

Policies and Procedures
of
Albany Presbytery Committee on
Ministers and Congregations
(COMAC)

In its relationship with Pastors and
Congregations



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Introduction

We hope this manual will help guide pastors and congregations as they face challenges and changes in their ministry together. Much of the manual is devoted to the multitude of steps, possibilities and questions that come with a pastor departing or retiring and the search for what happens next in the life of a congregation. There are many options and possibilities, and we encourage leaders of congregations—including pastors—to read those sections carefully to help them have a smooth and productive transition.

While that is the bulk of the manual, it is also important to mention that the work of COMAC is not limited to times of pastoral transition. The committee also offers mediation in times of conflict or disagreement in a congregation, as well as listening teams for those times when it is helpful to have an outside perspective on a question or situation within the congregation. The committee also has oversight of pastoral and compensation and maintains relationships with retired pastors. The committee oversees the approved preaching list and addresses mandated requirements for sexual harassment trainings.

In short, COMAC is about the relationship between pastors and congregations, between congregations and other congregations, and between presbytery and congregations. It is our hope that this manual will help answer at least some of your questions as you live into the promise of being Christ's body. And if it doesn't, please contact us so that we can look for the information and help you need.

May God bless you in your ministry.

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I. Dissolution of the Pastoral Relationship (G-2.09)

A. Voluntary Resignation

1. When a pastor decides to resign a position, he/she shall consult with COMAC before taking any action and before notifying the session or congregation. COMAC will explain the process of resigning to the pastor, and will advise about actions to be taken.
2. In consultation with COMAC the pastor will decide whether to inform the session at a stated or special session meeting. At the session meeting a representative of COMAC will explain the policies and procedures of pastoral dissolution, leadership in the interim, securing new leadership, appropriate boundaries, including Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) function and the election process (if applicable). Both COMAC and the pastor should pay special attention to the process of acknowledging the feelings and emotions of elders at the session meeting. Following the meeting with the session, a letter shall go out to the entire membership of the congregation notifying them of the resignation of the pastor by first-class mail. This letter should be prepared ahead of time and shall go out the following day. It is appropriate to also follow up with electronic communication.
3. The session shall call a meeting of the congregation to be held as soon as possible. The pastor's departure date should be within as short a period as feasible following the congregational announcement, typically four to eight weeks. (G-2.0902)
4. The congregational meeting to act on the resignation of the pastor shall be moderated by a member of presbytery approved by COMAC other than the resigning pastor. A representative of COMAC shall be present to answer questions related to the policies and procedures to be followed. This includes explanation of the interim time and the various ways of engaging the congregation's transitional process including appropriate boundaries between the congregation and its former pastor. The process for electing the PNC and its function will also be explained if necessary and the Covenant of Departure will be handed out.
5. Before the resigning pastor leaves the position, two to three members of COMAC shall meet with the pastor for an exit interview. This interview serves to get up-to-date information regarding the church, to identify problem areas, or to underscore specific strengths for the benefit of the future relationship of COMAC with that church. Parts of the interview may be dealt with as confidential.
6. When a pastor leaves a parish and plans to continue to live in the area, COMAC shall consult with him or her and the congregation about the importance of refraining from future involvement with that parish and have the pastor sign the Covenant of

Departure, which will be shared as a handout with all congregation members at the congregational meeting.

7. When a voluntary resignation is in response to irreconcilable differences between pastor and congregation, a resignation package shall be negotiated in consultation with COMAC. The resignation package typically includes one month of pay for every year of service, with a maximum of six monthly payments including continuance of BOP medical coverage for the member and dependents.

B. Retirement

1. When a pastor is considering retiring, he/she shall consult with the COMAC regarding the process and timing. A healthy retirement means that the pastor should begin to plan at least 2-4 years in advance for the emotional and spiritual joys and sorrows this life-stage brings. Maintaining healthy emotional and relational boundaries is difficult and it is strongly recommended that a pastor contemplating retirement engage the services of a professional counselor or clergy coach to assist with this important transition. It is further strongly recommended that the pastor's spouse/partner be included in this process of letting go and moving into a new future. For information on the pension procedure contact our Regional Representative from the Board of Pensions.

2. The goal of COMAC is to provide a process to prepare for and facilitate the smooth, compassionate transition of a retiring pastor (and spouse/partner) leaving a church congregation. In general the process for retirement follows that of a resigning pastor, however it is typical for retirement plans to be announced no earlier than six months ahead of time.

a. Representatives of COMAC will meet with the retiring pastor as early as retirement is considered and prior to announcing this to the session or congregation. The Pastor's spouse/partner is welcome and encouraged to attend.

b. This confidential meeting is for the purpose of providing information about the retirement process and planning the announcement to the congregation.

c. Representatives of COMAC will meet with the pastor and the session to discuss issues surrounding the transition to retirement.

4. A resource packet for retirement is available through the Board of Pensions.

5. Pastors considering retirement are encouraged to take advantage of the Board of Pensions pre-retirement seminars.

C. Responsibilities of the Departing/Retiring Pastor:

1. The departing pastor shall make clear to the officers and congregation by public and written announcement that, after leaving the church, he/she is no longer their pastor and that he/she is not available to be called on for any and all pastoral services, which include funerals, weddings, baptisms, graduations, blessings, etc. This also includes future commitments. This includes ceremonies that are not in the church building and include former members and friends of the congregation. It is the departing pastor's responsibility to hold the appropriate boundaries and redirect requests to the current Moderator of Session. If there are repeated requests that the departing pastor continues to field from the congregation, it is the departing pastor's responsibility to notify COMAC so that they can be in touch with the Clerk of Session. These responsibilities for healthy boundaries extend to the spouse/partner of the retiring pastor. It is not appropriate for the family of the departing pastor to continue to worship at the congregation from which the pastor has departed. COMAC shall meet with the retiring pastor and spouse/partner 6 months prior to retirement to explain this policy and answer any questions. Pre-retirement counseling for the retiring pastor and spouse/partner is highly recommended. The pastor along with the clerk of session shall sign a Covenant of Departure and shall be shared in writing with all members of the congregation and shared during the congregational meeting.
2. If the departing pastor continues to reside in the area, he/she must direct any invitations for funeral services to the current pastor and notify local funeral directors that they are not to call upon him/her to conduct funeral services for church members.
3. The departing pastor or spouse/partner shall not attempt in any way to influence the church in the selection of a successor, or to influence the policies of the successor(s) and the future of the church.
4. Visits to the former parish should be at the sole invitation of the current moderator of session. In conversations with members of the former congregation, there shall be no conversation, criticism or questioning of policies of the current pastor or other staff members, and the future direction of the church.
5. A departing or retiring pastor's spouse/partner and family shall not continue to worship at the former congregation, serve on its boards and/or comment on the future ministry of the congregation.
6. Any questions or problems regarding the above should be referred to COMAC. Repeated infractions from a departed/retired pastor will be considered as grounds for disciplinary process.

