

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

POLICY ON SPECIALIZED MINISTRY

G-11.0403 gives to each presbytery the determination of who will be its continuing members (i.e., its minister members). Presbytery is required to develop written criteria for the validation of all ministries carried on within its bounds which are not pastoral positions related to a particular congregation, or are not presbytery staff positions. The criteria are to fit within the following standards:

- The ministry must be in demonstrable conformity with the mission of God's people set forth in scripture and our constitution, specifically G-6.0104 (Forms of Ministry):

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.

- It is to be a ministry that serves others and fits within the definitional parameters set by G-6.0203: educators, chaplains, pastoral counselors, campus ministers, missionaries, evangelists, administrators, social workers, consultants, or other specific tasks appropriate to the ministry of the church.
- It shall give evidence of theologically informed fidelity to God's word—in effect this means the minister must have a degree from an approved seminary and must have met the requirements for ordination if not already ordained.
- The ministry shall be carried out in accountability to the presbytery and other organizations, agencies or institutions. Accountability to the presbytery is routinely achieved by the filing of a Specialized Ministers Report annually with the Stated Clerk's office. Specialized ministers who do not report on their work annually may be re-designated by Committee on Ministry as at-large members.

Because of the requirement of "accountability to other organizations, agencies, or institutions", no specialized ministry which does not clearly describe accountability to a supervisor, a Board of Directors, etc. will be approved.

- The minister will be a responsible participant in the life of the presbytery to the extent possible and will be part of the worship life of one of presbytery's congregations. Parish Associate relationships are encouraged for all specialized ministers, and specialized ministers are commended to the attention of pastors and sessions for consideration as Parish Associates.

The process:

An ordained minister who wishes to be received as a minister member of presbytery on the basis of his/her conduct of a specialized(non-parish-based) ministry will communicate with the Chairperson of the Committee on Ministry. The Chairperson or one of the assigned staff will send this policy statement to the applicant and request a written explanation of how the proposed ministry meets the criteria. This response will be referred either to the Transfers' Subcommittee, or to an ad hoc subgroup of two or more COM members and appropriate staff.

If the recommendation is to validate the ministry and receive the minister on that basis, this recommendation must be approved by the full committee, and will then be reported to presbytery as an action taken on presbytery's behalf, and the minister would be received in accordance with the current procedure.

If the Committee on Ministry declines to validate a proposed specialized ministry, or decides to withdraw approval previously given, the minister must be provided an opportunity to appeal to the presbytery; presbytery's decision will determine and settle the matter except for the minister's access to judicial process. A specialized minister who has been received on the basis of a particular ministry may not take up a different specialized ministry without presbytery's approval given through the Committee on Ministry. Which is to say, validation attaches to a particular approved work of ministry, and is not a status conferred on the minister.

When a minister engaged in a validated specialized ministry leaves that work, he/she is automatically designated as an at-large member of presbytery pending further changes; this is an action taken by the Stated Clerk of presbytery and does not require any action by COM. The annual reporting requirement also applies to all at-large minister members.
