

## Item

*Overture 31. On Amending the Book of Order to Create a Fourth Office to Be Known as Educating Elder—From the Presbytery of Shenandoah.*

The Presbytery of Shenandoah overtures the 217th General Assembly (2006) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to do the following:

1. Amend the *Book of Order* to create a fourth office to be known as educating elder. The educating elder shall be a certified Christian educator (G-14.0700). The educating elder shall be called, ordained, and/or installed by a congregation (G-6.0106) and shall be a voting member of the session of the congregation in which he/she is called to serve. The educating elder shall be a member of the presbytery while serving a call within that presbytery, with the responsibilities and privileges conferred by such membership, including those relating to the committee on ministry (G-11.0501). The educating elder called to serve the church in a position beyond the congregation shall be ordained and/or installed by the congregation in which his/her membership resides.

The educating elder shall perform those duties common to all elders (G-6.0304) including assisting in worship (W-1.4003) and distributing the elements in communion (W-3.3616d). The educating elder will encourage and support growth in Christian faith and life for all ages (G-14.0701b).

2. Direct the Stated Clerk to send the following amendments to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

a. Shall G-6.0106a–b be amended as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“a. To those called to exercise special functions in the church—deacons, elders, *educating elders*, and ministers of the Word and Sacrament—God gives suitable gifts for their various duties. In addition to possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, natural and acquired, those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world. They must have the approval of God’s people and the concurring judgment of a governing body of the church.

“b. Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001), or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, *educating elders*, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament.”

b. Shall a new section, “*G-6.0400 Educating Elder*,” be added and the current G-6.0400–.0500 be renumbered to read as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“*G-6.0400 4. Educating Elder*

“*6.0401 Scriptural and Historical References*

“a. *The basic model for ministry in Scripture and the Christian tradition is service. Christians serve God and others in the name of Jesus Christ. The educating elder is called to serve the church. Ordination is the way the church sets apart persons for service, confirms persons in their inward call to ministry, and sets them within the church’s order. An ordained office provides affirmation of God’s call, validation, and accountability of persons called to educational ministry.*

*“b. In the New Testament, teachers are called along with apostles, evangelists, prophets, and pastors to equip the saints for the work of ministry and for the building up of the body of Christ. John Calvin in The Institutes of the Christian Religion (4.3.4) mentions a fourth office of teacher. According to Calvin, education is an indispensable task of the church. The Presbyterian church has historically emphasized that the church’s teaching function must be given centrality if God’s reconciling work in Jesus Christ is to be made known.*

**“6.0402 Christian Educators and Presbytery**

*“Certified Christian educators, having completed the academic, examination, and experiential requirements for certification, would be eligible to be ordained to the office of educating elder. The church, through the local congregation and the presbytery, calls the educating elder to the office and responsibility of educating elder. Such educating elders shall receive training approved by the presbytery. The committee on ministry of the presbytery shall examine the educating elder as to his/her personal faith and motives for seeking ordination. The local congregation shall call, exam, ordain, and/or install the educating elder. The church where he/she has membership shall call, exam, ordain, and/or install the educating elder if he/she is called to a position beyond the bounds of a local congregation. The educating elder shall be a member of the presbytery and session of the congregation where he/she is called to serve, with voice and vote.*

**“6.0403 Gifts and Requirements**

*“The educating elder should be a person of faith, dedication, and good judgment. Her or his manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel, both within the church and in the world.*

**“6.0404 Specific Responsibilities**

*“The educating elder, in partnership with the pastor, elders, and deacons of a local church, may be responsible for the Sunday school, workshops assisting children in worship, youth groups, preparing young people to make a profession of faith, communion and discipleship classes, Bible studies, teacher/leader training, retreats, outreach ministries, daycare centers, and other ministries. The educating elder may assist in worship and serve communion.*

