama Presbytery **Ruling Elders** in good standing with their churches and with the recommendation of their pastor, they may be added to the pulpit supply list. However, they may only preach two consecutive Sundays. If more consecutive Sundays are required, they will need to ask permission from the Commission on Ministry (COM). *

If the request comes from **at-large, retired, or other minister members** of North Alabama Presbytery, their names shall be added. However, they may only preach two consecutive Sundays. If more consecutive Sundays are required, they will need to ask permission from the COM.*

If the request comes from **Ruling Elders outside of North Alabama Presbytery**, the COM moderator will ascertain that they are in good standing with their churches, and with the recommendation of their pastor, they may be added to the pulpit supply list after an examination by the COM Examination Team. This examination will require a written Faith Statement and Faith Journey. They may only preach two consecutive Sundays. If more consecutive Sundays are required, they will need to ask permission from the COM.*

If the request comes from **PCUSA ministers outside of North Alabama Presbytery**, they will need to provide a written Faith Statement and Faith Journey to the COM before being added. An ecclesiastical background check will be conducted by the Executive Presbyter or COM Moderator. Additional examination may be requested. They may only preach two consecutive Sundays. If more consecutive Sundays are required, they will need to ask permission from the COM.*

If the request comes from **non-PCUSA ordained ministers**, they will need to provide a written Faith Statement and Faith Journey to the COM and be examined by the COM Examination Team. A criminal and ecclesiastical background check will be conducted by the Presbytery office. They may only preach two consecutive Sundays. If more consecutive Sundays are required, they will need COM permission.

If a person on the list wishes to be removed, they must alert the Stated Clerk of North Alabama Presbytery and their name will be deleted.

The COM will provide a current list of pulpit supply preachers to North Alabama Presbytery. This list may be obtained from the Presbytery office and is included in the PRESBYTERY Directory.

**This requirement is to ensure that the pulpit supply is not becoming a “supply pastor,” in which case a contract would be required, along with permission of the COM. Possible further examination and conversation may also be appropriate.*

Eucharistic Elders Policy

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has authorized Presbyteries to train and approve Ruling Elders to serve the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. These “Eucharistic Elders” may be authorized by the Commission on Ministry to serve the sacrament in congregations who do not have regular ordained pastoral leadership and in other situations approved by the COM.

Ruling Elders desiring to serve as Eucharistic Elders must complete this application, be endorsed by their Pastor and/or Session, and attend the training provided by the Commission on Ministry.

The Eucharistic Elder Application is found in Appendix T.

CRITERIA FOR VALIDATING MINISTRIES

In determining which ministries outside the congregation are considered validated (*G-2.0503a.*), North Alabama Presbytery shall be guided by the following criteria:

- 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 the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). (*G-3.0306*)
 - 1. The ministry shall be a mission project or other form such as Chaplaincy or is of the nature of pastoral care, pastoral counseling, or pastoral education.
 - 2. It is a ministry related by organization, accountability, and structure to the PCUSA or is in correspondence with the PCUSA.
 - 3. It is a ministry related to a seminary acceptable to the Presbytery.
 - 4. It is a ministry related to a non-denominational organization dealing with the needs of persons, such as drug and alcohol addiction, marriage and family problems, the housing and feeding of the poor, which is acceptable to the Presbytery.
 - 5. It is a ministry related to an international organization such as a council of churches or other ministry of service which is acceptable to the Presbytery.

- B. The ministry shall be one that serves others, aids others, and enables the ministries of others.
 - 1. This ministry shall show the pattern of one who came not to be served, but to serve (Mat. 20:28)
 - 2. This ministry shall demonstrate a quality of life and relationships that commend the Gospel to all persons and that communicates its joy and its justice.
 - 3. This ministry shall reach out in concern and service to the life of the human community as a whole.
 - 4. This ministry shall show evidence of a quality of life which helps to share the ministry of the Good News.

- C. This 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 the *Book of Order*.
 - 1. The ministry shall adhere to the essentials of the Reformed faith and polity as expressed in the church's Constitution.
 - 2. This ministry shall be entrusted to persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

- D. This ministry shall be carried on in accountability for its character and conduct to North Alabama Presbytery, and to the organizations, agencies, and institutions served.
 - 1. This ministry shall be conducted with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Eph. 4:2)
 - 2. This ministry shall be carried out by speaking the truth in love and building up the Body of Christ. (Eph. 4:14-15)
 - 3. This ministry shall be sensitive to the judgments and needs of others.
 - 4. Teaching Elders (also called Ministers of the Word and Sacraments) shall in all things be committed to teaching the faith and equipping the saints for the work of ministry (Eph. 4:12)

- E. The ministry shall include responsible participation and work of North Alabama Presbytery and in the worship and service of a congregation of the Presbytery or a congregation in correspondence with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

