

GUIDELINES FOR COM INTERVIEW WITH CANDIDATES

The Presbytery of Denver

The candidate should receive an affirmative recommendation for membership in Denver Presbytery, commensurate with a call to a vacant pulpit or position if:

1. The candidate has at least the minimum skills required to perform the requirements of the proposed job description.
2. The candidate's theological "personality" is compatible with that of the local church as described in the CIF.
3. The candidate will support the programs and polity of the Presbytery of Denver and will work for peace and unity in the presbytery.
4. The candidate can affirm and carry out the ordination vows(W-4.4003), meet the standards for ordination described in (G.6.0106b & G6.0108a & b) and affirm the theological content articulated in Chapter Two of the Book of order.

Should the candidate declare a scruple to any of the items in D above the COM, will not approve the candidate but will present them and their scruple for examination on the floor of Presbytery. The Examination team will schedule an examination of no less than three hours. The first half of the examination will be in the areas of theology listed above and questions about their statement of faith. The second half of the examination will be in the areas of suitability for the call being considered and sharing details of life in Denver Presbytery. The candidate will receive in advance a copy of these guidelines at least a week before the conversation.

The following are suggested questions:

1. What is there about this position that excites and interests you?
2. What are your strongest abilities, experience and skills that will enable you to be effective in this position?
3. What are the major qualities you look for in your relationships with members of the congregation and/or your peers on the staff?
4. How do you prefer to work with others to achieve your objective?
5. Tell us about yourself: health, maturity and practical judgment, sense of humor, initiative.
6. We are interested in your leadership capabilities:
 1. Effectiveness as a preacher
 2. In evangelism
 3. Habits in parish calling
 4. Program effectiveness
 5. Administrative ability
 6. Style of working with others
 7. What large hopes and dreams have you for this congregation?
 8. Tell us about your past relationship with previous presbyteries.
 9. What role would you like to assume in Denver Presbytery?
 10. What 'motivates' you and 'keeps you going'?
 11. What areas of your ministry have been most exciting to you?

FAITH

1. What is your understanding of faith?
2. Where are you in your pilgrimage of faith?
3. Tell us about your faith in Jesus Christ and personal religious life (or How do you take care of your soul?)

THEOLOGY

1. What issues of theological reflection have been demanding your study and thinking recently? Explain some of them.
2. Where are you at the present time in your theological studies?
3. What in your opinion is the foremost theological issue facing the Church today?
4. In what way are the Confessions of our church important to you?
5. How do you define the essential tenants of the Reformed Faith?
6. The following questions deal with *the theological content* as described in chapter 2 of the Book of Order.

Trinity

Give us your understanding of the Trinity? How does it affect your practice of ministry?

Incarnation

Give us your understanding of the incarnation? How *does* it affect your ministry?

Authority of Scripture

Give us your views on the inspiration of the Scriptures,
Explain your understanding of the first chapters of Genesis
Give us your understanding of the Trinity.

Salvation (faith and grace)

Give us your views on redemption through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Sovereignty of God

How do you reconcile the sovereignty of God with the evil, pain and sorrow in the world?

Human tendency to idolatry: (Nature of Sin)

How do you understand sin?

Stewardship of all of life

How do you understand our role as stewards?

Covenantal Ecclesiology: (Christian Church and Community)

When we speak of the Church, what does it mean to you?

How understand the connectional nature of the Presbyterian Church?

What is your understanding of the Lord's Supper? What is its significance? How do you prepare children to come to the table?

Explain to us the meaning of the Sacrament of Baptism. Give us your views on Infant Baptism. Describe your practice of Baptism.

How do you understand the ordination vow to Peace, *purity and* unity.

How do you understand the ordination question around being a colleague in ministry?

Transformation of society

What do you see as the mission of the Church in the world?

Talk about your understanding of the church and it's relationship with society.

ORDINATION STANDARDS

1. Take a moment to read G6.0106b & G6.0108a.,b. Is there any way that you do not meet these standards? Do have any scruples to declare?
2. ***Chapter 2 of the Book of Order covers the Church and its Confessions.*** Read over that chapter. Is there any thing in this chapter that you can not affirm? Do have any scruples to declare?
3. Take a moment to read the Ordination Vows in ***W-4.4003***. Is there any vow that you can not affirm? Do have any scruples to declare?

Possible Questions for Candidates and Those Seeking Membership in the Lehigh Presbytery

The following questions have been prepared by the Committee on Ministry and contributors from throughout the Lehigh Presbytery, with assistance from other presbyteries around the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). They are intended as a spark to help in identifying or verbalizing a question to ask.

This list is meant to be foundational, not limiting, meaning that no one is limited to asking these specific questions. If a person's statement of faith or response to another inquiry prompts a question in your mind, you are urged to follow up. These are meant to be a beginning, not an end. But on those occasions when you desire to ask a question but are not sure what, or if you have the hint of a question in mind, but lack the exact words, these questions may help.

This list will be available on the Lehigh Presbytery website, and those to come before the Presbytery will be encouraged to review it beforehand. These are not meant to surprise anyone, but in order to provide a thoughtful answer they do have the opportunity to be prepared beforehand. Not only does this allow the Presbytery to get to know the person better, but it gives that person an opportunity to get to know the Presbytery better.

