

ORDINATION TO TEMPORARY PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS

Background

As the Protestant Church in North America enters the 21st century, it is encountering a sea change in societal context. Even while some congregations are finding it difficult to maintain a “traditional,” 20th-century model of pastoral ministry, God is opening doors for the Church to grow in new directions. While the Church has traditionally understood a formal call from a congregation to be a requirement for ordination, the expansion of validated ministry to include numerous non-congregational contexts (e.g., campus ministry, hospital and hospice chaplaincy, camp ministry, etc.) highlights the good news that God calls women and men to minister and proclaim the Gospel in a variety of settings; indeed, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) *Book of Order* (2017-2019) contains language that explicitly recognizes this truth. G-2.0701 *Ordination* reads,

“Ordination to the ordered ministry of minister of the Word and Sacrament is an act of the whole church carried out by the presbytery, setting apart a person to ordered ministry. Such a person shall have fulfilled the ordination requirements of the presbytery of care and received the call of God to service to a congregation or other work in the mission of the church that is acceptable to the candidate and to the presbytery of call.”

Nevertheless, the P.C.(U.S.A.) has historically preferred a congregational call and installation for ordinands to congregational ministry, while also providing for ordination to non-installed ministries. Yet as seminary graduates enter a field where “traditional” (i.e., full-time with benefits) congregational calls are decreasing in number, this discrepancy has become an obstacle to many who have heard God’s call to congregational ministry. With this policy, the Presbytery of the James seeks to address this discrepancy. In establishing this policy, the Presbytery of the James recognizes that God may call a person to ordained ministry in the P.C.(U.S.A.) through means other than a formal call extended by a congregation to an installed pastoral relationship.

Process

- I. Any POJ congregation seeking to secure pastoral leadership via a Temporary Pastoral relationship rather than calling someone to an installed position shall first petition the Committee on Ministry for permission to pursue this path. Under the provisions of *Book of Order* G-2.0504 *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 twelve 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.

- II. This is a significant change in the nature of the church's pastoral leadership, and part of COM's charge is to provide congregations support and counsel, especially during times of transition. This request shall include:
 - a. A paragraph or two explaining how the session and congregation came to this decision, including how this change would support their mission and ministry now and in the near future;
 - b. Copies of the congregation's year-end financial statements for the previous three years.
- III. Should COM approve this request:
 - a. In its search, the Session **shall** consider people ordained to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament in the P.C.(U.S.A.), and **may** consider candidates for ordination in the P.C.(U.S.A.) who have been certified "Ready to Receive a Call" by their Committee on Preparation for Ministry.
 - b. The Session shall report to the COM the demographic profiles of the candidates it considered when it requests COM approval of a Covenant Agreement.
 - c. Should the proposed Covenant Agreement **not** include full participation in the P.C.(U.S.A.) Medical and Pension benefits program for the candidate, COM shall instruct the Session to consider alternative ways to support the candidate beyond regular compensation.
- IV. Further steps shall be in accordance with standard POJ policies and *Book of Order* guidelines concerning Temporary Pastoral Relationships (G-2.0504b).
- V. Should this process lead to COM's approval of a Covenant Agreement with a P.C.(U.S.A.) candidate, the POJ shall ordain the candidate among the congregation whose Session has approved the Covenant. However, this service of ordination shall not include elements of the service of installation.