



**PROCEDURE MANUAL
for
MINISTERIAL AND CANDIDATES
COMMITTEES**

THIRD EDITION



EPC

*A Global Movement of
Evangelical Presbyterian Churches*

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Introduction

The *Procedure Manual for Ministerial and Candidates Committees* is compiled by the Ministerial Vocation Committee of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church as a reference tool primarily for Presbyteries of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. This Manual brings together in one place the constitutional requirements from the *Book of Order*, practices required by action of the General Assembly (*Acts of Assembly*), and advisory material. It also contains sections that are of value to search committees and Sessions.

This Manual is periodically revised to incorporate relevant amendments to the *Book of Order* and actions of the General Assembly. This edition includes amendments and legislative actions approved through the 38th General Assembly (June 2018). In an effort to improve readability, this edition presents the material in a more logical fashion without the outline format of previous editions. Except for chapters 1 and 2—which provide a high-level overview of the process—the text of the *Book of Order* and *Acts of Assembly* has been moved from the body of the chapter to the end in order to improve readability while not requiring the reader to go back and forth from the Manual to the *Book of Order*.

References to *Book of Government* begin with “G,” to the *Book of Worship* with “W,” and to the *Book of Discipline* with “D.” Text of the references to the *Book of Order* may be found at the end of each chapter, cited in the order they appear in the *Book of Order*. Acts of Assembly referenced in each chapter will be listed following the *Book of Order* text in chronological order with the year the action was taken followed by the item number. For example, “85-03” designates 1985, action number 3.

Input to improve future editions is gratefully received and may be sent to info@epc.org or mailed to:

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A note on forms: Previous editions of the *Procedure Manual for Ministerial and Candidates Committees* contained a section of forms, checklists, and other resources designed to be used by Presbyteries and churches. Because many of these forms are updated (sometimes multiple times) between printings of this Manual, this section has been removed. Instead, each of these forms is available on the EPC website at www.epc.org/downloads. Appendix B beginning on page 114 lists the specific page address of each form, which will be the most current version. If you are viewing this Procedure Manual as a pdf file on your computer, these are active links that will take you directly to the form on the EPC website.

For best results when viewing this Manual pdf in Adobe Acrobat, select “View” > “Page Display” > “Two Page View” from the navigation menu at the top of your screen.

The Call of a Christian

All Christians are called by God to participate in the ministry of Jesus Christ in the world and to exercise such gifts as God has given them in obedience to His purpose. The call of God to be Christian demands that the choice of work be a responsible decision of faith based on several important factors:

First, the work should be *appropriate to serve God's purposes*. Therefore, work should be judged first on the basis of its relationship to the biblically expressed mission of the Church, and second, on the relative need in the world for that work. It is not enough to choose useful work that one likes and can do. The Christian's work should be important to the Kingdom of God.

Second, the work should be *consistent with a person's abilities*. God has created each person with an individual set of natural abilities and a unique emotional and mental pattern. All Christians should make use of testing, counseling, and every other means at their disposal to learn as much as they can about themselves and their God-given gifts so they may best serve God in the vocational area for which He has fitted them.

Third, the work should be *confirmed by an inner conviction* that this is God's will for their lives. By the grace of God, when Christians seek God's will for their lives with good judgment, they begin to sense a strong conviction that one type of work is better for them than others. This is what might be spoken of as the "inner call."

Finally, the work should be *confirmed by others*. One's inner conviction is necessary, but should never be trusted alone since this kind of inner experience may be misinterpreted. The Church is responsible for helping all its members choose work that is not merely satisfying or financially beneficial, but more importantly to choose work that honors God and reflects His will and Kingdom ministry. This is what might be spoken of as the "outward call."

The Call to the Ordained Ministry

The Reformers believed that God instituted the ordained ministry to proclaim His Word, to administer the sacraments, and to ensure the orderly government of the Church. They held that both preaching and teaching by a trained and duly authorized person are essential. The sacraments are functions of ordained ministry—not because their validity is based on the Minister's ordination, but because they must never be separated from preaching His Word, the declaration of God's will. These elements, the right preaching of the Word, the proper administration of the sacraments, and the practice of scriptural discipline were and still are the marks of the true Church.

How does someone decide if God is calling him or her to vocational ministry? His or her own judgment? The opinions of others? The covenant community? The Reformers felt the people

of God could best make the ultimate judgment about demonstrated gifts for the ministry. They insisted that ministers be called by the Church (G.10-1).¹

By this call of the Church, the Reformers meant a process that included the search for and selection of candidates, candidate preparation, and the election of a candidate to be pastor by the people of the congregation. The next step was examination before Presbytery, culminating in the ordination and installation of the candidate as minister. These steps comprise the “outward call,” or the call of the Church. In Calvin’s mind, Scripture taught that the Church has the responsibility to be the agent through which God calls people into the ministry. Moreover, his experience forcefully indicated that this biblical understanding of the call served a dual purpose: it protected the Church from weak and misguided leadership, and it provided the means of securing the gifted, disciplined, prepared clergy that would be necessary for the Reformed churches. Like Luther, Calvin and his successors placed the deciding consideration upon the call of the Church.

In theory and in practice, the Reformers affirmed the right and the responsibility of the Church to choose or select candidates for the ministry. The “inner call” has frequently been given predominant consideration. The Reformers affirmed its importance, but they never acknowledged it as the sole deciding factor for admission to the ministry. Calvin defined the inner or secret call as the “good testimony of one’s heart” that allowed an individual to accept an office in the church.

Some look upon the call to the ministry as an event that takes place at one time and may not be apparent to anyone other than to the one called. The *Book of Government* explains, however, that this calling is not only an event but a process. For the individual, this process strengthens the impetus to the ministry; for the Church it confirms the validity of the call and the suitability of the person called.

¹ G.10-1. It is God through the Holy Spirit who calls persons to office in the Church. This calling to office consists of three parts: first, the inward call to individuals where they bear testimony of that calling; second, the call of a local church, Church Court, or other appropriate agency to them to fill that office; third, the approval by an appropriate court of the Church.

2

From Candidacy to Call: An Overview of the Ordination Process

Introduction

This chapter provides process steps and milestones of the pastoral call process to candidates, Ministerial and Candidates Committees (the abbreviation MCC refers to both or either), and local churches. More detail of each step is provided in subsequent chapters.

Notes:

- Steps to the process are identified either as requirements (required by the *Book of Order*) or recommendations.
- References to the *Book of Government* begin with “G,” to the *Book of Worship* with “W,” and to the *Book of Discipline* with “D.” References to *Acts of Assembly* begin with a number.
- Forms that are referenced are available for download (typically in fillable PDF format) on the EPC website at www.epc.org/downloads. A list of forms with corresponding URLs is available on page 114 of this Manual as Appendix B.
- This chapter does not address all responsibilities of the Candidates or Ministerial Committees, just the pastoral call process elements. For example, care of ministers who are already ordained is not included here.

Overview of Phases and Milestones

The process has four major phases. Details of each phase are described separately.

1. **Application to Come Under Care.**
The appropriate forms are provided by the prospective candidate and the Session to the Presbytery to seek approval for a pastoral candidate to come under care of the Presbytery. If approved, the candidate moves to the Preparation for Office phase.
2. **Preparation for Office.**
The candidate works with the Ministerial or Candidates Committees and an advisor is appointed by the appropriate committee to mentor the candidate throughout the remainder of the process; including education, testing, and other preparation requirements, including a valid call. If approved by the Presbytery, the candidate moves to the Installation and Ordination phase.
3. **Pastoral Search and Call.**
This phase is completed by a local church seeking a pastor, and results in a call to the candidate. This is required before the Installation and Ordination phase.
4. **Installation and Ordination.**
This phase is completed by the Presbytery and calling congregation and concludes the process.

Application to Come Under Care

The following are the steps to becoming a Candidate Under Care. This phase is initiated when the prospective candidate applies to come under care of their local church Session, and the pastor contacts the Presbytery MCC and submits the endorsement form. The process is then overseen by the Ministerial/Candidates Committees.

Required by the *Book of Order* or *Acts of Assembly*:

- A. Membership in EPC church for a minimum of six months (G.11-2A).
- B. Application to Come Under Care submitted by the candidate to the Session (G.11-2A).
- C. Session Endorsement Form submitted by the Session to the Presbytery (G.11-2A).
- D. Examination and recommendation by Ministerial or Care of Candidates committee (G.11-2B).
- E. Criminal background check. (98-15). [May be conducted before or after approval of candidacy]
- F. Examination by the Presbytery (G.11-2C).
 - Questions on Christian experience and growth.
 - Questions on motives for seeking ordination.
 - Questions on personal call to ministry.
 - Candidate responds affirmatively to questions asked by the Moderator (G.11-2C).
 - Charge is given to the candidate by an appropriate member of the Presbytery (G.11-2C).
 - Advisor (a Teaching Elder in the same Presbytery where the candidate is under care) is assigned (G.11-2E).
- G. Placed on candidate roll and recorded in Session minutes (G.11-2C).

Recommended steps (these are recommended, and not required, because not listed as required in either the *Book of Order* or *Acts of Assembly*):

- A. Ordinarily a candidate is under care for one year (G.11-2H).
- B. Service of recognition by home church is appropriate (G.11-2D).

Resources and Forms:

- It is suggested to read through the Theology of Calling for a good overview of the process.
- Application to Come Under Care.
- Session Endorsement Form.
- More detail on interviewing suggestions is included in Chapter 5.

Candidates Transferring Between EPC Presbyteries or From Another Reformed Denomination:

Receiving a Candidate by Transfer within the EPC

If a candidate requests transfer to another Presbytery, both presbyteries must approve. The candidate also must transfer membership to a local church within the new Presbytery (G.11-2H) and the new Presbytery must appoint one of its members as an advisor. All files and records must be forwarded from the original to the new Presbytery.

Receiving a Candidate from another Reformed Denomination

A Presbytery may receive a candidate from another Reformed denomination provided that the candidate has been under care in that denomination for at least one year, has met the EPC educational requirements for ordination, and is being considered for a call by an EPC congregation (G.11-2J). In this situation, the candidate is not subject to the six-month membership requirement (G.11-2A).

The following are the steps to prepare for ordination. These are overseen by the Ministerial/Care of Candidates committees.

Required by the *Book of Order* or *Acts of Assembly*:

- A. Criminal background check (98-15).
- B. Advisor Report, submitted at least annually (G.11-2F).
- C. College and seminary transcripts (G.12-2A).
- D. (if applicable) CEEP (Candidate's Educational Equivalency Program) requirements for MDiv equivalence. These requirements are provided by the Ministerial Vocation Committee and approved by the Presbytery (or MCC).
- E. Statement of Faith.
- F. Personal Information Form (PIF) including Reference Letters (98-15) and Exceptions to Westminster Standards, if any (G.12-4).
- G. Written examinations.
- H. Oral examination by the Ministerial Committee.

Recommended steps (these are recommended, but not required because they are not listed as required in either the *Book of Order* or *Acts of the Assembly*):

- A. Report of Physical Examination (if included, this occurs before the written exams).
- B. Report of Psychological Evaluation (if included, this occurs before the written exams).
- C. Ethical Affirmations for EPC Leaders (15-02, strongly encouraged).

Resources and Forms:

- Advisor's Report Form.
- Statement of Faith.
- Personal Information Form (PIF).
- Ethical Affirmations for EPC Leaders.
- Request for Ordination Exam.
- Report of Physical Examination (new form).
- Report of Psychological Exam (new form).
- Reformed Reading List.
- Termination of Candidacy Form.

Variations of this Process:

Candidate Under Care of One Presbytery Receives a Call from a Church in Another Presbytery

In this case, oral examinations are conducted by the calling Presbytery. All files and records must be forwarded from the original to the calling Presbytery (G.10-8C.2).

Examination of a Teaching Elder Changing Presbyteries

The receiving Presbytery must conduct and sustain the examination, approve the call and terms of call, and the dismissing Presbytery must act to dismiss the minister. The Stated Clerks of each Presbytery must promptly communicate the actions of their respective bodies (G.10.8C.2). Depending on which body acts first, a minister may be dismissed pending reception or a minister may be received pending dismissal.

Examination of an Ordained Minister Coming from Outside the EPC

During the search process, the Search Committee must consult with the Ministerial Committee as early as possible, as different provisions will apply depending upon the ecclesiastical body from which the minister is coming (G.12-3).

The Ministerial Committee should verify that the minister's ordination is from an ecclesiastical body, is valid, and is current. The EPC normally recognizes ordination from Christian churches or denominations. Because educational requirements for ordination differ from one tradition to another, the Ministerial Committee must evaluate the minister's educational credentials, may waive language educational requirements by a two-thirds vote, and may require additional study.

From Another Denomination within the Reformed Family (05-10)

Such denominations include (but are not limited to) the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARP), the Evangelical Covenant Order of Presbyterians (ECO), the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA), the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America, the Christian Reformed Church, the United Church of Christ, National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, and the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference. Churches that do not identify themselves as "denominations" and come from a different historic stream than the British Reformed tradition (Presbyterian and Puritan Congregationalist), such as the Reformed Baptist Church, are by definition not a "denomination from within the Reformed family." Independent churches that are Reformed in doctrine are not "denominations within the Reformed tradition" by virtue of their independence.

When seeking membership in an EPC Presbytery, a minister from a denomination within the Reformed family shall present credentials of education required by those seeking ordination (82-07.1). The minister shall be examined on views and beliefs in the same fashion as one transferring from one Presbytery to another within the EPC, and may be examined on knowledge (G.12-3B).

From Outside the Reformed Tradition

The Presbytery shall satisfy itself that the minister has a valid ordination and education equivalent to EPC ordination requirements. Presbyteries may require additional coursework or readings.

A minister coming from outside the Reformed tradition shall be examined in the same manner as a candidate for ordination as specified in G.12-2C. This examination, however, does not make the minister a candidate, nor require that the minister become a candidate. The purpose of the examination is not to call into question the applicant's ordination, but to assure a Presbytery that the minister's education is consistent with the standards for ministry within the EPC.

Termination of Candidacy

The following are examples of reasons for which a Presbytery may terminate an individual's candidacy:

1. The candidate no longer desires to pursue ordination.
2. The candidate no longer desires to pursue ordination within the EPC.
3. The candidate engages in behavior or embraces beliefs which would not be acceptable to the EPC.
4. The candidate is making no progress over an extended period of time in pursuing ordination.

To terminate candidacy:

1. Either the candidate or the MCC puts the reasons for termination in writing to the other party.
2. The MCC or one of its representatives makes reasonable attempts to meet with the candidate to discuss the reasons for termination.
3. The MCC brings to the Presbytery a motion to terminate candidacy.
4. When a candidacy is terminated, the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery notifies the candidate's sponsoring church and the Office of the Stated Clerk (General Assembly), using the Termination of Candidacy Form.

Reinstatement of Candidacy

A person's candidacy may be reinstated through the following procedure:

1. If the person seeking reinstatement is a member of an EPC church other than the original sponsoring church, the person should be a member for a time sufficient for the Session to give a credible endorsement. The person's previous EPC membership may be considered adequate to fulfill the requirements of **G.11-2A** by the Presbytery for purposes of reinstatement.
2. The Session of the church at which the former candidate is currently a member, having satisfied itself that the potential candidate shows evidence of a call to ministry and a commitment to pursue that call, endorses the member.
3. The MCC proceeds according to the procedures outlined above, requiring updated forms as necessary, and may recommend the candidate's reinstatement to the Presbytery.
4. The potential candidate is examined by the Presbytery according to the provisions of **G.11-2C**.

Pastoral Search and Call

The following are the steps to complete a pastoral search and call. These are overseen by the Ministerial/Candidates Committees and completed by the local church. This is required to be completed before the Ordination and Installation phase.

Required by the *Book of Order* or *Acts of Assembly*:

- A. Formation of a search committee recommended by Session and elected by the congregation (G.10-4A).
- B. Conducting the Search, after informing the Ministerial Committee that a search is envisioned and having been appointed a liaison from the Ministerial Committee (G.10-4B), including:
 - Announcing the position (including a pastoral position description).
 - Preliminary screening/interviews with review of PIF forms.
 - In-depth interviews, check of references, and selection of top candidate.
 - Finalizing of the terms of call and communication to the candidate (12-11.1).
 - Agreement with the candidate on terms of call specifics.
- C. Concluding the Search.
 - Inform the Ministerial Committee and seek consent (G.10-4C).
 - Inform Session (G.10-4F).
 - Inform the congregation of selection and terms of call via a congregational meeting (G.10-4G, H).
 - Report exact vote count in meeting minutes, to pastor nominee (G.10-4G) and to the Ministerial Committee and Session.
 - Congregation appoints representatives to advocate the call at a Presbytery meeting (G.10-4G).
- D. Approval by Presbytery (G.12-2).
 - Preach a sermon demonstrating the ability to expound on the Word of God effectively.
 - Presbytery review of PIF, Statement of Faith, and exceptions to the Westminster Standards.
 - Questions on: Christian experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and progress in spiritual growth.
 - Questions on: Theology and Sacraments.
 - Questions on: English Bible.
 - Questions on: The Book of Order.
 - Questions on: The Reformed Tradition.
 - Questions on: Nature of the Office of the Teaching Elder
 - If approved, appoint an Administrative Commission and Chair of the Commission. The Commission must consist of at least 5 Ruling and Teaching Elders

in proportion as near to 2:1 as possible with Ruling Elders from at least two churches (G.21-1C).

Recommended steps (these are recommended, and not required, because not listed as required in either the *Book of Order* or *Acts of the Assembly*):

- A. Church Information Form (used along with position description to inform potential candidates of the church environment).

Resources and Forms:

- Church Information Form.
- Terms of Call.
- More detail on search committee recommendations is found in chapter 6.
- EPC Position Papers may be referenced as part of the interview process.

Variations of this process

Planned Pastoral Transitions

The process described above is not the only way a pastoral transition may take place in the EPC, especially in larger churches. This paragraph is titled deliberately to avoid the notion of “pastoral succession.” Given the irrevocable right of the congregation to call its own Pastor, the pastors of local churches do not have the right to “name their successor.” However, there are situations in which it is wise and beneficial for the Pastor to be involved in a planned transition. These situations generally occur when a long-term Pastor knows that the time is coming to end the pastoral relationship, often (but not always) due to pending retirement.

Although transition planning should begin earlier, an announcement of the Pastor’s retirement (or intention to leave), with the Presbytery’s consent and affirmed by the congregation and pegged to a date or event is equivalent to the announcement of a vacant pulpit, making it possible for the congregation to elect a search committee before the effective date of the Pastor’s departure. In some situations, an Associate Pastor has been called with an expectation that this individual could be the next Pastor. If so, special provisions described above must be followed.

Associate Pastor Search Process

1. Called by a Search Committee.

An Associate Pastor is called by the congregation. When that Associate Pastor will be coming from outside the church staff, the congregation follows the same process as calling a Pastor. As the Session is making preparations, the position description must include the main areas of responsibility in which the Associate Pastor will be serving (G.10-5). Although the Pastor is not a member of the Search Committee, the Committee should regularly seek out the Pastor’s input and advice.

2. Calling an Assistant Pastor as an Associate Pastor.

The Session, by a three-fourths vote and with the approval of the Presbytery’s Ministerial Committee, may recommend to the congregation that an Assistant Pastor currently on staff be called as an Associate Pastor without needing to elect a search committee. The Presbytery must approve the call and the terms of call. Since it is a new call, the Presbytery also conducts a service of installation (G.10-6B).

Assistant Pastor Search Process

An Assistant Pastor is called by the Session for particular responsibilities for a limited period of time (which may be extended). The Session may conduct a search for an Assistant Pastor in a manner it deems appropriate (G.10-6A). The provisions for forming a congregational search committee do not apply; however, it is wise to involve members of the congregation in the search process. The Assistant Pastor must be examined and approved by the Presbytery in the same way as a Pastor or Associate Pastor. In many cases, an individual is called as an Assistant Pastor with the understanding that he or she will be considered as an Associate Pastor in the future.

Chaplain

See the Chaplains Work and Care Committee Handbook for details on the process for Chaplains.

When a Teaching Elder has been approved by the Presbytery, an Administrative Commission is appointed on to act on behalf of the Presbytery to ordain (if necessary) and install the new Pastor. The process is overseen by the Presbytery, and administered by the Administrative Commission (G.21-1C; 02-04.1).

Required by the *Book of Order* or *Acts of Assembly*:

- A. Ministerial Obligation Form (signed by Pastor-elect) G.19-4B.4.
- B. Ordination/installation service to include:
 - Preaching of the ordination/installation sermon (G.13-1A).
 - Ordination vows (G.13.2A).
 - Questions to the congregation (G.13.2A).
 - Appropriate prayer (G.13-3B).
 - Declaration of ordination/installation (G.13-3C).
 - Minutes submitted to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery (G.13.3E).

Recommended steps (these are recommended, and not required, because not listed as required in either the *Book of Order* or *Acts of Assembly*):

- A. Commission meets privately prior to the service for prayer and election of a secretary to take minutes.
- B. A charge to the Pastor-elect and to the congregation is appropriate (G.13-3D).
- C. Commission meeting after the service for reading of the minutes and prayer.
- D. Reception for the Pastor-elect and family following the service.

Resources and Forms:

- Ministerial Obligation Form.
- Service form for Ordination/Installation service.
- Minutes of the Commission to Ordain and/or Install.
- More detail on the ordination/installation service is available in chapter 7.

3

The Office of Teaching Elder

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) is governed by Ruling and Teaching Elders (G.2-1).² “Teaching Elder” will be used throughout this Manual to designate the office in the EPC that is also known as “Minister” or “Minister of the Word and Sacrament.” Pastor is one of the varieties of calling within the office of Teaching Elder. Most ministers will serve within a pastoral ministry in a church, but some will serve in one of the other varieties of calling: teacher, missionary, evangelist, administrator, or chaplain.

Pastor

The Pastor is called by the congregation as the “shepherd of that flock,” with particular responsibility to teach, preach, and lead the congregation in worship (G.9-5A). The Pastor is both a member and Moderator of the Session (G.18-2A) and ordinarily moderates meetings of the congregation (G.7-4). The call shall³ be approved by the Presbytery, which shall proceed with ordination and/or installation (see chapter 4, beginning on page 23, and the “Terms of Call—Pastor/Associate Pastor” form on page 116).

Associate Pastor

All churches have a position of “Pastor,” and when additional Teaching Elders are called, their calling is that of Associate Pastor or Assistant Pastor. “Co-pastor” is not an office recognized by the EPC (85-05).⁴ An Associate Pastor is called by the congregation (G.10-5). The call shall stipulate the primary responsibilities of the position and shall be approved by the Presbytery, which then shall appoint a Commission to proceed with ordination (if required) and installation (G.13-1A). The Associate Pastor, being called by the congregation, is a member of Session (G.18-1). Ordinarily, Associate Pastors are not eligible to succeed the Pastor. For exceptional cases, special provisions for approval by the Session and Ministerial Committee apply before approaching the Associate Pastor as a candidate (G.10-4D).

Assistant Pastor

The Assistant Pastor is called by the Session (G.10-6). This call shall be for a definite period of time and is renewable. The call shall stipulate the primary responsibilities of the position and shall be approved by the Presbytery, which shall then appoint an Administrative Commission to proceed with ordination (if required) and installation. While serving as an Assistant Pastor, that individual may not succeed the Pastor. The Assistant Pastor is not called by the congregation and therefore is not a member of the Session (G.18-1).

Churches may call an Assistant Pastor to serve as an Associate Pastor. This may be done without a search committee on recommendation of the Session and a three-fourths majority

² All *Book of Order* references cited are found at the end of this chapter.

³ In this Manual, “shall” refers to actions required by the *Book of Order* and *Acts of the Assembly*.

⁴ All *Acts of Assembly* references cited are found at the end of this chapter.

approval of the Ministerial Committee. Such a transition is a change in call and requires that terms of call be approved by the congregation and the Presbytery. Because it is a change in call, the Presbytery shall appoint an Administrative Commission to conduct an installation service (G.21-1C.1(a); 02-04.6).

Teacher

A Teaching Elder may be called by an appropriate outside agency/institution to serve as a Teacher. The primary purpose of such agencies should be the preparation of people for ministry or entrance into seminary (G.9-5B). In those agencies/institutions, the Teaching Elder's main responsibilities should be teaching subjects that would find a place in a seminary curriculum (e.g., Bible, theology, church history, apologetics).

Evangelist

A Teaching Elder may be called by a court of the church or an appropriate organization outside the church to serve as an Evangelist (G.9-5C). An Evangelist may serve in an itinerant ministry, as a missionary, or as a domestic church planter. Teaching Elders serving as missionaries totally under the auspices of the EPC are considered to be serving within bounds even though their ministries may be overseas (99-10). In most cases these missionaries will be appointed by EPC World Outreach with no cooperative agreements in place with another agency. Teaching Elders serving as missionaries in out-of-bounds capacities do not need terms of call approved by the Presbytery.

Administrator

A Teaching Elder may be called to serve as administrators in church courts, an agency of the denomination, or in other Christian agencies/institutions deemed appropriate by the Presbytery (G.9-5D). Teaching Elders serving as Administrators called by church courts are considered as serving within bounds (99-10).

Chaplain

A Teaching Elder may be called by a court of the church, the military, a hospital, an institution, a university, or other appropriate agency to serve as a Chaplain (G.9-5.E). While the call to serve as a Chaplain is approved by the Presbytery, the military, Veterans Administration, and some institutions (particularly hospitals) require denominational endorsement from the national level of the Church as a condition of employment. The General Assembly elects a Chaplain Endorser who, with the Chaplains Work and Care Committee, grants such endorsements. See chapter 8 of this Manual and the Chaplains Work and Care Committee Procedure Manual available at www.epc.org/chaplaincy for the theology of chaplaincy ministries, as well as policies and procedures for chaplaincy endorsement and service.

Temporary Pastoral Relationships

When a pulpit is vacant, a Session may invite a Teaching Elder or a Commissioned Pastor⁵ to serve in a temporary capacity as Stated Supply, Supply Transitional Pastor, or Occasional Supply (G.10-7.A). Sessions should give serious consideration to the benefits of a Transitional Pastor

⁵ See chapter 9 for additional information on Commissioned Pastors.

during the time in which a church is searching for a Pastor.⁶ (See *Book of Order* chapter 10). Retired ministers may remain on the Retired roll and serve in a temporary pastoral relationship, and ministers from other denominations may *not* be transferred to the EPC as Transitional Pastors.

A Session may invite a non-EPC-ordained minister to serve in a temporary capacity. The Presbytery must approve the invitation (G.10-7A), and may authorize the non-EPC minister to administer sacraments (94-22; 14-06). However, a non-EPC minister is not eligible to moderate the Session because that minister has no standing in the EPC as a basis for serving as an officer of the church court. In such cases, the Presbytery should give due consideration to appointing a minister of the Presbytery to serve as Moderator (G.18-2A.4) in order to strengthen the ties between the church and the Presbytery during the transition of pastoral leadership. When distance makes it difficult for a Presbytery-appointed Moderator to attend all Session meetings, a helpful practice has been for the Session to elect one of its members to serve as Moderator pro tempore who consults regularly with the Moderator and serves in that capacity when the Moderator is unable to attend.

Calling a Pastor Who Has Served In a Temporary Pastoral Relationship

A Teaching Elder should not accept an invitation to serve in a temporary pastoral relationship with the intent of becoming the Pastor. To do so diminishes the minister's ability to accomplish the tasks necessary in the transitional period⁷ as defined by the Assembly.

However, in the exceptional case where it seems evident to the search committee that a person serving (or who has served) in a temporary relationship may be the one God is calling as Pastor, *Book of Government* 10-7B sets out special stipulations. In order to formally consider a person who has served the church in a temporary pastoral relationship (current or past), the search committee must seek approval of the Session and the Ministerial Committee of the Presbytery and obtain a three-fourths majority vote from both.

⁶ See chapter 12 on "Guidelines for Transitional Pastoral Ministry."

⁷ See chapter 12 on "Guidelines for Transitional Pastoral Ministry."

- G.2-1 The government of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church shall be Presbyterian in form.** This is government by Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders meeting in representative assemblies called Church Courts.
- G.7-4 Moderator of meeting.**
- A. Ordinarily, the Pastor will be the Moderator.
 - B. In the case of sickness or temporary absence of the Pastor or if it is deemed impractical or unwise by the Session for the Pastor to moderate a congregational meeting, the Session shall either:
 1. Appoint one of its members, with the concurrence of the Pastor, to call the meeting to order and to preside, or
 2. Request the Moderator of the Presbytery to appoint another Teaching Elder from outside the congregation to call the meeting to order and to preside.
- G.9-5 The office of Teaching Elder:** Within the office of Teaching Elder there are a variety of callings that require ordination. God distributes to each gifts according to the common needs of the Church. These include:
- A. **Pastor:**
 1. Titles.

