

PRESBYTERY OF SAN FRANCISCO

As amended and approved by Presbytery on May 8, 2007

The process for the examination of Candidates for Ministry who have been “found ready to be examined” by another Presbytery and who are being examined for ordination and membership by the Presbytery of San Francisco.

This process fulfills the responsibility described in G-14.0314 & G-14.0401 and 2

The Policy

This process will be used for all Candidates who have been under care of another presbytery but are being examined for membership in the Presbytery of San Francisco. To begin this process the Candidate must have a validated call to serve a church or agency within the Presbytery and have been found ready to be examined by their Committee on Preparation for Ministry. If a Candidate is given permission to have her/his final trials of Ordination in their presbytery of care and then seek transfer to the Presbytery of San Francisco then they would follow the process for Transfer of Minister Members from other presbyteries.

The prospective member must meet all the constitutional requirements for ordination to Word and Sacrament as specified in the Book of Order. Any alternate means to meet particular ordination requirements that have been approved by the presbytery of care shall be noted and reported to this presbytery.

The Candidate is asked to supply the COM with a one-page statement of faith, a short personal biography and a release form for all their files from the Committee on Preparation for Ministry of their presbytery of care. All these documents shall be received in this Presbytery’s office at least two weeks prior to their meeting with the COM.

The examination takes place before the calling congregation or session votes on the candidate. Ideally this meeting will take place during the visit when the person candidates for a position. The examination is part of a larger interview with the prospective minister member. The interview is an opportunity for the COM to get to know the person, build a supportive relationship with the prospective new member, and help with the transition process.

The COM examination will be done by the appropriate East Bay or West Bay regional COM group. When an examination is done at a special called meeting of the COM group, all members will be invited and a minimum of 5 members must be present. In the event that the recommendation of the COM group is not received by the Presbytery, an extended examination/interview of a prospective member could be done by the combined East Bay / West Bay COM groups in order to address issues raised by the Presbytery.

Steps

1. The prospective candidate/minister member will come before the COM at an appointed time. The candidate may bring a representative from the calling church/agency to the meeting with prior permission of a COM moderator. This guest will be invited to participate at appropriate times during the meeting. The minister must supply the COM with a one-page statement of faith and a short personal biography as well as their CPM files from the presbytery of care and any other documents the COM may request.

2. The examination will be done in the context of a larger interview process where the committee and the candidate/prospective member get acquainted and learn of the ministry to which the candidate is being called. The COM will use this time to assess any changes that might need to be included in the call and make recommendations to the candidate/church/agency that they feel will be helpful.
3. The candidate shall be examined on his or her Christian faith and views in theology, the Sacraments, and the government of this church as well as asked the nine ordination questions and any other inquiry deemed appropriate in light of the responses of the candidate/prospective minister member. This will include questions about G-6.0106b. Additional questions shall be asked as the COM seeks a fuller understanding of the candidate and the nature of the call. The COM must be rigorous and deliberate in seeking a full understanding of the candidate's faith and practice as well as an understanding of the Reformed Tradition. The COM will perform its duties prayerfully and responsibly, respecting those being examined as a sister or brother in Christ. The COM will follow the guidance of G-6.0108a and b as to determining acceptable acts of freedom of conscience of prospective minister members.
4. After the interview/examination the committee will vote to recommend to Presbytery to ordain or not to ordain the candidate. A recommendation to ordain would also include a recommendation to receive the candidate as a minister member of the Presbytery. The candidate will be presented to Presbytery and members of Presbytery will be invited to ask questions of the COM representative(s) about the process and ask questions of the prospective member about his or her Christian faith and views in theology, the Sacraments, and the government of this church. Consideration shall be given to what questions are appropriate for this meeting and what questions should be referred to the COM for an extended examination of the prospective member if needed.
5. If in the course of their examination the COM finds the candidate to have expressed possible departures from the standards of the Book of Confessions and/or Book of Order as a matter of conscience about non-essentials tenets, these findings shall be included in the report to Presbytery. As guided by G-6.0108a and b, it is ultimately the responsibility of the Presbytery to determine if a candidate/prospective minister member's act of conscience fits within acceptable bounds of our Reformed faith and polity.
6. In situations where the COM votes to recommend that a person not be ordained and received into membership in the Presbytery, the COM liaison and chair of the committee will meet as soon as possible with the Pastor Nominating Committee or calling agency and explain the reasons for the recommendation of COM.
7. At the meeting where the candidate/prospective member is examined they will be asked to introduce him/herself to the Presbytery and share the nature of the work to which he/she has been called. At this meeting a printed one page biography and one page statement of faith will be presented to the Presbytery.
8. In the event that the members of Presbytery feel a need for further examination of the candidate an extended examination/interview of candidate/prospective member may be done by the full COM. Issues and questions raised by the Presbytery shall be addressed at this meeting.
9. When the full COM does an extended examination/interview it will make its recommendation to the next meeting of Presbytery with a report of its findings.