Types of Pastoral Positions

The types of pastoral positions are pastor, co-pastor, and associate pastor. Pastoral relationships with congregations can be either “installed” or “temporary.”

Installed Pastoral Relationships

Installed pastoral relationships are typically for an indefinite period. However, an installed pastor may be called for a designated term as determined by the presbytery, in consultation with the congregation. Calls with a predetermined end date may be renewed for an additional designated term or changed, with the approval of the presbytery and congregation, to an indefinite call.

Temporary Pastoral Relationships

- Session invites for service with presbytery concurrence
- Teaching elder, PC(USA) or other; PC(USA) candidate, or ruling elder
- Titles determined by presbytery
- Up to twelve-month terms, but may be renewed

“Titles and terms of service for temporary relationships shall be determined by the presbytery. A person serving in a temporary pastoral relationship is invited for a specified period not to exceed twelve months in length, which is renewable with the approval of the presbytery. A teaching elder employed in a temporary pastoral relationship is ordinarily not eligible to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor.” (Book of Order, G-2.0504b)

Succession Restrictions

Ordinarily an associate pastor is not eligible to become the next installed pastor of the congregation he or she is serving. In the same way, a temporary pastor is not ordinarily eligible to become the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor (Book of Order, G-2.0504a-b). If a presbytery determines that in its mission strategy it is advisable for a teaching elder currently serving as associate pastor or temporary pastor, to be permitted to serve as the next installed pastor, co-pastor, or associate pastor, the relationship shall be established by a three-fourths vote of the members of the presbytery present and voting (Book of Order, G-2.0504c).
Ministers of Other Denominations

The Book of Order affirms the ecumenical commitment of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), particularly in Chapter Five of the Form of Government: Ecumenicity and Union. This section outlines our relationships with other denominations and holds that the basis of these relationships is to give visibility to the unity that exists in Christ.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has authorized and directed the formation of covenants, agreements, and statements of purpose with other Christian bodies that address, among other things, the mutual recognition of baptism and the orderly exchange of ministers. Such agreements are said to place us in correspondence with one another.

The PC(USA) is in a relationship of correspondence, meaning the church maintains a relationship with the highest council or governing body with the following:

- Churches with which the PC(USA) has had historical relations outside the United States, as recognized by the General Assembly.
- Churches that are members of the ecumenical bodies (for example: the World Council of Churches, World Communion of Reformed Churches, National Council of Churches, Christian Churches Together, etc.) in which the PC(USA) holds membership.
- Churches with which the PC(USA) has formal ecumenical dialogue approved by the General Assembly.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is in full communion or covenant relationship with those churches so recognized by the General Assembly. These relationships exist as a matter of ecumenical agreement.

Covenant of Agreement Partners

A minister of another Reformed Church as a part of the Formula of Agreement may be permitted to serve a PC(USA) congregation under the Orderly Exchange Process. 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).

For more information see:

- Advisory Opinion for Receiving Ministers of Other Denominations [link]
- Formula of Agreement [link]
- Under Covenant Agreement Between the Korean Presbyterian Church Abroad and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) [link]
- Highlights to calling ministers under the Formula of Agreement (the Process for Orderly Exchange) [link]

On Calling a Pastor
Ministers of Other Christian Churches

Ministers of other denominations that are not a part of the Formula of Agreement churches may serve PC(USA) congregations on a temporary basis if their service meets the mission strategy of the presbytery. Refer to your presbytery for guidance on this issue.

Immigrant Fellowships and Congregations

Immigrant fellowships and congregations often have particular needs for pastoral leadership that may be difficult to fill. When the presbytery determines that its mission strategy with one of these fellowships or congregations requires it, the presbytery may recognize the ordination of a minister in good standing in another denomination. If the minister lacks the educational history required of our candidates, the presbytery will then provide educational opportunities as necessary and prudent for the minister’s successful ministry in the presbytery. Immigrant fellowships and congregations must work closely with the presbytery to secure appropriate pastoral leadership and to ensure that they are following the constitutional process described in G-20505a (1) for calling an immigrant pastor.

Leadership Options for Small Congregations

- PC(USA) Teaching Elders — Called to serve smaller congregations as part-time pastors in installed and temporary positions.
- Bi-Vocational/Tentmakers — PC(USA) teaching elders who serve as pastor and also work in other employment that may be ministry related or not. When considering a tentmaker pastor, it is important to remember that the person must divide his or her time among multiple employers. The pastor will be restricted in the number of hours he or she has available to work for the church. These individuals are members of the presbytery and serve as all other teaching elders except in their hourly commitment to the congregation.
- Supply/Temporary Pastors — Teaching elders and candidates serving as temporary supply pastors. The specific title of the position may differ among presbyteries. These contract positions are made with the session with the approval of the presbytery. The contract positions are for twelve months and can be renewed annually with presbytery approval. (For more information, see G-2.504b.)
- Small Church Residency Program — Open to first-call pastors who are PC(USA) candidates for ministry and have been certified by their presbyteries as ready to negotiate for service. This program pairs small, underserved congregations in a variety of ministry settings with recent seminary graduates who are interested in answering God’s call to serve where there is need in the PC(USA), specifically in small-membership congregations. For more information see:
  - [http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/residency/about-program/](http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/residency/about-program/)
  - Video — [www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/residency/videos/](www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/residency/videos/)
Ruling Elders Commissioned for Particular Pastoral Service (CRE) — Ruling elders may be commissioned to a particular congregation for a specified term that should not exceed three years. However, the commission can be renewed. Ruling elders who seek to serve as CREs must meet the training and examination of their presbytery. The commission of CREs is limited to their presbytery of membership. For more information, see G-2.10.