

**Presbytery of West Virginia  
Committee on Ministry  
Position Description  
Commissioned Moderators Appointed by Presbytery**

**Authorities**

The **Moderator** possesses the authority necessary for preserving order and for conducting efficiently the business of the body. They shall convene and adjourn the body in accordance with its own action (G-3.0104 Book of Order).

**Presbyteries** shall provide by rule for Moderators when the session is without a Moderator for reasons of vacancy or inconvenience (G-3.0201 Book of Order).

**Moderator Position Summary**

When the session is without a pastor/Moderator, the Presbytery appoints a member to moderate the session and congregation. The rule for the Presbytery of West Virginia is that the Committee on Ministry will appoint Moderators where sessions are without a Moderator. Ordinarily this will be a minister member of the Presbytery but may be a Ruling Elder commissioned for that purpose (G-2.1001 Book of Order). If there is an interim pastor, that person ordinarily will be named Moderator.

A commissioned Moderator is a representative of the Presbytery. While they play a different role than an installed or covenanted Moderator, they should be working to keep the church connected to the Presbytery/being Presbyterian.

**Duties**

1. Be the Moderator of the session. The session shall not meet without a Moderator.
2. See that the requirements of the Book of Order are fulfilled.
3. Confer with the Clerk of Session prior to each meeting to prepare an agenda.
4. Give leadership to the session to ensure the maintenance of the work and worship of the church, its regular services of worship, educational programs, mission, whatever is usual and required in the life of the church. This means raising issues like meeting as a session at least four times per year, approving and celebrating communion at least four times per year, returning mission and giving pledge requests, per capita, officer training opportunities and requirements, statistical report, financial review, etc.
5. Ensure decisions of the session are assigned so that they will be carried out.
6. Work with the session to ensure that pastoral care is provided to members of the congregation.

7. Moderate congregational meetings of the church. Seeing that constitutional notice and procedures are followed and that the actions of the congregation are reported to the Presbytery, as required.
8. Assure that the church's Sessional Records are presented to Presbytery at the proper time for review (although ordinarily the Clerk of Session will deliver them for review).
9. Communicate regularly with the Chair of the Committee on Ministry regarding the life and needs of the church and Session.

### **Procedure and comments**

1. Upon receiving notice that they have been asked to serve as Moderator of a Session, the Moderator should immediately contact the Clerk of Session and make themselves available. The Committee on Ministry will notify the Clerk of Session of their Moderator as soon as they are appointed.
2. They should review G.3.02 "The Session," of the Book of Order and pay particular attention to section G-3.0201, "Moderator."
3. The meaning of the connectional system becomes especially important when a church is without an installed pastor. The Moderator commissioned by Presbytery should not seek to act as the pastor of the church but should make every effort to see that the church functions and that the Session is strengthened.
4. If the church is to search for a new pastor:
  - a. If possible, the person designated to be Moderator should participate in the session meeting where procedures and plans for the transition period are discussed. This meeting should take place approximately one month before the departure of the pastor. The exiting pastor is encouraged to invite the new Moderator to preside over this discussion.
  - b. The Moderator should be supportive in every way of the pastor search process but shall not direct, influence, or interfere in the search process.
  - c. The Moderator shall be informed of the schedule of congregational gatherings, should encourage participation, and should help the church and Session in implementation of the transition plans.
5. The Presbytery-commissioned Moderator is not a Session member according to the definition of G-3.0201 Book of Order, and thus does not have voting privileges.
6. As stated in the Book of Order G-3.0201, the Session of a church meets only when the Moderator is present to preside. If it is necessary for a Session to meet when the Presbytery-commissioned Moderator cannot be present, for that occasion the Presbytery Moderator may invite another minister member of the Presbytery to preside. The Moderator also is the person designated to preside over congregational meetings. If the Moderator cannot be present, they should coordinate with the Clerk of Session, Committee on Ministry Chair, or the Stated Clerk to provide for another minister member of the Presbytery to be present and moderate.

**Relationship with Committee on Ministry**

The Moderator of a session for a vacant church represents the presbytery's interest in the ongoing life of the congregation and should maintain a relationship of cooperation and understanding with the Committee on Ministry. The Moderator shall complete a six-month Moderator Update Report to COM on their work with the session and congregation. The COM may invite the Moderator of the church to meet with them to make additional reports and to discuss matters concerning the church.

**Length of Service**

Normally the appointment's end date runs with the filling of the pulpit. Appointments will be reviewed annually by COM. COM and the Moderator keep in touch formally through the COM's Moderator Report form. That and other communications keep COM aware of the Moderator's service and for understanding if the length of service needs to be adjusted.

**Expenses:**

The person commissioned to moderate a session of a church in which they are not the installed pastor or with which they do not have a covenant relationship will be compensated for the work of moderating at the rate of \$75 per meeting and will be reimbursed any travel expenses in excess of 20 miles one way. Expenses for travel, telephone, postage, and the like of the Moderator are to be paid by the church. The Moderator should not hesitate to submit such expenses. No other compensation will normally be paid. If a church is unable to pay the Moderator's expenses, that session should apply to Presbytery's Committee on Ministry for financial assistance with the expenses.