

Summary of Guidelines for the Employment of Ministers of Other Denominations

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There is a great deal of confusion about PC (USA) policies and procedures related to ministers of other denominations. Congregations seeking pastors may want to consider non-Presbyterians. Presbyteries are contacted by ministers of other denominations seeking pastoral work, and Churchwide Personnel Services receives PIFs from such persons every week.

I. Use of Internet-based referral system by Ministers of Other Denominations

The PC (USA) Internet-based referral system "Church Leadership Connection" is available for PC (USA) ministers only. Ministers of denominations, including our Formula Partners (ELCA, RCA, and UCC) are encouraged to contact presbyteries in which they seek to serve in temporary positions. Ministers in the process of transferring to the PC (USA) must meet requirements including ordination exams before they may use Church Leadership Connection.

II. Ministers from Other Denominations (G-11.0404)

Ministers from other denominations may only serve Presbyterian (USA) churches at the discretion of the Presbytery and under certain circumstances.

A. **Only PC (USA) ministers and Formula Partner ministers** (Reformed Church in American, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the United Church of Christ) **may serve as installed pastors of PCUSA congregations.** This includes the positions of Pastor, Associate Pastor, Co-Pastor, Designated and Designated Associate Pastor.

B. Ministers of other denominations may serve in **temporary positions** such as Sunday-to-Sunday supply, as Stated Supply, or Interim Pastor.

C. Presbyteries have no obligation to allow other denomination ministers (including those of churches in full communion or in correspondence with the PC (USA)) to serve their churches. Thorough examination and reference checking is essential.

D. **Ministers of other denominations who wish to become PC (USA) ministers must meet the Book of Order requirements in G-11.0404.** Any waiver of those requirements is in "extraordinary circumstances" and can be made only by the calling presbytery with a 3/4 vote. Ministers of other Reformed churches ordained for 5 or more years only need a 2/3 vote.

III. Ministers from Churches in Correspondence

A. Formula Partner Ministers (G-11.0405b)

Ordained ministers in one member Church of the Formula of Agreement may be invited or may express their desire to serve in another Church; they do not have the right to serve in the other Church.

1. **Formula Partner Ministers** (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, United Church of Christ, and Reformed Church in America) may be installed and serve Presbyterian Churches while remaining members of their home denominations. Reference checking and examination by the C.O.M. would take place just as it would for any Presbyterian minister seeking a call within the presbytery. The minister is installed (if home denomination allows) and is enrolled as a member of the presbytery with all rights and privileges.

2. **Accountability** - Formula Partner ministers remain accountable to the sending body for continuation of ministerial status. The inviting and sending bodies share responsibility for pastoral care of ordained ministers. They are accountable to the presbytery of call for their ministry with the church. It is hoped that when such relationships are established, the governing body representatives would partner in supporting the ministry.

3. **Financial Arrangements** – Formula Partner ministries will remain members of their denominational medical and pension plans. Presbyterian congregations will pay dues to the insuring entity. It is expected that salaries will be the same as would be paid to a Presbyterian minister.

B. Ministers of Other Churches in Correspondence (G-11.0405a)

Ministers of denominations "in correspondence with" the General Assembly may be enrolled in presbytery during temporary service in the PC(U.S.A.). (See G-11.0405a.) The Office of the General Assembly maintains a list of churches that are "in correspondence". They may serve in **Temporary Service**, such as Sunday-to-Sunday supply, as Stated Supply, or Interim Pastor. **Approval is at the discretion of the presbytery**

It is essential that the Committee on Ministry meet with each non-Presbyterian minister to assess theology and practice of ministry, understandings of Presbyterian government, and their intentions, as well as to explain the presbytery's goals for the church and resources available to the minister. It is wise for C.O.M. to get involved early in a relationship between a congregation and a non-Presbyterian pastor rather than to be faced with the unpleasant task of telling a church the pastor with whom they have built a relationship cannot serve them.

IV. Transfer of Membership to PC (USA)

A. **In order to become a PC (USA) minister**, a minister of another denomination (including Formula Partners) must:

- Be an ordained minister
- Have a Baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university and a Theological degree from an institution acceptable to the presbytery of call
- Pass PC(USA) standard ordination exams
- Have a presbytery's approval to become a member, once the minister has a call

AT THIS POINT THEY MAY ENTER A PERSONAL INFORMATION FORM ONLINE IN Church Leadership Connection FOR REFERRAL

We cannot accept Ministers of Other Denominations who have not passed PCUSA ordination exams since only the Presbytery of call gives waivers from the Book of Order requirements. They will be required to provide attestation of "good standing" from an authorized official of his or her present governing body. Our office will request, on behalf of the presbyteries, the required "good standing" letter

B. **To complete the transfer they must:**

- Have a call to appropriate work in the PCUSA
- Be examined and approved by the presbytery of call (usually by the Committee on Ministry)
- They will be examined on their Christian faith, in theology, and in the system of government of this church, and at the discretion of the presbytery in other subjects
- Answer the ordination questions in the affirmative
- Furnish evidence that they have been officially removed from the roll of the other denomination

C. Waiver of requirements (see G.14.0313 and G-11.0404b.)

The presbytery shall not waive any of the foregoing requirements except in extraordinary cases. It shall make an exception only by three-fourths vote of the members of the presbytery present.

Ministers of other Reformed denominations (such as Reformed Church in America or United Church of Christ) may be exempted from taking standard ordination exams if they have been ordained for five or more years and if the presbytery approves by a two-thirds vote as above.

V. New Immigrant Fellowship and Congregations

In order to meet the pastoral needs of new immigrants, calling presbyteries may, by a 3/4 vote, enroll a new immigrant minister who does not meet the educational requirements. The presbytery must develop a plan to provide the minister with the educational opportunities necessary to support successful ministry.

Book of Order G-11.0404f.

In the case of ministers for new immigrant fellowships and congregations, a presbytery may, if it determines that its strategy for mission with that constituency requires it, recognize the ordination of (G-15.0202) and enroll a new immigrant minister furnishing evidence of good standing in a denomination in correspondence with the General Assembly as a member of the presbytery, even though at the time of enrollment that minister lacks the educational history required by G-14.0310b-d. In the case of such a minister lacking such preparation, the presbytery shall undertake an evaluation of the minister's understanding of and proficiency in Bible, Reformed Theology, Sacraments, Presbyterian Polity, preaching, leading worship, pastoral care, and teaching. If the presbytery is satisfied as to the minister's preparation in and understanding of those areas, the presbytery may, by a three-quarters vote of those present, enroll that minister as a minister of the presbytery. Any presbytery taking such an action shall provide that minister with educational opportunities as seem necessary and prudent to the presbytery for that minister's successful ministry within the bounds of that presbytery. This section, when utilized, may result in exceptions to the procedures and requirements described in G-11.0403c, G-14.0310b-d and G-14.0313a-c.

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Note: A minister called to a work that will not be under the jurisdiction of the presbytery where the work is situated must follow G-11.0401. Both the presbytery of membership and the presbytery in which the work is done must give the minister permission to labor in that locale.