



Classis of North Grand Rapids
1460 Banbury Drive
Grand Rapids MI 49505
statedclerk@northgr.org

Process and Procedures for Calling; Contracting and Installation of a Minister of Word and Sacrament

The Book of Church Order is very specific about the process for calling and installing Ministers of Word and Sacrament. The following guide is provided to assist church consistories and congregations in understanding the process and the steps required.

BCO Part II. Article 12. Sec. 7. A minister of the classis shall superintend the proceedings of a consistory when a call is being issued to a minister. When completed, a call must be presented by the consistory to the classis, which shall approve the call before it is presented to the minister called. If no legitimate objection is offered, the minister shall be installed by the classis or its committee according to the office for installation in the Liturgy.

The Classis appoints the supervisor who oversees the proceedings of the consistory of a church without an installed minister. The supervisor assists the consistory and congregation during the ministerial search and calling process.

The Call

The North Grand Rapids Classis is governed by Rules of Order which also detail the Classis' procedures for calling and installing a pastor.

Classis Rules of Order, Article 2. Section 4. The Pastoral Care Committee E. Responsibilities:

“1) To meet with and interview pastoral candidates, approve calls.... In all of these actions relating to the Minister of the Word, written notice shall be sent to each member of the Classis, and the decision of the Pastoral Care Committee shall become final only after five full days have elapsed since the postmark on the Stated Clerk's letter of notice.”

Explanation:

It is important that the consistory/supervisor involves the Pastoral Care Committee early in the calling process. The Pastoral Care Committee is made up of a minimum of 10 people—five clergy and five elders. Many schedules must be coordinated to complete the Committee's work in processing a call so as much lead time as possible benefits the Committee, the consistory, and the candidate.

Before a church consistory may present the call to a minister the consistory must first submit the formal call to the Stated Clerk who will forward the document to the Pastoral Care Committee. The Committee will review the call to ensure that it meets the RCA criteria. The Committee will then schedule a personal meeting with the minister candidate to ensure that the minister conforms to the RCA requirements and practice of an ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament.

After completing these steps the Committee will vote to approve or disapprove the call and advise the consistory of that action. The Class Rules of Order permit the Committee to approve or disapprove the call on behalf of the entire Classis.

The Pastoral Care Committee will inform the Stated Clerk of the Committee's vote; the Stated Clerk will inform the Classis Supervisor and Consistory of the Committee's decision.

If the Call is Approved

If the call is approved the Stated Clerk of the Classis must notify the Classis members and delegates of this action. Members and delegates have five days from the date of notice to object to the Committee's action. Should any two ministers and two elders of Classis object to the action of the Pastoral Care Committee, the President or the next senior officer available shall call a special session of Classis and the questioned action shall not take effect, but rather the entire matter shall be laid before the Classis.

If not objection is made and after five days from the date of notice the consistory may formally present the call to the minister candidate. If the call is disapproved the Committee will work with the Consistory and supervisor to ensure that the call is restated to meet the RCA's criteria.

After the Call is Accepted

Once the call is accepted by the minister candidate the Consistory will notify the Pastoral Care Committee and Classis President to schedule the installation service.

If the minister candidate is not yet ordained the candidate's ordination must take place before or concurrent to the installation service.

If the unordained minister candidate is a student under care of the North Grand Rapids Classis, the Classis Student Care Committee, candidate and Classis president will schedule the ordination as part of the installation service.

If the candidate is under care of another RCA classis that classis must first ordain the candidate before installation to the North Grand Rapids Classis congregation.

The Classis President and the minister candidate will ensure that the installation service follows the RCA Liturgy for Reception and Installation of a Minister of Word and Sacrament.

The candidate will provide the Classis President with a detailed order of worship and list of participants for approval a minimum of three weeks prior to the installation service. The President will ensure that the service meets the RCA Liturgy for Reception and Installation of a Minister of Word and Sacrament. The President will discuss any concerns with the candidate if necessary.

The Installation Service

The installation service is a formal North Grand Rapids Classis meeting. Notice of the installation service date and time must be provided to Classis members and delegates a minimum of 10 days prior to the installation service.

In accordance with the Classis Rules of Order a quorum of members must attend the installation service for it to be an official Classis meeting (five clergy members and five elder delegates).

