

Guidelines and Practices for Retired Ministers

Commission on Ministry

Approved: December 11, 2025

(Revised in accordance with the 2023–2025 Book of Order)
“...and the multitude of years should teach wisdom.” — *Job 32:7b*

I. Introduction and Theological Foundation

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) gives thanks for the faithfulness and wisdom of those who have served as Ministers of Word and Sacrament and who now live in retirement. Retirement marks not an end to one’s calling, but a transition in vocation and rhythm of service. The gifts and witness of retired ministers continue to enrich the life of the presbytery, the local congregation, and the wider church.

Under the current *Book of Order* (G-2.0503 – G-2.0504; G-3.0307), all Ministers of Word and Sacrament whether actively serving, engaged in specialized ministry, or retired remain members of the presbytery and under its pastoral care and oversight.

II. Relationship to the Presbytery

Retired ministers remain members of presbytery and continue to share in its life and witness. They retain voice and vote, unless otherwise limited by presbytery rule.

Retired ministers are **encouraged to**:

- Participate in presbytery worship, fellowship, and discernment as they are able.
- Share their wisdom and experience through mentoring, prayer, or committee service.
- Transfer membership to the presbytery in which they reside, when appropriate, to facilitate care and fellowship.

Retired ministers are **not required to**:

- Submit requests for excused absences from presbytery meetings.
- File annual reports such as those required of Members-At-Large or ministers serving outside congregations.
- Maintain validated ministry status.

These adjustments reflect the presbytery’s pastoral understanding that retirement is a new season of grace and rest, while maintaining accountability under *G-3.0307*.

III. Ethical and Pastoral Boundaries

All ministers—active or retired—remain bound by the *Standards of Ethical Conduct* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Retired ministers are expected to:

1. Support the ministry of their successors.

Upon leaving a congregation, retired ministers will act and speak in ways that strengthen the ministry of the next pastor. (*Standards of Ethical Conduct*, II.14–15)

2. Provide pastoral services only with presbytery authorization.

Retired ministers shall not return to serve the congregation from which they retired in any pastoral capacity (including weddings, funerals, or sacraments) without explicit invitation from the presbytery or the moderator of session.

3. Respect boundaries of ministry.

Pastoral relationships are built upon trust, and the integrity of transitions requires careful observance of appropriate boundaries.

IV. Participation in Ministry After Retirement

Retirement does not remove ordination or the call to service. Ministers who feel led to offer their gifts in part-time, temporary, or volunteer capacities may do so with presbytery awareness and support.

Retired ministers may serve, with presbytery approval, in such roles as:

- Interim, supply, or temporary pastoral service in a congregation other than the one from which they retired.
- Parish associate, pastoral counselor, spiritual director, or chaplaincy roles.
- Volunteer or community-based ministries consistent with the mission of the Church.

Each presbytery may determine what forms of service require formal approval or validation (*G-3.0307*).

All retired Ministers of the Word and Sacrament who wish to engage with congregations or validated ministries beyond the congregation must be in compliance with the policies of the Presbytery

- If applicable a current Background Check
- Sign Acknowledgment of the Misconduct Policy
- Complete Boundary Training
- Anti-Racism Policy (when available)

V. Pastoral Sensitivity and Care

The Presbytery recognizes that some retired ministers, especially those residing in care facilities or living with health limitations, may no longer be able to participate in presbytery life or fulfill administrative requirements. In these cases, the presbytery

extends grace and pastoral sensitivity, acknowledging years of faithful service and affirming that these ministers remain valued members of Christ's body. Accordingly, the presbytery affirms the following practices:

- Retired ministers in care facilities or with significant limitations are considered **excused** from signing annual acknowledgments (such as harassment or boundaries training policies).
- They are **not required** to attend presbytery meetings or file absence requests. The presbytery will continue to offer spiritual support, visitation, and prayer as part of its covenant care.

VI. Validation or Approval of Post-Retirement Ministry

While retired ministers are not required to engage in validated ministry, any post-retirement work performed under the title or function of "Minister of Word and Sacrament" should be conducted with the knowledge and approval of the presbytery. Presbyteries retain the authority and responsibility to determine which ministries fall under their validation or approval processes (*G-3.0307*). This ensures accountability, appropriate support, and consistency with the mission of the Church.

VII. Board of Pensions and Compensation

Retired ministers receiving a pension under the *Board of Pensions Benefits Plan* may not return to compensated service for the same employing organization or congregation from which they retired.

With presbytery approval, they may:

- Serve in another congregation or presbytery in an interim or temporary capacity.
- Serve with non-PC(USA) organizations.
- Volunteer in ministries not eligible for the Benefits Plan.

Questions concerning compensation, employment limits, or income continuation should be directed to the *Board of Pensions* and the presbytery's Commission on Ministry.

VIII. Continuing Connection and Gratitude

The Presbytery celebrates its retired ministers as treasured members of the body of Christ. Their wisdom, stories, and faith continue to shape the witness of the Church. Through prayer, communication, and fellowship, the presbytery commits to remain connected to those who have served faithfully and now rest in a different rhythm of ministry.

"The Church is a community of memory as well as of hope. Those who have gone before us teach us faithfulness; those who serve still remind us that God's call endures."

Key References

- *Book of Order* G-2.0503 – G-2.0504 (Ministers of Word and Sacrament; Retirement)
- *Book of Order* G-3.0307 (Presbytery Responsibilities for Oversight and Support)
- *Standards of Ethical Conduct for Ordained Officers* (PC(USA))
- *Board of Pensions Post-Retirement Service Guidelines* (Administrative Rule 801)