

ADVISORY OPINION

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Presbytery of Milwaukee

February 23, 2020

RE: Ministers from Other Christian Churches

Questions:

1. May a minister from another Christian church serve a congregation in our presbytery?
2. May a minister from another Christian church be installed as a pastor?

Answer:

The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has set forth in G-2.0607 the standards for all ministers who may serve in this denomination, including those of other denominations. The requirements include:

- “a. a candidate’s wisdom and maturity of faith, leadership skills, compassionate spirit, honest repute, and sound judgment;
- “b. a transcript showing graduation, with satisfactory grades, at a regionally accredited college or university;
- “c. a transcript from a theological institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools acceptable to the presbytery, showing a course of study including Hebrew and Greek, exegesis of the Old and New Testaments using Hebrew and Greek, satisfactory grades in all areas of study, and graduation or proximity to graduation, and
- “d. satisfactory grades, together with the examination papers in the areas covered by any standard ordination examination approved by the General Assembly”

Some of the requirements set forth in G-2.0607 may be waived based on the process of the other denomination’s ordination process, and their standards may be accepted in place of the PC(U.S.A.) standards (i.e. ordination exams).

Ministers from denominations in full-communion or in ecumenical agreement with the PC(U.S.A.) may serve PC(U.S.A.) congregations under the terms of those agreements.

Ministers from Christian churches in historic correspondence with the PC(U.S.A.), who have participated in ecumenical dialogues, and share core theological understandings may serve PC(U.S.A.) with permission of the presbytery under G-2.0505 and G-2.0506.

The following are denominations that the PCU(USA) is in historic correspondence and whose ministers may serve as pulpit supply and administer the sacraments, providing approval from their denominational jurisdiction and the presbytery.

No minister from these denominations may be considered for installed position, nor are they allowed to serve as moderators of sessions unless appointed by the presbytery under its own

rulers and policies. Only ministers from Full Communion denominations may be installed and serve as moderators with voice and vote (marked with an * below).

After being interviewed by the Presbytery's Commission on Ministry and as part of the approval of relationship, the ecumenical ministers shall be oriented and mentored to the PC(U.S.A.) theology (Book of Confessions), governance (Book of Order), and worship standards (Directory for Worship, and Book of Common Worship (2018) as example).

This list is always being updated. Always ask the Stated Clerk to make sure the PC(U.S.A.) is still in correspondence with these denominations BEFORE approving a contract or pulpit supply relationship.

African Methodist Episcopal Church
The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada
Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
Cumberland Presbyterian Church Cumberland
The Episcopal Church (USA)
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*
Hungarian Reformed Church in America*
International Council of Community Churches
Korean Presbyterian Church Abroad (KPCA)*
Korean Presbyterian Church in America*
Moravian Church in America, Northern and Southern Provinces*
National Baptist Convention of America, Inc.
National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.
Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.
Reformed Church in America*
United Church of Christ*
The United Methodist Church

(* = Full Communion Partner)

Ministers from other Christian churches who are not in full communion, ecumenical agreement, or ecumenical correspondence, may only serve Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) churches at the discretion of the presbytery under the presbytery's own rules and policies.

Only ministers approved by a presbytery, under its own rules and policies, may moderate a session. No minister, PC(U.S.A.) or from other Christian churches, who is not installed may vote at a session meeting.

**Summary of Guidelines for the
Transfer and Employment of Ministers of Other Christian Churches
as provided by the Office of the General Assembly, PC(U.S.A.)**

I. Use of internet-based referral system by Ministers of Other Christian Churches

The Presbyterian Church U.S.A. Internet-based referral system “Church Leadership Connection” is available for Presbyterian Church U.S.A. ministers only. Ministers of other Christian Churches including our Formula Partners, (ELCA, RCA. and UCC) are encouraged to contact presbyteries in which they seek to serve in temporary positions. Ministers in the process of transferring to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) must meet requirements including ordination exams before they may use Church Leadership Connection.

II. Ministers from Other Christian Churches (G-2.0505)

- Ministers from other Christian Churches may only serve Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) churches at the discretion of the Presbytery under the presbytery’s rules and policies.
- Only Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) ministers and Formula Partner ministers, (Reformed Church in America, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the United Church of Christ) may serve as installed pastors of Presbyterian Church U.S.A. congregations. (G-2.0506)
- Ministers of other Christian churches may serve only in temporary positions.
- Presbyteries have no obligation to allow other Christian churches ministers (including those of churches in full communion or in correspondence with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to serve their churches. Thorough examination and reference checking is essential.
- Ministers of other Christian churches who wish to become Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) ministers must meet the *Book of Order* requirements in G-2.0505 Transfer of Ministers of Other Christian churches.
- Full waiver to ministers of other Reformed churches (World Communion of Reformed Churches) who have been ordained for 5 or more years may be granted by a presbytery by a 2/3 vote may be granted by a presbytery.

