

# COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

## HANDBOOK



**PRESBYTERY *of* PHILADELPHIA**  
*Reflecting the transformative hope of the Gospel*

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Presbytery of Philadelphia  
Commission on Ministry (COM)  
Handbook

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### COM Manual

- Commissioner Roster
- Church List by Region Liaison
- Regional Team Actions
- Covenant of Confidentiality Expectation
- Role of COM
- Types of Pastoral Relationships
- Pastoral Transitions
- Glossary of COM Terminology and Abbreviations
- COM Core Values
- PNC Process with Timeline

### Supporting Forms and Documents

*\*indicates please see most recent resource on the presbytery's website in the COM toolkit*

- Closing a Church
- COM Terms of Call Minimums Form \*
- Covenant of Closure \*
- CRE CLP article
- Exit Interviews – Pastor, Session, and Transitional Pastor
- Loan to Pastors \*
- Ordination and/or Installation Administrative Commission Request Form \*
- Retirement Pension Application Guidelines \*
- Sabbatical Plan Guidelines
- Sample Dissolution Agreement \*
- Selection and Expectations of the Transitional Pastor \*
- Sick Leave & Family Leave Guidelines \*
- Understanding Effective Salary \*
- Validated Ministry Process & Application



Presbytery of Philadelphia

Commission on Ministry  
Regional Team Actions

**To Report**

Ordination/Installation Administrative  
Commissions

Guest Preachers at Ordinations/Installations

Mission studies

Permission to form a PNC

Ministry Information Form (MIF) and Job  
description approvals

Moderator appointments

Review of parish associate annual reports

Interim Pastor reports

**To Recommend for COM Vote**

All Designated, Temporary, Supply and Transitional  
contracts. Pastor and Associate Pastor Terms of Call

Ruling Elders to a commissioned ministry

Dissolutions of pastoral relationships

Permission to open or close an installed position

Lease agreements with other worshipping communities

Mergers, yokes, and closures

Validation of Ministry

Permission to form/dissolve a Parish Associate  
Relationship

Approve ministerial salaries

Approve applications for sabbaticals

Membership status changes

Approve ministers to status of Honorably Retired

## What is the Commission on Ministry?

The COM is an elected commission of the Presbytery of Philadelphia composed of Teaching Elders/Ministers of Word & Sacrament as well as Ruling Elders for the purposes of:

- Assisting churches with pastoral transitions including but not limited to retirements, resignations, leaves of absence, and other staffing adjustments.
- Offering resources to churches, clergy, and Sessions regarding Board of Pensions benefits, Terms of Call, sabbaticals, and financial assistance for clergy.
- Providing a COM liaison to each Session to serve as a link between the churches and COM for all resourcing needs for this commission.
- Providing commissioners to conduct fitness of call interviews, exit interviews, PNC guidance, as well as Administrative commission and care teams as needed.
- Appoint Moderators of Session in the absence of a pastor.

Presbytery of Philadelphia  
Commission on Ministry  
Definitions of Pastoral Relationships

Type of Position	Installed	Designated	Temporary (e.g. Bridge)	Transitional	Supply
Explanation of position	For congregations seeking their next permanent pastor	For congregations after trauma or in need of stability; or if they need assistance from COM in search	For short term coverage for a quick fix, or to bridge a time gap	For intentional transitional leadership to lead church to next phase	For pastoral leadership when a church is not seeking an installed pastor
Called by Congregation or Session	Called by Congregation	Called by Congregation	Hired by Session	Hired by Session	Hired by Session
Search Type	Open Search EEO^  *Internal candidates may apply, with approval of a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority of COM.	COM puts forth candidates to PNC, but open to suggestions. Candidates should have or be willing to get at least 1 week of transitional ministry training	Limited Search in consultation with COM	Limited Search – candidate must be certified in transitional (interim) training	Limited Search <b><u>OR</u></b> Full Search, EEO
Length of Contract	Terms of Call	2-4 years; renewable for max of 5 years	3-12 months; normally not renewable	12 months; renewable up to 2 years	12 months; renewable indefinitely
Ordainable or Not	Ordainable	Ordainable	Normally not Ordainable	Ordainable	Ordainable
Installation Path	Installed Indefinitely	Hopefully installed indefinitely after designated period	Normally not a path for installation	Almost never a path for installation (exception may be made by $\frac{3}{4}$ majority vote of COM and if original contract specifies that they may be considered)	Potential path for Installation: after 3 years with $\frac{3}{4}$ approval of COM (if there has been a full search)
Approval by COM or Regions	Approved by COM	Approved by COM	Approved by COM	Approved by COM	Approved by COM

^Equal Employment Opportunity

**Pastoral Transitions - Working Together with Church & Commission on Ministry (COM)**  
**Presbytery of Philadelphia**

Presbyterians are a connectional church—we do things together! We also believe the movement of God's Spirit is best discerned together. When it comes to a pastoral call, we talk about a three-fold call: the pastor, the congregation, and the Presbytery. All three parties are part of the discernment process. It is important to stay in close contact with your COM liaison throughout the transition—they serve as a conversation and discernment partner as well as a guide through the process. This is especially true because there is no “one size fits all” model for pastoral transition. There are a few points in the process that will require approval from COM before proceeding, so it is important to inform your liaison when you are at or nearing those points.

