

Policy for Receiving Ministers as Members-at-Large into Denver Presbytery

According to the “Form of Government, G-11.0400” Presbytery receives into its membership those ministers who have a call to a pastoral relation within the presbytery or from a governing body or who are entering a work that can qualify as a validated ministry in service beyond the jurisdiction of the Church. Presbytery may also receive, as a member-at-large, ministers who were active members of another presbytery, but are now voluntarily engaged in an occupation that does not comply with all the criteria for a validated ministry if *specified circumstances* exists: “because of family responsibilities or other individual circumstances which presbytery recognizes as important.” (G-11.0406b) It has been the practice of Denver Presbytery not to receive ministers as members-at-large except when family responsibilities limit ministry possibilities* .

Ordinarily, ministers engaged full time in academic pursuit (*i.e.* Th.D., Ph.D) do not meet the above stated requirements, and are therefore not eligible to be received as members. However, presbyteries do retain the right to recognize “individual circumstances” that may merit receipt of ministers as members-at-large. Denver Presbytery may establish specific criteria that would make an advanced-degree student eligible for being received into membership of the Presbytery. Such criteria might include an area of study that can be shown to have a direct and practical application to the life and vitality of the Church, whether congregational, denominational or ministerial** .

Therefore, Ministers of Word and Sacrament shall be considered *eligible* for receipt into membership of Denver Presbytery as a Member-at-large providing:

The minister shall be a member in good standing of another presbytery, and shall have been given a satisfactory governing body reference check by the presbytery of membership.

The minister shall demonstrate an ability and willingness to comply with as many of the criteria in G-11.0403 as possible, including regular attendance at Presbytery assemblies.

The minister shall be open to becoming a parish associate in a congregation of the Presbytery.

The minister shall be temporarily disengaged from the active practice of ministry as defined in G-11.0403 due to family responsibilities.

or

The minister shall be engaged in full time academic studies in a field which, in the estimation of the COM, can be demonstrated to have a direct and practical application to the life and vitality of the Church, whether congregational, denominational, ecumenical, or ministerial.

It should be noted that eligibility does not guarantee membership status.

* Family responsibilities may include such things as a spouse’s move into the bounds of the presbytery – requiring the minister to terminate a call or other validated ministry or if the minister is the primary caregiver for small children.

This practice has served the presbytery well. A presbytery as geographically popular as Denver can easily become inundated with applicants who are not engaged in ministry but who simply want to move to Denver. Experience has shown that ministers who “float” without call or validated ministry oftentimes bring with them additional problems for the presbytery.

** A Ph.D. dissertation of the Development of the Dead Sea Scrolls within the Essene community probably would not meet this criteria, while an examination of Jungian theory as it relates to clinical pastoral care might.

For pertinent sections of the Form of Government, see G-11.0402, G-11.0403, G-11.0406b).