PROCEDURE FOR CONSIDERING AND APPROVING AN APPLICANT FOR A VALIDATED MINISTRY

Agencies or Organizations wishing to establish a Validated Ministry

Agencies or organizations wishing to establish a validated ministry in North Alabama Presbytery should contact the Commission on Ministry (COM) to request a validated ministry application form. Upon completion of the form, it should be sent to the COM. The COM shall determine if a meeting between the subcommittee and the agency or organization is needed for further clarification, and if needed will schedule a meeting in consultation with the agency. The COM sub-committee will act on the application and forward its recommendations to the COM for approval. If approved by the COM, the recommendation shall be included in its report to the Presbytery for approval. A validated ministry within an agency must be approved by the Presbytery before a minister can be approved as a validated minister. Validated ministries are required to present an annual report to the COM for review.

Pastors seeking employment with a Validated Ministry

Pastors seeking employment with a validated ministry in North Alabama Presbytery must request a validated ministry application from the COM and submit the completed application to the COM for action. If approved the recommendation shall be included in the COM's report to the Presbytery for approval. An agency or organization must be approved as a validated ministry before a Pastor can be approved as a validated minister within a validated organization. Validated ministers are required to submit an annual report to the COM for review.

Pastors seeking to engage in ministries beyond the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church (USA)

1. Any ministry beyond the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will require that the employing agency/organization be approved as a validated ministry, subject to annual reporting and renewal of validation.
2. Pastors seeking to work in a ministry beyond the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) must make application and be approved for that work, subject to annual reports and renewal to engage in that work.
3. Subsequent to the adoption of this policy, in the event a Teaching Elder, who is a member of North Alabama Presbytery, conceives a ministry that involves self-employment and any measure of self- evaluation, that ministry must be validated through the usual application process, and, as with validated ministries, will require the establishment of a method of supervision and reporting that is acceptable to North Alabama Presbytery through its Commission on Ministry.

The application forms for Validated Ministries are in Appendices M and N.

PROCEDURE FOR ANNUAL COMMISSION ON MINISTRY REVIEW
OF VALIDATED MINISTRIES
AND PERSONS PERFORMING SUCH MINISTRIES

G-2.0503 states: “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.”

The Commission on Ministry (COM) is responsible for maintaining pastoral contact with all minister members of Presbytery. It also is responsible for obtaining, annually, information from each, regarding the manner in which they continue to fulfill appropriate dimensions of their ordination vows as Teaching Elders. It is obvious that each of the four categories of validated ministry may require varying responses, along with similar ones, depending on the nature of the category. The process for reporting is as follows for:

A. All Teaching Elders in good standing in North Alabama Presbytery:

It is the policy of North Alabama Presbytery that every Teaching Elder shall annually, in a timeframe set by the COM, report on the following:

- How is your ministry in 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 denomination? (See especially Chapter 1 of the *Book of Order*.)
- How is your ministry one that serves others, aids others, and aids the ministries of others?
- How does your ministry give evidence of theologically informed fidelity to God’s Word?
- How is your ministry carried on in accountability for its character and conduct to the Presbytery and to other organizations, agencies, and institutions?
- How does your ministry include responsible participation in the deliberations and work of the Presbytery and in the work and service of a particular congregation?
- Identify the number of occasions when you have performed the sacerdotal functions (baptism, Lord’s Supper, marriages, funerals, etc.) of your office during the report year.

B. In addition to A. above, every Teaching Elder who is under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery will annually report on the following:

- Name and address of validated employing agency, including the name and address of supervisor.
- Copy of current job description, including any changes from previous report.
- Your understanding of how, in your current ministry, you are promoting the peace, unity, and purity of Christ’s Church.
- Your relationship in worship and work with a particular Presbyterian Church.
- The number of times you have attended meetings of Presbytery, and what you are doing by way of involvement in your Presbytery.
- A statement of your availability to lead worship, on invitation, and under what circumstances you could do so.

C. In addition to A., Teaching Elders in a validated ministry in service beyond the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will annually report on the following:

- Name and address of validated employing agency, including the name and address of supervisor.
- Copy of current job description, including any changes since previous report.
- Your understanding of how, in your current ministry, you are promoting the peace, unity, and purity of

Christ's Church.

- Your relationship in worship and work with a particular Presbyterian church.
 - The number of times you have attended meetings of Presbytery, and what you are doing by way of involvement in your Presbytery.
 - A statement of your availability to lead worship, on invitation, and under what circumstances you could do so.
- D. Validated Ministries¹: In the process of becoming a validated ministry, an annual report shall be submitted, containing the following:
- A job performance evaluation of the Teaching Elder engaged in the validated ministry.
 - A copy of the Teaching Elder's job description, including noted changes in it.
 - Responses to any questions that may be posed by the Commission on Ministry.
 - A request that the validated ministry be renewed for an additional year.

