

Commission on Ministry

General Guiding Principles

Approved February 10, 2026



**THE PRESBYTERY OF
SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND**

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Resources and Policies

Please refer to the Presbytery website for all current resources and policies related to the work of the Commission on Ministry that are updated and approved.

Pastoral Searches

Because these resources are updated frequently, an electronic resource file will be provided to Interim and Pastoral Nominating Committees by the COM at the time of training.

Theology of Ministry

The Commission on Ministry is guided by the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in the roles and responsibilities between those who participate in the life of congregations, pastoral leadership, the Presbytery and Sessions.

Marks of Church Membership from the Book of Order, the Ministry of Members G-1.0304:

Membership in the Church of Jesus Christ is a joy and a privilege. It is also a commitment to participate in Christ's mission. A faithful member bears witness to God's love and grace and promises to be involved responsibly in the ministry of Christ's Church. Such involvement includes:

- proclaiming the good news in word and deed,
- taking part in the common life and worship of a congregation,
- lifting one another up in prayer, mutual concern, and active support,
- studying Scripture and the issues of Christian faith and life,
- supporting the ministry of the church through the giving of money, time, and talents,
- demonstrating a new quality of life within and through the church,
- responding to God's activity in the world through service to others,
- living responsibly in the personal, family, vocational, political, cultural, and social relationships of life,
- working in the world for peace, justice, freedom, and human fulfillment,
- caring for God's creation,
- participating in the governing responsibilities of the church, and
- reviewing and evaluating regularly the integrity of one's membership, and considering ways in which one's participation in the worship and service of the church may be increased and made more meaningful.

From the Book of Order on the definition of a Minister of Word and Sacrament G-2.0501:

Ministers of the Word and Sacrament (also called teaching elders and pastors) shall in all things be committed to teaching the faith in word and deed and equipping the saints for the work of ministry (Eph. 4:12). They may serve in a variety of ministries, as authorized by the presbytery. When they serve as preachers and teachers of the Word, they shall preach and teach the faith of the church, so that the people are shaped by the pattern of the gospel and strengthened for witness and service. When they serve at font and table, they shall interpret and "show forth" the mysteries of grace in word and

action, lifting the people's vision toward the hope of God's new creation. When they serve as pastors, they shall support the people in the disciplines of the faith amid the struggles of daily life. When they serve as presbyters, they shall participate in the responsibilities of governance, seeking always to discern the mind of Christ and to build up Christ's body through devotion, debate, and decision.

From the Book of Order on the responsibilities of ministry of the Word and Sacrament G-2.0504:

When ministers of the Word and Sacrament are called as pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor of a congregation, they are to be responsible for a quality of life and relationships that commends the gospel to all persons and that communicates its joy and justice. They are responsible for studying, teaching, and preaching the Word, for celebrating Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and for praying with and for the congregation. With the ruling elders, they are to encourage people in the worship and service of God; to equip and enable them for their tasks within the church and their mission in the world; to exercise pastoral care, devoting special attention to the poor, the sick, the troubled, and the dying; to participate in governing responsibilities, including leadership of the congregation in implementing the principles of participation and inclusiveness in the decision-making life of the congregation, and its task of reaching out in concern and service to the life of the human community as a whole. With the deacons they are to share in the ministries of compassion, witness, and service. In addition to these pastoral duties, they are responsible for sharing in the ministry of the church in councils higher than the session and in ecumenical relationships.

On the Role of the Presbytery from G-3.03

The presbytery is the council serving as a corporate expression of the church within a certain district and is composed of all the congregations and ministers of the Word and Sacrament within that district. The presbytery shall adopt and communicate to the sessions a plan for determining how many ruling elders each session should elect as commissioners to presbytery, with a goal of numerical parity of ministers of the Word and Sacrament and ruling elders. This plan shall require each session to elect at least one commissioner and shall take into consideration the size of congregations as well as a method to fulfill the principles of participation and representation found in F-1.0403 and G- 3.0103. Ruling elders elected as officers of the presbytery shall be enrolled as members during the period of their service. A presbytery may enroll, or may provide by its own rule for the enrollment of, ruling elders during terms of elected service to the presbytery or its congregations.