The following are points in the process that **require approval from COM**:

1. **Choosing a transition model** The traditional transitional model is to call a transitional/interim pastor and then an installed pastor. If the church is opting for something other than the traditional model (e.g. co-pastor or designated pastor), COM must be a conversation partner in that discernment process and then COM must approve the model before any additional steps are taken.
2. **Mission Study** - The mission study is drafted by a team appointed by session. This team should include at least one elder and be representative of the diversity of the congregation. The mission study is then approved by session and is sent to COM for approval.
3. **Forming a Pastoral Nominating Committee (PNC)** - COM must grant permission for the church to elect a PNC (usually this is done at the same time as the approval of the mission study).
4. **The MDP (Ministry Discernment Profile)** (formerly MIF, Ministry Information Form) must be approved by COM. It is written by the PNC, approved by session, and then is sent to COM for approval.
5. **Final two to three candidates** - an executive presbyter check is required at this point. Please inform your liaison and Rev. Ruth Santana-Grace that you are ready for an EP check on your top two or three candidates. This needs to be done before an offer is made.
6. **Terms of Call** - must be approved by COM; this should happen prior to the congregational meeting. It is wise to involve your liaison from the beginning of negotiations so they can help ensure the terms of call are in line with requirements.



## Glossary of COM terms

AC – Administrative Commission

BoC – Book of Confessions

BOO – Book of Order

BoP – Board of Pensions

Call – this term can apply to the theological sense that the Holy Spirit is leading an individual to a certain ministry role. It is also applied to the specific contract between a pastor and a ministry setting.

Candidate – An individual under the care of the CPM in the final steps before requesting to be certified ready to receive a call.

Certified ready – An individual who has been approved by CPM to actively seek out their first ordained call.

CLC - Church Leadership Connection

database CLP - Commissioned Lay Pastor

COM – Commission on Ministry

CPE – Clinical Pastoral Education

CPMM – Commission on Preparation for Ministry and Membership

CRE – Commissioned Ruling Elder

EP – Executive Presbyter

HR – Honorably Retired

Inquirer – An individual under the care of the CPM in the first stage of the discernment process for ordination.

MIF – Ministry Information Form

OGA – Office of the General Assembly

Ords – abbreviation referring the ordination exams in the areas of Bible Content, Biblical Exegesis, Church Polity, Theological Competence, and Worship & Sacraments.

Parish Associate – former term used by the PCUSA for retired or at-large pastors serving in relationship with a specific congregation who may or may not be paid or contracted.

PCC – Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates which oversees the ordination exams.

PIF – Personal Information Form

PNC – Pastor Nominating Committee

As of June 2023, these new terms should be added to the pastoral search resources:

MDP – Ministry Discernment Profile (previously referred to as MIF)

PDP – Personal Discernment Profile (previously referred to as PIF)

UP – User Profile

*All questions regarding the new Church Leadership Connection system should be directed to the Manager of Call Process Support – Rev. Manuel Silva-Esterrich who is an employee of the Office of the General Assembly.*

## **COM Core Values**

### **Churches - We serve the churches!**

They are our focus. Our call is to walk with them, doing what's best for the congregation. Most of the time, that means we listen first: to who the congregations are or are becoming. Then, we come alongside them in a variety of ways: helping, dreaming, teaching, guiding. If we forget our call, then we're altogether lost.

We must be open and flexible, as our churches are growing and stretching in new ways than ever before.

### **Collaboration - We work together!**

Offer your opinion and seek wisdom as a group. Once a decision is made, you support the group's decision publicly and privately.

Respect one another. When there are complaints within COM, address the person directly.

Do the work in pairs: visiting churches, interviews, etc. Never go alone at key moments: having another person to hear helps on all sides.

### **Communication - Talking is good!**

Copy your regional leader/COM leadership on all emails as appropriate and save your paper and email trails.

Discern what is NOT appropriate for emails.

Contact your church session and pastor at least annually.

Always ask questions if you're not sure. If you say something to a church, tell us what you said, even if it was wrong.

### **Confidentiality - We are a trustworthy body!**

We do not discuss our meetings outside of the meeting. There are sensitive matters being considered as well as timing issues providing us with information before the churches are informed.

At times, it can be hard to discern the difference between keeping people in-the-know, and gossiping, especially among pastors. When unsure, share "upward" (with Regional Moderator, COM Chair, Executive Presbyter, and/or Stated Clerk), but avoid sharing "outward" with peer commissioners.

### **Commitment - We need you!**

Meetings are important, but the work outside of the meetings needs our best effort; most of your time and energy should not happen on the first Thursday of the month.

You should attend one session meeting/church event annually for your churches.

### **Calendar - A very important date!**

Be sure to let us know so you can be excused from meetings you must miss. Beyond 3 absences/year, a conversation should be had about ability to sustain your COM commitment.

Turn in all materials regarding the movement in your churches, and motions to be made in COM by the deadlines.

## PNC Sample Timeline

Pastor announces to Session the end of their term in service to a particular congregation

COM is notified

Establish a transition team

Congregational meeting is held for the dissolution of the pastoral relationship Exit interviews are conducted with pastor and with Session

Transitional team works with COM liaison to determine if a transitional pastor, bridge pastor, designated pastor, or called pastor search will be conducted

If a bridge or designated pastor is the next clergy staff person, the transitional team works with presbytery to create a job description and select a candidate.

If an interim pastor is the next step then the transitional team worked with COM liaison to crate a job description and do a search for this clergy person.

If a called and installed pastor is the next step desired, then the transitional team works with the COM liaison on a mission study. Once the mission study is complete and approved by COM, then a PNC is formed, a MIF created, and a search is done for the next called pastor.

The PNC is elected by the congregation, then this PNC create a MIF.

The PNC receives orientation from the COM liaison in the process.

Once the MIF is posted, then PIFs are screened, interviews are conducted, and once a final candidate is selected they are presented to the congregation for a vote.

If the pastoral candidate is approved, then the new pastor is ordained/installed.

