

Role of Commission on Ministry (COM)

Introduction

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) adopted a new Form of Government (effective July 2011) which substantially reorders the structures of individual presbyteries. The new Form of Government requires presbyteries to develop mechanisms that address the means whereby a presbytery will receive and oversee teaching elder members.

Background

While the new Form of Government does not name the entity whereby presbyteries oversee the process for receiving and overseeing teaching elder members, it does explicitly indicate that a presbytery “may delegate its authority to designated entities within the presbytery.” (new Form of Government, G-3.0307) To that end, this policy sets forth the specifics for the designated entity which will oversee these functions.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to name and identify the entity within the Presbytery of Carlisle with the responsibility and authority to receive, evaluate and act upon those teaching elders who wish to become members of the Presbytery of Carlisle and to support congregations.

Implementation

1. The Name of the Entity

The entity designated within the Presbytery of Carlisle with responsibility and authority is the Commission on Ministry.

2. Membership

The members of the Commission on Ministry shall continue in place until replaced by the Presbytery of Carlisle. The number and composition of the Commission on Ministry is eighteen members, including the chair, in equal numbers of teaching elders (ministers) and ruling elders. Additionally, the executive presbyter, who serves as the primary staff resource person, and the stated clerk shall be ex-officio members with voice but without vote.

3. Meetings

The Commission on Ministry shall meet monthly. If there is no pressing business, the chair of the Commission on Ministry may cancel a particular month’s meeting.

4. Quorum

A simple majority of members elected shall constitute a quorum.

Duties

1. Delegated Authority

The Form of Government specifically identifies those tasks which may be delegated to an entity within the presbytery. (G 3.0307) Of those functions, the following are those that the Commission on Ministry is responsible to carry out and/ or oversee:

- receive and oversee teaching elder members,
- approve calls for pastoral services,
- approve invitations for temporary pastoral services,
- support congregations without pastors,
- dissolve relationships between pastors and congregations,
- dismiss members,
- uphold close relationships with both member congregations and teaching elders.

To facilitate the above identified tasks, the Commission on Ministry will have the authority to act on behalf of presbytery in the following ways:

- a. Examine and approve teaching elders for membership in the presbytery;
- b. Review and approve calls issued by congregations for installed pastoral relationships;
- c. Examine and approve teaching elders for service beyond the jurisdiction of the church;
- d. Dissolve the pastoral relationship in cases where the congregation and pastor concur;
- e. Inquire into reported difficulties in a congregation;
- f. Appoint moderators for sessions of churches as necessary;
- g. Validate ministries for teaching elders laboring beyond the jurisdiction of the church;
- h. Approve ministers as honorably retired, or member-at-large.
- i. Dismiss members to other presbyteries
- j. Dismiss members to other denominations

For all actions carried out as a result of these delegated authorities, COM must report any such action to the presbytery at its next regular meeting.

10. Related Duties

To ensure the smooth functioning of congregations and pastoral relations, the Commission on Ministry shall also have the authority to carry out the following tasks:

- a. Recommend to the Presbytery annually for action any change in minimum terms of call;
- b. Review annually the compensation and benefit package of all installed pastoral relationships within the Presbytery to determine that they meet the Presbytery's minimum terms of call;
- c. Approve and communicate the rate for all pulpit supply and appointed moderators of sessions.
- d. Provide support and guidance for sessions and certified Christian educators in the employment process, including:
- e. Encourage certified Christian educators to complete and place on file with the Committee on Ministry the Christian Educator Information form;
- f. Review annually minimum compensation and benefit requirements for full-time certified Christian educators and recommend any changes to Presbytery for approval;
- g. Encourage sessions to notify COM when sessions are considering dissolving the relationship with certified Christian educators, notifying COM before any action takes place on such dissolution.
- h. Provide support for certified Christian educators in the certification process and encourage employing sessions to make continuing education funds and time available to Christian educators seeking certification.
- i. Develop and maintain appropriate policies pertinent to the conduct of teaching elders and certified Christian educators, for example the Ethics policy or the Sexual Misconduct policy.
- j. Respond to the pastoral needs of teaching elders and certified Christian educators.
- k. Generate commissions to ordain and/or install teaching elders, and report the completion of such work to the presbytery.

Continuation of Existing COM Policies

All policies and guidelines in place within the Presbytery of Carlisle adopted before July 10, 2011 that applies to the functioning of the Commission on Ministry shall remain in place until they are replaced by action of the Commission on Ministry or the Presbytery of Carlisle.

Adopted 6/25/2002, amended 1/13/2007, Amended by Presbytery 11/15/2011, Amended by Presbytery 5/24/2016