

PRESBYTERY OF GREAT RIVERS CONTINUING MEMBERSHIP AND VALIDATION OF MINISTRY POLICY

In accordance with the Book of Order, ministers of Word and Sacrament are called and ordained to offices of ministry. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian Gospel in the church and in the world. They must have the approval of God's people and the concurring judgment of a governing body of the church. As such, ministers of the Word and Sacrament shall be members of presbytery which shall designate them to such work as may be helpful to the church in mission, in the performance of which they shall be accountable to the presbytery. (G-6.0100) & (G-6.0200). Ministers of the Word and Sacrament have membership in the presbytery by action of the presbytery itself, and maintain their membership in accordance with G-11.0000.

In 2005, a ruling of the Permanent Judicial Commission of the General Assembly directed each presbytery to formulate a policy clarifying its implementation of the *Book of Order* provisions for validated ministries beyond the jurisdiction of the church. Presbytery of Great Rivers recognizes that validated ministries beyond its congregations are important to its mission to the world. Celebrating the contributions of those who minister beyond pastoral office, we commit ourselves to finding new ways in which those contributions might enrich the life of presbytery.

Committee on Ministry Responsibilities

Toward that end, the Committee on Ministry shall review annually the ministries of continuing minister members who engage in ministries beyond the congregation. The goal is to (1) offer pastoral support and explore ways in which the presbytery might serve them and their ministries; (2) familiarize the presbytery with the work done on its behalf in these ministries and explore ways the presbytery might benefit more deeply from them; and (3) assist members in validated ministries in assessing how their work discharges the responsibilities of ordination to ministry of the Word and Sacrament.

Continuing Member Responsibilities

For their part, members of the presbytery engaged in validated ministries shall fulfill the responsibilities for continuing members outlined in G-6.0100, G-6.0200, and G-11.0400.

As stated in G-6.0203, "When ministers are designated as educators, chaplains, pastoral counselors, campus ministers, missionaries, partners in mission, evangelists, administrators, social workers, consultants, or in other specific tasks appropriate to the ministry of the church, they shall evidence a quality of life which helps to share the ministry of the good news. They shall exercise pastoral care of those for whom they are responsible and shall seek to fulfill their ministry by serving Christ and their fellow men and women, strengthening the church, and equipping it for concern and service to the life of the human community."

1. Accountability: G-11.0403 requires that a validated ministry "shall be carried on in accountability for its character and conduct to the presbytery and to organizations, agencies, and institutions." Members of presbytery who engage in these ministries shall satisfy this requirement in part by filing a written report on their ministries each year. COM may permit members to satisfy additional measures of accountability offered by their host agencies or institutions (e.g., ethics training) in lieu of equivalent presbytery requirements.
2. Responsible Participation: G-11.0403 also requires that a validated ministry "shall include responsible participation in the deliberations and work of the presbytery and in the worship and service of a congregation."
 - a. For members engaged in ministry within congregations of Great Rivers Presbytery, "responsible participation" normally requires attendance at all stated meetings (or a request for excuse in emergencies) and a willingness to serve in the committee structures of the governing bodies.
 - b. Recognizing that the particular circumstances of validated ministries beyond congregations of this church can make attendance at stated meetings difficult, Great Rivers Presbytery expects members in validated ministries to attend as many meetings as possible and to request excuse when conflicts arise.

- c. Members in validated ministries beyond the congregation shall remain eligible for election to the higher governing bodies of the church and to the boards and agencies of those governing bodies (G-6.0203 and G-11.0403) and shall exhibit willingness to serve in those capacities as responsibility to their local ministries allows.
- d. If scheduling conflicts make attendance at stated meetings particularly difficult for a member in validated ministry beyond the congregation, COM may work with the member to identify service in the presbytery (e.g., committee work, task force service, teaching) that might substitute for attendance at stated meetings as “responsible participation.”
- e. Those involved in ministries outside of a congregation are expected to participate in the worship life of a local PCUSA congregation or a congregation in full communion with the PCUSA.