D. Termination of Pastor, Associate Pastor or Stated Supply Requested by Congregation

1. When a session deems it wise to ask the congregation to dissolve a pastoral relationship, with or without the clergy person's concurrence, the session shall develop, in consultation with COMAC, a termination agreement before calling a congregational meeting. Following a congregation's vote to request the presbytery to dissolve the relationship, and upon COMAC's concurrence, COMAC shall recommend to the presbytery that the relationship be dissolved and shall report the terms of the termination agreement.
2. In any termination requested by a congregation, special attention shall be paid to the emotional needs of all parties involved. COMAC may assign personal caregivers who will offer support and care to the terminated pastor, pastor's spouse/partner and family, the session and the congregation. COMAC or its representatives should be present during any formal discussions and/or negotiations to offer support.
3. Normally the pastor or associate pastor shall be given a six-month severance package following the congregation's action to dissolve the pastoral relationship plus BOP medical coverage continuance for the member and dependants. A severance package would include all salary and allowances, but not reimbursable amounts. During this period, COMAC will be available to the pastor for consultation in regard to a future call. COMAC reserves the right to negotiate an appropriate severance package.
4. When a stated supply relationship is terminated at the request of a congregation prior to the end of the agreed term, COMAC shall recommend to the presbytery that six-weeks compensation be paid by the congregation.

II. Provision for Temporary Pastoral Leadership (G-2.0504b)

A. Moderator

COMAC shall appoint a moderator for the session while a church is without an installed pastor. The moderator shall be a teaching elder member of the presbytery, and will be the interim pastor or stated supply, when in place.

B. Temporary Supply

When permanent pastoral leadership is unavailable, the pulpit may be filled by the session on a week-to-week basis. Information regarding possible temporary supply is available through the COMAC chairperson. A temporary supply may be a candidate for the interim position. (See the presbytery website for the most up-to-date honoraria and mileage information, which is updated annually).

C. Stated Supply

In some situations COMAC, after consultation with the session, may appoint a stated supply pastor to serve a congregation that is not seeking an installed pastor. The appointment is for a period not exceeding one year. A stated supply can be re-appointed following approval by COMAC, and concurrence by the session.

Review of Stated Supply Relationships

COMAC shall review each stated supply relationship through an annual review with session and pastor. This review should occur three months before the end of each contract period.

D. Interim/Transitional Pastor or Interim/Transitional Associate Pastor

When a pastor has left a church, regardless of the reason, the session is faced with several options available as to how to replace that pastor. The most important first step it should take is to invite COMAC to explain the pros and cons of the various alternatives and assist in the decision-making as to what is best for that church which includes a financial review. COMAC will visit the session to explain the interim process and to encourage the session to set goals for the interim period, and prepare either a job description or a Ministry Information Form (MIF).

1. Why an Interim/Transitional Pastor?

In every transition between pastors, several things need to happen that an interim pastor can facilitate. Congregations need to understand their history, particularly as it relates to former pastors, both recent and past. It is important to consider the church's present identity and its future possibilities. There is a need to develop an enthusiastic commitment to new pastoral leadership and to the opportunities and challenges of a

different future for their church.

2. Interim/Transitional Pastor Selection Committee

The session should appoint an Interim Pastor Selection Committee (IPSC) of three to five members, with at least one of its members from the session. Other members may be recruited without regard to their present offices. In some cases the session has assigned this task to the Personnel Committee.

3. Expectations of Interim/Transitional Period

Churches go into an interim period with different opportunities and needs. The session, in consultation with their assigned COMAC representative, should identify the two or three things they would most like to accomplish during the interim. Some possibilities include but are not limited to:

- Experience a different pastoral personality and leadership style
- Renew or re-invigorate the congregation's understanding of mission, its local context and the nature of 21st century ministry
- Conduct an intensive visitation program
- Address new and emerging needs around worship (including time, location, community needs, etc.)
- Deal with any unresolved problems
- Update church records
- Address building maintenance and needs
- Revise/review administrative practices and stewardship

The session should inform the selection committee of these areas of focus. This information will be helpful in the selection process.

4. Writing a Position Description

The session should approve a position description or Ministry Information Form (MIF) and then forward it to COMAC for approval.

5. Candidates

COMAC will consult with the Interim Pastor Search Committee on persons qualified to be interim pastor for the church. The guidelines to be considered for an interim pastor are as follows:

- A positive reference check.
- Completion of acceptable interim/transitional ministry training. It is preferable for the candidate to have served two successful interim pastorates.

- a. The Interim Pastor Search Committee shall submit names to COMAC for approval and background checks.
- b. Approval by COMAC of all persons being considered as an interim pastor is required prior to making contact with them.

6. Interviews

The Interim Pastor Search Committee should:

- Prepare interview questions in advance.
- Arrange for interviews with each of the candidates.
- Carry out interviews in a timely manner.
- Inform all candidates of its decision prior to formal announcement.

7. Terms of the Contract

After selecting the final candidate, the committee shall meet with him/her to negotiate the terms of the contract that will define the interim relationship, consulting with COMAC to be sure the terms meet presbytery requirements. The following guidelines are recommended:

Normally compensation should be no lower than that of the previous pastor; however it is customary for interim pastors to be paid at higher rates given their additional training and experience. It is also important that experience apportionments in the Albany Presbytery Terms of Call sheet be recognized.

