

Vacancy Offset Policy

Elder Commissioner Parity Formula — Extended Vacancy Provision

Purpose

The Elder Commissioner Parity Formula guarantees every congregation one floor slot and provides structural offsets for congregations whose installed teaching elder is serving in a constrained role. This policy addresses a related but distinct situation: congregations that have been without an installed minister or active interim for an extended period and therefore lack any teaching elder voice at presbytery meetings.

An extended vacancy is not a minor gap. It is a sustained democratic deficit. A congregation in its second year of seeking a pastor has been without ministerial representation at the presbytery table a congregation that may wait a year or more for an installed pastor. This policy provides a remedy — not automatic, but available upon petition.

Eligibility

- The congregation has been without an installed minister or active commissioned interim for a period of six months or more.
- The congregation is actively engaged in a pastoral search or discernment process.
- The session has voted to petition for the vacancy offset.

Note on Temporary Ministry Support:

Whether a current temporary ministry arrangement constitutes sufficient teaching elder representation is a question the Stated Clerk will address in direct conversation with the congregation. Supply preachers alone may not qualify. If in doubt, submit the petition and the Stated Clerk will make that determination.

The Offset

Upon approval by the Stated Clerk, an eligible congregation receives one additional elder commissioner slot — bringing their total from the floor allocation of 1 to 2 — effective at the first stated meeting of the presbytery following the approval date.

The offset is temporary. It expires automatically upon the installation of a minister or the commissioning of an active interim. The session clerk is responsible for notifying the Stated Clerk's office when either event occurs.

Process

- The session votes to petition the Stated Clerk for the vacancy offset.
- The Clerk of Session, or Moderator of Session if available, submits the completed Vacancy Offset Petition Form to the Stated Clerk.
- The Stated Clerk verifies the vacancy status and, if eligibility is confirmed, grants the offset in writing.
- The offset takes effect at the next stated meeting following written approval.
- The Stated Clerk maintains a record of all active vacancy offsets, reviews their status in consultation with the Committee on Ministry at its regular monthly meetings, and notifies affected congregations when their offset expires.

Ongoing Review

Active vacancy offsets are reviewed by the Stated Clerk in consultation with the Committee on Ministry (COM) at its regular monthly meetings. The Stated Clerk may request updated information from petitioning congregations at any time to confirm continued eligibility. COM's ongoing work with congregations in transition makes it the natural partner for monitoring the status of active offsets.

Adopted by the Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse
The Rev. Ben Fitzgerald-Fye, Stated Clerk

PRESBYTERY OF CAYUGA-SYRACUSE

Vacancy Offset Petition

Request for Additional Elder Commissioner Slot During Extended Pastoral Vacancy

Before you submit:

A congregation must have been without an installed minister or active commissioned interim for six months or more, and the session must have voted to petition. Please complete all fields. The Stated Clerk will verify eligibility and respond in writing. Incomplete forms will be returned.

Congregation Information

Congregation: _____

City / Town: _____ County: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Vacancy Information

Date vacancy began:	Current Temporary Ministry Support:
_____	_____

Note: Supply preachers may not constitute ministerial representation. Eligibility questions will be addressed by the Stated Clerk.

Current status of
pastoral search
or discernment: _____

Session Action

**Date
session
voted to
petition:**

**Session
approved:
Yes / No**

The session of the above-named congregation hereby petitions the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse for a temporary vacancy offset of one additional elder commissioner slot in accordance with the Vacancy Offset Policy. We attest that the information provided in this form is accurate and complete.

Signatures

Clerk of Session (signature required)

Date

Moderator of Session (if available)

Date

If the position of Moderator is vacant or unfilled, the Clerk of Session signature above is sufficient.

For Office Use Only

**Date
received:**

**Approved /
Denied:**

**Effective meeting
date:**

Notes:

Stated Clerk, Presbytery of Cayuga-Syracuse

Date