It is the desire of the Commission on Ministry that all Teaching Elders performing work outside of a congregation shall meet collegially with representatives of the COM for summary reports, worship, and fellowship, on an occasion set by the COM, at least once during each year.

The forms for reporting on all validated ministries in North Alabama Presbytery shall be reviewed, and altered, if needed, each year by the Commission on Ministry. Teaching Elders engaged in validated ministry shall have an opportunity to evaluate the forms they are required to complete and shall have an opportunity to advise the Commission on Ministry with suggestions for changes.

An important dimension of the annual Teaching Elder reports is to afford each Teaching Elder an opportunity to reflect theologically and practically on their practice of ministry, and to frame that report in a manner that coherently expresses their commitment to serve Christ in fidelity to their ordination vows, and to promote the peace, unity, and purity of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

The Annual Report form for Validated Ministries are in Appendix O.

¹ In North Alabama Presbytery, *employing agencies*, in addition to *validated ministers* in their employ, must annually report to the *Commission* on Ministry, as agreed upon in their Validation Process.

MINISTERS AT LARGE

Ministers at Large are a vital part of our Presbytery's ministry. Therefore, they are expected to submit an annual report to the Committee on Ministry to share how they are fulfilling their pastoral calling.

The Annual Report form for Ministers at Large is in Appendix O.

HONORABLY RETIRED

Honorably Retired Pastors are also a vital part of our Presbytery's ministry. Therefore, they are requested to complete Parts 1 & 3 of the **Annual Report form in Appendix O** so that the COM may continue to care for them.

PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

The Book of Order (G-2.0601) underscores the importance of full preparation and oversight for those who are ordained as ministers of the Word and Sacrament. This preparation process involves a covenant relationship of mutual trust and support between the person who is experiencing God's call to ministry, the Session of their church, their Pastor, the seminary, and the Presbytery. The process toward ordination is divided into two phases: inquiry and candidacy and shall continue for a period of no less than two years.

Beginning the Process:

To enter this preparation process, a person considering ordination as a minister of the Word and Sacrament shall have been active in the life and work of the congregation for at least six months and shall have received the endorsement of the Session. It is assumed that this person will have had conversations with the pastor regarding their sense of call, who can then direct the person to the appropriate contact on the Commission on Ministry who will provide more detailed advice and direction regarding the preparation process.

The details of the preparation process can be found in the Committee on Preparation for Ministry Handbook.

The list of forms required for Preparation for Ministry (and links to online access at pcusa.org) are in Appendix P.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Who can moderate a congregational or session meeting if the pastor is unable?

If there is no installed pastor, or the installed pastor is unable to moderate and/or to name another moderator, the Moderator of the COM will name a moderator. Should the Moderator of the COM be unable then the Vice-Moderator of the COM will name a moderator. (*G-1.0504, G-3.0104 & G-3.0201*)

2. Can an Associate Pastor or someone in a Temporary Pastoral relationship be permitted to become the next permanent or designated pastor?

An Associate Pastor or person in a Temporary Pastoral relationship is *ordinarily* not eligible to serve that church as permanent or Designated Pastor.

3. What are the requirements for membership in North Alabama Presbytery?

- Be a member in good standing in their previous Presbytery.
- Receive a call to North Alabama Presbytery.
- Pass examinations from COM and examination on the floor of Presbytery.
- Be Honorably Retired.
- Be a Member at Large moving with a spouse to the Presbytery or working on post-graduate studies. (*G-2.0505 & G-2.0506*)

4. What mechanisms and processes has North Alabama Presbytery developed and maintained to serve as pastor and counselor to Teaching Elders, Ruling Elders commissioned to pastoral service, and Certified Christian Educators of the Presbytery; to facilitate the relations between the Presbytery and its congregations, Teaching Elders, Ruling Elders commissioned to pastoral service, and Certified Christian Educators; and to settle difficulties on behalf of the Presbytery where possible and expedient?

The COM has developed specialty roles and teams to meet these requirements:

- Liaisons.
- Examination Team.
- Preparation for Ministry Team. (*G-3.0307*)

5. How does the Presbytery encourage and affirm persons certified and called to service within congregations, councils, and church-related entities, serving in staff positions?

Persons may be certified and called to service within congregations, councils, and church-related entities. These individuals endeavor to reflect their faith through their work and to strengthen the church through their dedication. They should be encouraged by their session and Presbytery to meet, or be prepared to meet, the certification requirements provided by a national certifying body approved by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Names of those who have earned such certification shall be transmitted to the General Assembly by the stated clerk. Ruling Elders who have earned such certification shall be allowed the privilege of the floor and voice at Presbytery meetings. (*G-2.11*)