The contractual term is normally for one year, with renewal possible.

After approval of the contract by the session, COMAC should be notified.

Ordinarily the interim pastor will serve until the new pastor is in place. Periodic reports from the interim pastor are to be submitted to COMAC and session.

8. Introduction to the Congregation

The committee should prepare an appropriate plan for presenting the interim pastor to the congregation. This may include such steps as a write-up in the church newsletter and a reception after worship. It should include an introduction during regular Sunday worship at which time a representative of the session will welcome the interim pastor. Ordinarily a representative of COMAC will explain the special provisions of the interim ministry at this worship service. See Appendix F for a suggested litany of beginning.

III. Mission Study

It is important that every congregation engage periodically in a Mission Study and Action Plan. Normally this study process will be conducted under the authority and with the oversight of the session. Mission study resources are available through the presbytery office and are updated periodically.

A Mission Study is required before any steps to finding an installed pastor take place. If there is an interim pastor serving a congregation, COMAC will require that a Mission Study and Action Plan be completed during the interim period. Other times it may be useful to do a Mission Study and Action Plan when a congregation is facing a significant change or transition. A COMAC appointed representative will work with the Mission Study Committee to complete an approved Mission Study process.

The departing pastor shall not be involved in the conduct of the Mission Study and Action Plan. The session has the final authority to approve the Mission Study and Action Plan. A copy of all completed Mission Studies and Action Plans should be shared with COMAC and must be approved by COMAC before a PNC is elected.

IV. Securing New Pastoral Leadership

A. Election of the Pastor/Associate Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC/APNC)

1. Guidelines for the Church Nominating Committee in selecting nominees to the PNC/APNC:

- a. The session will prepare a slate of names for the PNC/APNC to be presented to the congregation. These should be representative of the whole congregation. Numbers range from five to nine with seven an average number.
 - b. At least one person should be a member of the session, one a deacon or trustee, and one a youth (if possible). The majority of the PNC/APNC should be composed of persons not currently serving as elders, deacons, or trustees. Because this is a time-consuming task, all should be relieved temporarily of other major responsibilities.
 - c. Each person nominated to serve on the PNC/APNC should have an open mind without bias for any potential candidate. Otherwise, the nomination should be declined.
 - d. Nominees shall comply with Equal Employment Opportunity guidelines, i.e., the nominees must in all conscience be willing to consider candidates without regard to race, ethnic origin, sex or gender identity, marital status, sexual orientation, physical disability, or age.
 - e. No more than one person per household or extended family shall be nominated. No PNC/APNC member may be from the same family as a staff member of the congregation.
 - f. The youth member should be high school age or older.
 - g. Persons serving on Presbytery COMAC or as a COMAC liaison should not be nominated.
2. A representative of COMAC will be assigned to consult with the session nominating committee to review the procedures for the election of the PNC/APNC, explain its functioning and the guidelines used in the selection of the nominees.
3. A congregational meeting shall be called for the election of the PNC/APNC. Ballots should be prepared in advance with space for nominations from the floor. Care must be taken that persons nominated from the floor are present and have agreed to serve.
4. The representative of COMAC also will explain that the congregation, in electing the PNC/APNC, is granting it authority to bring one nominee back to the congregation for a vote. The PNC/APNC will report to the session when it is ready to recommend one person for a call.

5. The actions of the PNC/APNC will be absolutely confidential. This does not preclude general informational reports to the congregation concerning progress, but names or locations of candidates under consideration (or rejected) will not be disclosed to anyone not a member of the PNC/APNC or COMAC. Members of the congregation may make suggestions as to possible candidates but will not receive a report as to the action of the PNC/APNC on their suggestion.
6. Once the PNC is elected, COMAC shall appoint a trained liaison to guide the PNC/APNC in the procedures of the search process and to assure an orderly and open search. Resources from the presbytery and denomination will be provided. The search team may not begin until the training of the PNC/APNC occurs.

B. The Pastor/Associate Pastor Nominating Committee at Work (and Related Matters)

1. The previous and interim pastors shall not have any influence on the selection of the new pastor by the PNC/APNC. Such interference is grounds for disciplinary process.
2. A representative from COMAC should assist the newly elected PNC/APNC in setting their first meeting date. COMAC's liaison will moderate the meeting until a chairperson has been elected and will outline the duties and processes of the committee's work. The liaison will continue to meet regularly with the PNC/APNC, serving as consultant and link with COMAC.
3. The PNC/APNC will request the session to budget or transfer adequate funds to its control to enable it to interview candidates, hear them preach, and pay other PNC/APNC expenses. When the PNC/APNC has completed its work, the unused funds shall be returned to the church treasurer with an accounting of expenditures.
4. The first task of the PNC/APNC is to prepare a Ministry Information Form (MIF) based on the Mission Study. The MIF will highlight the church's mission and its particular needs for pastoral leadership. COMAC will assure that the MIF reflects the church appropriately, describes the position accurately, and that the terms of call meet the presbytery minimums which are set annually by the Presbytery and posted on the presbytery website or may be obtained from the Stated Clerk.

No candidates shall be considered until the MIF has been completed and approved first by the PNC and then by the session and then by COMAC.

5. When the MIF has been approved, the PNC/APNC will proceed to consider candidates. The committee will receive Personal Information Forms (PIFs) from various sources. Care must be taken to consider candidates without regard to race, ethnic origin, sex or gender identity, marital status, sexual orientation, physical disability, or age.
6. The Role of the Pastor in the Associate Pastor Nominating Committee Process.

Because of the importance of staff relationships within the local church, the pastor should be involved with the APNC in the selection of a candidate, but shall not dominate the proceedings. In keeping with this policy, the pastor's role is as follows:

- a. The pastor is an ex-officio member of the APNC without vote.
- b. The pastor, as an ex-officio member, has the right to speak in meetings of the APNC, to suggest names for consideration by the APNC, and to inform the committee regarding his/her evaluation of the qualifications of the candidate.
- c. When a candidate is interviewed, the pastor may be a member of the interviewing APNC. If either the pastor or the candidate so requests, they shall have time to visit apart from the APNC.
- d. If there is a disagreement between the pastor and the APNC as to the final candidate, the pastor and the chairperson of the APNC shall consult with COMAC before the session is asked to call a meeting of the congregation. COMAC's role will be as a mediator to resolve the differences.

