

Criteria for Validating Ministries in the Presbytery of San Fernando

Presbyteries are required to establish written criteria for validating ministries within their bounds (G-11.0403). Clergy serving in ministries beyond the jurisdiction of the church and members-at-large of the presbytery are required to have their status reviewed annually. The criteria used in annual reviews must meet the standards of applicable paragraphs of the Book of Order and are intended to help presbyteries to define those ministries to which ministers of the Word and Sacrament may be called or in which they may conduct approved work, consistent with the mission of the presbytery. For members- at-large actively seeking a call, much of what follows is unnecessary.

According to the Book of Order (G-11.0408), “Validated Ministries”:

“A minister of the Word and Sacrament who is an active member of presbytery may be engaged (1) in a validated ministry within congregations of this church, (2) in a validated ministry in other service of this church, (3) in a validated ministry in service beyond the jurisdiction of the church, or may be (4) honorably retired.”

The question of validating ministries, a responsibility given to presbyteries, revolves around items 2 and 3 in that list, since ministries in congregations and the ministry of the Honorably Retired do not require decisions on the part of presbytery as they carry an inherent validation. Item 2 requires a judgment on the part of presbytery that a given ministry is, in fact, “in service to this church”, a determination not left to the discretion of a minister of the Word and Sacrament alone, but requiring the assent of the governing body. With regard to both the second and third items, G-11.0411, “In Service Beyond the Jurisdiction of The Church”, gives relatively clear guidance for the presbytery’s determinations. Two criteria stand out: the ministry must be “consonant with the mission of presbytery”, and it must comply “with all of the criteria in G-11.0403, titled “Criteria for Ministry of Continuing Members.”

In addition to the “Criteria for Ministry of Continuing Members” found in G-6.0100, G-6.0200 and G-11.0403 the following shall apply:

1. A continuing member shall take the initiative in establishing an active relation to Presbytery evidenced by regular attendance. Regular attendance shall normally be understood to consist of attendance in at least three (3) of the regular stated meetings each year; and request for excuse for all absences. Honorably Retired members are encouraged to attend meetings but are not required to request an excuse for all absences from regular stated meetings.
2. A continuing member shall exhibit and implement willingness to serve in the committee and committee structures of the governing bodies.
3. A continuing member shall be (a) under documented and approved call or contract to a particular congregation or governing body position, (b) honorably retired, or (c) actively seeking a call as pastor, associate pastor, pulpit supply, stated supply, temporary supply, or other pastoral duties, serving, or willing to serve, a minimum of ½ time if requested by

presbytery through its committee or designated representative. If the member is employed full-time elsewhere, less than ½ time is acceptable or (d) entering a work defined in G-11.0411 for which the presbytery shall give its permission by validating it a ministry “In Service Beyond the Jurisdiction”.

The criteria for determining a validated ministry “In Service Beyond the Jurisdiction” (G-11.0411) shall be based upon whether the proposed ministry meets all of the following standards:

- (a) is a mission project or other form of ministry such as day care project, Chaplaincy or is of the nature of pastoral care, pastoral counseling or health care service; is a ministry related by organization, accountability and structure to other denominations with which the PCUSA is in correspondence; is a ministry related to a seminary acceptable to the presbytery; is a ministry related to a non-denominational organization *of which work is acceptable to the presbytery*, is a ministry related to an international organization such as a council of churches or other ministry of service acceptable to the presbytery.
- (b) is a ministry that serves others, aids others and enables the ministry of others and relates to the service of people rather than to the production of goods or of profits.
- (c) is a ministry that makes active and effective use of the biblical and theological training that is required for ordination.
- (d) is a ministry carried out in accountability for its character, conduct and performance results to a management committee, board of directors or to others responsible for the overall results of the total ministry program.
- (e) is a ministry carried out in accountability for its character and conduct and is answerable to the presbytery for agreed upon end results or activities with a face to face review of the ministry on a yearly basis.
- (f) is a ministry that will allow the continuing member to participate actively in the worship and service of a congregation of this presbytery or in a congregation of a denomination in which the PCUSA is in correspondence and it is expected that the continuing member will so participate.

If one or more of the criteria cannot be met, the continuing member should ask to be designated either a member-at-large or an inactive member of presbytery. If presbytery is unwilling to grant this then the continuing member should seek release from the exercise of ordained office (G-11.0414) until he or she receives a call to ministry that fulfills all criteria.

Restoration to the exercise of the office is possible without re-ordination by (1) application to and approval of the presbytery that granted release, (2) reaffirmation of ordination vows, and (3) resumption of a ministry that qualifies for continuing active membership in presbytery. These steps provide for ease in movement and are in no way judgmental. They are permissive in that re-ordination is not necessary. People should be encouraged to use them.