The presbytery is responsible for the government of the church throughout its district, and for assisting and supporting the witness of congregations to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that all congregations become communities of faith, hope, love, and witness. As it leads and guides the witness of its congregations, the presbytery shall keep before it the marks of the Church (F-1.0302), the notes by which Presbyterian and Reformed communities have identified themselves through history (F-1.0303) and the six Great Ends of the Church (F-1.0304).

In light of this charge, the presbytery has responsibility and power to:

a. *provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard.* This responsibility shall include organizing, receiving, merging, dismissing, and dissolving congregations in consultation with their members; overseeing congregations without pastors; establishing pastoral relationships and dissolving them; guiding the preparation of those preparing to become ministers of the Word and Sacrament; establishing and maintaining those ecumenical relationships that will enlarge the life and mission of the church in its district; providing encouragement, guidance, and resources to congregations in the areas of mission, prophetic witness, leadership development, worship, evangelism, and responsible administration to the end that the church's witness to the love and grace of God may be heard in the world.

b. *provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received.* This responsibility shall include authorizing the celebration of the Lord's Supper at its meetings at least annually and for fellowship groups, new church developments, and other non-congregational entities meeting within its bounds; authorizing and training specific ruling elders to administer or preside at the Lord's Supper when it deems it necessary to meet the needs for the administration of the Sacrament; and exercising pastoral care for the congregations and members of presbytery in order that the Sacraments may be received as a means of grace, and the presbytery may live in the unity represented in the Sacraments.

c. *nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ.* This responsibility shall include ordaining, receiving, dismissing, installing, removing, and disciplining its members who are ministers of the Word and Sacrament; commissioning ruling elders to limited pastoral service; promoting the peace and harmony of congregations and inquiring into the sources of congregational discord; supporting congregations in developing the graces of generosity, stewardship, and service; assisting congregations in developing mission and participating in the mission of the whole church; taking jurisdiction over the members of dissolved congregations and granting transfers of their membership to other congregations; warning and bearing witness against error in

doctrine and immorality in practice within its bounds; and serving in judicial matters in accordance with the Rules of Discipline.

Relationship with Sessions G-3.0303

Presbytery, being composed of the ministers of the Word and Sacrament and commissioners elected by the session of congregations within its district, has a particular responsibility to coordinate, guide, encourage, support, and resource the work of its congregations for the most effective witness to the broader community. In order to accomplish this responsibility, the presbytery has authority to:

- a. develop strategy for the mission of the church in its district;
- b. control the location of new congregations and of congregations desiring to move as well as to divide, dismiss, or dissolve congregations in consultation with their members;
- c. establish minimum compensation standards, including provision for dissolution terms, pastoral calls and for those serving in temporary pastoral service, Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators within the presbytery;
- d. counsel with a session concerning reported difficulties within a congregation, including:
 - i. advising the session as to appropriate actions to be taken to resolve the reported difficulties,
 - ii. offering to help as a mediator, and
- e. acting to correct the difficulties if requested to do so by the session or if the session is unable or unwilling to do so, following the procedural safeguards of the Church Discipline;
- f. assume original jurisdiction in any situation in which it determines that session cannot exercise its authority. After a thorough investigation, and after full opportunity to be heard has been accorded to the session, the presbytery may conclude that the session of a congregation is unable or unwilling to manage its affairs wisely, and may appoint an administrative commission with the full power of session. This commission shall assume original jurisdiction of the existing session, if any, which shall cease to act until such time as the presbytery shall otherwise direct.
- g. consider and act upon requests from congregations for permission to take the actions regarding real property as described in G-4.0206.

