

# **Credentials Committee Manual**

## **I. STATEMENT OF AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY**

The Credentials Committee is responsible for the administration of the following areas:

- Licensure examinations;
- Ordination examinations;
- Examinations of ordained ministers seeking transfer into Presbytery;
- Examinations of churches seeking admission into Presbytery.

## **II. OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR THE COMMITTEE**

### **II.A. Membership**

Membership of the Committee is as established and defined by the Standing Rules of Presbytery.

### **II.B. Quorum**

The Permanent Committee quorum defined in the Standing Rules of Presbytery will be the quorum for this Committee with the addition of the requirement that at least one Teaching Elder and one Ruling Elder member be present.

### **II.C. Officers**

II.C.1. The officers of the Committee shall be a Chairman and a Secretary elected annually by the membership at or before the October Stated Meeting of Presbytery, with their duties to begin immediately following the October Stated Meeting.

#### **II.C.1.a. Chairman**

II.C.1.a.i. The Chairman shall preside at all regular and called meetings during his term of office, unless he is absent, in which case, another member may be elected to preside over that particular meeting.

II.C.1.a.ii. The Chairman shall send and receive all correspondence for the Committee and keep an accurate file on all proceedings and business of the Committee. At the end of his term, he shall transmit all files, records and reports pertaining to the work and proceedings of the Committee to the incoming Chairman.

II.C.1.a.iii. He shall ordinarily call the meetings of the Committee, setting the exact time and place of each, and shall prepare an agenda for each meeting and make a copy available to each member before the meeting.

II.C.1.a.iv. He shall provide applicants with the proper forms for licensure and ordination at their request. He shall also provide applicants with the names and addresses needed to mail copies of applications to all Committee members and to mail copies of all required written work either to all Committee members or to the proper sub-committee or examiner.

II.C.a.v. The Chairman shall be responsible in seeing that the work of the Committee is carried out as a whole in the best means possible.

#### **II.C.b. Secretary**

II.C.b.i. The Secretary shall keep an accurate record of the minutes of each Committee meeting and shall send copies of the minutes to each Committee member.

II.C.b.ii. At the end of his term of office, he shall transmit all files, records and reports in his possession pertaining to the Committee to the incoming Committee Secretary.

II.C.b.iii. If, for any reason, the Chairman is unable to call a meeting when it is needed, a meeting may be called by the Secretary.

#### **II.D. Meetings**

II.D.1. The Committee shall ordinarily have its Stated Meeting prior to each Stated Meeting of Presbytery. The exact time and place of the meeting shall be set by the Chairman or by the Secretary when the Chairman is unable to do so, but not less than seven days in advance. If at all possible, the meeting shall be held early enough for the Committee's report to be included with the Stated Clerk's mail-out of the docket.

II.D.2. Called Meetings of the Committee may be arranged by the Chairman or the Secretary when the Chairman is unable to do so. If any three principal members petition the Chairman to call a meeting, the Chairman will do so within the next two weeks after the presentation of the petition.

II.D.3. The Committee will ordinarily not meet to examine men for licensure or ordination less than seven days prior to the meeting of Presbytery.

#### **II.E. Expenses**

Expenses of the Committee shall be paid by Presbytery through the use of vouchers signed by the Chairman of the Committee.

#### **II.F. Amendments**

Committee procedures may be changed by vote of the Committee during any meeting, but such changes shall not take effect until ratified by the Presbytery.

### **III. PROCEDURES FOR GRANTING PERMISSION TO MOVE ON TO THE FIELD**

Ordinarily permission to move on to the field is given when a man is called, examined and received by Presbytery.

### **III.A. Ordained ministers who are already members of Covenant Presbytery:**

All such matters are assigned to the Church Care Committee. See their Committee manual.

### **III.B. Ordained ministers who are not already members of Covenant Presbytery.**

#### **III.B.1. Ordained ministers from another PCA Presbytery:**

They ordinarily may not move on to the field without the permission of Presbytery (BCO 21-1). The Committee has the power of a commission to grant exceptions to this rule but only after having examined a man on his views in committee and only by a vote of those present in a properly called committee meeting with a quorum present. Any who move on to the field under this provision must understand that their examination must still be sustained by Presbytery and their call must still be approved by Presbytery.

