

Hiring Married Co-Pastors

Hiring a married couple to be co-pastors of a church has become a common practice in the Reformed Church in America (RCA). This presents a few unique circumstances that are not contemplated by the *Book of Church Order (BCO)*. For example, if more than one pastor is serving a church, the *BCO* uses terms like “Senior” and “Associate,” not “Co-Pastor.” While “Co-Pastor” is a suitable title, there are some *BCO* requirements that must be considered. When hiring a married couple, each ordained as an RCA Minister of Word and Sacrament, use this guide to help with the hiring process so that your church is in compliance with the *BCO* requirements.

Letter of call

Each of the ministers must have a separate letter of call.

Consistories who call a married couple to co-pastor the church must fill out a separate call form for each person using Formulary 5 in the *BCO*.

See BCO, Chap. 1, Part I, Art. 2, Sec. 6 (2019 edition, p. 15)

Classis

It is the responsibility of the classis to ensure compliance with the provisions of the call form.

See BCO, Chap. 1, Part I, Art. 2, Sec. 7 (2019 edition, p. 15) and BCO, Chap. 1, Part II, Art. 15, Sec. 3 (2019 edition, pp. 53-54)

Retirement

Each minister must be enrolled separately in the RCA 403(b) Retirement Program.

- If one or both ministers are full time, the church will contribute 11 percent of the salary (or salaries) or the effective buying power per household (EBPH) amount, whichever is greater.
- If one or both of the ministers are part time, the church will contribute 11 percent of the salary (or salaries).
- Part time is defined by the Board of Benefits Services as working less than 30 hours per week. This is in accordance with the *BCO* (Chap. 1, Part II, Art. 15, Sec. 3 [2019 edition, pp. 53-54]).

Life and Long-Term Disability Insurance

Each minister must be enrolled separately in the Life and Long Term Disability insurance programs.

See BCO Formulary No. 5

Medical Insurance

One health insurance family plan should be provided to the ministry couple.

The plan could be purchased through the Reformed Benefits Association or purchased privately, but it must be a plan that meets or exceeds the minimum insurance requirements set forth by the Board of Benefits Services.

For current insurance requirements, visit www.rca.org/airb.

Governance

If the co-pastors share the role of Senior Minister, one of the pastors should be elected president by the consistory. (*BCO*, Chap. 1, Part I, Art. 3, Sec. 1 [2019 edition, p. 19])

The other co-pastor may be elected as a vice president of consistory, in addition to the elder who is elected as vice president of consistory. (*BCO*, Chap. 1, Part I, Art. 3, Sec. 2 [2019 edition, p. 19])