7. The Role of the Associate Pastor in the Pastor Nominating Committee Process.

Because of the importance of staff relationships within the local church, each associate pastor(s) shall be allowed the opportunity to meet the final candidates as part of the interview process of the PNC. The PNC should consider his/her input in making their final decision, but she/he should not have undue influence in the PNC's decisions.

8. When the PNC/APNC has several final candidates, arrangements are made for each of them to preach at a neutral pulpit. The COMAC liaison will work with the COMAC to assist in making these arrangements. It is the responsibility of the PNC/APNC to invite the candidate, inform him/her of the date and time of the service, arrange transportation and make other local arrangements, at the expense of the PNC.

During the neutral pulpit weekend, COMAC shall interview each potential candidate. The interview will include his/her suitability for the particular position, COMAC's understanding of the congregation, and expectations regarding participation in the presbytery.

It is normal and appropriate to include the potential candidate's spouse/partner in the face-to-face interview weekends and to pay for these expenses.

9. Recent Seminary Graduates: (G-2.0607)

When a candidate who is being considered for a call is under care of presbytery, he/she shall be in consultation with the Committee on Leadership Development (CLD) to determine whether the candidate has been certified to receive a call.

10. It is strongly recommended that the PNC/APNC work for a unanimous committee

vote; however, at least 90% shall approve a candidate to present to the congregation.

11. Once the PNC/APNC, the candidate, and the session have reached full agreement concerning the terms of call, COMAC must approve the terms. The PNC/APNC will then arrange with the session to have the candidate meet the congregation, preach and lead in worship.

12. The congregational meeting for calling the new pastor should be held following the worship service. A teaching elder member of the presbytery with the prior agreement of COMAC shall moderate the meeting.

13. A final candidate requiring ordination or transfer of membership to the presbytery shall be interviewed by COMAC or by COMAC on behalf of the presbytery. This interview is part of the process used in this presbytery to fulfill the requirement of an examination of each teaching elder seeking membership and normally occurs during the interview weekend.

14. When all requirements have been met, COMAC will join with the congregation in presenting its recommendation to the presbytery regarding action on the call and plans for installation. No call is final until the presbytery has concurred. COMAC does have commission powers to approve a call without presenting it to Presbytery for action if it wishes. Presbytery must act to approve an ordination.

15. At the presbytery meeting where the call is approved, the COMAC, on behalf of the candidate, will present the ordination and/or installation commission and plans. The commission shall include no fewer than five members of the presbytery, with the teaching elders and ruling elders in numbers as nearly equal as possible. No more than one of its elder members may be from any one of its constituent churches. Ecumenical participation beyond the commission is encouraged. The moderator of the presbytery leads the installation/ordination commission or his/her designate.

16. The installation/ordination of the new pastor is a worship service of the presbytery and should take place as soon as practical. The order of service shall be informed and guided by the Book of Worship.

V. Other Staff Relationships

A. Consultation with COMAC

Churches are encouraged to consult with COMAC when considering hiring any ordained person to a full- or part-time position, such as Director of Christian Education, Director of Youth Ministries, Director of Family Ministries, Teaching Elder of Music, Director of Child/Day Care.

B. Certified Christian Educator (G-2.1103)

1. The Certified Christian Educator is a professional educator who is certified by the denomination.
2. A church may wish to consider certified Christian educators as well as ordained/ordained persons for a position in Christian education.
3. Compensation for a certified christian educator needs to meet presbytery minimums for pastoral calls.

C. Parish Associates

Please consult with the COMAC before entering into a parish associate relationship with any member (active or retired) of presbytery or one of our ecumenical partners.

D. Certified Ruling Elders (CRE's)

Please consult the Albany Presbytery CRE policy for procedure and educational requirements.

VI. Consultation

A. Triennial Visits (Not required by the Book of Order)

A triennial visit is a pastoral visit to the session of a local church by representatives appointed by COMAC. It has several purposes: to support the good work ongoing by the pastor and the session in the church, to provide a communication link between the church and the presbytery, to provide a forum to raise and answer any questions the session may have, and to expose any problem areas that may need attention. Outcomes include a written report to COMAC on the visit (copy shared with the church), and follow-up on any commitments made to the church during the visit. Hopefully, the most important outcome would be greater understanding by the session of the role of COMAC to support them in their good ministry in the name of Christ.

B. Consulting/Coaching/Mediation

The COMAC has a number of resources and tools available for the variety of situations that can come up in the life of a congregation. The session should contact COMAC for resourcing with any needs it may have. The COMAC is a part of the Synod of the Northeast Mediation Network, Coaching Network, and 1001 New Worshipping Communities. We also have relationships with our ecumenical partners and with the Samaritan Counseling Center. Resources are most needed in a time of heightened tension or conflict; however, we strongly encourage pastors and sessions to engage a yearly process of congregational evaluation so as to avail themselves of proactive and positive resourcing to create healthy, vital and growing missional communities of faith. Resources are not always needed when there is a problem-but are a gift to the ongoing health and vitality of congregational life.

VII. Role of COMAC Regarding Compensation

The COMAC has the responsibility to study compensation plans for parish teaching elders and to make recommendations to the presbytery concerning minimum terms of call. It shall annually make a recommendation to the presbytery concerning cost-of-living increases.

VIII. Terms of Call

Minimum requirements for new calls are set annually by the Presbytery.

A. Salary/Housing - The presbytery has established a minimum amount for salary and housing for new calls. When there is a manse, the Board of Pensions requires the manse allowance to be at least 30% of cash salary for calculation of pension dues.

B. Pension/Major Medical Insurance - This is established by the Board of Pensions.

C. Professional Expense Reimbursement - established annually.

D. Paid Vacation - One month per year.

E. Study Leave - Two weeks per year and a minimum allowance as set by presbytery.

Both are accruable to a maximum of six weeks over a three-year period. Study leave is provided for the purpose of maintaining and improving a teaching elder's ability to perform pastoral or staff specialist functions more effectively, or to contribute to professional growth. Prior consultation with the session is recommended before any study leave is taken.