#### **III.B.2. Ordained ministers from another denomination:**

They must first be received by Presbytery before moving on to the field.

### **III.C. Non-ordained candidates**

#### **III.C.1. Candidates licensed to preach in Covenant Presbytery:**

The Committee may act as a commission to grant permission to a current licentiate in Covenant Presbytery to move on to the field and to function as a student supply until the next Stated Meeting of Presbytery. The Committee may do this only by a vote of those present in a properly called committee meeting with a quorum present. Any who move on to the field under this provision must understand that their examination must still be sustained by Presbytery and their call must still be approved by Presbytery.

#### **III.C.2. Candidates not licensed to preach in Covenant Presbytery:**

Presbytery reserves the right to grant permission to a non-licensed candidate to move on to the field as a student supply after his licensure examination.

## **IV. PROCEDURES FOR COMMITTEE'S WORK IN RELATION TO RECEIVING TEACHING ELDERS (MINISTERS) SEEKING ADMISSION INTO MEMBERSHIP OF COVENANT PRESBYTERY**

### **IV.A. Requirements of the Book of Church Order that must be met**

IV.A.1. Teaching Elder seeking admission to membership in Presbytery must ordinarily be dismissed by the Presbytery of which he is a member, and ordinarily the Stated Clerk of Covenant Presbytery must have received a transfer of membership to this Presbytery before he will be examined. In cases where the dismissing Presbytery will be meeting after Covenant

Presbytery and where the Stated Clerk of the dismissing Presbytery knows of no reason to anticipate any problem with the requested dismissal, the Committee may recommend that Presbytery receive the Teaching Elder pending receipt of his dismissal.

IV.A.2. Except in the case of a retired minister, the Teaching Elder seeking admission to membership in Covenant Presbytery must have a call to a definite work of ministry within the geographic bounds of Presbytery or by a court or agency of the Church.

IV.A.2.a. The call must include financial arrangements (such as salary, vacation, insurance, retirement, etc.) between those calling and the one called, and assurance that the definite work will afford the liberty to proclaim and practice fully and freely the whole counsel of God, as contained in the Scriptures and understood in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

IV.A.2.b. Presbytery may, at its discretion, approve the call of a Teaching Elder to work with an organization outside the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church in America, provided that he be engaged in preaching and teaching the Word, that the Presbytery be assured he will have full freedom to maintain and teach the doctrine of our Church, and that he report at least annually on his work.

IV.A.3. If the minister seeking admission to membership is from another denomination, he must answer in the affirmative the questions put to a candidate at ordination and give evidence of having the educational requirements for candidates for ordination as set forth in paragraph 21-4, BCO (also BCO 13-6).

IV.A.4. Ministers seeking admission into Presbytery shall be examined in Christian Experience and their views in theology, the Sacraments and Church Government.

IV.A.5. Each minister admitted to membership in the Presbytery must sign the obligation as set forth in the book of records as is required of candidates at ordination (BCO 13-6).

**IV.B. The Credentials Committee shall use the following procedures in fulfilling the responsibilities assigned to the Committee by Presbytery in this particular area of work.**

IV.B.1. After having been notified by the Clerk of Presbytery that a church has called a Teaching Elder to serve the congregation and he has indicated that he will seek admission to membership in Covenant Presbytery, the Chairman of the Committee shall call a meeting of the Committee for the following purposes:

IV.B.1.a. To examine the call of the church to the Teaching Elder and to make a recommendation to Presbytery concerning the call. Ordinarily the call must come from a church, Presbytery, or the General Assembly of this denomination. If the call comes from another source, the Presbytery shall always make a record of the reasons why it considers the work to be a valid Christian ministry.

IV.B.1.b. To interview and examine said Teaching Elder in all areas as required by the Book of Church Order and make a recommendation to Presbytery relating to his examination before Presbytery.

IV.B.1.c. To prepare for the Committee's work at the meeting of Presbytery in the examination and reception of the minister seeking admission.

