

**THE PRESBYTERY OF RIVERSIDE ASSEMBLY  
HEALTHY PASTORS AND CONGREGATIONS COMMISSION  
POLICY**

**PART I: PREFACE**

Pursuant to G-3.0301c, the presbytery has the responsibility and power to nurture the covenant community of Christ's disciples; "[t]his responsibility shall include ordaining, receiving, dismissing, installing, removing and disciplining its members who are Ministers of the Word and Sacrament; commissioning ruling elders to limited pastoral service; promoting the peace and harmony of congregations and inquiring into the sources of congregational discord; supporting congregations in developing the graces of generosity, stewardship and service; assisting congregations in developing mission and participating in the mission of the whole church; taking jurisdiction over the members of dissolved congregations and granting transfers of their membership to other congregations; warning and bearing witness against error in doctrine and immorality in practice within its bounds; and serving in judicial matters in accordance with the Rules of Discipline."

Pursuant to G-3.0306, the "presbytery determines the Ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are its members and validates the ministries in which they are to be engaged. It shall be guided in this determination by written criteria developed by the presbytery for validating ministries within its bounds (G-2.0503a).

"The presbytery shall examine each Minister of the Word and Sacrament or candidate who seeks membership in it on his or Christian faith and views in theology, the Sacraments, and the government of this church.

"The presbytery may designate Ministers of the Word and Sacrament to work as teachers, evangelists, administrators, chaplains, and in other forms of ministry recognized as appropriate by the presbytery. Those so designated may administer Sacraments at times and places authorized by the presbytery."

Pursuant to G-3.0307, [i] "Presbyteries shall be open at all times to communication regarding the life and ministry of their congregations." To that end each presbytery [ii] "shall develop and maintain mechanisms and processes to serve as pastor and counselor to Ministers of the Word and Sacrament, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and certified Christian educators of the presbytery; to facilitate the relations between the presbytery and its congregations, Ministers of the Word and Sacrament, ruling elders commissioned to pastoral service, and certified Christian educators; and to settle difficulties on behalf of the presbytery where possible and expedient."

In order to accomplish this pastoral work within the Presbytery of Riverside [hereinafter, "Presbytery"], a Healthy Pastors and Congregations Commission shall be elected. Its primary objective is to ensure the health of both pastors and congregations through promoting the peace and harmony of the churches, especially with regard to matters arising out of the relations between Ministers of the Word and Sacrament and congregations. Its purpose shall be to mediate differences and reconcile persons, to the end that the difficulties may be corrected by the appropriate governing councils if possible, that the welfare of particular congregations be strengthened, and that the unity of the body of Christ may be made manifest.

## **PART II: RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A.** The Healthy Pastors and Congregations Commission shall be open at all times to communication with and shall oversee and provide pastoral care for Ministers of the Word and Sacrament, ruling elders commissioned to a particular pastoral service, ruling elders serving as members of a session or other governing council, and certified Christian Educators within the bounds of the Presbytery.
- B.** The Healthy Pastors and Congregations Commission shall exercise wise discretion in determining when to take cognizance of information concerning difficulties within a particular church, proceeding with the following steps:
- 1.** It may take the initiative to bring the information to the attention of the session of the church involved, counseling with the session as to the range of appropriate accounts to be taken to correct the situation and restore peace and unity.
  - 2.** It may offer its help as a mediator in case the session either finds itself unable to settle problems peaceably or takes no steps toward settlement of the difficulties.
  - 3.** It may act to correct the difficulties if requested to do so by the concerned parties, or recommend that action be taken by the Presbytery.
- C.** The Healthy Pastors and Congregations Commission shall visit regularly and consult with each Minister of the word and Sacrament, chaplain or CLP performing work under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery Assembly. It shall annually report to the Presbytery Assembly the status and type of work in which each Minister of the Word and Sacrament is engaged. It shall require an annual report from each Minister of the Word and Sacrament performing work which is not under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery or a higher governing council of the church.
- D.** The Healthy Pastors and Congregations Commission shall make recommendations to the Presbytery Assembly regarding calls for the services of Ministers of the Word and Sacrament. Every call for the services of a Minister of the Word and Sacrament or candidate in a pastoral relationship shall be the Commission's responsibility to present to the Presbytery Assembly, with a report as to the call being in order and a recommendation as to whether the call should be placed in the hands of the Minister of the Word and Sacrament or candidate. Every application on behalf of a Minister of the Word and Sacrament for Presbytery membership shall be the Commission's responsibility to review and make a recommendation to the governing council before its vote on the application. Every request by a Minister of the Word and Sacrament [or certified Christian educator] for approval to labor at a task appropriate to the ministry, though not a pastoral relationship with a particular church congregation, shall be made to the Commission, which shall review and report to the governing council with recommendation for the Presbytery Assembly's action.
- E.** The Healthy Pastors and Congregations Commission shall annually review and set minimum compensation and salary guidelines for Ministers of the Word and Sacrament called to a pastoral ministry to congregations and fellowships within the Presbytery, including matters concerning vacation time and ministerial study leave.
- F.** The Healthy Pastors and Congregations Commission shall annually review and make recommendations to the Presbytery Assembly concerning its Sexual Misconduct: Prevention and