A Note about the Form of Government in the Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), this Handbook and Categories of Pastoral Leadership

The new Form of Government of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) was established in 2010. Previous COM Handbooks from this Presbytery have not reflected these changes. Each Presbytery now must have a Manual of Operations for Commissions such as the Commission on Ministry which details the operating procedures in that local Presbytery. While previous iterations of this handbook in the Presbytery of Southern New England (PSNE) have had much guidance from the Book of Order, there is now freedom to establish procedures that work in our local context. This manual reflects these procedures and is followed by a series of policies that may be updated by the Commission on Ministry as it sees fit. Any policy updates or changes will be reported to and brought to the Presbytery as appropriate and required. We have also provided a listing of resources to accompany this manual.

The new Form of Government no longer details the many different types of pastoral positions that may be held. For active ministry there are only installed and temporary categories (which can take various forms based on the needs of the congregation). Beyond that are members at large or retired clergy. The Commission on Ministry is guided by the categories and types of membership/leadership for ministry of Word and Sacrament as outlined in G-2.0503 - 4:

G-2.0504 Presbytery and the Minister of the Word and Sacrament

As the Lord has set aside through calling certain members to be ministers of the Word and Sacrament, so the church confirms that call through the action of the presbytery. The presbytery shall determine whether a particular work may be helpful to the church in mission and is a call to validated ministry requiring ordination as a minister of the Word and Sacrament. In the performance of that ministry, the minister of the Word and Sacrament shall be accountable to the presbytery. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament have membership in the presbytery by action of the presbytery itself, and no pastoral relationship may be established, changed, or dissolved without the approval of the presbytery.

G-2.0503 Categories of Membership

A minister of the Word and Sacrament is a member of a presbytery and shall be engaged in a ministry validated by that presbytery, a member-at-large as determined by the presbytery, or honorably retired.

a. Engaged in a Validated Ministry A validated ministry shall:

- (1) demonstrate 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;
- (2) serve and aid others, and enable the ministry of others;
- (3) give evidence of theologically informed fidelity to God's Word;
- (4) be carried on in accountability for its character and conduct to the presbytery in addition to any organizations, agencies, and institutions served; and
- (5) include responsible participation in the deliberations, worship, and work of the presbytery and in the life of a congregation of this church or a church in correspondence with the PC(USA) (G-5.0201).

When ministers of the Word and Sacrament are called to validated ministry beyond the jurisdiction of the church, they shall give evidence of a quality of life that helps to share the ministry of the good news. They shall participate in a congregation, in their presbytery, and in ecumenical relationships and shall be eligible for election to the higher councils of the church and to the boards and agencies of those councils.

The presbytery shall review annually the work of all ministers of the Word and Sacrament engaged in validated ministries outside the congregation.

b. Member-at-large

A member-at-large is a minister of the Word and Sacrament who has previously been engaged in a validated ministry, and who now, without intentional abandonment of the exercise of ministry, is no longer engaged in a ministry that complies with all the criteria in G-2.0503a. A minister of the Word and Sacrament may be designated a member-at-large because he or she is limited in his or her ability to engage in a ministry fulfilling all of the criteria for a validated ministry due to family responsibilities or other individual circumstances recognized by the presbytery. A member-at-large shall comply with as many of the criteria in G-2.0503a as possible and shall actively participate in the life of a congregation. A member-at-large is entitled to take part in the meetings of the presbytery and to speak, vote, and hold office. The status of member-at-large shall be reviewed annually.

c. Honorably Retired

Upon request of a member of presbytery, the presbytery may designate the member honorably retired because of age or physical or mental disability.

G-2.0504 Pastoral Relationships

When ministers of the Word and Sacrament are called as pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor of a congregation, they are to be responsible for a quality of life and relationships that commends the gospel to all persons and that communicates its joy and justice. They are responsible for studying, teaching, and preaching the Word, for celebrating Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and for praying with and for the congregation. With the ruling elders, they are to encourage people in the worship and service of God; to equip and enable them for their tasks within the church and their mission in the world; to exercise pastoral care, devoting special attention to the poor, the sick, the troubled, and the dying; to participate in governing responsibilities, including leadership of the congregation in implementing the principles of participation and inclusiveness in the decision-making life of the congregation, and its task of reaching out in concern and service to the life of the human community as a whole. With the deacons they are to share in the ministries of compassion, witness, and service. In addition to these pastoral duties, they are responsible for sharing in the ministry of the church in councils higher than the session and in ecumenical relationships.