## **CLOSING A CHURCH**

This document is meant to assist Administrative Commissions, the Commission on Ministry, and the Presbytery when a church closure is being considered whether through dissolution or merger.

### **Focal points:**

- Celebrate the life and ministry that has gone on
- Take time to mourn the loss of this community of faith

### **Practical Matters:**

Churches closing should gather together for distribution to the Presbytery, or the Presbyterian Historical Society, all the “Records” described in Book of Order G-3.0107 as reasonable by the Clerk of the Presbytery and the Membership Rolls and Registers described in Book of Order G-3.0204a and G-3.0204b and such other registers the Session may have deemed necessary. Those records shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

### **RECORDS:**

- All Minutes books, Session records, trustee records, deacons’ records, Sunday School, Mission Society, Women’s Society, Congregational records, Registers
- By-laws
- Articles of Incorporation
- Historical materials (e.g. photographs, historical bulletins or newsletters, souvenir histories, etc.) Determine which to turn over to the Stated Clerk to be digitally saved and/or sent the Presbyterian Historical Society for safe keeping.
- Major repair contracts and instruction manuals

### **TRUSTEE NEEDS**

#### **1. DEEDS:**

- a. Collect all deeds (either originals or copies which include recording information) including, but not limited to: church building and grounds, parking lot(s), manse building and grounds, deeds to other properties or rights including, but not limited to cemetery(ies), recorded easements and rights-of-way. Deeds, if recorded, will be recorded in the County in which the Church is located.

2. **MORTGAGES:** all mortgage or other financial obligation papers, if any, and all satisfaction papers for those mortgages.

3. **INSURANCE:** The Comprehensive General Liability (CGL) policy(ies) for the property, policy number(s); name, address and telephone number of the agent. Policy renewal date and amount of last premium. Policy(ies) should include all amendments and endorsements. Also include separate policies which may insure motor vehicles, excess policies or D&O policies, workers’ compensation policies and accident insurance. It is recommended that a church retain the current policy information as well as the previous 4 years information. This can be done by saving the declaration pages from the policies.

#### **4. UTILITIES AND SERVICE PROVIDERS:**

List all account numbers, names, addresses, contact information for all utilities:

- a. Water
- b. Gas
- c. Oil
- d. Electricity

- e. Sewer
- f. Telephone
- g. Cleaning or janitorial services
- h. Trash pickup
- i. Lawn mowing and landscaping
- j. Snow removal
- k. Elevator inspection and maintenance
- l. Security systems
- m. Internet carrier (if not part of the telephone contract)

5. **BANK ACCOUNTS & INVESTMENT ACCOUNTS:** List numbers and accounts, balances in them, institutions and locations (addresses and contact information for branches where held), names and signers of accounts. Collect financial records for the last seven years.
  - a. All checking accounts
  - b. Certificates of deposit
  - c. Passbook savings accounts
  - d. U.S. Savings Bonds
  - e. Brokerage or investment accounts
  - f. Securities or bonds not included in e above (some churches may still hold securities in certificate form)
6. **MEMORIALS, ENDOWMENTS, RESTRICTED FUNDS:** List all endowment funds, memorials, endowments or restricted funds, together with copies of the Will, Trust or other contract which established the fund and the name and address of any third party which may hold or control the funds such as a bank or individual trustee (these should indicate funds held by the Presbyterian Loan Program). If the copy of the Will or Trust does not describe the use or restriction on use of the fund, provide a description of the limitations (which might have been imposed by the congregation or session upon funds which might otherwise be unrestricted).
7. **LEASES:** Identify all groups or organizations which use space in the church, with or without a lease. Get list and copies of any written agreements.
8. **CEMETERIES:** If relevant, the cemetery register, as well as any plat plans or maps of the cemetery. Any registration receipts or stubs, if available. Also, if not already collected, any mowing contracts, etc.
9. **1099 FORMS:** Names of people the church has paid more than \$600 in the last year. The church should retain 1099's for the current year and the previous 7 years, if not included in the financial records in item 5. above.
10. **SAFE DEPOSIT BOX:** Location, box number, contract, keys, names and addresses of those authorized to open box.
11. **FURNISHINGS:** Prepare and Inventory of major items. Are any of them of significant personal value to a current member(s)? If so, Session to propose disposition. These could include the church organ, musical instruments, amplification and recording equipment. Indicate which of these would remain with the church after closing. The church seal, if available, should be sent to the office of the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery.
12. **KEYS:** Collect all keys to building and label them. Also collect any pass codes or pass cards which may permit entry to the building or rooms.
13. **GOVERNMENT NUMBERS:**

- a. Employer Identification Number (EIN)
- b. Sales Tax Exempt number

## **Notifications**

- State of PA to cancel the State Tax identifier number and to notify that corporation is defunct (and succeeded by new merged corporation if relevant).
- Federal Internal Revenue Service: cancel the Employer ID number
  - Send letter to IRS, c/o appropriate service center
    - Include Power of Attorney (Presbytery minutes authorizing closure)
    - Commission minutes of closure
    - Statement that this entity in existence and that EID should be cancelled
    - Question – do this after last W-2 is filed
- Township to cancel any accounts for local taxes (income taxes on employees)
- Count to cancel any accounts for local taxes
- Contact the Social Security Administration to cancel any numbers they have
- Close any accounts (bank, investment etc.)
- Empty and close safe deposit box
- Close any Post Office box
- After building is sold, but not before, cancel insurance
- Turn off utilities, including disconnect fees, and close accounts: water, sewer, trash, electricity, gas, oil delivery, snow removal, grass mowing, etc.
- Retrieve keys

## **Necessary Tasks if a Church is Merging with another PCUSA Church**

- The church Session should pass a motion: that any gift, legacy, devise, annuity, or other benefit to the church that accrues or becomes available after the said church has been dissolved shall become the property of the trustees of the new merged church.
  - Note: if the new merged church changes its name, then state the new name. Also remember, if newly merged church changes its name, it needs new incorporation papers, and new by-laws.
- Pay the per capita for the church being dissolved.
- Ask Presbytery to officially close the congregation.
- Decide what should be done with the property. If the decision is to dispose of the property, then get at least one appraisal. Then both Session and congregation vote. The Session sends request to sell property to Presbytery's Commission on Financial Management (Trustees), which will either approve or reject the request (as it would for any other congregation) and then send the request on to presbytery for its approval.