1. What regular spiritual practices do you follow? Why?
2. What energizes you in your Statement of Faith, and centers your faith journey?
3. What does it mean to you, practically speaking, to "trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?"
4. How specifically and generally has the grace of God impacted your life?
5. Our constitutional questions ask us to "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." What distinctive elements of the Reformed faith would you describe as "essential", and how do they impact your life and ministry?
6. Our constitutional questions for ordination describes the Scriptures as "by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ and God's word" to us." What does this mean to you as you think about the place of Scripture in the life of faith? In the life of the Church?
7. Who is Jesus Christ to you?
8. What is sin? How does sin impact believers in Jesus Christ as individuals and as a community? How ought Christians respond to sin in the larger world?
9. Are there favorite themes to which you return most often in your preaching? What are they, and why are they significant to you?
10. How do you understand the Incarnation? How does it affect your ministry?
11. What do the creation accounts in Genesis -3 mean to you? How would you respond to someone who told you they believed that the earth was created by God in seven days out of nothing?
12. Share your understanding of the importance of the sacraments in today's church.
13. How do you understand accountability to the presbytery?
14. What do you see as the mission of the church in the world?
15. What does it mean to affirm that God alone is the Lord of the conscience? How should that affirmation reflect on controversial issues that divide the church?
16. What is your sense of the goals and vision of the church or work to which you are being called?
17. How do you see your skills, gifts, interests, and abilities in light of the goals and needs with this call? Within the Presbytery? What concerns you? What excites and interests you? Why is this new call a good "match" between applicant and position?
18. Tell us of your best experience with a congregation. Recall a time when you felt most alive, most involved, spiritually touched, or most excited about your involvement.

19. What areas of your ministry have been most exciting to you?
20. What is it about being a member of this denomination that you value?
21. How do you balance your personal/family life with your ministry?
22. How do you “recharge your battery,” revitalize your energy level or find the emphasis for regeneration?
23. What is the difference between a connectional church and a congregational church? What are the strengths of our connectional system?
24. How do you conceive of the role of the church in the wider community of which it is a part?
25. What is your favorite passage of Scripture and why? How have you experienced the truth of its message in your life?

**NATIONAL CAPITAL PRESBYTERY
COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY
CLEARANCE PROCESS**

June 24, 2007

Revised September 11, 2008

Revised September 10, 2009

In light of the action at the 217th General Assembly (2006), placing greater responsibility and power in presbyteries for examining persons seeking membership or new calls within the presbytery, the Committee on Ministry has taken steps to strengthen the process by which to recommend clearing persons for membership in National Capital Presbytery and for exercising appropriate oversight of clergy and congregations involved in moves within the presbytery.

The Committee on Ministry has been working on this process since August 2006. Through its Coordinating Team, the Committee began researching and drafting a Committee on Ministry Clearance Process. This process was adopted on November 1, 2006 and amended on February 2, 2007. Members of the Clearance Team were recruited, and met February 2-3, February 23, March 23, April 27 and June 22. A draft report was shared with the Coordinating Council on May 2 and June 6. Some suggestions were incorporated resulting in a document presented for information and feedback to the presbytery at an informational meeting May 12. Input from these meetings resulted in the current document, which was finalized by the Clearance Team on June 22 and approved by COM via email June 22-24. This new process will take effect July 1, 2007.

This process serves to clear clergy for membership and/or newly installed ministry within National Capital Presbytery. The following categories of clergy go through this process:

- Candidates for the ministry seeking ordination and membership in NCP
- Ordained clergy in all membership categories seeking to transfer membership to NCP
- Interim pastors who are seeking to labor within the bounds of NCP without becoming minister members of NCP.
- Clergy members of NCP seeking to move to a new installed position within NCP.

In accordance with existing presbytery policy, the presbytery votes on the first two categories, while the COM votes on the third and fourth categories. In accordance with actions of the 217th General Assembly and constitutional advice from the Office of Constitutional Services, the presbytery votes on all three categories when there is a declared scruple or perceived departure. The clearance process as outlined is the same for all four categories.

Part I:

COM Grants Permission for a Congregation to Begin Search.

Party Primarily Responsible: Transitions Team of COM

Permission to elect a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) or Associate Pastor Nominating Committee (APNC) granted by COM based on congregation's readiness to begin a search.

Part II:
Executive-to-Executive Clearance
Party Primarily Responsible: General Presbyter and COM moderator

The Clearance Process begins once PNC's are ready to interview candidates "face to face."

At this point the General Presbyter of National Capital Presbytery does a "presbytery to presbytery" check of the candidates. If the General Presbyter has a concern he/she will consult with the COM moderator and they may consult with trained counselors in deciding whether or not a particular candidate is emotionally healthy or suitable for the particular congregation.

Part III
Practical Theology/ Operational Match
Party Primarily Responsible: PNC/APNC

The PNC's are primarily responsible, along with liaisons, for determining the practical theological and "operational" match with the congregation, and may involve the PNC or liaison consulting with the General Presbyter, the Transitions Chair, or other appropriate arms of the presbytery.