A. Installed Pastoral Relationships

The installed pastoral relationships are pastor, co-pastor, and associate pastor. A minister of the Word and Sacrament may be installed in a pastoral relationship for an indefinite period or for a designated term determined by the presbytery in consultation with the congregation and specified in the call. When a congregation determines that its strategy for mission under the Word so requires, the congregation may call additional pastors. Such additional pastors shall be called co-pastors or associate pastors, and the duties of each pastor and the relationship between the pastors of the congregation shall be determined by the session with the approval of the presbytery. When a congregation has two pastors serving as co-pastors, and the relationship of one of them is dissolved, the other remains as pastor. The relationship of an associate pastor to a congregation is not dependent upon that of a pastor. An associate pastor is ordinarily not eligible to be the next installed pastor of that congregation.

B. Temporary Pastoral Relationships

Temporary pastoral relationships are approved by the presbytery and do not carry a formal call or installation. When a congregation does not have a pastor, or while the pastor is unable to perform her or his duties, the session, with the approval of presbytery, may obtain the services of a minister of the Word and Sacrament, candidate, or ruling elder in a temporary pastoral relationship. No formal call shall be issued and no formal installation shall take place.

Titles and terms of service for temporary relationships shall be determined by the presbytery. A person serving in a temporary pastoral relationship is invited for a specified period not to exceed

thirty-six months in length, which is renewable with the approval of the presbytery. A minister of the Word and Sacrament employed in a temporary pastoral relationship is ordinarily not eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor.

C. Pastoral Relationship Completion - When any relationship ends, no non-disclosure agreement shall be allowable. These are now officially prohibited by the Book of Order.

A non-disclosure agreement, also known as a confidentiality agreement, is an agreement that outlines confidential knowledge, or information that is to remain confidential. Such an agreement binds the party or parties who have signed it and prevents them from discussing any information included in the contract with anyone not authorized by the agreement.

D. Exceptions

A presbytery may determine that its mission strategy permits a minister of the Word and Sacrament currently called as an Associate Pastor to be eligible to serve as the next installed pastor or co-pastor, or a minister of the Word and Sacrament employed in a temporary pastoral relationship to be eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor. Presbyteries that permit this eligibility shall establish such relationships only by a three-fourths vote of the members of presbytery present and voting. [It should be noted that the Presbytery of Southern New England has determined that this practice is not the norm and that Interim/Transitional Pastors should maintain solely that role.]

G-1.0104 Other Forms of Corporate Witness (Immigrant Fellowships, Worshiping Communities, etc.)

In circumstances where the formation of a traditional ecclesiastically and legally organized congregation is not desired or deemed appropriate, and a worshiping community has been formally recognized by a presbytery according to its own definition, presbyteries and congregations may work together with such a group to provide supervision and support. Such recognized groups shall be under the mutually agreed upon oversight of a minister of the Word and Sacrament approved by the presbytery, shall include at least one ruling or teaching elder in their chosen leadership, and shall function under the financial, legal, and disciplinary sponsorship of an ecclesial council (either a session or a presbytery). The sponsoring council shall, in consultation with the worshiping community, authorize any celebrations of the sacraments within

the group in accordance with the Directory of Worship. Membership records for group participation desiring to be formally enrolled as baptized, active, or affiliate members in the PC(USA) shall be maintained by the sponsoring council. Such groups shall not hold property, and may not undertake any financial, legal, or contractual obligations, apart from their sponsoring council. They shall adhere to the sponsoring council's required policies on sexual misconduct, harassment, child and youth protection, and antiracism. Presbyteries shall determine appropriate means of representation and participation of such groups in and through the sponsoring councils (session and/or presbytery).

Dissolution of the Pastoral Relationship (G-2.09)

Please see the Presbytery policy on dissolution of pastoral relationships.