**~~“G-6.0400 G-6.0500 4. 5. Deacons~~**

**~~“G-6.0401 G-6.0501 The Ministry and Gifts of Deacons  
[Text remains unchanged.]~~**

**~~“G-6.0402 G-6.0502 Responsibilities  
[Text remains unchanged.]~~**

**~~“G-6.0403 G-6.0503 Organization  
[Text remains unchanged.]~~**

**~~“G-6.0404 G-6.0504 Supervised by Session  
[Text remains unchanged.]~~**

**~~“G-6.0405 G-6.0505 Meetings  
[Text remains unchanged.]~~**

**~~“G-6.0406 G-6.0506 Related Service  
[Text remains unchanged.]~~**

**~~“G-6.0407 G-6.0507 Decision Not to Use Deacons  
[Text remains unchanged.]~~**

**~~“G-6.0500 G-6.0600 5. 6. Renunciation of Jurisdiction~~**

[Text remains unchanged.]

~~“G-6.0501~~ *G-6.0601* Renunciation of Jurisdiction

[Text remains unchanged.]

~~“G-6.0502~~ *G-6.0602* Persistence in Disapproved Work

[Text remains unchanged.]

~~“G-6.0503~~ *G-6.0603* Effect of Renunciation

[Text remains unchanged.]

c. Shall G-6.0501 (or G-6.0601 as renumbered in Recommendation 2.b. above) be amended to read as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“When a church officer, whether a minister of the Word and Sacrament, elder, *educating elder*, or deacon, renounces the jurisdiction of this church in writing to the clerk or stated clerk of the governing body of jurisdiction, the renunciation shall be effective upon receipt. Renunciation of jurisdiction shall remove the officer from membership and ordained office and shall terminate the exercise of office.”

d. Shall G-7.0103 be amended to read as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“The members of a particular church voluntarily put themselves under the leadership of their officers, whom they elect. The session, which consists of the pastor or co-pastors, the associate pastors, and the elders *and educating elders* in active service, is the governing body in a particular church. The law and government of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) presuppose the fellowship of women and men with their children in voluntary covenanted relationship with one another and with God through Jesus Christ. The organization rests upon the fellowship and is not designed to work without trust and love.”

e. Shall G-7.0302a be amended to read as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“a. The congregation shall hold an annual meeting and may hold other meetings as necessary. The annual meeting may consider such business as electing officers, hearing reports of the session along with plans for the coming year, hearing reports from the board of deacons and other organizations of the church, and transacting other business as is appropriate. It shall review the adequacy of the compensation of the pastor or pastors *and/or educating elders* upon report of the prior review by the session. (G-10.0102n) Public notice of the meeting shall be given on two successive Sundays.”

f. Shall G-7.0304a(2) be amended to read as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“(2) matters related to the calling of a pastor or pastors *and/or educating elders*;

g. Shall G-10.0101 be amended to read as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“The session of a particular church consists of the pastor or co-pastors, the associate pastors, ~~and~~ the elders, *and the educating elders* in active service.<sup>a</sup> All members of the session, including the pastor, co-pastors, and associate pastors, are entitled to vote.”

h. Shall G-10.0103a be amended to read as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“a. The pastor of the church shall be the moderator of the session and the session shall not meet without the pastor except as hereunder provided. In congregations where there are co-pastors, they shall, when present, alternately preside in the session. When it may appear advisable for prudential reasons that some minister other than the pastor should preside, the pastor may, with the concurrence of the session, invite a minister of the same presbytery to do so. A presbytery may appoint a lay pastor as moderator of session to the church to which she or he is commissioned. The person assigned to the commissioned lay pastor as mentor and supervisor shall also supervise his or her work as moderator. In addition, the moderator of the session of a church with a vacant pulpit may request an elder *or educating elder* who is a member of the presbytery’s committee on ministry, the stated clerk, executive presbyter, or associate executive presbyter, to preside; such elder may not moderate the session of the church of which that elder is a member. In the case of the sickness or absence of the pastor the same expedient may be adopted; or the session, after having obtained the approval of the pastor, may convene and elect another of its own members to preside.”

i. Shall a new section “G-10.0302c(6)” be added to read as follows:

