

The Orderly Exchange of Ordained Ministers of Word and Sacrament

as established by

A Formula of Agreement (1997)

and agreed among the participating churches

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Reformed Church in America

United Church of Christ

This document is a resource to assist the churches of *A Formula of Agreement (FOA)* to grow in mutual understanding and, in particular, to implement the *FOA*'s provisions for the mutual exchange of ministers of Word and Sacrament.

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**Evangelical
Lutheran**
Church in America



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Introduction

Through adoption of *A Formula of Agreement (FOA)*, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America and the United Church of Christ entered into a relationship of full communion with one another. Among other things, full communion means that the four churches “recognize each other’s various ministries and make provision for the orderly exchange of ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament.”

This resource seeks to help the church bodies grow in their wise implementation of this provision. It includes both principles identified from the beginning and fruits of subsequent experience. This opening statement, common to the four *FOA* churches, is followed by sections prepared by each church to help the others understand its procedures, commitments and distinctive terms.

Together, these materials support rather than replace direct conversations and personal relationships among those in our church offices who oversee particular instances of exchange of ministers. It is essential that there be proactive, open and continuing communication among these offices; no document can convey the complexity of ways that the procedures of each church are lived out, and a commitment to help one another in honoring the diversities of each tradition is part of the meaning of living in communion.

“Minister” in this document refers to ministers of Word and Sacrament in the four churches.

Principles for the exchange of ministers

1. This orderly exchange of ministers is for the sake of participation in the mission of God and can be an important sign of our unity in Christ. Thus, the needs of mission are always paramount. Ministers in one church *may be invited* to serve in another church; they do not have a *right* to serve in the other church.
2. Exchangeability, as part of common ecumenical commitment to collaborate as members of the one body of Christ, can enhance shared ministry and mission by encouraging more flexible, responsive and effective placement of ministers. Thus, orderly exchange encourages those in our churches responsible for ministerial placement to invite the service of ministers available in other churches and make use of their gifts; it encourages ministers in each church to respond to such invitations or, where appropriate, to express their openness to serve in another church.
3. While we are members of the one body of Christ Jesus, there is also diversity in the body. Therefore, the means of implementing orderly exchange need not be identical in each participating church. The existing polity of each church continues to be respected. It is important, however, that provisions parallel each other as much as possible and that each church be conversant with the provisions of the others.
4. One of the ways diversity is expressed is in the various ways the churches are organized, live communally, and allow for the care and discipline of their congregations and ministers. While ministers retain their ministerial membership in their own churches, the orderly exchange of ministers is understood to be at the invitation of the receiving church and subject to that church’s placement procedures and polity. It is within this context that responsibilities of both care and discipline are exercised.

5. *A Formula of Agreement* is a commitment to ongoing relationship among the four churches, which is undergirded by ongoing conversation and mutuality in the *FOA* spirit of “mutual affirmation and admonition.” Good practice in the exchange of ministers requires both the establishment of proper boundaries and the complete and mutual disclosure between church bodies of information concerning past and present ministry of these ministers, including discipline related matters, both during initial consideration and throughout any period of service under orderly exchange. Good practice will also require continued conversation to share both the celebrations and the challenges of implementation.

Implementation of the principles for the exchange of ministers

1. A minister of a full communion church may be eligible to engage in extended service in any position open to a minister in another participating church except as noted otherwise in the polity of either church. These provisions for exchangeability under the *FOA* do not directly affect these continuing practices:
 - Ministers’ occasional service in participating churches, while it may be further encouraged by full communion, continues to be authorized according to the polities of each of the churches.
 - Service in another church under the provisions of full communion does not accomplish or intend transfer of ministerial membership. When such transfer does seem appropriate, it will be authorized according to the polities of the two churches.
2. In evaluating the availability of ministers of Word and Sacrament, regional bodies of each participating church will do so in accordance with the stated intentions in *A Formula of Agreement*.
 - a. Judicatories should:
 - Be in conversation with *FOA* counterparts in their geographic regions about general mission objectives which could be supported through orderly exchange of ministers.
 - Explore with their congregations where there may be appropriate opportunities for orderly exchange of ministers.
 - Consult with their own ministers and those of the *FOA* partners concerning the gifts and commitments necessary for carrying out orderly exchange within the spirit and intentions of the *FOA*.
 - b. Ministers open to service in another church body should:
 - Consult, as appropriate, with their own judicatory leadership concerning availability and suitability for service in another full communion church body.
 - Use the ministerial profile or mobility forms of the sending church body and provide other documentation as requested.
 - Contact (either directly or consultatively with one’s own judicatory office, as appropriate) a regional staff person of the full communion church in the region or area one wishes to serve and follow that church’s procedure, and refrain from contacting a congregation directly unless instructed by the appropriate regional or judicatory official of that congregation’s church body.

3. Placement and oversight procedures of the inviting church shall be observed. Those responsible for placement will consider both ministers' faithful formation in their own tradition and their familiarity with that of the inviting church.
 - The churches expect that those who would serve in a congregation of another church will be formed and grounded for ministry in their own tradition. Therefore, such service is not intended for a first call.
 - To be invited for service in another church, a minister will demonstrate to that church's appropriate regional body both knowledge of and appreciation for the history, polity, theological and liturgical identity, practices of ministry, and discipline of that church. The minister will then be expected to preach, teach, administer the sacraments, and participate in the governance of that church in a manner consistent with that knowledge and appreciation.
4. Approval for extended service shall occur only in consultation with, and the concurrence of, the sending body.
 - When granting concurrence for a minister to serve in another church, the sending body will do so in accordance with the stated intentions in *A Formula of Agreement*.
 - Each church will develop a provision whereby a minister may be granted full participation in the appropriate regional body of the church in which the minister is serving, which may include privilege of voice and vote.
5. The minister is responsible for maintaining continued ministerial standing with and remains accountable to the sending body. Therefore, exchange of information concerning a specific disciplinary matter is initiated when an allegation of misconduct is first made, and appropriate next steps are agreed upon by representatives of the churches involved.
 - In a disciplinary review or judicial process, the minister remains under the jurisdiction of the sending body, and the inviting body may be asked to participate as appropriate.
 - The inviting body retains the right to rescind the invitation to service, even in situations where a formal disciplinary process may not be initiated by the sending body.
6. Since ministers remain members of their sending body, they continue to participate in the pension and benefits program of the sending church. The inviting church should therefore be expected to contribute to the minister's pension and benefits program in keeping with the practices of the sending church.
7. Responsibility for pastoral care of ministers is shared by both churches: in the ELCA, the synod; in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the presbytery; in the Reformed Church in America, the classis; and in the United Church of Christ, the conference or association.
8. The four churches will continue conversations among their ecumenical relations and ministry staff persons to share experiences, address difficulties, and clarify procedures in order to enhance the orderly exchange of ministers and to find ways to celebrate more visibly our full communion relationship and its opportunities for expanded mission.

The national staff offices welcome and encourage the sharing of questions, concerns and experiences from local and regional settings.

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

Full Communion bylaws

For the implementation of church-to-church relationships of full communion, the following bylaws in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* apply.

7.31.08. Invitation to Service. In accord with bylaw 8.62.11. and following, a minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been established by the Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may serve contractually in a ministry setting of this church under a “Letter of Invitation to Service” upon the authorization of the bishop of the synod in which such service occurs.

8.62.11. A minister of Word and Sacrament of this church, serving temporarily in a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by a Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament—upon endorsement by the synodical bishop and by action of the Synod Council in the synod in which the minister of Word and Sacrament is listed on the roster—under policies developed at the direction of the presiding bishop and secretary, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council. A minister of Word and Service of this church serving temporarily in a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by a Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, may be retained on the roster—upon endorsement by the synodical bishops and by action of the Synod Council in the synod in which the minister of Word and Service is listed on the roster—under policies developed at the direction of the presiding bishop and secretary, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.

- a. A letter of call may be issued to a minister of Word and Sacrament of this church, serving temporarily in such a church body, by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or a Synod Council, in accord with the Table of Sources of Calls (ELCA churchwide continuing resolution 7.44.A16.b.).
- b. A letter of call may be issued to a minister of Word and Service of this church, serving temporarily in such a church body, by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America or a Synod Council, in accord with the Table of Sources of Calls (ELCA churchwide continuing resolution 7.74.A16.b.).
- c. A letter of call issued by the Church Council or a Synod Council for service in a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been established by the Churchwide Assembly shall be governed by churchwide constitutional provision 7.43. and churchwide bylaw 7.43.01.

8.62.12. A minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by a Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may be authorized by the synodical bishop to serve in a congregation or employing entity of this church. Such service shall be rendered

under a contract between the congregation or employing entity and the minister of Word and Sacrament in a form proposed by the synodical bishop and approved by the congregation or employing entity. Any such service shall be in accord with churchwide policies developed at the direction of the presiding bishop and secretary, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

- 8.62.13.** Whenever a rostered minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is to serve or is serving in a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Churchwide Assembly, or whenever a minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been so declared and established is to serve or is serving in this church, a full sharing of relevant information concerning such rostered minister's experience and fitness for ministry is expected between the synodical bishop (or other appropriate office or entity) of this church and the appropriate person, office, or entity in the other church. Relevant information related to fitness for ministry shall include, but is not limited to, any information concerning disciplinary proceedings or allegations that could result, or could have resulted, in disciplinary proceedings.
- 8.62.14.** A minister of Word and Sacrament from a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by a Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may be granted the privilege of both voice and vote in the Synod Assembly during the period of that minister's service in a congregation of this church, in accord with ELCA churchwide bylaw 8.62.12.
- 8.62.15.** The availability of a minister of Word and Sacrament from a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by a Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America shall be understood normally in three categories: availability to serve in an occasional situation; availability to meet an extended need, including service in "yoked parish" settings; and availability for a transfer of roster status.
- a. *Occasional service:* An occasional situation is defined as one in which a minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which a relationship of full communion exists may be asked to preach or administer the sacraments in an ELCA congregation on an occasional basis with the authorization of the synodical bishop.
 - b. *Extended service:* A minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which a relationship of full communion exists may be invited to serve as the pastor of an ELCA congregation for an extended period of time, yet remain a minister of Word and Sacrament of his or her present church body. Such a person would be expected to preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in an ELCA congregation in a manner that is consistent with the Confession of Faith of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and to live in a manner consistent with the ministerial policy of this church. Such service shall be rendered only as authorized by the synodical bishop in order to serve the ministry and mission needs of the ELCA in a given situation.
 - c. *Transfer:* A minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which a relationship of full communion exists who seeks to serve indefinitely within the ministry of Word and Sacrament of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America may apply for admission to the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of the

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and be approved through the candidacy process for admission to the roster. Such a minister would then become an ELCA pastor upon receipt and acceptance of a regular call and installation in an ELCA congregation or other setting.

- d. Roster status in more than one church body is precluded in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. As required by ELCA churchwide constitutional provision 7.22. and bylaw 7.31.01., ministers on the Word and Sacrament roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America must accept and adhere to this church's Confession of Faith, as well as abide by this church's standards and policies for ministers of Word and Sacrament.

