

**PRESBYTERY OF SCIOTO VALLEY**  
**Committee on Ministry**

**Policy on Continuing Members and Validated Ministries**  
**(Adopted April 18, 2006 and Amended February 17, 2009)**

**Introduction**

In determining the ministers of the Word and Sacrament who shall be its continuing members and what constitutes validated ministries within its bounds, the Presbytery is instructed by G-11.0403, which says that *“the presbytery shall be guided by written criteria developed by the presbytery for validation of ministries within its bounds.”* What follows are those written criteria.

**Ordained Office of Minister of Word and Sacrament.**

Then, G-11.0403 continues, saying that *“These criteria shall be based upon the description of the nature of the ordained office found in G-6.0100 and G-6.0200.”* The Presbytery of Scioto Valley understands these sections of the Book of Order to mean:

- That all members of the Church are called to ministry. There are a variety of ministries—some ordained, most lay. The office of Minister of the Word and Sacrament is one ministry, among many that God has called the Christians to, that the primary emphasis of this ministry is the proclamation of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments. The ordained minister of Word and Sacrament differs from other types of ministries in function only, not in status.
- That God’s people, acting through the Presbytery, elect persons to the office of Minister of the Word and Sacrament. Ordination to Word and Sacrament is not a status that follows the person, but an office to which a person is elected by the Presbytery. Thus, the Presbytery normally does not ordain a person to the office of Minister of the Word and Sacrament without that person having a call from a validated ministry. During the period of election, the Minister is accountable to the Presbytery for his or her ministry.
- That sometimes, after a period of service in a validated ministry, God calls a minister to a ministry other than that of Word and Sacrament. On such occasions, the Minister shall be released from his/her ordination by the Presbytery. In so doing the Presbytery makes no value judgment, only a recognition and celebration of the new form of ministry that God is now leading the person to service.
- That the ministry of Word and Sacrament is open to both men and women.
- That the nature of ministry is service, not to be served.

## Standards

*“...and the following standards:*

*a. Ministry of continuing members shall be in demonstrable conformity with the mission of God’s people, as set forth in Holy Scriptures, the Book of Confessions and the Book of Order of this church.*

The Presbytery of Scioto Valley understands this standard to mean that a Minister’s job/ministry must be of a religious nature, usually reflected in a job title like “pastor,” “minister,” “chaplain,” bishop(overseer),” evangelist,” teacher,” missionary or in job activities/duties such as, “preaching, “teaching, “counseling, “healing, “reconciling, “witnessing or “administering (judicatory).”

*b. The ministry shall be one that serves others, aids others and enables the ministries of others.*

The Presbytery of Scioto Valley understands this standard to mean that the primary motive of the Minister’s job is service to others.

*c. The ministry shall give evidence of theologically informed fidelity to God’s Word. This will normally require the Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent and the completion of the requirements for ordination set forth in G-14.0482.*

The Presbytery of Scioto Valley understands this standard to mean that the Minister’s job must be one that requires, either officially or by the nature of the work, a graduate theological education.

*d. The ministry shall be carried on in accountability for its character and conduct to the presbytery and to organizations, agencies and institutions.*

The Presbytery of Scioto Valley understands this standard to mean that the Minister’s work must be visibly and organizationally accountable to a non-profit religious or social service organization.

*e. The ministry shall include responsible participation in the deliberations and work of the presbytery and in the worship and service of a congregation.”*

The Presbytery of Scioto Valley understands this standard to mean that the Minister’s job must allow the Minister time to participate in the life of a local congregation and/or of the Presbytery and the Minister must demonstrate a willingness to do so.

The Presbytery of Scioto Valley understands that validated ministry is any ministry that fulfills all five of the above standards.

For purposes of determining a validated ministry, and in the spirit of St. Paul who practiced a tent making ministry, the Presbytery of Scioto Valley may consider either a Minister’s full time or part-time employment for purposes of determining validation. This provision does not apply to these categories of membership: Members at Large and Inactive Members.

In determining a validated ministry, it is the responsibility of the Minister to offer evidence or testimony to the Presbytery regarding how a particular ministry/job fulfills or fails to fulfill the above five standards. The burden of proof is on the Minister. The Minister may provide such documents as, employment contracts, literature describing the ministry, job descriptions, etc. The Presbytery of Scioto Valley has final authority in determining what constitutes a validated ministry and who shall be its continuing members.