Part IV:
Documentation
Party Primarily Responsible: Office Manager

Once the PNC has reached a decision on a particular candidate, and that candidate has agreed to be nominated, documentation must be completed through the Office Manager in the presbytery office. At the present time, this list includes the following documents:

Documents provided to the PNC liaison and the PNC when elected

Terms of Call Packet
Equity Sharing templates and samples
EEO/AA Policies, including Forms #1, #2 and #3
PNC Handbook for Liaisons
PNC Handbook for PNCs

Documents provided to the PNC when candidate has been chosen by PNC:

Terms of Call Packet
EEO/AA Form #3
Proposed Dates Form
Procedure for the Congregational Meeting (provided after the interview)

Documents provided to the Candidate (* before the interview, ** after the interview)

*Clearance Process
*Clergy Sexual Misconduct Policy
*Signature form agreeing to Sexual Misconduct Policy
*Code of Ethics for Clergy and Other Church Professionals
*Signature form agreeing to Code of Ethics
*Release for Criminal Background Check
**PACE Brochure
** Systems Coaching Brochure (for those ordained 5 years or less)

- **Ministry Crisis Fund Leaflet
- **Ordination/Installation Instructions and Worksheet

Documents required from the Candidate (at least one week prior to Clearance Interview)

- *Signature form for Clergy Sexual Misconduct Policy (signed)
 - *Signature form for Code of Ethics for Clergy and Other Church Professionals (signed)
 - *Release for Criminal Background Check (signed)
 - Statement of Faith¹ **and brief biographical information** (not to exceed two pages, **total**)
 - Candidate's PIF
 - The three Clearance Interview Essays² (see below)
- (*Note: these first three documents are not required of minister members of NCP.)

Documents required from the PNC (at least one week prior to the Clearance Interview)

- Terms of Call Form A (completed and signed)
- Any Equity Sharing or loan document or covenant³
- EEO/AA form #3
- Proposed Dates Form (completed and signed)

Documents provided to the Clearance Team:

- Statement of Faith **and brief biographical information** (not to exceed two pages, **total**)
- Candidate's PIF
- The three Clearance Interview Essays
- Church Information Form

Part V:
Clearance Interview
Party Primarily Responsible: Interview Teams

The Clearance Interview will be a conversation based around the candidate's written Statement of Faith, PIF, and responses to three of the following questions. The candidate chooses two questions from among Questions 1-4 on which to submit written responses. In addition, the candidate submits a written response to Question 5. The interview will last from 1½ to two hours. It will be conducted by one of the four-person Interview Teams. It will cover the Statement of Faith, the PIF, the three essays the candidate has written, as well the two questions on which the candidate has not written. The interview is intended to be a wide-ranging discussion, including follow up questions and points of clarification.⁴ Its purpose is not only to determine a candidate's viewpoints, but theological thought process and quality as well.

¹ The Statement of Faith should address the following: Trinity, Nature of Humanity, Person and Work of Jesus Christ, the Nature of the Church, Scripture, Sacraments, Mission and Christian Hope (Eschatology).

² The only document forwarded to the Coordinating Team of COM is the Statement of Faith and the biographical information.

³ If such a document is planned but will not be negotiated by the time of the Clearance Interview, a general description of the anticipated agreement must be submitted along with Terms of Call Form; full documentation should be submitted to the Transitions Team of COM when the agreement is completed.

⁴ Throughout its life, the Clearance Team will consult the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery, as well as the Office of Constitutional Services of the General Assembly, so that at each step the process falls within constitutional bounds of the denomination. At the present time, the Interview Teams will follow the current advice from the Clerk concerning follow-up questions concerning G-6:10106. That advice reads as follows: *If a person does not self-acknowledge a practice that the confessions call sin, then a governing body has a positive obligation to make further inquiry only if it has direct and specific knowledge that such person is in violation of the ordination and installation standards. A hunch, gossip, or stereotype is not a sufficient ground to compel a governing body to make further inquiry.* (2003, *Hart, Presbytery of San Joaquin v. Presbytery of the Redwoods*)

The questions are as follows:

1. Please reflect theologically on the meaning and practice of the Fourth Ordination Question (W-4.4003d) “Will you fulfill your office in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our Confessions?”
2. Why are you in the Reformed tradition and a Presbyterian in the PC(USA)?⁵
3. What aspects of our Presbyterian polity do you consider most valuable? What aspects do you consider most in need of further development?
4. What do you understand to be your responsibility in furthering “the peace, unity and purity of the church” (W-4.4003g)?
5. Would you share with us your understanding of the Book of Order G-6.0106 a & b? How are you seeking to embody this understanding in your life and ministry?

G-6.0106 a. & b.

- a. To those called to exercise special functions in the church – deacons, 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 for 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, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament.