“(6) *Educating elders serving the church, with dates of service.*”

j. Shall G-11.0101b be amended to read as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“b. When the number of resident ministers entitled to vote in the presbytery is greater than the number of elders so entitled, it shall redress this imbalance annually by providing for the election, appointment, or selection of additional elders, paying special attention to the concerns of G-9.0104. Presbyteries facing an imbalance due to a large number of resident honorably retired minister members may, by presbytery rule, use active participation of honorably retired members as a criterion in determining balance. *Educating elders shall be counted with elders in determining balance of representatives.*”

k. Shall G-11.0103n be amended to read as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“n. to ordain, receive, dismiss, install, remove, and discipline ministers,<sup>c</sup> to plan for the integration of new ministers into the life and work of presbytery, to establish minimum compensation and benefit requirements for all pastoral calls (G-14.0506e) and for all calls to *educating elders* and Certified Christian Educators and guidelines for compensation and benefits for Certified Associate Christian Educators employed by the churches of the presbytery (G-14.0705b(2)), to provide services of recognition for *educating elders*, Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators (G-14.0705b(1)), and to find in order, approve, and record in the presbytery minutes the full terms of calls, and changes of calls approved by the presbytery.”

l. Shall G-11.0103z be amended to read as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“z. to authorize specific elders (*including educating elders*) for periods not exceeding one year at a time, to administer or preside at the Lord’s Supper in specific circumstances and with proper instruction by presbytery in the doctrine and administration of the Lord’s Supper, when it deems it necessary to meet the needs for the administration of the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper that cannot otherwise be met;”

m. Shall G-11.0407 be amended to read as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“The stated clerk shall maintain ~~four~~ *five* rolls, one listing the names of all the ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are continuing members of the presbytery and who are active members, one listing the names of all the ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are continuing members of the presbytery and who are members-at-large, one listing the names of all the ministers of the

Word and Sacrament who are continuing members of the presbytery and who are inactive members, *one listing all educating elders who are members of and serving within the bounds of the presbytery*, one listing all Certified Christian Educators and Certified Associate Christian Educators within the bounds of the presbytery who are entitled to the privilege of the floor with voice at all presbytery meetings, and a ~~fifth~~ *sixth* roll listing those who have been deleted from the other rolls. On or before December 31 of each year, the presbytery shall determine the category of membership of each continuing member in accordance with the relevant sections of this chapter and cause appropriate record of such determination to be made.”

n. Shall G-11.0501a be amended to read as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“a. Each presbytery shall elect a committee on ministry to serve as pastor and counselor to the ministers, *educating elders*, and Certified Christian Educators of the presbytery, to facilitate the relations between congregations, ministers, and Certified Christian Educators, and the presbytery, and to settle difficulties on behalf of presbytery when possible and expedient.”

o. Shall G-11.0502a be amended to read as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“a. . It shall visit regularly and consult with each minister *and educating elder* of the presbytery. It shall report to the presbytery annually the type of work in which each minister *and educating elder* of the presbytery is engaged. It shall require an annual report from every minister *and educating elder* performing work which is not under the jurisdiction of the presbytery or a higher governing body of the church.”

p. Shall G-11.0502e–j be amended by adding a new “e.” and re-lettering current “e.–j.” as “f.–k.” These sections shall now read as follows:

“e. *It shall counsel with churches regarding calls for educating elders and shall advise the church’s nominating committee regarding the merits, availability, and suitability of any candidate whose name is contemplated for nomination to a congregation.*

“~~e.~~ f. [Text remains unchanged.]

“~~f.~~ g. [Text remains unchanged.]

“~~g.~~ h. [Text remains unchanged.]

“~~h.~~ i. [Text remains unchanged.]

“~~i.~~ j. [Text remains unchanged.]

