

Commission on Ministry

Minister Membership Policy in the San Joaquin (SJ) Presbytery

As stated in the Book of Order, all ministers in the San Joaquin Presbytery have their membership in one of three categories and are validated through the Commission on Ministry (COM). **“A Minister of the Word and Sacrament is a member of a presbytery and shall be engaged in ministry validated by the presbytery, a member-at-large as determined by the presbytery and honorably retired.” (G-2.0503)**

There are three categories for ministers in the Book of Order: minister in validated ministry, member at large, and honorably retired minister. Each category has its own unique responsibilities and requirements for Ministers of the Word and Sacrament (MSW) and as such are members of a presbytery. All ministers (Validated, Member at large, or Honorably Retired (HR)) are subject to the discipline of the church

The presbytery through the COM and the Stated Clerk shall review annually the work of all Ministers of the Word and Sacrament (MSW) (whether active or retired), minister members at large, and Commissioned Ruling Elders (CRE) who are under the supervision of the COM and the discipline of the church as well.

Validated Ministry Member Requirements

Those serving as Installed, Interim, *Chaplains (see foot note), Stated Supply, & in validated ministries of the Presbytery shall meet the minimum-requirements set forth in this policy and must:

- Send in yearly reports and terms of call or contracts that provide information on the validated ministry, whether that is in a congregation, as a chaplain, as a professor, or in college ministry. The minister shall send this information and any contractual information to the COM for review annually by January 31st.
- Attend the mandatory sexual harassment prevention conduct training every three years (or their licensing board equivalency and show proof of their training to the COM)
- Participate in the (SJ) presbytery either through the work of committees, attending presbytery meetings, or presbytery related events/worship/workshops.
- Communicate with the COM for either validation for a new ministry, or to request a move to membership at large, or to transfer to another call if a change in ministry occurs. This shall be done by either the minister, congregation, organization or presbyter.

- Provide evidence to COM of a quality of life that helps to share the ministry of the good news when MSW are called to validated ministry beyond the jurisdiction of a congregation.

If a minister is in validated ministry outside of the bounds of the (SJ) Presbytery, the shall:

- Show proof of completion of a PCUSA accepted sexual harassment prevention training.
- Return the year-end report that is sent out by COM annually in the fall to the presbytery office by January 31 of the subsequent year.
- In addition they are strongly encouraged to attend PCUSA presbytery meetings in their place of residence.

To remain in good standing to seek a validated call, the minister will be up to date on boundary training and will have no current allegations of misconduct against him/her. If the minister wishes to seek a call, he/she will be in contact with the Stated Clerk, will have shown participation in the life of the presbytery, and will be responsible for yearly check in's by completing the annual letter that the presbytery sends out for the year end review.

If one or more of the criteria for validated ministry cannot be met, the MSW should ask to be designated as a member-at-large. If the presbytery is unwilling to grant this, then the MSW should seek release from the exercise of ordained office (G-2.0507) until he or she receives a call to ministry that fulfills all criteria¹.

G-2.0508 Failure to Engage in Validated Ministry

A MSW whom the presbytery determines no longer to be engaged in a validated ministry (G-2.0503a) or to fulfill the criteria for membership at large (G 2-0503b) and who is not honorably retired (G 2-0503c), shall not have a voice or vote in meetings of the presbytery, except when the matter under consideration pertains to his/her relationship to the presbytery. Names of such person shall be reported annually to the COM and to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery. If after three years the MSW does not meet the criteria for the above, the presbytery may vote to delete that person's name from the roll of membership and upon request of the member to move to a session, dismiss that person to a congregation for membership (G.2-0507).

¹ G-2.0507 Release from Ministry as a Minister of Word and Sacrament

When a MSW against whom no inquiry has been initiated pursuant to D-10.0101 and D-10.0201, against whom no charges have been filed, and who otherwise is in good standing shall make application to be released from the exercise of the ordered ministry of teaching elder, the presbytery shall delete that person's name from the roll and upon request of a session dismiss that person to a congregation. Release from the exercise of ordered ministry requires discontinuance of all functions of that ministry. The designations that refer to teaching elders shall not be used. The person so released shall engage in the ministry shared by all active members of congregations. Should a person released under this section later desire to be restored to the ordered ministry of teaching elder, that person shall apply through the presbytery which granted the release, and upon approval of that presbytery, the reaffirmation of the ordination questions, and the resumption of a ministry that qualifies that person for membership in the presbytery, shall be restored to the exercise of the ordered ministry as a teaching elder without re-ordination.