Part VI:

Approval Steps

Party Primarily Responsible: Interview Team, Clearance Team, Coordinating Team, COM, Presbytery

And, from another decision: *Since the ordaining and installing governing body best knows the life and character of the candidate, initial and further inquiry as to compliance with all the standards belongs to that governing body. If that governing body has reasonable cause for inquiry based on its knowledge of the life and character of the candidate, it has the positive obligation to make due inquiry and uphold all the standards for ordination and installation. (2002, Weir v. 2nd Presbyterian Church, Ft. Lauderdale)* The presbytery in 2002 adopted a document titled “Guidelines for Compliance with G-6.0106”. *In part, it declares “a candidate can be disqualified pursuant to G-6.0106b only upon the candidate’s own plain, palpable, and obvious self-acknowledgement of a practice which the confessions call sin. ...A candidate’s disclosure of his/her sexual orientation does not, standing alone, warrant inquiry by the Committee on Ministry into the candidate’s sexual practice.”*

⁵ Substitute for non-PCUSA candidates: “How do your faith tradition and polity align with and/or depart from the Presbyterian and Reformed tradition and polity?”

The Clearance Team will strive for a thorough and thoughtful recommendation on each candidate. It is the hope of the team that most recommendations will be supported by consensus by the team. In the case that such consensus is not reached, the rights of viewpoints of members of the Interview Team, Clearance Team, and/or Committee on Ministry not in the majority will be protected so that their voice is heard and considered by the next appropriate level of the process.

All matters related to the reception, ordination and installation of Ministers of the Word and Sacrament shall be approved by the Coordinating Team of the Committee on Ministry upon the recommendation of the committee's clearance teams, with the following provisions;

- Action related to any individual that involves a "scruple" that is judged to be a departure from essentials of the Reformed tradition shall be referred to the presbytery in session for disposition.
- Actions related to individuals that receive majority approval of less than 80% of the Coordinating Team likewise shall be referred to the presbytery in session.

In accordance with actions of the 217th General Assembly and constitutional advice from the Office of Constitutional Services, the presbytery has final approval on persons the COM is recommending for membership and current members COM is recommending for installation when there is a declared scruple or perceived departure.

In cases where no scruple is declared or departure perceived:

- Whenever a vote is unanimously positive at any level (Interview Team, Clearance Team, full COM), that unanimously positive vote constitutes the final action or recommendation of COM; the PNC/APNC is free to call a congregational meeting and the candidate is free to move onto the field.
- Whenever a vote is unanimously negative at any level, the clearance is not approved and all action stops.*
- Whenever the vote is not unanimous, it moves to the next level if all three of the following conditions occur:
 - A member voting in the minority chooses to take it to the next level
 - The particular candidate/clergy agrees
 - The PNC/APNC agrees.
- Whenever a vote is negative but not unanimous and does not move to the next level because one of the above conditions does not occur, then the clearance is not approved and all action stops.
- Whenever a vote is positive but not unanimous and the members in the minority choose not to take it to the next level, then the clearance is approved.
- Whenever a vote is tied, the members voting *for* approval are considered "in the minority," in which case it moves to the next level if a member voting for approval chooses to take it to the next level, the particular candidate/clergy agrees, and the PNC/APNC agrees.

In cases where a scruple is declared or departure perceived:

- Whenever a vote is positive at any level (Interview Team, Clearance Team, full COM), the matter moves to the next level (Clearance Team and full COM).
 - If the full COM vote is positive, the PNC/APNC is free to call a congregational meeting.
 - If the congregation votes to call the candidate, the COM then recommends the candidate for consideration by the presbytery.
 - If the presbytery approves, the candidate is free to move onto the field and be installed.
- Whenever a vote is unanimously negative at any level, the clearance is not approved and all action stops.*
- Whenever the vote is negative but not unanimous, it moves to the next level if a member voting in the minority chooses to take it to the next level, the particular candidate/clergy agrees, and the PNC/APNC agrees.
- Whenever a vote is negative but not unanimous and does not move to the next level because one of the above conditions does not occur, then the clearance is not approved and all action stops.

** In cases where a decision moves to higher levels:*

- *A majority or minority report may be offered to the Clearance Team, Committee on Ministry and the floor of Presbytery by anyone involved in the clearance process.*

Examination of Ministers of the Word and Sacrament Seeking Membership in the Presbytery of the Cascades

Purpose

The *Book of Order* [G-11.0402] provides that “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.”

The examination and interview provide an opportunity for discussion of the minister’s Statement of Faith, understanding of the Reformed faith, and experience in ministry and witness.

Responsible for Examination

An Interview Team, which will include at least two ministers of the Word and Sacrament and two elders, will examine the incoming minister in a face-to-face interview, and will make a recommendation to the regional COM regarding receiving each new minister of the Word and Sacrament into the Presbytery.

As part of the examination for membership in the Presbytery of the Cascades by a regional Committee on Ministry, each candidate shall be asked if he or she has a departure from ordination standards as described in G-6.0108 of the *Book of Order*. That departure may be a matter of doctrine, discipline, or governance. In the event that a candidate which the regional COM has otherwise deemed suitable for membership declares a departure, the authority of a regional COM to act as a commission of the Presbytery shall end and the remainder of the examination of the minister seeking admission must be done at the next stated meeting of the Presbytery. The Presbytery shall determine on a case-by-case basis whether the departure is from an essential or not and whether to approve membership in the Presbytery. If the minister is a candidate for a pastoral position the Pastor Nominating Committee/Associate Pastor Nominating Committee of the church seeking pastoral staff will be notified that action on the minister’s reception must be deferred until the next stated meeting of the Presbytery and provided information as to why the COM cannot take action to receive the minister into membership. The PNC/APNC may then seek another candidate for examination by the regional COM or wait until the Presbytery as a whole has had opportunity to examine the candidate and has voted whether or not the candidate may be received as a member of the Presbytery of the Cascades.

