

Policy Regarding the Relationship of Ministers of Word and Sacrament (Honorably Retired, Member-at-Large & Validated Ministry) to the Congregations Where They Worship

The Commission on Ministry
Salem Presbytery

Introduction

The Minister of the Word and Sacrament who serves as pastor of a particular church has clearly defined responsibilities (G-2.0501). While all Ministers of the Word and Sacrament are called to equip “the people of God for their ministry and witness” (F-3.0202), pastors “shall support the people in the disciplines of the faith amid the struggles of daily life.” (G-2.0501) The relationship of pastor and church member involves an intimacy that makes the office of Pastor different than those of other Ministers of the Word and Sacrament.

One of the tensions all Ministers of the Word and Sacrament must cope with is that they are not members of a particular congregation. Rather, they are members of a Presbytery and are supervised by their presbytery through its Commission on Ministry who is “pastor and counselor to teaching elders.” (G-3.0307) The Commission on Ministry is charged with determining if the work of a Minister of the Word and Sacrament (not serving as a pastor) is helpful to the church in mission (G-2.0502) but it is the pastor of a particular church who is charged with equipping the members of that church to fulfill their calling to be God’s mission.

Ministers of the Word and Sacrament and Particular Churches

Ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are retired, a Member-at-Large or serving in a validated ministry are colleagues with other Ministers of the Word and Sacrament serving as pastors and are to help them further God’s mission in the particular church with whom they are serving. These Ministers possess unique gifts and skills based on their service or calling and COM seeks to assist these men and women in discerning how their gifts and skills might be used for the mission of Salem Presbytery in our particular churches.

Families and Spouses of Ministers of the Word and Sacrament Worshipping in Particular Churches

Ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are honorably retired, a Member-at-Large or serving in a validated ministry are supervised by the presbytery’s Commission on Ministry, and while a minister's family or spouse is not within the COM's jurisdiction they remain within our concern because they are members of the larger body of Christ. When the Minister who is honorably retired, is a Member-at-Large or who serves in a validated ministry and their family or spouse worship in a particular congregation a new kind of relationship is established that isn’t clearly defined by our polity.

When the Minister of the Word and Sacrament and their family and/or spouse establish a relationship with a particular church, the family and/or spouse (like all other members of a church) will be under the jurisdiction of the Pastor and the Session per the *Book of Order*.

Purpose of This Policy

In the hope of loving one another as Christ loves us, the COM institutes a policy of pastoral care toward all Ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are honorably retired, members-at-large or ministers serving in a validated ministry—and their families and/or spouse—when they worship in one of our particular congregations. The policy is intended both to encourage them in their spiritual growth and to assist the Pastor and people of the congregation with whom the Minister and his/her family or spouse will be worshipping in finding appropriate ways the Minister and his/her family or spouse might use their gifts in helping the congregation fulfill God’s mission. Salem Presbytery Policies regarding relationship of retired and departing pastors with their former congregations also inform this policy.

Ethical Framework

Our Form of Government does not offer specific guidance when it comes to the relationship of honorably retired ministers, member-at-large ministers or ministers serving in a validated ministry to a particular church—except in the case of the church one served prior to retiring. There is a code of ethics which guides all Ministers of the Word and Sacrament. *Life Together in the Community of Faith: Ethical Standards for Ordained Officers in the Presbyterian Church (USA)* will be the framework on which this policy’s collegiality and accountability practices are based.

Collegiality and Accountability Practices

1. The presbytery, through its Commission on Ministry, maintains oversight of the Ministers of the Word and Sacrament under its purview and shall determine if the ministry of each Minister who is honorably retired, a member-at-large, or serving in a validated ministry is helpful to the Church and the presbytery’s mission. (*G-2.0502*)
2. Yearly reports from all Ministers who are members-at-large or serving in a validated ministry shall be submitted to the COM Task Force on Policy, Compensation, Mediation and Church Officer Development.
3. Per the *Book of Order* and the *COM Manual*, all Ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are retired, a member-at-large, or serving in a validated ministry are to be involved in the mission of Salem Presbytery by serving on its committees and attending presbytery meetings and shall actively participate in the life of a congregation.
4. Ministers of the Word and Sacrament worshipping in a particular church shall not serve on Session committees, be a member of a group within the church or direct activities of any committee or group except at the invitation of the Pastor, and the Pastor deems advisable, this invitation to serve without remuneration may be detailed in a written covenant with the Pastor (see #5 below). However, if the desired service is to be remunerated, then the Pastor and Teaching Elder shall comply with all of the covenantal requirements (see #5 below.)
5. When a Minister of the Word and Sacrament who is honorably retired, a member-at-large or serving in a validated ministry and their family or spouse establish a relationship with a particular church, the Minister and Pastor should make every effort in a timely manner:
 - a. They shall discuss boundaries and appropriate roles for the Minister and his/her family/spouse, and they shall review this policy at this meeting;
 - b. Should the Pastor and the Minister of the Word and Sacrament agree that the Minister

- possesses certain gifts and skills that might be helpful for the Pastor to accomplish their ministry, they shall create a written covenant detailing how the Minister will use their gifts and skills under the supervision of the Pastor (cf. Parish Associate);
- c. The Pastor the Minister of the Word and Sacrament shall send a letter to the congregation (or send a mass email or post this letter on the church website) informing the congregation of the nature of the relationship with the Minister and their family will have with the congregation and how the Minister will covenant to support the Pastor in their ministry by using the gifts and skills of the Minister.
 - d. The Minister of the Word and Sacrament shall meet with the council of the church (the Session) to discuss the covenant agreement he/she has made with the Pastor.
 - e. Should the pastor determine that it is not appropriate for a covenant of service to be established, there shall be agreement on appropriate actions and boundaries of the minister within the congregation so that the ministry of the congregation is supported.
6. Each time new pastoral leadership comes to a church (transitional, installed, etc.) it is recommended that the Pastor shall meet with Ministers worshipping with the congregation to review this policy along with the policy regarding retired pastors as appropriate.
 7. Upon notice that the Pastor will be leaving the church, the covenant with the Minister will be automatically terminated. It is incumbent on the Minister to refrain from any part of the covenant when the church is without a Pastor unless otherwise directed by the Commission on Ministry (see #8).
 8. The Pastor has the discretion to terminate the covenant with the Minister at any time and shall communicate with the Commission on Ministry and the Session the reasons for the termination.
 9. When there is a Temporary or Transitional pastor, the covenant with the previous Pastor will be reviewed by the Temporary or Transitional Pastor and discussed with Session. The Temporary or Transitional Pastor, in consultation with the Session, may reinstate the previously-agreed upon or follow the guidelines as set above in #5 to create a new covenant with the Minister.
 10. Should it be determined by the pastor that behavior of the Minister of the Word and Sacrament who is not the pastor is not building and supporting the ministry of the congregation or is being detrimental to it, the Pastor should address these concerns directly with the Minister and also bring the concerns to the attention of the COM.
 11. If the concerns are not corrected by the Minister so that the relationship can be supportive, the Pastor should request the intervention of the COM and request that the Minister of concern separate themselves from the congregation. This request will be actively supported by the COM and may be made by it.
 12. Lack of resolution may result in formal charges against Ministers who act with disregard of their vows to “be a colleague to those in ministry” or “to promote the peace, purity and unity of the church.” The complaint or charges may come from either the COM, Pastor or Session of the church involved according to the Rules of Discipline.