**Presbytery of Philadelphia**  
**Commission on Ministry**  
**Covenant of Closure (Covenant)**  
*With an Outgoing Pastor*

The Rev. \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_ Church, and the Commission on Ministry of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, having discussed the intent and requirements of the Presbytery's policies regarding pastors who are leaving service in a congregation, enter into the following covenant:

**1. The Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ agrees:**

- a) Not to worship with the congregation. The purpose of this is to allow the interim and any installed pastors the opportunity to become accepted fully as the congregation's leader(s) with as few difficulties as possible. Exceptions to this, in a case of crisis, should be dealt with by the moderator, session and Commission on Ministry.
- b) To refrain from giving opinions or directions regarding church business that could undermine the transitions necessary for the church and the development of the relationship between the congregation and a new pastor.
- c) Not to accept an invitation to fill any functions he/she performed during his/her tenure as pastor of that church, nor indicate a willingness to do so, unless the invitation has first come from the interim or new installed pastor and not from a congregation or its members.

*COM's interpretation of this is that if a member of the congregation approaches the former pastor and asks if he/she will officiate at a special event that the former pastor shall decline the request and refer that member to the current pastor of the congregation. The former pastor shall not give any indication to the member that he/she would be glad to officiate if only the current pastor would invite him/her. That would be contrary to the spirit of this covenant and would not contribute to the health of the congregation and its relationship to the current pastor.*

- d) Not involve himself/herself in any leadership or advisory role (public or private) concerning any of his/her successor(s). This includes refraining from suggesting names to nominating committees or commenting on potential candidates.
- e) Not to intervene, support or give advice to anyone involved in a congregational disagreement or dispute. It is important to practice due diligence in not breaking the boundaries set by COM and the interim or newly installed pastor.
- f) To be judicious in his/her continued use of social media with members of the community that he/she served ie. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Flickr, Tumblr, Four Square, Linked In etc.

Please note that there are no time limits to this covenant and the terms do not expire after a certain period of time has passed. *It is important that the former pastor/s practice due diligence in not breaking the boundaries set by COM and the interim pastor.* It is understood that this policy does not affect or require termination of friendships with individuals in the congregation, but these friendships must be continued in the spirit of the above agreement.



**Presbytery of Philadelphia**  
**Commission on Ministry**  
**Covenant of Closure (Covenant)**  
*With an Outgoing Pastor*

**2. The responsibilities of the Session, on behalf of the congregation, are as follows:**

Respect the terms of the Covenant as outlined above.

- a) Interpret to the congregation the terms of the Covenant. Many members will not understand the change in relationship that occurs when a person ceases to be the pastor of the congregation. This may be true particularly when a former pastor is elected to be a Pastor Emeritus(a). The congregation mistakenly may have the understanding that a Pastor Emeritus(a) is exempted from the terms of this Covenant. He/she is not exempted in any way.
- b) Instruct the congregation not to involve itself in the continuing ministry of the former pastor.
- c) Incorporate any written agreement in the Session Minutes.

**3. The Presbytery of Philadelphia's Commission on Ministry shall:**

- a) Interpret the Covenant and its purpose to the pastor and to the Session
- b) Be the Presbytery's agent in reminding all parties of the principles of the Covenant
- c) Assist any pastor or Session having difficulty understanding or adapting to this change of relationship
- d) Enforce compliance of the Covenant when a breach occurs

\_\_\_\_\_  
Outgoing Pastor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Clerk of Session

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
COM Moderator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Please return form to:  
Presbytery of Philadelphia  
Attn: Commission on Ministry  
915 E Gowen Ave  
Philadelphia, PA 19150

## RULING ELDERS

# Regarding Ruling Elders: A Monthly Series for Serving Faithfully

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*The Ministry of the Commissioned Ruling Elder*

*Chris Wolf - September 15, 2020*

Where has your faith journey taken you?

My journey has always kept me in the church. As a child, my playtime included lining up my dolls on the couch for Sunday school where I was the teacher, for worship where I was the preacher, and we all sang together. Later in life, I taught Sunday school with real kids, which led me to become a Christian educator, which led me to work for the presbytery as the resource center coordinator and then as their educational consultant and camp coordinator. In the meantime, I completed my presbytery's commissioned lay pastor (CLP) preparation and have since been commissioned to a couple of churches. Eventually I was called to service as the presbytery's CLP program coordinator. God leads, I follow. Well, more realistically, God pushes and who am I to say no to God?

Over the years, the name of those commissioned to serve in this way has changed: commissioned lay pastor (CLP), ruling elder commissioned to particular service, commissioned ruling elder (CRE), and now, commissioned pastor (CP). Regardless of the name, we are ruling elders who have been trained to provide specific pastoral functions. Many fill this role within a small congregation.

More than half of mainline congregations are small. Many cannot afford ministers of Word and Sacrament, but these churches are family. They want to continue to be together as that family of faith and be the body of Christ in their community. The Book of Order provides a way to assure that there is pastoral leadership available for these small congregations (G-2.10).

