

Guiding Principles for the Work of the Committee on Ministry

Presbytery of Southern New England

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The “Why”

At the very beginning of the Book of Order is a statement on God’s mission in Jesus Christ. This mission statement is worth quoting in its entirety, because it is meant to guide everything we do as a church. This is why we exist as an institution:

The good news of the Gospel is that the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—creates, redeems, sustains, rules, and transforms all things and all people. This one living God, the Scriptures say, liberated the people of Israel from oppression and covenanted to be their God. By the power of the Spirit, this one living God is incarnate in Jesus Christ, who came to live in the world, die for the world, and be raised again to new life. The Gospel of Jesus Christ announces the nearness of God’s kingdom, bringing good news to all who are impoverished, sight to all who are blind, freedom to all who are oppressed, and proclaiming the Lord’s favor upon all creation.

The mission of God in Christ gives shape and substance to the life and work of the Church. In Christ, the Church participates in God’s mission for the transformation of creation and humanity by proclaiming to all people the good news of God’s love, offering to all people the grace of God at font and table, and calling all people to discipleship in Christ. Human beings have no higher goal in life than to glorify and enjoy God now and forever, living in covenant fellowship with God and participating in God’s mission. (*Book of Order*, F-1.01)

The “What”

As the Committee on Ministry of the Presbytery of Southern New England, you are called to a particular form of ministry in the Church of Jesus Christ. The current bylaws of the presbytery define your tasks as follows:

- A. To fulfill the duties mandated in the Book of Order, G-11.0500 series, and all other parts thereof that come within its purview;
- B. To assist each church in a goal setting and review process, and to provide for review of pastoral work and compensation;
- C. To make counseling available for professionals in the parishes and specialized ministries as the need may arise;
- D. To provide for the spiritual and emotional development of all clergy and their spouses;
- E. To appoint a moderator of a session where the pulpit is declared vacant;
- F. To counsel with a member church if the various constituencies of the congregation are not fairly represented on the session;
- G. To appoint a commission for the ordination and/or installation of a minister who has received a properly approved call to labor within the bounds of Presbytery;
- H. To dismiss ministers, in good standing, who are without pastoral charge, in the intervals between stated meetings of Presbytery;

- I. To dissolve pastoral relationships and dismiss ministers in good standing to a calling Presbytery, in the interval between stated meetings of Presbytery, when requested by both the congregation and the minister;
- J. To appoint established members of the Presbytery to serve as advisors to counsel newly ordained solo pastors for not more than two years.

Please note, in the new Form of Government, adopted in 2013, the Book of Order no longer requires that presbyteries have a “Committee on Ministry,” but simply that each presbytery function as a “Pastor, Counselor, and Advisor to Its Pastors and Congregations” (G-3.0307). In addition to the specific responsibilities and powers provided for in the bylaws, it might be helpful to think of your role in these terms:

Presbyteries shall be open at all times to communication regarding the life and ministry of their congregations.

Each presbytery shall develop and maintain mechanisms and processes to serve as pastor and counselor to its pastors, both ministers of the Word and Sacrament and, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service (also called commissioned pastors [also known as commissioned ruling elders]), as well as the certified Christian educators of the presbytery; to facilitate the relations between the presbytery and its congregations, pastors, and certified Christian educators; and to settle difficulties on behalf of the presbytery where possible and expedient. (Book of Order, G-3.0307).

The “How”

Beyond this, it will be important to remember that all the structures established for governing the church “presuppose[...] the fellowship of women, men, and children united in covenant relationship with one another and with God through Jesus Christ. The organization rests on the fellowship and is **not designed to work without trust and love**” (G-1.0102, emphasis added). As you consider requests from the presbytery’s congregations and members, consider the emotional and spiritual, as well as legal and financial, circumstances they face. Sigh with them and offer to pray for them in their hardship, rejoice with them at exciting opportunities, and do your best to nurture the covenant relationship that connects us. Nurture community among yourselves as committee members, taking time at your meetings to check in and pray for one another.

The Role of the Clerk

As stated clerk, I can help you navigate the polity and procedures of the PC(U.S.A.). As secretary to the Committee on Ministry, I am at your disposal to:

- take minutes at your meetings
- receive communications related to requests for ordaining and installing commissions, approval and dissolution of calls, and any other transitions
- communicate your decisions and requests as you direct
- assist you, with the General Presbyter, in finding resources from our denomination and other sources to help you do your work
- make recommendations regarding the appropriate wording for motions, as you prepare your report to the Presbytery