A Teaching Elder may be called by a congregation to be a Pastor or Associate Pastor. Sessions may call a Teaching Elder as Assistant Pastor. These are the only recognized callings for Teaching Elders in a congregational setting.
 2. Authority and Responsibilities.

Pastors shall preach and expound the Word, to be God’s prophet to the people and to be the people’s priest before God. Pastors shall lead the people in worship; celebrate the sacraments; and oversee the education, nurture, and mission of the church. The Pastors with the Ruling Elders shall exercise joint ministry to the needs of the flock and to all those who have need of a Pastor’s care, love, and compassion. With the active Ruling Elders, the Pastor and Associate Pastor(s) shall exercise joint responsibility of jurisdiction. Teaching Elders shall be diligent to serve actively in the courts of which they are members.
 - B. **Teacher:** A Teaching Elder may be called to teach in an institution deemed appropriate by the Presbytery that has as a primary purpose the preparation of people for ministry or entrance into seminary. Such calling shall ordinarily include the responsibility for preaching the Word and administration of the Sacraments. As a Teacher, the Teaching Elder is also to serve as a pastor, caring for the spiritual wellbeing of others.
 - C. **Evangelist:** A Teaching Elder may be called by a court of the church or by some organization approved by the Presbytery to serve as an Evangelist. Evangelists

may serve as missionaries, church planters, or in an itinerant ministry.

1. An Evangelist serving as missionary has as a primary duty the preaching of the gospel. The Presbytery may authorize the Teaching Elder to administer the sacraments in that role. When a Teaching Elder is called by the General Assembly as an Evangelist, the Presbytery also may empower the Evangelist to ordain and install Ruling Elders and Deacons to serve in emerging national churches that are not part of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in accordance with applicable rules and regulations established by the General Assembly.
2. An Evangelist serving as church planter may be entrusted by the calling court to develop churches, to conduct preparational meetings of such churches, and to oversee the required preparation of Elders and Deacons.
3. An Evangelist serving in an itinerant ministry. Teaching Elders may be called to serve in a ministry of itinerant evangelism that does not involve church planting.
4. Those powers given to the Evangelist, including the power to receive and dismiss members, shall be specified by the Presbytery in writing.

D. **Administrator:** A court of the Church or one of its agencies may call a Teaching Elder to serve in some administrative capacity. An organization deemed proper by the Presbytery may also issue a similar call. In such cases, it is always the responsibility of the Administrator to seek opportunity to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments.

E. **Chaplain:** A court of the Church, a hospital, the military, institutions, universities, or other appropriate fields of service may call a Teaching Elder as Chaplain if the Presbytery deems it appropriate. In such cases, the Chaplain shall always have as a primary responsibility the sharing of the Good News of God in Jesus Christ. The Presbytery may authorize the Chaplain to administer the sacraments in that role.

G.9-11 The Ruling Elder as a Commissioned Pastor: A Ruling Elder may be temporarily authorized by the Presbytery as a Commissioned Pastor for a congregation without a Pastor to preach the Word, evangelize, moderate a Session, administer the sacraments, perform marriages (if civil law allows), preside at funerals, and provide pastoral care. A Presbytery also may approve and give appropriate powers to a Ruling Elder to serve as a Commissioned Pastor in mission churches, church planting and church revitalization works, or in chaplaincy positions in hospitals, hospices, prisons, or other institutions.

G.10-4D Ordinarily, an Associate Pastor is not eligible to succeed the Pastor. However, should a search committee desire to consider an Associate Pastor as Pastor, approval by a three-fourths vote of Session and a three-fourths vote of the Ministerial Committee shall be required for the search committee to proceed.

G.10-5 The call of an Associate Pastor by a local church.

A congregation may call an Associate Pastor by means of a search committee in the same fashion as indicated above, with the exception that the call of the congregation shall stipulate the primary responsibilities to be exercised by the Associate Pastor.

G.10-6 The call of an Assistant Pastor by a Session.

- A. A Session, in consultation with the Ministerial Committee of the Presbytery, may call an Assistant Pastor. The call of the Session shall be for a definite period of time and is renewable. The call of an Assistant Pastor may be terminated by the Session prior to that time only with the consent and approval of the Presbytery. The call shall stipulate the primary responsibilities to be exercised by the Assistant Pastor. The call of the Session shall always conform with the Acts of the General Assembly and follow the form approved by an appropriate committee of the General Assembly.
- B. A Session, by a three-fourths vote and with the approval of the Presbytery's Ministerial Committee, may recommend to the congregation that an Assistant Pastor of the local church be called as an Associate Pastor without a search committee being elected. The call as Associate Pastor must be approved by the Presbytery, and an installation service shall be conducted by the Presbytery or by its appointed Commission.

G.10-7 Temporary Pastoral Relationships.

- A. Temporary Pastoral Relationships may be established with lawfully ordained ministers or Commissioned Pastors when a church is without a Pastor.
 - 1. **Transitional Pastor.**
 - a. A Transitional Pastor is called by the Session to serve during the period a congregation is seeking a Pastor. The Transitional Pastor intentionally leads the congregation toward greater health and readiness for their next pastor and will ordinarily be appointed by the Presbytery to moderate the Session during the time of service.
 - b. Due to the temporary nature of the call, Transitional Pastors called from another Presbytery in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church will ordinarily maintain membership in their home Presbytery.
 - c. Upon approval of the Ministerial Committee, Transitional Pastors are introduced to the receiving Presbytery and enrolled as corresponding members (voice but not vote).
 - d. If a Transitional Pastor is called from outside the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the Presbytery shall examine and transfer the pastor according to applicable provisions of the *Book of Government*.
 - 2. **Stated Supply Pastor.**
 - a. A Stated Supply Pastor is invited by the Session to serve for a definite period of time, not less than one month and no more than twelve months. The term of service is renewable. Although this invitation is not a call, the invitation to serve and the authority to preach the Word, administer sacraments, and moderate Session must be approved by the Presbytery or by the Ministerial Committee, if authorized by the Presbytery.
 - b. Stated Supply Pastors from outside the Evangelical Presbyterian Church are invited by the Session and shall be interviewed and approved by the Presbytery or the Ministerial Committee, if authorized by the Presbytery.

3. Occasional Supply Pastor.

- a. An Occasional Supply Pastor is invited to serve regularly on specified days. Only the Ministerial Committee must approve.
- B. Ordinarily, a person currently serving in a temporary pastoral relationship is not eligible to be called as Pastor of that church. Should a search committee desire to consider any person who has served in a temporary capacity since the pulpit most recently became vacant, it must secure approval by a three-fourths vote of the Session and a three-fourths vote of the Ministerial Committee in order to proceed.

G.10-8C.1 Teaching Elder transferring from another EPC Presbytery or other church body.

The receiving Presbytery shall not enroll that Teaching Elder without an approved call unless the minister is retired and being enrolled as an Associate Member.

G.13-1 The Ordination and Installation of Teaching Elders, Ruling Elders, and Deacons.

A. Teaching Elders.

1. Ordinarily, the ordaining/installing Presbytery will appoint an administrative commission to conduct a worship service at a date and time approved by the Court. A sermon suitable to the occasion shall be preached. The person presiding shall recount the conditions necessary for ordination and/or installation, the solemnity of the event, and its importance in the life of the church.
2. Presbyteries may also directly ordain a Teaching Elder.

G.18-1 The Session.

The entire life of the local church is under the oversight and supervision of the Session. The Session is composed of the Pastor and Associate Pastor(s) and all the Ruling Elders on active service. The Pastor and Associate Pastor(s) are full members of the Session and have the privilege of voting.

G.18-2 Officers of the Session.

A. Moderator.

1. The Pastor shall be the Moderator and is a voting member of the Session. If the Moderator wishes to make motions or otherwise participate in debate, some other member of the Session should serve as Temporary Moderator.
2. An Associate Pastor, at the request of the Pastor and with the consent of the Session, may serve as Moderator for the Pastor.
3. If there is no Pastor or Associate Pastor or if there is no Associate Pastor and the Pastor is absent for more than one month, the Session may elect one of its members to serve as Moderator.
4. Presbytery, at its discretion, may appoint a Teaching Elder of the Presbytery to serve as Moderator when a church has no Pastor. The Presbytery may authorize its Ministerial Committee to appoint, at its discretion with concurrence of the church Session, a minister of Presbytery to serve as Interim Moderator of the Session until such time as the Presbytery can act in the matter.

G.21-1 Committees and Commissions.

C. Administrative Commissions.

1. Authority and Responsibilities.

Administrative Commissions are appointed to perform special functions. The functions entrusted to such commissions include, but are not limited to the following:

- a. To ordain Teaching Elders and to install them where appropriate.

- 85-05 The General Assembly sustains the Permanent Judicial Commission's opinion regarding the office of co-pastor as being non-existent. Relationships between Teaching Elders and EPC congregations sanctioned by the *Book of Government* are those of Pastor, Associate Pastor, and Assistant Pastor (Minutes, 5-40).
- 94-22 A lawfully ordained minister in good standing of a non-EPC church may be authorized to serve communion in an EPC church, with the concurrence of the Presbytery (Minutes, 14-36).
- 99-10 The Assembly sustains an opinion of the Permanent Judicial Commission regarding the status of ministers who are missionaries serving totally under the auspices of the EPC and ministers serving in an administrative capacity in one of the courts of the church (G.9-5D). Ministers serving in such capacities should be classified as ministers with calls, not as ministers serving out-of-bounds (Minutes, 19-40).
- 02-04.6 Presbyteries are reminded that a change in call from Assistant to Associate Pastor is a significant change. It is the congregation that calls, not the session. An installation service is required and appropriate when such a change occurs.
- 14-06 The Assembly extends the provision of *Act of Assembly 94-22*, "A lawfully ordained minister in good standing of a non-EPC church may be authorized to serve communion in an EPC church, with the concurrence of the Presbytery "to specifically include the Sacrament of Baptism" (Minutes, 34-56).

4

The Presbytery and the Work of the Ministerial/Candidates Committees

The government of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church is Presbyterian in form, with Teaching and Ruling Elders meeting in representative assemblies called Church Courts. The Church Courts, in their ascending order, are the Session, the Presbytery, and the General Assembly (G.2-1).⁸

Presbytery Membership

All active Teaching Elders including those who are without call, out of bounds, retired, or on the Associate Member roll, are permanent members of Presbytery (G.19-2). Teaching Elders do not hold membership in a local church. For each meeting of Presbytery, Sessions elect as commissioners two Ruling Elders for each EPC minister in their congregation, and any additional Ruling Elders as may be allowed through annual parity adjustment or by virtue of church membership (G.19-2A.4(a)). Ruling Elders not currently serving on Session also may be elected as commissioners to Presbytery. The only Ruling Elders who are permanent members of Presbytery are those serving as Moderator or Stated Clerk during their term of service (G.19-3A).

Ministerial Obligation

The “Ministerial Obligation—Teaching Elder” form (G.19-4B.4, available on page 115) is a signed affirmation of the Teaching Elder’s ordination vows. Two copies of the form should be signed: one for the minister’s personnel file at the Presbytery and one for the minister’s personnel file at the Office of the General Assembly. It should not only be signed by newly ordained ministers, but also by those ministers who transfer into a Presbytery.

Active Status

Active members of Presbytery are Teaching Elders who: 1) have been duly examined and received by the Presbytery with an approved call to ministry; 2) are temporarily without call; and 3) are retired, but not on Retired, Inactive, or Associate Member status (G.19-2A.1,2; G.19-2B.1; G.15-2A). There are circumstances, apart from a disciplinary process, under which the Presbytery may place an active minister on Inactive or Associate status.

Inactive Status

For various reasons, Teaching Elders, prior to retirement, may experience a period of time when they are without a call. Because ordination and Active status are tied to a call, being without call is a temporary, transitional situation. During that time the Teaching Elder, with the assistance of the Ministerial Committee, should be prayerfully and diligently seeking a new call. A Teaching Elder may, for reasons deemed valid, request to be placed on Inactive status, which is effective upon the Presbytery’s concurrence (G.14-3B.1(b)). However, if a Teaching Elder who is not retired has been without approved call for more than one year, the Presbytery, after judicious consideration, may place the Teaching Elder on Inactive status involuntarily, provided the

⁸ All *Book of Order* references cited are found at the end of this chapter.

vote to do so is by a two-thirds majority (G.14-3B.2). Teaching Elders on Inactive status have all rights and privileges of ordination temporarily set aside, including participation in Presbytery meetings (G.14-3A). However, they remain beneficiaries of the pastoral care and discipline of the Presbytery. After one year on Inactive status, the Teaching Elder may request to be restored to Active status, provided the Teaching Elder has a valid, approved call (G.14- 3B.1(b)). After five years on Inactive status, the Presbytery may remove the Teaching Elder from office without sanction (G.14-3B.3; G.14-4B.4). Retired Inactive Teaching Elders may not be removed from the rolls of Presbytery for reason of inactivity (G.15-2B).

Retired Roll

For reason of age, infirmity, or debilitating condition, a Presbytery may place a Teaching Elder on the Retired roll upon that person's request (G.15-1). Retired Teaching Elders remain active members of Presbytery unless they have been placed on Retired Inactive or Associate Member status (G.15-2B, C). Retired Teaching Elders are eligible to accept approved invitations to serve in a temporary pastoral office (see page 15 and chapter 12) while remaining on the Retired roll.

Retired Teaching Elders should attend at least one meeting of Presbytery per year. If a Retired Teaching Elder cannot do so, the Presbytery may place that Teaching Elder on Inactive status or the Teaching Elder may request Associate Member status (G.15-2B). A Retired Teaching Elder on Inactive status has all the rights and privileges of ordination temporarily set aside. After one year, the Retired Teaching Elder on Inactive status may request to be returned to Active status based on resumption of participation in Presbytery.

It is appropriate for Presbyteries to conduct a service of worship honoring the retiring Teaching Elder. The Ministerial Committee should organize itself to fulfill its responsibility for the pastoral care of retired ministers (G.15-1B).

Special Conditions for Teaching Elders upon Reaching Age 70

Teaching Elders serving in in any capacity in the Church must inform the Presbytery six months prior to their 70th birthday (G.14-1D). Upon reaching age 70, the current pastoral relationship is automatically terminated. At the Teaching Elder's initiative, the calling body may elect that person annually to serve in the same capacity with the approval of the Session (if the person is a Pastor or Associate Pastor) and the Presbytery (G.14-1D.1). Teaching Elders past the age of 70 may accept a new call, upon recommendation of the Ministerial Committee and a two-thirds majority vote of the Presbytery. That call must be renewed annually (G.14-1D.2).

Associate Member Roll

Two categories of Teaching Elders may voluntarily request placement on the Associate Member roll: 1) those serving in an out of bounds call that impedes or prevents regular or required Presbytery attendance, or 2) those on the Retired roll. The Presbytery shall grant all such requests made within two years of the approval of the out-of-bounds call or placement on the Retired roll. After two years, Teaching Elders in those two categories shall automatically be placed on the Associate Member roll unless the Presbytery grants an exemption by a two-thirds majority vote. Exemptions must be renewed annually. The same condition applies to Teaching Elders who have been without Presbytery approved call for two years (G.19-2B.1(a)). For those without call for more than one year, the Presbytery also has the option of placing the Teaching Elder on the Inactive roll if the person shows no evidence of actively seeking a call (G.14-3B.2).

A retired minister from another Reformed denomination may be received without a call as an Associate Member, following the normal examination procedure for a minister from within the Reformed family (G.15-2C).

An Associate Member of Presbytery: 1) has all the privileges and responsibilities of ordination, 2) has voice but not vote at Presbytery and General Assembly meetings, 3) may serve as a full member of a Presbytery or General Assembly committee, 4) is not eligible to serve as an officer of the court, and 5) is not counted in the annual parity adjustment for the Ruling and Teaching Elders (G.19-2B.1(b))

The Relationship of the Ministerial/Candidates Committee to the Presbytery

The Ministerial Committee is the one constitutionally required committee of the Presbytery (G.21-2). Its composition and duties are specified in *Book of Government* 21-2A. Presbyteries may assign responsibilities related to candidates for the gospel ministry to a separate committee (G.21-2D.1(a)).

The Ministerial Committee is the pastoral arm of the Presbytery. First, it seeks to care for its member churches and ministers. Second, it gives oversight to the preparation of candidates for the ministry. The Committee stands at the outer gate to the ordained ministry—responding to applicants, screening them, and recommending whether or not they shall be admitted to processes that may eventually lead to ordination as Teaching Elders.

The Ministerial Committee is ordinarily responsible for the preparation and initial examination of Commissioned Pastors. A Commissioned Pastor is a Ruling Elder temporarily authorized by the Presbytery to provide pastoral leadership for churches without pastors; mission churches; church development works; and/or hospital, hospice, prison, or other specialized ministries as deemed appropriate by the Presbytery. Although commissioned by the Presbytery, a Commissioned Pastor is not a member of the court unless elected as a representative by the church Session. For additional information, refer to chapter 9.

The significance of the Ministerial Committee's task calls for well-qualified people able to commit themselves to a faithful term of service. The *Book of Government* sets the minimum membership for the committee at six (G.21-2A). The committee should be large enough to carry out its functions without undue hardship for any, but not so big as to be unwieldy. It would be helpful if the committee were composed of persons of varying ages and life experiences. The Presbytery is encouraged to provide adequate funds to enable the committee to discharge all its responsibilities. These funds should make provision for such items as: 1) administration (expenses of the Committee), 2) program (expenses related to workshops, retreats, etc.), and 3) scholarship or aid funds.

Once the Ministerial Committee has been established by the Presbytery, it may structure itself in whatever way seems best suited and most efficient to fulfill its responsibilities. The following suggestions are offered:

1. Presbytery should specify in its bylaws how the Chairman is to be elected or appointed, and the committee should select a Clerk. Selection of the committee's Chairman should be made with careful consideration being given to qualifications and continuity. Due to the significant and extensive duties of the Chairman, some Presby-

teries provide a stipend. Presbytery should provide oversight for a smooth transition between committee Chairmen.

2. The Chairman should be careful to keep the committee informed and involved, and be diligent to oversee the implementation of the committee's work in accordance with stated policies. The Chairman should keep the Presbytery's Moderator and Clerk informed as to the committee's work and potential problems.
3. The committee should meet regularly, whether in person or virtually, to fulfill its responsibilities at least as often as the Presbytery meets. If the committee conducts phone conference or electronic meetings, it should have an agreed-upon policy that ensures the real-time participation of committee members.

- G.2-1 The government of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church shall be Presbyterian in form.** This is government by Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders meeting in representative assemblies called Church Courts.
- A. These Church Courts, in their ascending order, are the Session, the Presbytery, and the General Assembly.
 - B. Churches may also elect Deacons, but the Board of Deacons is not a Church Court.

G.14-1D Dissolution by reason of age.

When a Teaching Elder serving in any capacity in the church reaches the age of 70, that relationship shall be terminated. The Teaching Elder is obligated to notify the Presbytery six months prior to his or her 70th birthday.

1. Annual renewal of the pastoral relationship or call after age 70.
The Teaching Elder who is age 70 or older is eligible, at his or her initiative, to be reelected annually in the same relationship with the approval of the calling body, the Session, and the Presbytery. When such a call is renewed, no installation is necessary.
2. Receiving a new call past age 70.
Presbytery, on recommendation of the Ministerial Committee, by a two-thirds vote, may approve a new call for the Teaching Elder who is age 70 or older. That Teaching Elder is eligible to be re-elected in this new relationship yearly with the approval of the calling body and Presbytery.
3. Serving in temporary pastoral relationships after age 70.
A Teaching Elder who is past age 70 is eligible to serve in a temporary pastoral relationship for a period of up to one year as approved by the Presbytery. The Presbytery may authorize the Ministerial Committee to serve as an Administrative Commission to establish such relationships.

G.14-3 Removal of an officer to inactive membership status.

- A. Inactive Membership status.
When an officer is placed on inactive membership status, all rights and privileges granted by ordination are temporarily set aside, including the right to vote and participate in the meetings of the Church Courts.
- B. Special provisions for removing Teaching Elders to Inactive Membership status.
 1. Removal at the Teaching Elder's initiative.
 - a. When a Teaching Elder accepts a call disapproved by Presbytery, Presbytery shall place the Teaching Elder on Inactive status.
 - b. A Teaching Elder may, for reasons deemed valid by the Presbytery, request to be placed on Inactive Membership status. If the Presbytery concurs, the Teaching Elder shall be placed on such status. After at least one year, the

Teaching Elder may request Presbytery to be restored to Active Membership status. The Presbytery, after careful deliberation, may do so provided the Teaching Elder has a valid call that Presbytery approves, or provided the Teaching Elder is being transferred to another Presbytery in order to receive a call.

2. Removal at the Presbytery's initiative.

When the Teaching Elder who is not retired has been without approved call for a period of one year, the Ministerial Committee shall confer with the Teaching Elder as to the Teaching Elder's continued sense of call and expectations for future ministry. The committee will then recommend to the Presbytery whether the Teaching Elder should remain on Active Membership status in the Presbytery or be placed on Inactive Membership status. The Presbytery, at its discretion and after judicious consideration, may place the minister on the Inactive status roll involuntarily provided the vote to do so is by a two-thirds majority.

3. Limit for Inactive status.

A limit of 5 years shall be placed on the time during which a Teaching Elder on Inactive status who is not retired shall remain on the roll of Presbytery. After five years, the Presbytery has the right to remove that minister from office without sanction.

G.14.4 Removal from office.

An officer of the church remains ordained to the office and remains obligated to fulfill the vows of ordination. However, there are certain conditions under which the officer may be removed:

B. By removal from office without sanction.

4. The Teaching Elder has been on the Inactive roll for at least 5 years.

G.15-1 The retirement of a Teaching Elder.

A. Eligibility for retirement.

A Teaching Elder may request to be placed on the Retired roll of Presbytery due to age, infirmity, or other debilitating condition.

B. Recognition of retirement.

If the Presbytery concurs, a service of appreciation and thanksgiving should be conducted, either at the meeting of Presbytery or at the place of service of the retiring Teaching Elder. Ordinarily, a Presbytery shall appoint a special commission to conduct this service and a record of it inserted in the minutes of the Presbytery.

C. Pastoral care of retired Teaching Elders.

The Presbytery shall be responsible for making an annual review of its retired members to be sure of their welfare and to rectify any deficiencies. Such annual review shall be reported to the court and recorded in its minutes.

D. Upon reaching age 70.

When a Teaching Elder reaches age 70, special conditions apply as prescribed in G.14-1D.

G.15-2 Status of Retired Teaching Elders.

A. Active status.

A Teaching Elder who is retired according to the provision of **G.15-1** remains on the Active roll of Presbytery. Membership may be transferred to another Presbytery.

B. Inactive Retired status.

A Retired Teaching Elder, who does not participate in the life of the Presbytery by attending at least one Stated Meeting during a calendar year, may be placed on Inactive status at the discretion of the Presbytery. After at least one year, the Retired Teaching Elder may request Presbytery to be restored to Active status. The Presbytery shall make the determination based on the Teaching Elder's participation in the meetings of the Presbytery and need not require a specific call to be restored to Active status. A Retired Teaching Elder on Inactive status shall not be removed from the Presbytery rolls for that cause and is to be afforded the same pastoral care as Retired Teaching Elders on Active status.

C. Associate Member status.

A retired Teaching Elder may be granted the status of Associate Member as defined in **G.19-2B.1**. A retired minister may be received from another Presbytery or another Reformed denomination as an Associate Member.

G.19-2 Membership of Presbytery.

The Presbytery is composed of all the Teaching Elders on its roll as ongoing members, any Ruling Elder officers of the Presbytery, and Ruling Elders elected by each Session as commissioners for a Stated or Called Meeting as per **G.19-2A.4**.

A. Voting Members of Presbytery.

1. Active Teaching Elders: Teaching Elders who are serving in an approved call or actively seeking a call.
2. Retired (Active) Teaching Elders.
3. Ruling Elder Officers of the Presbytery.
4. Ruling Elder Commissioners elected by each Session.
 - a. The Session shall elect two Ruling Elders for each Pastor, Associate, and/or Assistant. A local church shall have no fewer than two Ruling Elders for each 500 members or major portion thereof.
 - b. Disparity Correction.

When a disproportionate ratio of Teaching Elders to Ruling Elders occurs in a Presbytery, the Presbytery shall move to correct the ratio by assigning to member churches on a yearly alphabetical rotational basis the right to elect additional Ruling Elder Commissioners to the Presbytery. Associate Members are not counted as part of the ratio of Ruling and Teaching Elders.

B. Non-voting Members of Presbytery.

1. Associate Member Teaching Elders.
 - a. Qualifications.

The Presbytery shall establish a roll of Associate Members. A Teaching

Elder who is retired or serving in a capacity outside of bounds which may impede or prevent regular and/or required attendance at Presbytery meetings may, upon request, within two years of this change in call be granted the status of Associate Member. Those who are retired, serving in a capacity which prevents regular and/or required attendance, or those without a Presbytery approved call for two years will automatically be placed on the Associate Membership roll. Presbytery, by two-thirds vote, may exempt a minister from becoming an Associate Member for one year. This exemption may be granted to the minister on an annual basis. Presbyteries may, by two-thirds vote, receive a retired minister from another Reformed body as an Associate Member, following the normal process of examination.

b. Rights and Restrictions.

Associate Members are entitled to serve with voice and vote on all committees of Presbytery and General Assembly. Associate Members are entitled to serve with voice but not vote on Commissions to ordain and install pastors and to receive churches. Associate Members shall have voice but not vote at all Presbytery and General Assembly meetings. Associate Members are not eligible to serve as officers of any court but do retain all rights and privileges of ordination and are to be afforded the same pastoral care as Active Members.

c. Temporary pastoral relationships.

Any Associate Member called to serve as Stated Supply or Transitional Supply shall automatically be returned to active membership status during such service.

d. Return to Active status.

An Associate Member may request to be placed on Active status. The Presbytery may do so upon recommendation by the Ministerial Committee and provided the Minister has a call Presbytery approves, or provided the Minister is being transferred to another body in order to receive a call.

e. Transfer of Associate Members.

Associate Members, against whom no charges are pending, may transfer with the same status to another Presbytery, following the normal examination process.

2. Inactive Teaching Elders.

3. Retired (Inactive) Teaching Elders.

4. Teaching Elders under the sanction of suspension from office.

G.19-3 Officers of the Presbytery.

A. Moderator.

The Moderator of the Presbytery shall be elected by that court. The person elected must be a Ruling or Teaching Elder. A Ruling Elder, once elected, shall be a member of the court for the length of term to which elected.

1. Length of Term.

Election may be for that stated meeting of the court, or, at the discretion of the Presbytery, for one year. A Ruling Elder, once elected as Moderator, shall be a member of the court for the length of term to which elected.

2. Special provisions if unable to serve.

In the event of death or inability to serve, the most recently elected Moderator shall serve until the court can elect a new Moderator. If no former Moderator is present, the Minister present with the earliest date of ordination shall convene the court until a Moderator is elected.

B. Stated Clerk.

The court shall also elect a Stated Clerk. The Stated Clerk shall be a Teaching or Ruling Elder. Such election shall be for a specified period of time. If a Ruling Elder, the Stated Clerk shall be a full member of the court for the duration of the term.

G.19-4B With respect to Teaching Elders.

4. To establish a Ministerial Obligation record to which all Ministers must subscribe before being received into membership. This obligation shall consist of the ordination vows for ministers to which shall be added a subscription as follows: "I do receive and adopt the above vows as a true statement of my faith, commitment, and obligation and I do resolve and promise to exercise my calling to the gospel ministry in obedience to those vows."

G.21-2 The Ministerial Committee.

Each Presbytery shall have a Ministerial Committee consisting only of Teaching and Ruling Elders.

A. Membership.

The Ministerial Committee shall have at least six members and be established and maintained in such a way as to insure that the differences between the number of Teaching and Ruling Elders on the Committee shall never be greater than one.

B. Quorum.

Its quorum for action shall be a simple majority of membership, to include at least one Ruling Elder and one Teaching Elder.

C. Succession.

Eligibility to succeed will be determined by the appointing court.

D. Authority and Responsibilities.

1. With regard to Teaching Elders and Candidates.

- a. It shall have the oversight of candidates for the gospel ministry of the Presbytery, although the Presbytery may assign this function to some other committee.
- b. It shall confer with each Teaching Elder desiring to become a member of the Presbytery, or candidate desiring ordination.
- c. It shall conduct any examination and assessment it deems necessary in order to make a decision for its recommendation to Presbytery concerning the application.
- d. It shall conduct the examination by Presbytery of the applicant according

to the *Book of Government*.

