

VALIDATING THE MINISTRY OF CONTINUING MEMBERS
of the
LAKE HURON PRESBYTERY

I. Preamble

The *Book of Order* requires that presbyteries develop written criteria for validating the ministries of continuing members. The principles that shape these criteria are drawn from the description of the office of Minister of Word and Sacrament and the description of the presbytery's responsibility for validating ministries:

"While the ministry is one, specific forms of ministry may emphasize special tasks and skills and the ordering of the offices of ministry shall reflect this variety. There may be forms of ministry in which primary emphasis is given to proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments, forms that stress deeds of love and mercy, forms that are primarily educational, administrative, legislative, or judicial, and forms that are primarily prophetic. (G-6.0104)

"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. In addition to fulfilling the particular responsibilities to which they are called, they shall participate in a congregation, in their presbytery, and in ecumenical relationships, and shall be eligible for election to the higher governing bodies of the church and to the boards and agencies of those governing bodies. (G-6.0203)

A presbytery shall determine the ministers of the Word and Sacrament who shall be its continuing members. In making this determination the presbytery shall be guided by written criteria developed by the presbytery for validation of ministries within its bounds. These criteria shall be based upon the description of the nature of ordained office found in G-6.0100 and G-6.0200 and the following standards:

- 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 this church.
- b. The ministry shall be one that serves others, aids others, and enables the ministries of others.
- c. The 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 G-14.0402.

Attachment A – December 6, 2005 Presbytery Stated Meeting

- d. The ministry shall be carried on in accountability for its character and conduct to the presbytery and to organizations, agencies, and institutions (e.g. a board of directors).
- e. The ministry shall include responsible participation in the deliberations and work of the presbytery and in the worship and service of a congregation. (G-11.0403)

In addition to these references, the presbytery's own Statement of Mission and Directional Signals shape its consideration of valid ministries within its bounds:

Statement of mission and directional signals: (adopted at the October 3, 2000 Presbytery meeting)

statement of mission

"The mission of the Presbytery of Lake Huron is to partner with congregations, helping people to know, grow, share and serve as disciples of Jesus Christ."

directional signals

Moving Away FromMoving Towards

From Legalism to Grace: Recovering Our Spiritual Center

We want to move away from acting out a belief that God rewards us for our adherence to rules for their own sake. That spirit asks "What must we do to please God?" We want to move toward a more grace oriented faith that asks, "What can God do through us, if we allow God to work?"

- To move toward a grace centered existence.
- To move toward a spirit of responding to God's grace in our lives.
- To move toward a model of being a servant to the servants of God.
- To move toward being a mission-centered Presbytery focused on Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God.
- To move toward celebrating our shared life in response to grace.
- To move toward a welcoming of change as opportunity to grow.

From Serving the Institution To Serving the Kingdom: Recovering our Focus

In relating to congregations, we want to move from a primary emphasis on Presbytery as regulatory agency, promoter of denominational programs, and tax collector to Presbytery as mentor, catalyst, consultant, encourager and developer of pastors and lay leaders.

- To move from the primary focus on Presbytery as legislative assembly to Presbytery as community of mutual support, educator, networker, provider of resources.
- To move from emphasizing institutional accountability (rules and regulations) toward more emphasis on spiritual accountability (faithfulness to our mission, vision, and values).
- To move from preoccupation with structure, order and control (permission withholding) to encouraging flexibility, creative risk taking, and grassroots initiatives (permission giving).

Attachment A – December 6, 2005 Presbytery Stated Meeting

- To move beyond the struggle in filling committee vacancies to empowering people to use their gifts and energy.
- To move away from a climate of indifference toward a climate of gratitude and trust where people will feel free to be themselves and to reveal their thoughts and feelings.
- From preoccupation with doing things the right way to a focus on doing the right thing.

From "Acquiring Members" to "Making Disciples": Recovering our Purpose

To move from the mindset of maintenance and membership to the mindset of service and discipleship. Members perceive service to be limited to attending church, contributing money and helping out by serving on a committee. Disciples, first of all, pursue the spiritual disciplines that they may grow in the faith; discover, develop and exercise their God given gifts; find their vocation or calling in daily life; and enthusiastically share their faith and resources with others.

We want to make disciples and create the expectation that people grow and change as followers of Jesus.

- To move from thinking of ministry as what the clergy do to seeing ministry as what the whole people of God do. Baptism/confirmation is the call to active discipleship and each person is called to a ministry.
- To move from seeing Christian life as only church related activities, to seeing it as ministry in daily life, in the workplace, home and community.
- To move from emphasis on clergy as the sole ministers to clergy as equippers and mentors of disciples.
- To see the success of the church's ministry in terms of the quality and faithfulness of the way lives are changed.
- To move from a church that is growing older and smaller to one that reaches the unchurched of all generations, that seeks and builds disciples.