“~~j.~~ k. [Text remains unchanged.]”

q. Shall G-11.0502f (or G-11.0502g as re-lettered in Recommendation p. above) be amended to read as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“f. It shall counsel with sessions regarding stated supplies, interim pastors, interim co-pastors, interim associate pastors, *interim associate pastors*, and temporary supplies when a church is without a pastor, and it shall provide lists of pastors, commissioned lay pastors, and qualified lay persons who have been trained and commissioned by the presbytery to supply vacant pulpits. Concurrence of the presbytery through its committee on ministry is required when a session invites an interim pastor, interim co-pastor, or interim associate pastors, as provided for in G-14.0513b and c.”

r. Shall G-11.0503 be amended to read as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“The committee shall be open to communication at all times with the ministers, elders who are members of sessions, sessions of the presbytery, *educating elders*, and Certified Christian Educators within the bounds of the presbytery.”

s. Shall G-14.0101 be amended to read as follows: [Text to be deleted is shown with a strike-through; text to be added or inserted is shown as italic.]

“The persons elected by the church to service in the offices of the church (G-6.0000) shall be ordained to these offices by the church. Ordination is the act by which the church sets apart persons to be presbyters (ministers of the Word and Sacrament, or elders, *or educating elders*) or deacons, and is accompanied with prayer and the laying on of hands. Ordination to the office of minister of the Word and Sacrament is an act of the presbytery. Ordination to the offices of elder, *educating elder*, and deacon is an act of the session, except in the case of the organization of a new church. (G-7.0202)”

t. Shall a new section, “*G-14.0700 Calling and Ordaining Educating Elders*” be added and current Sections “G-14.0700–.0800” be renumbered as “*G-14.0800–.0900*,” so that they shall read as follows:

“*G-14.0700 Calling and Ordaining Educating Elders*

“*G-14.0701 Calling Provisions*

“*Those persons called to the ministry of educating elder shall fulfill all of the requirements of certified Christian educators as found in G-14.0800 [currently G-14.0700]. When seeking a call within a particular presbytery, that presbytery’s committee on ministry may examine the candidate beyond the certified educator requirements as to his or her readiness for ministry.*

“*G-14.0702 Election of an Educating Elder*

“*a. An educating elder shall be elected by the vote of the congregation and shall be approved by the presbytery. This call cannot be changed except by consent of the presbytery at the request of the educating elder, at the request of the church by action of congregation, or at the request of the calling institution or agency.*

“*Work of the Committee*

“*b. The nominating committee shall confer with the committee on ministry as provided in G-11.0502e [new] when seeking an educating elder. Care must be taken to consider candidates without regard to race, ethnic origin, sex, marital status, age, or disabilities.*

“*G-14.0703 Congregational Meeting*

“*a. When a congregation is convened for the election of an educating elder, the pastor/moderator of the session shall preside.*

“*b. Following the prayer for the guidance of God, the moderator shall call for the report of the nominating committee. Following the report, the moderator shall then put the question: ‘Are you ready to proceed to the election of an educating elder?’ If they are ready the moderator shall declare the name submitted by the nominating committee to be in nomination. The vote shall be upon the question whether the congregation, under the will of God, shall call the person nominated to be its educating elder, and it shall be taken by ballot. In every case, a majority of the voters present and voting shall be required to elect.*

“*G-14.0704 Service Beyond Congregation*

“*When an institution or agency beyond a specific congregation extends a call to an educating elder, the presbytery’s committee on ministry shall be informed of such a call, and finding the call in good order, shall add the name of the educating elder to the presbytery rolls upon ordination and/or*

*installation of the educating elder. The congregation in which the educating elder holds membership shall provide a service of ordination and/or installation. If said congregation is not within the presbytery bounds of the calling institution/agency, the educating elder shall, within one year of having accepted the call, become a member of a PC(USA) congregation located within the presbytery of the calling institution/agency.*

**“G-14.0705 The Call**

*“The terms of the call shall always provide for compensation that meets or exceeds any minimum requirements of the presbytery in effect when the call is made and shall thereafter be adjusted annually as required to conform to such requirement. The presbytery may prepare a standard form for terms of call or adopt a model form provided by an agency of the General Assembly.*

**“G-14.0706 Service of Ordination and Installation**

*“The service of ordination and installation shall focus upon Christ and the joy and service of responsibility of serving him through the mission and ministry of the church, and shall include a sermon appropriate to the occasion. The minister presiding shall state briefly the nature of the office of educating elder.*

