

## COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

Presbyteries shall be open at all times to communication regarding the life and ministry of their congregations. Each presbytery shall develop and maintain mechanisms and processes to serve as pastor and counselor to its Ministers of the Word and Sacrament commissioned pastors (also known as Commissioned Ruling Elders), and Certified Christian Educators of the presbytery; to facilitate the relations between the presbytery and its congregations, ministers of the Word and Sacrament, commissioned pastors, and certified Christian educators; and to settle difficulties on behalf of the presbytery where possible and expedient. (Refer to PC(U.S.A.) Book of Order G-3.0307)

The Commission on Ministry (COM) is responsible for the health of ministry in the presbytery, attending to the well-being of congregations and their faithfulness in responding to God's call to them as well as the nurture, support and professional development of church professionals, including Ministers of the Word and Sacrament, Certified Christian Educators (CCE), Commissioned Ruling Elders (CRE).”  
(<https://sangabpres.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/comhandbook.pdf> page 1-2)

### **Responsibilities:**

COM shall:

- Support and walk with all congregations, ministries, Ministers of Word and Sacrament, CREs, and CCEs in the Presbytery of the Coastlands.
- Provide liaisons congregations, ministries, Ministers of Word and Sacrament, CREs, and CCEs who serve as pastoral and guiding presences. available as a pastoral presence.
- Connect congregations to the necessary training, facilitation, or resources for needs within their context, and to encourage the connections between the congregation, COM, Presbytery and helpful resources, harnessing the power of our identity as a connectional church.
- Maintain and implement the policies concerning
  - Minimum Compensation for the Presbytery for Installed Ministry in a congregation, both full and part-time
  - Minimum Compensation for the Presbytery for Temporary or Contract ministry in a congregation, both full and part-time
  - Pulpit supply and moderator guidelines, standards for honoraria
  - Receiving a pastor from another denomination
  - Process and approval for Administrative Commissions for Ordination and Installation services
  - Process for receiving new minister members/transfer of membership into the presbytery
  - Covenants of closure
  - Parish Associate(s): relationship, contract, annual evaluation, and closure

- o Other policies as needed or required by the Presbytery, Synod or General Assembly.
- o Policies and processes for validating ministries outside of congregational contexts
- o Process for reviewing ministers serving in specialized ministries on an annual basis and evaluating the ministries in which they serve
- COM will conduct as part of its work
  - o Bring examinations for Ordination to the presbytery when an individual receives a call within our bounds
  - o Exit interviews for Sessions, Ministers and CREs when a pastor departs
  - o Development of a process for conversation/engagement with Pastor Nominating Committees
  - o Interviews of Ministers entering the Presbytery or accepting a new call
  - o Work with any Minister and congregation to create then approve the Administrative Commission for an Ordination or Installation.
  - o Celebrations of retirement
  - o Annual training of regular and ad hoc COM members
- The presbytery may delegate authority to the COM to address or accomplish various tasks on presbytery's behalf. Please see link for [COM List of Delegated Work](#).

The COM strives in its work towards the following goals:

- To be pastoral in its understanding and how it engages with congregations and ministers.
- Not only to be present when a congregation or minister needs something or there is a need to offer correction or guidance, but also to be in relationship regularly with all congregations and ministers.
- To be a hub for sharing resources and connecting churches and ministers who might have similar needs or making connections to do ministry together.
- To be in partnership with the Ministry Resource Committee as we work with ministers and ministries to identify necessary resources.

### **Structure for the Commission on Ministry of the Presbytery of the Coastlands**

The Commission on Ministry of the Presbytery of the Coastlands consists of a balanced group of Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Ruling Elders to serve as connectional partners of the Presbytery to each congregation, ministry of the presbytery, and Minister (including those serving in Specialized Ministries, those who are Honorably Retired, and those whose status is minister at large) and CREs. COM will have the responsibility to ensure through its framework to build relationships with congregations and ministers through regular contact and periodic visits and to report back to COM any requirements as far as needed resources, transitions, or conflicts that might need more directed or specialized support or intervention.

As part of COM's framework, a team of liaisons who may be but not necessarily elected



members of COM will serve, and be tasked by COM to care for and partner with the Congregations, Ministries, CREs and Ministers of the Presbytery in the below enumerated ways. There will be other specialized teams constituted by the COM that will fulfill particular tasks and require specialized training.

### Membership of COM

- COM will have 18 members elected by the presbytery with a goal of parity between ruling and teaching elders in three classes.

