

PRESBYTERY OF SAN FRANCISCO

As amended and approved by Presbytery on May 8, 2007

The process for the
Transfer of minister members from another denomination

This process fulfills the responsibility described in G-11.0402. Minister Seeking Membership

The presbytery, through its appropriate committee, shall examine each minister or candidate who seeks membership in it on his or her Christian faith and views in theology, the Sacraments, and the government of this church, except as provided in G-14.0314. They shall also follow all the requirements of G-11.0404.

The Policy

This process will be used for all ministers not already members of the PC (U.S.A.) who seek membership as minister members of the Presbytery of San Francisco. To begin this process the minister must have a validated call to serve a church or agency within the Presbytery. The minister must be found to be in good standing with the denomination of which he/she is a member. Membership in the Presbytery is contingent upon release from the minister's present church body. There are variables that must be considered depending on the minister's present ordination status. Following guidance of the Book of Order, the COM will determine the process that must take place before this policy can be used. For example, if a prospective minister member has been ordained and is presently a member of a denomination that is not Reformed or in correspondence with PC (USA) there could be other requirements to be fulfilled before this process can begin. The status of the minister will be determined by the COM.

The prospective member must meet all the constitutional requirements for ordination to Word and Sacrament. This includes appropriate academic degrees with attention to the Reformed tradition, Greek and Hebrew and ordination examination requirements. Other tools such as a Psychological Evaluation and background checks may be used in the examination process for membership. The COM may find alternate means to meet particular ordination requirements if they find it appropriate. Any alternate means shall be reported to the Presbytery.

An examination and interview takes place before the calling congregation or session votes on the candidate. Normally this meeting will take place during the visit when the minister 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 minister member will come before the COM at an appointed time. The minister 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, a short personal biography and a letter from their denomination of their standing in the body and a willingness to release them to the Presbytery of San Francisco 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 prospective member get acquainted and learn of the ministry to which the minister 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 minister/church/agency that they feel will be helpful.
3. The minister 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 minister and the nature of the call. The COM must be rigorous and deliberate in seeking a full understanding of the minister'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 receive or not receive the minister into membership in the Presbytery. The COM will determine if the report will be brought to the Presbytery on the consent agenda or as a regular part of its report. As always, the report can be removed from the consent agenda when requested. If the COM recommendation is removed from the consent agenda, 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 the committee votes to recommend receiving the minister as a member of the Presbytery but have in the course of their examination found the minister to have expressed 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 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 received into membership in the Presbytery, the COM liaison and chair of the committee will meet with the Pastor Nominating Committee or calling agency and explain the reasons for the decision of COM. The recommendation will be reported to the Presbytery with a written explanation for its action. The Presbytery may choose to accept the recommendation of the COM or choose to proceed with an examination by the Presbytery.

7. At the meeting when the COM reports on its action on membership of a minister, the prospective member 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. This takes place regardless of whether or not the person has been received into membership during the consent agenda.
8. In the event that the recommendation of the COM group is not received by the Presbytery, an extended examination/interview of a 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.