Call Process and Procedure Checklist

- Consistory develops the call.
- Consistory sends call document to the Stated Clerk; who sends to the co-leaders of the Pastoral Care Committee.
- The Pastoral Care Committee reviews the call to insure that the call meets the requirements of the BCO and Classis approved minimum salary guidelines.
 - Annual salary in specified number of payments.
 - Housing – parsonage is free and all utilities are paid by the church. Housing allowance is at least 30% of base salary.
 - Insurance – major medical (including family), group life, long-term disability. If not offering group medical insurance the church must cover the cost of the premiums paid for medical insurance for the minister and immediate family. These premiums must meet or exceed the minimum standards stipulated by the Board of Benefits Services. Dental and long term care (including family) are optional. When a high deductible health plan is chosen, consideration should be given to using all or part of the savings in premium to establish a Health Savings Account (HSA) for the minister.
 - Retirement contributions – full contributions are required to be paid as required by the BCO (contact Board of Benefits Services for current percentages). (BOBS phone 212-870-2892; email cbussieres@rca.org)
 - Social Security – pastors shall be reimbursed for Social Security payments at the rate of one-half of the rate payable by a self-employed person. The reimbursement is calculated on the base salary plus housing. If a pastor has elected not to be part of the Social Security system, an equal allowance is to be made for another appropriate retirement program. The church shall require evidence that this other retirement program has benefits comparable to Social Security benefits including Medicare.
 - Professional Development – as required by the BCO. A minimum of one week with a stipend equal to not less than 1/52 of annual minimum base salary (excluding housing allowance) shall be granted each year for professional development. By mutual agreement, this time and money may be accumulated up to a maximum equivalent of four years of service. The program of study must be approved by the Consistory, and should be mutually beneficial to the church and pastor.

- Vacation – The minimum amount of vacation time granted each year shall be: a) senior and solo pastors: 4 weeks including 4 Sundays; associate pastors with 0-5 years of service: 3 weeks; associate pastors with over 5 years of service: 4 weeks including 4 Sundays. One week of vacation may be carried over to the next year.
- Mileage or Car Allowance – use of car for ministry purposes shall be reimbursed either at the IRS per mile rate or for actual expenses, whichever is more equitable in the situation, as agreed upon by pastor and consistory. (note: per IRS rules, one round trip commute each day is not a reimbursable expense).

Recommended Provisions

- Sabbatical – it is recommended that consistories adopt a policy of granting pastors at least a six week sabbatical at full salary after each seven years of service with that congregation. The sabbatical shall be scheduled at a time mutually agreed upon by the consistory and pastor. The plan for the sabbatical will be approved by the consistory with the clear intention that the sabbatical benefit both the pastor and the church.
 - Ministerial Couples – it is recommended that the consistory of a church served by a ministerial couple be sensitive to the possibility that a shared parsonage benefit or housing allowance can decrease those pastors’ retirement and social security payments thus placing them at a disadvantage when they retire. Those consistories are urged to consider paying more than the minimum retirement and/or social security benefit to correct this inequity.
 - Special consideration is recommended for those pastors who have led their congregations to start significant new worship services, worship sites or ministries resulting in new conversions to Christ and new ministry leaders. It is recommended that the consistory consider an annual merit increase of an additional 2.5% above the appropriate step in the chart (or above the current salary if already above the minimum annual base salary). If these new revitalization efforts result in the formation of a new church, it is recommended that the salary be at least 5% above the appropriate step in the chart (or above the current salary if already above the minimum annual base salary). These recommendations are voluntary and are at the discretion of the consistory.
- The Pastoral Care Committee interviews the called minister (ideally this can be done when an out of town/state minister is visiting the calling church.
- The Pastoral Care Committee approves or disapproves the call.
- If approved the Pastoral Care Committee notifies the Stated Clerk who then notifies the Classis Supervisor and Consistory and publishes the action to the Classis members and delegates.
 - The Classis members and delegates have five days from the date of notification to state any objection to the action. The Classis can call a special classis meeting to hear and consider objections.
 - If the call is not approved the Pastoral Care Committee will discuss the reasons for disapproving the call with the Classis Supervisor and calling church

consistory. The calling church consistory may revise and resubmit the call for approval, correcting any errors and omissions in the original call.

- If the Pastoral Care Committee denies approval following a resubmission of the call the Committee will provide written reasons for the denial to the Classis Supervisor, calling church consistory and the Classis Executive Committee.
- If the call is accepted, the new minister and consistory and Classis president will set a date and time for the installation service. They will coordinate the installation service order of worship and participants with the Classis President.
- The Stated Clerk will provide a minimum of 10 days' notice to the Classis members and delegates of the date and time of the installation service.