F. Leaves of Absence

1. Medical Leave

In keeping with the congregation's promise to provide for the welfare of the pastor, to stand by him/her in trouble and share her/his joys, Albany Presbytery requires that congregations provide medical care for their pastors. It is suggested that this leave dovetail as closely as possible to those outlined in the Personnel Policies of Albany Presbytery which can be found on the Presbytery website.

2. Maternity/Parental Leave

In keeping with the congregation's promise to provide for the welfare of the pastor, to stand by him/her in trouble and share her/his joys, Albany Presbytery requires that congregations provide parental-leave care for their pastors. It is suggested that this leave dovetail as closely as possible to those outlined in the Personnel Policies of Albany Presbytery which can be found on the Presbytery website.

3. Sabbatical or Other Extended Leaves*

a. Churches may include in terms of call provision for extended study leave, or sabbatical, every seven years.

b. Any pastor planning to be away from a church for an extended period of time (seven weeks or more) on sabbatical or for extended leave, shall consult with COMAC and receive its concurrence at least 60 days in advance of leaving. Thus the presbytery may be assured of continuing pastoral care and moderator leadership of the session and

the congregation. If necessary, COMAC will consult with and advise the session about the matter.

C. Other types of leave are envisioned in the Presbytery Personnel Policy and congregations and ministries of the Presbytery are strongly encouraged to use these with all staff (ordained and non-ordained).

**Unused leave is not transferable.*

IX. Teaching Elders Who Are Not Installed in a Particular Parish

A. In Relationship with other Churches

Teaching elders who are not officially related to a particular church shall respect the position of pastor(s) regarding all teaching elder's functions within the community.

1. Requests to conduct weddings and funerals are not to be accepted until and unless the pastor of the church has issued an invitation for such.
2. The sacraments will be officiated by another teaching elder only at the request of the local pastor or by permission of presbytery or synod.
3. Teaching Elders, except when on official presbytery business, are neither to counsel with nor advise members of other congregations.

X. Membership in Presbytery

A. Placement in Membership Categories

1. There are three categories of membership: (G-2.0503). Please see the Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for complete descriptions and requirements of all categories of ministry (G-2.0501-G-2.0509).

- Engaged in a Validated Ministry
- Member-at-Large
- Honorably Retired

2. These categories apply to all continuing members, including parish-related ministries and specialized ministries that are validated by action of the presbytery each year. The stated clerk maintains the rolls of each category. The presbytery must annually review and approve the status of all continuing members.

3. Each member will submit an annual statement to COMAC describing the ministry that would qualify him/her for continuing membership, and for determining the appropriate category on the rolls. The COMAC will review these statements and recommend validation of that ministry.

4. Each member shall demonstrate completion of boundaries training or a COMAC-approved alternative every five years. There is no waiver for this requirement without prior COMAC approval.

5. The ministry that each member maintains as part of his/her mission as a follower of Jesus Christ may be independent of paid employment. It need not be a full-time ministry in order to be considered for validation for membership. Ministry is thus defined as a form of service, not as a form of employment. Tent-making can be considered for validation.

6. The Book of Order G-2.0505 and G-2.0506 establishes the guidelines and procedures to be followed when receiving members of other denominations into membership in the Presbytery.

APPENDIX A

EXIT INTERVIEWS

Ordinarily, the Exit Interview is arranged by the COMAC Co-Chairs.

The Exit Interview may take place at the presbytery office or at another place convenient for the participants.

Suggested questions for the interview:

1. What are some of the joys of your ministry in this place?
2. As you look back on your ministry here, how has the community of faith that called you changed?
3. And how have you changed?
4. What, in your opinion, are the major issues/challenges/weaknesses facing the church (or other institution) as you leave?
5. What have been your major frustrations in the course of your ministry here?
6. What are the two or three things you would like to say to your successor in this position?
7. Is there anything you would like to say about your experience as a member of Albany Presbytery?

The interview team will select a clerk to submit a written report to the Committee on Ministers and Congregations through the presbytery office.

APPENDIX B

THE ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF RETIREMENT

To provide a process to prepare for and facilitate the smooth, compassionate transition of a retiring pastor (and spouse) leaving a church congregation. This transition includes changing relationships among the retiring pastor, interim pastor, session, congregation and new pastor.

Provide guidance through a process that will address practical, personal and emotional needs of the retiring pastor, beginning when the pastor starts seriously entertaining the idea of retirement and continuing through the transition to a new pastor.

I. RETIRING PASTOR

A. INTRODUCTION

A number of matters must be addressed when a person retires as pastor of a congregation. Previously there has been a tendency to address only those issues arising from a reading of the Book of Order. This approach is inadequate when one considers the dynamics involved in the transition we call “retirement,” a transitional process containing significant stressors which impact upon the physical and emotional health of the pastor, his/her family, and the congregation.

In order to move effectively into pastoral retirement it is important that the stressors that accompany retirement be recognized. Often this acknowledgement is confined to the “thinking” part of the brain, and does not include the “feeling” part. A plan must be so designed that a retiring pastor can deal with the realities of retirement and accompanying feelings. The intent of this plan is to enable the individual to successfully enter retirement with a modicum of good health, humor and grace, and with the feelings of excitement that accompany the anticipation of a new stage of life.

B. STRESSORS FOR THE RETIRING PASTOR (and Spouse/Partner)

Stress arises from losses and changes experienced in retirement.