Specialized Teams, striving fair representation and balance between elders and ministers (not necessarily elected members of COM). Members are to be approved by the whole of the COM, with view towards suitability for specific teams/tasks. Teams are to be evaluated annually.

- A team of 5, including at least one elected COM member and/or 1 minister active in Specialized Ministries outside of a congregational context to support those who serve in Specialized Ministries outside of congregational contexts to tend to the specific tasks of support and oversight as well as to establish cohorts and serve as liaisons for ministers in these categories.
- A team of 5, including at least one elected COM member, to support those who are Honorably Retired and At Large to tend to the specific tasks of support and oversight as well as to establish cohorts and serve as liaisons for ministers in these categories.
- A rotating team of 2 to 3 members, including at least one elected COM member, to coordinate a fit interview, conduct that interview, prepare candidates to appear before presbytery, shepherd them through the installation and ordination process.
- A team of 3 to 5 members who are trained in the interim/transition process to walk with churches through those processes
- A team of 3 to 5 people to work with any congregation working to hire any Minister around just compensation, minimums, and Board of Pensions benefits.
- A team of 3 to 6 members to provide mediation in congregational conflict. These members will be provided with training recommended by the presbytery.
- A team of 3 to 5 members to facilitate conversations and provide information and resources to congregations around merging, yoking, and other creative possibilities for transformation.

### Role of elected COM members:

- Attend regular meetings to complete the work commissioned to COM by the presbytery.
- Serve 3 – 4 Congregations doing the work of or overseeing the liaisons
- Set guidelines, create and disseminate the documents and ensure their proper completion and submission.
- Oversee and coordinate with sub-teams to set goals, provide training and clarify processes.
- Act as a communication hub for sub-teams, congregations, and ministers both to and from the presbytery, including reporting any actions and ministry transitions to presbytery on a

- regular basis.
- Elect among themselves at least two moderators.

#### Section Internal to COM Manual

- As a liaison to a congregation
  - Identify with the rest of COM a cohort of 3 congregations who can be shepherded as they navigate similar circumstances. Such circumstances could include similar geographic location, similar size of congregation, similar aspirations/goals of the congregation.
  - Initially visit with the pastor(s) or commissioned lay pastor and staff (including DCEs) of each church in their cohort.
  - Initially visit the sessions of each congregation at a regular meeting to introduce themselves and their role with the church.
  - Establish a monthly meeting time for the cohort to check in with the cohort of pastors, commissioned lay pastors, and DCEs of the congregations. Guide those conversations as they pertain to shared questions, needs, or ministries.
  - Establish a relationship with the clerks of each session. Check-in periodically.
  - Pray for the congregations.
  - When a need arises like a pastoral transition, a conflict, contract negotiation, or other technical need, refer this back to COM to find the appropriate way to address the need.
  - Participate in the regular review of validated ministers serving in congregational contexts
  - Oversee recognition of and offer prayers for retiring ministers in their cohort
- Meet bi-monthly with the cohort of liaisons for your area. These cohorts will be 4 liaisons for the churches in a geographic area. The cohort will meet to discuss possible bridges, common needs, or other ways churches might connect to do ministry or support one another.
- Attend regular COM meetings and coordinate and communicate the needs, gifts and any helpful resources to the congregations you walk alongside.
- Serve on one of the small teams.

#### Liaison to Ministers serving in Specialized Ministries, Honorably Retired Ministers, and Ministers at-large

- Be a duly elected member of COM
- Serve as a liaison to a cohort of 10-15 ministers serving in specialized ministries, honorably retired ministers, and ministers at-large
- Have quarterly touch points with ministers in the cohort and arrange annual/semi-annual meetings of the cohorts
- Serve on a COM team responsible for reviewing applications for validation of ministries outside of congregational contexts and making recommendations to the larger COM
- Conduct the regular reviews (in accordance with presbytery policy) of those serving in



validated ministries outside of congregational contexts and assess their participation in the life of the presbytery on an annual basis

- For ministers serving in specialized ministries, arrange to tour their ministry context and learn about the ministry they provide
- Pray for the members of your cohort and those to and with whom they minister