**IV.C. The procedures to be followed by the Committee at the Stated Meeting at which the Teaching Elder seeking admission is to be examined for membership:**

IV.C.1. Presentation of the minister by the Chairman of the Committee to Presbytery.

IV.C.2. A brief oral statement of the Committee's work prior to its report to Presbytery.

IV.C.3. Motion that the certificate of transfer from the dismissing Presbytery be found in order and committed to record or motion that reception of the Teaching Elder be pending the receipt of certificate of dismissal.

IV.C.4. Motion that the call of the particular church to the Teaching Elder be found in order and that it be placed in his hands at the proper time. If the call is not from a particular church, a motion will be made that Presbytery make a record of the reasons why it considers the work to be a valid Christian ministry. If the ministry is outside the jurisdiction of the PCA, an explanation of how the BCO requirements for such a call have been satisfied will be given.

IV.C.5. Motion that Presbytery proceed to examine the minister according to the requirements of the Book of Church Order. If the recommendation of the Committee be that Presbytery not examine and receive the Teaching Elder, it shall state reasons for the negative recommendation. If the court approves the recommendation to examine, the Chairman of the Committee or a person designated by him shall examine the minister in the area of Christian Experience, touching his views in Theology, the Sacraments and Church Government.

IV.C.6. The examiner in each area shall give opportunity through the Moderator for the court to participate in the examination. When this part of the examination is completed, he shall move that this part of the examination be sustained.

IV.C.7. When the entire examination has been completed, the Chairman of the Committee as a member of the Court shall move that the examination as a whole be sustained.

IV.C.8. If the examination be sustained and the minister being received be from another denomination, the Chairman of the Committee shall make a statement about his educational qualifications and shall remind the court that he must answer in the affirmative the questions put to a candidate for the Gospel Ministry at ordination.

IV.C.9. The call is to be placed in the hands of the minister by the Court and he must state his acceptance of the call.

IV.C.10. Motion shall then be made by the Chairman or a member of the court that the minister be received as a member of Presbytery. The minister should then sign the obligation in the book of records.

IV.C.11. The Committee should then remind the Court that a commission with a proper quorum is to be appointed by Presbytery to install the minister in the office to which he has been called.

## **V. PROCEDURES FOR THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE WITH ANY MAN DESIRING TO BE LICENSED.**

### **V.A. Reasons for licensure**

V.A.1. Anyone regularly preaching in the pulpits of Covenant Presbytery must be licensed by Covenant Presbytery. Regular preaching is preaching as often as once a month for six months or longer.

V.A.2. All interns of Covenant Presbytery who are doing their internship within the geographic bounds of Covenant Presbytery must be licensed by Covenant Presbytery.

V.A.3. Presbytery may choose not to re-examine an ordinand in any area covered in his licensure examination. If the candidate for licensure wants Presbytery to consider not re-examining him in these areas when he is examined for ordination, he should so inform the Committee at the time of his licensure examination. This information will be taken into account in the standard by which the candidate is judged. The sermon must be before Presbytery and not only before a committee for Presbytery not to require another sermon at the ordination examination.

V.A.4. When any licentiate moves from the bounds of another Presbytery into Covenant Presbytery, Covenant Presbytery may, at its discretion, use an abbreviated licensure examination as described in BCO 19-5. Any licentiate receiving only this abbreviated examination must be re-examined in all areas when examined for ordination.

### **V.B. The Committee shall provide for the examination of the candidate as follows:**

V.B.1. A statement of his Christian experience and inward call to preach, to be presented orally before the Committee and/or sent in to the Committee in written form (at the discretion of Presbytery upon the recommendation of the Committee).

V.B.2. An examination as prepared by the Committee on the candidate's basic knowledge of Biblical doctrine as outlined in the Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of the Presbyterian Church in America; practical knowledge of Bible content; basic knowledge of the government of the Presbyterian Church in America as defined in the BCO. The examination will be conducted orally before the Committee and/or sent in to the Committee in written form (at the discretion of Presbytery upon the recommendation of the Committee).

V.B.3. A written sermon on an assigned passage of Scripture.

