

Guidelines to Appoint a Moderator

Commission on Ministry

Approved: January 16, 2025

In the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (PCUSA), when a congregation does not have a pastor to moderate the Session, specific guidelines are followed to ensure proper governance and continuity. Here are the key points based on PCUSA polity:

1. Responsibility of the Presbytery

- The **presbytery** is responsible for ensuring that the Session has a moderator.
- According to the *Book of Order* (G-3.0109), the presbytery has the authority to appoint a moderator for the Session when there is no installed or temporary pastor.

2. Qualifications of a Moderator

- The appointed moderator is typically a **teaching elder** (ordained minister) who is a member of the presbytery.

3. Appointment Process

- The presbytery's **Committee on Ministry (COM)** or equivalent body usually oversees the appointment process.
- The Session or congregation may communicate their needs to the presbytery, but the final decision rests with the presbytery.
- Access the situation for conflicts of interest, former relationships, etc.

4. Term of Appointment

- The term of the moderator may be for a specified period or until an interim pastor, temporary pastor, or installed pastor is in place.
- The moderator's responsibilities end when a new pastor is ordained, installed, or hired to lead the congregation.

5. Duties of the Moderator

- Convene and preside over all Session meetings.
- Ensure the Session operates in compliance with the *Book of Order* and presbytery policies.
- Provide pastoral guidance and leadership as needed.

- Facilitate the congregation's preparation for calling new pastoral leadership, if applicable.

6. Special Circumstances

- If the Session faces complex issues, the presbytery may appoint a **commission** with temporary jurisdiction over the Session. This is more common in situations of conflict or crisis.
- In some cases, the presbytery may ask a nearby pastor or a retired minister to serve as the moderator.

7. Communication with the Presbytery

- It is important for the Clerk of Session to maintain clear communication with the presbytery and its COM during the transition period.
- Regular updates and consultation with the presbytery can ensure smooth operation of the Session and the congregation.

Questions regarding specific procedures should be directed to the COM or the stated clerk for guidance.