This procedure applies only to examination for reception of ministers already ordained in the Presbyterian Church (USA). Candidates under care of this Presbytery will be examined by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry and presented for direct theological examination by

the Presbytery. Procedures for reception of ministers from other denominations are described in Appendix E of this Chapter, Page 32.

Preparation by the Minister

In preparation for the Interview Team examination, each ordained minister shall provide a current one page statement of his or her theological beliefs with implications for life and ministry in today's world, a one page copy of his or her education and work history, and the signed copy of the Revised Policy and Procedure on Sexual Misconduct for the Presbytery of the Cascades. Each minister shall also be provided a set of the attached questions which may be asked as part of the examination (Appendix D, Exhibit 1).

Each minister shall meet with the Interview Team (of at least two ministers and two elders) for the interview which will start from, but not be limited to, discussion of the statement of faith and the person's work history.

Time of Examination

The Interview Team shall interview and examine all ordained ministers not members of the Presbytery of the Cascades who are finalists (see *Toward Calling Your Pastor*, Page 8, Item 14) for a pastoral call when they are brought to the community by a Pastor Nominating Committee for interview and preaching in a neutral pulpit. The Interview Team will report to the regional COM only on the candidate whom the Pastor Nominating Committee wishes to recommend to the congregation.

Ordained ministers who are seeking membership in the Presbytery of the Cascades but are not finalists for a pastor call - e.g., candidate for a Validated Ministry, Honorably Retired ministers, etc. - may be interviewed at any time mutually convenient for the minister and the Interview Team.

If the Interview Team has serious concerns, or if it expects serious concern in the regional COM about

- whether a candidate adheres to the essentials of the Reformed faith and polity;
- whether the applicant, if a finalist for a pastoral call, is an appropriate match for the calling congregation; or
- whether there are some other reasons the candidate may not be received as a member

the Interview Team shall immediately notify the regional COM Chair and the Co-Executive Presbyter staffing that COM, if either is not present at the interview and examination. If the applicant is a finalist for a pastoral call, the Interview Team shall also immediately notify the Pastor Nominating Committee. If the PNC continues to move toward a call, the Interview Team shall request the regional COM to consider whether the person is acceptable for membership.

At its discretion, the regional COM may request that the person be examined upon the floor of Presbytery by the Presbytery. If the applicant is a finalist for a pastoral call, such an examination shall occur before presentation of the minister to the congregation for a call. On the basis of the report and recommendation of the regional COM, and the personal appearance when the minister in question can respond to the concerns of the Presbytery, Presbytery shall take action on the request to concur in the pastoral call (if the applicant is the choice of a Pastor Nominating Committee for a pastoral call) and the request to receive the minister as a member of the Presbytery of the Cascades. If necessary, the Presbytery may share in the reasonable expenses of a visit for direct examination by the Presbytery.

Report

The COM liaison, as convener of the Interview Team, shall make a full report and recommendation (with copy of the minister's one page statement of faith and one page copy of his or her education and work history) to the regional COM, which will normally take action on behalf of the Presbytery. The action of the COM will be reported to the Presbytery at its next Stated Meeting. A copy of the minister's one page statement of faith and education and work history shall be made a part of the COM report to Presbytery.

Examination Process Training

Each COM will provide regular education for the examining task, and will regularly provide guidance and evaluative comment on their examining work.

Examination of Ministers not Called to Congregations

An Interview Team of at least two ministers and two elders shall conduct the examination as though the minister were being called to a pastoral position, and will make its recommendation to the COM for action.

Sample Questions for Examination of Ministers Seeking Membership in the Presbytery of the Cascades

The Presbytery of the Cascades, through its regional Committees on Ministry, examines all ministers seeking membership in the Presbytery. The examination is to determine approval of possible membership in the Presbytery and, in case of minister candidates who are finalists chosen by a Pastor Nominating Committee, for approval of a possible call to the congregation.

For the interview examination, the minister provides to the regional Committee on Ministry, prior to the interview:

- A one-page current statement of faith;
- A one-page copy of his or her education and work history; and
- A signed-off copy (Appendix F, Exhibit 1) of the Revised Policy and Procedure on Sexual Misconduct for the Presbytery of the Cascades.

The interview will start from, but not be limited to, discussion of the minister's statement of faith, the person's work history, in the case of a finalist for a pastoral call, includes the appropriateness of the "match" of the minister with the church.