- e. It shall report annually on the work of the Teaching Elders to the Presbytery, along with any recommendations it might have. This includes an annual report from those Teaching Elders approved for labor outside the bounds of Presbytery.
 - f. The committee shall be responsible for an annual review of remuneration of Teaching Elders, shall consult with Sessions if deemed necessary concerning such remuneration, and may recommend to Presbytery minimum terms for the call of Teaching Elders. Requests to Presbytery for a change in the terms of call shall come through this committee.
 - g. It shall review each request for dissolution of a pastoral relationship, and make a recommendation to Presbytery.
2. With regard to local churches.
- a. It shall counsel with local churches in securing Pastor(s). Calls shall always be placed in the hands of this committee who shall then make its recommendation to the Presbytery. No call to a Pastor may be issued by a congregation that has not first consulted with the committee.
 - b. It shall recommend to the Presbytery a Teaching Elder to serve as Moderator of the Session, and shall work with a congregation in securing pulpit supply. The Presbytery may authorize the Ministerial Committee to appoint, with concurrence of the Session, an Interim Moderator of the Session.
 - c. The committee, or a Presbytery-designated alternate committee, shall consult with local churches receiving aid from Presbytery and shall make recommendations to the Presbytery concerning that aid.
 - d. Although no complaint may have been received, if in the judgment of the committee a local church may be having difficulties or appears to be failing in its mission, the committee has the authority to investigate and to make recommendations to Presbytery.
 - e. Presbytery may authorize the Ministerial Committee to serve as a Judicial or Administrative Commission. The committee may also be appointed as an ongoing Administrative Commission to:
 - 1) Dissolve pastoral relationships and dismiss Teaching Elders according to the *Book of Order* when both the congregation and the Pastor concur in the dissolution.
 - 2) Approve temporary pastoral relationships.
 - 3) Review terms of call or invitations for all pastoral relationships, excluding out-of-bounds terms of calls, to ensure that the terms meet the minimum established standards.
 - 4) Ordain and/or install Teaching Elders in accordance with provisions in this *Book of Government*.
 - 5) Appoint advisors for Candidates Under Care and mentors for Commissioned Pastors.

5

Process of Candidacy and Examination

The Ministerial Committee of the Presbytery has the responsibility for overseeing candidates under the Presbytery’s care that are preparing for ordination as a Teaching Elder. The Book of Government⁹ commits this responsibility to the Ministerial Committee, but due to the extent and importance of the task, Presbyteries may assign this responsibility to a separate committee (G.21-2D.1(a)). Such assignment should be noted in the Presbytery’s bylaws or standing rules.

Session Responsibilities for Candidates

The role of the Session is critical in the candidacy process, because it is in the best position to observe and affirm the potential candidate’s gifts and calling to ordained ministry. Sessions should take their responsibility seriously, not looking to another body to say “no” to a candidate when the Session knows that it is necessary.

Any member of the Session, upon learning that a person in the congregation has a sense of call to the ministry, should discuss it with that person. The “Criteria for Candidate Evaluation” form may be helpful in the evaluation process. If, after prayer and discussion, the individual wants to pursue the candidacy process, he or she shall submit an Application to Come under Care to the Session, and the Pastor should notify the chairman of the Ministerial/Candidates Committee (hereinafter, MCC).¹⁰

A representative of the MCC should may consult with the Session before the Session formally interviews an applicant or endorses the applicant for candidacy. This gives the MCC an opportunity to instruct the Session on the qualities needed in ministers and the obligation that falls upon any endorsing church. The Session should be encouraged to seriously evaluate the applicant’s sense of call and qualifications to pursue ordination. A Session should do all it can to encourage suitably gifted members to consider pursuing ministry in the EPC. Pastors should view it as a great privilege to encourage and mentor candidates for the ministry from their own congregations. In the evaluation of applicants, Sessions should assure themselves that they can endorse the applicants in good conscience to pursue ordination as a Teaching Elder in the EPC.

The church’s responsibility for a candidate should not end when the candidate is received by the Presbytery. An endorsing church should be willing to:

1. Provide some financial support for education.
2. Maintain regular communication during the period of training.
3. Provide pastoral support, even though Presbytery is responsible for supervision of training.

⁹ All *Book of Order* references cited are found at the end of this chapter.

¹⁰ Since either the Ministerial or other committee (typically named “Candidates” or “Candidates Care” Committee) may be responsible for the oversight of candidates, this Manual will use the term Ministerial/Candidates Committee (MCC) when referring to the candidacy process.

4. Allow the candidate to participate in leading worship whenever possible.
5. Make annual reports to the MCC of the degree to which it has fulfilled its role as an endorsing church.

The Session shall complete the Session Endorsement Form (called “Session Approval Form” in *Act of Assembly 83-04*)¹¹ as the means to communicate its endorsement to the MCC. It is appropriate for the Session to recognize the applicant in a worship service. The Session should be well-represented at the meeting of Presbytery when one of its home church members is examined for candidacy. The Session should record in its minutes when it is notified that a church member is taken under care of Presbytery.

Presbytery Ministerial/Candidates Committee Responsibilities for Candidates

The MCC is responsible for guiding applicants through all the steps necessary under the *Book of Government* to become Candidates Under Care of the Presbytery and ordained Teaching Elders in the EPC. Presbyteries should encourage candidates to enter this process as soon as possible during, or preferably before, their seminary studies.

Presbytery’s oversight of candidates, taken in its broadest sense, includes enlistment, reception, supervision, and examination.

Enlistment

The MCC should develop ways to work with Sessions to seek out those who may be called to be Teaching Elders and present to them the opportunities, blessings, and responsibilities of the ministry of the Word.

Reception

To become a Candidate, a person must:

1. Be a member of an EPC congregation for at least six months (G.11-2A).
2. Receive the endorsement of the Session (see “Session Responsibilities for Candidates” on page 33).
3. Successfully complete the application process established by the Presbytery (G.11-2B).

The application process should include the following items:

- a. Information as to the time requirements before Presbytery can act on the application.
- b. Application forms.¹²
 - 1) “Session Endorsement Form” (83-04).¹³
 - 2) “Application to Come under Care” (83-03).
 - 3) Transcripts from all educational institutions attended after high school.
 - 4) Preliminary Questionnaire.

¹¹ All *Acts of Assembly* references cited are found at the end of this chapter.

¹² Those forms required by the *Book of Order* or by Acts of the General Assembly are so noted.

¹³ All *Acts of Assembly* references cited are found at the end of this chapter.

- 5) Statement in writing of applicant’s personal Christian experience and the events which had led to a sense of God’s call to the ministry.
 - 6) “Candidate’s Statement of Faith, Part 1” form, available on page 115).
 - 7) Results of any assessments of physical examinations, psychological evaluations (e.g. MMPI-2), and any assessments of emotional, intellectual, and vocational aptitudes for ministry that Presbytery may require (G.11-2B).
- c. Reference check (see “Candidate Reference Check Form”).
 - d. Background Check (98-15).

Background checks are required because of the EPC’s responsibility to protect the wellbeing of the flock under its care and to secure the integrity of the household of faith. Further, by judicial precedent, any employer that fails to exercise due diligence and reasonable care to hire safe and competent employees exposes itself to legal liability for damages caused by employees so hired. The information requested in the background check is not confidential and is readily available on the public record, thus not violating anyone’s privacy.¹⁴

- e. Medical and psychological evaluations.

While not explicitly required by the *Book of Order*, it is recommended that one or both evaluations be included in the process. The committee should determine the cost of medical, physical, and psychological evaluations made by its approved centers or counselors, and establish a policy on payment of fees, travel, and other expenses. This should be explained to the applicant at the start of the process. The Ministerial Vocation Committee recommends that expenses be shared equally by the endorsing church, Presbytery, and applicant because all have important commitments to the process. The MCC should determine its policies on how to handle sensitive information that may surface as a result of these evaluations.

- f. Ethical affirmations.

Before a candidate is ordained, the candidate must agree to and sign the “Ethical Affirmations for EPC Ministers.” Minimally, the MCC should inform the potential candidate of this requirement and provide a copy. MCCs may decide to have the applicant sign the form as a prerequisite to being recommended to the Presbytery. Presbyteries have discretion as to when the form must be signed, but it must be signed prior to ordination (15-02).

- g. Personal Interview.

The MCC should have a personal interview with the applicant. The full committee should meet with the applicant before voting on whether or not to recommend that Presbytery take this person under care.

- 1) The MCC should discuss the procedures it will use during the interview process. The Ministerial Vocation Committee of the General Assembly recommends that MCC and church search committees listen to the audio training series “Biblical Interviewing Skills,” available on the EPC website at www.epc.org/biblicalinterviewingskills. MCCs should also seek input from those who have had training in the interview process.

¹⁴ Many reputable agencies provide this service. For background checks on its employees, the Office of the General Assembly uses “Protect My Ministry” (www.protectmyministry.com).

- 2) The MCC should establish reach a consensus on what it is seeking to learn about the applicant. The MCC will also need to clarify the standards that will govern the acceptability and non-acceptability of an applicant (see the “Checklist for Candidates Coming Under Care of Presbytery,” available on page 114). The MCC needs to understand that it acts as one of the important gatekeepers for the process leading to ordination. It should, therefore take the responsibility for evaluating a prospective candidate very seriously; evaluating the applicant’s potential to serve as a Teaching Elder in the EPC.
- 3) Explore the applicant’s calling to ministry:

Questions for Committee before meeting: Do we understand and agree on a theology of calling? What implications are there in the idea that calling is not only an event but a process? How does this theology of calling shape our intentions toward applicants? Can we ourselves explain this theology of calling to an applicant?

Approaches during meeting with the applicant: What influences you toward this ministry? How is God working things together to help you make the decision to pursue the ministry?
- 4) Explore the applicant’s gifts and talents:

Questions for the committee before meeting: What personal characteristics and gifts are most needed in the ministry? How do gifts and talents relate to effective ministry?

Approaches during meeting with the applicant: What is your assessment of your own gifts and talents? How would these gifts and talents relate to your ministry? In what ways might this process of candidacy serve as an opportunity to discover and develop your gifts and talents? What would be your goals in this process?

How can the committee help you achieve them?
- 5) Explore vocational options:

Questions to be resolved before meeting: What are various avenues of service within the ordained ministry? What are the requirements for each avenue? How can the committee help the applicant achieve them?

Approaches during meeting with the applicant: What do you believe God wants of you? What do you want to do in the ordained ministry? How will ordination help you to minister? Could you serve just as effectively without ordination?
- 6) Explaining the candidacy process:

Questions to be resolved before meeting: What are the options and requirements of candidacy? How can we reach agreement with this applicant about the nature and requirements of our mutual relationship?

Approaches during meeting with candidate: How do you wish to proceed from here? What are your plans? Do you wish to come under care of Presbytery, and under the supervision of the committee?
- h. Following the interview, the committee votes on whether or not to recommend receiving the applicant as a candidate.

If the vote is positive, the committee should notify those responsible to arrange for a place on the docket of a meeting of Presbytery for examination. The Chairman should also notify and alert the Moderator to be prepared to ask the necessary questions and participate in the service of recognition (G.11-2C).

- i. The Committee, after consulting with the applicant, should be prepared to present the following to Presbytery:
 - 1) Plans for recognition and reception at Presbytery.
 - 2) Name of a ministerial advisor to be appointed by Presbytery (ordinarily not the candidate's Pastor) (G.11-2E).
4. Successfully complete examination on the floor of Presbytery on Christian experience and growth, motive for seeking ordination, and sense of call to the ministry. After the examination is approved, the candidate answers questions from the Moderator affirming a sense of call, expressing willingness to submit to Presbytery supervision, and renewing commitment to live as a follower of Christ. The Moderator normally asks an appropriate member of the Presbytery to give a charge to the new candidate (G.11-2C).
5. The Candidate's home church should arrange for a service of recognition (G.11-2D).

—Receiving a Candidate by Transfer within the EPC

Ordinarily, a candidate must be under care for a minimum of one year prior to ordination (G.11-2H). A candidate may request transfer to another Presbytery. If approved by the two presbyteries, the candidate must also transfer membership to a local church within the new Presbytery (G.11-2H) and the new Presbytery must appoint one of its members as an Advisor. The MCC is responsible to see that all files and records have been forwarded from the original to the new MCC and that all necessary documents are transferred between the Stated Clerks of the two Presbyteries.

It is not unusual for a Candidate Under Care of one Presbytery to receive a call from a local church in another Presbytery. In that case, written exams are ordered by MCC of the Presbytery in which the candidate is under care, in consultation with the MCC in the Presbytery processing the call.¹⁵ Oral examinations are conducted by the Presbytery processing the call. The Stated Clerks of the receiving and dismissing Presbyteries shall exchange official correspondence regarding the actions of each Presbytery (G.10-8C.2), including the transfer of the candidate's files (see the "Presbytery Transfer of a Candidate Under Care" form, available on page 116).

—Receiving a Candidate from another Reformed Denomination

A Presbytery may receive a candidate from another Reformed denomination provided that the candidate: 1) has been under care in that denomination for at least one year, 2) has met EPC educational requirements for ordination, and 3) is being considered for a call by an EPC congregation (G.11-2J). In this situation, the candidate is not subject to the six-month membership requirement that all others must fulfill (G.11-2A).

¹⁵ See section on "Examination" below.

Supervision

The MCC is responsible for supervising and caring for candidates until they have been ordained or otherwise cease to be candidates.

—Advisors

On recommendation of the MCC, the Presbytery shall appoint an Advisor to the candidate. Advisors shall be Teaching Elders in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in the same Presbytery in which the candidate is under care (G.11-2E).

Normally, the Advisor is not the candidate's Pastor, because the two roles are different. The Advisor, working in consultation with and reporting to the MCC, should be someone qualified to assist the candidate in navigating the process of education, calling, and ordination. In effect, Advisors are project managers, helping candidates move toward ordination. Advisors expedite communication between candidates and their Presbyteries (G.11-2E).

In 2012, the Ministerial Vocation Committee (MVC) of the General Assembly conducted a survey of Advisors and candidates that had recently completed the ordination process in order to determine best practices. As a result of that survey, the MVC concluded that Presbyteries would be well served to communicate to both Advisors and candidates the following expectations and be diligent in reviewing the work of assigned Advisors:¹⁶

1. Advisors should become acquainted with the M.Div. curriculum of the seminaries in which their candidates are studying, and both compare them with EPC educational requirements and ensure the candidates are aware of any EPC-specific requirements beyond the degree requirements in their seminaries. Advisors should be familiar with the "Reformed Reading List" available on page 116 and encourage the candidates to study those resources in preparation for ordination—especially if the seminary does not include courses in or based on Reformed theology.
2. Advisors should contact the candidates at least once a quarter (preferably once a month), in person whenever possible.
3. Advisors should communicate and help the candidates accomplish the required elements of the ordination process:
 - a. Preparation for written and oral examinations for ordination.
 - b. Psychological evaluations.
 - c. Medical exam.
 - d. Background check.
 - e. Personal Information Form.
4. Advisors should help candidates determine/clarify their theological convictions.
5. Advisors should be alert to additional issues that candidates may be facing, which the Advisor may handle directly or refer to the candidates' Pastors or other appropriate professional resources:
 - a. Marriage and family issues.

¹⁶ A few candidates participating in the survey had little, if any, contact with their Advisors. In a few situations, they did not know who their Advisor was, pointing to the need for Presbyteries to develop appropriate accountability systems for Advisors.

- b. Faith and life issues (spiritual health, devotional life).
 - c. Financial issues.
 - d. Emotional health.
 - e. Character issues.
 - f. Leadership issues.
6. Advisors should assist candidates in affirming the validity of their calls to ministry.
 7. Advisors should help candidates reflect on their field experiences.
 8. Advisors should help candidates understand the process of finding a call.
 9. Advisors should submit a written report annually to the Presbytery's MCC concerning the progress of the Candidates (see the "Advisor's Report" form available on page 114). The report should include the following:
 - a. Time spent with candidates.
 - b. Ways in which communications have been maintained.
 - c. Ways in which candidates have been involved in the worship and work of local churches.
 - d. Advisors should ask candidates annually to provide a narrative of personal, spiritual and academic progress, growth in professional skills, and financial needs.

In the event that the candidate is completing educational requirements outside the boundaries of the Presbytery, the Presbytery may consider an arrangement by which an EPC Teaching Elder closer to the candidate visits the candidate from time to time. In such arrangements, the Advisor is still responsible to communicate regularly with the candidate.

—Standard Educational Requirements

Ordained ministers in the EPC are normally expected to have a Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university, a Master of Divinity or equivalent degree from a seminary approved by the Presbytery (G.11-2G; 82-07.1), and such other standards as may be determined by Acts of the General Assembly. Normally the candidate is under care of the Presbytery for a minimum of one year while completing educational requirements. Sometimes, candidates are received after completing their educational requirements. In those cases, a Presbytery may shorten the normal time the candidate is under care and proceed more quickly to examination for ordination. Grounds for shortening the normal period of time under care should be noted in Presbytery minutes (02-04.5).

—Exceptions to Normal Education Requirements: Extraordinary Status

Under extraordinary circumstances, the Presbytery may, by two-thirds vote, waive all or part of a candidate's educational requirements (G.11-2I). In such cases, the General Assembly's Ministerial Vocation Committee shall recommend a course of study to the candidate to address whatever educational deficiencies may exist (82-07.2; 15-01).

—Candidate's Educational Equivalency Program (CEEP)

The purpose of the Candidate's Educational Equivalency Program (CEEP) is not to offset or in any way weaken the long-accepted approach to the preparation for ministry. However, those who have been unable to follow the traditional track—especially at the seminary level—may

follow a non-traditional track that would lead to the regular examination for ordination. This non-traditional track should maintain an appropriate degree of educational rigor and should not be considered a “short cut” to ordination.

The 35th General Assembly approved updated requirements for educational equivalency. The requirements for those candidates received under extraordinary circumstances became effective January 1, 2016. Requirements for candidates received prior to that time will not change.

<i>Biblical Courses</i>	
Old Testament	12 hours, including: Old Testament Survey Old Testament Exegesis
New Testament	12 hours, including: New Testament Survey New Testament Exegesis
Biblical Languages	Competence in Hebrew and Greek Exegesis demonstrated through an examination
<i>Theological Courses</i>	
Systematic Theology	12 hours made up of: 9 hours in Systematic Theology 3 hours in Ethics
Historical Theology	Competency in Reformed Theology (Westminster Confession and Catechisms) demonstrated through an examination
Apologetics	3 hours in Apologetics
<i>Ecclesiastical Courses</i>	
Leadership	3 hours
Presbyterian History/Polity	EPC Book of Order study
Church History	9 hours (emphasis on Reformation)
Missiology	3 hours
<i>Pastoral Courses</i>	
Homiletics	3 hours
Evangelism/Disciple Making	6 hours made up of: Evangelism Discipleship/Disciple Making
Pastoral Care and Counseling	3 hours
In service	12 hours (typically supervised ministry experience)

“Hours” = semester hours. 1 semester hour = 45 hours of work (traditionally 15 hours in class, 30 hours of class preparation). Required “courses” may be taken by traditional, online, or approved guided/directed study means.

—Process for determining specific CEEP requirements

1. The MCC forwards the candidate's file to the Ministerial Vocation Committee of the General Assembly. The file should include:
 - a. A copy of the college and post-graduate transcripts of the candidate.
 - b. A written descriptive overview of the candidate's experience and ministry to date.
 - c. A list of any published articles or materials.
 - d. Candidate's "Personal Information Form," available on page 115.
 - e. Candidate's "Application to Come Under Care of Presbytery" form, available on page 114.
2. The Ministerial Vocation Committee will review the candidate's file, make a preliminary assessment of educational deficiencies, and meet with the candidate in person or by video conference to review and finalize their assessment of the candidate's educational deficiencies. The MVC's assessment will take into account both the candidate's educational background and experience.
3. The Ministerial Vocation Committee will recommend to the MCC a course of study addressing any educational deficiencies. The MCC may make modifications and is responsible for overseeing completion of requirements. The MCC must verify that requirements have been completed before written examinations are issued.

Examination

Presbyteries have the responsibility of examining candidates for ordination to ensure that they have the competency to serve (G.12-2).

The *Book of Government* stipulates mandatory areas of examination:

1. Original languages of Scripture. Evidence of coursework may fulfill this requirement (G.11-2G; G.12-2A).
2. Exegetical skills. Evidence of coursework may fulfill this requirement (G.12-2A).
3. Christian experience (G.12-2B).
4. Knowledge of (G.12-2C):
 - a. Theology.
 - b. Sacraments.
 - c. English Bible.
 - d. *Book of Order*.
 - e. Reformed Tradition.
 - f. Nature of the Office of Teaching Elder.
5. Ability to expound the Word of God effectively (G.12-2D).

—Written Examinations

The six content areas required by G.12-2C (see immediately above) are covered in four written examinations approved by the General Assembly's Ministerial Vocation Committee:

1. English Bible.
2. Theology, Sacraments, and Reformed Tradition.

3. Polity (*Book of Order* and Nature of the Office of Teaching Elder).
4. Exegesis Examination.

Several versions of each examination are maintained and rotated annually. The Candidate may not review or study the tests prior to the time of testing, and the examinations may not be reproduced or shared. Recommended study materials are available on the Ministerial Vocation section of the EPC website at www.epc.org/mvcresources.

The four written examinations shall be completed as a unit, within a three-week period. When the Candidate is ready to take the written examinations, the MCC Chair shall contact the Office of the General Assembly using the “Request for Ordination Examinations” form, available on page 116). Candidates may not request tests for themselves. Anticipated dates for administering the examinations should be indicated on the Request Form. In order to release the exams, the Office of the General Assembly shall have a current Personal Information Form on file for the candidate and verify that all requirements have been met.

Proctors of ordination examinations must be approved by the MCC Chairman. Family members of the candidate shall not be approved as proctors. Examinations will be sent to the proctor no sooner than 21 days prior to the date of testing. If the candidate decides not to take the examination, the proctor shall notify the Office of the General Assembly immediately. In no case shall the examinations be held by the proctor for more than 30 days.

The Ministerial Vocation Committee approves a group of exam graders. Examinations are rotated among the approved graders. Names of examinees are removed from the examinations and replaced with a numeric code before being sent to a grader. The Chairman who requested the examinations on behalf of the candidate will be notified of exam results. The Chairman, in turn, notifies the candidate. Written examinations are held on file in the Office of the General Assembly and are not released to the candidate or MCC. A score of 75% is required to sustain written examinations. If a candidate/transferee does not sustain one or more exams, brief comments will be included in a letter to the Presbytery MCC to assist the candidate/transferee in preparing to retake the examination(s). A candidate is eligible to re-take an examination 30 days after sitting for the original exam. If a candidate fails to pass an exam after three attempts, at least six months must elapse before sitting for the exam again. When the candidate is prepared to re-take the exam, the Ministerial/Candidates Chairman shall submit a new request for examination form.

The Ministerial Vocation Committee of the General Assembly shall resolve any appeals arising from examination grading.

—Oral Examinations

Following successful completion of written ordination exams, the Ministerial/Candidates Committee of the Presbytery conducts an oral examination of the candidate and, if acceptable, brings the individual to the floor of the Presbytery for a final oral examination. Candidates are examined in the following areas:

1. Christian Experience.

A Pastor leads not only through teaching and preaching, but also by way of example. The Presbytery should be satisfied that a candidate demonstrates not only the aca-

- democratic achievement and necessary skills for the work of ministry, but also a vital experiential relationship with the Lord and growth in the fruit of the Spirit (G.12-2B).
2. Sermon.

The candidate shall preach a sermon before the Presbytery on an assigned topic or Scripture, demonstrating ability to expound the Word of God effectively (G.12-2D). The MCC should communicate with the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery and any other body responsible for establishing docket for meetings, informing them of candidates who are ready to preach. The candidate may preach the required sermon at a meeting prior to the rest of the oral examination.
 3. Knowledge.

The candidate shall be examined orally before the MCC and before the Presbytery as a whole at a properly constituted meeting in the same areas as the written exams (G.12- 2C):

 - a. Theology.
 - b. Sacraments.
 - c. English Bible.
 - d. *Book of Order*.
 - e. Reformed Tradition.
 - f. Nature of the Office of Teaching Elder.
 4. Written statement of any exceptions to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms.

Candidates shall submit a written statement of any exceptions they have to the Westminster Confession and Catechisms (G.12-4). Presbyteries must vote to allow or disallow the candidate's exceptions. If the Presbytery disallows any exception(s), they must also determine: 1) if the exception(s) disqualifies the candidate from ordination, or 2) if there is a need for any restrictions on teaching those exceptions. Presbytery minutes record the fact that exceptions were allowed or disallowed, but do not record the specific exception (03-09). This provision removes the content of exceptions from the process of review and control (G.2-4A), preserving the authority of the Presbytery to ordain Teaching Elders (G.19-4B.3).

Termination of Candidacy

The Candidates Committee should conduct an annual review of the Candidate roll. The normal process of candidacy is to shepherd the candidate through the appropriate steps that will lead him or her to ordination (see the section, "Supervision," on page 38 and following). Sometimes, however, a candidacy must be terminated.

—Reasons for Terminating Candidacy

The following are examples of reasons for which a Presbytery may terminate an individual's candidacy:

1. The candidate no longer desires to pursue ordination.
2. The candidate no longer desires to pursue ordination within the EPC.
3. The candidate engages in behavior or embraces beliefs that would not be acceptable to the EPC.

4. The candidate is making no progress over an extended period of time in pursuing ordination.

—Steps in Termination

To terminate candidacy, the steps below should be followed:

1. Either the candidate or the MCC puts the reasons for termination (see above) in writing to the other party.
2. The MCC or one of its representatives makes reasonable attempts to meet with the candidate to discuss the reasons for termination.
3. The MCC brings to Presbytery a motion to terminate candidacy.
4. When a candidacy is terminated, the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery notifies the candidate's sponsoring church and Office of the General Assembly using the "Termination of Candidacy" form, available on page 116.

Reinstatement of Candidacy

A person's candidacy may be reinstated through the following procedure:¹⁷

1. If the person seeking reinstatement is a member of an EPC church other than the original sponsoring church, the person should be a member for a time sufficient for the Session to give a credible endorsement. The person's previous EPC membership may be considered adequate to fulfill the requirements of **G.11-2A** by the Presbytery for purposes of reinstatement.
2. The Session of the church at which the former candidate is currently a member, having satisfied itself that the potential candidate shows evidence of a call to ministry and a commitment to pursue that call, endorses the member according to the procedures outlined above.
3. The MCC proceeds according to the procedures outlined above, requiring updated forms as necessary, and may recommend the candidate's reinstatement to the Presbytery.
4. The potential candidate is examined by the Presbytery according to the provisions of **G.11-2C**.

Examination of Ministers Transferring to the Presbytery

In addition to examining candidates for ordination, Presbyteries also have the responsibility to examine ordained ministers who are seeking to transfer their ordination and receive a call, whether from another EPC Presbytery or from outside the EPC.

Examination of a Teaching Elder Changing Presbyteries

Ordination in one Presbytery does not mean that an EPC minister may freely take a call in any EPC congregation. When receiving a call in another Presbytery, the receiving Presbytery examines the minister orally on views of the areas indicated in **G.12-3A** (Theology and Sacraments, English Bible, the *Book of Order*, the Reformed Tradition, and the Nature of the Office of Teaching Elder). This examination on views is the Presbytery's opportunity to ascertain the convictions

¹⁷ Adopted by the 23rd General Assembly (2003) (03-08).

of the minister who is seeking membership in the Presbytery. Ministerial Committees should instruct presbyters on the type of questions that are appropriate in this context. For example, “Outline the Book of Romans” asks for Bible content, whereas “What are your convictions on the issue of biblical inerrancy?” asks for the minister’s views.

Before the transfer of a minister is complete, the receiving Presbytery must conduct and approve the examination, approve the call and terms of call, and the dismissing Presbytery must act to dismiss the minister. The Stated Clerks of each Presbytery are responsible for promptly communicating the actions of their respective bodies (G.10.8C.2). Depending on which body acts first, a minister may be dismissed pending reception or a minister may be received pending dismissal.

Examination of an Ordained Minister Coming from Outside the EPC

A church may desire to call an ordained minister from outside the EPC. During the search process, the search committee must consult with the Ministerial Committee, as different provisions will apply depending upon the ecclesiastical body from which the minister is coming (G.12-3). These provisions should be communicated to the search committee and the potential minister early in the search process.

The Ministerial Committee should verify that the minister’s ordination is from an ecclesiastical body, is valid, and is current. This is normally accomplished through official communication with the ordaining body. The EPC normally recognizes ordination from Christian churches or denominations. Because educational requirements for ordination differ from one tradition to another, the Presbytery is responsible to evaluate the minister’s educational credentials, may waive language requirements by a two-thirds vote, and may require additional study (02-07).

—From another denomination within the Reformed family

“Another denomination from within the Reformed family” is defined in *Act of Assembly* 05-10. Such denominations include (but are not limited to) the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, the Presbyterian Church of America, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America, the Christian Reformed Church, the United Church of Christ, National Association of Congregational Christian Churches, and the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference. Churches that do not identify themselves as “denominations,” coming from a different historic stream than the British Reformed tradition (Presbyterian and Puritan Congregationalist), such as the Reformed Baptist Church, are not, by definition, a “denomination from within the Reformed family.” Independent churches that are Reformed in doctrine are not “denominations within the Reformed tradition” by virtue of their independence.