1. The pastor has held a position of executive power, with responsibility for development and implementation of program, creation and maintenance of physical facilities, and production of budget and finance.
2. The pastor has had a visible presence in the community and entree to and recognition by a wide variety of civic and governmental organizations.
3. The pastor has been party to a unique bonding to families and individuals, primarily through baptisms, weddings and funerals. The pastor

APPENDIX C

DEPARTURE COVENANT

The Rev. _____, the _____ Presbyterian Church, and the Committee on Ministers and Congregations of Albany Presbytery, enter into the following covenant. All those who sign this covenant are bound by I:C “Responsibilities of the Departing/Retiring Pastor” in the COMAC Manual:

1. I, the Rev. _____ agree:

- not to become involved in any leadership or advisory role (public or private) in the _____ Presbyterian Church congregation; and
- not to intervene, support, or give advice to anyone involved in a congregational disagreement or dispute;
- not to officiate in any special events in the lives of former parishioners or of the congregation, including weddings, funerals, baptisms, worship leadership, church anniversary activities, etc. unless expressly invited by the Moderator of the Session
- to refuse requests for pastoral services made by members of the congregation;
- to not visit the congregation, attend worship or a special event unless at the invitation of the Moderator of the Session;
- to refrain from giving opinions or directions regarding church business
- to explain and affirm the above principles to the congregation in writing (by letter or newsletter) and/or the pulpit before departing.
- It is understood that this policy does not affect or require termination of friendships with individuals in the _____ Presbyterian Church congregation.

2. The Session of the _____ Presbyterian Church agrees:

- a. to respect the terms of the Covenant agreed upon by Rev. ____ outlined above; and
- b. to interpret the terms of the Covenant to the congregation and incorporate this agreement in the minutes of the congregational meeting when the pastoral relationship is dissolved; and
- c. to incorporate this agreement in the Session Minutes.

_____ Clerk of Session Signature

_____ Pastor Signature

_____ Signature, COMAC Representative

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE INTERIM REPORT

MEMO TO: Interim Pastors

FROM: Committee on Ministers and Congregations

RE: COMAC POLICY ON REPORTS TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE COMAC

Please find below an outline to be followed in your reporting to the Committee on Ministers and Congregations.

If you have any questions, please call the chair/co-chairs of COMAC or the Presbytery Office.

Interim reports to the Committee on Ministers and Congregations (COMAC)

I. A written report of up to two pages in length shall be e-mailed to the chairperson(s) of the COMAC.

The first report is due within 30 days, including general comments on the interim process task of entering the church.

Process Task of Entering:

- a. What can the regional body (Presbytery, COMAC) tell you about the church?
- b. Ritual of welcoming for this particular ministry.
- c. Get to know board members and officers.
- d. What can long time members, leaders, significant volunteers tell you about the customs, traditions, flow and patterns of the church?
- e. Where do you need to plug in (meetings, events, community)?
- f. Read the records, especially for the years the last pastor served.

The next report is due in 90 days. It should include general comments on the developmental tasks of interim ministry.

Developmental Tasks:

- a. Coming to terms with history
 - i. Putting the tenure of last Pastor or Pastors into perspective
 - ii. Celebrating what has been good
 - iii. Admitting what has been bad
- v. Venting of feelings, grieving, accepting and moving on

- b. Discovering a new identity as God's people
 - i. Mission Study
 - ii. Visioning
 - iii. Affirmation
 - iv. Season of renewal and growth
- c. Allowing needed leadership change
 - i. Honoring past leaders
 - ii. Welcoming new leadership
 - iii. Understanding power
 - iv. Managing conflict
- d. Renewing denominational linkages
 - i. Crisis intervention
 - ii. History
 - iii. Authority
 - iv. Partnership
 - 1. Mission
 - 2. Stewardship
 - 3. Resources
- e. Commitment to new leadership and the future
 - i. Modeling existing skills
 - ii. Transition rituals
 - iii. Planning for start up
 - iv. Appreciation of new leadership and mission
- IV. Other items of note during the transitional period as appropriate:
 - a. Mission Study work
 - b. Creation of the Pastor Nominating Committee
 - c. Health of the Congregation
 - d. Process task of exiting
 - i. What are growing edges for the congregation (developmental tasks)?

- ii. Mutual expressions of joy, thanksgiving, sadness, hope.
- iii. Personal contact with those who have been significant to your ministry.
- iv. Well-planned ritual of leave taking in context of worship.
- v. What has been learned? What has succeeded? Making a clean break.
- V. Continuing reports at 90-day intervals, or more often if you need to communicate with COMAC, until the Mission Study is done, and then at six-month intervals.
- VI. Send copies of annual contract renewals to COMAC at the Presbytery Office.

This is to be attached to the Interim Agreement

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE INTERIM PASTOR AGREEMENT

The following agreement between the Session of Presbyterian Church in and the Reverend is for providing interim pastoral ministry to this congregation. The Reverend will be a Interim Pastor of this congregation for a period of months beginning

THE INTERIM PASTOR:

Will _____ will not _____ serve as head of staff.

Will _____ will not _____ assist in the preparation of the Ministry Information Form.

SHE/HE SHALL (check all that apply)

1. Serve as Moderator of Session.
2. Work closely with the Transition Committee of the congregation and the COMAC.
3. Lead worship and preach all Sundays except for vacation and study leave.
4. Do pastoral calling with the ill, homebound, and prospective members.
5. Officiate at weddings and funerals as requested.
6. Plan and moderate Session and congregational meetings.
7. Assist the boards and committees to carry out their assigned tasks.
8. Train newly elected officers.
9. Help the Transition Team and/or Pastor Nominating Committee conduct a Mission Study.
10. Perform other administrative duties as requested by the Session.
11. Other duties:

FOCUS POINTS FOR THIS MINISTRY SHALL BE:

1. *Reviewing how the congregation has been shaped and formed*—It is important for congregations to know their history so they can appreciate their heritage and, at the same time, be aware of the issues and concerns that need to be resolved in order to move freely into the future.

2. *Defining and redefining sense of purpose and direction*—The mission of a congregation is examined by asking "Who are we now in our present context and who/what is it do

we understand God calling us to be?" This Focus Point involves discerning a vision to which a congregation Believes it is being called to live out..

3. *Reviewing the congregation's ways of organizing and developing new and effective lay and clergy leaders*—Over a period of time the leadership of most congregations begins to take on much of the style and values of the previous pastor. When that pastor leaves, there is often a time when persons who have been in leadership rethink their commitment and determine whether or not they want to continue in leadership positions.

4. *Discovering the relationships and networks the church builds beyond itself*—Congregations often are not aware of the support and resources they receive from their denominational structures. That relationship is normally more visible while the structures of the church beyond the congregation are engaged in working with the congregation in moving through the interim period and seeking to find the right pastor to call. The transition time helps raise the awareness of a congregation to its denominational heritage, ministries, and resources.