CLPs, CREs, CPs are not "called" pastoral leaders in the sense that the Book of Order speaks of "called and installed pastors." They are "commissioned" to specific forms of pastoral functions. It is a three-way covenant between the church, the ruling elder, and the presbytery — God is in the mix, always. The commission is to a particular place for a particular time. That commission is reviewed annually. Being commissioned to a particular place means that the CRE can only officiate at weddings, communion, and baptisms that are for that portion of the body of Christ and approved by the session.

Before that commissioning can happen, the ruling elder needs to be trained. The Book of Order currently leaves this up to each presbytery to set their own standards for its

requirements. Training often includes areas such as: Bible overview/how to study Scripture, Reformed theology, worship and sacraments, how to teach/preach, polity, pastoral care, and programs and mission of the PC(USA).

A CRE is most often a part-time job. You are usually employed somewhere else but have a desire to serve God through the church. What I have said to the churches that I have been commissioned to is that with a CRE we get to be what we say we are: the ministry of the people — the priesthood of believers. The “pastor” can’t do it all! We ALL have to BE the church!

There was an old commercial for the United States Army that used the tag line, “The toughest job you’ll ever love.” I would say that is true for CREs. It is a privilege and a joy to be able to share the Good News of God’s love through worship, Bible study, and pastoral care.

Where might your faith journey be taking you?

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Chris Wolf is a child of God, currently a CP/CRE/CLP, and was first commissioned more than 15 years ago. She previously worked for the Presbytery of Lake Huron as the resource center coordinator/educational consultant/camp coordinator. Wolf has also served as Christian educator in several churches.

Presbytery of Philadelphia  
Commission on Ministry (COM)  
**Exit Interview with the Pastor**

Minister's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Effective Date of exit: \_\_\_\_\_ How long at this position? \_\_\_\_\_

1. As you reflect on your time here, what do you feel have been your primary contributions to the life of this congregation?

- a. What gave rise to your decision to leave this call?

- b. Was the termination voluntary or not? If you are leaving because you are seeking another call, why?*

2. How was your exit processed within the congregation? The Session?

- a. How would you describe the congregation? The Session?

Presbytery of Philadelphia  
Commission on Ministry (COM)  
**Exit Interview with the Pastor**

3. Any history of conflict?
  - i. Sexual misconduct?
  - ii. Financial difficulties?
  - iii. Administrative Commission?
  - iv. Other?
4. What is the state of the finances, the building, the leadership, the spiritual vitality, the programs?
5. What are the top 4 gifts of the congregation?
6. What are the top 4 challenges the congregation will likely face over the next three years?
7. Are there any items/tasks that an interim should be specifically prepared to work through with this congregation?

Presbytery of Philadelphia  
Commission on Ministry (COM)  
**Exit Interview with the Pastor**

8. Are there any issues that COM should be aware of?

9. Any other comments?

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Commission on Ministry  
915 East Gowen Ave  
Philadelphia, PA 19150

Presbytery of Philadelphia  
Commission on Ministry (COM)  
Exit Interview with the Interim Pastor

Minister's Name:

Date:

Congregation:

Interviewed by:

Effective Date of exit:

How long at this position?

1. Please describe the situation when you arrived.
2. What difficulties were dealt with during the transition (interim/bridge) period?
3. How would you describe the congregation? The Session?
4. History of conflict? Describe the conflicts you encountered and how you and the congregation have dealt with them.
5. Are there any "secrets" in the congregation that might negatively impact its future? *(Such secrets might include sexual misconduct, a staff member with substance abuse/addiction problems, thefts, etc.)*

Presbytery of Philadelphia  
Commission on Ministry (COM)  
Exit Interview with the Interim Pastor

6. What is the present status of the finances, the building, the leadership, the spiritual vitality, the programs?
7. What are the biggest gifts this congregation has to offer the Realm of God? The next pastor?
8. What are the biggest challenges the congregation will likely face over the next three years?
9. Are there any interim tasks that remain to be addressed that the next minister or the COM should be specifically prepared to work through with this congregation?
10. What did you intentionally change and why?
11. What did you choose not to change, and why?



Presbytery of Philadelphia  
Commission on Ministry (COM)  
Exit Interview with the Interim Pastor

12. Summary of interim experience:

13. Any other comments?

14. How might the Presbytery have provided additional support during the transition period?

15. Are you willing to serve again as an interim pastor?    ☐ Yes    ☐ No

If yes, when?

Date

Signed

Please return form to:  
Presbytery of Philadelphia  
Commission on Ministry  
915 E Gowen Ave  
Philadelphia, PA 19150

Presbytery of Philadelphia  
Commission on Ministry (COM)  
Exit Interview for Sessions

Name of Church: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Pastor exiting: \_\_\_\_\_

Beginning Date of Service: \_\_\_\_\_

Concluding Date of Service: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How would you characterize the congregation when your pastor first arrived? What were the significant issues affecting the life of the congregation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What have been your pastor's most important contributions to the congregation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. In what ways have you been blessed by your pastor's ministry with this congregation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. How might people in the congregation describe their strengths/weaknesses as a congregation?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What are your concerns for the congregation's continued growth?

Presbytery of Philadelphia  
Commission on Ministry (COM)  
Exit Interview for Sessions

6. Are there dynamics in the church of which the COM should be informed?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What have been the strengths and weaknesses of your congregation's relationship with our presbytery?