When seeking membership in an EPC Presbytery, a minister from a denomination within the Reformed family shall present credentials of education required by those seeking ordination (82-07.1). The minister shall be examined on views and beliefs in the same fashion as one transferring from one Presbytery to another within the EPC, and may be examined on knowledge (G.12-3B).

—From outside the Reformed tradition

When a minister from outside the Reformed tradition seeks to become a member of an EPC

Presbytery, the Presbytery shall satisfy itself that the minister has a valid ordination and education equivalent to EPC ordination requirements. Presbyteries may require additional coursework or readings. In the case of biblical languages, the Presbytery shall make a determination in accordance with *Act of the Assembly* 02-07.

A minister coming from outside the Reformed tradition shall be examined in the same manner as a candidate for ordination, i.e., both orally and in writing in the areas specified in **G.12-2C**. This examination, however, does not make the minister a candidate, nor require that the minister become a candidate. The purpose of the examination is not to call into question the applicant's ordination, but to assure the Presbytery that the minister's education is consistent with the standards for ministry within the EPC.

G.2-4A Review and Control.

For orderly process of Review and Control, each organizational unit shall submit its minutes to the Church Court above. The Board of Deacons shall submit its minutes at least semi-annually to the Session; the Session shall submit its minutes to the Presbytery annually; the Presbytery shall submit its minutes to the General Assembly annually.

G.10-8C Transfer.

2. Official communication regarding transfer. The dismissing church body shall be informed by the receiving Presbytery for the purpose of taking appropriate action. The Presbyteries shall deal directly with each other through their Stated Clerks in certifying both the call of the church and the credentials of the minister, Teaching Elder or candidate.

G.11-2 Preparation for Ordained Ministry as a Teaching Elder.

Since the office of Teaching Elder is seen as the first office in the Church both for dignity and usefulness, special preparation is required.

- A. A person desiring to become a Teaching Elder shall first become a Candidate Under Care of the Presbytery of which that person's church is a member. That person begins this process by seeking the endorsement of the Session of the local church where the person's membership has been held for at least six months. When the Session has approved the candidate, application shall be made to the appropriate committee of the Presbytery.
- B. The Presbytery committee charged with the oversight of candidates shall make whatever tests of gifts and abilities, as well as of sincerity of purpose, it deems necessary. If the candidate is approved, the committee shall recommend to Presbytery the approval of candidacy.
- C. The Presbytery shall make public examination of the candidate as to Christian experience and growth, the motive for seeking ordination, and a statement regarding the person's call to the ministry. If approved, the Presbytery shall proceed as follows.

The candidate shall respond affirmatively to the following questions to be put by the Moderator of the Presbytery:

1. As you understand God's working in your heart and life, do you continue to believe yourself called to the office of Teaching Elder?
2. Do you now submit yourself to the care and supervision of this Presbytery as you prepare yourself for this office?
3. Do you renew your commitment as a Christian, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, to live as becomes a follower of Jesus?

The Moderator, or someone appointed by the Moderator, shall offer a prayer of

thanksgiving and a blessing for the candidate.

A charge shall be given to the candidate by someone appointed by the Moderator. The Moderator shall then declare the person received as a candidate, the person's name shall be placed on the Candidate roll of the Presbytery, and welcomed in an appropriate manner.

- D. The candidate continues to be a member of the local church and subject to the Session. But with regard to the candidate's training for the ministry, the candidate is under the oversight of the Presbytery. It is appropriate for the home church of the candidate to have a service of recognition.
- E. The Presbytery shall assign a Teaching Elder in the Presbytery, ordinarily not the candidate's Pastor, to serve as advisor to the candidate. The Advisor and the candidate's Pastor shall submit regular reports to the appropriate committee on the progress of the candidate.
- F. The Presbytery shall have some committee to which the oversight of candidates is assigned. This committee shall oversee the training of the candidate, giving encouragement and pastoral attention, and making an annual report to the Presbytery of the progress of the candidate.
- G. A candidate shall pursue a course of study that leads to a Master of Divinity degree from an accredited seminary approved by the Presbytery, and such other standards as may be determined by Acts of the General Assembly. Academic work that is equivalent to a Master of Divinity degree may be completed by those means designed for candidates under extraordinary status (**G.11-2I**).
- H. Ordinarily, a candidate must be under care for a minimum of one year prior to ordination. A candidate, for reasons acceptable to the Presbytery, may request transfer to another Presbytery. The candidate's membership must also be transferred to an EPC congregation within that Presbytery.
- I. A Presbytery, for reasons it judges adequate, may receive a candidate under extraordinary circumstances for whom it may waive part or all of the total educational requirements for ordination. This action requires a two-thirds vote by the Presbytery. When such a candidate is received, it is appropriate to assign courses of independent study or study under some appropriate person.
- J. A candidate from another Reformed denomination who has been under care for at least one year in that denomination, has met EPC educational requirements for ordination, and is pursuing a call from an EPC congregation shall be examined in the manner prescribed in **G.12-2**. Any candidates from outside the Reformed Tradition follow the procedures of **G.11-2**.

G.12-2 The examination of a Candidate for Ordination as a Teaching Elder.

- A. The candidate shall present evidence of competency in the original languages of Scripture, including transcripts of coursework taken, along with the required exegesis. (82-07: This requirement is satisfied by the successful completion of the standardized open-book exegesis examination in either Greek or Hebrew and include a sermon manuscript based upon that exegesis).
- B. The candidate shall be examined in Christian experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and progress in spiritual growth.

- C. The candidate shall be examined in writing and orally in the following areas: Theology and Sacraments, English Bible, the *Book of Order*, History of the Church and the Reformed Tradition, and the Nature of the Office of Teaching Elder.
- D. The candidate shall preach a sermon to the Presbytery to demonstrate the ability to expound the Word of God effectively.
- E. If the Presbytery has previously received a candidate and has not required the stipulated work of college and/or seminary, the requirements for language shall be omitted. However, every other part of the examination shall be given. The examination must be approved by a two-thirds majority of the Presbytery.

G.12-3 Examination of Transferees.

- A. Examination of an EPC Teaching Elder seeking to transfer into a Presbytery.
EPC Teaching Elders shall be examined on views of the areas indicated in G.12-2 and they shall relate their experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and progress in spiritual growth.
- B. Examination of non-EPC ordained Ministers.
 - 1. Examination of an Ordained Minister from Another Reformed Denomination:
A Minister seeking to become a Teaching Elder in a Presbytery of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church from another denomination from within the Reformed family shall present credentials of education required by those seeking ordination in the EPC. The minister shall be examined on views and beliefs and may be examined on knowledge.
 - 2. Examination of Ministers from non-Reformed Traditions:
A minister presenting current and valid ordination credentials from any other ecclesiastical tradition shall be examined in the same manner as a candidate for ordination.
- C. Presbytery shall not ordinarily receive a minister seeking to transfer while discipline, inquiry, or charges are pending. Presbytery may, after careful review of the case, by three-fourths vote, declare pending charges insufficient for refusal of membership.

G.12-4 Exceptions to the Westminster Confession and Catechisms

The candidate or transferring Teaching Elder shall provide a written statement of any exceptions to the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of this Church, and the Presbytery shall act to allow or disallow the exceptions. The Presbytery shall not allow any exception to the “Essentials of Our Faith.” Following ordination, should the Teaching Elder develop exceptions to the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, he or she shall report those exceptions to the Ministerial Committee and the Presbytery shall act to allow or disallow these exceptions.

G.19-4 Authority and Responsibilities of the Presbytery.

- B. With respect to Teaching Elders.
 - 2. To examine ministers and candidates, to receive and dismiss ministers and candidates.

3. To ordain and install, to dissolve pastoral relationships, to approve calls and to grant permission to labor outside the bounds of Presbytery.

G.21-2D Authority and Responsibilities.

1. With regard to Teaching Elders and Candidates.
 - a. It shall have the oversight of candidates for the gospel ministry of the Presbytery, although the Presbytery may assign this function to some other committee.
 - b. It shall confer with each Teaching Elder desiring to become a member of the Presbytery, or candidate desiring ordination.
 - c. It shall conduct any examination and assessment it deems necessary in order to make a decision for its recommendation to Presbytery concerning the application.
 - d. It shall conduct the examination by the Presbytery of the applicant according to the *Book of Government*.
 - e. It shall report annually on the work of the Teaching Elders to the Presbytery, along with any recommendations it might have. This includes an annual report from those Teaching Elders approved for labor outside the bounds of Presbytery.
 - f. The committee shall be responsible for an annual review of remuneration of Teaching Elders, shall consult with Sessions if deemed necessary concerning such remuneration, and may recommend to Presbytery minimum terms for the call of Teaching Elders. Requests to Presbytery for a change in the terms of call shall come through this committee.
 - g. It shall review each request for dissolution of a pastoral relationship, and make a recommendation to Presbytery.

82-07.1 Uniform Procedures on Candidacy and Ordination.

1. Requirements for ordination shall be:
 - a. Seminary degree – Master of Divinity or equivalent that shall include Old and New Testament Survey, Old Testament Exegesis, New Testament Exegesis, Church History (with an emphasis on the Reformation), Apologetics, Leadership, Preaching, Evangelism, Missiology, Discipleship/Disciple-making, Pastoral Care and Counseling, and Ethics;
 - b. Care of the Presbytery in accord with **G.11-2F**;
 - c. Examinations – four written and one oral examination must be sustained;
 - d. Valid call;
 - e. Other evidence—assurance those spiritual gifts needed for effective ministry are present and being developed.

In addition:

1. Three courses in Systematic Theology (equivalent of nine semester-hours). Competency in Reformed theology as expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms shall be demonstrated through a standardized ordination exam governed by the Ministerial Vocation Committee.
2. Original languages. The standing for ordination in the EPC is the ability to exegete competently the Scriptures in the original languages. This competency shall be demonstrated by a standardized open-book exegesis exam in either Greek or Hebrew, including a sermon manuscript based upon that exegesis, to be submitted within a one-week period. This exam shall be governed by the Ministerial Vocation Committee.
3. “EPC specific” courses:
 - a. EPC Polity;
 - b. Care of the Presbytery in accord with **G.11-2**;
 - c. Examination—four written and one oral examination must be sustained;
 - d. Valid call;
 - e. Other evidence—assurance those spiritual gifts needed for effective ministry are present and being developed.

82-07.2 All exceptions to fulfilling standards for ordination (extraordinary circumstances) will be referred to the permanent Committee on Ministerial Vocation for a recommended course of action, including continuing education and reading requirements. The Presbytery of jurisdiction shall, in conjunction with the Ministerial Vocation Committee:

- 2.1. Mail necessary documentation (personal history, etc.) to the permanent committee for its review and counsel, and
- 2-2. Proceed with process of ordination only after receiving recommendations

from the permanent Ministerial Vocation Committee.

- 83-03 Presbyteries shall use the approved standardized “Application: Candidates for the Gospel Ministry” for persons seeking to come under care of Presbyteries (Minutes, 3- 48).
- 83-04 Session shall use the approved “Session Approval Form” for commending candidates to Presbyteries (Minutes, 3-48).
- 98-15 Presbyteries shall perform a background investigation on all individuals seeking candidacy or membership in their Presbytery. The investigation of public records shall include at least a verification of social security number, criminal history, and motor vehicle driving history. Also, as part of the reception process, references must be checked (Minutes 18-41).
- 02-04.5 In exercising their discretionary authority (e.g., waiving the ordinary requirement of one year under care for a candidate), Presbyteries should indicate the grounds for doing so in their minutes.
- 02-07 The Assembly adopts a Permanent Judicial Commission ruling that a Presbytery must evaluate the transferee’s educational credentials, including the requirements pertaining to biblical languages and either 1) require “appropriate courses in the original languages” and an exegesis paper assigned by the Presbytery; or 2) exempt the transferee from such requirement by a two-thirds vote (Minutes, 22-24).
- 03-09 While the written statement of exceptions to the Westminster Standards shall be reviewed and allowed or disallowed by the Presbytery, the statement itself should not appear in the minutes of Presbytery. However, minutes should reflect that the statement was received and allowed or disallowed. The statement of exceptions shall be retained in the minister’s personnel file.
- 05-10 The Assembly sustains a provisional opinion of the Stated Clerk clarifying what constitutes a “denomination from within the Reformed family” (G.12-3B). Such denominations: 1) legally and/or ecclesiastically share a common government; 2) are theologically, historically, and/or fraternally identified with the Continental or British Reformed traditions; 3) profess one of the historic Reformed confessions and/or other standards whose doctrine is consistent with these in content as well as scope; and 4) could be part of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC), the Reformed Ecumenical Synod (REC), or the World Reformed Fellowship. (WRF) (Minutes, 25-53). *Note: Subsequently, WARC and REC merged to form the World Communion of Reformed Churches.*
- 15-01 The Assembly adopts requirements for the “Candidates Educational Equivalency Program,” supplementing *Act of Assembly* 83-07 and giving specification to G.11-2I (assigning courses of study to candidates with extraordinary circumstances), namely: 1) Old Testament Survey, 2) New Testament Survey, 3) Old Testament Exegesis,

4) New Testament Exegesis, 5) Church History (with an emphasis on the Reformation), 6) Apologetics, 7) Leadership, 8) Preaching, 9) Evangelism, 10) Missiology, 11) Discipleship/Disciple-making, 12) Pastoral Care and Counseling, 13) Ethics, 14) Three courses in Systematic Theology (equivalent of nine semester-hours), 15) Competency in Reformed theology as expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms demonstrated through a standardized ordination exam governed by the Ministerial Vocation Committee, 16) Ability to exegete competently the Scriptures in the original languages (demonstrated by a standardized open-book exam governed by the Ministerial Vocation Committee) in either Greek or Hebrew, including a sermon manuscript based upon that exegesis, to be submitted within a one-week period, and 17) an EPC Polity course (Minutes, 35-30).

15-02 The Assembly adopts “Ethical Affirmations for EPC Leaders” for use with Candidates Under Care, and strongly encourages its use in EPC Presbyteries and churches (Minutes, 35-30. See the “Documents” section of the Minutes of the 35th General Assembly.

6

Process of Pastoral Search and Call

A local church in the EPC has the irrevocable right to call its own Pastor, with the concurrence of the Presbytery (G.6-6).¹⁸ The time of transition between Pastors and the selection of a new Pastor are critical in the life of the local church. During these times, churches are often served by Pastors in temporary positions—Transitional Pastor, Stated Supply, or Occasional Supply (G.10-7)—and churches always utilize a Search Committee (G.10-4). This chapter describes first the typical process that takes place when a church is without a Pastor (a “vacant pulpit”) and searching for its next Pastor. It then will describe a scenario for “pastoral succession” and the search process for Associate Pastors and Assistant Pastors.

Presbytery and Session Responsibilities When There Is No Pastor

Appointing a Moderator

The Pastor is the Moderator of the Session (G.18-2A.1). When a church is without a Pastor, it often is wise for the Presbytery to appoint a Teaching Elder from the Presbytery to serve as Moderator (G.18-2A.4; G.21-2D.2(b)), especially in a solo Pastor situation. Such an appointment may strengthen the ties of the church to the Presbytery during this transitional time. If authorized by the Presbytery and with the concurrence of the Session, the Ministerial Committee may appoint an interim Moderator until the Presbytery can take action (G.18-2A.4; G.21-2D.2(b)). Since distance between churches can make it difficult for a Moderator to attend all meetings, it may be helpful for the Session to appoint one of their members to serve as a Moderator pro tempore when the appointed Moderator is unable to attend. The Moderator pro tempore also can serve as a helpful point of communication between the appointed Moderator and the Session. It is possible, if permitted by the Presbytery, for the Session to elect one of its members as Moderator when there is no Pastor (G.18-2A.3).

Temporary Pastoral Positions

In the absence of the Pastor, the Session is responsible to: 1) Continue regular worship services in accordance with the Session’s authority and responsibilities (G.18-3A, M), and 2) engage a Stated Supply, Transitional Supply, or Occasional Supply as appropriate and in consultation with the Ministerial Committee (G.10-7C). The Ministerial Committee is responsible for working with the Session in this process.

Ministerial Committee Liaison

The Ministerial Committee should send this chapter (or a publication of its own based on this chapter) to the Session as soon as it is aware of a pastoral vacancy. It is wise for the Ministerial Committee to appoint a liaison with the church as soon as there is a pastoral vacancy. This individual should be familiar with the concepts of Transitional Pastor ministries (chapter 12 in this Manual) and the pastoral search process in this chapter. The Ministerial Committee liaison

¹⁸ All *Book of Order* references cited are found at the end of this chapter.

should meet with the Session as soon as possible after there is a pastoral vacancy to: 1) explain the merits of securing a qualified individual in one of those temporary pastoral positions, 2) help the Session locate an appropriate transitional, stated, or occasional supply minister, and 3) explain the pastoral search process in this chapter. Once a Search Committee is formed, the liaison can guide the committee through their responsibilities.

Pastoral Search Process

The Congregation has the irrevocable right to call its own Pastor, provided that the Presbytery concurs (G.6-6). It does so through an elected Search Committee (G.10-4A).

Stage 1 — Preparatory Work by the Session

One of the distinct advantages in having a Transitional or Stated Supply Pastor is the assistance that person can give in this preparatory work. Additionally, the presence of the Transitional or Stated Supply Pastor removes the need for the Session to manage day-to-day functions of the church so it can focus on these critical tasks and give the Search Committee a solid foundation on which it can work. The Ministerial Committee also may be aware of resources within the Presbytery or Office of the General Assembly to assist with these tasks.

1. Review and modify (or develop if none exists) the vision and mission of the church.
2. The Session or the Search Committee (in consultation with and approval of the Session) completes the Church Information Form (CIF), available on page 115.
3. The Session or the Search Committee (in consultation with and approval of the Session) completes a Pastor's Position Description. Those responsible for developing the Position Description should carefully consider how much detail should go into the document. If it is overly detailed, it may be too limiting. If there is not enough detail, important expectations may not be well communicated and be the source of problems in the future. The Position Description should be flexible enough to provide adaptability to changing congregational circumstances and needs, and prevent a candidate from simply giving lip service to a static document.
4. The Session determines a range of compensation it believes the congregation will support as terms of call for the new Pastor (G.18.3H). The Session should factor in required EPC items such as medical insurance and pension, and normal reimbursements for expenses (see the "Terms of Call—Pastor/Associate Pastor" form, available on page 116). In establishing those parameters, the Session should be sensitive to offering a level of compensation influenced by the previous Pastor's, and/or a particular candidate's education, training, experience, and other accomplishments. Ministerial Committees should have access to publications such as *The Compensation Handbook for Church Staff* by Richard R. Hammar (published annually by Christianity Today International) as they work with Sessions and Search Committees.

Terms of call should include salary, housing (02-4.3) (or a statement such as "housing allowance included in salary and will be specified when housing has been secured"), EPC medical insurance, retirement 10% (minimum), two weeks' study leave, and four weeks' vacation (81-04; 81-05; 81-06; 82-07.34, 5.4). Terms of call also should include appropriate accountable plans (e.g., mileage, books/study, etc.). Accountable reimbursement plans are recommended instead of "allowances," which are paid regularly without requiring documentation. A "reimbursement" paid in ac-

cordance with a properly formed policy is not taxable to the minister, whereas some a portion of the “allowance” could be.

Stage 2 — Formation of the Search Committee

The Ministerial Vocation Committee recommends extensive involvement of the Session in forming and preparing materials for the Search Committee, as well as representation on the Search Committee. At the same time, the irrevocable right of the congregation to elect its Pastor must be preserved (G.6-6). Ultimately, the Search Committee is formed by and responsible to the congregation, not the Session.

1. The Session, as the elected leadership of the church, should take the responsibility allowed in G.10-4A and nominate members for the Search Committee. The congregation has the right to determine the size of the Search Committee (G.10-4A). In making its recommendation, the Session should consider that experience has shown that seven members is optimal for the larger churches and five members for the smaller churches (under 200 members). A good composition for the Search Committee is:
 - a. Two or three Ruling Elders serving on Session. The new Pastor will work directly with the Session as its Moderator (G.18-2A), so the Session should be adequately represented. The Search Committee will be dissolved, but the new Pastor’s relationship with the Session will be critical to a fruitful, long-term ministry.
 - b. One from the Board of Deacons, if the church has this Board (G.6-4). Often the Pastor is the Moderator of the Board of Deacons (G.17-4A), and if not, the Pastor is an advisory member (G.17-7). Therefore, the Deacons should be represented in the pastoral search.
 - c. Three or four spiritually mature, discerning members of the congregation who are not new to the church. These qualities are more important than electing people to represent various constituencies or interest groups in the congregation. Search Committee members are to seek and represent the mind of Christ on the committee.

It is common to think that staff members should be on the Search Committee. Having staff members on the Search Committee is not recommended due to the inherent conflict of interest in hiring the person to whom one will report in an employment setting. The Search Committee should consult with staff in the process for an understanding of the needs of the church’s ministry, and the prospective Pastor should meet with staff, but it is unwise for staff members to serve on the Search Committee.

2. The Session calls a congregational meeting to elect a Search Committee (G.10-4A; G.7-1, 2, 3) and presents its recommendation for the size of the committee and its nominees for the committee. The congregation has the right to amend the size of the committee, and the floor must be opened for additional nominees (G.10-4A).

Stage 3 — Orienting the Search Committee

It is common for this to be the first involvement in a pastoral search by most members of a Search Committee, though some may have Human Resources experience in their professions. There is common wisdom from that profession that transfers to the pastoral search process, but there is a unique additional dimension that must be considered. The Search Committee, on behalf of the congregation, is seeking to understand the mind of Christ about whom He has called to be the pastoral leader of this congregation. Additionally, most Search Committee

members have had little or no exposure to the EPC form of government and *Book of Order*. Many may carry assumptions from other churches with a different form of government where they have been active. For these reasons, it is imperative that the Ministerial Committee (probably through its appointed liaison) meet with the Search Committee shortly after it is elected to orient them to the process. This orientation/training of Search Committees must be done by a representative of the Ministerial Committee in person or via a teleconference if distance presents an obstacle.

1. Preliminary Responsibilities of the Session.

Communicate the items developed in Stage 1 to the Search Committee and the Ministerial Committee:

2. Joint meeting of Session, Search Committee, and Ministerial Committee representative.
 - a. The Session, Search Committee, and Ministerial Committee representative should review/discuss the CIF and make any necessary adjustments/corrections.
 - b. The Search Committee should be in complete support of the church's vision and mission, and agree to accurately represent it to candidates.
 - c. The Ministerial Committee representative should outline the constitutional requirements for the pastoral search, requirements that Pastors must meet to become a member of the Presbytery, and any Presbytery-specific requirements for the Search Committee process. There should be clear agreement as to the expectations each party has of the others, and establish communication channels and timetables between the Search Committee and Ministerial Committee.
 - d. The Ministerial Committee representative should communicate the Presbytery's policy on background checks for ministers (98-15).
 - e. The Search Committee and Session should agree on a suitable timetable of reporting to both the Session and congregation, and announce the schedule to both bodies.
 - f. In its initial meetings on its own, the Search Committee should:
 - 1) Agree on praying regularly for God's guidance and direction in the selection.
 - 2) Schedule regular meetings.
 - 3) Elect a chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary.
 - 4) Establish a covenant of confidentiality with clear boundaries for the committee. It is highly recommended that names of individuals be kept confidential, even from family members and church officers until the final stages of the search process.
 - 5) Decide the method of voting, type of majority needed to select a Pastor-nominee, and how decisions are to be made. Although unanimity is not essential, the committee should strive to receive unanimous and enthusiastic support in the choice of the nominee.
 - 6) Decide on who will speak for the committee.
 - 7) Set up systems whereby it will:
 - i. Keep the Session and the congregation informed of the committee's progress,
 - ii. Keep the Ministerial Committee fully informed of progress.

- iii. Keep clear and accurate files of ministers under consideration, including their Personal Information Forms (with the dates it was requested and received), correspondence with individuals, and decisions made concerning each candidate.
- iv. Keep candidates still under consideration informed of the committee's progress.
- v. Promptly inform candidates when they are no longer under consideration.

Stage 4 – Conducting the Search

1. Announce Pastor vacancy.

The Search Committee, in consultation with the Session, will announce the open position. Typical channels are the EPC Office of the General Assembly through the Ministry Staff Opportunities at www.epc.org/mso, Presbytery meetings, and General Assembly meetings. The Ministerial Committee should be actively involved in referring ministers to churches with vacancies. Search Committees also have posted positions through placement offices at seminaries and through online services like ChurchStaffing.com. It is common for Search Committees to ask members of the congregation to submit names. If so, the congregation should also be informed of EPC qualifications for ordination. There is a growing trend to use pastoral search organizations.

2. Communication.

Periodic updates (monthly recommended), from the Search Committee are critical, even if there is no progress (e.g., “The Search Committee continues to meet, pray, read Personal Information Forms, and listen to candidates’ sermons. Please keep us in your prayers as we proceed.”).

3. Preliminary Screening/Interviewing.

a. Communication with Candidates.

- 1) Acknowledge receipt of the candidate’s Personal Information Form shortly after it is received.
- 2) Advise the candidate of his or her current status shortly after decisions are made to continue or end consideration.

b. Considering Associate Pastors and Transitional Pastors as candidates.

Sometimes it is appropriate to consider an Associate Pastor as a candidate. The committee should be mindful that their familiarity with the Associate Pastor or Transitional Pastor is both a positive and a negative. For some, serving as an Associate Pastor is excellent preparation for serving as Pastor. However, for many the specific calling of an Associate Pastor is the position for which the Teaching Elder is best suited. Unfortunately, it can be an opportunity for “politicking” by the Associate or Transitional Pastor in order to gain a position to which the Lord may not be calling. For these reasons, there are special stipulations for considering Associate and Transitional Pastors as candidates. In both cases, the Search Committee must obtain a three-fourths vote of the Session and the Ministerial Committee in order to proceed (G.10-4D; G.10-7B).

An Assistant Pastor serving on the staff when the pastor position becomes vacant is *not eligible under any circumstances* to be a candidate (G.10-4E).

c. Reviewing Personal Information Forms (PIFs).

The Search Committee should receive many of these, both from within and outside the EPC. Review, study, and most importantly pray over the PIFs in light of the agreed upon vision and mission, the position description, and the requirements for ordination in the EPC. At some point, at least three or four candidates should constitute the committee's "short list." The Search Committee should then very prayerfully agree to list these as "First preference," "Second preference," and so on.

Remember to communicate decisions with all candidates (see section 3 above).

d. Check references.

It is unlikely anyone would list someone who would give a bad reference. The Search Committee should seek out references in addition to the ones listed in the PIF, such as the Stated Clerk and/or Ministerial Committee Chairman of the minister's Presbytery, General Assembly Stated Clerk or executive staff, or friends from the candidate's church and/or place of residence. If a candidate is currently serving a church, be very cautious in contacting people in that church. The candidate's interest in another position may be confidential, and this kind of "leak" could prove detrimental to the minister and church.

The Chairman should communicate the "short list" to the Ministerial Committee liaison, giving an opportunity for the liaison to note any concerns that should be taken into account. A common concern is "ordainability." If a Search Committee is considering a person from outside the EPC, there could be extra requirements to be met before the person is eligible for examination and ordination by the Presbytery. For example, a person who is a candidate for ordination in another denomination may have to first be a member for six months in an EPC local church before being eligible to be endorsed by the Session and received as a Candidate Under Care of the Presbytery (G.11-2A; G.11-2J).

Some candidates may be eliminated during this phase. Remember to communicate these decisions to the candidates (see section 3 above).

e. Sample Sermons.

Those remaining on the "short list" should provide the Search Committee with recorded sample sermon(s). It may be appropriate for the Search Committee to attend a service where the minister is preaching. If so, the visit should be discreet (e.g., don't enter and sit together as a large group).

The following suggestions are offered for guidance when listening to a sermon:

- 1) Reread the person's PIF.
- 2) Have the following questions in mind:
 - i. Does the person read the Scripture well and carefully?
 - ii. Is the sermon faithful to Scripture?
 - iii. Is the pulpit manner compelling?
 - iv. Are the prayers helpful?
 - v. Is the sermon easily followed, well organized, and applicable to life?

- vi. Is the congregation attentive?
- vii. Is the person's custom at the close of the service acceptable?

Once all members of the Search Committee have heard/seen the candidate's sermon, the Search Committee should decide whether to pursue one candidate at a time from this point forward, or to conduct preliminary interviews with all those on the "short list" first, and then review and rearrange that list before the next step.

f. Initial interview.

