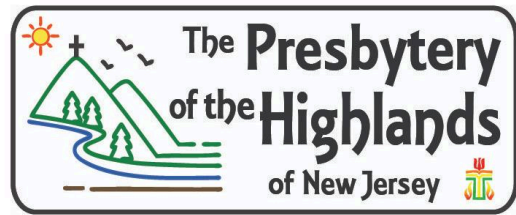


Recognition of a Validated/Specialized Ministry Policy

Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey



Introduction

The Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey affirms and supports the diverse ways in which God calls people to serve the Church and the world. While many Ministers of Word and Sacrament serve in installed pastoral roles within congregations, others are called to ministries beyond the local church. These ministries, though varied in form, are essential expressions of the Gospel through proclamation, sacrament, justice, mercy, and service.

The Presbytery bears responsibility for both the minister and the ministry. The recognition of a Validated/Specialized Ministry is the means by which the Presbytery:

- Discerns and affirms an individual's call to ministry beyond the traditional congregational setting within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.);
- Acknowledges, supports, and holds accountable those who serve faithfully in such ministries; and
- Evaluates whether a particular ministry—whether within the Presbytery's geographic area or beyond its direct jurisdiction—meets the standards for validation according to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

These ministries reflect creative, Spirit-led opportunities to embody the mission of Christ in a wide range of contexts.

Purpose

The purpose of recognizing a Validated/Specialized Ministry is to:

- Affirm the minister's call and the legitimacy of the ministry within the mission of the Church;
- Ensure accountability to the Presbytery, the denomination, and the wider community;

- Provide ongoing support, nurture, and connection between the minister and the Presbytery; and
- Strengthen the Church by expanding the ways in which the Gospel is proclaimed and lived.

Definition of a Validated/Specialized Ministry

A Validated/Specialized Ministry is typically a ministry outside the life of a local congregation that meets the criteria outlined in the *Book of Order* and the guidelines of the Presbytery of the Highlands.

A minister engaged in a Validated/Specialized Ministry (G-2.0503a) shall:

- Demonstrate conformity with the mission of God's people in the world as set forth in Holy Scripture, the *Book of Confessions*, and the *Book of Order*;
- Serve others and enable the ministry of others;
- Give evidence of theologically informed fidelity to God's Word;
- Be accountable for the character and conduct of the ministry to the Presbytery, in addition to any organizations or institutions served; and
- Participate responsibly in the worship, work, and deliberations of the Presbytery, as well as in the life of a congregation of this church or a church in correspondence with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Examples of Validated/Specialized Ministries

Validated/Specialized Ministries may take many forms, all consistent with the mission of God's people as expressed in Scripture and the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). These include, but are not limited to:

- Educators
- Chaplains
- Pastoral counselors
- Campus ministers
- Camp and conference ministry leaders
- Mission partners (domestic and global)
- Evangelists
- Administrators
- Social workers in church-related settings
- Faith-based community organizers
- New church development pastors

- Presbytery, synod, or General Assembly staff
- Others as approved by the COM

Criteria for Ministers Serving in a Validated/Specialized Ministry (G-2.0503)

A minister serving in a Validated/Specialized Ministry:

- Shall be a Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), or otherwise authorized for service in accordance with the *Book of Order*;
- May be ordained if the Presbytery approves both the call and the ministry setting;
- Shall participate in a congregation and in ecumenical relationships, consistent with ordination vows;
- Shall be eligible for election to higher councils of the Church and to boards and agencies of those councils;
- Shall participate in the Presbytery's Boundary Awareness Training at least once every three years;
- Shall report annually to the Presbytery on the status and work of the ministry; and
- Ministers serving in immigrant or non-English-speaking contexts will be considered in accordance with the *Book of Order*.

Approval Process for Validation of Specialized Ministry

To be recognized as a Validated/Specialized Ministry, the following process is required:

- 1. Submission of a Written Application**, including:
 - A statement describing how the ministry meets the required criteria;
 - A one-page Statement of Faith;
 - A Personal Discernment Profile (PDP), résumé, or curriculum vitae;
 - Financial terms of call (if applicable).
- 2. Commission on Ministry (COM) Review and approval process**
 - The COM reviews the application, evaluates the terms of call, and interviews the applicant.
 - The COM may approve or defer for more information or not approve.
 - The COM reports its recommendation to the Presbytery for formal recognition.

Members-at-Large

A Member-at-Large is a Minister of Word and Sacrament who was previously engaged in a Validated/Specialized Ministry but is no longer serving in a ministry that fully meets the criteria of G-2.0503a, without having intentionally abandoned the exercise of ministry.

A minister may be designated as a Member-at-Large due to circumstances such as:

- Family responsibilities
- Transition between calls
- Employment outside the church
- Other situations recognized by the Presbytery

Criteria for Member-at-Large Status

A Member-at-Large:

- Shall participate in a congregation within the Presbytery and be available to assist congregations and the Presbytery (e.g., preaching, worship leadership, moderating sessions);
- Shall be eligible for election to higher councils of the Church and to boards and agencies of those councils;
- Shall participate in Boundary Awareness Training at least once every three years; and
- Shall report annually to the Presbytery on their status and engagement in ministry.

Annual Report Forms will be sent annually to all Validated/Specialized/Members-at-large members of the Presbytery.