Response Policy, including Ministers of the Word and Sacrament' attendance at certified awareness education programs as required by the policy. It shall nominate members to the team, including the chair, and provide training for the Presbytery's Sexual Misconduct Response Team [SMRT].

**G.** The Healthy Pastors and Congregations Commission shall provide for the implementation of equal opportunity employment for Ministers of the Word and Sacrament and candidates without regard to race, ethnic origin, sex, age, marital status or disability. In the case of each call, it shall report to the Presbytery Assembly the steps in this implementation taken by the calling congregation.

**H.** Through its Holy Conversations Teams the Healthy Pastors and Congregations Commission shall visit with the session or governing council of each congregation, and fellowships founded prior to 2012 within the Presbytery at least once every two years, discussing with them the mission and ministry of the particular church and encouraging the full participation of each governing council and congregation in the life and work of Presbytery and of the larger church. Each Holy Conversation Team will be composed of the church liaison, another member of the HPCC chosen by the liaison, and a member of the Partners in Ministry Committee, who will be appointed by the PIMC.

**I.** The Healthy Pastors and Congregations Commission shall counsel with churches and fellowships regarding calls for installed pastoral relations, visiting and counseling with every committee elected to nominate a pastor, co-pastor or associate pastor. It shall advise such search committee regarding the merits, availability and suitability of any candidate or Minister of the Word and Sacrament whose name is contemplated for nomination to the congregation, and may have the privilege of suggesting names to the committee. No call to a permanent pastoral relationship shall be in order for consideration by the Presbytery Assembly unless the church has received and considered HPCC's counsel before action is taken to issue a call, pursuant to G-2.08 et seq. A call to an installed pastoral relationship for Minister of the Word and Sacrament members of the Presbytery should not be issued until it has been approved by the Healthy Pastors and Congregations Commission; any call extended by a congregation prior to approval by the Healthy Pastors and Congregations Commission shall be considered as contingent pending HPCC, and as appropriate, Presbytery Assembly or Presbytery Commission approval.

**J.** The Healthy Pastors and Congregations Commission shall counsel with sessions regarding temporary pastoral relationships [G-2.0504b] including interim pastors, interim co-pastors and interim associate pastors, and temporary supplies when a church is without a pastor. It shall provide lists of Ministers of the Word and Sacrament and ruling elders commissioned to particular pastoral service to supply vacant pulpits.

**K.** The Healthy Pastors and Congregations Commission shall make recommendations to the Presbytery Assembly regarding calls for the services of Ministers of the Word and Sacrament transferring into the Presbytery. If the Assembly is not meeting within sixty (60) days, the HPCC may approve the call and report its action at the next Presbytery Assembly meeting. If the candidate is approved, the church may issue a call, and the HPCC will introduce the new member at the next Presbytery meeting.

**L.** The chair or co-chair of the HPCC shall serve on the Presbytery Commission.

### **PART III: MEMBERSHIP**

**A.** The Healthy Pastors and Congregations Commission shall be composed of eighteen (18) members, consisting of approximately equal numbers of Ministers of the Word and Sacrament and ruling elders, bearing in mind the principles of unity in diversity [F-1.0403]. The Presbytery Leader for Mission and Vision/Stated Clerk of Presbytery shall serve as an *ex-officio* member, without vote.