**V.C. The Committee will lead the Presbytery at a Stated Meeting in the examination of the candidate for licensure through these steps:**

V.C.1. A report on the full examination, including written parts, of the candidate by the Committee.

V.C.2. An oral statement by the candidate of his inward Christian experience and inward call to the ministry.

V.C.3. An oral examination of the candidate in the areas set forth in BCO 19-2(b).

V.C.4. And the court shall, if all parts of the trial prove satisfactory, proceed to the licensure of the candidate according to BCO 19-3,4.

**VI. PROCEDURES & GUIDELINES FOR THE EXAMINATION AND ORDINATION OF A CANDIDATE FOR THE GOSPEL MINISTRY**

**VI.A. Requirements of the Book of Church Order**

VI.A.1. Before a candidate, or licentiate, can be ordained to the office of the ministry, he must receive a call to a definite work (BCO 20-1).

VI.A.1.a. Ordinarily the call must come from a church, Presbytery, or the General Assembly of this denomination. If the call comes from another source, the Presbytery shall always make a record of the reasons why it considers the work to be a valid Christian ministry.

VI.A.1.b. A proper call must be written and in the hands of the Presbytery prior to being acted upon by a Presbytery. It must include financial arrangements (such as salary, vacation, insurance, retirement, etc.) between those calling and the one called, and assurance that the definite work will afford the liberty to proclaim and practice fully and freely the whole counsel of God, as contained in the Scriptures and understood in the Westminster Confession of Faith.

VI.A.1.c. A Presbytery may, at its discretion, approve a call to work with an organization outside the jurisdiction of the Presbyterian Church in America, provided that the one called be engaged in preaching and teaching the Word, that the Presbytery be assured he will have full freedom to maintain and teach the doctrine of our Church, and that he report at least annually on his work.

VI.A.2. Anyone seeking ordination must have completed the internship program of a PCA Presbytery. The Committee may also make a recommendation for the approval of previous experience as equivalent to an internship in accordance with BCO 19-16.

VI.A.3. The call must be approved by the Presbytery, and if it is found to be in order, placed in the hands of the person to whom it is addressed at the appropriate time (BCO 21-1).

VI.A.4. Trials for ordination shall consist of the following parts (BCO 21-4):

VI.A.4.a. Examination in Christian experience.

VI.A.4.b. Examination as to knowledge of the Greek and Hebrew languages, Bible content, theology, the Sacraments, church history, the history of the PCA, and church government and discipline (a degree from a seminary approved by the Presbytery may be accepted in lieu of an oral examination in the original languages).

VI.A.4.c. Evidence of appropriate academic preparation as explained in BCO 21-4.

VI.A.4.d. An exegesis paper on an assigned Scripture requiring the use of the original languages.

VI.A.4.e. The candidate shall also be required to preach a sermon before Presbytery.

VI.A.4.f. A thesis on an assigned theological topic.

VI.A.4.g. The Committee's written licensure examination if not previously taken.

**VI.B. The procedures and work of the Committee with the candidates leading to his examination for ordination before Presbytery**

VI.B.1. The Committee shall, through personal contact with the candidate, determine that requirements as set forth in the BCO 21-1 and 21-4 relating to a specific call to ministry within bounds of Presbytery and education requirements have been met or will be met by the date of the Stated Meeting at which the candidate is to be examined. All testimonials as required should be made available to the Committee by the candidate.

VI.B.2. All candidates who have not previously taken the Committee's written licensure examination will be required to do so.

VI.B.3. The Committee shall assign and set a date for completion of written parts of the evaluation, that is, the exegesis, etc.

VI.B.4. The Committee shall make the candidate aware of the fact that he is to preach a sermon before Presbytery. The Chairman of the Committee shall arrange through the Moderator and Clerk of Presbytery, for a service of worship with the candidate's sermon as a part of the service.

VI.B.5. The Committee shall meet with the candidate at a time and place determined by the Chairman. At this meeting, the Committee shall examine the candidate thoroughly in all the parts of the oral examination that is to be conducted before Presbytery. This is not in lieu of the examination before Presbytery, but will enable the Committee to determine its recommendation to Presbytery about the examination of the candidate.