5. *Synthesizing the transitional work, activating and training the pastor nominating committee, and coaching the committee as requested to do its work*—When a congregation has developed a shared vision of its future and has sought to call a pastor to help lead it in moving into that future, there will be a new commitment both to that new leader and to a hope-filled future.

During the length of this agreement, the Interim Pastor will be accountable to the Albany Presbytery through its Committee On Ministers and Congregations. At the end of the agreement, the Session agrees to review and evaluate the Interim Pastor's work.

It is understood that the Reverend will assist the Pastor Nominating Committee with methods, processes and adequate reports, but shall not be involved in any way with the search or selection of the new pastor. Any suggestions the Interim Pastor has to make about potential pastors of this congregation shall be submitted to the Committee On Ministers and Congregations.

This agreement is for a period of up to months, but may be terminated by the Session upon 30 days written notice. (See **NOTE** below.) The Interim Pastor may terminate the agreement with a 30-day written notice and forfeiture of any payment beyond that period. This agreement and the Pastor's work will begin.

TERMS

The Interim Pastor is employed (complete the appropriate portion below):

- _____ On a part-time (3/4 Time) basis consisting of _____ days per week.
- _____ On a full-time basis, serving approximately _____ days per week.
- _____ Will take time off weekly. Choose one: _____ days _____ days _____ day

COMPENSATION

Salary (annually)	
Housing (annually)	
Board of Pensions (Provided)	
Other (SECA \$1,554 & Dental \$1,506)	
Professional Expense Reimbursement	
Estimated Mileage Reimbursement*	
Continuing Education Reimbursement	
Other	
Other	

Total

*This amount is not part of the compensation and should not be listed under the Interim's compensation in a line item in the church budget. The IRS will consider it taxable if listed under compensation in the budget.

- **NOTE:** The above compensation will continue for two months after the cessation of employment either by 1.) the expiration of agreement or 2.) by termination by the Session or 3.) until the Reverend ... begins work in another position, whichever occurs first. When the Session gives the Interim Pastor 30 days notice, there shall be two months severance which will include Board of Pension Dues and any additional coverage the Interim pastor had chosen, e.g. SECA, dental.

- Study leave is TWO weeks (including 2 Sundays) and Vacation is FOUR weeks (including 4 Sundays)

Interim Pastor

Clerk of Session

Chairperson(s), Committee On Ministry And Congregations

APPENDIX F

LITANY OF BEGINNING AN INTERIM MINISTRY

Presbytery Representative: This is a time of transitions and new beginnings for We in Albany Presbytery rejoice at the possibilities and potential of the ministry we will share with your Interim Pastor. There is anticipation, expectation and hope that what we build together, with God and with one another, will be good and faithful, full of joy and promise.

Congregation: We do not yet know what the future holds. Nevertheless, we commit ourselves to God's future, confident that God will be with us, certain that God will provide for us. We trust God to lead us toward greater wholeness, faithfulness and service.

Congregational Representative: We are all aware that this time of beginnings is also a time of endings. There may be old relationships to which we have not yet said farewell. There also may be old hurts and hopes... and old ways of being and doing... which are powerful and important. We do not come to this time as brand-new people, but bring with us the past and its memories, many of which are good and cherished, but some may not be.

Congregation: We pledge, with God's help, to accept what is past as past, to cherish what has been good, to forgive what has hurt, to continue what is useful, and to let go of what we no longer need.

Interim Pastor: With God's help, I make this covenant with you: I pledge that I will be a partner with you, participating in the life of the congregation, sharing in the decisions, working with you in common tasks, and assisting you in this time of transition. I pledge that I will be a leader among you, offering my ideas, experience, love, prayers, and support, and working with you to shape a vision and mission for this church family. And I pledge that I will be a pastor for you, standing with you, sharing your times of joy and of trial.

Congregation: With God's help, we pledge to accept and support you as our Interim Pastor, to challenge you when necessary and to encourage you as we share this journey

of faith. The Session and Board of Deacons, as well as all the staff and members, you will be kept in our prayers. We welcome you as you work in our midst as partner, leader, and pastor.

Presbytery Representative: The presbytery is aware this is a temporary relationship, but we also know this will be a significant period in the life of this church family. We will support this church family and ... We have covenanted with one another and before God to be faithful to our calling as Christ's people.

All: As we respond to God's calling, we promise to offer one another our love, respect

honesty, humor, and creativity... to remember the precious gift of real laughter and genuine tears... and to acknowledge the benefits of working together in shared ministry.

APPENDIX G

A LITANY FOR ENDING AN INTERIM PASTORAL RELATIONSHIP

On _____, 201_, I began ministry in this congregation as your Interim Pastor. I have, with God's help and to the best of my abilities, faithfully exercised this trust. The interim time is over and thus my ministry with you. I publicly state that my ministry as Interim Pastor of _____ Presbyterian Church ends this day.

Do you, the members of the _____ Presbyterian Church, recognize and accept the conclusion of this pastoral relationship? If so, please say, "**We do.**"

The Interim Pastor will ask the following people forward for the stated purpose:

Elder _____, Clerk of Session, for the Interim Pastor to give a copy of the Church Manual which was used to administer the ministry and mission of the church.

Elder _____, chair of the Personnel Committee, for Interim Pastor to give the key to the church building and office.

Elder _____, chair of Worship (or Rev. _____, Associate Pastor) for the Interim Pastor to give the Pulpit Bible which was used to preach and teach the Word of God.