Teleconferencing or videoconferencing are encouraged at this stage of the process. Otherwise, the Search Committee Chairman and the candidate(s) must arrange a suitable time and place to meet face-to-face. It is best to select one member of the Search Committee to lead the interview. The leader should announce at the beginning of the interview that time will be provided for questions from the committee members and from the candidate. A preliminary interview usually consists of the following (but is not limited to):

- 1) The candidate's testimony, call to ministry, and brief description about the candidate and candidate's family.
- 2) What led the candidate to be interested in your church?
- 3) The candidate's initial vision/impression of ministry for your church based on the CIF.
- 4) Ask about his particular ministry strengths and weaknesses. In other words, what part of the ministry does he have a passion for and feels he is best suited for (and likewise for weaknesses).
- 5) Probe to discover if the candidate seems prone to enlist help from others in his admitted weak areas and how he would go about that.
- 6) Make sure you understand what the candidate is saying. If a statement is unclear or vague, be sure to ask for clarification (e.g., "What did you mean when you said ...?").
- 7) Preliminary interviews should not last beyond two (2) hours. Followup questions with a particular candidate can be addressed in a future interview.

Many Search Committee members are inexperienced at interviewing. An audio training resource, "Biblical Interviewing Skills," is available on the EPC website at www.epc.org/biblicalinterviewingskills.

4. In-depth interviews and calling.

a. Reconsider the "short list."

Once the first round of interviews is concluded, the Search Committee should review its "short list" for modification or change(s). After prayer individually and together, one candidate may emerge as the first preference and the first candidate to pursue for calling as Pastor.

b. In-depth face-to-face interview with the first preference candidate.

The Search Committee should strongly consider arranging time for the candidate to meet with the Session so that the two parties can discern whether or not there is a "fit." From this point on, it is recommended that this candidate is the only candidate considered, taking the attitude by faith, "This appears to be God's

choice as our Pastor” until it is obviously evident otherwise.

c. Vote on the first preference candidate.

After completing the in-depth interview phase and following adequate time for prayer, the Chairman calls for a vote of the Search Committee.

If the vote is favorable for the candidate, the Search Committee, having information from the Session in hand, agrees to the terms of call to be offered to the prospective new Pastor and informs the candidate of their intent to recommend him or her as the new Pastor with the terms of call stipulated. There may be some questions, discussion of the terms of call offered (which is appropriate), as the candidate may have special needs, concerns, and/or circumstances that the Search Committee may not be aware of. It is most desirable for the Search Committee and candidate to agree on terms of call prior to informing the Session. If the Search Committee feels the candidate’s requests are unreasonable or unworkable, the candidate should be made aware of the Search Committee’s concerns and that the congregation and/or Session may or may not agree to them. The Search Committee should not inform the Session of its candidate choice if terms of call become a serious point of contention, as this revelation may be grounds for the Search Committee’s reconsideration of a candidate.

Stage 5 – Concluding the Search Process

1. Informing the Ministerial Committee.

The Search Committee must seek the consent of the Ministerial Committee before the next step. Normally, the Chairman contacts the Ministerial Committee liaison. The liaison informs the Ministerial Committee Chairman who polls committee members on their advice and/or consent regarding the Pastor-nominee. If the Ministerial Committee does not give its consent, the Search Committee may still continue with the Pastor-nominee, but should be aware that there could be difficulties with Presbytery approval as the process moves forward (G.10-4C).

2. Informing the Session.

After receiving input from the Ministerial Committee, the Search Committee Chairman contacts the Clerk of Session (if verbal, it must be followed up in writing) of their decision. It is wise for the Session to meet with the Search Committee (or its Chairman) in executive session. If the interview process has not included a time for the Pastor-nominee and Session to meet, it should be arranged before a congregational meeting is called. The Session does not have veto power over the Search Committee’s recommendation. However, a good working relationship between the prospective Pastor and Session is extremely important for a long, fruitful tenure. Both the Pastor-nominee and the Search Committee should carefully weigh the input from this time with the Session.

3. Informing the Congregation.

When the Pastor-nominee and the Search Committee are in agreement to move forward, the Session must call a congregational meeting for the Search Committee to present their recommendation for the person to be called and the terms of that call (G.10-4G, H). A common practice historically has been for the congregation to vote before it formally meets the Pastor or hears the Pastor-nominee preach. In recent

years, the practice of “candidating” has become more popular, in which the Pastor-nominee preaches and meets members of the congregation in a variety of settings before the congregational vote. There are merits for both procedures, and the process the church will follow should be determined beforehand and a congregational meeting timed appropriately.

4. Congregational Meeting.

Some Search Committees have demonstrated creative ways to introduce the Pastor-nominee and his or her family, such as conveying biographical and professional information through video clips, Powerpoint presentations, colorful printed brochures, leaflets, and other media. It is appropriate for the Search Chairman, on behalf of the committee, to move approval of the call and terms of call (see the “Terms of Call—Pastor/Associate Pastor” form, available on page 116) to the Pastor-nominee. There is no need for a second because the recommendation comes from a committee. Voting is done by tallying a standing vote, a show of hands, or written ballot. The vote count must be reported to the Pastor-nominee (G.10-4G) and it is advisable to report it to the Ministerial Committee. Assuming the motion is approved and the Pastor-nominee has accepted, the Chairman of the Search Committee should offer a motion to dissolve the Search Committee upon approval of the Pastor-elect by the Presbytery (unless this has been done when the Search Committee was formed). The clerk of the meeting shall send minutes of the meeting, including the exact vote, to the MC Chairman and also to Presbytery’s Stated Clerk.

5. Presbytery examination and approval.

The local church has the irrevocable right to call its own Pastor(s). While the right is irrevocable, it is not unconditional (G.6-6). The Presbytery must examine, approve the call, approve the terms of the call, and receive the Pastor-elect into its membership. This is a primary way in which the EPC expresses its theology of church government as Teaching and Ruling Elders meeting together in representative assemblies of ascending order (G.2-1). The examination process is described in chapter 4 of this Manual. The Search Committee should have a spokesperson at the Presbytery meeting at which the Pastor-elect is being examined in order to advocate for the call.

It is strongly recommended that a minister not be allowed to begin service at the calling church prior to the Presbytery having completed all its work. Doing so places the minister and church in an extremely awkward position if the Presbytery does not approve the Pastor-elect’s examination.

6. Ordination and installation.

When a Teaching Elder has been approved by the Presbytery, an Administrative Commission is appointed on to act on behalf of the Presbytery to ordain (if necessary) and install the new Pastor. The process is described in chapter 6 of this Manual.

Planned Pastoral Transitions

The process of dissolving the pastoral relationship, securing a transitional supply, forming a Search Committee, and calling a new Pastor has a long history and is still common, but it is not the only way a pastoral transition may take place in the EPC—especially in larger churches. This paragraph is titled deliberately to avoid the notion of “pastoral succession.” Given the irrevocable right of the congregation to call its own Pastor, the Pastors of local churches do not have the right to “name their successor.” However, there are situations in which it is wise and

beneficial for the Pastor to be involved in a planned transition.²⁰ These situations generally occur when a long-term Pastor knows that the time is coming to end the pastoral relationship, often (but not always) due to pending retirement.

Although transition planning should begin earlier, an announcement of the Pastor's retirement (or intention to leave), with the Presbytery's consent and affirmed by the congregation and pegged to a date or event is equivalent to the announcement of a vacant pulpit, making it possible for the congregation to elect a Search Committee before the effective date of the Pastor's departure.²¹ In some situations, an Associate Pastor has been called with an expectation that this individual could be the next Pastor. If so, special provisions described above must be followed.

Associate Pastor Search Process

1. Called by a Search Committee.

An Associate Pastor is called by the congregation. When that Associate Pastor will be coming from outside the church staff, the congregation follows the same process as calling a Pastor. As the Session is making preparations, the Position Description must include the main areas of responsibility in which the Associate Pastor will be serving (G.10-5). Although the Pastor is not a member of the Search Committee, the committee should regularly seek out the Pastor's input and advice. Because of the close working relationship, the Pastor should openly and enthusiastically support the candidate selected.

2. Calling an Assistant Pastor as an Associate Pastor.

The Session, by a three-fourths vote and with the approval of Presbytery's Ministerial Committee, may recommend to the congregation that an Assistant Pastor currently on staff be called as an Associate Pastor without needing to elect a Search Committee. Presbytery must approve the call and the terms of call. Since it is a new call, Presbytery also conducts a service of installation (G.10-6B).

Assistant Pastor Search Process

An Assistant Pastor is called by the Session for particular responsibilities for a limited period of time (which may be extended). The Session may conduct a search for an Assistant Pastor in a manner it deems appropriate (G.10-6A). The provisions for forming a congregational Search Committee do not apply, however it is wise to involve members of the congregation in the search process, especially those in the areas of ministry to which the Assistant Pastor will be called. The Assistant Pastor must be examined and approved by the Presbytery in the same way as a Pastor or Associate Pastor. In many cases, an individual is called as an Assistant Pastor with the understanding that he or she will be considered as an Associate Pastor in the future (see section immediately above).

²⁰ There is an increasing amount of helpful literature available on planned leadership transitions in organizations such as *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken About Pastoral Transitions* (Weese and Crabtree, Leadership Network, 2004) and *Next: Pastoral Succession that Works* (Vanderbloemen and Bird, Baker Books, 2014).

²¹ In the absence of a specific provision or prohibition in the *Book of Order*, this has been the consistent advice of the Office of the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly.

- G.2-1** **The government of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church shall be Presbyterian in form.** This is government by Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders meeting in representative assemblies called Church Courts.
- A. These Church Courts, in their ascending order, are the Session, the Presbytery, and the General Assembly.
 - B. Churches may also elect Deacons, but the Board of Deacons is not a Church Court.
- G.6-4** The local church has the right to determine whether or not it shall have a Board of Deacons.
- G.6-6** The local church has the right to call its own Pastor(s), provided the Presbytery concurs by receiving such Pastor(s) into its membership.
- G.7-1** **Calling a meeting.**
The Session may call a congregational meeting when deemed necessary. Also, when at least one-fifth of the active membership shall request a meeting in writing, the Session shall do so without delay. Further, the Session shall call a meeting when instructed to do so by the Presbytery.
- G.7-2** **Notice of meeting.**
At least two Sundays' notice shall be given. The meeting may be conducted on the same day the second notice is given. The purpose of the meeting must be stated in the call.
- G.7-3** **Agenda of meeting.**
Only those matters stated in the call may be presented and handled.
- G.10-2** The right of calling may never be taken away or conditioned for non-Scriptural reasons. This right is inalienable and may not be changed. At the same time, a Church Court also has the inalienable right not to approve an individual for reasons the Court determines to be proper and in keeping with Scripture.
- G.10-4** **The call of a Pastor by a local church.**
When a local church desires to call a Pastor, the procedure shall be as follows:
- A. The Session shall call a congregational meeting. The Session may nominate a Search Committee to the congregation, although the floor must also be opened for other nominations. The congregation shall proceed to determine how many persons are to serve and to select them.
 - B. The Search Committee shall carry on its work in regular consultation with the

Ministerial Committee of the Presbytery.

- C. Upon agreeing on an individual they feel led of God to nominate, the Search Committee shall secure the consent of the Ministerial Committee. Should that committee decline to consent, the Search Committee may persist with the nomination, recognizing the Presbytery has the right to reject the call.
- D. Ordinarily, an Associate Pastor is not eligible to succeed the Pastor. However, should a Search Committee desire to consider an Associate Pastor as Pastor, approval by a three-fourths vote of Session and a three-fourths vote of the Ministerial Committee shall be required for the Search Committee to proceed.
- E. A person serving as Assistant Pastor on the same church staff at the time the pastor position becomes vacant shall not be called to fill that position in the same church, by any means.
- F. After consulting with the Ministerial Committee, the Search Committee shall notify the Session in writing of its nominee and the Session shall call a congregational meeting.
- G. When the congregational meeting has been convened, the Search Committee shall make its report and recommendations to call a Pastor. This recommendation shall include the details for remuneration, including all benefits. The congregation shall conduct a counted vote in a fashion it deems appropriate. A majority favoring the recommendation is required to elect a Pastor. The exact vote must be recorded in the minutes and the person being elected notified of the count. The congregation shall appoint representatives to advocate the call at a meeting of the Presbytery.
- H. The call of the congregation shall always conform with the Acts of the General Assembly and follow the form approved by an appropriate committee of the General Assembly.

G.10-5 The call of an Associate Pastor by a local church.

A congregation may call an Associate Pastor by means of a Search Committee in the same fashion as indicated above, with the exception that the call of the congregation shall stipulate the primary responsibilities to be exercised by the Associate Pastor.

G.10-6 The call of an Assistant Pastor by a Session.

- A. A Session, in consultation with the Ministerial Committee of the Presbytery, may call an Assistant Pastor. The call of the Session shall be for a definite period of time and is renewable. The call of an Assistant Pastor may be terminated by the Session prior to that time only with the consent and approval of the Presbytery. The call shall stipulate the primary responsibilities to be exercised by the Assistant Pastor. The call of the Session shall always conform with the Acts of the General Assembly and follow the form approved by an appropriate committee of the General Assembly.
- B. A Session, by a three-fourths vote and with the approval of Presbytery's Ministerial Committee, may recommend to the congregation that an Assistant Pastor of the local church be called as an Associate Pastor without a Search Committee being elected. The call as Associate Pastor must be approved by Presbytery and

an installation service shall be conducted by the Presbytery or by its appointed Commission.

G.10-7 Temporary Pastoral Relationships.

- A. Temporary Pastoral Relationships may be established with lawfully ordained ministers or Commissioned Pastors when a church is without a Pastor.
 - 1. Transitional Pastor:
 - a. A Transitional Pastor is called by the Session to serve during the period a congregation is seeking a Pastor. The Transitional Pastor intentionally leads the congregation toward greater health and readiness for their next Pastor and will ordinarily be appointed by the Presbytery to moderate the Session during the time of service.
 - b. Due to the temporary nature of the call, Transitional Pastors called from another Presbytery in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church will ordinarily maintain membership in their home Presbytery.
 - c. Upon approval of the Ministerial Committee, Transitional Pastors are introduced to the receiving Presbytery and enrolled as corresponding members (voice but not vote).
 - d. If a Transitional Pastor is called from outside the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the Presbytery shall examine and transfer the Pastor according to applicable provisions of the *Book of Government*.
 - 2. Stated Supply Pastor:
 - a. A Stated Supply Pastor is invited by the Session to serve for a definite period of time, not less than one month and no more than twelve months. The term of service is renewable. Although this invitation is not a call, the invitation to serve, authority to preach the Word and administer sacraments, and to moderate Session must be approved by the Presbytery or by the Ministerial Committee, if authorized by the Presbytery.
 - b. Stated Supply Pastors from outside the Evangelical Presbytery Church are invited by the Session and shall be interviewed and approved by Presbytery or the Ministerial Committee, if authorized by the Presbytery.
 - 3. Occasional Supply Pastor:
 - a. An Occasional Supply Pastor is invited to serve regularly on specific days. Only the Ministerial Committee must approve.
- B. Ordinarily, a person currently serving in a temporary pastoral relationship is not eligible to be called as Pastor of that church. Should a Search Committee desire to consider any person who has served in a temporary capacity since the pulpit most recently became vacant, it must secure approval by a three-fourths vote of the Session and a three-fourths vote of the Ministerial Committee in order to proceed.

G.11-2 Preparation for Ordained Ministry as a Teaching Elder.

Since the office of Teaching Elder is seen as the first office in the church both for dignity and usefulness, special preparation is required.

- A. A person desiring to become a Teaching Elder shall first become a Candidate Under Care of the Presbytery of which that person's church is a member. That person begins this process by seeking the endorsement of the Session of the local church where the person's membership has been held for at least six months. When the Session has approved the candidate, application shall be made to the appropriate committee of the Presbytery.
 - J. A candidate from another Reformed denomination who has been under care for at least one year in that denomination, has met EPC educational requirements for ordination, and is pursuing a call from an EPC congregation shall be examined in the manner prescribed in **G.12-2**. Any candidates from outside the Reformed tradition follow the procedures of **G.11-2**.
- G.12-1** Prior to approving a candidate for ordination as a Teaching Elder, Ruling Elder, or Deacon, it is important for the ordaining court to assure itself of the competency of the individual being ordained to serve. Therefore, certain examinations should be made.
- G.12-2 The examination of a Candidate for Ordination as a Teaching Elder.**
- A. The candidate shall present evidence of competency in the original languages of Scripture, including transcripts of coursework taken, along with the required exegesis.
 - B. The candidate shall be examined in Christian experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and progress in spiritual growth.
 - C. The candidate shall be examined in writing and orally in the following areas: Theology and Sacraments, English Bible, the *Book of Order*, History of the Church and the Reformed Tradition, and the Nature of the Office of Teaching Elder.
 - D. The candidate shall preach a sermon to the Presbytery to demonstrate the ability to expound the Word of God effectively.
 - E. If the Presbytery has previously received a candidate and has not required the stipulated work of college and/or seminary, the requirements for language shall be omitted. However, every other part of the examination shall be given. The examination must be approved by a two-thirds majority of the Presbytery.
- G.17-4 Officers of the Board of Deacons.**
- A. Moderator.
The Board may elect a Moderator for a term of one year, or the Session may appoint a Pastor of the congregation to serve as Moderator.
- G.17-7 The Board and the Pastor(s).**
Though not a voting member of the Board, the Pastor(s) is officially designated an advisory member. As such, the Pastor(s) is entitled to participate in deliberations, giving advice and wisdom.

G.18-2 Officers of the Session.

A. Moderator.

1. The Pastor shall be the Moderator and is a voting member of the Session. If the Moderator wishes to make motions or otherwise participate in debate, some other member of the Session should serve as temporary Moderator.
2. An Associate Pastor, at the request of the Pastor and with the consent of the Session, may serve as Moderator for the Pastor.
3. If there is no Pastor or Associate Pastor, or if there is no Associate Pastor and the Pastor is absent for more than one month, the Session may elect one of its members to serve as Moderator.
4. Presbytery, at its discretion, may appoint a Teaching Elder of the Presbytery to serve as Moderator when a church has no Pastor. The Presbytery may authorize its Ministerial Committee to appoint, at its discretion with concurrence of the church Session, a minister of the Presbytery to serve as Interim Moderator of the church Session until such time as the Presbytery can act in the matter.

G.18-3 Authority and Responsibilities of the Session.

- A. To oversee the worship of the congregation in accordance with the *Book of Worship*, including the time and place of worship, special services, the music program, and the celebration of the sacraments. This shall not infringe on the responsibility of the Pastor in the selection of hymns, Scriptures, sermon, administration of the sacraments, or other duties that are incumbent on the office of Pastor.
- H. To determine the budget of the church and the benevolence objectives of the congregation.

G.21-2D [Ministerial Committee] Authority and Responsibilities.

2. With regard to local churches.
 - a. It shall counsel with local churches in securing Pastor(s). Calls shall always be placed in the hands of this committee who shall then make its recommendation to the Presbytery. No call to a Pastor may be issued by a congregation that has not first consulted with the committee.
 - b. It shall recommend to the Presbytery a Teaching Elder to serve as Moderator of the Session, and shall work with a congregation in securing pulpit supply. The Presbytery may authorize the Ministerial Committee to appoint, with concurrence of the Session, an Interim Moderator of the Session.

- 81-04 Terms of call for any minister of member churches shall provide for participation in the denominational hospitalization and disabilities program (Minutes, 1-32).
- 81-05 Terms of call for any minister shall provide a minimum of 18% benefit to provide for group hospitalization, disability, and pension. The pension factor shall not be less than 10%. This benefit shall be computed on the gross effective salary base, i.e., salary and housing/utilities allowance (Minutes, 1-32).
- 81-06 The denominational group insurance plan providing health, disability, and life coverage shall be mandatory for all ministers within member churches (Minutes, 1- 36).
- 82-07
4. Terms of call: The amount of annual vacation time: one month.
 5. Terms of call: The amount of time to be given for study leave: two weeks, cumulative up to six weeks.
- 82-10 The General Assembly approves the concept of self-funding insurance and instructs its Committee on Administration to execute a plan in trust as appropriate. Individual churches are urged to assume the deductible portion of the health insurance program and cost of co-insurance as part of a minister's compensation (Minutes, 2-52, Appendix I).
- 83-02 Opportunity shall be provided at each General Assembly for Pastors seeking a call to meet with churches and ministries seeking to issue a call (Minutes, 3-37).
- 84-08 General Assembly adopts the self-funding group insurance plan offered by The Travelers and gives authority to the permanent Committee on Administration to approve and establish all details relative to the establishment of proposed plan.
General Assembly requires Pastors and employees of all member congregations, Presbyteries, and the Assembly who meet minimum requirements to enroll in the program.
This major medical program shall be reviewed annually and a full report made to the General Assembly (Minutes, 4-37).
- 87-12 The Assembly approves the establishment of an employer-sponsored, tax-sheltered annuity program for the required minimum (10%) of gross effective salary for retirement for each minister and missionary, and urges each congregation to participate in such program (Minutes, 7-53).
- 88-08 Assembly amends participatory requirements for group health insurance plan by requiring participation of all ministers on the rolls of Presbyteries with the exception of:
1. Missionaries laboring in cooperative agreements with mission agencies;

2. Ministers laboring in institutional agencies providing their own group insurance plan;
3. Ministers afforded group insurance coverage as part of retirement benefits from a previous employer;
4. Ministers without call and ministers laboring less than 20 hours in a place of ministry (Minutes, 8-24).

98-15 Presbyteries shall perform a background investigation on all individuals seeking candidacy or membership in their Presbytery. This investigation of public records shall include at least a verification of social security number, criminal history, and motor vehicle driving history. Also, as part of the reception process, references must be checked (Minutes, 18-41).

02-04.3 In a number of cases, housing allowances approved in terms of call seem to be far above the accepted IRS standard cap of fair rental value (furnished) plus utilities. Pastors, Sessions, and Presbyteries are urged to be diligent in conforming to established regulations.

12-11.1 The initial terms of call shall be approved in public by both congregations and presbyteries, using the forms found in the *Book of Order* and *Procedure Manual for Ministerial and Candidates Committees*.

2. Changes in terms of call must be noted and voted upon by Presbyteries on recommendation from the Ministerial Committee. The changes may be noted as either a dollar amount or percentage amount, with only the change (not the new total) noted.
3. Background or supporting material regarding terms of call shall be made available to the Presbytery Review Committee through the Stated Clerk upon the committee's request.

7

Process of Ordination and Installation

Ordination and installation are important milestones for Pastors and congregations. However, they are acts of the Presbytery, not the local church. Even so, Sessions and congregations have responsibilities in this process as well.

Presbytery Responsibilities

The Presbytery is responsible to oversee the process of ordaining/installing a minister. The Presbytery ordinarily delegates this responsibility to an Administrative Commission (G.21-1C; 02-04.1)²² but the Presbytery retains the ultimate responsibility for insuring the order and meaning of this significant event. The Ordaining/Installing Commission shall consist of at least five Ruling and Teaching Elders in proportion as near to 2:1 as possible with Ruling Elders from at least two churches (G.21-1C.2). The quorum for a commission shall be a minimum of one-half of its membership (G.21-C3). The Presbytery may specify which of the commissioners is to serve as Chairman of the commission.

Church Session Responsibilities

Usually some Ruling Elders of the calling church are selected to be members of the commission. Commission members participate with the Presbytery in setting the time and place of the ordination and/or installation.

Local Church Responsibility

The members of the local church shall participate in greeting the newly ordained/installed Pastor-elect and consider having a reception for the Pastor-elect and his or her family following the service.

Ordination and Installation Planning

The *Book of Government* describes the specific steps which shall be followed in the ordination and installation of ministers (G.13-1A). This portion of the Manual is an aid in implementing the procedures outlined in the *Book of Government*.

Suggested Steps to be taken by Presbytery Prior to the Ordination/Installation

Prior to the appointment of an Administrative Commission, the Presbytery, through the Ministerial Committee, should consult with the Pastor-elect and the Search Committee prior to the Presbytery meeting. The Ministerial Committee should prepare recommendations for the Presbytery, taking into consideration the wishes of the Pastor-elect and the local church to which the Pastor is being called concerning the following matters:

1. The time and place of the ordination and/or installation. Ordinarily this service will be held in the local church to which the Teaching Elder is being called. When called

²² All *Book of Order* references cited are found at the end of this chapter.

by two or more congregations, the Teaching Elder may be installed in each church or a joint service may be held (G.13-5).

2. The names of the Teaching and Ruling Elders composing the commission to ordain/install. It is customary for the Pastor-elect to request specific Teaching and Ruling Elders to serve on the commission. Presbytery may set the number of individuals it wishes to serve on the commission, conforming to the requirements of (G.21-1C.2). Members of this commission shall be members of the Presbytery under whose jurisdiction the service takes place. Teaching Elders from other EPC Presbyteries and other lawfully ordained ministers or Elders outside the EPC may be enrolled as corresponding members of the commission. However, these individuals are not part of the minimum requirements for composition of the commission set out in the *Book of Government*. Before submitting the names of commission members to the Presbytery, the Pastor-elect and/or a member of the Presbytery assisting the Pastor-elect should secure agreement of the nominees to serve if appointed. The Presbytery shall identify a Chairman for the commission.
3. The specific parts of the service to be assigned to members of the commission and to other invited participants. At a minimum, the service should include the following parts:
 - a. Presiding and asking the constitutional questions;
 - b. Preaching of the ordination/installation sermon;
 - c. Bringing a charge to the Pastor-elect;
 - d. Bringing a charge to the congregation;
 - e. Offering the prayer of ordination/installation;
 - f. Declaration of ordination/installation.
4. Prior to the service, the commission shall meet privately and open its proceedings with prayer. A secretary shall be selected to take minutes, using the "Minutes of the Commission to Ordain and/or Install" form, available on page 115).
5. Following the service, the commission should convene to conclude its own meeting with the reading of the minutes of the proceedings and with prayer. Minutes shall be submitted to the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery within ten (10) days.

G.13-1A Teaching Elders.

1. Ordinarily, the ordaining/installing Presbytery will appoint an Administrative Commission to conduct a worship service at a date and time approved by the Court. A sermon suitable to the occasion shall be preached. The person presiding shall recount the conditions necessary for ordination and/or installation, the solemnity of the event, and its importance in the life of the church.
2. Presbyteries may also directly ordain a Teaching Elder.

G.13-2A Ordination vows.

The person presiding shall administer the following ordination vows for those being ordained and for those coming into the Evangelical Presbyterian Church from some other denomination:

1. Do you reaffirm your faith in Jesus Christ as your own personal Lord and Savior?
2. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, totally trustworthy, fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, the supreme, final, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
3. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?
4. Do you promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with the system of doctrine as taught in the Scriptures and as contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Catechisms of this Church you will, on your own initiative, make known to your Presbytery the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this ordination vow?
5. Do you affirm and adopt the “Essentials of Our Faith” without exception?
6. Do you subscribe to the government and discipline of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church?
7. Do you promise subjection to your fellow Presbyters in the Lord?
8. Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the holy ministry from love to God and a sincere desire to promote His glory in the gospel of His Son?
9. Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in promoting the truths of the gospel and the purity and peace of the Church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?

G.13-2C Questions to the congregation.

When the person being ordained has responded affirmatively to these vows, the

²³ For Deacons, the vow is “Do you promise subjection to your fellow church officers in the Lord?” (G.13- 7B)

person presiding shall address the following questions to the congregation:

1. Are you, the members of this congregation ready to receive _____ (*name*) as your _____ (*name of office to which the person is being ordained/installed*)?
2. Do you promise to submit to _____ (*name*) in matters of spiritual discipline, and to receive with humility and love the word of truth?
3. Do you promise to support _____ (*name*) with your prayers, to give encouragement and assistance in every way as _____ (*name*) seeks to instruct you in the things of the Lord and to lead you in the building of the Kingdom of God in this place?
4. Do you commit yourselves to fulfill the terms of the call you have extended and to make provision for _____ (*name*) needs that the name of Christ might be glorified?

G.13-5 Ordination and/or installation of a Pastor in more than one congregation.

When a Pastor is called to a multiple field, it is appropriate that the procedures for ordination and/or installation be conducted in each congregation, or a joint service may be held.

G.21-1C Administrative Commissions.

1. Authority and Responsibilities.

Administrative Commissions are appointed to perform special functions. The functions entrusted to such commissions include, but are not limited to the following:

- a. To ordain Teaching Elders and to install them where appropriate.
- b. To organize, dissolve, dismiss, or receive local churches, or to constitute a mission church.
- c. To serve as a temporary Session of a mission church.
- d. To visit local churches having difficulties or appearing to be failing in their mission, to inquire into and resolve the difficulties therein. If it is necessary that a Session be dissolved, the authority of an Administrative Commission may be limited by actions of the General Assembly.

2. Membership.

Administrative Commissions of a Presbytery and the General Assembly shall be composed of Teaching and Ruling Elders in proportion as near to two Ruling Elders to one Teaching Elder as possible. The minimum numbers and distribution of members shall be:

- a. For the General Assembly, not fewer than three Presbyteries.
- b. For the Presbytery, not fewer than five members, with Ruling Elders representing not fewer than two member churches.

G.21-C3 Quorum.