**PROCESSES FOR COM USE REGARDING
ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE ROLLS (G11.0407)**

1. Stated Clerk shall send a letter and annual report form to members-at-large in October of every year noting those members-at-large whose status is defined by family responsibilities or illness/disability, etc. The letter will:
 - a. Include language of G-11.0406b (and five criteria cited in G-11.0403).
 - b. Cite Presbytery policy regarding attendance (#1) and service (#2) with reference to the individual’s actual attendance and known service.
 - c. Request a written response by December 1 that includes indication of desire to continue as member-at-large.
2. If written response is received, a two-member subcommittee of COM will review the response and, if warranted, meet with the member to discuss his/her activities vis a vis G-11.0403. Recommendation for continuing (or not) at large status made by this subcommittee to COM.
3. If written response is not received, COM will send, via return receipt requested a letter, indicating intent to place the minister on inactive status effective upon action at the first stated meeting of Presbytery in the next calendar year.
4. Members-at large who are in good standing and have been designated as members-at-large for 3 or more years will have an opportunity to discuss their sense of call to ministry with a sub-committee of COM overseeing specialized and validated ministries.

VALIDATED MINISTRY

The intent of this process is to support creativity and the “doing of new things” while also conforming to G-11.0411. Ultimately, a minister serving in a validated ministry continues in direct relationship with COM and the Presbytery. His or her gifts and experiences are to be shared with the larger body and celebrated by that body.

1. Central to COM decision to validate one’s service is *clear accountability*. It is expected that the minister with validated service will have an ongoing relationship with a congregation or congregations. His or her ministry must occur under the supervision of a governing body or employing organization approved by COM.

2. The individual private practice of counseling, psychotherapy, holistic healing, therapeutic massage etc. do not necessarily meet the requirements for validation because they may lack a direct accountability relationship. Practices, which are associated with churches that provide accountability and oversight, as well as those practices that demonstrate state licensing or professional supervisory and/or accountability may be eligible for consideration. Further, establishing a parish associate relationship with a PCUSA congregation may also be a way of meeting the Book of Order accountability requirements.
3. For those seeking validation for the first time, a two-member subcommittee of COM will meet with the individual minister to review the requirements for validation as set forth in the Presbytery approved policy on continuing members and validated ministries. If possible, one of the two COM members shall have been involved in a validated ministry outside of the parish. This review shall be in relationship to the actual documented work of the minister. The subcommittee shall make recommendation to COM for or against validation.
4. COM will send a letter in October of each year to continuing members with validated ministers and members-at-large. Each letter shall include an outline for written report by that minister to COM. Deadlines for receipt of the annual report shall be December 1.
5. COM will review every report received and make an annual determination regarding continuation of validation and/or presbytery membership status.
6. Should a report not be received, COM will notify the minister [via return receipt requested] of its intent to withdraw validation effective January 1 of the new calendar year.

If one or more of the criteria cannot be met, the continuing member should ask to be designated either a member-at-large or an inactive member of presbytery. If presbytery is unwilling to grant this then the continuing member should seek release from the exercise of ordained office (G-11.0414) until he or she receives a call to ministry that fulfills all criteria.

Restoration to the exercise of the office is possible without re-ordination by (1) application to and approval of the presbytery that granted release, (2) reaffirmation of ordination vows, and (3) resumption of a ministry that qualifies for continuing active membership in the presbytery. These steps provide for ease in movement and are in no way judgmental. They are permissive in that re-ordination is not necessary. People should be encouraged to use them.

NOTE: Any minister who is denied member-at-large or validated ministry status by COM may appeal this decision to the Presbytery.

BOOK OF ORDER REFERENCES

Active Member:	G-11.0406a
Member-at-Large:	G-11.0406b
Inactive Member:	G-11.0406c
Validated Ministry:	G-11.0408
Criteria for Ministry of Continuing Members	G-11.0403