

Care of Students Commission
Classis of Passaic Valley

Commissioned Pastor Recommendation for
Arlene Romaine called to Packanack Community Church

Having walked with Arlene Romaine from the beginning of her call to become a commissioned pastor, overseen and approved her theological education in the Certificate in Theological Studies curriculum at New Brunswick Theological Seminary as well as additional courses in polity and Christian education, recommended her for commissioning at Ponds Reformed Church, where her work was consistent and attentive to the Word, and having seen her continued involvement in the life of the classis and regular attendance to classis and commission meetings, the Care of Students Commission gives these reasons in support of her being commissioned to serve as a commissioned pastor at Packanack Community Church:

- 1) The position Arlene is being called to at Packanack requires the same skills and experience which she fulfilled at Ponds Reformed Church, and we affirm her gifts for ministry.
- 2) Packanack Community Church is physically located within the geographic boundaries of the classis, as required in Chapter 1, Part II, Article 14 of the BCO.
- 3) Arlene's direct supervisor in this new position is a RCA minister of Word and sacrament, who serves as Senior Pastor of Packanack Community Church.
- 4) The BCO does not limit the service of a commissioned pastor to only ministry in a RCA congregation, and is intentionally written in open-ended terminology in order to give the classis the ability to respond to the unique ministry needs within their bounds, and the calls, gifts and training of commissioned pastors under their care.
- 5) Our classis has commissioned two commissioned pastors for service in non-RCA settings; those ministries are at the Eastern Christian Children's Retreat and the Christian Health Care Center. Both of these positions are "*for a specific ministry within that classis*" but the ministry is not limited to being solely for a RCA congregation within the bounds of the classis. In both cases the person serves in a

ministry considered valid by the classis at a location within the geographic boundaries of the Classis of Passaic Valley.

- 6) Arlene will maintain her RCA church membership at Ponds Reformed Church, where she is ordained as an elder.
- 7) Regarding matters of discipline, the Book of Church Order is very specific regarding the *Discipline of a Commissioned Pastor* as stated in Chapter 2, Part I, Article 3, Section 3:

"Elders who are serving in a classis commission as a commissioned pastor are subject solely to the government and discipline of the classis. Commissioned pastors shall be subject to the same rules as ministers within Chapter 2, Part I."

That referenced discipline of ministers is found in Article 3, Section 4, and it specifically declares that *"the classis shall have exclusive jurisdiction in the case of a charge against a minister with the exception noted below (regarding General Synod professors)"*.

It is worth noting that the BCO lists the *Discipline of a Commissioned Pastor* in its own Section 3, and not under Section 2 *Discipline of an Elder or Deacon*.

- 8) Regarding any concern that commissioning Arlene to Packanack is setting a precedent for future commissionings, it is helpful to note here that, unlike the ordination of a minister of Word and sacrament, which is lifelong, commissioned pastors are only commissioned to a specific ministry within the bounds of classis, and they serve at the pleasure and under the authority of the classis. The classis always decides on the merits of commissioning a commissioned pastor to a call based on the classis' examination of the call and the person's gifts and training being appropriate to that call. Each commissioning is separate and distinct based on the person and the call to ministry, and so the classis would act on each case quite apart from any previous decisions involving other calls and other candidates.