8.62.16. Rostered ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, while serving in an ecumenical setting, remain subject to the standards, policies, and discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. A minister of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which a relationship of full communion exists is understood by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as subject to the standards, policies, and discipline of the church body in which the minister is rostered or holds ministerial membership. Such a minister, while serving in an ELCA congregation or other ministry, is expected to abide by the standards and policies of this church related to ministers of Word and Sacrament.

8.62.17. When a minister of Word and Sacrament from a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by a Churchwide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America completes a contract for extended service, the synodical file on that minister shall be sent to and retained by the Office of the Secretary.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Cooperation with other church bodies in the exercise of Word and Sacrament ministry

The Lutheran-Reformed proposal for full communion adopted by the 1997 ELCA Churchwide Assembly, *A Formula of Agreement*, declared, “that they [the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America (RCA) and the United Church of Christ (UCC)] recognize each other’s various ministries and make provision for the orderly exchange of ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament.”

In accord with the governing documents of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, policy related to the orderly exchange of ministers between the participating church bodies is developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council. Such policy would apply to ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church who, while being retained on the roster of the ELCA, would serve temporarily in a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been established, and to ministers of Word and Sacrament of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been established who would serve temporarily in a congregation or other ministry setting of this church.

The *Manual of Policies and Procedures for Management of the Rosters of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, adopted by the Church Council in March 2017, outlines the following practices related to the availability of ministers of Word and Sacrament between the ELCA and church bodies with which a relationship of full communion has been established. “Resources for familiarization with the life and practice of the ELCA” is an appendix on page 88.

http://download.ELCA.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Policies_Procedures_Roster_Mgmt.pdf

Background: In accordance with the governing documents of the ELCA, policy related to the orderly exchange of ministers of Word and Sacrament between the participating church bodies is developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council. Such policy would apply to ministers of Word and Sacrament in this church who, while being retained on the roster of the ELCA, would serve temporarily in a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been established, and to ministers of Word and Sacrament in a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been established who would serve temporarily in a congregation or other ministry setting of this church without being admitted to the roster of the ELCA.

See “Admission to the Roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of Persons Ordained in Another Christian Tradition” [page 11 of the roster manual] for the process by which a minister of Word and Sacrament in a full communion partner church body, intending to serve indefinitely in the ELCA, may apply for admission to the ELCA roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament. Such a person would then become an ELCA pastor upon receipt and acceptance of a regular call and installation in an ELCA congregation or other approved setting.

Roster status in more than one church body at a time is precluded in the ELCA.

I. Ministers of Word and Sacrament of another church body serving in the ELCA

NOTE: A minister of Word and Sacrament of a full communion partner church serves in an ELCA congregation UNDER CONTRACT, NOT UNDER CALL by the congregation.

- A. **Occasional service.** A minister of Word and Sacrament in a church body with which a relationship of full communion exists may be asked to preach or administer the sacraments in an ELCA congregation on an occasional basis with the authorization of the synod bishop.
- B. **Extended service.** A minister of Word and Sacrament in a church body with which a relationship of full communion exists may be invited by the synod bishop to serve as the pastor of an ELCA congregation for an extended period of time, yet remain an ordained minister of that church body. Such a person will be expected to preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in an ELCA congregation in a manner that is consistent with the “Confession of Faith” of the ELCA, and to live in a manner consistent with the expectations of this church as stated in “Vision and Expectations.” Such service shall be rendered only as authorized by the synod bishop in order to serve the ministry and mission needs of the ELCA or its ecumenical partners in a given situation.

Service in a congregation of this church or employing entity shall be rendered under a contract between the congregation or employing entity and the minister of Word and Sacrament, for a stated period of time in a form proposed by the synod bishop and approved by the congregation. Extended service is reviewed annually by the Synod Council or Church Council.

Upon the recommendation of the synod bishop and approval by the Synod Council, the synod bishop authorizes an extended service ministry.

1. Upon such authorization the minister of Word and Sacrament enters service in the ELCA through the entry rite, “Invitation to Extended Service,” which acknowledges the service of the minister of Word and Sacrament as pastor in a congregation or other setting of ministry in this church.

The Rite of Installation is **NOT** used as that rite is for use only for a regularly called minister of Word and Sacrament of the ELCA.

2. A minister of Word and Sacrament who is approved to serve in an extended service ministry in the ELCA may be granted voice and vote in a synod assembly.

At any time for the sake of the ongoing ministry, the synod bishop may withdraw authorization for service (or the congregation, employing agency or the minister may terminate a contract for extended service) after consultation with the other parties to the contract.

Ministers of Word and Sacrament who have ceased to be “rostered” or the equivalent by a full communion partner church body are not considered eligible for such service unless or until they are received on the roster of the ELCA or of another full communion church.

II. ELCA ministers of Word and Sacrament serving in another church body

A minister of Word and Sacrament of this church, serving for an extended period of time in a church body with which a relationship of full communion exists, may be retained on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament upon the recommendation of the synod bishop and by action of the Synod Council in the synod in which the minister is listed on the roster.

Congregations that cease to be rostered by a full communion partner church body are not eligible for service by a pastor of the ELCA until the congregation is received by the ELCA or another church body with which a relationship of full communion has been established.

III. Procedures

A. Assessment. Authorization for extended service is given by the Synod Council, on the basis of the synod bishop's assessment of the suitability for service of the minister of Word and Sacrament. The bishop may wish to appoint a panel to assist in this determination. The appropriate churchwide unit recommends that this not be a responsibility of the full synod Candidacy Committee, although members of the committee may serve on the panel.

B. Pension and medical insurance. A determination of the medical and disability insurance for the minister of Word and Sacrament will be made. The guiding principle has become that a minister of Word and Sacrament serving under provisions of a full communion agreement remains in his or her parent church body's pension and benefits plan, and the congregation or other ministry setting contributes to that plan.

It is anticipated that a congregation of this church will be able to contribute to the plan of another church body in order to provide appropriate medical coverage and a pension plan. Similarly, a minister of Word and Sacrament of this church serving in another church body will need to determine that Portico Benefit Services (or another comparable plan) coverage is provided by the employing body.

C. Accountability and pastoral care. A minister of Word and Sacrament in another church body is accountable to the jurisdiction or judicatory in which that person is "rostered" or in other ways a member. Similarly, a minister of Word and Sacrament of this church serving in another church body remains on the roster of this church and is accountable to the bishop of the synod in which rostered. The synod bishop is responsible for appropriate pastoral care and leadership for all ELCA congregations, including those served by ministers of Word and Sacrament of other church bodies (ELCA constitutional provision 10.31.a.3.).

D. Exchange of information. The assessments, authorizations, and reviews necessary to the "orderly exchange of ordained ministers" between church bodies with which a relationship of full communion exists require the complete and continuing disclosure to the synod of all information concerning the past and present ministry of these ministers serving in the ELCA, or of ELCA ministers of Word and Sacrament serving under call from a synod council or the Church Council. Such disclosure must include any disciplinary proceedings, including discipline related to conduct during service in the ELCA by a minister of another church body.

E. Source of call. A minister of Word and Sacrament of this church serving in a congregation, local, or regional ministry setting of another church body serves under a letter of call from the Synod Council in which that minister is rostered. An ELCA minister of Word and Sacrament serving in a national ministry setting of another church body serves under a letter of call from the ELCA Church Council. This call is subject to annual review by the Synod Council or Church Council.

F. Titles. The usual title "pastor of (insert name of congregation)" would be used for ministers of Word and Sacrament serving in an ELCA congregation. The recognized professional title of "The Rev." for an ordained minister also would be applicable, in view of the officially recognized status of that minister of Word and Sacrament in a church body with which the ELCA has a relationship of full communion.

Glossary of Terms — Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Bishop

In the ELCA, a bishop is a minister of Word and Sacrament given responsibility to provide pastoral care, teaching and leadership in a synod and its congregations. The bishop is chief executive officer of the synod, as well as its chief ecumenical and inter-religious officer, and is to strengthen the unity of the Church. Bishops exercise solely this church's power to ordain (or provide for the ordination by another synod bishop of) approved candidates for ministry of Word and Sacrament; and they consecrate (or provide for the consecration of) approved candidates for ministry of Word and Service. Bishops are elected by synod assemblies to six-year terms and may be re-elected.

Bishop's Assistant or Associate

A member of the synod staff, either a rostered minister or a layperson, who assists the bishop in carrying out the responsibilities of that office, including matters regarding placement and rostering.

Bishop, Presiding

A minister of Word and Sacrament who is a teacher of the faith of this church and provides leadership for the life and witness of this church. The presiding bishop is the chief executive officer of the churchwide organization and is the chief ecumenical and inter-religious officer of the ELCA. The presiding bishop is elected to a six-year term and may be re-elected.

Book of Concord

The Book of Concord (1580; current English translation 2000) is a collection of 10 foundational documents for Lutheran theology: the three ecumenical creeds, Augsburg Confession, Apology, Smalcald Articles, Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, Small Catechism, Large Catechism and Formula of Concord. It became the official standard of doctrine for most Lutheran Churches; the ELCA constitution accepts the *Augsburg Confession* as a "true witness to the Gospel" and the other confessional writings as "further valid interpretations of the faith of the Church." Most familiar of the Reformation-era texts is Martin Luther's *Small Catechism*, which continues in common use as a formative presentation of Christian affirmations. Its teachings and even phrases are instantly recognizable to many Lutherans.

Church Council

The Church Council of the ELCA is the board of directors of the churchwide organization, serving as the interim legislative authority between meetings of the Churchwide Assembly. The Church Council meets at least two times each year, and is composed of the four churchwide officers (presiding bishop, vice president, secretary and treasurer), the chair of the Conference of Bishops, and at least 32 and not more than 45 other persons elected to six-year terms by the Churchwide Assembly.

An ELCA minister of Word and Sacrament serving in a national ministry setting of another church body serves under a letter of call from the Church Council.

Churchwide Assembly

The Churchwide Assembly is the highest legislative authority of the churchwide organization. It reviews the work of the churchwide officers and churchwide units. It establishes churchwide policy

and adopts the budget for the churchwide organization. It has the sole authority to amend the constitution and bylaws of the ELCA. The Churchwide Assembly meets triennially in regular session.

Churchwide Organization

The churchwide organization functions interdependently with the congregations and synods of the ELCA. It is responsible for developing churchwide policy, standards for leadership, including rostered ministries, and the coordination of the work of the ELCA both globally and throughout the territory of the ELCA.

Conference of Bishops

The Conference of Bishops is composed of the bishops of the 65 synods, the presiding bishop and the secretary of the ELCA. The conference meets at least two times each year and is a forum in which goals, objectives and strategies may be developed and shared concerning pastoral leadership, care and counsel for the synods. The Conference of Bishops reviews recommendations from the appropriate churchwide units pertaining to policies and programs, and in particular participates in the development and study of ecumenical and inter-religious documents and assists bishops in their ecumenical and inter-religious roles.

Congregation

Congregations, together with synods and the churchwide organization, are one of the three interdependent expressions of the ELCA. They act through their Congregation Meetings and typically delegate authority to an elected Congregation Council.

Congregation Council (see also Church Council and Synod Council)

Like synods and the churchwide expression, an ELCA congregation has a council. Typically the congregation delegates many matters of governance to its council, which it elects from its members. Each congregation's constitution specifies the pastor's role on its council.

Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions

The basic commitments of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as well as its organizational outline, structural patterns, and rubrics of governance are expressed by its constitutions, bylaws and continuing resolutions. These documents govern the life of the ELCA as congregations, synods and the churchwide organization.

Deacon

Since 2016, ministers of Word and Service are known as deacons. Some deacons are members of the Deaconess Community of the ELCA and are known as Sisters.

Evangelical

“Evangelical” was an original designation for the reformers, from the Greek word for “gospel” or “good news.” Still used this way in German-speaking areas to designate Christians who are not Roman Catholic or Orthodox, the term is also used currently by The Lutheran World Federation to characterize Lutheran tradition. While in the United States the word has distinctively taken on additional connotations from other historical developments, its use in the name of the ELCA honors

and reclaims the heritage of witnessing to the “good news” of God’s grace and living as “gospel people,” sharing God’s love for the world.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

The ELCA came into being on January 1, 1988, by the uniting of three church bodies. Lutheran roots on this continent are deep. In the mid-17th century early Lutherans came from Europe, settling in the Virgin Islands and the area that is now known as New York. The Ministerium of Pennsylvania, the first Lutheran church body, was established in 1748. The ELCA is currently the largest of the Lutheran bodies in the United States.

Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW)

(See Worship Resources)

Full Communion

“Communion” comes from the biblical *koinonia* — to share, act together, live in fellowship. It describes a relationship of churches where each maintains its autonomy but fully recognizes the other as church.

The Preface to *A Formula of Agreement* includes a definition full communion for this ecumenical relationship, closely related to the ELCA’s explanation of “full communion” in *Ecumenism: A Vision of the ELCA* (1991). Among the characteristics is that the churches “recognize each others’ various ministries and make provision for the orderly exchange of ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament.”

Letter of Call

A call is an action through which a person is asked to serve in a specified ministry. Such an action is attested in a “letter of call.” A letter of call is issued by that ELCA expression (congregation, synod or churchwide organization) most directly involved in accountability for the specified ministry.

The Lutheran World Federation

The ELCA belongs to The Lutheran World Federation, a Communion of Churches. This is a global body of churches in the Lutheran tradition which unites its members in “pulpit and altar fellowship” and describes Lutheran identity as evangelical, sacramental, diaconal, confessional and ecumenical.

Membership

ELCA members are the baptized members of its congregations. Baptized members are those persons who have been received by the Sacrament of Holy Baptism in ELCA congregations, or, having been previously baptized in the name of the Triune God, have been received by certificate of transfer from other Lutheran congregations or by affirmation of faith.

Pastor

Ministers of Word and Sacrament are known as pastors, especially those who serve in congregational settings. The term “pastor” may describe a minister of Word and Sacrament serving in a non-congregational setting as well.

Representational Principles

Among the principles of organization, the ELCA currently provides that at least 60 percent of the members of assemblies, councils, committees, boards and other organizations shall be laypersons; that, as nearly as possible, the lay members shall be 50 percent female and 50 percent male, and that, where possible, the representation of rostered ministers shall be both female and male. It is also determined that a minimum goal of 10 percent of the membership of its assemblies, councils, committees, boards or other organizational units be persons of color and/or persons whose primary language is other than English. It is also a goal of the ELCA that at least 10 percent of the voting members of the Churchwide Assembly, Church Council, and churchwide boards and committees be youth and young adults.

Region

There are nine geographic regions within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, recognized as a partnership among groups of synods within the region and the churchwide organization.

Roster

The ELCA has two rosters: the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament and the roster of Ministers of Word and Service. For each roster there are four mutually exclusive categories: under call, on leave from call, on disability status or on retired status.

Rostered Ministers

Those listed on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament or on the roster of Ministers of Word and Service are collectively known as rostered ministers. Every rostered minister must be a member of an ELCA congregation. (For those granted retired or disability status, rare exceptions are made.)

Rostered Minister Profile (RMP)

The RMP is a 16-step document designed to stimulate reflection, to summarize a rostered minister's interests and ministry, and to be used as a professional résumé. It is used by ELCA rostered ministers and candidates for rostered ministry to express their interest in and availability for a call.

Synod

There are 65 synods in the ELCA. Each synod, together with the churchwide organization, bears primary responsibility for the oversight of the life and mission of the ELCA in its territory.

Synod Council

The Synod Council is the board of directors of the synod and serves as its interim legislative authority between meetings of the Synod Assembly. For the ELCA, a minister of Word and Sacrament serving in a congregation, local or regional setting of another church body serves under a letter of call from the council of the synod in which that minister is rostered.

Synod-authorized ministries

When need exists to render Word and Sacrament ministry for a congregation or ministry of this church where it is not possible to provide appropriate pastoral leadership, the synod bishop — acting with the consent of the congregation or ministry, in consultation with the Synod Council, and in accord with standards and qualifications developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference

of Bishops, and approved by the Church Council — may authorize a person who is a member of a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to offer this ministry. Such an individual shall be supervised by a minister of Word and Sacrament appointed by the synod bishop; such service shall be rendered during its duration under the sacramental authority of the bishop as the synod's pastor. Such an individual will be trained to fulfill this ministry for a specified period of time and in a given location only. Authorization, remuneration, direct supervision, and accountability are to be determined by the appropriate synod leadership according to churchwide standards and qualifications for this type of ministry. Authorization for such service shall be reviewed annually and renewed only when a demonstrated need remains for its continuation. (ELCA bylaw 7.31.09.)

Synod-authorized ministers are not available for exchange through full communion agreements.

Synod Assembly

The Synod Assembly is the highest legislative authority of the synod, with a regular meeting held at least triennially (with most synod assemblies meeting annually). All rostered ministers are voting members, as are representative lay members from every congregation within the synod.

Worship Resources

Evangelical Lutheran Worship (2006) is “commended” for use in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This is a core rather than a comprehensive resource; it reflects a body of prayer and song that our churches consider worthy to hold in common. The book contains notable representatives of a wide variety of liturgical texts and musical forms that point to larger repertoires outside this volume — expressions desired in every context by an increasingly diverse church.

Examples of this widening circle of resources include *Libro De Liturgia Y Cantico* (1998) and *This Far by Faith: An African American Resource for Worship* (1999); *Evangelical Lutheran Worship Occasional Services for the Assembly* (2009); supplemental resources on marriage, <http://www.ELCA.org/Resources/Worship#Liturgy> and many more in diverse media.

The Use of the Means of Grace was adopted for “guidance and practice” by the 1997 Churchwide Assembly as “a statement on the practice of Word and Sacrament.”

http://download.ELCA.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/The_Use_Of_The_Means_Of_Grace.pdf

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

Processes and resources for exchange of ministries with participating churches in *A Formula Of Agreement*

The orderly exchange of ministers is intended for those who are already ordained as Ministers of Word and Sacrament in one of the Formula churches. As stated in the principles of orderly exchange, it is “not intended for first calls.” The 2008 General Assembly approved the following Authoritative Interpretation (2008, 48, 51, 279, Item 04-24): The words “not intended” in the Orderly Exchange document closes the door to ordination to a first call in another denomination. This interpretation within the PC(USA) applies to both those Formula church candidates who might want to serve PC(USA) churches and PC(USA) candidates who might want to serve Formula of Agreement churches.

I. Provisions for ministry by ministers of Formula churches in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The following provisions are governed by the general principle of Presbyterian polity that *the Presbytery decides who shall be members and approves calls for service in churches.*

A. Service of a joint congregational witness, as well as with ecumenical parishes, cooperative ministries, and new worshiping communities.

1. Covered by G-5.05 (section of the Form of Government of the *Book of Order*).
 - a. Presbytery approves call of union or federated church to a minister to serve as pastor or associate pastor, or appoints a minister to serve in a temporary ministerial capacity in a Presbyterian church, or approves the invitation of a cooperative specialized ministry to a minister to serve in that ministry.
 - b. The minister may be enrolled as a temporary member of a presbytery with the rights and privileges of membership (voice, vote, serve on committees, hold office) during that service. (*G-2.0506*)
2. The minister may not be called to an installed ministry in a Presbyterian church by virtue of this membership in a presbytery.
3. The minister must be in good standing with a governing body of jurisdiction in the church of which he/she is a member.
4. The governing body with jurisdiction over the minister approves the ministry according to its applicable procedures.

B. Installed ministry and temporary service in a Presbyterian congregation

1. Extended service, which is the only category to which the orderly exchange of ministers under the Formula of Agreement applies, is defined within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as either installed ministry or temporary service in a Presbyterian congregation.
2. Installed ministry within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) can either be for an indefinite term or a for a designated term up to 3 years. Temporary service is for a specified period not to exceed twelve-months, but may be renewed. (*G-2.0504 a,b*)

3. G-2.0506 provides an exception, for ministers from Formula churches, to the general rule that only ministers of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) may be called and installed as pastors, co-pastors, and associate pastors in Presbyterian congregations (except those covered in A above).
 - a. Presbytery approves the call of the congregation using the procedures of the presbytery. *(G-2.0803)*
 - b. The minister is installed as pastor, co-pastor, designated pastor, or associate pastor. *(G-2.0805)*
 - c. The minister may be enrolled during this service as a member of presbytery with all rights and privileges. *(G-2.0506)*
4. The minister must be in good standing with a governing body of jurisdiction in the church of which he/she is a member.
5. The governing body of jurisdiction approves the ministry according to its applicable procedures.
6. The minister remains a member of her /his church, subject to the discipline of that church, and continues under the benefits plan of that church.

C. Reception of a minister of a Formula church as a minister member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

1. Ministers seeking to transfer church membership from another church will be considered under the applicable provisions in G-2.0505.
 - a. Ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will have to “submit satisfactory evidence of possessing the qualifications of character and scholarship required of candidates of this church.” *(G-2.0607 & G-2.0610)*
 - b. Ministers of the Reformed Church in America and the United Church of Christ will also have to meet the requirements of G-2.0607 and G-2.0610, but there is a provision that may allow an exception for them to the candidate examination requirements if the minister has been ordained more than five years. *(G-2.0505a(2))*
2. Ministers seeking transfer will need to be in good standing in their own churches and be granted dismissal by the governing body of jurisdiction.
3. This is not an avenue for avoiding candidacy requirements in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

II. Service by a Minister of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in another Formula Church

A. Service in union and federated churches, ecumenical parishes, cooperative ministries *(G-5.05)*

1. Approval of invitation for service is by supervising judicatories of all participating churches.
2. Presbytery approves call of union or federated church to a minister to serve as pastor or associate pastor, or approves the invitation of a cooperative specialized ministry to a minister to serve in that ministry.
3. The minister may accept membership or participation in the supervising judicatory for the duration of the service. The invitation for such membership or participation is at the discretion and according to the provisions of the inviting church.

4. The minister remains a member of his/her presbytery, subject to the discipline of this church, and continues under the benefits plan of this church.

B. Temporary service in a congregation of another Formula church (G-2.0506)

1. Approval of invitation for service is by the supervising judicatory of inviting church according to provisions of that church.
2. Presbytery validates (approves) temporary ministerial service in a congregation of a Formula church. Presbytery reviews service at least annually and may withdraw approval.
3. The minister may accept membership or participation in the supervising judicatory for the duration of the service. The invitation for such membership or participation is at the discretion and according to the provisions of the inviting church.
4. The minister remains a member of his/her presbytery, subject to the discipline of this church, and continues under the benefits plan of this church.