**Written report of meeting is to be sent to:**

Presbytery of Philadelphia  
Commission on Ministry  
915 E. Gowen Avenue  
Philadelphia, PA 19150

## Presbytery of Philadelphia

### Policies & Guidelines for Ordination & Installation Services

Welcome to the Presbytery of Philadelphia! If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact either the Executive Presbyter, Rev. Ruth Faith Santana-Grace or the Stated Clerk, Rev. Kevin L. Porter at 215.242.1400.

Ordinations and Installations are services of the Presbytery of Philadelphia in collaboration with a local congregation celebrating a new season in the life of that particular church family. The service should be held as soon as is feasible following the effective date of the call.

Prior to planning the service, please clear the availability for date and time with the Presbytery Moderator. Contact information for the moderator can be found at the Presbytery Office. The Moderator or his or her designee will officiate the service.

#### The Administrative Commission

The Administrative Commission is approved by the Presbytery through its Commission on Ministry (COM), a meeting prior to the actual service. *Please check with COM for deadlines.* The candidate or pastor is invited to identify individuals who represent the presbytery as identified below:

1. *Convener:* The Administrative Commission is convened by the Presbytery Moderator or by her or his designee.
2. *Members of the Commission:* Shall be composed of no fewer than five commissioners one of which shall be the Moderator or his/her designee, **each from a different congregation** of the Presbytery of Philadelphia. There shall be a minimum of three (3) Elders, men and women, and at least one member representing the diversity of Christ's church.
  - a. When the Moderator or designee is a Minister of Word and Sacrament, the commission shall consist of at least one (1) additional Minister of Word and Sacrament and three (3) Elders
  - b. When the Moderator or designee is an Elder, the commission shall consist of at least two (2) Minister of Word and Sacraments and two (2) additional Elders

Please feel free to contact your Regional Moderator of the COM for suggestions of persons who may be willing to participate. The Presbytery Office can also provide presbytery and regional commission contact information. Members of the Commission, while present at the service, are not required to participate as worship leaders.

You may invite members and ministers of churches in full communion with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Reformed Church in America, United Church of Christ) to participate, as well as Minister of Word and Sacraments of other presbyteries. If the sermon is being offered by a minister of another presbytery or denomination, that person must be approved by the appropriate regional body of COM.

#### Planning the Service

This is your celebration. We encourage you to make it your own. Attached is a sample order of worship that can be used as a reference. Normally, the service should be held at a time other than the regular Sunday morning worship service. It should run approximately one and one-quarter hours, which means that the sermon should be no longer than 15 minutes, the charge to the person being ordained or installed (and to the congregation, if applicable), should be limited to five minutes, and the special musical selections should be limited to no more than two. Suggestions for a well-planned service are included below:

#### Planning Suggestions and Requirements

1. **One week before the service:** confirm date and time with participants. The Moderator and the Executive Presbyter should receive a copy of the bulletin at least a week before the service. Once the order has been cleared, all participants should receive a copy. Assure that each participant understands

her or his role and inform them what time and where to meet prior to service. Discuss any preferences as to ecclesiastical wear for Minister of Word and Sacraments.

2. **On the day of the service:** provide a room where the Moderator can convene, constitute the Administrative Commission, and review service details, at least 30 minutes prior to the service. Have an usher on hand to greet participants and show them to the room. Red stoles are encouraged for installations and ordinations.
3. Provide adequate seating in or near the chancel for the entire Administrative Commission, so that all may stand with the Moderator during the actual service of ordination or installation, thereby signifying the Presbytery's role in the service.
4. Consider printing in the worship bulletin the constitutional questions to the congregation and the presbytery. (*see sample service bulletin*)
5. Encourage participants to maintain time limits on their part of the service.
6. The charge to the newly ordained/installed and the congregation should be done by a colleague from outside the local church, as they will be able to speak to the possibilities that someone from the inside cannot.
7. Provide child care to encourage parents of young children to attend.
8. The congregation is encouraged to plan a celebratory reception at the conclusion of the service.
9. The PNC/Session is encouraged to present a small gift (i.e. stole) to the candidate.

### **The Offering**

The offering received at each ordination/installation service is for scholarships given to Inquirers and Candidates attending seminary who are under the care of the Commission on Preparation for Ministry and Membership. The church has the responsibility to count the offering, and send a check for the full amount to the Presbytery with the name of the new member and date of service in the memo line. Make checks payable to the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

Please mail to:  
Presbytery of Philadelphia  
Attn: Accounting Office  
915 East Gowen Avenue  
Philadelphia, PA 19150

**INSTALLATION OR ORDINATION**  
**ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION REQUEST FORM**  
*Book of Order G-2.07 & G-2.0805*

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
[Please Print Name as It Should Appear on the Presbytery's Records]

CHURCH (where the service is to be held): \_\_\_\_\_

CALLED OR VALIDATED POSITION: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE AND TIME OF SERVICE: \_\_\_\_\_

**MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION**

Shall be composed of no fewer than five commissioners one of which shall be the Moderator or his/her designee, each from a different congregation of the Presbytery of Philadelphia. There shall be a minimum of three (3) Elders, men and women, and at least one member representing the diversity of Christ's church.