**“G-14.0707 Questions to Educating Elder**

*“The minister shall ask the one preparing to be ordained or installed as educating elder to stand before the congregation and to answer the following questions:*

*“a. Do you trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?*

*“b. Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal, and God’s Word to you?*

*“c. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?*

*“d. Will you fulfill your office in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions?*

*“e. Will you be governed by our church’s polity, and will you abide by its discipline? Will you be a friend among your colleagues in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God’s Word and Spirit?*

*“f. Will you in your own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world?*

*“g. Do you promise to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church?*

*“h. Will you seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?*

*“i. Will you be a faithful educating elder, watching over the people, providing for their Christian nurture, worship, and service? Will you share in government and discipline, serving in governing bodies of the church, and in your ministry will you try to communicate the teachings and show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?*

**“G-14.0708 Constitutional Questions to the Congregation**

*“The educating elder-elect having answered in the affirmative, an elder shall stand with him or her before the congregation and shall ask the congregation to answer the following questions:*

*“a. Do we, the members of the church, accept (names) \_\_\_\_\_ as elders or deacons,\* chosen by God through the voice of this congregation to lead us in the way of Jesus Christ?*

*“b. Do we agree to encourage them, to respect their decisions, and to follow as they guide us, serving Jesus Christ, who alone is Head of the Church?*

**“G-14.0709 Prayer and Laying on of Hands**

*“a. The members of the church having answered these questions in the affirmative, the one being ordained shall kneel, if able, for the prayer and the laying on of hands by elders and ministers of Word and Sacrament. Those previously ordained shall stand, along with the congregation, if able, for the prayer of installation.*

**“Statement**

*“b. The moderator shall say to the one who has just been ordained and/or installed: You are now an educating elder in the Church of Jesus Christ and for this congregation [or \_\_\_\_\_ (institution/agency)]. Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Amen.*

**“Welcome**

*“c. The elders and minister(s) of Word and Sacrament shall welcome the newly ordained and/or installed educating elder into their fellowship in ministry.*

**“Congregation**

*“d. After the service, it is appropriate for the members of the congregation (and institution/agency) to greet their new educating elder, showing affection and support.*

**“G-14.0710**

*“An educating elder may terminate the call from the congregation or institution/agency for good cause, with the session’s or institution’s consent. Upon the ending of one’s call, the educating elder ceases to be an active member of the session to which he/she had been called as well as a voting member of presbytery.*

~~“G-14.0700~~ **G-14.0800 7. 8. Certified Christian Educator**

~~“G-14.0701~~ **G-14.0801 Christian Educators**

*“[Text remains unchanged.]*

~~“G-14.0702~~ **G-14.0802 The Certified Christian Educator**

*“[Text remains unchanged.]*

~~“G-14.0703~~ **G-14.0803 Certification**

*“[Text remains unchanged.]*

~~“G-14.0704~~ **G-14.0804 Educator Certification Council**

*“[Text remains unchanged.]*

~~“G-14.0705~~ **G-14.0805 Presbytery**

*“[Text remains unchanged.]*

~~“G-14.0800~~ **G-14.0900 8. 9. Certified Christian Educator**

~~“G-14.0801~~ **G-14.0901 Commissioned Lay Pastor**

*“[Text remains unchanged.]*

~~“G-14.0802~~ **G-14.0902 Other Certified Lay Employees**

*“[Text remains unchanged.]*

**~~G-14.0803~~ G-14.0903 Notification of Status**

“[Text remains unchanged.]”

**~~G-14.0804~~ G-14.0904 Recognition by Presbytery**

“[Text remains unchanged.]”

***Rationale***

In the Old Testament, God’s people are instructed “keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children . . . (Deut. 6:6–7 NRSV). In the New Testament, teachers are called out along with apostles, evangelists, prophets, and pastors “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11–12 NRSV). Jesus tells us in the Great Commission to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. . . .” (Matt. 28:19–20 NRSV).