C. Installed ministry or extended service in a congregation of another Formula church (G-2.08)

1. Approval of invitation for service is by the supervising judicatory of inviting church according to provisions of that church.
2. Presbytery validates (approves) extended ministerial service in a congregation of a Formula church. Presbytery reviews service at least annually and may withdraw approval.
3. The minister may accept membership or participation in the supervising judicatory for the duration of the service. The invitation for such membership or participation is at the discretion and according to the provisions of the inviting church.
4. The minister remains a member of his/her presbytery, subject to the discipline of this church, and continues under the benefits plan of this church.

D. Transfer of a minister member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to a judicatory of a Formula church

1. A minister may request transfer of ministerial membership to another of the Formula churches.
2. Such a minister will remain on the rolls and under the authority of his/her presbytery until notice is received from a judicatory of a Formula church that the minister has been enrolled or rostered.

A minister may not be transferred if any disciplinary matter is pending.

III. Resources

A. At the Presbytery level

1. Executive or General Presbyter (or mid council leader charged with supporting the work of the presbytery related to teaching elders/Ministers of Word and Sacrament and inquirers and candidates for ministry)
2. Stated Clerk

3. Committee on Ministry (or the presbytery committee or process that is charged with the care of teaching elders/Ministers of Word and Sacrament)
4. Committee on Preparation for Ministry (or the presbytery committee or process that is charged with the care of inquirers and candidates for ministry)

B. At the Synod level (applicable for ministries that cross presbytery boundaries)

1. Synod Executive (All but two of the 16 synods have someone performing the executive function)
2. Stated Clerk
3. Appropriate Committees (synod structures vary dramatically)

C. At the General Assembly level

Office of the General Assembly

- a. Ordered Ministries and Certification – (502) 569-5421 or (888) 728-7228 x5421
- b. Call Process Support – (502) 569-5730 or (888) 728-7228 x5730
- c. Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations – (502) 569-5423 or (888) 728-7228 x5423
- d. Constitutional Interpretation – (502) 569-5432 or (888) 728-7228 x5432

D. Information about Staff serving in positions listed above

See the PC(USA) directory for presbytery leaders at <http://ogaapps.pcusa.org/directories/#/mgb>.

Call Process in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Whether a call is to a congregational setting or to a setting outside of a congregation, the call of a new pastoral leader to ministry within the bounds of a presbytery supports the mission and vision of that presbytery through the particular church. Each presbytery seeks leaders who will enhance the presbytery's mission at a particular time and in a particular place. While the process by which a pastoral leader is called varies among presbyteries, all processes are guided by *The Book of Order*, which is Part II of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), all congregational pastoral relationships are established by the presbytery and require the concurrent approval of the presbytery, the congregation or its session, and the pastoral leader. Pastoral leaders within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are called Ministers of Word and Sacrament or Teaching Elders.

Ministers of Word and Sacrament may be installed as pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor of a congregation. This installed pastoral relationship may be for an indefinite period of time or for a designated term as determined by the presbytery in consultation with the congregation and specified in the call.

Ministers of Word and Sacrament may also serve in temporary pastoral relationships that do not carry a formal call or installation; the relationships are established with the session of the congregation in concurrence with the presbytery. These temporary relationships are approved by the presbytery, which also determines the titles and the terms of service. The terms of service for temporary pastoral relationships are for a specified period not to exceed twelve-months, but may be renewed. (*G-2.0504 a,b*)

Within the PC(USA), calls are often filled through the Church Leadership Connection (CLC) system. This database system connects pastoral and lay leaders to calling organizations by matching the Ministry Information Forms (MIF's) of calling organizations with Personal Information Forms (PIF's) of call seekers. After the initial connection, call seekers and calling organizations are encouraged to engage in deeper conversation with potential "fits" as they seek to discern the will of Christ for ministry together. At this time, the use of CLC is restricted to individuals and entities with an official affiliation to the PC(USA).

Ministers of Formula of Agreement partners who are interested in serving in a PC(USA) congregation may express their interest by contacting the local presbytery to which the congregation belongs. The process is described in more detail below in the Orderly Exchange Process. It is expected that those seeking to serve a PC(USA) congregation will have compatible theology with the denomination and be willing to learn and abide by its polity.

Regardless of denominational affiliation, all pastors called to serve a PC(USA) congregation are called to preach and teach the faith of the church so that the people are shaped by the pattern of the gospel and strengthened for witness and service. Pastors also serve as presbyters and members of presbyteries. They participate in the responsibilities of governance within local presbyteries and the larger church, always seeking to build up the body of Christ through the sharing of their ministry gifts, service, leadership, devotion, knowledge and decision making.

Ministers of Formula of Agreement Denominations
(ELCA, PC(USA), RCA and UCC)
The Process of Orderly Exchange

Ministers of Formula of Agreement denominations (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Reformed Church in America and the United Church of Christ) under Orderly Exchange” may serve as an installed or temporary pastor of a PC(USA) congregation by invitation from a PC(USA) presbytery (regional mid council).

Highlights of the Formula of Agreement and the Orderly Exchange process are:

- The orderly exchange process begins with the identification of a ministry need by the appropriate regional body of the “inviting” congregation and the identification of an ordained minister from a Formula of Agreement partner church who may serve in that ministry setting.
- The judicatory of the “inviting” congregation initiates the process of the orderly exchange between the congregation to be served and the ordained minister. The ordained minister does not initiate the process of exchange.
- The “inviting” congregation should consult with the appropriate regional body of the ordained minister to determine the suitability of the potential service and to receive the concurrence of the “sending” body—presbytery, classis, conference and association or synod. The ordained minister remains accountable to the sending church for continuation of ministerial status.
- A ministry in a congregation of another church is not intended for a “first call” candidate. Experience in and knowledge of one’s own tradition is seen as necessary before serving in a different tradition.
- This agreement applies only to persons who are ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament and does not apply to persons who are locally trained and authorized ministers – commissioned pastors (RCA), commissioned ruling elders (PC(USA)), licensed ministers (UCC), synodically authorized ministers (ELCA).
- Ministers serving in an orderly exchange should be temporary under this agreement. Should an ordained minister of one church intend to serve permanently in another church then the process of the transfer of ministerial status should be followed.
- Should a disciplinary process be necessary, the ordained minister remains under the jurisdiction of the sending body, but the inviting body may be asked to participate as necessary.
- Pension and medical coverage is through the denominations of membership.

The complete policy and process document, “A Formula of Agreement – The Orderly Exchange of Ordained Ministers of Word and Sacrament,” is available on the Web at:

<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/ecumenical-formula-agreement/>.

Presbyteries may enroll ministers of another Christian church temporary membership in the presbytery for a period of service who is serving temporarily in a validated ministry in this church, or in an installed relationship under the provisions of the Formula of Agreement (*Book of Order, Appendix B; G-5.0202*), when the minister has satisfied the requirements of preparation for such service established by the presbytery’s own rule. (*G-2.0506*) As a temporary member, a pastor may be granted voice and vote in meetings, are authorized to administer the sacraments and moderator meetings of the session.

Glossary of Terms — Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Book of Confessions

The confessional portion of the *Constitution* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The included confessional statements range from the Nicene and Apostles Creeds, through the sixteenth century Reformed confessional documents, to “A Brief Statement of Faith” adopted in 1991 as part of the reunion of the Presbyterian Church in the United States and the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, and the Belhar Confession from the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa adopted by the PC(USA) in 2016.

Book of Order

The procedural portion of the *Constitution*. It includes the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, Form of Government, Directory for Worship, and the Rules of Discipline.

Call

Used two ways in the *Book of Order*: either as the formal action of a congregation, electing by vote a pastor or associate pastor for the congregation, or as the less formal approval by a presbytery of a minister’s service in a number of settings. (*G-2.05*)

Church Leadership Connection (CLC)

The online database and search system that supports the PC(USA)’s national call system.

Commissioned Pastor (see Ruling Elder Commissioned to Particular Service)

Presbyterian ruling elders who have been given a particular commission to provide pastoral services in a congregation or to do some other presbytery-authorized ministry under the guidance of a minister mentor. (*G-2.10*) Orderly exchange of ministers under the Formula of Agreement does not pertain to Commissioned Pastors.

Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Also *Constitution*. The guiding documents for doctrine and practice in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). See *The Book of Confessions* and the *Book of Order* above.

Deacon

The ordained office in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) of which the focus is on compassionate care for members and non-members of a church. A session may assign additional duties to deacons. Orderly exchange of ministers under the Formula of Agreement does not pertain to PC(USA) deacons.

Disciplinary process

Provisions in the Rules of Discipline, the fourth section of the *Book of Order*, for resolving conflicts involving governing bodies (remedial cases) or for resolving questions of fitness for ministry in relation to allegations that the person has committed an offense (disciplinary cases).

Executive

The chief administrative and/or mission staff person of a presbytery or synod may be called Executive Presbyter or Synod Executive. Those serving in these executive roles may also be called General Presbyter, Presbytery Leader, or another title indicating their staff role.

General Assembly

The highest council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), representative of the unity of the synods, presbyteries, sessions, and congregations of the church.

Installation

Formally used in the *Book of Order* for the worship service at which a pastoral relationship is formally established between a congregation and a pastor or associate pastor. Also used formally for the worship service marking the beginning of service of elders on the session of the congregation or deacons in service in the congregation. Used also for services marking the beginning of service of officers and staff in the church.

Installed Pastor / Installed Pastoral Relationship

A Minister of Word and Sacrament/teaching elder can be called to a permanent or designated pastoral position, and the presbytery shall complete the call process by organizing and conducting a service of installation. Once the installation is complete, the Minister of Word and Sacrament/teaching elder is the installed pastor. Not all pastoral relationships are installed positions. (G-2.0805) Installed pastoral relationships are only open to PC(USA) Ministers and Ministers of Formula Agreement churches through the orderly exchange process.

Joint Witness

When its strategy for mission requires it, a presbytery may approve the creation of a joint witness between congregations of this denomination and congregations of other Christian churches that recognize Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, accept the authority of Scripture, and observe the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Such joint witnesses shall be subject to the constitution of each denomination involved. Wherever the constitutions of the denominations differ, the mandatory provisions of one shall apply in all cases when the others are permissive. Wherever there are conflicting mandatory provisions, the congregational council shall petition the next higher councils or governing bodies to resolve the conflict. (G-5.05)

MIF / Ministry Information Form

The form completed and listed on the Opportunity Search of the Church Leadership Connection by calling organizations. A calling organization may be a church or any institution that is officially affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Pastor

A person called by a congregation or its session and validated by the presbytery of which it is a part to provide spiritual leadership, nurture, and care. Such individuals may be ministers of the Word and Sacrament within the PC(USA), Formula churches, or other Christian churches, or ruling elders of the PC(USA) with specific commissions from the presbytery (referred to as either "commissioned pastors" or "commissioned ruling elders"). Persons with orders of or authorizations for ministry

other than minister of the Word and Sacrament in churches other than the PC(USA) may not be considered for pastoral roles with its congregations. Pastoral relationships with PC(USA) congregations may be defined as either “pastor” or “associate pastor” and for terms defined either as “temporary,” “installed for a definite term,” or “installed for an indefinite term.” Only ministers of the Word and Sacrament from the PC(USA) or the other Formula churches may be considered for “installed” pastoral relationships (whether of “definite” or “indefinite” term).