A commission shall have as its quorum, a minimum of one-half of its membership.

- 02-04.1 Commissions are representative of the Presbytery and give an opportunity for particular churches to appreciate the fact that they are part of a larger Church. Even though the constitutional minimum for commissions is five people from two churches, Presbyteries should give due consideration in forming commissions to make them more broadly representative.

8

Chaplain Endorsement

Chaplain is one of the five varieties of callings within the office of Teaching Elder (G.9-5E). For those Chaplains needing denominational endorsement, the Presbytery MCC, the General Assembly's Chaplains Work and Care Committee, and the EPC Chaplain Endorser work together. Authority to ordain belongs to the Presbytery. Authority to endorse for chaplaincy belongs to the General Assembly. For additional information on the theology of chaplaincy ministry and procedures, see the Chaplains Work and Care Procedure Manual (see www.epc.org/chaplaincy) (12-13; 12-14).²⁴

The General Assembly as Endorsing Agency

Military Chaplains serve as officers in the Armed Forces (non-combatants) and also represent their faith groups. The Department of Defense (DoD) requires that military Chaplains have an endorsement from a recognized religious body or denomination. For Chaplains coming from denominations, the DoD recognizes the national level of the church as the endorsing body. The EPC is a DoD-recognized denomination²⁵ and the General Assembly authorized the Ministerial Vocation Committee (MVC) to design a process for the "proper maintenance of the military chaplaincy program" (83-15). Until 2011, the MVC designated a subcommittee to handle the endorsement process with an MVC member serving as Chairman and the Stated Clerk as the designated Endorser. In 2011, the 31st General Assembly created the Chaplains Work and Care Committee (CWCC) to oversee the endorsement process, develop policies related to Chaplain ministries, and oversee pastoral care of Chaplains (11-13). The Moderator of the General Assembly nominates a denominational Chaplain Endorser (normally a retired Chaplain) who is affirmed by the General Assembly and authorized to represent the denomination to the DoD.²⁶

The Veterans Administration also requires Chaplains to be endorsed. Increasingly, hospitals and other institutions (e.g., federal and some state prison systems) require endorsements. Many hospitals require their Chaplains to be "board certified" by agencies such as The Association of Professional Chaplains (APC). One of the requirements for board certification is endorsement from a recognized religious body or denomination.

Relationship of General Assembly and Presbyteries in the Endorsement Process

The Chaplain endorsement process of the General Assembly runs alongside the ordination and approval of call process in the Presbytery. Good communication between the prospective

²⁴ All *Acts of Assembly* references cited are found at the end of this chapter.

²⁵ The EPC is a member of the National Association of Evangelicals Chaplains Commission, the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces (NCMAF), the Endorsers Conference for Veterans Affairs Chaplaincy (ECVAC), and the Chaplains Alliance for Religious Liberty (12-04).

²⁶ *Rules for Assembly* 10-1L.3: "The Moderator shall nominate to the General Assembly a Teaching Elder to serve as the denomination's Chaplain Endorser for a three-year term, which is renewable. The Endorser will be operationally accountable to the Office of the Stated Clerk."

Chaplain, the Presbytery, the Endorser, and the Office of the General Assembly is essential. The Presbytery, as the ordaining body, speaks to the prospective Chaplain's suitability to be a Teaching Elder in the EPC. The General Assembly, through its Chaplains Work and Care Committee, speaks to the person's qualifications to serve in the specialized calling of Chaplain.

Reception as a Candidate Under Care is a prerequisite for CWCC approval of that person for the military's Chaplain Candidate Program. Ordination as an EPC Teaching Elder (or in certain circumstances, approval for ordination) is a prerequisite for the CWCC's endorsement as a military or institutional Chaplain. Commissioned Pastors may be endorsed as institutional Chaplains, but not as military Chaplains (G.9-11).²⁷

Sometimes, timing of the approval process in the military or the Veteran's Administration requires that the CWCC's endorsement be done prior to the Presbytery's action. In such cases, the CWCC's endorsement is revoked if the Presbytery does not ordain or approve the call to chaplaincy. If a minister is transferring from another denomination with a call as a military Chaplain, the Presbytery must receive a report from the CWCC prior to receiving the minister and approving the call (89-23).

Military Chaplain Candidates

Those not yet ordained and seeking to serve as military Chaplains under the endorsement of the EPC should follow the normal steps of candidacy with their Presbytery described in chapter 4. The Department of Defense (DoD) requires that all Chaplain Candidates hold an Ecclesiastical Approval from a recognized religious body or denomination. Additional DoD requirements include the satisfactory completion of the first semester in a recognized seminary, passing a military medical examination, and passing a check for a security clearance. The CWCC may approve a Candidate Under Care of a Presbytery for the Chaplain Candidate Program in the Armed Forces. This will be done in communication with the candidate's Presbytery. The approval process requires:

1. Military Chaplain Candidate Application, available at www.epc.org/chaplaincy.
2. Personal Information Form.
3. Phone reference checks.
4. Face-to-face interview with a CWCC member or a designee.
5. Phone interview with the CWCC.
6. Approval by the CWCC.

Military Chaplains

Ordination as an EPC Teaching Elder is a prerequisite for the CWCC's endorsement as a military Chaplain. Although there are many variations, a common process is for a Candidate Under Care to first receive approval from the CWCC for the Chaplain Candidate Program and be part of that program while completing ordination requirements (see Military Chaplain Candidates above). Upon ordination, the Chaplain Candidate becomes eligible for endorsement as a Chaplain, typically in the National Guard or Reserves. The military typically requires two years of pastoral

²⁷ All *Book of Order* references cited are found at the end of this chapter.

experience prior to becoming an active duty Chaplain. The endorsement process may run simultaneously with the Presbytery's ordination process and is done in communication with the Presbytery. The endorsement process requires:

1. Military Chaplain Application, available at www.epc.org/chaplaincy.
2. Updated Personal Information Form (PIF).
3. Written reference checks and phone reference checks by the CWCC.
4. An MMPI-3 psychological evaluation. If the MMPI-3 is required by the Presbytery, the prospective Chaplain should arrange for the evaluation letter to be released to the General Assembly's Office of the Stated Clerk.
5. Prepare/Enrich marriage evaluation (if married or engaged). This is required due to the unique stresses that deployments place on marriages.
6. Face-to-face interview with a CWCC member or a designee.
7. Phone interview with the CWCC.
8. Approval by the CWCC.

By definition, a call to serve as a military Chaplain is an out-of-bounds call (**G.10-8B.2(a)**). These Chaplains often qualify for Associate Membership status (**G.10-8B.2(b)**). Chaplains are encouraged to hold membership in the Presbytery in which they may most easily participate (88-07). However, because the nature of military chaplaincy requires frequent moves, common practice has developed to not require those Chaplains to join a new Presbytery and be examined each time they move.

Acts of Assembly 88-07, 99-12 and 11-12 speak to other aspects of military chaplaincy.

Civilian Institutional Chaplains

For institutional chaplaincies that require denominational endorsement, the process is similar:

1. Civilian Chaplain Application, available at www.epc.org/chaplaincy.
2. Current Personal Information Form (PIF).
3. Written reference checks and phone reference checks by the CWCC.
4. Prepare/Enrich Marriage evaluation (if married or engaged).
5. Face-to-face interview with a CWCC member or a designee.
6. Phone interview with the CWCC.
7. Approval by the CWCC.

Some Commissioned Pastors may qualify for approval to serve as institutional Chaplains. Presbytery approval of the Commissioned Pastor and the call is a prerequisite for the CWCC's endorsement.

G.9-5 The office of Teaching Elder.

Within the office of Teaching Elder there are a variety of callings that require ordination. God distributes to each gifts according to the common needs of the Church. These include:

- A. Pastor.
- B. Teacher.
- C. Evangelist.
- D. Administrator.
- E. Chaplain.

A court of the Church, a hospital, the military, institutions, universities, or other appropriate fields of service may call a Teaching Elder as Chaplain if the Presbytery deems it appropriate. In such cases, the Chaplain shall always have as a primary responsibility the sharing of the Good News of God in Jesus Christ. The Presbytery may authorize the Chaplain to administer the sacraments in that role.

G.9-11 A Ruling Elder may be temporarily authorized by Presbytery as a Commissioned Pastor for a congregation without a Pastor to preach the Word, evangelize, moderate a Session, administer the sacraments, perform marriages (if civil law allows), preside at funerals, and provide pastoral care. Presbyteries also may approve and give appropriate powers to a Ruling Elder to serve as a Commissioned Pastor in mission churches, church planting and church revitalization works, or in chaplaincy positions in hospitals, hospices, prisons, or other institutions.

G.10-8B.2 [Calls] from a church or agency outside the bounds of Presbytery.

- a. If a Teaching Elder desires to accept a call outside the jurisdictional or geographic bounds of the approving Presbytery, the Teaching Elder shall present a call from that body to the Presbytery, indicating the nature of the work and the terms of the call. If the Presbytery approves the nature of the work as appropriate to the gospel ministry and requiring ordination, it may approve the call for a definite period of time. After the expiration of that time, the Minister must receive further approval to continue.
- b. If the nature of this call impedes or prevents regular and/or required attendance at Presbytery meetings, the Teaching Elder may be granted the status of Associate Member.

- 83-15 The General Assembly instructs the Ministerial Vocation Committee to proceed to design a process for the proper maintenance of the military chaplaincy program (Minutes, 3-37).
- 88-07 Chaplains are encouraged to hold membership in the Presbytery allowing the greatest participation and most effective ministry (Minutes, 8-41).
- 89-23 Extended active-duty military Chaplains seeking to transfer from other denominations may be received by Presbytery only after a review and report regarding that person's chaplaincy by the Ministerial Vocation Committee (Minutes, 9-36). *The 31st General Assembly moved this responsibility to the Chaplains Work and Care Committee (11-13).*
- 99-12 The Assembly adopts guidelines for EPC military Chaplains leading worship with other faith groups:
While our Chaplains are encouraged to exercise their ministry in the Armed Forces with the maximum of collegiality in cooperation with persons of varying beliefs, the EPC does not approve joint leadership of a worship service with persons representing faith groups outside the historic Christian tradition, as defined by the Apostles' Creed (Minutes, 19-45).
- 11-12 The Assembly approves a policy statement "Ministry Policy for EPC Chaplains for Dealing with Persons Who Practice Homosexual Behavior and Claim Homosexual Identity" (Minutes 31-53). *See the Documents section of the 31st General Assembly Minutes.*
- 11-13 The Assembly creates a permanent Committee on Chaplains Work and Care whose Chairman serves as denominational endorser (Minutes, 31-53).
- 12-04 The Assembly approves joining the Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty as an Associate Member, and approves the EPC's Chaplain Endorser maintaining a membership as an Individual Member (Minutes, 32-41).
- 12-13 The Assembly approves the Chaplains Work and Care Committee Handbook as the Committee's procedure manual (Minutes, 32-56 and "Documents" section).
- 12-14 The Assembly approves the response of the Chaplains Work and Care Committee to the referral from the 30th General Assembly regarding the nature of chaplaincy and authorizes its inclusion in the CWCC Handbook (Minutes, 32-56 and "Documents" section).

Ruling Elder as a Commissioned Pastor

Presbyteries may utilize Commissioned Pastors to provide leadership to mission churches, church planting, and church revitalization works. They may also be approved to serve in some institutional (non-military) chaplaincies. Depending on the qualifications of the person and the nature of the ministry, Presbytery may authorize a Commissioned Pastor to preach, evangelize, moderate a Session, administer sacraments, perform marriages, preside at funerals, and/or provide pastoral care. Commissioned Pastors may serve for a term of up to three years, which is renewable (G.9-11; G.9-11A).²⁸ Although commissioned by the Presbytery, a Commissioned Pastor is not a Teaching Elder and therefore is not an ongoing member of the Presbytery.

The Training, Evaluating and Examining a Commissioned Pastor

Although not required by the *Book of Government*, the responsibility for training, evaluating, and examining potential Commissioned Pastors typically falls to the Ministerial Committee. A Ruling Elder considered for becoming a Commissioned Pastor should have sufficient knowledge and skills to perform as the only Pastor of the church or ministry in need. Minimally, the Ruling Elder should have studied and be well-versed with the material in the *EPC Leadership Training Guide*.

Examining a Commissioned Pastor may include interviews and testing from the questions at the end of each section of the *Leadership Training Guide*. The Presbytery should focus on past experience and specific skills demonstrated relative to how he or she fits with the assignment to be made. Presbyteries are free to develop their own Commissioned Pastor training programs. Other denominations have similar provisions for “lay ministers.” Such individuals must first become Ruling Elders in the EPC. At that point they are eligible to be examined by the Presbytery for service as a Commissioned Pastor (G.9-11C).

Commissioning of a Commissioned Pastor

Upon the authorization of a Commissioned Pastor, the Presbytery has the responsibility to conduct an appropriate commissioning service, either directly or through an Administrative Commission (G.9-11F). The Presbytery assigns a Teaching Elder to each Commissioned Pastor to serve as a supervisor and mentor and to assist in writing an annual report to the Presbytery (G.9-11D).

²⁸ All *Book of Order* references cited are found at the end of this chapter.

G.9-11 The Ruling Elder as a Commissioned Pastor.

A Ruling Elder may be temporarily authorized by a Presbytery as a Commissioned Pastor for a congregation without a Pastor to preach the Word, evangelize, moderate a Session, administer the sacraments, perform marriages (if civil law allows), preside at funerals, and provide pastoral care. Presbyteries also may approve and give appropriate powers to a Ruling Elder to serve as a Commissioned Pastor in mission churches, church planting and church revitalization works, or in chaplaincy positions in hospitals, hospices, prisons, or other institutions.

- A. Authorization shall be for a term up to three years and may be renewed. Such authorization shall specify those powers granted and shall stipulate in which church(es) or ministry contexts those powers are authorized. Such powers shall be exercised only in those contexts.
- B. Potential Commissioned Pastors shall be examined by the Presbytery and found to have sufficient knowledge in the areas in which they will be serving.
- C. A Ruling Elder previously commissioned as a lay pastor by another Reformed body may become a Commissioned Pastor as deemed appropriate by the Presbytery and subject to the same requirements of the EPC Commissioned Pastor.
- D. Presbytery shall assign a Teaching Elder to each Commissioned Pastor as supervisor to act as mentor and to assist the Commissioned Pastor in writing an annual report to Presbytery.
- E. Presbytery may terminate the authorization to serve as a Commissioned Pastor at any time prior to the expiration of the commission.
- F. Upon authorization of a Commissioned Pastor, the Presbytery shall administer the vows of commissioning below either immediately or through an Administrative Commission at a designated time.
 1. Do you now reaffirm the vows you took upon your ordination as a Ruling Elder and do you recommit yourself to them in the discharge of your obligations as a Commissioned Pastor?
 2. Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in promoting the truths of the gospel and the purity and peace of the Church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise to you on that account?
 3. Will you seek to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all your duties as Commissioned Pastor whether personal or relative, private or public; and to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the gospel in your manner of life, and to walk with exemplary piety before this congregation of which God will make you an officer?
 4. Are you now willing to take responsibility in the life of this congregation/in this ministry as a Commissioned Pastor, and will you seek to discharge your duties relying upon the grace of God, in such a way that the entire Church of Jesus Christ will be blessed?

The Ministerial Committee of the Presbytery is responsible for providing oversight, support, and counsel for ministers in their respective Presbyteries (G.21-2D).²⁹ The Committee also is responsible to give oversight, guidance, and advice to Sessions in matters related to the work of the minister.

Active Teaching Elders

The Ministerial Committee shall maintain communication with all of the active Teaching Elders in the Presbytery and shall make an annual report to the Presbytery regarding the work of each Teaching Elder (G.21-2D.1(e)). This includes a report on those Teaching Elders approved for labor outside the bounds of the Presbytery. This annual report on the active Teaching Elders may include the following information: name, church, length of ministry, key responsibilities, accomplishments during the past year, new responsibilities, concerns, and problems in the ministry (see the “Annual Report on Teaching Elders” form, available on page 115).

The Committee also is responsible for an annual review of remuneration of ministers, consulting with Sessions when necessary and may recommend to the Presbytery the minimum terms for a call. All requests for changes in terms of call come to the Presbytery through the Ministerial Committee (G.21-2D.1(f)).

The General Assembly has made provisions to assist in medical care of ministers in special situations. *Acts of the Assembly* 89-15 and 90-16³⁰ provide guidance.

Inactive Teaching Elders

When a minister is on Inactive status, “all rights and privileges granted by ordination are temporarily set aside” (G.14-3). Therefore, during Inactive status, the services performed by the minister cannot be regarded by the EPC as within the exercise of EPC ministry for tax purposes. Accordingly, the minister may not be eligible for any tax benefits or exemptions generally made available to ministers of the gospel under federal law by reason of affiliation with the EPC.

Because “all rights and privileges granted by ordination are temporarily set aside” for ministers on Inactive status, services performed by the minister during his or her Inactive status will not be subject to EPC supervision in any way. Further, the minister is not an agent of the EPC in an ecclesiastical or any other capacity during his Inactive status. As a result, the EPC cannot be construed as legally liable for any action of ministers on Inactive status. During the period of inactivity, the minister’s ecclesiastical and legal relationship with the EPC shall ordinarily be understood as non-existent.

²⁹ All *Book of Order* references cited are found at the end of this chapter.

³⁰ All *Acts of Assembly* references cited are found at the end of this chapter.

Retired Teaching Elders

A Teaching Elder who is retired remains a full member of his or her Presbytery unless action is taken to put the minister on Inactive status or on the roll of Associate Members. The Ministerial Committee is responsible for making an annual review of its retired members in order to evaluate their income and to seek to rectify any deficiencies. This review is to be included in the annual review of ministers (G.15-1).

At the request of the retired Teaching Elder (within two years of being placed on the Retired roll), the Presbytery may place that Teaching Elder on the roll of Associate Members (G.15-2C). After two years, the retired Teaching Elder is automatically placed on the Associate Member roll unless the Presbytery acts to make an exception, which it may do annually (G.19-2B.1(a)). An Associate Member has voice but not vote in meetings of the Presbytery and General Assembly, is eligible to serve on committees, but is not eligible to serve as an officer and is not counted for purposes of parity of Teaching and Ruling Elders. An Associate Member retains all the rights and privileges of ordination (G.19-2B).³¹

Teaching Elders with Calls Outside the Bounds of Presbytery

A Teaching Elder may be called as Pastor, Teacher, Evangelist, Administrator, or Chaplain (G.9-5) to a ministry outside the direct authority of a court of the Church. After being fully satisfied that the ministry is consistent with one of the callings within the office of Teaching Elder, the Presbytery may grant permission for the Minister to labor outside of bounds (G.10- 8B.2). The “Call to a Validated Ministry Outside the Bounds of Presbytery” form, available on page 115, provides Presbyteries with a means of becoming a formal third party to a call. Presbyteries are urged to take this role seriously in the mutual accountability between the governing body and its members. The form is the tool by which Presbyteries evidence their concern for the ministry to be performed, to outline its expectations of the minister, and, where appropriate, to consult with the calling agency as an advocate for the minister as to ecclesiastical matters. Prior to accepting a call, the minister shall contact the Presbytery in which membership is sought and provide the Ministerial Committee with a Position Description. The Ministerial Committee, guided by the four criteria outlined on the form, shall determine if the ministry ought to be validated. If the ministry is validated (G.9-6A), a call shall be issued. This call shall be reviewed and renewed annually by the Presbytery.

General Considerations

If the outside-of-bounds call comes from a church or agency located within a different Presbytery than the one in which the Teaching Elder is a member, normally the Teaching Elder transfers to that Presbytery. In some cases it may be advisable for the Teaching Elder to retain membership in his or her Presbytery while laboring outside of boundaries in another. This is a common situation for military Chaplains, who move frequently due to the nature of their calling. If that is the case, the Teaching Elder must receive the consent of both Presbyteries (G.9-6B).

Teaching Elders serving out of bounds whose callings prevent them from active participation in

³¹ See the section “Presbytery Membership” in chapter 3 for more information on the Retired roll and Associate Members.

their Presbyteries may be placed on the Associate Member roll (G.19-2B.1(a)) at the request of the Teaching Elder, approval of the Ministerial Committee, and by a two-thirds majority vote of the Presbytery. After two years, the Teaching Elder serving out of bounds “serving in a capacity which prevents regular and/or required attendance” is automatically moved to the inactive roll unless the Presbytery acts to make an exception, which it may do annually (G.19-2B.1(a)). The calling agency and the Presbytery are responsible to complete the form, “Call to a Validated Ministry Outside the Bounds of Presbytery,” available on page 115. The call to a ministry outside the bounds of the Presbytery is reviewed and renewed annually. It should not be renewed when it is determined that the member’s calling is not consistent with the office of Teaching Elder.

When an outside-of-bounds call is not approved and the Teaching Elder persists in that call, the procedures in G.10-8B.2 and G.14-3 apply and the Teaching Elder is placed on the inactive roll.

Limitations

Teaching Elders laboring out of bounds are by definition “serving outside the authority of a court of the Church” (G.9-6A) and “outside the structures of the Church” (G.10-8A.3). Therefore, they serve under the ecclesiastical but not the legal authority of the EPC. They cannot, therefore, act as an agent of the EPC in the legal sense. They cannot exercise any authority to bind the EPC to any contracts or agreements, nor can they commit the EPC to fulfill any other legal obligations.

Teaching Elders serving outside of bounds are employed by the calling agency, not by the EPC. They will not be subject to the supervision of the EPC with respect to time, place, or manner of ministry. Any financial relationships or legal accountability regarding their ministry will be undertaken solely through the calling agency. Accountability to the EPC relates solely to spiritual and ecclesiastical matters. The Presbytery is the court of original jurisdiction (D.3-2B) for any matters requiring action under the *Book of Discipline*.

Internal Revenue Service regulations state that eligibility to claim any special tax benefits or privileges available to the minister of the gospel under federal law may be jeopardized if any of the following apply to a ministry:

1. The calling agency did not arrange with the EPC for the minister’s services.
2. The minister performs services for the calling agency that other employees of the calling agency who are not ministers are performing.
3. The minister performs the same services before and after obtaining permission from the EPC to labor out of bounds.

Missionaries and the Out-of-Bounds Status

EPC ministers who serve as missionaries overseas are in a unique position because of their geographical distance from EPC Presbyteries. Some Teaching Elders are EPC World Outreach global workers serving under the direct oversight of EPC World Outreach, and some serve in cooperative agreements with other agencies. Those EPC Teaching Elders serving under the direct oversight of EPC World Outreach are under both the legal and the ecclesiastical authority of the denomination. Although they may not be serving in the geographic boundaries of an EPC Presbytery, they are within the jurisdictional bounds of the denomination and are not considered laboring outside of bounds (99-10).

Ordained EPC missionaries who serve under the direct oversight of some other mission agency are serving “out of bounds” (G.10-8B.2; G.10-9). They serve under the ecclesiastical, but not under the legal authority of the EPC. Their legal relationship lies with the agency under whose direct supervision they serve. This relationship with their primary mission agency is understood as the legal relationship which governs their ministry.

Annual Reviews and Reports

The Ministerial Committee has responsibility for conducting annual reviews for all ministers in the Presbytery, including Pastors classified as active, inactive, retired, and serving out of bounds. All annual reviews shall be conducted sensitively and with a sufficient amount of time being provided for the minister to share information reflecting areas of accomplishment, disappointment, expectation, and need.

The Ministerial Committee shall submit year-end written reports to the Presbytery covering actions in all its areas of responsibility and any evaluations made during the year according to the following categories:

1. Report on the work of the ministers of the Word (G.21-2D.1(e)).
2. Annual review of the remuneration of Teaching Elders (G.21-2D.1(f)).
2. Report on ministers laboring outside the boundaries of Presbytery (G.21-2D.1(e)).
3. Report on the progress of the candidates of the Presbytery (G.21-2D.1(ab)).
4. Report on ministers over age 70 serving in pastoral ministry (G.14-1D).

A model reporting form, “Annual Report on Teaching Elders,” is available on page 115 as an aid to Ministerial Committees in their reporting responsibilities.

Compensation

The minister’s salary and benefits are an area of concern for the Ministerial Committee. Annual review of the adequacy of compensation and the advocacy of an organized compensation plan to improve inadequate salaries should have a high priority in every Presbytery (83-01).

Retirement and Benefits

The Ministerial Committee should encourage each minister to have a working knowledge of retirement plans. In particular, Teaching Elders should be aware that contributions to the EPC Retirement Plan may be designated for housing allowance following retirement. Detailed information may be secured from the EPC Benefit Resources, Inc. (BRI) Board of Directors, and if desired, independent financial counsel.

The EPC has adopted a self-funding health insurance plan (84-08). The plan requires all EPC ministers serving EPC churches to participate. Employees who meet minimum requirements may participate in the plan as well (87-12).

Terms of Call

The Ministerial Committee is responsible for reviewing the terms of call of all Pastors (Pastor, Associate Pastor, and Assistant Pastor) (G.21-2D.1(f)). The Ministerial Committee may rec-

commend to a Presbytery minimum terms for the call of a minister ((G.21-2D.1(f)). Requests to a Presbytery for a change in the terms of call shall also be reviewed by the Ministerial Committee before it recommends these changes to the Presbytery (G.21-2D.1(f)). At the time that the Presbytery approves a call of a Teaching Elder, the entire package is reviewed. Subsequent annual reports to the Presbytery need only report the change in terms of call (11-08; 12-11). A Presbytery may commit the authority to approve terms of call to an Administrative Commission, provided that it meets the stipulations of G.21-1.

Outside of Bounds

The Ministerial Committee shall maintain contact with all Teaching Elders laboring outside the bounds of Presbytery and assure that these individuals submit their annual reports to the Presbytery. Outside-of-bounds calls are subject to annual review and approval (G.9-6A; G.10-8AB).

Teaching Elders Without Call

The Ministerial Committee shall maintain contact with Teaching Elders without call and confer with them regularly regarding their sense of call and expectations for future ministry. The committee is responsible to recommend to the Presbytery whether that minister should remain on Active status or be placed on the Inactive status roll. After two years without call, Teaching Elders are automatically placed on the Associate Member roll unless the Presbytery acts to make an exception, which it may do annually (G.14-3B.2; G.19-2B.1(a)).

Retired Ministers

The Presbytery, through the Ministerial Committee, is responsible for making an annual review of its retired members to be sure of their welfare and to rectify any deficiencies. Communication between Presbytery Ministerial Committees will help ensure care of retired ministers who change residence in retirement (G.15-1C).

Ministers over Age 70

Ministers over the age of 70 serving in any capacity in the Church may continue to serve in their present capacity with the annual approval of the church session and the Presbytery (G.14-1D).

Ministers over age 70 serving as Stated Supply or Occasional Supply may be approved to serve for up to one year (G.14-1D).

Dissolution of Pastoral Relationships

Only the Presbytery has authority to dissolve pastoral relationships. This authority may be given to the Ministerial Committee when both the congregation and Pastor are in agreement (G.14-1A). Normally, the initiative to dissolve a pastoral relationship comes from the Pastor or Associate Pastor when receiving another call. However, the Session may also initiate the request for dissolution (G.14-1B). If the congregation and Pastor (or Associate Pastor) do not concur in the request for dissolution, then the Presbytery makes the final decision (G.14-1C). Normally, such recommendation comes to the Presbytery by way of the Ministerial Committee, or the Presbytery establishes an Administrative Commission to make the decision (G.21-1). There have been rare occasions, usually when there is irremediable conflict, when Presbyteries have utilized their authority to dissolve pastoral relationships and active relationships of Ruling

Elders on their own initiative (typically through an Administrative Commission) (G.21-1).

When the Pastor Initiates Dissolution

Before informing the Session or congregation of an intention to request dissolution of the pastoral relationship, the Pastor must first consult with the Ministerial Committee (G.14-1B). The Pastor should then inform the Session and the Session will call a congregational meeting as soon as possible, observing the required two Sundays notice (G.7-2; G.14-1) for the purpose of deciding whether to concur in the Pastor's request for dissolution. One of the Sundays in the "two Sundays notice" may be the Sunday of the meeting itself. The same provision applies to Associate Pastors. Since an Assistant Pastor is called by the Session, the resignation of an Assistant Pastor before the term of service expires does not require a congregational meeting. Usually a minister initiates dissolution of the pastoral relationship in order to respond to a call to serve in another pastorate or ministry. If the minister will not be serving within the church as a minister or in some other ministry approved by the EPC in the near future, the minister may request to be placed on Inactive status by the Presbytery. After one year on Active status without call, the Presbytery may consider placing the minister on Inactive status. If the minister is actively seeking another call to ministry, the Presbytery may keep the minister on the Active roll (G.14-3).

The congregation has the right to refuse to concur with the minister's request. If it does not concur, it shall appoint representatives to explain its reasons to the Presbytery (G.14-1C), which has the sole authority to make the decision (G.14-1A). The Presbytery may determine if it wishes to hear the matter as a whole court, or commit the matter to the Ministerial Committee for a recommendation, or appoint a Commission to make the decision. Whatever the means, both congregation and Pastor/Associate Pastor should be heard.

