

Presbytery of the James
Member-at-Large Policy
COM Approved: March 13, 2025
Presbytery Approved: June 10, 2025

The PC(USA) Book of Order G-2.0503b states: *"A member-at-large shall comply with as many of the criteria in G-2.0503a as possible and shall actively participate in the life of a congregation."* The Presbytery of the James recognizes that this is a requirement, not an option, and seeks to uphold this standard with both compassion and integrity. This policy does not apply to retired pastors.

Understanding Member-at-Large (MAL) Status

The Presbytery of the James understands Member-At-Large (MAL) status to be temporary by intent and requires that all MALs:

- Regularly attend presbytery meetings
- Actively participate in the life of a PC(USA) congregation

MALs in the Presbytery of the James shall comply with all pertinent portions of the Book of Order in order to maintain presbytery membership.

Member-at-Large Responsibilities

MALs are expected to:

1. Fulfill all responsibilities outlined in the PC(USA) Book of Order, particularly G-2.0503b.
2. Submit an Annual Report Form each year to COM, demonstrating how they are meeting the expectations set forth in G-2.0503b and POJ criteria.
3. Maintain active participation in a PC(USA) congregation.
4. Engage in the broader life of the presbytery through worship, service, or other ministry-related activities.

Commission on Ministry (COM) Responsibilities

The COM shall review annually the status of all MALs using the relevant Book of Order guidelines and POJ policies. If a MAL fails to fulfill their responsibilities, COM may recommend their removal from the POJ roll to the presbytery.

COM Responsibilities Include:

1. Upon approving a request to dissolve a pastoral relationship (G-2.0502), request that the presbytery enroll the minister as a Member-at-Large (MAL). The enrollment date shall be the date of the presbytery meeting at which the request is approved. COM shall communicate this enrollment date to the MAL.
2. Inform the MAL of the requirement to regularly attend POJ meetings and to actively participate in the life and regular worship of a local PC(USA) congregation.
3. Send an annual request to each MAL, including the Annual Report Form and the deadline for submission.
4. Review annual reports and follow up with MALs regarding:
 - Efforts to find a new call or transfer membership to another presbytery.
 - Any good cause or extenuating circumstances preventing a return to ministry (e.g., family responsibilities, self-care, community service).
 - The flexible application of this policy as outlined in G-2.0503b.

Three-Year and Five-Year Review Process

1. COM will ensure a fair and compassionate process for discernment, allowing the MAL to present their case before any final recommendation is made.
2. At the three-year mark, COM will evaluate whether the MAL has:
 - Engaged in ministry through supply preaching, session moderation, or pastoral activities.
 - Actively sought a new call (e.g., submitted a Pastoral Mission Profile to churches).
 - Considered transferring membership to another presbytery.
 - Provided good cause or extenuating circumstances for continued MAL status.
3. If a MAL has been active in the life of a congregation and is seeking a pastoral call, they shall remain in good standing as a member of presbytery.
4. If these criteria have not been met, COM will meet with the MAL for discussion. If the MAL declines to meet, COM may recommend that the MAL consider requesting release from ordained ministry (G-2.0507).
5. If a MAL demonstrates ongoing interest in ordained ministry by engaging in validated ministry activities, seeking a call, or remaining active in a congregation, COM may recommend that the MAL remain in good standing as a member of the presbytery.

COM will continue to provide pastoral counsel and guidance so long as the MAL remains a presbytery member.

6. At the five-year mark, if the above criteria remain unmet, COM shall recommend to the presbytery that the MAL be released from ordained ministry (G-2.0508). The MAL shall be notified in writing at least 60 days before such a recommendation is presented to the presbytery.
7. A MAL may appeal or request a review if COM recommends release after five years.