PIF / Personal Information Form

The form completed and entered into Church Leadership Connection by call seekers. A call seeker may be a Minister of Word and Sacrament, a candidate for ministry of Word and Sacrament, or a lay professional with membership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Presbytery

The regional body with jurisdiction over the churches in a geographical area [an exception: presbyteries identified with an ethnic language constituency] and over the ministers whose church membership is held in the presbytery. (*G-3.03*) There are currently 170 presbyteries. This is the inviting body for the Formula of Agreement exchange of ministers.

Ruling Elder

In Presbyterian polity, governance is by presbyters (teaching elders, also known as ministers of Word and Sacrament, and ruling elders). Ruling elders are elected from the membership of the congregation and serve on session and participate with ministers in presbytery, synod, and the General Assembly. Parity is a principle for participation in those bodies (half ruling elders, half teaching elders/ministers of Word and Sacrament). Orderly exchange of ministers under the Formula of Agreement does not pertain to ruling elders.

Ruling Elder Commissioned to Particular Service (also known as Commissioned Pastor)

Presbyterian ruling elders who have been given a particular commission to provide pastoral services in a congregation or to do some other presbytery-authorized ministry under the guidance of a minister mentor. (*G-2.10*)

Session

The elected governing body of a local congregation, consisting of the pastor who serves as moderator, other installed pastoral staff, and the elders elected from and by the congregation. (*G-3.02*)

Stated Clerk

The elected officer of a presbytery, synod, or the General Assembly who keeps the minutes and records of the governing body, and is the chief correspondent for the governing body in ecclesiastical matters.

Synod

The governing body with jurisdiction over a number of presbyteries. The focus of synod function has varied from being strictly ecclesiastical or programmatic. (*G-3.04*) There are currently 16 synods.

Teaching Elder / Minister of Word and the Sacrament

The ordained office with responsibility for preaching, administering the sacraments, providing pastoral care, and guiding with ruling elders the spiritual life and mission of a congregation. Ministers of Word and Sacrament may engage in a wide variety of ministries upon the approval of the presbytery. *(G- 2.0503a)*

Temporary Member

A presbytery may enroll a minister of another Christian church who is serving temporarily in a validated ministry in this church, or in an installed relationship under the provisions of the Formula of Agreement *(Book of Order, Appendix B; G-5.0202)*, when the minister has satisfied the requirements of preparation for such service established by the presbytery's own rule. *(G-2.0506)*

Temporary Pastor / Temporary Pastoral Relationship

Temporary pastoral relationships are approved by the presbytery and do not carry a formal call or installation. When a congregation does not have a pastor, or while the pastor is unable to perform her or his duties, the session, with the approval of presbytery, may obtain the services of a teaching elder, candidate, or ruling elder in a temporary pastoral relationship. No formal call shall be issued and no formal installation shall take place. *(G-2.0504)*

Terms of Call

The terms of compensation for a pastoral call. The terms are to meet or exceed presbytery minimum requirements at the time of the call, and include participation in the benefits plan. The session reviews the terms annually, and the congregation votes to approve the terms annually.

REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA

The Orderly Exchange of Ministers of Word and Sacrament Policy Paper

The purpose of this paper is to outline ways to implement within the Reformed Church in America the orderly exchange of ordained ministers between denominations. This paper is being distributed along with the paper *Principles for the Orderly Exchange of Ministers of Word and Sacrament*, which has been written by representatives from the four churches of *A Formula of Agreement*. Three sections follow below: Background, Categories of Service, and Procedures for the Exchange of Ministers. The majority of this paper is devoted to ministers from other denominations serving within the Reformed Church in America. Reformed Church in America ministers serving outside of the Reformed Church in America may be subject to similar policies and procedures found in the polity of other denominations. The authority of this paper is derived from its sources.

I. Background

In June of 1997, the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America approved *A Formula of Agreement (FOA)*, a document that declares “full communion” between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and three churches of the Reformed tradition: the United Church of Christ (UCC), the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (PC(USA)) and the Reformed Church in America (RCA). Prior to this action, the General Synod passed an important resolution clarifying the effect of approving *A Formula of Agreement* on our relationship with the two other Reformed denominations. *A Formula of Agreement* does not establish a new and different relationship between the Reformed churches. General Synod declared that, by virtue of our Reformed polity and the fellowship shared in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, our relationship with the UCC and the PC(USA) remains the same in accord with our own understanding of “full communion,” which we define as “full table and pulpit fellowship and the recognition of each other’s ministries, in keeping with the authority and responsibilities of the classes and the consistories.” The General Synod went on to say, “Specifically, this means for the Reformed Church in America that admittance to the pulpit is governed by the classis and admittance to the Lord’s Table is governed by the board of elders. This understanding is in keeping with the RCA doctrinal standards, the RCA Liturgy, and the RCA *Book of Church Order (MGS 1997, p. 185)*.”

Along with other commitments, full communion is understood to mean that the four churches “recognize each other’s various ministries and make provision for the orderly exchange of ordained ministers of Word and sacrament.” The phrase “to recognize each other’s ministries” means that the *four FOA* churches recognize as *valid* each other’s ordination to the Office of Minister of Word and Sacrament, the Office of Deacon and the Office of Elder. This means that re-ordination is not required when a minister moves from one denomination to another. The phrase “orderly exchange of ordained ministers of Word and sacrament” speaks about the *availability* of ordained ministers to serve across denominational lines. Ordained ministers in one church *may be invited* to serve in another church; they do not have a *right* to serve in the other church. The word “exchange” is a technical term that is meant to affirm the validity of the ordination of ministers of Word and sacrament. It carries the meaning of eligibility and interchangeability—that ministers may be eligible and available to serve in one denomination for an extended, but limited time, while retaining membership in another, following the polity of each denomination.

In 2002, a new section was added to the *Book of Church Order* that allows consistories to call ministers of Formula churches to become pastors of the local congregation.

II. Categories of Service

In a conversation with the other *FOA* churches in March 1999, three categories of service for ordained ministers were identified: 1) occasional service, 2) extended service, and 3) transfer of membership. All three are possible means for ministers to serve in a denomination other than the one in which they were ordained. However, the goal of the *FOA* was not to encourage ordained ministers to transfer membership from one denomination to another. The *FOA* seeks to allow a more effective use and deployment of the ordained leaders of each denomination on an occasional or temporary basis in order to enhance our shared ministry and mission. The paragraphs below identify the sections of the RCA *Book of Church Order (BCO)* that apply to each category of service and provide some commentary on their application.

Occasional Service

An ordained minister of another denomination may be asked to preach or administer the sacraments in an RCA congregation on an occasional basis. The governing body of the local congregation (consistory) is given the authority to decide whether or not to invite a specific person to preach or administer the sacraments following the provisions printed below.

Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Sec. 11e

The consistory of a church may invite or permit ministers of other denominations whose character and standard are known to preach for them. Ministers of other denominations or their counterparts whose character and standard are not known shall not be engaged to preach in a local church until they have furnished to the consistory written evidence of recent date of their good ministerial standing and of their authorization to preach the Word. The consistory shall then determine whether to issue an invitation to preach. Ordinarily, the preaching of the Word shall be performed by an ordained minister or a theological student appointed pursuant to the Government of the Reformed Church in America, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 7, Section 7. In special circumstances, an elder commissioned by the classis as a preaching elder may preach. However, a consistory may authorize, in occasional or special circumstances, other persons to preach.

The consistory has significant freedom in deciding whether a person is qualified to preach in a particular local church. However, the consistory acts under the supervision of the classis and the classis may intervene if the principles above are not followed.

Extended Service

A minister of a Formula church may serve a congregation of the RCA for an extended period. The first, and primary, way would be through the call of a consistory to serve a congregation. The relevant section reads:

Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Sec. 4

A consistory may call a minister of a Christian church that the General Synod has declared to be in full communion with the Reformed Church in America. The classis shall install the minister

according to the order for installation in the Liturgy but the minister shall not subscribe to the declaration. The minister shall be a member of the classis for the period of the call.

A called minister in the RCA is installed as pastor and teacher of a congregation. Installation confers a connection that can only be dissolved by mutual request of the minister and consistory (except under certain conditions) and with the approval of the classis. Arrangements for ministerial compensation are set out in the instrument of the call and are reviewed by the classis only if new arrangements fall below the threshold set out in the call. The call binds minister and congregation in mutual accountability.

In becoming a member of the classis for the period of the call (see below), the minister receives the privilege of voice and vote at the classis. Furthermore, he or she does not subscribe to Declaration for Ministers, as that would make her or him subject to discipline at levels including deposition from office and excommunication. However, ministers from *Formula* churches would agree to act in a manner consistent with the declaration and to accept the counsel and admonition of the classis. In effect, it would be to subject oneself to “admonition and rebuke, the lowest form of discipline. It is understood that while a classis of the RCA cannot suspend or depose from office, in cases where such would be appropriate, the classis could require termination of the ministry with the local congregation.

A second option for extended service may be rendered under a contract between the RCA congregation and the ordained minister. A minister may be invited to serve as an assistant minister or as the only ordained minister of a church. All contracts must be approved by the consistory of the local congregation and the classis of which that congregation is a member.

Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part I, Article 2, Sec. 8 (Assistant Ministers)

A consistory may contract with one or more assistant ministers to serve along with its minister(s) serving under a call. The contract(s) shall follow the guidelines established by the classis. The minister may be commissioned by the classis as a minister under contract, but shall not be *ipso facto* a member of the church or the consistory.

Assistant ministers serve under contracts. Associate ministers serve under approved calls. A contract is not the same as a call. Calls are extended for an indefinite period of time and require membership within the RCA, except as provided for within the framework of the *FOA*. Contracts are temporary and must be reviewed annually by the classis. The minister under contract may or may not be a member of the classis. The RCA assistant ministers may or may not be installed, depending on whether they are members of the classis. The installation of an assistant minister has a different effect than the installation of a minister serving under a call from a church. When a classis approves a contract between an assistant minister and a church, it approves the provision for dissolution of the relationship contained in the contract. Each classis is free to establish guidelines for the approval of contracts with regard to the length of contract, minimum salary guidelines, the dissolution process, and any other requirements that the classis may adopt. For ministers serving under a call, the classis may dissolve the relationship between the minister and the congregation only by their mutual consent or by a two-thirds vote of the classis delegates.

Although assistant ministers are always ministers under contract, not all ministers under contract are assistant ministers. Since the term “stated supply” was abandoned in 1987 (see *MGS 1987*, p. 179), at least three types of ministers under contract can be found in the *BCO*:

1. Ministers serving churches without an installed pastor,
2. Specialized transition ministers (STM), and
3. Assistant ministers serving on staff in churches.

The following section of the *BCO* speak about ministers under contract:

Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 7, Secs. 4, 5, 8, 9 (Ministers under Contract)

Sec. 4. The classis, at the request of a church or with its consent, shall appoint one of its ministers or a minister of another classis, or of another approved body, the minister under contract of a church that is without an installed minister. The appointment shall be for a term of not more than one year. It shall be subject to renewal after proper review by the classis. The minister under contract shall perform the duties and receive the financial support which is agreed upon and shall report to classis whenever that body shall require it.

