

BOOK OF FORMS SECTION 176.1

(Clerks of Assembly report, A&P 2021, p. 317-18, 54)

Book of Forms 176 and following, defines who of the church's elders, diaconal ministers and ministers of Word and Sacraments are eligible to be placed on the constituent roll of a presbytery. The first subsection reads as follows.

176.1 Ordained ministers within the bounds, whose ministry is carried out on a minimum of a half-time basis and not as a complement to some other vocational pursuit and:

The Clerks of Assembly think that the words “and not as a complement to some other vocational pursuit” are no longer appropriate given the realities of the church today. The inclusion of these words dates back to a time when the church questioned whether a candidate for ministry ought to be ordained to anything less than full-time ministry. That discussion concluded that ordination validation should be based on the quality of the candidate to be ordained and not the quantity of time devoted to ministry.

Part of the commentary surrounding this decision was that a call to part-time ministry should not be merely a supplement to some other vocational pursuit and that the other vocational pursuit should be something that would be “fitting” for a minister and not distract from the ministry of Word and Sacraments. (A&P 1988, p. 391, 21). There seemed to be a concern that some ministers might consider their “other vocational pursuit” as their primary occupation, while ministering on the side. The phrase “...and not as a complement to some other vocational pursuit...” appears to be an attempt to protect against such prioritization.

While both full-time and part-time ministry are deemed to be a response to a call of God, it is reasonable to expect the call to require a serious commitment from the minister. Nevertheless, it is understandable that ministers called to part-time ministry may very well be called to other work that supplements a part-time stipend. To try to determine which vocation is the primary and which is the secondary, seems an unnecessary distinction. Before they are called and ordained, ministers must receive the confirmation of a session, a certifying presbytery, a seminary, a guidance conference, a psychological examination body, a calling congregation and the presbytery that sustains the call. It is hoped favourably completing this journey of discernment serves as a significant part of the validation of an individual's ordination. The presbytery, in its ongoing care and oversight of ministers, will be able to assess if the minister is sufficiently committed to the service of the church.

With these considerations in mind, the Clerks of Assembly make the following recommendation.

Recommendation CLK-015 (adopted, p. 54)

That the proposed amendment to Book of Forms section 176.1, be referred to sessions and presbyteries for study and report to the Clerks of Assembly by January 31, 2021.

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