III. Formula Partners and Ministers from ‘Churches in Correspondence’ (G-5.0202)

Ordained ministers in one member Church of the Formula of Agreement may be invited or may express their desire to serve in another Church; they do not have the right to serve in the other Church.

- **Formula Partner Ministers** (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, United Church of Christ, and Reformed Church in America) may be installed and serve Presbyterian Churches while remaining members of their home Christian churches. Reference checking and examination by the presbytery would take place just as it would for any presbyterian minister seeking a call within the presbytery. The minister is installed (if home Christian Church allows) and is enrolled as a member of a presbytery with all rights and privileges.
- **Accountability** - Formula Partner ministers remain accountable to the sending body for continuation of ministerial status. The inviting and sending bodies share responsibility for pastoral care of ordained ministers. They are accountable to the presbytery of call for their

ministry with the church. It is hoped that when such relationships are established, the governing body representatives would partner in supporting the minister.

- **Financial Arrangements** – Formula Partner ministries will remain members of their denomination’s medical and pension plans. Presbyterian congregations will pay dues to the insuring entity. It is expected that salaries will be the same as would be paid to a presbyterian minister.

IV. Transfer of membership to Presbyterian Church U.S.A

A. In order to become a Presbyterian Church U.S.A. minister, a minister of another Christian Church (including Formula Partners) must:

- Be an ordained minister
- Have a Baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university and a Theological degree from an institution acceptable to the presbytery of call. (G-2.0607b-c)
- Pass Presbyterian Church U.S.A. standard ordination exams. (G-2.0607d)
- By a three-fourths vote, a presbytery may waive any of the requirements for ordination in G-2.06, except for those of G-2.0607d. If a presbytery judges that there are good and sufficient reasons why a candidate should not be required to satisfy the requirements of G-2.0607d, it shall approve by 3/4 vote some alternate means by which to ascertain the readiness of the candidate for ministry in the areas covered by the standard ordination examinations. (G-2.0610)
- A presbytery can accept a minister of another Christian churches after the constitutional conditions have been met. They will be required to provide attestation of “good standing” from an authorized official of his or her present governing body. The Stated Clerk office will request on behalf of the presbyteries the required “good standing” letter.

B. To complete the transfer they must:

- Have a call to appropriate work in the Presbyterian Church U.S.A.;
- Be examined and approved by the presbytery of call (usually by the Committee on Ministry);
- They will be examined on their Christian faith, in theology, and in the system of government of this church, and at the discretion of the presbytery in other subjects
- Answer the ordination questions in the affirmative; and
- Furnish evidence that they have been officially removed from the roll of the other Christian Churches.

V. New Immigrant Fellowship and Congregations

In the case of ministers for immigrant fellowships and congregations, a presbytery may, if it determines that its strategy for mission with that group requires it, recognize the ordination, and receive as a member of presbytery a new immigrant minister who furnishes evidence of good standing in a Christian Church, even though at the time of enrollment that minister lacks the educational history required of candidates, and provide

such educational opportunities as seem necessary and prudent for that minister's successful ministry in the presbytery. *Book of Order* G-2.0505a(1).

It is essential that the presbytery or its designated commission or committee meet with each non-Presbyterian minister to assess theology and practice of ministry, understandings of Presbyterian government, and their intentions as well as to explain the presbytery's goals for the church and resources available to the minister. It is wise for the presbytery or its designated commission to get involved early in a relationship between a congregation and a non-Presbyterian pastor rather than to be faced with the unpleasant task of telling a church the pastor with whom they have built a relationship cannot serve them.

The Office of the General Assembly website maintains the list of churches that are "in correspondence" <https://oga.pcusa.org/section/ecclesial-and-ecumenical-ministries/ecumenical-and-agency-relationships/ministers-other-denominations/>.

A confirmation of a church "in correspondence" status can be requested from the Associate for Ecumenical and Agency Relationships at (888) 728-7228 ext.5444 or email (see <https://oga.pcusa.org/section/ecclesial-and-ecumenical-ministries/ecumenical-and-agency-relationships/about-us/>).