#### Interim/Transition (5 members)

- Be trained in interim/transition work or have significant experience.
- Be conversant in Presbytery of the Coastlands policy and process for pastoral transition.
- Be prepared to work with congregations on
  - The departure of a pastor
  - Ensuring moderating and preaching are covered for a gap time
  - The various kinds of ways churches may choose to have pastoral leadership for a transition including full and part-time, interim work, more significant transitions before a new pastor is hired, pulpit supply instead of a regular pastoral role, pastors for a designated term. So that you can advise churches on how to proceed with finding their transition leader
  - Transitional pastor contract negotiations including how the Board of Pensions coverage may differ for a transitional leader from an installed leader. Refer to the contract group for assistance as needed.
  - The tasks once an interim is in place. This includes helping reinforce for the congregation that it takes time to move through a transition and helping to calm anxiety.
  - Knowing the Presbytery resources available when the interim or congregation may have questions about finances, worship resources, education, mission, training or whatever resources might be useful (this could be a manual or list)
  - The mission study or a process and the multiple ways to do it, and the consultants who are available for congregations, including what COM will be looking for in the report.
  - Advice for Nominating Committee on calling a PNC.
  - Advice for Session on setting a budget for the PNC, travel expenses for candidates and the pastor once called, and setting their terms of call range.
  - Training the PNC for their work:
    - Choosing a PNC structure: moderator, secretary, communicator, other roles,
    - Familiarity with the CLC and interpreting it to the PNC,
    - Good but confidential communication with Session and the congregation,
    - The flow of the prayerful process (don't rush!),
    - Creating a MIF,
    - Avoiding discrimination in the process,
    - Adapting the Mission Study to the MIF,
    - Choosing a process for interviews and communication with candidates,
    - A mock interview once the MIF is complete and approved by session and COM,

- Be prepared if a PNC asks about calling a candidate that will be newly ordained or who is from another denomination,
- Contract negotiations (refer to the contract team as necessary)

#### Compensation team

- Be conversant in Presbytery of the Coastland minimums for salary, benefits, leave, reimbursables, vacation, and continuing education.
- Be familiar with PC(USA) polity requirements regarding the provision of benefits, the Board of Pensions' *A Theology of Benefits*, the various benefits programs and plans offered by the Board of Pensions and their eligibility requirements, including Pastor's Participation, Minister's Choice, and additional optional benefits including dental, vision, 403b and others.
- Be aware of cost of living or find access to this information for the area a church is located in to help them understand what fair compensation would be. (ensure cost of living calculator used includes ALL pertinent expenses, esp. food and healthcare which are not always factored in.)
- Be aware of pastoral compensation offered at other comparable congregations in the community.
- Review position descriptions in light of the compensation being offered to ensure that the covenant is a just and fair one. Propose appropriate adjustments as needed.
- Conduct annual review of ministers' compensation to ensure there is racial, ethnic, and gender equity.

#### Mediation team

- Have training in conflict mediation including cultural proficiency.
- Be aware of the polity of the PC(USA) and the Presbytery of the Coastlands so that clarity can be present as to required or helpful processes or options towards resolution.
- Be a pastoral presence in all mediations, offering prayer and reflection in the midst of often difficult conversations.

#### Size change and transformation team

- Be aware of all the possible options when a church is discerning that it is no longer able to do ministry as it is. This should include:
  - Moving from full to part-time
  - Yoking
  - Sales of property
  - Merging
  - Closing

#### Ordination support team

- Understand the theology and polity of the PC(USA) as well as policy and processes of the Presbytery of the Coastlands.
- Take responsibility for working with CPM to ensure there is are consistent

expectations communicated regarding Statements of Faith.

- Provide initial review of statements of faith and other required documentation to ensure all is in order in advance of it being forwarded to the wider committee.
- Connect with candidates in advance of the meeting to provide an overview of the COM process.
- Provide prayers for those serving in validated ministries outside of a congregational context when they are approved for ordination.

Installation team or point person

- Understand the process for installation, what paperwork is involved, and its purpose.
- Offer support and clear communication to any pastor benign installed including awareness of what Ministers and Ruling Elders may be available to serve on Installation Commissions if the pastor needs assistance filling their commission.
- Coordinate with the candidate, the Presbytery office, and the Moderator(s) to ensure the date of an installation works in the Presbytery calendar.
- Clearly communicate to the candidate that COM needs to have their completed commission paperwork at least 3 days prior to the stated COM meeting ahead of their Installation for approval.

It is expected that these teams will only become involved at the request of COM and the liaison to a particular congregation and minister, or will be in direct communication with COM as to those situations where the COM has not engaged the team directly. Liaisons will continue to serve the congregations alongside these teams and the team should coordinate with the liaison and work together to provide the needed resources and support for the congregation.

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