As part of the examination for membership in the Presbytery of the Cascades by a regional Committee on Ministry, each candidate shall be asked if he or she has a departure from ordination standards as described in G-6.0108 of the *Book of Order*. That departure may be a matter of doctrine, discipline, or governance. In the event that a candidate which the regional COM has otherwise deemed suitable for membership declares a departure, the authority of a regional COM to act as a commission of the Presbytery shall end and the remainder of the examination of the minister seeking admission must be done at the next stated meeting of the Presbytery. The Presbytery shall determine on a case-by-case basis whether the departure is from an essential or not, and whether to approve membership into the Presbytery. If the minister is a candidate for a pastoral position, the Pastor Nominating Committee/Associate Pastor Nominating Committee of the church seeking a pastoral staff will be notified that action on the minister's reception must be deferred until the next stated meeting of Presbytery and provided information as to why the regional COM cannot take action to receive the minister into membership. The PNC/APNC may then seek another candidate for examination by the regional COM or wait until the Presbytery as a whole has had opportunity to examine the candidate and has voted whether or not the candidate may be received as a member of the Presbytery of the Cascades. (Adopted by the Presbytery of the Cascades, November 10, 2007.)

Sample questions which may be asked in examination of ministers of the Word and Sacrament for membership into the Presbytery of the Cascades:

I. Personal Faith Experience

- How has the Gospel been good news in your life, and how might you share it with others?
- Share highlights of your faith story.
- What are the "growing edges" in your ministry?

II. Theology and Sacraments

- Explain the meaning of Christ's deity and humanity and their mutual relationship, and how that shapes your outlook on life and its problems and opportunities.
- In view of the universality of God's love, why are some people responsive to the call of Christ and others apparently not? In what sense, and to what extent, do you believe humanity is lost apart from Christ? What is the relation of Christianity to other religions and world views?
- How do you explain baptism and the Lord's Supper to children? To adults?
- What elements of Bible content and Reformed theology give you most guidance in our present struggle for social justice?
- Describe a possible sermon to illuminate one of the doctrines of the Apostles' Creed and apply it to life situations and concerns.

III. Polity and Program

- What is your conception of how the minister should exercise leadership in the congregation and session under Presbyterian polity?
- What considerations should a session take into account in deciding whether to give money to either denominational or non-denominational causes?
- Describe the *Book of Order's* portrayal of the working relationship between Presbytery and congregations. Mention the main practical issues that have arisen in your experience of that relationship.

IV. Mission and Constitution

- How do you balance denominational loyalty with personal freedom of conscience? Are there specific issues where this presents a problem for you?
- How have you implemented evangelism, peacemaking, alleviation of hunger, and education into your ministry?
- In your ministry, how do you seek to carry out our denomination's commitment to inclusiveness and diversity?

V. Ministry

- What goals have you set for your ministry?
- (For pastoral calls) What are your perceptions of the congregation you are being called to serve: its goals, its style and character, its particular strengths, needs and potential?
- How would you describe your leadership style? What are your expectations of leadership to be provided by others (e.g., session, governing board, colleagues)?

- What are your feelings about conflict? What is your preferred style (or styles) for responding to conflict, both within the congregation or group that you serve, and between you and others?
- Describe your commitment to Presbytery and the mission program of the Presbyterian Church (USA).
- What is your approach to, and your commitment to, professional development and personal growth? Give some examples of what you have done in this area.
- (For pastoral calls) What particular skills do you have in the congregation's top two priorities (Church Information Form)?

Procedures for Reception of Ministers from Other Denominations

1. The minister of another denomination makes application for membership to the Stated Clerk of Presbytery.
2. The minister is referred to the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) for supervision and guidance until all requirements of G-11.0404, including taking and passing the standardized ordination exams, have been met.
3. When the CPM certifies that the above requirements have been met, an Interview Team can be formed to determine whether the candidate is appropriate for the particular situation for which he/she is being called. The interview/examination will proceed as outlined in the previous section.

Presbytery of St. Augustine
EXAMINATIONS COMMISSION
TOPICS FOR EXAMINATION DISCUSSION

*The Presbytery of St. Augustine desires the process of examining ministers and candidates to be collegial rather than inquisitorial. Our hope is that the examination will be an occasion for substantive theological conversation among minister or candidates and the members of the commission that will illumine the faith commitments and theological depth and breadth of those who seek admission to membership in the presbytery. **This is not an examination of the content of the minister or candidate’s knowledge, but rather of his or her views.***

Toward that end, the Examinations Commission has prepared the following list of topics about which a minister or candidate seeking admission to the Presbytery of St. Augustine should be prepared to share theological conversation. This document does not presume to define particular answers as acceptable and others as unacceptable. It is intended to stimulate the thinking of a minister or candidate in preparation for his or her conversation with the commission. Not all of the questions listed below will be asked in any given conversation, and other questions related to these but not listed here may be asked as follow-up questions.

The examination conversation will proceed generally along the following plan:

- Introduction of minister/candidate and commission members*
- Questions for conversation*
- Commission discussion (minister/candidate excused temporarily)*
- Follow-up questions as needed*
- Commission decision and housekeeping matters*

Area One: Christian Faith and Spiritual Practice

1. Spirituality

- What do you understand “spirituality” to mean?
- What regular spiritual practices do you follow? Why?
- How would you go about nurturing spiritual discipline in the life of others? Of a congregation?

2. Faith and Life

- How do you see your faith impacting your
 - i. business dealings?
 - ii. political beliefs?
 - iii. decision making process?