Since its inception, the church has declared education to be one of its primary tasks. John Calvin, in *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (4.3.4) writes, “Those who preside over the government of the Church, according to the institution of Christ, are named by Paul, first *Apostles*; secondly *Prophets*; thirdly, *Evangelists*; fourthly, *Pastors*; and lastly, *Teachers* (Eph.iv.11). Of these, only the two last have an ordinary office in the Church.” Calvin then describes the temporary function of apostles, prophets, and evangelists. He continues, “Next come *Pastors* and *Teachers*, with whom the church can never dispense, and between whom, I think, there is a difference, that teachers preside not over discipline, or the administration of the sacraments, or admonitions, or exhortations, but the interpretation of Scripture only, in order that pure and sound doctrine may be maintained among believers. But all these are embraced in the pastoral office.” The Presbyterian church has historically emphasized that the church’s teaching function must be given centrality if God’s reconciling work in Jesus Christ is to be made known.

In the congregation and higher governing bodies, educators are often responsible for leading Bible study, evaluating curriculum, teaching worship readiness for children and parents, instructing and guiding in Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, coordinating and developing faith through confirmation, directing youth ministry, equipping officer training, and administering new member assimilation.

At the presbytery level, educators plan events that develop leadership abilities and enrich the minds and hearts of the laity, particularly for those smaller congregations that do not always have the benefit of pastors or educators on staff but, nevertheless, deserve trained leadership. Often educators train commissioned lay pastors. They supervise and/or direct camping ministry, which can be a primary setting for making vocational choices. At the General Assembly level, educators plan for and design curricula and resources for the denomination. They carry out actions of the General Assembly. They are representative of the denomination both to sister denominations and other educational entities. While educators are engaged in these many and varied ministries, they are often not examined or held accountable by the presbytery as to their suitability for educational ministry and competence in the fields of theology, Bible, polity, and worship, and sacraments.

Ordination is the act by which the church sets apart persons for service (G-14.0100). It is the way the church confirms persons in their inward call to ministry and sets them within the church’s order. An ordained office provides affirmation of God’s call, accountability, and validation. At the present time, three groups of persons are ordained: ministers of Word and Sacrament, elders, and deacons. A fourth ordained office for certified Christian educators, that of educating elder, would strengthen the denomination’s time-honored emphasis on education in the faith and affirm God’s call to this form of ministry. The educator certification process provides for examination in the areas of biblical interpretation, Reformed theology, human development, religious education theory and practice, polity, program and mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and worship and sacraments as well as experiential requirements (G-14-0703).

The office of educating elder would set within the order of the church persons called to an indispensable function within the life of the church. It would provide a way for the church to maintain standards of competence for those who give leadership in its educational ministry. The office would provide an ordered way for educators to be held accountable for their ministry. It would give educators access to the governing bodies of the church and full participation in their deliberations. Finally, it would lift up the educational function of the church as the essential ministry that Presbyterians have always known it to be.

### *Frequently Asked Questions Regarding the Educating Elder*

#### 1. Why should Christian educators be ordained?

Ordination is the act by which the church sets apart persons for service (G-14.0100). It provides a way for the church to affirm an individual's sense of God's call to him or her and to give full recognition of those persons who are called to an educational ministry. Ordination offers the means for the church to meet needs of educators for accountability, support, and full participation in the governance of the church. It affirms the historic priority of education as an indispensable ministry and indicates the seriousness with which the church views education.

#### 2. Why do we need a fourth office?

Currently our church is well-served by three offices, minister of Word and Sacrament, elder, and deacon, each with specific responsibilities that contribute to the well-being of the church. However, in light of our current environment of biblical illiteracy and an increasing number of church members without a background in reformed theology, there is a clear need for intentional focus on education and nurture which this fourth office can provide.