### **Categories of Continuing Membership**

#### **A. Validated Ministry with the Congregations of the Presbytery of Scioto Valley**

All Ministers of the Word and Sacrament serving congregations of the Presbytery of Scioto Valley or a congregation in a denomination that is a party to the Formula of Agreement, either on a part-time or full time basis, are considered to be in validated ministries.

Examples: Pastor, interim pastor, stated supply, etc.

#### **B. Validated Ministry in other Service to the Presbyterian Church (USA).**

All Ministers of the Word and Sacrament employed by the Presbyterian Church (USA) or any of its related agencies, judicatories or affiliated institutions, or any religious organization with which the Presbyterian church is an official partner, as long as all five above standards are met.

Examples: Presbytery Executive, Director of Presbyterian owned Camp grounds, President or professor in a church college or seminary, chaplain in a church hospital, G.A. staff, G.A. missionary or fraternal worker, overseas worker with Presbyterian church of Brazil.

#### **C. Validated Ministry in ministry beyond the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church (USA).**

All Ministers of the Word and Sacrament engaged in ministries not directly accountable to the Presbyterian Church (USA) or one of its related agencies, but serving another denomination, a governmental entity, or Christian or ecumenical organization, as long as all five standards are met.

Examples: Pastor temporarily serving a Methodist congregation, President of a Lutheran College, a Military Chaplain, evangelist with Billy Graham Crusades, staff person with Young Life, Director of Council of Churches, chaplain in a Methodist Hospital, a counselor or social worker employed by a religious agency.

Military Chaplains are not employed directly by a religious organization, but they are accountable for their ministry through the Presbyterian's Office of Chaplains, and therefore qualify in this category of validated ministry.

Ministers in a validated ministry beyond the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church (USA) shall form a relationship with a congregation in the Presbytery.

### **D. Honorably Retired**

All Ministers of the Word and Sacrament, who are honorably retired, are considered in validated ministries for purposes of Presbytery membership.

Examples: Ministers honorably retired.

Even though some honorably retired ministers may continue to serve the Presbytery on its committees or in its congregations as stated supply or interim pastors, such ministers are still considered Honorably Retired for purposes of membership.

### **E. Members at Large**

The Presbytery of Scioto Valley recognizes that some Ministers of the Word and Sacrament need to maintain membership in the Presbytery while they are in between calls to validated ministries or temporarily unable to accept such calls due to illness, etc. Further, the Presbytery of Scioto Valley recognizes that some Ministers of the Word and Sacrament, while they are in forms of ministry that meet most, but not all of the five standards described in G.11.0403, are in the judgment of the Presbytery doing work that is within the scope of the mission of the Presbytery of Scioto Valley, and therefore, upon the request of the Minister shall be granted continuing membership.

For reasons of accountability, support, and administrative oversight, many of these ministers who present individual requests for continuing membership as Ministers at Large in the Presbytery on the basis that their work is within the scope of the mission of the Presbytery, will be placed under the oversight of a subcommittee of the Committee on Ministry. COM will develop consistent criteria for persons in these circumstances to enter and to be annually reviewed in their “at large” status which are consistent with the Book of Order principles spelled out above. This committee will also provide for ongoing support and annual accountability of these ministries to the Committee on Ministry and the Presbytery.

Members at Large is a category of continuing membership in the Presbytery of Scioto Valley that makes allowance for these two above types of situations.

Ministers who are Members at Large are not in validated ministries, because they, by definition, do not fulfill all five standards for a validated ministry. Normally, the Presbytery will not ordain a person to a ministry within this category or accept the transfer of a minister from another Presbytery or another denomination as a Member at Large, except that a clergy spouse of a minister who accepts a call in church or validated ministry within the Presbytery may transfer from another presbytery or a denomination that has entered into the Formula of Agreement into this category if he or she has not yet received a call to a congregation or validated ministry within the Presbytery. Normally, ordination must be to a validated ministry.

Ministers who are Members at Large are encouraged to fulfill as many of the standards for validated ministry as possible, even if such fulfillment is voluntarily or on a part-time basis.

In this category, the Presbytery will consider each situation on a case by case basis, based on the evidence, testimony and request of the Minister.

Ministers who fulfill no more than two of the five standards, shall after two years be, upon the recommendation of COM, be placed in inactive status.

#### **F. Inactive Members**

In addition to the instructions regarding inactive members found in G-11.0406c, The Presbytery of Scioto Valley will place a Minister of the Word and Sacrament on inactive status if he or she fails to respond to communication from the Committee on Ministry or the Presbytery office for three years. The Presbytery will notify the Minister of this action by certified mail.

*Note: Italics are direct quotes from Book of Order*