**WHEN MODERATOR OR DESIGNEE IS A MINISTER OF WORD AND SACRAMENT**

*The commission shall consist of at least one (1) additional Minister of Word and Sacrament and three (3) Elders*

MODERATOR OR DESIGNEE	_____	CHURCH	_____
			CONGREGATION, MINISTRY OR MEMBERSHIP STATUS
MINISTER OF WORD AND SACRAMENT	1. _____	_____	_____
ELDER	NAME _____	CHURCH	_____
	NAME _____	CHURCH	_____
	NAME _____	CHURCH	_____

**WHEN MODERATOR OR DESIGNEE IS A ELDER**

*The commission shall consist of at least two (2) Minister of Word and Sacraments and two (2) additional Elders.*

MODERATOR OR DESIGNEE	_____	CHURCH	_____
			CONGREGATION, MINISTRY OR MEMBERSHIP STATUS
MINISTER OF WORD AND SACRAMENT	1. _____	_____	_____
	2. _____	_____	_____
ELDER	NAME _____	CHURCH	_____
	NAME _____	CHURCH	_____

**ADDITIONAL PERSONS TO SERVE ON ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION**

PLEASE INDICATE RULING OR MINISTER OF WORD AND SACRAMENT	NAME _____	CONGREGATION, MINISTRY OR MEMBERSHIP STATUS	_____
			_____
	NAME _____	CONGREGATION, MINISTRY OR MEMBERSHIP STATUS	_____
			_____

*Please be mindful of deadlines for approval*

*Plans must be sent to the Presbytery Office Attn: Commission on Ministry*

915 E. Gowen Avenue| Philadelphia, PA 19150| p. 215.242.1400| f. 215.242-1444| office@presbyphl.org

## **Sample of Order of Worship for Ordination or Installation**

Prelude

Welcome

Call to Worship

Opening Hymn

Prayer of Confession

Assurance of Pardon

Gloria Patri or sung response

Scripture Reading

Sermon

Anthem or Solo

Affirmation of Faith

Announcement of the Offering and Its Purpose

Offertory

The Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

Service of Ordination/Installation

Words of Introduction – Moderator or Designee

Constitutional Questions to person being ordained/installed – Moderator of Presbytery

- These may be printed in the bulletin

Constitutional Questions to Congregation – Member of PNC or Clerk of Session

- These may be printed in the bulletin

Prayer of Installation/ Ordination – May be offered by moderator or another participant

Declaration of Installation/Ordination – Moderator of Designee

Charge to newly Installed/Ordained (5 minutes)

Charge to congregation (5 minutes)

Closing Hymn

Benediction by newly Ordained or Installed Pastor

Postlude

**Sample Wording for Invitation to Service  
of Ordination or Installation**

The Presbytery of Philadelphia  
and the Session and Congregation of  
[Sponsoring Presbyterian Church]  
joyfully request the honor of your presence at the  
Service of Ordination/Installation of  
[name of person being ordained or installed]  
as  
[Pastoral Position]  
at [called organization, ministry, church, etc.]

On the day, month, year of our lord xxxx  
at xxxxx o'clock in the morning/afternoon

A reception will follow at xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx



Presbytery of Philadelphia  
Commission on Ministry (COM)  
Sabbatical Plan Guidelines

The person planning a sabbatical should provide the COM with a written plan and meet with the regional team to discuss those plans prior to COM approving them. The purpose of this process and set of guidelines is to help the sabbatical pastor find a real focus, understand that it's okay for the focus to change and still be successful, and also realize they will come back and share two or three months afterwards. Those things help to keep the sabbatical focused and intentional and knowing there will be a time to "report in" after helps folks consciously to process their time away.

In reviewing and approving your plans, COM looks specifically for:

- Well planned and thought out, clearly defined purpose/s or goal/s
- A balance of down-time and sabbatical purpose of clergy renewal
- Thought about how the fruits of your time away will be shared with the congregation on your return

We strongly suggest:

- Journal keeping
- A "guide" or mentor as one to whom the person can be accountable for keeping on or switching tracks ... someone to help maintain focus, serve as a midcourse correction aid, and to theologically reflect with you on the experience.

We look hard at what preparation has been done for the church during this time, especially if the sabbatical is for a solo pastor or head of staff:

- Have you planned for coverage for preaching/pastoral care/other responsibilities?
- Have you thought through issues of remuneration? If so, this needs COM approval at a certain point.
- How have the Session and the congregation been prepared? Are they on board with your plans and if not, how will that happen?
- Have guidelines been set up to keep the sabbatical time intact if the person spends some time at home?
- Have you planned communications with the congregation (letters/newsletter articles/etc.) re: the purpose of the sabbatical for a pastor?
- Have the pastor and Session given thought to how the congregation can best use this time for their own sabbatical study?
- Have they discussed re-entry issues for both pastor and congregation?
- Has there been any discussion of a "sending off" and welcome back" (to serve both the pastor and congregation?)

Upon your return we ask you to come to a COM regional meeting and give an oral and written evaluation of the sabbatical, including:

- o Did you find renewal in the time away? How?
- o What "worked?" What didn't?
- o What effect has the sabbatical time had on you, your walk with God, and your ministry?
- o How about the congregation's sabbatical experience -- was it helpful?
- o Also provide a financial accounting for how you used any granted funds or support from the congregation toward your sabbatical expenses.

Presbytery of Philadelphia  
Commission on Ministry (COM)  
**Validated Ministry Process & Application**

As the changing face of the church includes fewer and fewer traditional, full-time pastor and associate pastor roles, we have a decision before us. We can dissuade talented men and women from following God's call into ordained ministry, or we can offer creative opportunities for them to serve the Church. While the traditional role of the church is shifting, more than ever the world needs men and women carrying God's message of love, justice and reconciliation. It is unknown to us what God has in store for the future of professional ministry, and yet we are called to creatively embrace possibilities that will further God's work. Validated Ministry offers us, the Presbytery of Philadelphia, the ability to engage a changing world with transforming mission and ministry (G-2.0503a, G-3.0306).

### **What is a Validated Ministry?**

A Validated Ministry is normally a ministry outside of the ordinary congregational life that meets the criteria expressed in the Book of Order and by the guidelines of the Presbytery of Philadelphia. It shall be a ministry that serves others, aids others and enables the ministry of others. Also the ministry shall be carried on in accountability for its character and conduct to the presbytery and to organizations, agencies and institutions.