3. Faith Commitments

- Who is Jesus Christ for you?
- What does it mean to you, practically speaking, to “trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?” (*Book of Order* G-14.0405b(1))
- As you think about your life of faith, can you identify places or moments in which you were then or are now aware of the movement of God’s Spirit or the working of God’s grace?

Area Two: Reformed Theology

1. *“Essential Tenets” of Reformed Theology*

- Our constitutional questions ask us to “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” (*Book of Order* G-14.0405b(3)). What distinctive elements of the Reformed faith would you describe as “essential,” and how do they impact your life and ministry?
- What do you think is/are the unique contribution/s of the Reformed tradition to Christian faith and life?
- What use do you make of the *Book of Confessions* in the life of the church?

2. *Scripture*

- Our constitutional questions for ordination describe the Scriptures as “by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ and God’s Word” to us (*Book of Order* G-14.0405b(2)). What does this mean to you as you think about the place of Scripture in the life of faith? In the life of the Church?

3. *Christology*

- Who is Jesus, as you understand him?
- Of the many titles the New Testament uses for Jesus, which of the following (or others) do you find most illuminating and helpful in expressing your understanding of Jesus: Christ, Messiah, Lord, Son of God, Son of Man, High Priest, Lamb of God, Good Shepherd, Way/Truth/Life?

4. *Atonement*

- What do you understand to be the meaning of the death of Jesus?
- Throughout the history of the Christian faith, there have been many ways of modeling or describing the atoning work of Jesus Christ. What ways of describing the atonement are most illuminative and meaningful for you, and why?

5. *Sin and Salvation*

- What do you understand sin to be?
- We sometimes speak of sin as an individual phenomenon, and at other times as communal or corporate. How do you understand these terms, and what impact do they have on the way we think about the saving work of Jesus Christ?

6. *Theological Anthropology*

- What do you understand the biblical account to mean in the description of human beings as “created in the image of God” (Gen 1:27)?
- What does it mean to you that human beings are created “male and female” (Gen 1:27)? What is the place of sexuality in your understanding of God’s good creation?

7. *Proclamation of the Word*

- What is preaching, as you understand it?

- How do you prepare to preach, including your work with the text, your thinking about the congregation, etc?
- Are there favorite themes to which you return most often in your preaching? What are they, and why are they significant to you?

Area Three: Sacramental Theology and Practice

1. General matters

- What is the place of the sacraments in worship (in terms of both your theology of worship and the placement in the order of service)?
- What is your practice regarding the participation of elders (and deacons, if appropriate) in the administration of the sacraments? Why?

2. Baptism

- As you understand the sacrament, what happens in baptism?
- What scriptural models of baptism (circumcision, ritual cleansing, dying and rising, etc) are most illuminative and meaningful for you?
- In your ministerial practice, how do you handle requests from relatives to baptize a child whose parents are not members of the church you serve as pastor?
- How do you handle requests for private baptisms? How do you counsel individuals who come with such requests?

3. The Lord's Supper

- How do you understand the liturgical language of the “body” and “blood” of Christ, in light of your sacramental theology?

Area Four: Church Polity

1. Relationship to presbytery

- What expectations do you have regarding the presbytery in the following areas:
 - i. accountability to presbytery?
 - ii. support from presbytery?
 - iii. participation in presbytery?
 - iv. resources from presbytery?

2. Historic Principles of Order (Book of Order G-1.0300)

- The *Book of Order* lists eight “historic principles of church order” in G-1.0300. How important are these principles in your understanding of our church’s polity?
- How do you see them at work in the life of the church?

3. Government and Discipline

- Do you affirm that you will be “governed by our church’s polity” and “abide by its discipline” (*Book of Order* g-14.0405b(5))?
- If you can so affirm, what does that affirmation mean to you, especially in those cases in which your conscience leads you to disagree with our church’s polity and discipline?

Area Five: Suitability of Call

- What is your sense of the goals, visions, and needs of the church or work to which you are being called?
- How do you see your skills, gifts, interests, and abilities in light of those goals and needs?
- What areas of professional development and/or continuing education do think are most important for you in your first few years in this call?

**Proposed Examination Policy
Presbytery of Plains and Peaks
February, 2007**

The Presbytery of Plains and Peaks will be guided by the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in the examination of candidates. Based upon a thorough analysis of the relevant provisions in the *Book of Order*, and the history of Constitutional interpretation through decisions of the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission and the authoritative interpretations adopted by the General Assembly itself, we hereby adopt the following policy:

1. Persons being examined for ordination to the office of minister of Word and Sacrament and/or membership in the Presbytery shall be examined by the Presbytery.¹
 - a. Persons being examined for ordination shall be examined by the Presbytery in plenary assembly.²
 - b. Persons previously ordained as a minister of Word and Sacrament who seek presbytery membership may be examined by the Committee on Ministry (or a COM task force consisting of at least three persons) on behalf of the Presbytery.³
2. Persons being examined shall submit a brief statement of faith (ordinarily not to exceed one page) which shall be reviewed as part of the examination.⁴ Honorably retired persons may present an account of their faith journey in lieu of a statement of faith.⁵ The Presbytery reserves the right, however, to conduct a theological examination of honorably retired persons and may require a statement of faith from honorably retired persons seeking membership.⁶
3. Governing bodies do not possess a “right of conscience” that would permit them to violate mandatory provisions of the Constitution.⁷ For example, the Presbytery is bound by the third sentence of G-6.0106b which states, “Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as a . . . minister of Word and Sacrament.”⁸
4. Individuals being examined for ordination or presbytery membership who disagree with the faith or polity of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as expressed in the Scriptures, the *Book of Confessions*, or the *Book of Order* shall submit a statement of exception (“scruple”) expressing their disagreement to the Presbytery in writing prior to their examination.⁹

¹ For ordinands, G-14.0402a; for membership, G-11.0402.