**B.** Commission membership shall be divided into three separate classes of six individuals. One class shall be elected annually to serve a three-year term. Vacancies may be filled to complete a term by election of individuals at any regular meeting of the Presbytery Assembly. No member shall serve for consecutive terms, either full or partial, aggregating more than six years. A member having served a total of six years shall be ineligible for reelection for at least one year.

**C.** Annually the Presbytery Assembly shall elect one Commission member to act as the Moderator.

**D.** A quorum at any meeting shall consist of a majority of the current elected and voting members of the Committee, in no instance may a quorum consist of less than eight [8] members.

### **PART IV: POWERS**

Pursuant to G-3.0307 [iv], the Presbytery of Riverside commissions the Healthy Pastors and Congregations Commission with the authority of the Presbytery Assembly to take the following actions, and report such to the next meeting of the Presbytery Assembly:

1. To dissolve pastoral relationships in cases where the congregation and the Minister of the Word and Sacrament concur. If mediation is not successful in bringing about concurrence regarding dissolution of a pastoral relationship, the Committee's recommendations to resolve the dispute shall be brought to a meeting of the Presbytery.
2. To grant permission to a Minister of the Word and Sacrament to labor within or outside the bounds of the Presbytery.
3. To dismiss Ministers of the Word and Sacrament to other presbyteries, as long as no hindrance to the transfer exists.
4. To approve all temporary pastoral relationships, including, but not limited to, Temporary Supply Pastor, Interim Pastor, Transitional Pastor, Interim Associate Pastor or Interim Co-Pastor, when the Minister of the Word and Sacrament is currently a member of the Presbytery. Subject to confirmation at the Presbytery's next meeting, to approve all such temporary pastoral relationships, when the Minister of the Word and Sacrament is not currently a member of the Presbytery.
5. To approve all calls to installed pastoral relationships involving members of the presbytery. To make recommendations to the Presbytery Assembly regarding the services of Ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are transferring into the presbytery. If the Assembly is not meeting within sixty (60) days, to approve the call and report to the next Presbytery Assembly meeting.

6. To appoint a moderator for a session whenever there is a vacancy.
7. To call a special meeting of a session or congregation, when necessary, when a church is in conflict or the church is otherwise unable to function.
8. Pursuant to G-2.0503 and G-3.0306, to validate particular ministries within the bounds of the Presbytery, and review annually the work of all Ministers of the Word and Sacrament engaged in validated ministries outside a congregation.
9. To annually review and approve requests concerning the administration of sacraments by Ministers of the Word and Sacrament not occupying installed positions with a particular congregation.
10. To take special oversight of churches without pastors, including the authority to identify and train ruling elders, to preside for celebrations of the Lord's Supper.
11. To nominate for Presbytery Assembly approval the Sexual Misconduct Response Team, including the Moderator.
12. To approve data entry into and information exchange within the Church Leadership Connection of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
13. To commission ruling elders, pursuant to G-2.10 et seq. of the Book of Order, to a particular validated ministry.
14. Pursuant to Part V, below, to conduct clearance examinations of Ministers of the Word and Sacrament seeking membership in the Presbytery.
15. In the absence of a Presbytery Leader for Mission and Vision/Stated Clerk, the HPCC Chair is empowered to conduct reference checks on Ministers of the Word and Sacrament seeking membership in the Presbytery. Likewise, in the same absence, required-for-membership criminal, motor vehicle, and credit background checks will be conducted by a staff member to be determined by the Personnel Committee Chair.

## **PART V: CLEARANCE EXAMINATIONS**

Pursuant to G-2.0104b and G-3.0306, an individual seeking ordination and/or installation as a Minister of the Word and Sacrament in the Presbytery shall be examined by a sub-committee organized by the church's HPCC liaison consisting of no less than two [2] Ministers of the Word and Sacrament and two [2] ruling elders who are current or former members of the Healthy Pastors and Congregations Commission with respect to the individual's calling, preparation, gifts and suitability for the responsibilities of ordered ministry, including the candidate's written Statement of Faith. A report of the sub-committee's conclusions shall be presented to the Healthy Pastors and Congregations Commission, along with the candidate's written Statement of Faith. Nothing in this policy shall preclude, pursuant to G-2.0104b, examination of the individual by any member of the Presbytery at the Assembly meeting in which the individual is presented for approval prior to a vote of the council.