O God, you have bound us together for a time as Interim Pastor and congregation to work for the advancement of your kingdom in this place. We give you thanks for the ministry which we have shared in these _____ months now past. (silence)

We thank you for your patience with us despite our blindness and slowness of heart. We thank you for your forgiveness and mercy in the face of our failures. (silence)

Especially we thank you for your never failing presence with us through this time and for the deeper knowledge of you and of each other which we have attained. (silence)

We thank you for those who have been joined to this part of Christ's family through baptism. We thank you for opening our hearts and minds again and again to your Word, and for feeding us abundantly with the Bread of Life and Cup of Salvation. (silence)

Now, we pray, be with me who leaves and this congregation who remains; and grant that all of us, by drawing nearer to you, may always be close to each other in the communion of saints. All this we ask for the sake of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

Charge and Benediction

APPENDIX H

THE PRESBYTERY OF ALBANY GUIDELINE FOR OFFERINGS RECEIVED AT:

Services of Ordination to the Ministry and Services of Installation of a Teaching Elder

All offerings from ordinations and installations go to the seminary student fund to assist our seminarians and CRE's with expenses incurred in the process of preparation for ordination or commissioned service to the Church.

The Liturgy of the Service

The offering is included in the liturgy of the service.

In the introduction to the offering, the liturgist explains the purpose of the offering and describes the Presbytery Seminary Fund to which all contributions will be sent. This should also be in writing in the bulletin in this form:

The offering today is in support of the Albany Presbytery Seminarian Fund to assist those preparing for ordained and commissioned service to the larger Church. Please make your checks out to Albany Presbytery.

Remittance of the Contribution

The Clerk of Session at the congregation in which the ordination or installation is held will take responsibility for the funds to be collected after the offering. They are to be placed in a sealed envelope and given to a representative of the Presbytery to be taken to the Presbytery office the following day. Normally this would be the Stated Clerk or Moderator of the Presbytery.

APPENDIX I

The Role of Commissioned Ruling Elders

A commissioned ruling elder is a person ordained to the office of ruling elder who has been commissioned by a presbytery to carry out a particular ministerial assignment for a stated period of time. Unlike ordained status, which is permanent unless relinquished or rescinded, even if the ordained ruling or teaching elder no longer occupies the position to which she or he was ordained, commissioned status is temporary. It lasts for the duration of the assignment to which the person was commissioned. The functions that the CRE is authorized to carry out (celebrating the sacraments, for instance, or officiating at marriages) may not be performed after the commission terminates, unless another commission that includes those functions is issued.

Many ruling elders are engaged in important ministries in and for their home congregations, at the request and under the supervision of the Pastor and Session. Ruling elders may also be authorized to carry out pastoral functions in their home churches, such as celebrating the sacraments and moderating Session, by action of the presbytery under G- 3.0301. Neither of these forms of service in a ruling elder's home church requires a commission.

Use of Commissioned Ruling Elders

In furtherance of its strategy for mission, Albany Presbytery will, when possible, try to make creative use of persons who have prepared for commissioned service and who seek opportunities to serve. The Presbytery will consider commissioning appropriately-trained ruling elders to serve under the following circumstances:

1. To carry out pastoral functions in immigrant and racial/ethnic congregations and fellowships, if a teaching elder with the necessary language skills and cultural knowledge cannot be found.
2. To carry out part-time pastoral functions in congregations that have a vital mission but cannot, in the judgment of COMAC, secure the pastoral services of a teaching elder or minister of another denomination who is eligible for temporary membership in presbytery.
3. To carry out pastoral functions in a larger parish comprised of several

congregations under the supervision of a pastor who is a teaching elder.

4. To serve in various specialized ministries for which they have the appropriate training.

In every case:

- The commission shall specify the functions the CRE is authorized to perform.
- The commission shall be reviewed annually by Presbytery, as required by G-2.1001.
- The ruling elder commissioned under the terms of G-2.1001 shall work under the
- supervision of the Presbytery through the Committee on Ministry.
- A teaching elder shall be assigned as a mentor and supervisor, as required in G-2.1004.

Ruling elders will not be commissioned under the following circumstances:

1. To serve as pastors in congregations that, in the judgment of the Committee on Ministry, have the resources to support a full-time teaching elder at the Presbytery's minimum level. The role of CRE is intended to complement, not supplant, the ministry of teaching elders.
2. To serve in their congregation of membership. As noted above, this does not preclude ruling elders carrying important functions in their home congregations, including worship leadership, under the supervision of the Pastor and the Session; nor does it preclude Presbytery authorization of ruling elders to celebrate the sacraments or moderate Session in their congregation of membership, as provided in G-3.0301.
3. As a means for ministers of other denominations who do not meet the requirements of G-2.0505 to serve as pastors of Presbyterian congregations

Qualifications of Commissioned Ruling Elders

Qualifications for Commissioned Ruling Elders will be determined by the demands of the particular commission. The Committee on Preparation for Ministry will determine the requirements for a particular position and whether candidates for the position have the requisite knowledge, skills and abilities. CPM offers a general program of preparation; participants should understand that completion of the program does not guarantee a commission and that particular positions may require more or different preparation.

In the case of commissions that authorize the CRE to preach and preside in worship, the CRE must have grounding in the following areas:

1. The contents of the Bible in the language of the community being served.
2. Presbyterian principles for the interpretation of scripture.
3. Basic Christian doctrine and the major themes of Reformed theology.

4. The meaning of the sacraments and the structure of worship in the Reformed tradition.

In the case of commissions that authorize the CRE to provide pastoral care, the CRE must have:

1. A basic understanding of human personality and psychology.
2. Training to recognize situations in which expert professional care is required.

All CREs shall meet the Presbytery's clearance requirements, including psychological assessment and criminal background checks, and participate in the Boundary Awareness program.

Oversight and Supervision

The Committee on Ministers and Congregations will exercise oversight of the deployment of CREs and will, on behalf of the Presbytery, exercise supervision of CREs. Specifically, the Committee shall:

1. Propose to Presbytery that particular positions be open to Ruling Elders qualified to seek a commission.
2. Work with the congregation or ministry agency to consider CREs qualified for a position that Presbytery has opened to CREs.
3. Conduct the necessary clearance reviews.
4. Bring the proposal to commission a particular Ruling Elder to Presbytery for its approval.
5. Assign a teaching elder as mentor and supervisor for the CRE (G-2.1004), if the commission is approved.
6. Conduct the annual review of the CRE and bring any proposal for renewal of the commission to Presbytery.

The PC(USA), Office Of General Assembly, provides additional information on Commissioned Ruling Elders on its website, at the following link:

<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/clp/>