

POLICY #18 OF THE COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY PRESBYTERY OF SUSQUEHANNA VALLEY

CRITERIA FOR VALIDATED MINISTRIES

Because we are dealing with Ministry of Word and Sacrament it seems appropriate to begin with the basic assumption that any validated ministry must be in accord with and in some way fulfill the vows which are made at the time of ordination in answering the constitutional questions (G-14.0405b1-9)

In light of the above understanding, a Validated Ministry is one which witnesses to and promotes the proclamation of the Gospel in word and deed through acts of support, service, healing, teaching, professing or assisting in matters of spiritual growth and nurture. The assumption is that the primary focus of one's work relates to the service of people rather than the production of goods or of profits. The goal of ministry is to strengthen and equip the Church and it's people to proclaim the good news and to serve one another in love as Christ commands. (G-6.0104; G-6.0203)

While it could be argued that an Insurance Agent is engaged in service the primary focus is a financial one with the company responsible to it's investors and shareholders. Such service may indeed be a calling but it is distinct from ministry of word & sacrament. Likewise a teacher of mathematics even if it is in a religious institution is not engaged in the proclamation of or witness to the Gospel in any easily recognizable form. A teacher of science, however, who seeks and is free to explore theological implications for scientific endeavors as a significant component of his or her class work may well qualify.

A validated ministry must be accountable to one of the following: Presbytery, Synod, General Assembly, Governing Bodies of Ecumenical Partners, Denominational Agencies, Seminaries, Interdenominational Organizations and Certifying Boards with which the P.C.U.S.A. has affiliation. (G11.0403 d. "The ministry shall be carried on in accountability

for its character and conduct to the Presbytery and to organizations, agencies and institutions.")

A valid ministry beyond the bounds of the P.C.U.S.A. must be in conformity with or allow for a full and free expression of faith and of the theological understanding of ministry and mission of the reformed tradition as set forth in the Book of Order, Book of Confessions and mission statement of the Presbytery. (G-11.0411 "□ may be engaged in a ministerial calling consonant with the mission of the presbytery in an organization, agency, or institution in which the church has no official participation □")

A person teaching in a public school or working in other government institutions (a public social worker for example) does not have such freedom and therefore would not qualify as a validated ministry. Likewise a person working in a religious institution (Christian or otherwise) in which a commitment to or support of the doctrines of that particular organization is required would not qualify in so far as those doctrines run counter to a reformed understanding.

A person engaged in validated ministry within the bounds of the Presbytery is normally expected to participate in the work of the Presbytery: attending Presbytery meetings (at least 2 of 5); serving on at least one committee; and participating in the life of a local congregation.

Persons engaged in validated ministry beyond the bounds of the Presbytery would normally be encouraged to affiliate with the Presbytery in which the Ministry is being done. Exceptions may be made for those who reside within the bounds of the Presbytery and work close by; those engaged in ministries which involve much travel or encompass large geographic areas; those whom the Presbytery has deemed serve validated ministries and are otherwise in good standing but for some reasons unrelated to fitness for ministry the Presbytery in which they work will not receive them; and those who serve in Military Chaplaincies as well as those who serve in higher governing bodies of the Church. Those who are ordained to and serving in validated ministries beyond the bounds of

Presbytery are still expected to be active in a local congregation near where they live and support the work of the larger church as they are able.

Questions to ask in Validating a Ministry:

What is the theological justification for this ministry? Is it in accord with Reformed understandings?

How does the ministry promote and proclaim the gospel in word or deed?

How does the ministry further the work of the church?

How does the ministry fulfill the Ordination questions (G-14.0405b1-9)?

How and to whom is the Minister accountable?