Sec. 5. The classis shall determine whether a minister under contract who is also a member of the classis shall be appointed supervisor of the church served. The minister under contract shall preside at meetings of the consistory of the church if invited by the consistory to do so, but shall not have the right to vote.

Sec. 8. A consistory or governing body shall not enter into a contract with a minister, a licensed candidate, or a candidate for the Certificate of Fitness for Ministry except by approval of the classis. Between sessions of classis the approval may be given by the president and the clerk of the classis.

Sec. 9. The approval of the classis shall be required before a consistory or governing body and a competent minister, or ministers, may contract for the purpose of maintaining public worship, under that consistory’s or governing body’s direction, in a place or pulpit in any locality, or provide assistance for its own installed minister/s. In such cases a formal call is not required, though the classis shall review all contracts annually. Ministers employed by such contracts may or may not be required to be members of the classis.

Notice the words “of another approved body” in Sec. 4 above. The RCA does not maintain a list of approved bodies. Formula churches meet these criteria along with other Reformed bodies. All ministers will be expected to preach, teach, and administer the sacraments in a RCA congregation in a manner that is consistent with the RCA doctrinal standards, the RCA liturgical standards, and the *RCA Book of Church Order*.

Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 15, Sec. 15

A minister of another denomination whose ordination meet the criteria of Chapter I, Part II, Article 14, Section 1, whose good standing has been certified by that denomination, and who serves with the approval of classis as a minister under contract, an assistant minister, a minister in a cooperative specialized ministry in which classis shares sponsorship, or a minister to a congregation composed of denominational units at least one of which is associated with the

classis, or an installed minister, may upon request and with the approval of classis, hold membership in the classis. Such members shall have the rights and privileges of membership for the period of the approved service, but may not represent their classis in the higher judicatories, assemblies, agencies, or commissions of the Reformed Church in America.

Such members shall not subscribe to the declaration, but, in accepting membership, shall agree that in their duties approved by the classis they will conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the declaration and accept the counsel and admonition of the classis.

Transfer of Membership

An ordained minister of another denomination who desires to serve indefinitely within the RCA may apply for a transfer of membership. An ordained minister is received and installed by a classis only after accepting an approved call. An entire article of the *BCO* has been written to provide guidance for the transfer process.

Book of Church Order, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 14 (Reception of Ministers and Licensed Candidates from Other Denominations)

Sec. 1. A classis shall recognize as valid only such ordination in another denomination as is able to meet the following conditions: intended to be within and to the ministry of the catholic or universal church; performed by a duly organized body of Christian churches, and by the authority within such body charged with the exercise of this power, accompanied by prayer and the laying on of hands.

Sec. 2. A classis shall not receive any licensed candidate or minister under its care from any body of professing Christians which maintains doctrines opposed to those of the Standards of the Reformed Church in America, unless that licensed candidate or minister shall make a complete and explicit declaration in writing renouncing such doctrines as being contrary to the Standards.

Sec. 3. When an application is made for admission to the classis by a licensed candidate or a minister from another denomination, the classis shall consider only an applicant who has satisfied educational requirements that are equivalent to those required in the Reformed Church in America, and it shall subject the applicant to such examination before classis as shall demonstrate the applicant's understanding of the theology, history, government, and disciplinary procedures of the Reformed Church in America; understanding of and adherence to the Standards of the Reformed Church in America; and loyalty to its agencies.

Sec. 4. When an ordained minister of another denomination wishes to apply for admission to the classis, that minister shall furnish the classis with the following or the equivalent:

- a. a written statement from the body holding the minister's credentials attesting that the minister is an ordained minister in good and regular standing;
- b. a completed Minister's Profile form;
- c. copies of academic degrees;
- d. a seminary transcript;
- e. names, addresses, and telephone numbers of five persons who are qualified to comment on the applicant's ministry;

- f. a statement from the applicant which attests to knowledge of Reformed Church history, readiness to adhere to the Standards of the RCA, and a basic knowledge of and readiness to support Reformed Church agencies and institutions.

Sec. 5. An ordained minister from another denomination may seek to receive preliminary approval to candidate with RCA congregations.

- a. Prior to becoming a serious candidate for a call from a congregation in the Reformed Church in America, an ordained minister who is affiliated with another denomination shall meet with the appropriate committee of a Reformed Church classis, which shall determine whether, in its judgement, the minister is able to meet the requirements set forth in Chapter 1, Part II, Article 14, Sections 1, 2, 3, and 4. The committee's judgment, whether positive or negative, shall be sent by the stated clerk to the Office of Ministry Services for attachment to the applicant's Minister's Profile form and such distribution as may be appropriate.
- b. If the committee's judgment is negative, the classis may appoint one or more of its ministers to assist the applicant in preparation for a second meeting with the classis committee, which shall take place not less than six months after the initial meeting. The committee may also require additional formal study prior to a second meeting.
- c. When an ordained minister who is affiliated with another denomination has met with a classis committee in order to determine whether the minister is qualified to be considered for a call to a Reformed church, and the committee is not satisfied with the minister's qualifications, any subsequent meetings for the same purpose shall take place within the same classis, unless the classis specifically requests another classis to act on its behalf.
- d. When a classis is requested to approve a call to a minister who is affiliated with another denomination, prior to its examination of the applicant it shall obtain full information from the chairperson of the committee which reviewed the applicant's qualifications, as outlined in a, b, and c above.

Sec. 6. A licensed candidate from another denomination shall not be ordained as a minister before serving in a supervised ministry for a period of up to twenty-four months. The classis shall petition General Synod to provide this superintendence through the board of trustees of an RCA seminary or the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency (MFCA), which will determine the length of the period of supervision.

This article sets up a lengthy and complicated procedure with significant requirements for any ordained minister who is considering a transfer to the RCA.

III. Procedures for the Exchange of Ministers

In dialogue with the other *FOA* churches, it was agreed that the "orderly exchange of ministers" should allow ordained ministers to serve a church in another denomination for an extended time while retaining membership within the denomination of origin. The rationale for this agreement includes the need for flexibility in the process of sending and receiving ministers and the requirements of insurance plans and pension benefits. The other *FOA* churches have made provision for extended service without a transfer requirement. The RCA faces several difficulties in implementing this agreement.

The Nature of Calls and Contracts

The use of contracts for ministers serving churches has been a matter of debate in the RCA. In 1995, a paper on clergy contracts was adopted as a study resource for understanding the difference between contracts and calls. (See *MGS 1995*, pp. 209-212.) The paper states, “It is clear the issuance of a call and the provisions which surround the call to the minister are intended to be normative for congregations of the Reformed Church in America.” The RCA is faced with the difficulty of providing a means of extended, but temporary, service by ordained ministers of other denominations that does not violate its theological sense of a call to ministry.

An understanding from the ELCA of the source of a call may be helpful in resolving this difficulty. All ministers must serve with a commitment to a call that they have received from God. The *FOA* churches have agreed that approval for extended service shall occur only in consultation with, and concurrence of, the sending body. When ordained ministers serve outside of their denomination, the question arises of who should issue and approve a call. For the ELCA, a call issued to a minister that holds ordination in another denomination should be understood to have its origin in the sending denomination. For example, an ordained minister of the ELCA serving in an RCA congregation as a minister under contract serves under a letter of call from the ELCA Synod Council in which the ordained minister is rostered (or has membership). An ordained minister of the RCA must receive approval before accepting a contract with an ELCA congregation (as a specialized ministry). The approval of the ministry (or call) by the sending body allows the minister to continue an active status within the sending denomination. The contract establishes the particular understandings that have been reached between the minister and the receiving congregation and its supervising body and supplements the call of the sending body. A practical difficulty within the *BCO* is the limit of contracts to no more than one year for RCA churches without an installed minister. (It can be argued that no such requirement exists for assistant ministers; a classis may approve a multi-year contract for an assistant minister as long as it includes an annual review.) In a church without an installed pastor, the *BCO* says, “The appointment shall be for a term of not more than one year.” It may be helpful to amend the *BCO* by dropping that sentence. Although all contracts are subject to the review by the classis each year, a classis could then approve a multi-year contract as part of an extended service arrangement with an ordained minister from another denomination. The annual review by the classis would include the constitutional inquiry to ensure that the salary, housing, arrangements for professional development, and all other benefits received by the minister meet the terms of the original contract, subsequent revisions thereof, and the minimum standards of the classis.

Approval Process for Contracts

A consistory is charged with executing a call upon a minister of Word and sacrament. It is most unusual for a consistory to work through a search committee that will sort through possible candidates, conduct interviews, and arrange to hear candidates preach. The consistory is required to “endeavor to hear the mind of the congregation” concerning candidates for the pulpit. After, the classis must approve the call. Only then is the call fully approved and can be offered to the candidate for his or her response.

In adopting the *FOA*, it was understood that nothing in the document changed the method of the RCA for accepting ministers from other denominations. The classis, under the superintendence of the General Synod, has the responsibility and authority to examine all candidates for ministry and make a determination of whether a minister of another church (or the RCA) is fit for the ministry of

Word and sacrament within the classis. The *BCO* contains a lengthy process for the reception of ministers and licensed candidates from other denominations. It gives little guidance for the approval of contracts. The classis may adopt its own procedure for the approval of contracts and may include some of the requirements for the reception of ministers from other denominations in the contract approval process. Within the RCA, the classis is responsible for evaluating whether or not a candidate has a knowledge of and appreciation for the history, polity, theological and liturgical identity, practices of ministry, and discipline of the RCA.

The Supervision of a Church

When a minister under contract serves an RCA church that has no installed minister who is serving under a call, another minister appointed by classis serves as that church's supervisor, unless the classis determines that a minister under contract who is also a member of the classis shall also be the supervisor. (See *BCO* Chapter 1, Part 2, Article 7, Section 5 above.) Before a minister from another denomination may function as the supervisor of a congregation, the classis must make the minister a member of classis. Membership establishes a level of accountability that qualifies a minister to serve as a supervisor. Since the RCA has agreed to provide an opportunity for full participation in the classis for a minister from another denomination serving an RCA church, appointment as the supervisor of the church is the next logical step.

Form of Installation

A minister of a Formula church who is called to serve a congregation will be installed as pastor and teacher of that congregation. Prior to the installation, the consistory is required to publish the name of the candidate for three weeks to allow time for objection to the installation. The installation will follow the appropriate rite in the Liturgy (itself part of the Constitution of the RCA). The rite includes an interrogation of the candidate and concludes with a declaration of installation. However, a minister of a Formula church will not read the "Declaration for Ministers of Word and Sacrament" by which the minister is received as a member of the classis.