A Validated Ministry within the Presbytery of Philadelphia will:

- Proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ through Word and deed and may celebrate the sacraments
- Stress deeds of love and mercy
- Help to share the ministry of the good news and seek to fulfill the ministry of Jesus Christ
- Exercise pastoral care of those for whom they are responsible
- Strengthen the church
- Equip the church for service to the human community (*G-2.0102, G-3.0306 and G-2.0503*).

### **What are some forms of Validated Ministry?**

- educators
- chaplains
- pastoral counselors
- campus ministers
- missionaries
- partners in mission
- evangelists
- administrators
- social workers
- consultants
- faith based community organizers
- new church development pastors

Presbytery of Philadelphia  
Commission on Ministry (COM)  
**Validated Ministry Process & Application**

- other specific tasks appropriate to the ministry of the church including administrative (including presbytery, synod and GA staff), legislative, judicial or prophetic positions (*G-3.0306, G-2.0102*).

### **What are the established Validated Ministries within the Presbytery of Philadelphia?**

There are three ministries, which upon acceptance by the presbytery are Validated Ministries,

- Immigrant Faith Communities as outlined in Guidelines for *Welcoming Immigrant Faith Communities*
  - Missional Faith Communities (i.e. Broad Street Ministry), as outlined in *Guidelines Missional Faith Community*
  - New Church Development Projects.
- (see Guidelines for Welcoming Immigrant Faith Communities and Guidelines for Missional Faith Community)

The approval by the Commission on Ministry (COM) of a call to a Validated Ministry within a congregation (*G-2.0503.a*) shall be considered validation of that ministry.

### **What are the criteria for ministers serving in a Validated Ministry?**

The minister must be a PC (USA) Teaching Elder, or be cleared by the Commission on Preparation for Ministry and Membership (CPMM) to be ordained or have the credentials to become a PC (USA) minister in accordance with the Book of Order.

Also, ministers serving in a Validated Ministry must participate in the life of a local congregation, which may include being designated as a parish associate; and participate in the life of the presbytery in fulfillment of their ordination vows. Ministers serving in a Validated Ministry are encouraged to participate in the denomination beyond the presbytery as well as in ecumenical ministries (*G-6.0306, G-2.0502 and G-2.0702*).

If the Validated Ministry takes the minister away from this presbytery, it is expected that the minister will participate in the life of a local congregation and the local presbytery and report to the Presbytery of Philadelphia annually their involvement in the local presbytery and congregation. In the case of mission service, the minister will report annually on their work and status (*G-6.0306 and G-2.0502*).

Ministers serving a Validated Ministries within an immigrant and/or non-English speaking congregation or ministry will be given consideration (*G-2.0505*).

### **Can a person be ordained to a Validated Ministry?**

The simple answer to the question is yes. A person may be ordained if:

- The presbytery approves the Validated Ministry and
- The person is otherwise qualified to be ordained.

Presbytery of Philadelphia  
Commission on Ministry (COM)  
Validated Ministry Process & Application

### **What are the requirements for a Validated Ministry?**

- description of the goals and working relationships
- the signature of the minister (s), representative of the presbytery and where possible of the employing agency
- financial terms

Financial terms for a Validated Ministry may or may not meet the Presbytery of Philadelphia's minimum for a congregational call. Validated Ministry may be volunteer or part-time.

### **What about after the ministry has been approved?**

A minister of a Validated Ministry is expected to participate in the life of a congregation which may include being designated as parish associate. Also a minister is expected to remain an active member of the Presbytery through participation in presbytery meetings, commissions or committees and/or events and gatherings of the presbytery community.

### **What is the process for approval and review?**

#### ***A. Application for a Validated Ministry (Attachment A)***

- 1) The minister or candidate seeking approval for a Validated Ministry shall consult with the moderator of the Commission on Ministry (COM), and complete the **Application for Validated Ministry**.
- 2) The COM moderator shall place the application on the agenda of COM and, if deemed appropriate, schedule an interview for the minister with all or part of the COM.
- 3) The COM shall consider the application and, if approved by COM, report to the presbytery that the ministry is approved as a Validated Ministry.

#### ***B. Review of Validated Ministry***

##### Annual Review of Validated Ministry

The minister engaged in a Validated Ministry shall submit to the COM a brief reflection (no more than 2 pages) on the ministry in the last year and anticipated changes in the work of the ministry for the coming year. COM will document receipt of the Annual Review.

The COM may interview the minister concerning the Annual Review. If deemed necessary, the interview shall include, but may not be limited to:

- Activity of the ministry
- Goals for the ministry
- Plans of the minister for continuing education
- Ways in which the presbytery can be of greater support to the minister and ministry.

Presbytery of Philadelphia  
Commission on Ministry (COM)  
Validated Ministry Process & Application  
Application for Validated Ministry

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Ministry:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact information regarding Ministry:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide a published copy of information of employing organization (i.e. brochure) and brief job description.

**Church where you are worshipping/serving?** \_\_\_\_\_

In a brief essay (no more than two pages) describe how the proposed Validated Ministry will:

- Proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ through Word and deed and may celebrate the sacraments
- Stress deeds of love and mercy
- Help to share the ministry of the good news and seek to fulfill the ministry of Jesus Christ
- Exercise pastoral care of those for whom they are responsible
- Strengthen the church
- Equip the church for service to the human community.

Return a copy of this form and essay to the COM moderator **and** Presbytery Office.

Presbytery of Philadelphia Attn:  
Commission on Ministry 915 E.  
Gowen Ave Philadelphia, PA  
19150