Provision for Temporary Pastoral Leadership (G-2.0504b)

A. Moderator

The COM shall appoint a moderator for the session while a church is without an installed pastor. Normally, a moderator is only assigned until the arrival of an interim pastor, who then will become moderator of the Session during their service as interim pastor. If the COM deems it appropriate, the associate pastor, parish associate or stated supply can serve as the moderator of the session. All moderators of the session must be members of PSNE.

See the presbytery website for the most up-to-date honoria and mileage information, which is updated yearly. Supply preachers (those filling in a pulpit on an occasional basis for an in-between time, vacation, sabbatical or during continuing ed of installed pastor can also be located on the presbytery website).

B. Temporary Supply

When permanent pastoral leadership is unavailable, the pulpit may be filled by the session on a week-to-week basis with a minister of the Word and Sacrament, candidate, or ruling elder in a temporary pastoral relationship. Information regarding possible temporary supply is available through the COM chairperson and on the COM website. A temporary supply may be a candidate for the interim position. The specified period is not to exceed thirty-six months in length.

When the temporary pastoral relationship ends, no non-disclosure agreement shall be allowed. A covenant of closure shall be completed by the pastor and the congregation.

C. Stated Supply

In some situations COM, after consultation with the session, may recommend to the presbytery that a stated supply pastor be appointed to serve a vacant church that is not seeking an installed pastor. The appointment is for a period not exceeding one year. A stated supply can be re-appointed following recommendation of COM, presbytery action, and concurrence by the session.

Review of Stated Supply Relationships

The COM shall review each stated supply relationship through an annual review with session and pastor. This review should occur three months before the end of each contract period.

D. Interim Pastor or Interim Associate Pastor

When a pastor has left a church, regardless of the reason, the session is faced with several options available to it as to how to replace that pastor. The most important first step it should take is to invite COM to explain the pros and cons of the various alternatives and assist in the decision-making as to what is best for that church which includes a financial review. A representative of the COM will visit the session to explain the interim process and to encourage the session to set goals for the interim period, and prepare either a job description OR a Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP) depending on the needs of the congregation (the COM liaison will assist with this determination). The General Presbyter and COM liaison will train the interim search team before they can begin their work and provide them with an extensive online resource folder to assist them in the search.

The actions of the IPNC will be absolutely confidential. This does not preclude general informational reports to the congregation concerning progress, but names or locations of candidates under consideration (or rejected) will not be disclosed to anyone not a member of the IPNC or COM. Members of the congregation may make suggestions as to possible candidates but will not receive a report as to the action of the IPNC on their suggestion.

1. Why an Interim Pastor?

In every transition between pastors, several things need to happen that an interim pastor can facilitate. Congregations need to understand their history, particularly as it relates to former pastors, both recent and past. It is important to consider the church's present identity and its future possibilities. There is a need to develop an enthusiastic commitment to new pastoral leadership and to the opportunities and challenges of a different future for their church.

2. Interim Pastor Selection Committee

The session should appoint an Interim Pastor Nominating Committee (IPNC) of three to five members, consisting of the majority of members from the Session. Other members may be recruited without regard to their present offices. In some cases the session has assigned this task to the Personnel Committee.

3. Expectations of Interim Period

Churches go into an interim period with different opportunities and needs. The session, in consultation with their assigned COM representative, should identify what they would most like to accomplish during the interim. Some possibilities include but are not limited to:

- Experience a different pastoral personality and leadership style

- Renew or re-invigorate the congregation's understanding of mission, its local context and the nature of 21st century ministry (Complete Mission Study in consultation with the COM)
- Review staffing and budget for the future (right-sizing)
- Address new and emerging needs around worship (including time, location, community needs, etc.)
- Deal with any unresolved problems that stand in the way of ministry
- Update church records
- Address building maintenance and needs
- Revise/review administrative practices and stewardship

The session should inform the selection committee of these areas of focus.

4. Writing a Position Description

The session should approve a position description OR Ministry Discernment Profile (MDP) and then forward it to COM for approval. The Interim Pastor is a contract, not installed position, therefore responsible to and employed by the Session not the Congregation.