II. The Validation and Review of Active Minister Membership in the Presbytery of Lake Huron:

Active membership in the Presbytery of Lake Huron occurs in four ways: service to a congregation of the presbytery; honorable retirement; service to a non-congregational ministry of the church; and validated ministry in service beyond the jurisdiction of the church.

A. Validation and Review of Ministries within Congregations:

The approval by the COM of a call to a valid ministry within a congregation (G-11.0409) shall be considered validation of that ministry.

The annual report of COM of the type of work and salary compensation of each minister in congregational service (G-11.0502, 11.0103n) shall serve as the annual review of the service of each minister so engaged.

The presbytery, acting through its COM, shall review the ministry of ministers engaged in service within congregations. The COM shall, at its discretion, recommend actions to the presbytery arising from the

Attachment A – December 6, 2005 Presbytery Stated Meeting

liaison visits or other interactions undertaken in the execution of COM responsibilities (G-11.0502).

B. Validation and Review of Honorably Retired Ministers:

By granting the status of honorably retired upon an active minister member the presbytery also confers validation of that person's ministry [G-11.0412]. No further review shall be required.

C. Validation and Review of Ministries in other Service of this Church:

The approval of a call to other service of the church, either as extended by the presbytery for service on its staff or recommended by the COM, and consistent with the terms of G-11.0410, shall be considered validation of that ministry.

For members of the presbytery staff, the annual and other review processes conducted by the Personnel Committee shall serve as annual and major reviews of the validation of that ministry.

D. Validation and Review of Ministries in Service beyond the Jurisdiction of the Church:

The standards of G-11.0403a-e shall serve as broad criteria for the validation of ministry beyond the jurisdiction of the church. In considering an application for validation of such a ministry, the COM shall determine whether or not these standards have been met. Applicants for validation shall demonstrate the validity of proposed ministries. Using the application form contained in the attachments to this policy, the applicant shall submit an essay comprised of five paragraphs, each paragraph devoted to one of the following five topics:

1. *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:*

Describe the ways in which the ministry proposed for validation is consistent with and/or embodies the mission and directional signals of the Presbytery of Lake Huron as outlined in the Preamble above. In addition, the ministry so described shall be assessed by the Committee on Ministry as to its consistency with Scripture and the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A).

2. *Service and/or aid to others, or enables the ministry of others:*

"The primary thrust of the work being validated is toward serving people. Conversely, it implies that its primary thrust is not toward profit-making activities. This does not suggest that a person in a profit-making position cannot perform ministry; many lay persons

Attachment A – December 6, 2005 Presbytery Stated Meeting

do. Nor does it imply that the minister cannot be employed in a profit-making enterprise. The primary functions of one's work, however, should relate to the service of people rather than to the production of goods or of profits." (PCUSA COM Handbook)

Describe the nature of the ministry for which validation is sought (or submit the job description in which the responsibilities of the ministry are detailed). This paragraph of the essay shall make clear the specific aspects of the ministry through which others are served and/or encouraged to serve others.

3. Theologically informed fidelity to God's Word:

"The work to which the continuing member is called [shall make] active and effective use of the biblical and theological training that is required for ordination. Normally, this means that such work should provide opportunities to articulate the Christian faith." (PCUSA COM handbook)

Describe the specific ways in which theological education supports and nurtures the work of the ministry and/or the types of anticipated opportunities for articulating the Christian faith presented by the ministry. It is understood that not all articulation of the faith is verbal; Christian faith may be articulated in acts of compassion and self-sacrifice as well as through verbal proclamation.

4. Accountability for its character and conduct:

List the persons, entities, or agencies to whom the minister is accountable for the character and conduct of the ministry, whether or not the ministry is compensated. Include reference to the ethical standards of any professional organizations or associations of which the minister is a member.

5. Responsible participation in the deliberations and work of presbytery, and worship and service in a local congregation:

Provide a written affirmation that the applicant is a regular participant in the worship and service of a congregation of God's people. Include a description of work undertaken at the presbytery or higher judicatory levels.

6. Other necessary attestations and information:

a. An annual written report on the minister's place of residence and performance of the ministry shall be submitted directly to the Committee on Ministry by the minister's supervisor, supervisory board or appropriate governing board or agency for COM's consideration along with the aforementioned essay;

Attachment A – December 6, 2005 Presbytery Stated Meeting

- b. The stated clerk of the presbytery shall attest that the minister has been in attendance at presbytery at least once in the year previous to application for or review of validation and that the annual report of residence and work has been received for the that same year. If the minister seeking validation comes from another presbytery, the stated clerk shall request attestation from the stated clerk of the transferring presbytery. If the person seeking validation is a candidate, the stated clerk shall request evidence of certification of readiness for ministry from the Committee on Preparation for Ministry of the presbytery of care;
- c. At least one in-person interview with COM or its designees every three years, unless an exception is granted by the committee;
- d. Specialized ministers are not required to be enrolled in the pensions plan. A specialized minister who wishes to enroll must be employed at least 20 hours/week and have presbytery's approval of the ministry, which must be conveyed to the Board of Pensions in writing so that coverage can be obtained. If such coverage is not desired, the applicant must submit proof of insurance at least equal to the coverage provided by the Board of Pensions along with the application for validation.

