Pulpit Supply Policy: Guidelines for Pulpit Supply Preachers and Congregations

From time to time, congregations require that the pulpit be supplied for Sunday morning worship or other special services. This policy provides guidance to congregations seeking pulpit supply and defines the expectations for preachers providing pulpit supply services in the Presbytery of Donegal.

To assist congregations with finding qualified pulpit supply preachers, the presbytery maintains an official Pulpit Supply List. To be eligible for the Pulpit Supply List, preachers must agree to the stipulations outlined in this document.

Pulpit Supply List

How does a preacher apply for inclusion on the presbytery Pulpit Supply List?

1. The first step is to submit the required documents to the presbytery office:
    a. Presbytery Pulpit Supply Application Form
    b. All background clearances required by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for clergy and by the Presbytery of Donegal for teaching elders
    c. Signed acceptance of the Presbytery of Donegal Pulpit Supply Policy and commitment to abide by the professional standards outlined below.
    d. Signed acceptance of the Presbytery of Donegal Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Policy
    e. Signed acceptance of the Presbytery of Donegal Anti-Harassment Policy
    f. Enrollment in a Presbytery of Donegal Boundary Training within the first twelve months
    g. If the preacher is not a teaching elder or commissioned ruling elder member of the Presbytery of Donegal, verification of good standing in their denomination and results of a reference check conducted with the official denominational representative
2. When these documents have been provided, a meeting will be scheduled with the Pulpit Supply Task Group of the Presbytery of Donegal. The Pulpit Supply Task Group will review the provisions of this policy with the applicant. This group will recommend whether or not to place the preacher on the Pulpit Supply List.
3. The Connecting Our Ministry Commission (COM) votes to concur with the recommendation of the Pulpit Supply Task Group.

How long does a preacher remain on the Pulpit Supply List?

1. Once approved by COM, a preacher will remain on the Pulpit Supply List for the remainder of the calendar year and will be accountable to the annual renewal process thereafter.

2. Each October, renewal forms will be sent to all preachers currently on the Pulpit Supply List.
3. Any preacher who wishes to remain on the Pulpit Supply List for another year must complete the renewal form and return it to the presbytery office by the due date listed.
4. Failure to return the renewal form by the due date will result in removal from the Pulpit Supply List.
5. Renewal forms will be reviewed and approved by the Connecting our Ministry Commission annually.

Who is eligible to be placed on the Pulpit Supply List?

1. Teaching Elders who are members of the Presbytery of Donegal. Generally this includes retired ministers, those who serve in validated positions rather than congregations, and members at large.
2. Approved Commissioned Ruling Elders.
3. Ruling Elders with training in biblical exegesis and homiletics, on a case-by-case basis.
4. Teaching Elders who are members of another PC(USA) presbytery, with the approval of their COM.
5. Ministers and licensed "lay" preachers from other denominations included in the Formula of Agreement (United Church of Christ, Reformed Church in America, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America).
6. Occasionally, ministers from other denominations with which we are in correspondence may be placed on the list, on a case-by-case basis.

Is a congregation in the Presbytery of Donegal required to use the Pulpit Supply List to engage an occasional/short-term pulpit supply preacher?

- No. Congregations may invite other preachers not on the list for occasional pulpit supply. Many times, a session may wish to ask member(s) of the church to lead worship on a day when the pastor is away. Sessions should carefully check the credentials of any potential preachers from beyond the congregation to make sure they would be a good match for the congregation. Background clearances should be obtained for any pulpit supply preachers who will be preaching on more than one occasion. An advantage of the Presbytery of Donegal Pulpit Supply List is that all preachers on the list have already undergone background clearances in order to be approved for the list.
- When there is a vacancy for reasons other than vacation, study leave, or short-term leave for family or medical reasons, COM representatives will work with the session for longer-term planning and stability.

Professional Standards

What are the professional standards for serving as a pulpit supply preacher in the Presbytery of Donegal?

1. Communicate with the congregational representative in a timely fashion regarding bulletin and worship preparation.
2. Arrive at least 20 minutes (preferably one-half hour) before the scheduled start of the worship service.

