

THE JOHN KNOX PRESBYTERY

POLICY FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYMENT (For the Calling of a Teaching Elder in the Presbytery)

INTRODUCTION: In order to be faithful to the governing actions of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and to the law of the land (and any laws of the 3 states that may apply) and to continue to be faithful to the reconciling message of the Gospel which we proclaim and live by, it shall be the policy of John Knox Presbytery to:

- provide equal opportunity in employment and upward mobility for all qualified and qualifiable persons.
- prohibit discrimination in employment because of race, ethnicity, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, or marital status.
- promote the full realization of equal employment opportunity through a positive and continuing program of affirmative action.

The paragraphs from the Book of Order of the PC (USA) which specifically apply to EOE in the work of the committee on ministry (COM) are as follows:

Book of Order (F-1.0403)

“As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:27-29).

“The unity of believers in Christ is reflected in the rich diversity of the Church’s membership. In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God unites persons through baptism regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, disability, geography, or theological conviction. There is therefore no place in the life of the Church for discrimination against any person. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall guarantee full participation and representation in its worship, governance, and emerging life to all persons or groups within its membership. No member shall be denied participation or representation for any reason other than those stated in this Constitution.”

The Committee on Ministry shall provide for the implementation of equal opportunity employment for teaching elders and candidates without regard to race, ethnicity, sex, age, marital status, or disability. In the case of each call, it shall report to the presbytery the steps in this implementation taken by the calling group.

In practice, this policy will endeavor to promote the full realization of equal employment opportunity through a positive and continuing program of affirmative action. The purpose of this affirmative action program is to provide a positive way to approach the goal of equal opportunity employment of pastors by our presbytery and its congregations.

No outside party or statute can force a pastor nominating committee, or a congregation, to vote for a pastoral candidate it does not want. The problem has been that committees and congregations have too often decided ahead of time which kinds of possible candidates they do not want even before they have met them or interviewed them.

Automatic rejection of possible candidates in this way is both a denial of equal opportunity in the ministry and a severe limitation on the free work of the Holy Spirit within a congregation.

The following recommendations are intended to help make this equal opportunity process possible in John Knox Presbytery and its congregations in the future.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS

John Knox Presbytery adopts the following recommendations for affirmative action:

1. When a congregation indicates a desire to call a pastor, the COM of John Knox Presbytery will affirm its commitment to equal opportunity employment.
2. The session and the representative(s) of the COM will discuss together the meaning of equal opportunity employment in the ministry through affirmative action, in fulfillment of the provisions of the Book of Order and this policy.

The basic intent of affirmative action is to make equal opportunity a reality through the active recruitment and employment of women, persons of minority groups, and persons with disabilities.

3. The session analyzes the situation of its church and community. It discusses what it would mean to call a woman, minority pastor, or pastor with a disability. The following important questions should be discussed thoroughly:
 - What is the significance of Scriptural teaching, such as Galatians 3:28, to our situation?
 - What would calling a woman, minority pastor, or pastor with a disability mean to our church and its witness in our community? In our presbytery?
4. The session completes its part of Report Form # 1 (COM-12.a), signifying their commitment to Equal Opportunity Employment.
5. The session prepares carefully its presentation concerning election of the pastor nominating committee (PNC), including the nature of its work and the Equal Opportunity Employment Policy of John Knox Presbytery, to the congregation before they elect the PNC. The COM will provide assistance to the session in this presentation if requested.
6. The congregation completes its Section of Report Form #1 (COM-12.a), which signifies its commitment to Equal Opportunity Employment.
7. The PNC, in consultation with the COM representative, discusses its responsibilities in carrying out the presbytery policy for affirmative action and completes Paragraph 3 of Report Form #1 (COM-12.a), which signifies its intention to be an equal opportunity committee.
8. The PNC prepares, or updates, the Church Information Form. When the form is completed, it shall be submitted to the session for approval and then be transmitted to the COM for its approval.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION STRATEGIES

9. The COM shall counsel the PNC, when appropriate throughout the process of calling a teaching elder, regarding compliance with the Equal Opportunity Employment Policy of John Knox Presbytery and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
10. When the PNC has narrowed its list of potential candidates for further consideration, it shall request preliminary clearance of the COM, through the COM representative, to proceed with the process. The PNC, in consultation with the COM representative, reviews the implementation of its commitment to be an equal opportunity committee in arriving at this stage in the search for a pastor.
11. When the PNC has voted to ask a person to candidate, the chairperson shall report the consensus of the committee in writing to the chairperson of the COM to include the terms of the call, the effective date, and the EOE Report Form #2 (COM-12.b). The COM may authorize the PNC to report its decisions to the session when it is satisfied that the PNC has given serious consideration to minority and women candidates and those with disabilities.
12. When the COM has approved the request of the PNC to ask a minister to candidate, the chairperson of the COM shall certify to presbytery that the nominating committee has complied with the judicatory's equal opportunity employment policy and that the candidate is suitable for the church.
13. Presbytery, or the COM on presbytery's behalf, shall concur in the call when it is satisfied that the Equal Opportunity Employment constitutional requirements have been fulfilled by the PNC and session, and when the candidate is judged suitable for the church.
14. John Knox Presbytery's Policy for Equal Opportunity Employment shall be reviewed annually and forwarded to Synod.