Accountability and Pastoral Care

An ordained minister of the RCA remains subject to the standards, policies, and discipline of the RCA while serving in a church of another denomination. An ordained minister of another denomination serving within the RCA is understood to be subject to the standards, policies, and discipline of the denomination in which the minister holds membership. However, a minister serving a church within the RCA shall agree that in their duties approved by the classis they will conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the Declaration for Ministers and accept the counsel and admonition of the classis. For installed ministers of Formula churches in an RCA congregation, this would mean that should the classis judge that the minister is unfit for ministry, that minister's service to the local congregation would be terminated. The RCA classis would expect to cooperate with the relevant body of the sending denomination in any disciplinary action that body might judge appropriate. All contracts should make it clear that the service of a minister may be terminated by the classis if the classis decides that the conduct of a minister makes them unfit for ministry within the RCA. The classis is responsible for the pastoral care of each enrolled minister and the minister's immediate family. Following the principles of the orderly exchange document, pastoral care of ministers who are serving under contract in RCA churches will be shared by the denomination of membership and the RCA classis.

Retirement Benefits and Medical Insurance

The *FOA* churches have agreed that an ordained minister will participate in the retirement, health, and other benefit plans of the denomination of membership, not the denomination of service. It is anticipated that an RCA congregation will be able to contribute to the retirement and insurance plan of another denomination when a minister from another denomination serves an RCA congregation. Similarly, an ordained minister of the RCA serving in another denomination will be able to arrange for payment of the RCA insurance premiums and contributions to the RCA retirement plan. Due to insurance and retirement fund regulations, the transfer of membership would make such an arrangement impossible, so it is critical that ministers who are available for extended service be given the opportunity to retain their membership within their denomination of origin and continue the insurance and pension coverage that they have.

Dissolution of Pastoral Relationship

The conclusion of a pastoral relationship between an installed minister and a congregation takes place by means of a process called “dissolution.” Under normal circumstances, a consistory and minister jointly request of the classis that a member of the classis be present at a meeting of the consistory at which the request for dissolution will be voted. In attesting to the joint nature of the request, the member of the classis presents the request to the classis, which then votes to approve (or deny) the request. Only then is the minister released from her or his relationship to the congregation. However, either the minister or the consistory may request of the classis a dissolution without the agreement of the other party. In such instances the matter is set before the classis in full and open session for the decision of the classis.

RCA Ministers Serving in Other Denominations

An ordained minister of the RCA may serve in another denomination on a temporary basis while retaining membership within the RCA. Ministers who serve in this manner are considered “specialized ministers.” In order for ministers to retain their ordination within the RCA, all forms of ministry must be performed under the jurisdiction or with the approval of a classis of the RCA. Following the principles of the orderly exchange agreement, the classis is required to take an active role in the approval process for the sending of RCA ministers to other denominations. Ministers that serve in other denominations while retaining their membership in the RCA remain subject to the discipline of the RCA classis that holds their ordination. However, it is understood that the receiving body has the authority to dissolve the relationship between an RCA minister and a congregation of that denomination without the need for approval by the RCA classis.

Conclusion

As stated at the beginning, most of this paper is devoted to the questions that may arise when ministers from other denominations serve within the RCA. The RCA is learning from the other *FOA* churches what policies and procedures they use in receiving ordained ministers from the RCA. This paper attempts to address the RCA church order issues regarding the orderly exchange of ministers. Other issues are equally important. We are committed to continue conversations both within RCA and with the *FOA* churches to clarify our policies and procedures in order to enhance the orderly exchange of ministers.

A Summary of the Pastoral Search Process Reformed Church in America

The following steps in the search process are detailed in the Pastoral Search Handbook:

- Conclusion of minister's relationship
- Appointment of classis supervisor
- Pastoral leadership during the interim (specialized transition minister)
- Appointment of a search committee
- Preparation of the self-study
- Preparation of the church profile form
- Preparing for candidates (information packet)
- Interviewing candidates
- Checking candidates' references
- Hearing a candidate preach
- Procedures for considering a seminarian
- Recommending a candidate to the consistory
- Seeking the will of the congregation
- Negotiating the call
- Installation

The first step in the search process is the selection of a search committee. The consistory is responsible for the selection of the search committee. The search committee's tasks begin with preparation of a self-study and church profile form. The profile form is sent to the Office of Ministry Services and also to the regional synod office. These offices will return minister profiles of possible candidates. Also, congregations may solicit from church members and local clergy the names of potential candidates.

The search committee reviews the profiles, checks primary and secondary references, and conducts telephone and personal interviews. The personal interview should take place at the calling church with time for the candidate to tour the church facility, the parsonage, if the church has one, and the community. This interview should include only members of the search committee and the candidate.

After the initial interview process, if both parties are interested in exploring the relationship further, the search committee is ready to observe the candidate leading worship and preaching. It is suggested that an opportunity for the candidate to preach in a nearby church be provided instead of going to the candidate's church.

Only one candidate should be recommended to the consistory. The candidate is invited to meet the congregation and to lead a worship service. The congregation is involved in the final decision. If the congregational vote is positive after having met the candidate, the consistory can make the official call with the approval of the local classis. When a call is extended, it should include details of the position that may not be included in the standard form of the call. The call should also clarify salary and benefits, housing allowance, and who will be responsible for incidentals such as utilities and auto expenses.

Glossary of Terms — Reformed Church in America

General Synod – The General Synod is the highest assembly and judicatory of the Reformed Church in America. It consists of two minister delegates and two elder delegates from each of the classes having four thousand or fewer confessing members on the roll of its churches, and one minister delegate and one elder delegate for each two thousand confessing members, or fraction thereof, from each of the classes having more than four thousand confessing members on the roll of its churches as computed in accordance with the Bylaws of the General Synod; one elder or minister delegate from each of the regional synods; five General Synod professor delegates, drawn from each of the theological seminaries of the Reformed Church and the Ministerial Formation Certification Agency; a number of furloughing missionary and chaplain delegates; and corresponding delegates provided for in the Bylaws of the General Synod. Voting rights shall be limited to elder delegates and those minister delegates who are actively serving in ministries under the jurisdiction or with the approval of an assembly. The General Synod is a permanent, continuing body which functions between stated sessions through the General Synod Council, commissions, and agencies.

Regional Synod – The regional synod is an assembly and judicatory consisting of ministers and elders delegated by each of the classes within the bounds determined for it by the General Synod. Voting rights shall be limited to elder delegates and those minister delegates who are actively serving under the jurisdiction or with the approval of the classis. Each regional synod may determine the method of selection and the number of delegates from each classis within its bounds. The regional synod is a permanent, continuing body which functions between stated sessions through committees. A regional synod may retain its designation as a particular synod for its legal documents.

Classis – The classis is an assembly and judicatory consisting of all the enrolled ministers of that body and the elder delegates who represent all the local and organizing churches within its bounds. The classis is a permanent, continuing body which functions between stated sessions through committees. Voting rights shall be limited to elder delegates and those enrolled ministers who are actively serving as ministers either under the jurisdiction of or with the approval of the classis. The classis approves a call extended by a congregation to a Minister of Word and Sacrament. While the classis is not the inviting body, *FOA* candidates would be wise to contact a classis clerk before contacting a congregation's search team.

Consistory – A consistory is the governing body of a local church. Its members are the installed minister/s of that church serving under a call, the elders and deacons currently installed in office, and commissioned pastors authorized by the classis. The consistory extends the call to a Minister of Word and Sacrament, pending approval from the classis.

Minister of Word and Sacrament – The Office of Minister of Word and Sacrament is one of servanthood and service representing Christ through the action of the Holy Spirit. Ministers are called to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and to the ministry of the Word of God. In the local church the minister serves as pastor and teacher of the congregation to build up and equip the whole church for its ministry in the world. The minister preaches and teaches the Word of God,

administers the sacraments, shares responsibility with the elders and deacons and members of the congregation for their mutual Christian growth, exercises Christian love and discipline in conjunction with the elders, and endeavors that everything in the church be done in a proper and orderly way. As pastor and teacher the minister so serves and lives among the congregation that together they become wholly devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ in the service of the church for the world.

Commissioned Pastor – A commissioned pastor is an elder who is trained, commissioned, and supervised by a classis for a specific ministry within that classis that will include the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the sacraments. The commission shall be valid for the period of assigned service. Commissioned pastors are not covered by *A Formula of Agreement*.

Preaching Elder – A commissioned preaching elder shall be an ordained elder in the Reformed Church in America with gifts for preaching.

Ministry Call vs. Contract – Call: The consistory shall provide a minister, or ministers, for the church. It has the authority to call persons to the ministry of the church if the charter of the church has not made other provisions. The consistory shall endeavor to learn the mind of the congregation with respect to any person who may be called to the ministry of the church. The judgment of the congregation in such matters shall be considered to be of significant weight, but not binding. The instrument of the call to a minister shall be signed by the members of the consistory. If the call is approved by the classis and accepted by the person called, the latter's name shall be published in the church on three successive Sundays, so that opportunity may be afforded for the raising of lawful objections. If no such objections are raised, the classis or its committee shall install the minister according to the order for installation in the Liturgy. A consistory may call a minister of a Christian church that the General Synod has declared to be in full communion with the Reformed Church in America. The classis shall install the minister according to the order for installation in the Liturgy but the minister shall not subscribe to the declaration. The minister shall be a member of the classis for the period of the call. A consistory may call one or more associate ministers. The form of the call to an associate minister shall be the same as that to the senior minister, except that the word "associate" shall be inserted before the words "pastor" or "minister," wherever they occur in the text of the call. The associate minister shall be a member of the consistory. Contract: A consistory may contract with one or more assistant ministers to serve along with its minister(s) serving under a call. The contract(s) shall follow the guidelines established by the classis. The assistant minister may be commissioned by the classis as a minister under contract, but shall not be *ipso facto* a member of the church or the consistory.

RCA Standards – The RCA's Standards of Unity are the Belgic Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism with its Compendium, the Canons of the Synod of Dort, and the Belhar Confession.

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Provisions Regarding *A Formula of Agreement*

The United Church of Christ has the following provisions that provide for an “orderly exchange” of ordained ministers as called for in *A Formula of Agreement*. Long-standing ecumenical commitments have influenced the ecclesiastical procedures in the United Church of Christ and allow the ministry provisions outlined in *A Formula of Agreement* to be implemented in the United Church of Christ.

Occasional Service

An ordained minister of another formula communion may, when invited, preach or administer the sacraments in a United Church of Christ congregation.

A United Church of Christ ordained minister may accept an occasional invitation to preach or administer the sacraments in a congregation that is part of another formula communion. No further authorization is necessary on the part of the United Church of Christ.

Extended Service

A calling body of the United Church of Christ may invite an ordained minister of another formula communion to provide extended ministerial service to that calling body. The minister remains an ordained minister in the other communion.

The pastor serving a United Church of Christ local church may be granted Dual Standing by the United Church of Christ Association Committee on Ministry. The ordained minister retains ecclesiastical credentials in the other communion and is extended United Church of Christ collegial support, oversight and accountability while serving a United Church of Christ calling body. Dual Standing may be withdrawn at any time by the Association and Dual Standing ceases when the minister is no longer serving the calling body for which it was granted.

Upon the appropriate invitation of another formula communion and with the concurrence of the United Church of Christ Association Committee on Ministry that holds the minister’s ordained ministerial standing, a United Church of Christ minister may accept a specific invitation to serve a calling body of another formula communion while retaining ordained ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ. UCC Clergy are not permitted to personally circulate UCC Ministerial Profiles. All validated profiles will be provided to formula communions for search purposes through the Conference where the UCC Minister holds standing. It is the expectation that United Church of Christ ministers on extended service as pastor of a local congregation in another formula communion concurrently maintain any requirements for ministerial standing as set forth by their Committee on Ministry. When serving in another formula communion, the minister will apply for and receive the appropriate authorization of that communion.