5. Candidates

COM will consult with the Interim Pastor Search Committee on persons qualified to be interim pastor for the church. The guidelines to be considered for an interim pastor are as follows:

- A positive Executive and criminal reference check
- Completion of acceptable interim/transitional ministry training It is preferable for the candidate to have served at least two successful interim pastorates. The COM will work closely with interim search teams on providing feedback on the suitability and training of candidates and evaluating if updated training is needed.
- The Interim Pastor Search Committee will submit names to COM for approval and background checks prior to inviting candidates for a final interview.
- Approval by COM of all persons being considered as an interim pastor is required.

6. Terms of the Contract

After selecting the final candidate, the committee shall meet with them to negotiate the terms of the contract that will define the interim relationship, consulting with COM along the way to be sure the terms fulfill presbytery requirements. The following guidelines are recommended:

- Compensation should be no lower than that of the previous pastor; however it is customary for interim pastors to be paid at higher rates given their additional training and experience.
- Ordinarily the interim pastor will serve until the new pastor is in place. The COM will receive reports every six months from the interim pastor, which will include time to check in with the interim pastor on progress of the congregation. We are available to meet at any time in the process the interim pastor deems necessary.
- The COM will provide a contract to be filled out, following the sample from the Presbytery.

8. Introduction to the Congregation

The committee should prepare an appropriate plan for presenting the interim pastor to the congregation. This may include such steps as a write-up in the church newsletter and a reception after worship. It should include an introduction during regular Sunday worship at which time a representative of the session will welcome the interim pastor. Ordinarily a representative of COM will explain the special provisions of the interim ministry at this worship service. See our resources for a suggested Litany of Beginning.

III. Mission Study

It is important that every congregation engage periodically in a Mission Study and Action Plan. Normally this study process will be conducted under the authority and with the oversight of the Session. There are a variety of ways to engage a mission study and the interim pastor is encouraged to meet early on with the COM liaison to discuss what options are present and would be appropriate for the congregation.

If there is an interim pastor serving a congregation, COM requires a Mission Study and Action Plan be completed during the interim period. Other times it may be useful to do a Mission Study and Action Plan when a congregation is facing a significant change or transition. The COM no longer has a one-sized fits all Mission Study template for congregations given the wide disparity of types of congregations in our Presbytery. The interim pastor should be in touch with the COM liaison from the beginning to discuss and plan for a context-appropriate Mission Study process. The COM maintains updated resources for these to share as needed.

The departing pastor shall not be involved in the conduct of the Mission Study and Action Plan.

The Session has the final authority to approve the Mission Study and Action Plan. A copy of all completed Mission Studies and Action Plans should be shared with COM.

A completed and approved Mission Study is required by the COM prior to the approval of a PNC/APNC. Exceptions to this requirement require COM approval.

Securing New Pastoral Leadership

When it is time to begin a pastoral search for a Congregation, the Session shall reach out to the COM for training. This process is constantly shifting, and so the COM will give the most up-to-date training when searches occur. It is required that all congregations, regardless of type of search for pastoral leadership, be trained by the COM before proceeding. If a congregation proceeds without training, the search forms will not be approved.

Other Staff Relationships

A. Consultation with COM

Churches shall consult with COM when considering hiring any ordained minister (PCUSA or any denomination) to a full or part-time staff ministry position, such as Director of Christian Education/Faith Formation, Director of Youth Ministries, Director of Family Ministries, Director of Music, Director of Child/Day Care as these would fall under specialized or validated ministry categories.

B. Certified Christian Educator (G-2.1103)

1. The Certified Christian Educator is a professional educator who is certified by the denomination.
2. A church may wish to consider Certified Christian Educators as well as ordained/ordained persons for a position in Christian education.
3. Compensation for a Certified Christian Educator needs to meet Presbytery minimums for pastoral calls. Exceptions should be submitted to the COM for consideration.

C. Parish Associates

Please consult with the COM before entering into a parish associate relationship with any member (active or retired) of presbytery or one of our ecumenical partners. Sample parish associate agreements can be provided.