III. Process for Approval and Review:

A. *Approval of Application for Validation of Ministry:*

- 1) The minister or candidate seeking validation for a particular ministry shall complete the Application for Validation of a Ministry and submit the application to the stated clerk or Moderator of the COM no later than 2 weeks before the date of the COM meeting at which the application is to be considered.
- 2) The COM Moderator shall place the application on the agenda of the committee and, if deemed appropriate, schedule an interview for the minister with all or part of the COM.
- 3) The COM shall consider the application and recommend to the presbytery whether or not the ministry should be validated.
- 4) At its next stated meeting, the presbytery shall consider the COM recommendation and shall determine whether or not to validate the ministry.
- 5) If the ministry is validated, a commissioning liturgy may be celebrated by the presbytery to mark the beginning of the ministry.
- 6) The stated clerk shall notify the minister or candidate in writing of the decision of the presbytery.

B. *Review of Validation*

- 1) Annual Review
The minister engaged in a ministry validated by the presbytery shall report annually concerning the following:

Attachment A – December 6, 2005 Presbytery Stated Meeting

- Current mailing address, telephone number, and (if available) email address
- Character and conduct of the ministry accomplished in the time since validation or previous review
- Any anticipated changes in the character and conduct of the ministry for the coming year.

The report shall be submitted to the stated clerk no later than 30 April of each year, and shall be reviewed by the COM and reported to the presbytery, ordinarily at its stated June meeting. The COM may, and in the case of recommendation to rescind validation shall, interview the minister concerning the report and the character and conduct of the ministry.

- If the COM recommends continuing validation of the ministry, this action may be included in the consent agenda for the presbytery meeting.
- If the COM recommends rescinding validation of the ministry, it shall report its findings and reasons for so recommending to the presbytery, and the minister shall be offered opportunity to respond.

2) Major Review

At least once every three years after the validation of a ministry, the COM shall conduct an in-person interview with the minister to inquire into the ongoing character and conduct of the minister. This triennial review shall replace the annual review for that year. The content of the interview shall include, but may not be limited to:

- Conduct and activity of the ministry
- Goals for the ministry
- Long-range plans of the minister for continuing education or other personal and professional growth
- Ways in which the presbytery can be of greater support to the minister.

On the basis of this interview, the COM shall recommend to the presbytery whether or not to continue the validation of the ministry, under the same terms as the annual review.

If being present in person for the triennial interview poses a significant hardship for the minister, the COM may, at its discretion, choose some other means by which to conduct a conversation about the character and accomplishments of the ministry (e.g., on-line electronic discussion, telephone interview, etc.)

Attachments

Attachment A

Validation for Ministry Application

Name: _____
Address: _____

Phone: _____
Email: _____

The Validation for Ministry policy of the Lake Huron Presbytery requires applicants to submit a brief essay covering five areas as specified in the policy section II.d. In a brief (no more than two pages) essay describe how your proposed ministry demonstrates the following:

1. *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;*
2. *Service and/or aid to others, or enables the ministry of others;*
3. *Theologically informed fidelity to God's Word;*
4. *Accountability for its character and conduct;*
5. *Responsible participation in the deliberations and work of presbytery, and worship and service in a local congregation.*

Attachment A – December 6, 2005 Presbytery Stated Meeting

Attachment B

Annual Report on Validated Ministry

(to be submitted to the Clerk of Lake Huron Presbytery no later than
April 30)

Name: _____

Changes to address, phone, email: _____

Briefly (no more than two pages) describe the following:

1) The character and conduct of the ministry
accomplished in the time since validation or previous
review:

2) Describe any anticipated changes in the character
and/or conduct of the ministry for the coming year:

Date received: _____ Date reviewed: _____

Revised Draft Policy, November 10, 2005

Attachment A – December 6, 2005 Presbytery Stated Meeting

Notes for information, not part of the policy:

- The specialized minister's compensation agreement is not subject to approval by Committee on Ministry, unless the minister is a staff member of presbytery, synod, or GA. Otherwise the minister is engaged in a validated ministry beyond the jurisdiction of the church (G-11.0411).
- Either the specialized minister or his/her employer may submit to the Committee on Ministry a request for designation of a Housing Allowance which would be excludable from income taxes.