When the Session Initiates Dissolution

A Session on its own initiative may call a congregational meeting to present a recommendation to dissolve a pastoral relationship. These situations are rare, and normally the result of conflict between the Pastor/Associate Pastor, Session, and/or congregation. A Session should not reach this point lightly, and only after many attempts to resolve the situation (see the sections on Crisis Intervention and Conflict Management on page 90).

Severance Pay

When the Pastor or Associate Pastor does not initiate the dissolution, severance pay often becomes part of the discussion. There is no mandate to provide severance pay, but often is appropriate because the Pastor or Associate Pastor has not been preparing for a change of call. There have been a few situations in which severance pay is agreed to as part of the initial terms of call. In a few other situations, Sessions have included severance pay policies in their personnel manuals. If severance pay is not part of terms of call, it is considered to be a contractual arrangement between the Session and the Teaching Elder. While the Presbytery may advise, it does not need to approve.

Dissolving Assistant Pastor Relationships

In the case of an Assistant Pastor, the Session is the calling body and its call comes with specified responsibilities and a term of service (G.10-6A). The call to the Assistant Pastor expires at the end of the specified term. The Session has a moral responsibility to give the Assistant Pastor

sufficient notice (at least six months) of its intention to let the term expire, renew the term (with or without a change in responsibilities), or seek the congregation's approval in calling the Assistant Pastor as Associate Pastor. Renewing the term is a change of terms of call, requiring Presbytery approval (G.21-2D.1(f)). Calling an Assistant Pastor as an Associate Pastor is a change of call, requiring Presbytery approval and a service of installation (G.10-6B). If Session decides to dissolve the call of an Assistant Pastor before the term is complete, it may only do so with the concurrence of the Presbytery (G.10-6A).

Teaching Elders Reaching Age 70

When a Teaching Elder reaches the age of 70, the relationship in which that Teaching Elder is serving is automatically dissolved (G.14-1D). The minister may continue in the same relationship if elected by the congregation and approved by the Session and Presbytery on an annual basis (G.14-1D.1). If the Teaching Elder wishes to take another call after age 70, the Presbytery may approve, but a two-thirds majority is required (G.14-1D.2).

Report of Procedures to Presbytery

When a pastoral relationship is dissolved, the Clerk of Session should send a certified transcript of the minutes of the congregational meeting to the Ministerial Committee Chair and the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery. The Ministerial Committee, if previously authorized, may make final disposition of the matter if parties are in concurrence or make a recommendation to the Presbytery.

Transfer and Dismissal

Most transitions in the ministry of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church result from a Teaching Elder's acceptance of a call to a church. When the call comes from a church in another Presbytery, the Teaching Elder normally requests dismissal to and reception by the new Presbytery at the same time. The receiving Presbytery must conduct a background check (see page 35). Transferring Presbytery membership is only complete when dismissal from one Presbytery and reception by the new Presbytery have been approved.

A call from a congregation is not effective until the minister has been examined and the call and terms of call from the congregation have been approved. The call may only be officially placed in the minister's hands by the Presbytery of which that minister is a member (G.10-8B.1(b)).

The Stated Clerks of each Presbytery should communicate the actions of their Presbyteries to each other writing (G.10-8C.2), as well as to the Office of the General Assembly using the "Record of Change for Teaching Elder's Status and Ministry" form available on page 116. Appendix B on page 114 of this Manual has checklists and sample motions that may be used to be sure all mandated procedures are followed and recorded properly.

Pastoral Care of Congregations

In its relationship to the local churches, the Ministerial Committee:

1. Shall counsel with churches in securing Pastor(s) (G.21-2D.2(a)).
2. Shall recommend to the Presbytery a minister to serve as Moderator of the church Session if the church is without a Pastor and work with congregations in securing pulpit supply (G.21-2D.2(b)).

3. Shall consult with local churches receiving aid from the Presbytery, and shall make recommendations to the Presbytery regarding that aid (unless these responsibilities have been committed to another committee) (G.21-2D.2(c)).
4. If authorized by the Presbytery, may serve as a Judicial or Administrative Commission.

Crisis Intervention

Although no complaint may have been received, if in the judgment of the Ministerial Committee a particular congregation may be having difficulties or appears to be failing in its mission, the committee has the authority to investigate and to make recommendations to the Presbytery (G.21-2D.2(d)).

Conflict Management

Every Ministerial Committee should strive to develop the ability to discern early warning signs of conflict within individuals as well as within groups inside the local church. Much of the church's pain over conflict could be diminished or even avoided if committees were more sensitive to early warnings.

Relocation

In working with Teaching Elders who want or need to relocate, the Ministerial Committee should take a highly supportive role that can include the following:

- A. Exploring with the minister the type of call best suited to his or her gifts and needs at the time. Ministers often need guidance in order to be realistic about career goals and job prospects.
- B. Advising on the preparation of the Personal Information Form or reviewing the form when completed. Personal Information Forms should be kept current. A fillable PDF of the current version of the Personal Information Form is available on the EPC website at www.epc.org/downloads.
- C. Explaining how the call system works.
- D. Phoning or writing Ministerial Committees in other Presbyteries on behalf of the minister who wants to move.
- E. Encouraging the minister to practice interviewing skills with a colleague.
- F. Keeping in touch with the minister throughout the process.

G.7-2 Notice of meeting.

At least two Sundays notice shall be given. The meeting may be conducted on the same day the second notice is given. The purpose of the meeting must be stated in the call.

G.9-6 Teaching Elders serving outside of Presbytery bounds.

- A. Whenever a Teaching Elder is called to one of the positions provided for under G.9-5 by an agency that is outside the jurisdiction of a court of the Church, and after being fully satisfied that the ministry is consistent with the calling to the ministry of the Word, the Presbytery may grant permission for the minister to labor outside of its jurisdictional bounds. Such permission is renewable annually. The Teaching Elder shall make an annual report to the Presbytery of faithfulness to the gospel. The Teaching Elder serving out of bounds shall be diligent to serve actively in the Court. If the particular call prohibits such service, the Teaching Elder should seek Associate Member status.
- B. In the event that the outside-of-bounds ministry falls within the geographic boundaries of a Presbytery in which the Teaching Elder is not a member, the Teaching Elder shall seek the advice and obtain the approval of both Presbyteries.

G.10-2 The right of calling may never be taken away or conditioned for non-Scriptural reasons. This right is inalienable and may not be changed. At the same time, a Church Court also has the inalienable right not to approve an individual for reasons the Court determines to be proper and in keeping with Scripture.

G.10-6 The call of an Assistant Pastor by a Session.

- A. A Session, in consultation with the Ministerial Committee of a Presbytery, may call an Assistant Pastor. The call of the Session shall be for a definite period of time and is renewable. The call of an Assistant Pastor may be terminated by the Session prior to that time only with the consent and approval of the Presbytery. The call shall stipulate the primary responsibilities to be exercised by the Assistant Pastor. The call of the Session shall always conform with the Acts of the General Assembly and follow the form approved by an appropriate committee of the General Assembly.
- B. A Session, by a three-fourths vote and with the approval of Presbytery's Ministerial Committee, may recommend to the congregation that an Assistant Pastor of the local church be called as an Associate Pastor without a Search Committee being elected. The call as Associate Pastor must be approved by the Presbytery and an installation service shall be conducted by the Presbytery or by its appointed Commission.

G.10-8 Calls approved by the Presbytery.

A. Source of calls.

1. From a local church within the geographic bounds of the Presbytery, as modified by the inclusion or exclusion of churches according to the provision of **G.5-7** and **G.5-8**.
2. From a denominational court or agency.
If some court or agency of the denomination issues a call to a Teaching Elder, the calling body shall issue a call that conforms with the Acts of the General Assembly and follows the form approved by an appropriate committee of the General Assembly. The approving Presbytery shall proceed in a similar fashion for approving a call to a local church, except the commission to install may be omitted.
3. From outside the geographic and/or jurisdictional bounds of the Presbytery.
A Teaching Elder called by a church or agency outside the bounds of the Presbytery remains under the jurisdiction of the Presbytery.

B. Process for approving calls.

1. From within the geographic and jurisdictional bounds of the Presbytery.
 - a. Having determined that the person is suitable for the call, that the good of the whole Church shall be served, and that the person being called accepts the call, it shall inform the minister, Teaching Elder, or candidate of its approval and proceed to place the call in the hands of said person.
 - b. A call may be placed in the hands of a Teaching Elder or candidate only by the Presbytery in which that person is being called.
 - c. The Presbytery shall appoint a commission according to the stipulations .. of **G.21-1B.2** to proceed with ordination and/or installation.
 - d. The Teaching Elder is enrolled in the Presbytery upon the Presbytery's approval of the examinations and call and upon signing the ministerial obligation (**G.19-4B.4**).
2. From a church or agency outside the bounds of Presbytery.
 - a. If a Teaching Elder desires to accept a call outside the jurisdictional or geographic bounds of the approving Presbytery, the Teaching Elder shall present a call from that body to the Presbytery, indicating the nature of the work and the terms of the call. If the Presbytery approves the nature of the work as appropriate to the gospel ministry and requiring ordination, it may approve the call for a definite period of time. After the expiration of that time, the Minister must receive further approval to continue.
 - b. If the nature of this call impedes or prevents regular and/or required attendance at Presbytery meetings, the Teaching Elder may be granted the status of Associate Member.
 - c. In the event that the call outside of bounds falls within the geographic boundaries of a Presbytery of which the Teaching Elder is not a member, the Teaching Elder shall obtain the approval of both Presbyteries.

C. Transfer.

1. Teaching Elder transferring from another EPC Presbytery or other church

body. The receiving Presbytery shall not enroll that Teaching Elder without an approved call unless the minister is retired and being enrolled as an Associate Member.

2. Official communication regarding transfer. The dismissing church body shall be informed by the receiving Presbytery for the purpose of taking appropriate action. The Presbyteries shall deal directly with each other through their Stated Clerks in certifying both the call of the church and the credentials of the minister, Teaching Elder, or candidate.

G.10-9 Call Disapproved by Presbytery.

In the event a Teaching Elder accepts a call disapproved by Presbytery, that Teaching Elder shall be placed on Inactive status.

G.12-3B Examination of non-EPC ordained Ministers.

1. Examination of an ordained minister from another Reformed denomination: A minister seeking to become a Teaching Elder in a Presbytery of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church from another denomination from within the Reformed family shall present credentials of education required by those seeking ordination in the EPC. The minister shall be examined on views and beliefs in the same fashion as one transferring from one Presbytery to another within the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.
2. Examination of ministers from non-Reformed Traditions: A minister presenting current and valid ordination credentials from any other ecclesiastical tradition shall be examined in the same manner as a candidate for ordination.

G.14-1 The dissolution of a pastoral relationship.

A. Authority to dissolve a pastoral relationship

A Presbytery has the sole authority to dissolve a pastoral relationship. The Presbytery may authorize the Ministerial Committee to dissolve pastoral relationships and dismiss ministers when both the congregation and the Pastor or Associate Pastor concur in the dissolution.

B. Initiative to dissolve a pastoral relationship.

Either the Teaching Elder or a Session may initiate a request for dissolution of the pastoral relationship. Either party shall first consult with the Ministerial Committee before making a request to the congregation. A congregational meeting shall be duly called and the congregation requested to concur with the Pastor, Associate Pastor, or the Session in the request for dissolution of the pastoral relationship.

C. When a party declines to concur in dissolving a pastoral relationship.

When any party declines to concur in the dissolution of a pastoral relation, the congregation shall appoint representatives to the Presbytery to explain its action. The Presbytery, or an Administrative Commission appointed for this purpose, having consulted with the Pastor and duly appointed representatives, shall then be the sole judge of whether or not to dissolve the relationship.

D. Dissolution by reason of age.

When a Teaching Elder serving in any capacity in the Church reaches age 70, that relationship shall be terminated. The Teaching Elder is obligated to notify the Presbytery six months prior to his or her 70th birthday.

1. Annual renewal of the pastoral relationship or call after age 70.

The Teaching Elder who is age 70 or older is eligible, at his or her initiative, to be reelected annually in the same relationship with the approval of the calling body, the Session, and the Presbytery. When such a call is renewed, no installation is necessary.

2. Receiving a new call past age 70.

A Presbytery, on recommendation of the Ministerial Committee, may approve a new call for the Teaching Elder who is age 70 or older by a two-thirds vote. That Teaching Elder is eligible to be re-elected in this new relationship yearly with the approval of the calling body and Presbytery.

3. Serving in temporary pastoral relationships after age 70.

A Teaching Elder who is past age 70 is eligible to serve in a temporary pastoral relationship for a period of up to one year as approved by the Presbytery. The Presbytery may authorize the Ministerial Committee to serve as an Administrative Commission to establish such relationships.

G.14-3 Removal of an officer to Inactive Membership status.

A. Inactive Membership status.

When an officer is placed on Inactive Membership status, all rights and privileges granted by ordination are temporarily set aside, including the right to vote and participate in the meetings of the Church Courts.

B. Special provisions for removing Teaching Elders to Inactive Membership status.

1. Removal at the Teaching Elder's initiative.

- a. When a Teaching Elder accepts a call disapproved by the Presbytery, the Presbytery shall place the Teaching Elder on Inactive status.
- b. A Teaching Elder may, for reasons deemed valid by the Presbytery, request be placed on Inactive Membership status. If the Presbytery concurs, the Teaching Elder shall be placed on such status. After at least one year, the Teaching Elder may request the Presbytery to restore him or her to Active Membership status. The Presbytery, after careful deliberation, may do so provided the Teaching Elder has a valid call that Presbytery approves, or provided the Teaching Elder is being transferred to another Presbytery in order to receive a call.

2. Removal at the Presbytery's initiative.

When the Teaching Elder who is not retired has been without approved call for a period of one year, the Ministerial Committee shall confer with the Teaching Elder as to the Teaching Elder's continued sense of call and expectations for future ministry. The committee will then recommend to the Presbytery whether the Teaching Elder should remain on Active Membership status in the Presbytery or be placed on Inactive Membership status. The Presbytery,

at its discretion and after judicious consideration, may place the minister on the Inactive status roll involuntarily provided the vote to do so is by a two-thirds majority.

3. Limit for Inactive status.

A limit of 5 years shall be placed on the time during which a Teaching Elder on Inactive status who is not retired shall remain on the roll of the Presbytery. After five years, the Presbytery has the right to remove that minister from office without sanction.

G.15-1 The retirement of a Teaching Elder.

A. Eligibility for retirement.

A Teaching Elder may request to be placed on the Retired roll of the Presbytery due to age, infirmity, or other debilitating condition.

B. Recognition of retirement.

If the Presbytery concurs, a service of appreciation and thanksgiving should be conducted, either at the meeting of the Presbytery or at the place of service of the retiring Teaching Elder. Ordinarily, a Presbytery shall appoint a special commission to conduct this service and a record of it inserted in the minutes of the Presbytery.

C. Pastoral care of retired Teaching Elders.

The Presbytery shall be responsible for making an annual review of its retired members to be sure of their welfare and to rectify any deficiencies. Such annual review shall be reported to the court and recorded in its minutes.

D. Upon reaching age 70.

When a Teaching Elder reaches age 70, special conditions apply as prescribed in G.14-1D.

G.15-2C Associate Member status.

A retired Teaching Elder may be granted the status of Associate Member as defined in G.19-2B.1. A retired minister may be received from another Presbytery or another Reformed denomination as an Associate Member.

G.19-2B Non-voting Members of Presbytery.

1. Associate Member Teaching Elders.

a. Qualifications.

The Presbytery shall establish a roll of Associate Members. A Teaching Elder who is retired or serving in a capacity outside of bounds which may impede or prevent regular and/or required attendance at Presbytery meetings may, upon request, within two years of this change in call be granted the status of Associate Member. Those who are retired, serving in a capacity which prevents regular and/or required attendance, or those without a Presbytery approved call for two years will automatically be placed on the Associate Membership roll. Presbytery, by two-thirds vote, may exempt a minister from becoming an Associate Member for one year. This exemption may be granted

to the minister on an annual basis. Presbyteries may, by two-thirds vote, receive a retired minister from another Reformed body as an Associate Member, following the normal process of examination.

b. Rights and Restrictions.

Associate Members are entitled to serve with voice and vote on all committees of the Presbytery and General Assembly. Associate Members are entitled to serve with voice but not vote on commissions to ordain and install Pastors and to receive churches. Associate Members shall have voice but not vote at all Presbytery and General Assembly meetings. Associate Members are not eligible to serve as officers of any court but do retain all rights and privileges of ordination and are to be afforded the same pastoral care as Active Members.

c. Temporary pastoral relationships.

Any Associate Member called to serve as Stated Supply or Supply shall automatically be returned to Active Membership status during such service.

d. Return to Active status.

An Associate Member may request to be placed on Active status. The Presbytery may do so upon recommendation by the Ministerial Committee and provided the minister has a call the Presbytery approves, or provided the minister is being transferred to another body in order to receive a call.

e. Transfer of Associate Members.

Associate Members, against whom no charges are pending, may transfer with the same status to another Presbytery, following the normal examination process.

2. Inactive Teaching Elders.

3. Retired (Inactive) Teaching Elders.

4. Teaching Elders under the sanction of suspension from office.

G. 21-1 Committees and Commissions.

A. Definitions.

1. A committee is appointed by a court to study a matter and make recommendations back to the appointing body, or to carry out decisions already made. It shall then make written reports to the court that created it.
2. A commission is appointed to act for the appointing court. The appointing court shall state specifically the powers and duration given to a commission. The only permanent commission is the Permanent Judicial Commission. A commission shall make a written report of its actions which shall then be inserted in the minutes of the appointing court and be regarded as the actions of the court itself.

C. Administrative Commissions.

1. Authority and Responsibilities.

Administrative Commissions are appointed to perform special functions. The functions entrusted to such commissions include, but are not limited to the following:

- a. To ordain Teaching Elders and to install them where appropriate.

- b. To organize, dissolve, dismiss, or receive local churches, or to constitute a mission church.
 - c. To serve as a temporary Session of a mission church.
 - d. To visit local churches having difficulties or appearing to be failing in their mission, to inquire into and resolve the difficulties therein. If it is necessary that a Session be dissolved, the authority of an Administrative Commission may be limited by actions of the General Assembly.
2. Membership.

Administrative Commissions of a Presbytery and General Assembly shall be composed of Teaching and Ruling Elders in proportion as near to two Ruling Elders to one Teaching Elder as possible. The minimum numbers and distribution of members shall be:

- b. For the Presbytery, not fewer than five members, with Ruling Elders representing not fewer than two member churches.

G.21-2D [Ministerial Committee] Authority and Responsibilities.

1. With regard to Teaching Elders and Candidates.
 - a. It shall have the oversight of candidates for the gospel ministry of the Presbytery, although the Presbytery may assign this function to some other committee.
 - b. It shall confer with each Teaching Elder desiring to become a member of the Presbytery, or candidate desiring ordination.
 - c. It shall conduct any examination and assessment it deems necessary in order to make a decision for its recommendation to the Presbytery concerning the application.
 - d. It shall conduct the examination by the Presbytery of the applicant according to the *Book of Government*.
 - e. It shall report annually on the work of the Teaching Elders to the Presbytery, along with any recommendations it might have. This includes an annual report from those Teaching Elders approved for labor outside the bounds of the Presbytery.
 - f. The committee shall be responsible for an annual review of remuneration of Teaching Elders, shall consult with Sessions if deemed necessary concerning such remuneration, and may recommend to the Presbytery minimum terms for the call of Teaching Elders. Requests to the Presbytery for a change in the terms of call shall come through this committee.
 - g. It shall review each request for dissolution of a pastoral relationship, and make a recommendation to the Presbytery.
2. With regard to local churches.
 - a. It shall counsel with local churches in securing Pastor(s). Calls shall always be placed in the hands of this committee, who shall then make its recommendation to the Presbytery. No call to a Pastor may be issued by a congregation that has not first consulted with the committee.
 - b. It shall recommend to the Presbytery a Teaching Elder to serve as Moderator

of the Session, and shall work with a congregation in securing pulpit supply. The Presbytery may authorize the Ministerial Committee to appoint, with concurrence of the Session, an Interim Moderator of the Session.

- c. The committee, or a Presbytery designated alternate committee, shall consult with local churches receiving aid from the Presbytery and shall make recommendations to the Presbytery concerning that aid.
- d. Although no complaint may have been received, if in the judgment of the committee a local church may be having difficulties or appears to be failing in its mission, the committee has the authority to investigate and to make recommendations to the Presbytery.
- e. Presbytery may authorize the Ministerial Committee to serve as a Judicial or Administrative Commission. The committee also may be appointed as an ongoing Administrative Commission to:
 - 1) Dissolve pastoral relationships and dismiss Teaching Elders according to the *Book of Order* when both the congregation and the Pastor concur in the dissolution.
 - 2) Approve temporary pastoral relationships.
 - 3) Review terms of call or invitations for all pastoral relationships, excluding out-of-bounds terms of calls, to ensure that the terms meet the minimum established standards.
 - 4) Ordain and/or install Teaching Elders in accordance with provisions in this *Book of Government*.
 - 5) Appoint advisors for Candidates Under Care and mentors for Commissioned Pastors.

D.3-2 Original Jurisdiction.

In cases of original jurisdiction, the following rules apply:

- B. The Presbytery: The Presbytery has original jurisdiction in every disciplinary case involving ministers of the Presbytery.

- 83-01 The Committee on Ministerial Vocation shall annually provide the Presbyteries a letter encouraging each Session to review annually pastoral and staff compensation, taking into account such factors as changes in cost of living, performance, capabilities of the congregation, and economic conditions of the community. Each Presbytery shall determine how best to use the letter (Minutes, 3-37).
- 84-08 General Assembly adopts the self-funding group insurance plan offered by The Travelers and gives authority to the permanent Committee on Administration to approve and establish all details relative to the establishment of proposed plan.
- General Assembly requires pastors and employees of all member congregations, all presbyteries, and the Assembly who meet minimum requirements to enroll in the program.
- This major medical program shall be reviewed annually, and a full report made to the General Assembly (Minutes, 4-37).
- 87-12 The Assembly approves the establishment of an employer-sponsored, tax-sheltered annuity program for the required minimum (10%) of gross effective salary for retirement for each minister and missionary and urges each congregation to participate in such program (Minutes, 7-53).
- 89-15 The Assembly approved the establishment of a General Assembly benevolence fund for medical care costs, concentrating its benevolence health care efforts on ministers without call, mission church pastors, and retired ministers and their families (Minutes, 9-33).
- 90-16 The Assembly conceptually endorsed the Medical Benevolence Trust with the understanding that the actual Trust Agreement would be presented to the 11th Assembly. Approval to begin promotion of the Trust was given (Minutes, 10-41).
- 99-10 The Assembly sustains an opinion of the Permanent Judicial Commission regarding the status of ministers who are missionaries serving totally under the auspices of the EPC and ministers serving in an administrative capacity in one of the courts of the church (G.9-5D). Ministers serving in such capacities should be classified as ministers with calls, not as ministers serving out-of-bounds (Minutes, 19-40).
- 11-08 The Assembly affirms the guidance of the Office of the Stated Clerk as the authoritative interpretation of the General Assembly to be practiced by the Presbyteries regarding approving and recording ministers' terms of call (Minutes, 31-39). *The 32nd General Assembly modified the way terms of call may be recorded in the minutes. Cf. Acts of Assembly 12-11.*

1. That the terms of call shall be approved in public by both congregations and presbyteries, using the forms found in the *Book of Order* and *Procedure Manual for Ministerial and Candidates Committees*, and entered into the journal of each Presbytery's minutes.
2. That changes in terms of call must be publicly noted and voted upon by Presbyteries, and entered into the journal of each Presbytery's minutes. The changes may be noted as either a dollar amount or percentage amount, with only the change (not the new total) noted.
3. If a congregation or Presbytery wishes to alter this requirement, the only legal process would be a constitutional amendment.

12-11

The Assembly adopts a policy regarding approval and recording of ministers' terms of call, superseding the actions of the 18th and 31st General Assemblies (*Acts of Assembly 98-04 and 11-08*) (Minutes, 32-56).

1. The initial terms of call shall be approved in public by both congregations and Presbyteries, using the forms found in the *Book of Order* and *Procedure Manual for Ministerial and Candidates Committees*.
2. Changes in terms of call must be noted and voted upon by Presbyteries on recommendation from the Ministerial Committee. The changes may be noted as either a dollar amount or percentage amount, with only the change (not the new total) noted.
3. Background or supporting material regarding terms of call shall be made available to the Presbytery Review Committee through the Stated Clerk upon the committee's request.

Performance Review and Salary

History

The Standing Committee on Ministerial Vocation of the 18th General Assembly (1998) discussed a number of issues related to the Teaching Elder in the local church. One of these dealt with performance reviews of ministers and its relationship to salary recommendations for the coming year. The Ministerial Vocation Committee (MVC) followed up by mailing a questionnaire to each EPC church to solicit information about the annual performance review.

Although many of our larger churches have a sophisticated performance review process in place, many Sessions grapple each year with the practice of evaluating the Pastor and staff, as well as with questions of compensation changes, how and when to do evaluations, who should conduct the evaluation, and if it is biblical to conduct of performance review of someone seeking to serve Christ. There are many questions, and each calls for serious and wise deliberation.

Definitions

A performance review is a formal evaluation of the performance of the Pastor(s) and other staff members. It is an evaluation of the work that has been accomplished, typically since the last evaluation period. The performance review is conducted against the backdrop of a position description that spells out the expectations the church has if its Pastor(s) and other staff members. It is not a judgment regarding the ultimate spiritual life and God-directed service of the individual. As Paul so aptly said:

“Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.” (Romans 14:4).

Furthermore, Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

“I care very little if I am judged by you ... I do not even judge myself. It is the Lord who judges me.” (1 Corinthians 4:3-4).

Regardless of our career or vocation or employment, each of us will give an account to God of the way we have used our time, talents, and treasure for His Kingdom.

The performance review, however, focuses on the work related to employment in the local church. It is a reality check. It is an opportunity to give and receive feedback about the major responsibilities, goals, projects, accomplishments, and skills involved in related to the minister or staff member’s work. It is a time to speak the truth in love about the work of the ministry over the past evaluation period. In the parables, Jesus often taught the importance of accountability. Paul (2 Thessalonians 3:6-10) was hardest on those who thought they could draw on the resources of the Christian community without working. When we receive pay from a

church, however, we understand that we are being paid for the work that we are asked to do. Implicit in such an arrangement is an understanding that our work will be evaluated.

Value of a Regular Performance Review

A regular performance review encourages a close examination of the original Position Description and an evaluation of the major responsibilities that came with the position. The following questions are preparatory for those conducting the review:

1. Why was the staff member brought to this local church?
2. What was the staff member asked to do?
3. How well is the staff member accomplishing the responsibilities of the Position Description?
4. Has the staff member's role in the church changed?
5. Does the staff member's Position Description need to be changed to reflect new or different responsibilities assigned?

A regular performance review permits an open discussion of expectations of the church and the staff member.

A regular performance review fosters an evaluation of results within a limited time period. Every Position Description contains implicit and explicit responsibilities that will be undertaken during the time of ministry at the local church. A performance review is an opportunity to reflect on these results as they have been carried out during a specified period of time, to discuss accomplishments and failures, successes and frustrations, and to set goals for the next work period. Ultimately, we are called to faithfulness in our ministry to the Lord. But faithfulness is wedded to fruitfulness. The performance review sets the stage for evaluating not only the time and plans invested in work, but also the fruit or lack of fruit in the assigned areas of ministry.

A regular performance review provides a protection for the staff person. God looks with great disfavor on those who are lax in doing the Lord's work (Jeremiah 48:10). As iron sharpens iron, so one may sharpen another. A performance review can be the occasion of sharpening the vision, skills, and commitment to diligently serving the Lord in the life of the Teaching Elder and other staff members. It also provides a "paper trail" of evaluation if a Teaching Elder or staff person were to come under the criticism of members of the congregation as to the effectiveness of his or her work.

Process

The process of performance review differs among local churches. The review of the Teaching Elder(s) is handled by the Session or a subset of Session. In some cases, each Session member is asked to complete an evaluation form about the Teaching Elder, and the results are summarized and communicated by the Personnel Committee or an Executive Committee. In other churches, the performance review of the Teaching Elder(s) is conducted by a subcommittee composed of a smaller number of Elders such as the subset mentioned above. The MVC recommends that the evaluation be done by a subset of Session, a few Elders who would approach this task with great sensitivity and seriousness.