² G-14.0402a.

³ G-11.0402; G-11.0502h; Presbytery standing rule 1.1.3.(2)

⁴ Presbytery policy adopted February 2000.

⁵ Presbytery policy adopted February 2000.

⁶ The policy adopted in February 2000 does not prohibit the presbytery from exercising its Constitutional responsibility to examine under G-11.0402, as policies may not override the Constitution.

⁷ Reaffirmed most recently in *Londonderry v. Presbytery of Northern New England* (Remedial Case 213-2, 2001).

⁸ While the first two sentences of G-6.0106b articulate “standards,” the force of which may be subject to local application under the authoritative interpretation issued by the 217th General Assembly (2006), the third sentence specifically limits the authority of governing bodies to exercise their powers to ordain or install persons refusing to repent of any practices governed by those standards which the Confessions call sin.

⁹ On the limits of personal conscience, see G-6.0108; while G-6.0108 specifically identifies only the Book of Confessions and the Book of Order, the COM has added “the Scriptures.” The provision requiring a written statement is included to aid the Presbytery in conducting its assessment of whether the departure constitutes an essential of Reformed faith and polity. Should a “scruple” be announced during the examination, the Presbytery would be in order to suspend the examination to provide opportunity for the candidate to provide the written statement. The Presbytery could choose to resume the examination at such a place and time as would provide sufficient opportunity to consider the request carefully and conduct a reasonable and responsible examination. COM will be responsible for notifying persons to be examined of the Presbytery policy sufficiently in advance so as to allow them time to prepare written statements prior to the meeting.

a. Each person submitting a statement of exception shall be examined by the Presbytery in plenary assembly.¹⁰ Each exception requested shall be considered by the Presbytery as to whether it constitutes a rejection of an essential tenet of Reformed faith or polity. The person being examined shall be granted opportunity to defend the objection before the assembly. The assembly may take into account the depth and quality of theological reasoning in determining whether the position taken constitutes a rejection of an essential tenet.¹¹

b. Persons who are judged by this presbytery to reject an essential tenet of Reformed faith or polity shall not be ordained as a minister of Word and Sacrament, or be granted membership in this Presbytery, regardless of prior ordination or retirement status.

c. “So far as may be possible without serious departure from [the standards of the church], without infringing on the rights and views of others, and without obstructing the constitutional governance of the church, freedom of conscience with respect to the interpretation of Scripture is to be maintained” (G-6.0108a).

d. The Presbytery may not take any action which binds the judgment of future assemblies in the examination of candidates, nor may it reject a candidate’s statement of exception without providing the candidate an opportunity to defend the position or the presbyters the opportunity to weigh the position or its defense.¹²

5. Persons whose statements of exception are deemed by the Presbytery not to constitute rejection of an essential tenet are nevertheless required to act in conformity with the faith and polity of the church.¹³ Persons willfully violating mandatory provisions of the Constitution shall be subject to disciplinary action.

¹⁰ Under G-6.0108, the determination of departure from essentials is the responsibility of the governing body. The COM believes this decision may not and should not be delegated to any committee, task force, council, or commission.

¹¹ “It was clearly the intention that this decision as to essential and necessary articles was to be made after the candidate had been presented and had declared his beliefs and stated his motives personally, and after the examining body, whether Presbytery or (General) Synod, had had full opportunity to judge the man himself, as well as abstract questions of doctrine.” (Report of the Special Commission of 1925 [“Swearingen”], PCUSA, 1927, pp. 56-86).

¹² “One fact often overlooked is that by the Act of 1729, the decision as to essential and necessary articles was to be in specific cases. It was no general authority that might be stated in exact language and applied rigidly to every case without distinction. It was an authority somewhat undefined, to be invoked in each particular instance.” (Report of the Special Commission of 1925 [“Swearingen”], PCUSA, 1927, pp. 56-86.)

¹³ “The Commission recognizes the right of individuals to hold views contrary to the Constitution of the PCUS but, for the sake of order, actions contrary to the Constitution are not sanctioned” (PCUS, 1983, *Hambrick v. PJC, Synod of North Carolina*, No. 1-1983). See also *Londonderry et al. v. Presbytery of Northern New England* (RC 213-2, 2001). An examination concerns fitness for office. A decision to grant a “scruple” in examination for ordination does not abridge the authority of the Constitution to govern conduct of ministry or limit the grounds for remedial or disciplinary actions.