

**From: The Mentoring Commission
To: Delegates of Classis of Passaic Valley
Re: Commissioned Pastors**

The Commission affirms and celebrates that Arlene Romaine has exhibited gifts of ministry particularly in the area of Christian education and ministry to children, youth and families during her tenure at Ponds Reformed Church. We commend and give thanks to God for Arlene's new ministry with the Packanack Community Church. We pray that the new ministry in partnership with that Christian community is both faithful and fruitful.

It is the recommendation of the Mentoring Commission that the Classis of Passaic Valley define the parameters within which the Classis may designate the role of Commissioned Pastor and commission an individual to that ministry designation according to the Book of Church Order.

It is our understanding of the Book of Church Order that a Classis can not commission an Elder to serve as a Commissioned Pastor outside of the jurisdiction of that peculiar Classis.

I. In reading the BCO, Chapter 1, Part II Article 14 (particularly Sections 1 and 5), we understand that the designation of Commissioned Pastor is not an office, but a particular ministry engaged by an ordained Elder (office) for a specific time and place within a particular Classis within the Reformed Church in America. A Commissioned Pastor is defined as:

“An elder who is trained, commissioned, and supervised by a classis for a specific ministry within that Classis that will include the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the sacraments. The commission shall be valid for the period of assigned service.” BCO 1.II.14 Sec 1.

We find no support outlined in the BCO by which the Classis can commission an RCA Elder to a ministry of Commissioned Pastor outside the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical body which is the Classis, particularly another denomination.

II.

The Book of Church Order clearly states “A consistory may recommend a confessing member of a Reformed church to the classis as a candidate to become a commissioned pastor” BCO1.II.14 sec.2

It is our understanding that while a local RCA congregation may render an evaluation of ministry gifts and skills of an Elder to serve in God's church to a body within another jurisdiction, that “recommendation” does not meet the criteria of “recommending” that person to a specific ministry within a body in that separate jurisdiction.

III.

Further it is our reading of the Formula of Agreement that a transfer may occur for a *designated office* into a ministry of another participating denomination *according to the polity of the receiving denomination*. Since Commissioned Pastor is a designation to a particular ministry and not an office

no parity is apparent.

The Formula of Agreement applies only to persons who are ordained ministers of Word and Sacrament and does not apply to persons who are locally trained and authorized ministers — commissioned pastors (RCA), commissioned lay pastors [PC(USA)], licensed ministers (UCC), synodically authorized ministers (ELCA).

Therefore:

With respect for the polity and autonomy of other ecclesiastical bodies, including other RCA Classes and/or other denominations in particular, it does not appear to us that there is an appropriate warrant, according to the guidelines in the Book of Church Order, to commission an Elder whose membership is held in the Classis, to the office of Commissioned Pastor to a congregation in another jurisdiction.