When there are other staff members, the Pastor or immediate supervisor generally conducts

the evaluation. In some cases, the Pastor performs the review of all other Pastors and program staff. There may be a division of labor within the staff for such reviews. A Music Director might evaluate the Choir Director and Organist. An Assistant Pastor might evaluate program staff. The MVC recommends that each staff person be evaluated by his or her immediate supervisor. To complete an adequate performance review, every church should be able to answer in the affirmative the following questions:

1. Does each staff person, including the Pastor, have a Position Description?
2. Does each staff person have goals that have emerged from the Position Description, which both the staff person and his or her supervisor understand and to which both have agreed should be pursued within the time period to be evaluated?

The results of all evaluations are usually communicated to the Personnel Committee, which can present this information to Session when appropriate.

Performance Review Forms

The forms used in EPC churches for the annual performance review vary from simple to sophisticated. In general, a performance review form will provide space for comments on the following areas:

1. **Key result area:** Major responsibilities as mentioned in the Position Description. Space may also be allotted beside each major responsibility for specific duties related to each responsibility and comments about the achievement of these duties.
2. **Key projects and initiatives:** New programs or events that were initiated in concert with goals and objectives. What are the new areas of ministry that are being undertaken? Was there a major event or program that was initiated this past year? How successful were they?
3. **General factors and skills related to ministry:** Includes a listing of areas that impact the work of the ministry and may be focal points for evaluation and discussion. The following areas are typically included: quantity of work, quality of work, motivation level, vision, goal setting, spiritual life, staff relationships, congregational relationships, problem solving, communication skills, public preaching and teaching, initiative, creativity, work habits, leadership, administration, mentoring/leadership development, planning, and decision making.
4. **Specific goals, ideas, emphases, or changes for the next year:** One of the major results of the performance review should be to establish goals and objectives for the next year. As the Position Description is reviewed, as the projects and activities of the past year are evaluated. As the needs, opportunities, and vision for the coming year are assessed, specific goals should emerge that can be put in writing. To a large degree, these goals become the checkpoints for discussion at the next performance review.
5. **Measurements of performance should be conducted on some type of scale:** Some may use a three-fold scale (below average, average, and above average); others may use a five-fold scale (unacceptable, unsatisfactory, satisfactory, above average, excellent). For the sake of improvement and in a commitment to the good stewardship of our resources, EPC churches through their Session and minister are called to give honest feedback and evaluation to staff members. Some scale will need to be utilized that reflects a straightforward evaluation.

6. **Other considerations:** Often, both the supervisor and the staff member use an evaluation form. Both are instructed to complete the form and then meet to discuss their observations. The performance evaluation may also serve as an opportunity to discuss in more detail the personal development of the staff member. Under this heading, the following questions may be explored:
 - a. What are your ministry aspirations for the next three to five years?
 - b. What goals would you articulate for your personal and professional development during the next year?
 - c. What plans might you formulate to accomplish goals mentioned above?
 - d. How would you like to spend your next study leave?

The performance review should also be tailored to deal with the individual under evaluation. Senior leadership would be evaluated on issues related to vision, staff development, and overall leadership of the church. Other program staff would be evaluated with a greater focus placed on the accomplishment of goals that were established at the beginning of the evaluation process. Support staff would be evaluated with a priority placed on their work skills.

Timing

The timing of a performance review is important to the purposes of the review. Typically, a church year follows the momentum of the school year. Plans for programs and ministries are designed to be implemented during unfolding of the year, often beginning in September as families return from their summer vacation and as school calls children and students back to their studies.

A major performance review should therefore be scheduled sometime in the late spring. During this review, the work of the previous year can be evaluated, and plans for the new year can be discussed. Some churches also conduct a mid-year review, during the early winter. A mid-year review gives a platform for feedback on the progress to date and for helpful discussion that might assist in the work that has been planned.

Salary Considerations

Salary considerations address two major issues. The first speaks to the adequacy of the base salary of the minister and other staff members. Geography, size of church, and years of ministry will all impact this figure.

The second salary consideration speaks to the annual adjustment in compensation. How does the Session make these decisions? What is a reasonable process to follow in arriving at the recommendations for annual salary adjustments for the staff at a local church?

Each church will develop its own methods of processing these important decisions. One way would be to connect the annual performance review with salary recommendations. For instance, if measurements on the performance review were on a scale of one to five, the Personnel Committee could then ask that it be provided with a number (one to five) representing the summary of the performance review for each minister and staff person. In conjunction with the Finance Committee, the Personnel Committee could decide what amount of money would be available for increase in staff compensation.

Some churches take into consideration the annual cost of living increase by making it equal to a satisfactory rating on the review. The staff person who received a rating higher than satisfactory would receive a merit increase above the annual cost of living increase. The staff person who received a rating lower than satisfactory would receive less than the annual cost of living increase.

Most churches are ill-prepared for the transitional period between permanent Pastors. The congregation may be buoyed up by such ideas as the ministry of the laity as the way God intends for the church to operate, the multiple gifts of God's people as resourcing the church for such a time, and perhaps a history of handling crises well. Congregations, too, are generally energized by the new challenges presented to them, the opportunities the transition presents for new directions, and the whole search process as a stimulation to congregational unity.

Depending on the circumstances surrounding the previous Pastor's leaving, the congregation may be experiencing loss, shock, grief, anger, guilt, or panic. Old issues and unresolved conflict may resurface during this period. A congregation may not realize that some old but needed leadership retires with the Pastor's resignation. People who have been in the background of church life may begin to assert themselves. A congregation may not be prepared for the new future that a new Pastor will bring. These all present opportunities to focus on certain developmental tasks appropriate to the "in-between" times.

Needs are left unattended when a Pastor leaves, which some members of the congregation desire quite intensely—such as the elderly facing end-of-life issues and wanting the care of a Pastor. Moderating the Session and congregational meetings may need objective leadership. Pastoral representation at community functions may be neglected.

Healing may be needed, especially if the previous Pastor left under duress or has left behind a conflicted congregation. Process time is needed to handle change appropriately. Familiarities and established patterns are being challenged. Denial, anger, and bargaining—all part of the normal grief process—need to lead healthily to acceptance. Crises must be dealt with well and utilized. Any sense of hurry needs to be moderated by careful planning and search, and can be handled in the awareness that the pastoral vacancy has been temporarily filled.

A congregation may feel that transitional responsibilities can be handled by the associate staff or by lay leadership. In a multiple-staff setting, this assumes that the church will accept an Associate Pastor as the Head of Staff as it accepted that person as an Associate Pastor. Such is not always the case. It also assumes that the Associate Pastor:

1. Is prepared to be a transitional leader.
2. "Thinks" transitionally.
3. Can—and does—change priorities and style if necessary to perform intentional, transitional work rather than continuing in the Associate Pastor role.
4. Can add the Head of Staff responsibilities to an already busy schedule.

In addition, serving as a Transitional Pastor makes it difficult for the Associate Pastor to look for a new position in anticipation of the new Pastor potentially desiring to make staff changes. Furthermore, an Associate Pastor acting as Head of Staff (should he or she stay) may find it

difficult to return to an associate position once the new Pastor arrives.

If a church does ask a present Associate Pastor to serve as Transitional Pastor (and this is not recommended), much of what is suggested here should be required, including the drawing of a covenant and intentional work on the specific issues of the transitional period.

The search for a new Pastor demands a healthy congregation. No church wants its next permanent Pastor to be, in effect, an unintentional Transitional Pastor (which happens with frequency). A Transitional Pastor equipped for this specialized kind of leadership in a transitional time can help the church come to that point of health.

What is a Transitional Pastor?

A transitional time is an “in-between” time. For the church, it is the time between one Pastor leaving and a permanent Pastor being installed. The ministry of the church goes on, sometimes in regular and familiar ways, but always with new and unfamiliar challenges. We continue in such a time to be the people of God with the unique and distinct mission committed to us as a church. As to the congregation’s ministry, therefore, there really is no transitional period.

Many Transitional Pastors have served as long-term Pastors, bringing unique personality, skills, maturity, and perspective to the task. The Transitional Pastor also may have special skills in handling grief and using conflict positively. He or she should be one who quickly analyze situations, and who enters and exits a church in a healthy way. Transitional Pastors should have the ability to recognize unfinished tasks and lead toward their completion before the permanent Pastor arrives. The Transitional Pastor approaches the tasks of the “in-between time” with intentionality, not simply filling the pulpit. The result should be a congregation in a place of health, ready to receive a new long-term Pastor. A Transitional Pastor is convinced that this specialized work is a vital part of the church’s mission, not simply a fill-in until the “real” Pastor arrives.

Chosen by the Session and approved by the Presbytery, a Transitional Pastor should serve under a clearly defined, temporary, and published covenant, doing what a Pastor generally and routinely does (and more), and within a limited framework of time and goals. The Transitional Pastor may serve full-time or part-time for a portion of the transition (or for it all), be resident or not, but should not enter the relationship with the intention of becoming a candidate for the longer-term position.

Tasks of a Transitional Pastor

Research done by Loren Mead and the Alban Institute indicates that a congregation in transition generally has five basic areas of need. Mead calls these five areas “developmental tasks.” The order and manner in which they are addressed depend on the specific situation.

Coming to Terms with History

Natural reactions of grief, anger, despair, relief, guilt, and/or panic related to the loss of a Pastor need to be resolved. Old and debilitating ways of responding to crises need to be addressed. The “ghosts of Pastors past” need to be put to rest. A dearly loved immediate past Pastor needs to be released in the minds and hearts of the congregation. If the past Pastor was pressured to

leave by some in the congregation, healing between “for” and “against” groups needs to occur. Where the church has come from and how it got there needs to be understood, acknowledged, valued, and worked through (whatever is appropriate). Conflicts of long standing need to be resolved. Until this happens, a congregation is less able to face outward and cultivate its missional thinking and practice.

Discovering a New Identity

Churches in transition are no longer defined by their pasts. The Pastor who defined them in many ways is no longer present, and the church will not stay the same. A new identification must develop. While the next Pastor will bring vision to the church, the congregation must discover what, in general terms, it wishes to become in the future.

Facilitating Shifts of Power

New leadership is necessary, since the former Pastor was a key in setting tone and direction for the congregation. Some members fade from active service when the Pastor departs. Others get more involved than they have been. If the previous Pastor was a great influence on the congregation, a bold or controversial leader, the more changes in leadership will occur. A Transitional Pastor can help in leadership shifts, making them positive and appropriate to the changing situation. The Transitional Pastor may provide leadership training, giving the new Pastor a cadre of people who know the when, how, and where of church leadership.

Renewing Denominational Ties

Part of a church’s identity is its connection with the larger Church. The staff, resources, and organization of the EPC will become clearer to a church in transition as it connects more with the denomination in its search process. The Westminster Confession, the Catechisms, the Essentials, and the *Book of Order*—all of which help define us—should become more familiar to the church as it lives through the transitional period. The Pastoral Search Committee will contact the Presbytery and General Assembly leaders frequently, with an increased appreciation for their work. A Transitional Pastor can help a congregation understand its EPC heritage and denominational structure.

Building Commitment to a New Leadership and a New Future

The church must move from its past orientation to a future vision. Pastoral styles differ and strengths vary, and the congregation must be open to the individuality of its next Pastor. A congregation must be spiritually prepared for its new Pastor. A commitment to the new Pastor must be encouraged, especially when that person is identified and called. Shared vision and working relationships can and must develop among the congregation. The church must become forward-looking, appreciating the past but rolling up its sleeves to a new and exciting ministry in the upcoming days. The Transitional Pastor can engage the congregation in this process.

A congregation must experience the maximum benefit possible in the transitional period. The more these tasks are completed, the stronger a congregation will be for its next Pastor. If a congregation assumes that these issues will be successfully addressed without transitional leadership, it may be disappointed.

Steps to Securing a Transitional Pastor

1. When the previous Pastor leaves, the Session consults with the Ministerial Committee and determines to seek a Transitional Pastor.
2. Session appoints a Transitional Pastor Search Committee (TPSC) as an ad hoc committee of the Session, appointing its Chairman, if desired. This should be done before the congregation selects a Pastoral Search Committee.
3. The TPSC profiles the Transitional Pastor it determines to be best suited for the church, considering the church's special needs in the transition, how long it envisions the transitional period to be, possible beginning dates, salary and benefits package, and other such matters as it considers appropriate. It then develops the covenant to be presented to the Transitional Pastor candidate. For a sample, see the "Transitional Ministry Covenant" form, available on page 116.
4. The TPSC may post the opening in the EPC Ministry Staff Opportunity List on the EPC website at www.epc.org/mso. The Ministerial Committee may be able to make recommendations of potential Transitional Pastors.
5. The TPSC studies the potential Transitional Pastor's Personal Information Form (PIF) and prays about the choice(s) it will make for further investigation.
6. The TPSC makes contact with the choice(s) it makes to discover availability and gather other information it may seek. Some Transitional Pastors may be serving a church at the time another church calls, but may still be available within a month or two of that initial conversation. Contact also may be made with references at this time.
7. The TPSC interviews its available choice, further developing and then reviewing the covenant and other pertinent information with the potential Transitional Pastor.
8. The TPSC recommends the Transitional Pastor and the covenant to the Session. The Session issues the invitation (G.10-7).
9. When a Transitional Pastor is invited, the Session receives the necessary approvals from the Presbytery or the Ministerial Committee of the Presbytery, should this committee be empowered to make this decision (G.10-7).
10. Though an installation of a Transitional Pastor is not required, it may be a beneficial marker for both the congregation and the Transitional Pastor. If so, the TPSC plans for the installation service in consultation with the Ministerial Committee of the Presbytery. An "installation" of a Transitional Pastor, if done, does not require an Administrative Commission of the Presbytery.
11. The Session may ask the TPSC to continue during the transitional period to act as the Transitional Pastor's advisors, conducting periodic reviews of his or her covenant and ministry, and planning any and all matters related to his or her departure.
12. If a Transitional Pastor resigns and Session determines that a second Transitional Pastor is needed, the TPSC repeats its work until the next Transitional Pastor is secured by the Session.
13. Session dismisses the TPSC with thanks when the church has secured a permanent Minister and its work is complete. Recognizing that there may be a gap before the next term of service for the Transitional Pastor, a reasonable period of transitional compensation should be offered.

Covenanting with the Transitional Pastor

A church and its Transitional Pastor must have a clearly understood working relationship. Unhappy relationships develop when expectations are not clear. A covenant should be drawn that fits the needs of both the congregation and the Transitional Pastor. The expectations of the church (the Transitional Pastor Search Committee and the Session) and the Pastor should be thoroughly discussed and expressed in a Transitional Pastor Covenant similar to the “Transitional Ministry Covenant” form, available on page 116. Items included should be the tasks involved, the compensation package (salary, housing, vacation time, insurance, and possibly pension allowance), travel reimbursement, disability, and other such matters as express the desires and priorities of both parties. A congregation may wish to spell out the priorities for the first two or three months of transitional ministry. No assumptions should be made.

The covenant should include a pledge of support and cooperation between the church and the Transitional Pastor. The length of time before it is reviewed should be made clear. How either party terminates the covenant can be spelled out. What happens in the event of the church’s dissolution or the Transitional Pastor’s death can be written into the covenant. While this is not “Terms of Call” and does not need Presbytery approval, the Ministerial Committee should be consulted and informed.

The TPSC and the Transitional Pastor should review the covenant after three months of service to see if it reflects the intentions of both the church and the Pastor. Renegotiate, if necessary. If needed, changes should be suggested to the Session. At the same time, the TPSC should evaluate the ministry of the Transitional Pastor. Thereafter, the covenant should be reviewed no less than every six months should the continued ministry of the Transitional Pastor be needed. This covenant is not intended to restrict ministry, but to release it by clarifying all issues from the start—allowing the church and Pastor to do the critical work the transitional period requires.

Compensation for Transitional Pastors

Each church and Transitional Pastor must work out a compensation package agreeable to both. The compensation for a full-time transitional position differs from a part-time position, of course. As guidelines for the Session, consider these suggestions:

1. Salary should be negotiated based on the church’s current budget and the compensation package of the previous Pastor. It must be remembered that a Transitional Pastor is a “real” Pastor, often with experience and sometimes with specialized training, and that compensation must be appropriate to the position and experience. In either case (full- or part-time), the benefits package should include health insurance if the Pastor is not covered in another way, as well as pension. Because the Session “invites” rather than “calls” a Transitional Pastor (G.10-7), the invitation is approved by the Presbytery, but not the compensation package.
2. One option for determining compensation is the unit system. A unit is a block of time, usually three to four hours (a morning, an afternoon, or an evening) compensated at a certain rate for each unit.³² Using the “Transitional Minister Worksheet” available on page 116, the number of hours required for a Transitional Pastor’s ministry can be determined. Another option is that the Transitional Pastor is paid a percentage of

³² A rate of \$100 per unit would equate to an annual salary of approximately \$50,000.

- the former Pastor's compensation (suggested 80%).
3. Travel reimbursement should meet IRS guidelines. If commuting from a distance, reimbursement for that mileage should be included.
 4. The church should reimburse business expenses.
 5. Vacation should be determined on the basis of one paid week of vacation for each three months of service (four weeks per year, which is the standard for EPC Teaching Elders). General Assembly and Presbytery attendance is not considered vacation.
 6. If a church owns a manse, its use should be a matter for the church to determine and, if it determines to make it part of the compensation offered, this should be negotiated with the Transitional Minister.

Terminating the Interim Relationship: Giving the Gift of a Healthy Farewell

A Transitional Pastor should plan to leave one to four weeks before the new Pastor arrives, giving the church the opportunity to anticipate its new Pastor without too much of the Transitional Pastor's influence and a church's affection for the Transitional Pastor still intact. What is important is that the Transitional Pastor be intentional about the way the transitional ministry is concluded. In some situations, it may be appropriate to include the Transitional Pastor in the welcoming of the new Pastor, though this should be carefully considered before deciding to do so. The late Lyle Schaller, eminent church consultant, suggested that as the conclusion of the transitional time nears, the Transitional Pastor should think like a predecessor and leave behind a packet of useful information for the next Pastor. This could include church and city directories, maps, telephone numbers, etc.

As the exit approaches there should be expressions of joy and sadness, discussion about how the new Pastor will be received, records put into good order, arrangements made regarding pending weddings, etc., conversations about exact dates for the Transitional Pastor's break from the congregation, covenant termination, and the planning of an appropriate farewell event for the Transitional Pastor. A sermon or sermon series reviewing the time together, affirming the congregation as it moves forward, the experience of change and such topics would be appropriate.

An exit interview benefits both the church and the Transitional Pastor. The transitional period should be evaluated, the work of the Transitional Pastor discussed, how the congregation is perceived by the Transitional Pastor, what gains were made, and what work needs to be done in the future. Each of the five developmental tasks should be discussed to discover where the congregation is as it enters into a new and exciting phase of life together.

The Transitional Pastor should plan a transition conversation with the next Pastor, and the Session told that the Transitional Pastor plans such a talk.

As a Transitional Pastor approaches the end of the transitional period, planning should begin for the next ministry, including an evaluation of the transitional time and learnings for the next one. The Transitional Pastor has been involved in a significant and intense time in a congregation's life, and likely needs a break in order to be fresh for the next assignment. Above all, the Transitional Pastor should celebrate with the church, say "good-bye," and *leave!*

G.10-7 Temporary Pastor Relationships.

- A. Temporary pastoral relationships may be established with lawfully ordained ministers or Commissioned Pastors when a church is without a Pastor.
1. Transitional Pastor.
 - a. A Transitional Pastor is called by the Session to serve during the period a congregation is seeking a Pastor. The Transitional Pastor intentionally leads the congregation toward greater health and readiness for their next Pastor and will ordinarily be appointed by the Presbytery to moderate the Session during the time of service.
 - b. Due to the temporary nature of the call, Transitional Pastors called from another Presbytery in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church will ordinarily maintain membership in their home Presbytery.
 - c. Upon approval of the Ministerial Committee, Transitional Pastors are introduced to the receiving Presbytery and enrolled as corresponding members (voice but not vote).
 - d. If a Transitional Pastor is called from outside the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the Presbytery shall examine and transfer the Pastor according to applicable provisions of the *Book of Government*.
 2. Stated Supply Pastor.
 - a. A Stated Supply Pastor is invited by the Session to serve for a definite period of time, not less than one month and no more than twelve months. The term of service is renewable. Although this invitation is not a call, the invitation to serve, authority to preach the Word, to administer sacraments, and to moderate Session must be approved by the Presbytery or by the Ministerial Committee, if authorized by the Presbytery.
 - b. Stated Supply Pastors from outside the Evangelical Presbytery Church are invited by the Session and shall be interviewed and approved by Presbytery or the Ministerial Committee, if authorized by the Presbytery.
 3. Occasional Supply Pastor.

An Occasional Supply Pastor is invited to serve regularly on specified days. Only the Ministerial Committee must approve.
- B. Ordinarily, a person currently serving in a temporary pastoral relationship is not eligible to be called as Pastor of that church. Should a Search Committee desire to consider any person who has served in a temporary capacity since the pulpit most recently became vacant, it must secure approval by a three-fourths vote of the Session and a three-fourths vote of the Ministerial Committee in order to proceed.

Definition of an Exception to the Westminster Standards

An “exception” means that the individual disagrees with some statement in the Westminster Confession of Faith or its Catechisms, believes it to not be correct, has Scriptural support to justify believing it to be incorrect, and has Scriptural support for an alternative view. The point is that the only authority to which one may appeal in a disagreement with the Confession or Catechisms is Scripture.

Again, to take an “exception” means that the individual:

1. Disagrees with some statement in the Westminster Confession of Faith or its Catechisms, and
2. Provides Scriptural support to justify believing it to be incorrect, and Scriptural support for an alternative view.

Example of What is Not an Exception

The following “exception” is commonly taken, but is not technically an exception.

You may not agree with the view that the universe was created in six literal, 24-hour periods. You may personally believe that Genesis 1:1-2:3 is referring to six indeterminate periods of time—perhaps eons—and argue that the Hebrew word *yom* is being used metaphorically in that passage. This view would not be an “exception” unless you also believe that the Westminster view is not an acceptable alternative view; that it is incorrect, and you have Scripture to support it.

You may have Scriptural support for the indeterminate period of time view, citing the metaphorical use of the Hebrew word *yom* in Psalm 90:4 or 2 Peter 3:8 (“A thousand years in your sight are like a day.”). But do you have Scriptural support that the universe *could not* have been created in six literal, 24-hours periods, and perhaps be given the appearance of age by its Creator?

Your alternative view of the Westminster view is a “reservation,” rather than an exception—indicating that you simply do not know the exact amount of time referred to in each usage of the word *yom*, and that you acknowledge that there is more than one way to honestly interpret this portion of Scripture.

Website Addresses for EPC Forms, Checklists, and Other Resources

Previous editions of the *Procedure Manual for Ministerial and Candidates Committees* contained a section of forms, checklists, and other resources designed to be used by Presbyteries and churches. Because many forms are updated between printings of this Manual, that section has been removed. Instead, these forms are available on the EPC website. This Appendix includes the specific internet address of each form, which will provide the most current version. Many of these forms are in fillable PDF format; these must be downloaded to your computer and completed in Adobe Acrobat (web browsers like Chrome or Firefox will not save the information).

Forms for Endorsing and Receiving Ministerial Candidates

Advisor's Report

www.epc.org/files/advisorsreport

Application to Come Under Care of Presbytery

www.epc.org/files/applicationtocomeundercareofpresbytery

Candidate Reference Check Form

www.epc.org/files/candidatereferencecheckform

Candidate Items Sent and Received

www.epc.org/files/candidateitemssentandreceived

Certificate of Reception as a Candidate Under Care

www.epc.org/files/certificateofreceptionascandidateundercare

Checklist for Candidates Coming Under Care of Presbytery

www.epc.org/files/checklist-candidatescomingundercareofpresbytery

Checklist for Examination of a Candidate for Ordination

www.epc.org/files/checklist-examinationofcandidateforordination

Criteria for Candidate Evaluation

www.epc.org/files/criteriaforcandidateevaluation

Ethical Affirmations for EPC Leaders

www.epc.org/files/ethicalaffirmationsforepcleaders

Instructions for the Examining Physician for Required Medical Examination

www.epc.org/files/instructionsforexaminingphysician

Preliminary Questionnaire

www.epc.org/files/preliminaryquestionnaire

Psychological Evaluation Form

www.epc.org/files/psychologicalevaluationform

Session Endorsement Form

www.epc.org/files/sessionendorsementform

Forms for Ministerial and Search Committees

Annual Report on Teaching Elders

www.epc.org/files/annualreportonteachingelders

Call to a Validated Ministry Outside the Bounds of Presbytery

www.epc.org/files/calltovalidatedministryoutsideboundsofpresbytery

Call to a Validated Ministry Outside the Bounds of Presbytery (Form Instructions)

www.epc.org/files/calltovalidatedministryoutsideboundsofpresbyteryinstructions

Candidate's Statement of Faith

www.epc.org/files/candidatesstatementoffaith

Checklist for Examination of an EPC Teaching Elder Transferring to a Presbytery

www.epc.org/files/checklist-examinationofteachingeldertransferringtopresbytery

Checklist for Examination of an Ordained Minister from Another Denomination within the Reformed Tradition

www.epc.org/files/checklist-examinationofordainedministerfromreformedtradition

Checklist for Examination of an Ordained Minister from a Non-Reformed Tradition

www.epc.org/files/checklist-examinationofordainedministerfromnonreformedtradition

Checklist for the Dissolution of a Pastoral Relationship

www.epc.org/files/checklist-dissolutionofpastoralrelationship

Church Information Form (CIF)

www.epc.org/files/cif

Ministerial Obligation—Teaching Elder

www.epc.org/files/ministerialobligation-teachingelder

Ministerial Obligation—Commissioned Pastor

www.epc.org/files/ministerialobligation-commissionedpastor

Minutes of the Commission to Ordain and/or Install

www.epc.org/files/minutesofcommissiontoordaininstall

Personal Information Form (PIF)

www.epc.org/files/pif

Personal Reference Form (Extracted from PIF)

www.epc.org/files/pifreferenceform

Presbytery Transfer of a Candidate Under Care

www.epc.org/files/presbyterytransferofcandidateundercare

Record of Change for Teaching Elder’s Status and Ministry

www.epc.org/teachingelderministyrstatuschangeform

Reformed Reading List

www.epc.org/files/reformedreadinglist

Request for Ordination Examinations

www.epc.org/files/requestforordinationexaminations

Termination of Candidacy Form

www.epc.org/files/terminationofcandidacyform

Terms of Call—Pastor/Associate Pastor

www.epc.org/files/termsofcall-pastorassociatepastor

Terms of Call—Assistant Pastor

www.epc.org/files/termsofcall-assistantpastor

Terms of Call—Commissioned Pastor

www.epc.org/files/termsofcall-commissionedpastor

Terms of Call—Evangelist

www.epc.org/files/termsofcall-evangelist

The Ordination and Installation of a Teaching Elder

www.epc.org/files/ordinationandinstallationofteachingelder

Forms for Transitional Pastoral Ministry

Transitional Ministry Covenant

www.epc.org/files/transitionalministrycovenant

Transitional Minister Profile

www.epc.org/files/transitionalministerprofile

Transitional Minister Worksheet

www.epc.org/files/transitionalministerworksheet

When a Congregation Loses a Pastor - Temporary Process

www.epc.org/files/whenacongregationlosesapastor-temporaryprocess

Forms for EPC Chaplaincy

Military Chaplain Application

www.epc.org/chaplaincy/militarychaplainapplication

Military Chaplain Candidate Application

www.epc.org/chaplaincy/militarychaplaincandidateapplication

Military Chaplain Transfer of Endorsement Application

www.epc.org/chaplaincy/militarychaplaintransferofendorsementapplication

Civilian Chaplain Application

www.epc.org/chaplaincy/civilianchaplainapplication

Civilian Chaplain Transfer of Endorsement Application

www.epc.org/chaplaincy/civilianchaplaintransferofendorsementapplication

Volunteer Chaplain Application

www.epc.org/chaplaincy/civilianvolunteerchaplainapplication

Service Forms

The Ordination and Installation of a Minister

www.epc.org/files/ordinationandinstallationofminister

The Ordination and Installation of Ruling Elders

www.epc.org/files/ordinationandinstallationofrulingelders

The Ordination and Installation of Deacons

www.epc.org/files/ordinationandinstallationofdeacons

The Reception of New Members

www.epc.org/files/receptionofnewmembers

The Sacrament of Baptism (Adults)

www.epc.org/files/sacramentofbaptism-adults

The Sacrament of Baptism (Infants)

www.epc.org/files/sacramentofbaptism-infants

The Sacrament of The Lord's Supper

www.epc.org/files/sacramentofthelordssupper

Forms for Constituting and Organizing Churches

Mission Church—Petition to Constitute

www.epc.org/files/missionchurchpetitiontoconstitute

Local Church—Petition to Organize

www.epc.org/files/localchurchpetitiontoorganize

Local Church—Petition to be Received

www.epc.org/files/localchurchpetitiontobereceived

General Assembly Forms

Committee Nomination Endorsement Form

www.epc.org/files/nominationendorsementform

General Assembly Memorials Form

www.epc.org/files/generalassemblymemorialsform