VI.B.6. The Committee shall discuss the candidate's examination with him and encourage and help him in any way possible to be thoroughly prepared for the examination on the date set by Presbytery.

VI.B.7. The Chairman of the Committee shall request that the report of the Committee and the examination of the candidate be placed at a set place on Presbytery's docket.

**VI.C. The work and procedure of the Committee in leading the Presbytery in the examination of the candidate for ordination.**

VI.C.1. Introduce the candidate to Presbytery.

VI.C.2. Make an oral report on the Committee's work with and its examination of the candidate.

VI.C.3. Move that the call be found in order and that it be placed in his hands at the proper time. If the call is not from a particular church, a motion will be made that Presbytery make a record of the reasons why it considers the work to be a valid Christian ministry. Categories of valid ministries are found represented on p. 61 of the 1993 Yearbook, Part I, pp. 373-375 of the 1993 Yearbook, Part II, and p. 267 of the Minutes of the 21st General Assembly. If the ministry is outside the jurisdiction of the PCA, an explanation of how the BCO requirements for such a call have been satisfied will be given.

VI.C.4. If there is a transfer of candidacy involved, move that the certificate of transfer from the dismissing Presbytery be found in order and committed to record.

VI.C.5. Move the Committee's recommendation as to the examination of the candidate. If the recommendation is in the affirmative and so approved by Presbytery, he shall then lead the Presbytery in the examination of the candidate.

VI.C.5.a. Move that the written parts of the examination be approved, that is the exegesis and the thesis.

VI.C.5.b. Report on the educational qualifications of the candidate and move that a degree from a seminary approved by Presbytery be received in lieu of the oral examination in the original languages.

VI.C.5.b.i. If the candidate does not have such a degree, the Chairman shall make known to the court the testimonials as to the completion of an approved course of study (BCO 21-4).

VI.C.5.b.ii. If the case of the candidate is considered to be extra-ordinary, the Chairman, if the Committee has approved such a recommendation, will move that Presbytery proceed to the examination of the candidate as stated in BCO 21-4.

VI.C.5.c. Move the approval or disapproval of the sermon as a part of the trial for ordination.

VI.C.5.d. The Chairman or Moderator of Presbytery shall examine the candidate in Christian experience, and after it has been completed, move that it be sustained.

VI.C.5.e. The Chairman or a member of the Committee or Court shall examine the candidate in Bible content, theology, the Sacraments, church history, of the PCA, and Church Government.

Each examiner shall through the Moderator give the members of the Court an opportunity to participate in the examination. Each examiner shall make a motion relative to the sustaining of the part of the examination he has conducted.

VI.C.5.f. The Chairman shall make the proper motion in relation to the sustaining of the examination as a whole.

VI.C.6. The call is to be placed in the hands of the candidate by the Court and he must state his acceptance of the call.

VI.C.7. Motion shall then be made by the Chairman concerning the membership, quorum, date and time of the Commission to ordain the candidate and that upon ordination he be received as a member of the Presbytery.

VI.C.8. After his approval to be ordained, the candidate shall sign the obligation as set forth in the book of records as is required of candidates at ordination (BCO 13-6).

## **VII. NEW CHURCHES**

The Credentials Committee shall be responsible to visit any new congregation or existing congregation wishing to gain admittance to Presbytery to determine their motives and purposes of desiring such admission, and to determine the qualifications of their officers.

## **ADDENDUM**

The Credentials Committee is not responsible for the administration of the following areas:

- Candidacy examinations;
- The presentation of the yearly report on the progress of all candidates;
- The internship program;
- The dissolution of pastoral relationships;
- Changes in call;
- Approval of new calls of men already members of Presbytery;
- Granting permission as a commission for men already members of Presbytery to move on to the field of a new call;
- Yearly reports from all members of Presbytery laboring outside the jurisdiction of the PCA;
- The offering of encouragement and help for churches without pastor, including assistance in securing a new pastor;
- Licensure renewal;
- Pulpit supply approval;
- Oversight of Teaching Elders on roll of Presbytery without call.