

MEMBER-AT-LARGE POLICY

Guidelines

The Presbytery of the James understands the Member-At-Large (MAL) status to be temporary by intent and requires all MALs regularly attend presbytery meetings and be active in the life of a PCUSA congregation. MALs in the Presbytery of the James shall comply with all the pertinent portions of the Book of Order in order to maintain presbytery membership.

Rationale

The PCUSA Book of Order G-2.0503b states, “*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.*” The Presbytery of the James recognizes this is a requirement, not an option, and seeks to uphold this requirement with both compassion and integrity.

Committee on Ministry Responsibilities

COM shall review annually the status of all MALs using relevant Book of Order guidelines and POJ policies. Should COM determine a MAL’s failure to fulfill their responsibilities warrants removal from membership in the POJ, it shall make such recommendation to the presbytery.

COM shall:

1. Upon approving a request to dissolve a pastoral relationship (G-2.0502), request that the presbytery enroll the minister as a Member-at-Large of the POJ. The enrollment date shall be the date of the presbytery meeting at which the request is approved. If approved, COM shall communicate this enrollment date to the MAL.
2. Advise the MAL of the requirement to regularly attend POJ meetings and to participate in the life of a local congregation.
3. Send annual requests to the MAL that include the Annual Report Form and the deadline for completing the form.
4. Review annual reports and, when warranted, follow up with the MAL concerning the MAL’s efforts to find a call or to transfer membership to another presbytery, unless there is good cause and extenuating circumstances not to do so. COM shall interpret “good cause and extenuating circumstances” with flexibility in applying this policy. A MAL, for example, may need to take time away from ministry to attend to family responsibilities or “other individual circumstances recognized by the presbytery” (see Book of Order G-2.0503b). These other circumstances may include a need for self-care, engaging

temporarily in some form of non-church service to the community, or other circumstances recognized by COM.

5. On the third anniversary of the MAL's enrollment, if COM believes that the MAL has not:

- shown interest in continuing the exercise of ordained ministry,
- made efforts to seek a call,
- sought to transfer membership to another presbytery, and
- provided good cause and extenuating circumstances for their status,

COM shall meet with the MAL to discuss his/her particular situation. Based upon that discussion—or should the MAL decline to meet with COM—COM may recommend to the MAL that he or she consider requesting release from ministry as a Minister of the Word and Sacrament (G-2.0507). COM shall also submit the MAL's name to the Stated Clerk for reporting to the presbytery (G-2.0508). COM shall make every effort to continue to provide pastoral counsel and guidance to the MAL so long as he or she remains a member of the POJ. Any decision regarding the MAL's membership in the POJ shall be made in accordance with the provisions of G-2.0508.

MAL Responsibilities:

The POJ expects all MALs to continue their responsibilities as outlined in the PCUSA Book of Order, paying particular attention to the provisions of G-2.0503b. Every year, MALs shall submit a completed Annual Report Form to COM showing how they are meeting the standards of G-2.0503b and the criteria of this presbytery.

Adopted by Presbytery, June 18, 2019