***Restoration to the exercise of the office is possible without re-ordination (G-2.0507) 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 the presbytery. These steps provide for ease in movement and are in no way judgmental. They are permissive in that re-ordination is not necessary. If a person has been removed based on the presbytery rules for non-participation or engagement in ministry and want to be restored for non-judicial reasons, they may use the afore mentioned steps to become restored, with the presbytery's approval.

Member at Large Requirements

A member at large is one who has either been previously engaged in a validated ministry and who now, without intentional abandonment is no longer engaged in a ministry; a minister who needs to take a leave of absence from ministry for a period of time; a minister who is not yet retired and not in an active ministry; or a minister who has moved into the presbytery for reasons other than a call to ministry and who has yet to be engaged in a validated ministry. "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 PCUSA congregation," (G-2.0503) or a congregation in the formula of agreement, or in correspondence with the PCUSA. A member at large will live according to the following:

- Conformity with the mission of God's people
- Serve and aid others and enable the ministry of others
- Give evidence of theologically informed fidelity to God's word
- Be carried on in accountability for their character and conduct to the presbytery in addition to any organizations, agencies, and institutions serve
- Includes responsible participation in the deliberations, worship, and work of the presbytery and in the life of a congregation of this church or a church in correspondence with the PCUSA

Criteria for Accountability in [SJ] presbytery includes:

- Shall send in year-end reports due annually January 31 to the COM explaining what the individual is engaged in during the year whether ministry related or not.
- Shall attend the mandatory sexual harassment conduct trainings every three years.
- Will participate in the presbytery either through the work of committees, attending presbytery meetings, or presbytery events/worship/workshops.

- Will participate in a congregation that is in the formula of agreement or a church the PCUSA is in correspondence with and will report where the individual is attending on their yearly report.

COM will work to reintegrate individuals who are members at large and who have not been engaged in the presbytery by sending letters of request to move into compliance, working to get their yearly reports up to date and instruct them on the new policy. If upon two attempts the first being the annual letter and the second a follow up letter, to reengage a Member at Large has failed, the COM shall take action to remove the minister from the rolls of the presbytery.

*** Restoration is possible upon request (see above notation)

Honorably Retired Requirements

The COM will make every effort to engage with their honorably retired (HR) ministers, keeping them engaged and active in the life of the presbytery. Those who are honorably retired are invited and encouraged to continue to participate in the life of the presbytery through presbytery meetings, pulpit supply, committee work and attending any presbytery workshops and events.

Failure to Meet Minimum Requirements

COM will take action to remove minister members who have not been engaged in the above requirements (excluding HR and those in validated ministries outside of the boundaries of the presbytery, such as military chaplains, mission partners) giving them notice of their non-compliance with the requirements of the Book of Order and will move them from the status of member at large to inactive member if they fail to comply or reengage with the presbytery. COM will send the minister member a letter explaining which requirements they have failed to provide evidence of meeting as stated in this policy and that they have 90 days upon receipt of COM letter in which to comply with the stated requirements. If said individual does not respond within the 90 days, the COM will move them to inactive member status.

If an HR minister is still actively participating in any form of ministry, he/she shall maintain the standards of membership requirements of the presbytery as mentioned above. HR members who are no longer engaged in active ministry are exempt from the requirements set forth in this policy.

*Chaplains who are serving in: the military as (active duty/reserve), hospital, hospice, State Prison, State VA hospitals, federal chaplains endorsed by PCCMP, and chaplains affiliated with denominations the presbytery is in full communion/agreement of understanding with; are considered in validated ministry for the SJ Presbytery.

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Acknowledgement of Policy

I understand the role and importance of the Commission on Ministry (COM) to encouraged and guide the ministers who are under the jurisdiction of the San Joaquin Presbytery and the PC(USA) having either been commissioned or ordained or received into membership under said institutions.

I acknowledge that I am receiving this letter because I am a minister in a validated ministry, a commissioned ruling elder, a member at larger, or have retired as a minister of the Word and Sacrament, in the San Joaquin Presbytery.

I acknowledge that I have received and read the COM policy on minister membership and understand what the expectation is for my ministry and membership in the San Joaquin Presbytery.

I understand that this is a policy change within COM, and it is necessary moving forward that I will return this document, signed, by December 31, 2020 with all the necessary requirements to remain a member.

Printed Name

Signature/Date

Please return this acknowledgement of policy by December 31, 2020 to:

San Joaquin Presbytery Office
c/o Commission on Ministry
438 S. Locus St., Visalia, CA 93277