3. Obtain emergency contact information in case there is a travel delay or other emergency delaying arrival. Provide a cellphone number, if available, to the contact person.
4. Preach sermons that are the original creation of the preacher or attribute content created by others, pursuant to the stipulations of copyright law.
5. Be mindful that they are preaching as a guest in the pulpit. While sermons rightly address the intersection of the Word of God and culture, the ways the congregation will address controversial issues are under the supervision of the congregation's installed pastor and session. Pulpit supply preachers must agree to the following policy:
    a. Pulpit supply preachers may – and are encouraged to – include in public prayer local, denominational, national, and global events that are rightfully subjects of the prayer life of the congregation. Care should be taken in public prayers not to editorialize on issues of controversy.
    b. Pulpit supply preachers may reference local, denominational, national, and global events that are controversial in sermons while recognizing that people of good faith disagree on these issues.
    c. Pulpit supply preachers must clear the content of their sermon with the moderator or clerk of session if the preacher intends to express an opinion on a controversial topic. If in doubt about whether a statement is controversial, check with the moderator. For example, it is appropriate to say, "We all know such-and-such happened this week. There are many ways to look at this, and your pastor and session will guide your conversation. Today, we will include it in our prayers."
    d. Pulpit supply preachers are to refrain from speaking comparatively or derogatorily of any congregation, including the one in which they are preaching. It may be appropriate (but not necessary) to mention significant concerns or celebrations of other congregations – for example, serious building damage due to a fire or storm, the unexpected death of a pastor, a milestone anniversary, etc.
    e. Pulpit supply preachers may learn of confidential matters in the congregation in which they are preaching, such as pastoral vacancies or issues in the congregation. As warranted, the Connecting Our Ministry Commission should be alerted to significant information and how it has been shared with the congregation. Pulpit supply preachers should exercise care to ensure that information shared by one congregation is not inadvertently divulged to another congregation, unless it is public information.
6. Failure to comply with these professional standards of conduct will be addressed by the Pulpit Supply Task Group and may result in removal from the Pulpit Supply List.
7. When feedback about the pulpit supply preacher is provided by a congregation, this feedback will be shared with the pulpit supply preacher as appropriate.

Compensation

What are the honorarium guidelines for pulpit supply?

- Worship and sermon preparation is a craft. It takes time, skill, and commitment during the week to prepare. Sunday mornings involve travel time, worship preparation time on site, and the actual conduct of the services of worship.
- The *minimum* honorarium for a pulpit supply preacher is $150 for one service, or $200 for two services. In addition, mileage should be reimbursed at the IRS-approved rate.

When is an honorarium expected?

- An honorarium should be provided to any preacher filling the pulpit on any occasion when they are covering for the absence of the pastor, or at the convenience of the church and/or the pastor.
- An honorarium is not expected when a representative of an institution, program, or church agency has requested time in the pulpit to represent their organization or cause.
- For example: If a pastor will be on vacation and the congregation requests that Dr. Feedmore, President of the local food bank, fill the pulpit, an honorarium is to be provided. If, on the other hand, the food bank requests the opportunity for Dr. Feedmore to be heard in the church's pulpit on behalf of the organization, no honorarium is needed (although a donation might be the result!)

Should a presbytery staff member be given an honorarium?

- When a member of the presbytery staff is invited to preach for routine pulpit supply coverage, this is in addition to their regular presbytery duties and should be compensated according to the honorarium guidelines.
- When a member of the presbytery staff is scheduled to lead worship as part of the presbytery support of the congregation, then an honorarium is not expected. Examples of situations when an honorarium would not be expected include the Sunday after the departure of a pastor or to express care during a traumatic event. As the congregation has the ability, a donation to the mission of the presbytery is always welcome.

Scope of Work

Is it appropriate to ask the pulpit supply preacher to officiate a meeting of the congregation?

- It is appropriate to ask a pulpit supply preacher who is a teaching elder to moderate a brief meeting of the congregation to conduct routine business. If the congregational meeting immediately follows worship and lasts less than 15 minutes, then it may be included in the pulpit supply honorarium (although a small increase is always appreciated for the additional time and preparation).
- If the meeting is more substantive, the moderator of the session should coordinate with COM to determine an appropriate moderator for the congregational meeting. The honorarium to moderate a meeting of the congregation that lasts more than 15 minutes, or that is not directly before or after

worship, is $75, in addition to the pulpit supply honorarium. Mileage should be reimbursed at the IRS standard rate, unless already included in the pulpit supply compensation.

How are regular/long-term pulpit supply preachers approved by COM?

- There may be temporary occasions when a session needs to engage longer-term or "regular" pulpit supply. Longer-term pulpit supply preachers are typically engaged when a pastor is approved for a longer-term leave such as sabbatical, medical, or family leave. COM will work with sessions to arrange for longer-term pulpit supply in the case of pastoral leaves on a case-by-case basis.
- When a pastorate ends, sessions may sometimes engage pulpit supply in lieu of calling a transitional pastor, or while the search for the next pastor is in process. COM will work with the session to plan pulpit supply arrangements.
- When a session arranges for a preacher who is not on the Pulpit Supply List to preach on a regular basis, then COM will meet with the preacher for the Fit Between Person and Position Conversation and to ensure compliance with background checks and boundary training.
- COM seeks the opportunity to have an introductory meeting with preachers from other presbyteries or denominations who will be preaching regularly in one or more of Donegal Presbytery's congregations, even if they are not requesting to be placed on the Pulpit Supply List. This gives COM the opportunity to get to know and welcome preachers involved with our congregations, and it allows COM to conduct background checks and obtain clearances as appropriate.