Dual Standing

There are occasions when an ordained minister of another denomination is called to serve in a ministry setting of the United Church of Christ. Ordained ministers of another denomination who receive a call to serve in a UCC ministry setting can apply for Dual Standing to the Committee on

Ministry where the ministry setting is located. Dual Standing is a temporary standing in the United Church of Christ, valid only for the duration of the call. The application to the Committee on Ministry should include:

- o a current criminal background check and self-disclosure statement
- o a letter of standing from the original denomination;
- o a demonstrated knowledge of United Church of Christ history, theology and polity;
- o a demonstrated capacity to function in and appreciate the United Church of Christ.

Committees on Ministry meet with candidates for Dual Standing and complete an initial intake interview. This interview, in dialogue with the Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers, will determine the Committee's decision to say Yes to Dual Standing, Yes, but... with additional requirements before granting Dual Standing, No, but... with a decline but also an invitation to return after completing certain requirements, or No to Dual Standing.

Once satisfied, the Committee on Ministry may grant Dual Standing for the duration of the call within the UCC ministry setting. Oversight for ministers with dual standing is held primarily in the denomination of origin. The minister is responsible for any requirements of maintaining standing in the United Church of Christ as established by the Committee on Ministry for its ministers (boundary awareness training, anti-racism training, attendance at Association and Conference annual meetings). Not maintaining the requirements for standing may result in the removal of Dual Standing. If a disciplinary concern is raised regarding an ordained minister with Dual Standing, the Committee on Ministry may vote to receive the findings of a disciplinary review led by the denomination of primary standing or the Committee may undertake its own Fitness Review.

Dual Standing can be removed by the Committee on Ministry at any time and is not transferable. Dual Standing does not grant an ordained minister access to a UCC Ministerial Profile or to the UCC search and call system.

Privilege of Call

Some persons will be led by personal faith and vocational pilgrimage to transfer their ministerial credentials permanently to another formula communion. The United Church of Christ understands such a move of ministerial credentials to another formula communion to be a permanent transfer whereby the person becomes a member of the ordained ministry of another communion. Persons who move beyond occasional or extended service and serve permanently, indefinitely, or in succeeding periods of extended service are encouraged to consider a permanent transfer of ministerial credentials.

An ordained minister of another Formula of Agreement communion who wishes to permanently enter the ordained ministry of the United Church of Christ applies for Privilege of Call. Upon approval by the appropriate Committee on Ministry of an Association of the United Church of Christ the person is granted Privilege of Call. This enables the person to enter the search and call process of the United Church of Christ. Upon receiving and accepting a call to ministry that is accepted by the committee on the ministry as a valid call within the United Church of Christ the person is granted UCC ordained ministerial standing. The person has now entered the ordained ministry of the United

Church of Christ. The new United Church of Christ ordained minister then relinquishes ordination credentials in the previous communion.

A United Church of Christ ordained minister who desires to permanently enter the ordained ministry of another formula communion follows the processes and procedures required by that denomination for entrance into the ordained ministry of that communion. Upon receipt of credentials in another communion, the individual is expected to resign ordained ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ. If necessary, the Association where the individual held United Church of Christ ordained ministerial standing terminates the person's ordained ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ because the person has entered the Ordained Ministry of another communion.

Search and Call Process in the United Church of Christ

(updated information for Formula of Agreement, March 24, 2017)

1. The heart of the Search and Call process in the United Church of Christ is discernment – discernment of local church search committees as to who God is calling them to consider – and discernment of candidates as to where God would see their skills and gifts to be most appreciated.
2. Persons authorized to do so complete a Ministerial Profile and a Snapshot. The Ministerial Profile includes a Criminal Background Check, a Self-Disclosure Form, and three written references. Forms are submitted to one's Conference office for validation. An online platform allows for profile downloads by Conference or Association staff with the consent of the minister. Summary information is searchable to conference staff when they preview Snapshots.
3. A Local Church seeking a new pastor completes a Local Church Profile and submits it to the Conference or Association of which it is a member.
4. Local Churches seeking a new pastor are listed in UCC Ministry Opportunities, a website updated in real time.
5. Candidates who hold ministerial standing in the UCC or who are Members in Discernment who have been approved for ordination pending call may have their Ministerial Profile circulated. Neither the candidate nor the national setting sends these directly to the Local Church. Rather, the candidate requests that the Conference or Association staff of the Conference where the Local Church seeking a pastor resides to send that profile to the Local Church in which they are interested. If a current, validated profile is available, the Conference or Association staff automatically sends that profile to the specified Local Church.
6. The Search Committee of a Local Church seeking a new pastor reviews the profiles, checks additional references by telephone, contacts candidates it wishes to pursue, sends local church profile and other information about the church/community, conducts interviews of a selected number of candidates, hears them preach and experiences their worship leadership.
7. The Search Committee recommends a final candidate to the Local Church for vote. The candidate is invited to preach during worship on a designated Sunday, after which a special meeting of the Local Church is convened to vote on the candidate. If approved, the Local Church and candidate enter into covenant with one another for a new ministry.
8. If necessary, the Committee on Ministry of the Association or Conference in which the Local Church holds standing considers a request to transfer the ministerial standing of the called pastor into that Association or Conference.
9. At some point during the first year of service, and following the transfer of ministerial standing, the Local Church requests that the Association install the minister as Pastor and Teacher.
10. Ordained Ministers from Formula of Agreement communions do not have access into the UCC's Ministerial Profile Portal. Formula ministers may inquire to UCC Conference / Association staff about specific congregational openings or in general about serving in a UCC church within that geographic area. Conference and Association staffs maintain the right to share denominational paperwork of a formula minister with a Local Church Search Committee. If called, it is expected that the formula minister would apply for Dual Standing.

Glossary of Terms — United Church of Christ

Association

An Association is that body within a Conference of the United Church of Christ in which all local churches in a geographical area and all authorized ministers hold their standing.

Call

A Call is the official invitation from a local church or other calling body to a particular authorized minister to fulfill a leadership position.

Call Agreement & Covenants

A Call Agreement is the employment document between a minister and a congregation. Covenants (between three, four, or more entities) are documents of mutual accountability between the minister, Local Church of membership, Association, through its Committee on Ministry, and calling body, if different than the Local Church.

Calling Body

A calling body is an organization or institution (a Local Church, Conference, pastoral counseling center, etc.) that seeks the services of an authorized minister.

Committee on Ministry

The Committee on Ministry (sometimes called Church and Ministry Committee or Department of Church and Ministry) is the body in an Association or Conference which is delegated responsibilities for church and ministry concerns, which include the authorization, review, and discipline of authorized ministers in that Association.

Conference

A Conference is that body of the United Church of Christ which is composed of all Local Churches in a geographical area, all authorized ministers holding standing or Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in its Associations or in the Conference itself when acting as an Association.

Conference Minister

The Conference Minister is the pastor and chief executive officer of a Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Congregational Meeting

A congregational meeting is an official gathering of a congregation, called to make organizational and fiduciary decisions for the church, as well as extending an official call to pastoral leadership or terminating such call.

Criminal Background Check and Self-Disclosure

Part of the discernment process for clergy, included as part of the ministerial profile, which gives ministers the opportunity to make a conscientious assertion about legal, ecclesial and personal ethics and gives space for relevant commentary.

Dual Standing

A Committee on Ministry may grant Dual Standing to an ordained minister from another denomination who is engaged in any of the following ministries: serves as pastor of a Local Church of the United Church of Christ; serves an agency or Covenanted Ministry of the United Church of Christ; serves as a pastor of a yoked charge or a federated church which is affiliated with the United Church of Christ; serves in an ecumenical ministry, one constituent of which is a local church or agency of the United Church of Christ. Dual Standing lasts for the duration of the Call.

Four Forms of Local Church Pastorates

The Settled Pastor of a church is that person extended an official on-going Call by a local church or other calling body. An Intentional Interim serves a congregation in order to prepare them during a transitional time for a new minister; intentional interims are not eligible for long-term Calls to that specific setting. Designated-Term Ministers are called for a designated-time and a designated purpose such as revitalization, new church start, closure or merger. Designated-Term ministers are eligible for a call to settled ministry in that specific setting. Supply Ministers fulfil short term, occasional coverage such as pulpit supply, sabbatical supply, parental or military leave supply.

Installation

Installation is that act whereby an Association, in cooperation with a Local Church, officially endorses and celebrates the Call of a new minister to that Local Church or other officially recognized calling body.

Local Church

The basic unit of life and organization of the United Church of Christ. There are approximately 5,000 congregations with full standing in the denomination. All clergy are required to hold membership in a Local Church.

Local Church Profile

The instrument provided by the national setting to Local Churches, which provides search committees with the necessary forms to develop a comprehensive informational document that can then be sent to prospective candidates for a ministerial position.

Manual on Ministry

The Manual on Ministry is a resource of the denomination to equip the authorization of ministry in the United Church of Christ. Its primary audience is the Committee on Ministry.

Member in Discernment

A Member in Discernment is an individual member of the United Church of Christ who is discerning a call to authorized ministry, in covenant with their Local Church and their Committee on Ministry. The Member in Discernment process is intended to engage all discernment partners in reflection, conversation and assessment, so that the need of the church for excellent and faithful ministers may be met through wise decisions by all involved in the discernment process.

Ministerial Profile

The Ministerial Profile is an instrument of the national setting of the United Church of Christ that, when completed, allows ordained and commissioned ministers to have their personal, academic, and ecclesiastical information sent to local churches or other calling bodies that are searching for leadership in the United Church of Christ.

Ordained Ministerial Standing

Ordained Ministerial Standing is the authorization granted by an Association minister to an ordained minister to exercise all of the prerogatives of that ministry in and on behalf of the United Church of Christ. Ministerial Standing is granted at the time of ordination and may be transferred from Association to Association.

Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing

The United Church of Christ holds particular ecumenical agreements with The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and The United Church of Canada which allow for the possibility of holding Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing while serving a Ministry Setting within the UCC.

Marks and Code

The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers (the Marks) are a tool for ongoing discernment and assessment during the ministerial formation process and throughout one's service in ministry. The UCC Ministerial Code is the foundational document by which all ministers with standing are expected to abide. All clergy and candidates should be familiar with these two vital UCC documents.

Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization

The Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization ministry team of the United Church of Christ supports, resources and develops the capacities of other settings of the church in their oversight and accountability of ministers in the United Church of Christ.

Privilege of Call

Privilege of Call is a temporary status granted by a Committee on Ministry to an ordained minister of another denomination who desires to permanently transfer ministerial credentials to the United Church of Christ. Once granted Privilege of Call a minister has access into the UCC search and call system in order to seek a Call within the United Church of Christ and, upon receiving a Call, to apply for Ordained Ministerial Standing.

Sacraments

The United Church of Christ recognizes two sacraments – Baptism and Holy Communion.

Search Committee

A search committee is a committee formed within a church to assist the congregation to secure new pastoral leadership at the time of a pastoral vacancy.

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Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
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Reformed Church in America
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United Church of Christ
700 Prospect Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44115
www.UCC.org