



Comparison of Installed Ministers and Those Serving Under Contract in the RCA (Used with permission from Rev. Howard Moths)

Two types of ministers may serve a local church:

- Ministers who receive a call approved by the classis and are installed in a local church at a classis meeting form one group.
- Ministers who serve churches under contract form another.

This distinction is particularly important when it comes to membership in the consistory and the dissolution of the pastoral relationship between a minister and a church. Installed ministers are members of the consistory; ministers who are serving under contract are not. The pastoral relationship between an installed minister and the church cannot be terminated without the approval of the classis as it states in the *Book of Church Order (BCO)*, Chapter 1, Part II, Article 15, Section 8 (2023 edition, p. 56); the termination of a minister under contract is determined by the provisions of the contract.

Installed ministers are further divided into two classifications: 1) solo or senior ministers, and 2) associate ministers. Ministers who serve churches under contract are divided into two classifications: 1) ministers serving on a temporary basis a church without an installed minister (may be named specialized transition ministers), and 2) assistant ministers serving on staff in a church (*BCO*, 1.II.7.4-6, 1.II.7.9, 1.I.2.8).

The *Book of Church Order* requires a consistory to fulfill retirement and insurance provisions for all ministers serving the church, meaning both installed ministers and ministers under contract. These requirements are for both full-time and part-time ministers, though part-time ministers may be eligible for exemptions based on criteria outlined in the *BCO*.

	Ministers Under Call	Ministers Under Contract
Title	Senior Minister or Associate Minister	Contract Minister or Assistant Minister
Ministry Begins	When classis approves the call form (Formulary #5) and the minister is installed in the church by the classis.	When classis approves the contract on the date specified in the contract that follows the guidelines established by the classis.
Initiation of Ministry	Installation by the classis (<i>BCO</i> , 1.I.2.4).	Optional commissioning by the classis, if appropriate (<i>BCO</i> , 1.II.12.4).
Consistory Membership	Becomes a member of consistory by virtue of installation. May be elected	Not a member of consistory unless elected, ordained, and installed as an

	president of consistory and presides at all of its meetings except where otherwise provided (<i>BCO</i> , 1.I.3.1).	elder or deacon of the consistory. May not represent that church as an elder delegate to classis or a synod.
Church Membership	Becomes a member of the local church by virtue of installation.	May become a member of the church or retain membership in another local church.
Classis Membership	Becomes enrolled as a member of the classis when installed.	May become a member of the classis or retain enrollment in another classis.
Supervisor	No classis supervisor is necessary for a church with an installed senior minister.	May be appointed as supervisor of the church (if vacant) and preside at meetings of the consistory if invited by the consistory, but shall not have the right to vote.
Salary and Benefits	Must comply with the minimum standards for salary and benefits required by the <i>BCO</i> and/or approved by the classis.	Must comply with the minimum standards for salary and benefits required by the <i>BCO</i> and/or approved by the classis.
Evaluation of Ministry	Mutual reflection regularly with the consistory (<i>BCO</i> , 1.II.7.1m).	The classis shall review all contracts annually (<i>BCO</i> , 1.II.7.4,9).
Length of Ministry	Serves indefinitely until the pastoral relationship is dissolved by the classis after joint application by the minister and consistory, or a vote by the classis to dissolve the pastoral relationship (<i>BCO</i> , 1.II.15.8).	Serves until the contract ends and is not renewed, or earlier, when permitted in the contract. Contracts with churches without an installed minister are limited to one year, with possible renewal. Assistant ministers may receive multi-year contracts, subject to annual review by the classis.
Discipline	Amenable solely to the discipline of the classis while a member of classis (<i>BCO</i> , 1.II.15.2).	Amenable solely to the discipline of the classis while a member of classis. A minister who is ordained and installed as an elder or deacon remains amenable to the classis except in respect to the minister's conduct in exercising the responsibilities of the board of elders or the board of deacons. (<i>BCO</i> , 1.II.15.6)