D. Certified Ruling Elders (CRE's)

Please consult with the COM and CPM of the Presbytery of Southern New England for procedure and educational requirements. This falls under our CRE policy.

New CRE's are expected to participate in EMI, Early Ministry Institute.

Consultation

A. Connections with Congregations and Ministries of the Presbytery

The COM is committed to meeting with all congregations and ministries of the Presbytery. We are also responsible to all who serve in specialized and validated ministries as well as members-at-large and honorably retired clergy. The COM assigns formal liaisons to each congregation, new worshipping community or fellowship every year. Liaisons are the first point of contact and will check in with their assigned ministries throughout the year. For those not serving formally in congregations of the Presbytery, please reach out to the co-chairs of the COM, and/or the Stated Clerk and General Presbyter so that we can assist you.

B. Consulting/Coaching/Mediation

The COM has a number of resources and tools available for the variety of situations that can come up in the life of a congregation. The session should contact your COM liaison for resourcing with any needs it may have. The COM has connections with the Synod of the Northeast Mediation Network, the Synod of the Northeast Coaching Network and the 1001 New Worshipping Communities Coaches from the national church office. We also have relationships with our ecumenical partners and can provide referrals for counseling. While resources are most needed in a time of heightened tension or conflict; we strongly encourage pastors and sessions to engage a yearly process of congregational evaluation so as to avail themselves of proactive and positive resourcing to create healthy, vital and growing missional communities of faith. Resources are not always needed when there is a problem-but are a gift to the ongoing health and vitality of congregational life.

Role of COM Regarding Compensation

The COM has the responsibility to study compensation plans for parish teaching elders and to make recommendations to the presbytery concerning minimum terms of call. It shall annually make a recommendation to the presbytery concerning cost-of-living increases and a salary study for the Presbytery concerning parity related to gender and race.

Terms of Call

Minimum requirements for compensation are set annually by the Presbytery at the fall Stated Meeting. Nearly all of our congregations exceed these minimum requirements. Ordinarily non-installed terms of call for clergy are equivalent.

A. Salary/Housing - The presbytery has established a minimum amount for salary and housing for calls. When there is a manse, the Board of Pensions requires the manse allowance to be at least 30% of cash salary for calculation of pension dues. If a housing allowance is provided, the location of housing is at the sole discretion of the Pastor as it is their private residence.

B. Pension/Major Medical Insurance - This is established by the Board of Pensions. It is recommended that dental and vision care is also included.

C. Professional Expense Reimbursement - minimums established annually. The majority of congregations go above the minimum Presbytery requirement.

D. Paid Vacation - At least one month per year, 4 weeks, 4 Sundays.

E. Study Leave - At least two weeks per year and a minimum allowance as set by presbytery. Early Ministry Institute (EMI) is required for the first three years of a first ordained call and is provided by the Synod of the Northeast. Please see their website for information about training and registration. EMI is in addition to Study Leave.

Both are accruable to a maximum of six weeks over a three-year period. Study leave is provided for the purpose of maintaining and improving a teaching elder's ability to perform pastoral or staff specialist functions more effectively, or to contribute to professional growth. Prior consultation with the session is recommended before any study leave is taken.

F. Mileage Reimbursement - to conform with the current IRS reimbursement rate. Please note that in years when the IRS raises the rate, your pastor is continuing to drive as much as they usually do, and so this allowance should be adjusted accordingly.

G. 403b match - A 403b is offered for all plan participants in the Board of Pensions and church staff who are not enrolled in the Board of Pensions. Many congregations offer a match amount on an annual basis. Please contact the regional representative for our Synod for more information and to be enrolled.

H. Other - other items can be negotiated by the pastor and congregation. It is expected that 50% of SECA is reimbursed.

I. Sabbatical and Family Leave Policy - The Presbytery has approved a policy that is required to be included in the Terms of Call.

J. Please use the Compensation Worksheet on the Presbytery website to calculate all items. This is updated annually.

It is encouraged that every congregation provide COLA raises to all staff on an annual basis. If you fall behind on this as a congregation, your call to your pastor will become unsustainable.

