**Does This Position Qualify to Be Consistent with the Calling of a Minister of the Word?**

If ministers or ministerial candidates are offered positions outside of a congregation and wishes to be ordained or continue to be ordained, they must request that their calling church demonstrate to the classis that their work is consistent with the ministry of the Word, following the provisions of Church Order Article 12-c and its Supplement. It is important to consult with the supervising council or classis to find out if a position has been designated as “consistent with the calling of a minister of the Word” as required by Church Order Article 12-c (see also Supplement, Article 12-c).

1. Certain job descriptions include duties that may be deemed consistent with the calling of a minister of the Word. If ordination is either preferred or required this should be clearly noted in the job description.
2. Certain positions have previously been approved by synod or a classis as being consistent with the calling of a minister of the Word, and “it is generally assumed that a position once approved does not need to be approved again, even when there is a change in personnel filling the position” (*Manual of CRC Government*, 2019 edition)
3. There are numerous Christian occupations that can be well served by a person with theological training and ministerial experience, but that are not ecclesiastical in nature and are not directly related to the purpose and primary task of the ministry of the Word. As denominational staff, we are obligated to be clear about this matter! “Just because a (former) minister of the Word is able to do a job does not automatically designate that job as ecclesiastical in nature or make it directly related to the purpose and primary task of the ministerial office” (excerpt from Report 30, *Agenda for Synod 1978*). In every case, it is up to the classis to decide whether to approve of a position as consistent with the ministry of the Word.

We wish to underscore the *seriousness* of the task of the calling church and classes in making this judgment. “It is the responsibility of the classis, with the concurrence of synodical deputies, to prevent the development of many pseudo-ministerial positions which may be proposed as being consistent with the calling of a minister of the Word” (*Acts of Synod 1978*, p. 45-46).

**Church Order Article 11**

“The calling of a minister of the Word is to proclaim, explain, and apply Holy Scripture in order to gather in and equip the members so that the church of Jesus Christ may be built up.”

**Church Order Article 12-c**

“A minister of the Word may also serve the church in other work which relates directly to the calling of a minister, but only after the calling church has demonstrated to the satisfaction of classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies that said work is consistent with the calling of a minster of the Word.”

**Church Order Supplement, Article 12-c, sections a-b: Regulations for the application of Article 12-c of the Church Order to specific tasks and situations:**

“a. The calling church shall secure the prior approval of classis, with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies, for each new ministerial position, by providing classis with the following information:

1) The description of the official position (purposes, duties, qualifications, etc.) as determined by the calling church in consultation with cooperating agencies as applicable.

2) The evidence that the minister will be directly accountable to the calling church, including an outline of requirements for reporting to the calling church, and supervision by the calling church, in consultation with cooperating agencies as applicable.

3) The demonstration that the position will be consistent with the calling as a minister of the Word.

4) When any position having been declared by a classis to be “spiritual in character and directly related to the ministerial calling” . . . becomes vacant, this position shall be reviewed in light of Articles 11-14 of the Church Order before another call is issued.

b. When a new ministry opportunity can be met only by immediate action, the calling church (and the appropriate denominational agency) may obtain provisional approval from the classical committee, subject to subsequent approval by classis with the concurring advice of the synodical deputies. In the event that the provisional approval is not sustained and the minister desires to continue in the position, the minister may be honorably released from office and may be readmitted according to the regulations of the Church Order. (Cf. Article 14-e.)”

**Christian Reformed Church Order Commentary**

“The Church Order deals differently with those whose work is with what might be called non-ecclesiastical organizations or agencies. Here, the work is defined by such ‘outside bodies,’ and the classes must decide that what these folks actually do on a daily basis is in keeping with the ministerial calling. This decision also requires the concurrence of the synodical deputies. The concurrence is reported to synod and that assembly has the prerogative of approving or not approving the work that its deputies have done in each instance.”

“In the past, synodical deputies and or synods have drawn the line at professors of philosophy teaching at an independent Christian college, administrators of pastoral care centers who didn’t actually counsel anyone but simply ran the operations, and principal of a Christian high school, to name just three of these ‘rejections.’ A synod cannot interfere with their appointments, of course, but it can decide that persons who serve in these capacities will not be able to keep or establish ministerial credentials and, thus, that local congregations are not to call them as associate ministers.”

-Henry De Moor, Christian Reformed Church Order Commentary, Second Edition, pp. 79-80

**Joint Supervision**

Everyone who occupies the ecclesiastical office of the ministry of the Word must be directly accountable to his/her church council as well as to the employer. This includes ministers of the Word who are employed by church-related or even private Christian organizations. They retain official accountability to the church that calls them and gives them office.

**Church Order Article 13-b**

“A minister of the Word whose work is with other than the calling church shall be supervised by the calling church in cooperation with other congregations, institutions, or agencies involved. The council of the calling church shall have primary responsibility for supervision of doctrine and life. The congregations, institutions, or agencies, where applicable, shall have primary responsibility for supervision of duties.”

--Cf. Supplement, Article 13-b

**Church Order Supplement, Article 13-b**

“If any council, agency or institution of the CRC involved in the cooperative supervision of a minister of the Word learns about significant deviation in doctrine, life, or duties, it shall officially inform in writing its partner(s) in the supervision about such deviation before any action is taken that affects that minister’s status and future. A similar communication officially informing its partner(s) in supervision is expected from an agency or institution when a minister’s status is altered at a time of downsizing or position elimination.

Provisions for cooperative supervision of ministers of the Word working for agencies and institutions not directly under the authority of the synod of the CRCNA are to be formulated and processed according to the regulations contained in Church Order Supplement, Article 12-c and the provisions regarding chaplains adopted by Synod 1998 (see *Acts of Synod 1998*, pp. 391-392, 457-460).

The credential of a minister of the Word serving in specialized ministry (e.g. chaplaincy) may be sent to another church when such a change makes supervision of a minister’s doctrine and life easier and/or more effective. Transfer of ministerial credentials requires the regular calling process of the local church and must be approved by both councils and classes.”

(*Acts of Synod 2002*, pp. 469-470)

(*Acts of Synod 2017*, p. 624)

**Additional Note:**

Per U.S. IRS regulations, to qualify for certain tax advantages as a minister (e.g. housing allowance), an individual must work for a church or an integral agency of a church *and* be performing ministerial services. Worth’s Income Tax Guide for Minister’s (CRCNA HR has a copy) outlines services or duties that would “qualify” under ministerial services. If an ordained individual serves in a position that has been approved for ordination, CRCNA will designate that individual as eligible for housing allowance.

(Many ministers receive housing allowance, but do not live in parsonages.)