John Calvin, founder of the Reformed Tradition, in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (4.3.4) writes, "Those who preside over the government of the Church, according to the institution of Christ, are named by Paul, first *Apostles*; secondly *Prophets*; thirdly, *Evangelists*; fourthly, *Pastors*; and lastly, *Teachers* (Eph.iv.11). Of these, only the two last have an ordinary office in the Church." Calvin then describes the temporary function of apostles, prophets, and evangelists. He continues, "Next come *Pastors* and *Teachers*, with whom the church can never dispense, and between whom, I think, there is a difference, that teachers preside not over discipline, or the administration of the sacraments, or admonitions, or exhortations, but the interpretation of Scripture only, in order that pure and sound doctrine may be maintained among believers. But all these are embraced in the pastoral office."

Traditionally, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its predecessor denominations have continued to place a high value on Christian education, including the adoption of a fourth office, educating elder, just prior to reunion in 1983. Given the above reality, it is appropriate to draw on the roots of our Reformed tradition and reinstitute a fourth office with specific responsibilities that focus on education and nurture, to be known as the educating elder.

#### 3. How will this benefit the whole church?

Ordination of those called to ministries of education will strengthen the importance of Christian education in *all* congregations by

- providing a way for the church to maintain standards of competence and accountability for those who give leadership in its educational ministry;
- lifting up the educational function of the church as the essential ministry which Presbyterians have always known it to be;
- providing opportunity for persons called to an indispensable function within the life of the church to have access to the governing bodies of the church and full participation in their deliberations;

- providing for clarification and validation of a call when specific expertise in educational ministry is needed.

The office of educating elder allows for the intentional focus on education and nurture in a way that is lacking in the current structure of governance. As this intentional focus is realized in the life of the presbytery, it will begin to enrich the educational ministries of all of its churches. This may indeed encourage additional gifted and committed people to be drawn to this calling.

#### 4. Why should the new office be an elder?

Ever since the establishment of the fourth office by Calvin, education has been central to the responsibility of elders. In response to the growing educational and nurturing needs of the church, it is imperative to reclaim the historical and ever vital role of teaching elder. The preparation, accountability, and support for the educating elder are designed for that particular office and its distinctive functions and emphases. While this is a new office, the framework is in place for the ordination of elders requiring fewer changes to the *Book of Order*.

#### 5. What is the process required for becoming an educating elder?

The process would require working with the Educator Certification Council to become a certified Christian educator by completing the accrediting process (academic, experiential, and examination) as stated in the *Book of Order* (G-14.0703). The congregation who has called the certified Christian educator will examine, ordain, and/or install that individual as an educating elder with the approval of the presbytery.

#### 6. How can someone be a member of a congregation and a member of the presbytery?

An elder

- is a member of a congregation;
- serves as a member of the presbytery when elected to serve as a commissioner to that governing body or elected as an officer of the governing body;
- serving as chairperson of a standing committee, or a member of the council of presbytery, may be enrolled as a member of presbytery for the term of office, whether or not commissioned by his or her session;
- serving as exempt staff for the presbytery, may be enrolled as a member of the presbytery for the duration of service in such staff position, whether or not commissioned by his or her session;
- who is a certified Christian educator may be enrolled as a member of the presbytery.

A person filling this new office—the educating elder—would be enrolled as a member of the presbytery as long as he or she is actively serving a call within that presbytery.

#### 7. What if a congregation wants to call someone to do educational ministry who is not ordained or certified?

Congregations are free to do that now and this will not change. However, once a person is serving a congregation, there would be more opportunities available for service within the congregation and the larger church if he/she chooses to continue his/her education in the area of Christian education.

#### 8. How will this amendment further the Kingdom of God?

Researchers tell us that effective Christian education, more than anything else, influences the faith maturity of a person. Faith maturity influences how we live our lives and greatly influences how

Christians respond to God's call to ministry. That means effective Christian education affects a person's involvement in the church, the vocation he or she chooses, the way he or she interprets Scripture, his or her understanding of stewardship, his or her prayer life, his or her compassion for persons in need throughout the world, and his or her commitment to care for creation. The educational ministry is exciting and humbling. We believe this amendment will promote and encourage more effective Christian education. The hope of those serving as church educators is that we will model the love of God by equipping the people of God for ministry in the name of Jesus Christ.