F. Leaves of Absence

1. Medical Leave

In keeping with the congregation's promise to provide for the welfare of the pastor, to stand by them in trouble and share their joys, Presbytery of Southern New England requires that congregations provide medical leave care for their pastors. Medical leave is for short-term medical needs that may arise for the clergyperson and/or their immediate family members. COM is always glad to consult as needs arise. Medical leave policies are different from a disability plan (which is administered through the Board of Pensions). If a short-term medical leave needs to be extended to either family or disability leave, the Congregation must consult with the COM for appropriate resourcing and support. Family medical leave is also governed through G-2.0804 in the Book of Order. Congregations are encouraged to take advantage of resources available through state Paid Family Medical Leave programs, and should follow all applicable state laws.

2. Family Leave

Family leave is governed by G-2.0804 in the Book of Order. Additional reasons for offering leave in this manner include, but are not limited to:

- Leave to accommodate the birth, foster placement, or adoption of a child;
- Leave to provide care to an ill or disabled family member;
- Leave to heal following a loss or tragic event.

3. Sabbatical or Other Extended Leaves*

a. Churches shall include in terms of call provision for extended study leave, or sabbatical, every six years.

b. Any pastor planning to be away from a church for an extended period of time (seven weeks or more) on sabbatical or for extended leave, shall consult with COM and receive its concurrence at least 60 days in advance of leaving. Thus the presbytery may be assured of continuing pastoral care and moderator leadership of the session and the congregation. If necessary, COM will consult with and advise the session about the matter.

See sabbatical policy at this link.

**Unused leave is not transferable to another Presbytery.*

Ministers of Word and Sacrament Who Are Not Installed in a Particular Congregation

A. In Relationship with other Churches

Ministers of Word and Sacrament who are not officially related to a particular church shall respect the position of pastor(s) regarding all pastoral functions within the community.

1. Requests to conduct weddings and funerals are not to be accepted until and unless the pastor of the church has issued an invitation for such.
2. The sacraments will be officiated by another Minister of Word and Sacraments only at the request of the local pastor or by permission of presbytery or synod.
3. Ministers of Word and Sacrament, except when on official presbytery business, are neither to counsel with nor advise members of other congregations.
4. Ministers of Word and Sacrament who are not in a pastoral relationship or staff role at a particular ministry are asked to refrain from speaking at or influencing debate/conversation at meetings of the Congregation. As they are members of the Presbytery, they may not vote at such meetings.

Membership in Presbytery

1. In addition to installed pastors, there are three categories of membership: (G-2.0503). Please see the Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for complete descriptions and requirements of all categories of ministry (G-2.0501-G-2.0509).

- Engaged in a Validated Ministry
- Member-at-Large
- Honorably Retired

2. These categories apply to all continuing members, including parish-related ministries and specialized ministries that are validated by action of the presbytery each year. The stated clerk maintains the rolls of each category. The presbytery must annually review and approve the status of all continuing members.

3. Each member will submit an annual statement to COM describing the ministry that would qualify them for continuing membership, and for determining the appropriate category on the rolls. The COM will review these statements and recommend validation of that ministry.

4. Each member shall demonstrate completion of boundaries training and child abuse prevention training or a COM-approved alternative every three years. There is no waiver for these requirements without prior COM approval. In addition, all members must abide by all policies of the Presbytery including background checks.

5. The ministry that each member maintains as part of their mission as a follower of Jesus Christ may be independent of paid employment. It need not be a full-time ministry in order to be considered for validation for membership. Ministry is thus defined as a form of service, not as a form of employment. Tent-making can be considered for validation.

6. The Book of Order G-2.0505 and G-2.0506 establish the guidelines and procedures to be followed when receiving members of other denominations into membership in the Presbytery.

7. Interim Pastors are required to move their membership to PSNE unless there is a special circumstance that necessitates otherwise (and then can be discussed with COM). PCUSA clergy serving within the geographic bounds of PSNE but who are members of other Presbyteries should consult with their Presbytery of membership and the PSNE COM about membership designation.