

## **Shenandoah Presbytery Exam Policy**

### **Revised May 10, 2016**

The Committee on Pastoral Transition works through the commission authority of Shenandoah Presbytery to approve the examination of those called to pastoral positions within the presbytery and to welcome teaching elders into the membership of the presbytery. CPT does this work through the recommendations of its Exam Committee.

The Shenandoah Presbytery Exam Committee is a sub-committee of the Committee on Pastoral Transition. It is comprised of one member from the CPT who will act as chair and 4 members selected by the chair of the Exam Committee in consultation with the chair of CPT and elected by the CPT serving in 2 classes of 2 for 2 year terms. Each member is eligible to serve up to 3 consecutive terms for a total of 6 years before they must rotate off the committee. The chair of the Exam Committee will seek a balance in membership between Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders.

The Exam Committee is responsible for conducting exams for congregations seeking to fill a pulpit under the following circumstances

1. A Pastor Nominating Committee serving a congregation has extended a call to a Teaching Elder in the PC(USA). (If the call is to a Teaching Elder within the presbytery the exam will be for suitability for that particular call only. If the Teaching Elder is a member of another presbytery the exam will be for both membership in the presbytery and for suitability for the particular call.)
2. A Pastor Nominating Committee serving a congregation has extended a call to a member of another Reformed denomination with which the PC(USA) is in full communion (G-5.0202)
3. A session has offered a contract to a Teaching Elder from this or another presbytery to serve as an Interim Pastor, or in a Temporary Pastoral Relationship.
4. A session contracts with a Ruling Elder to fill a pulpit for an extended period of time (in excess of 1 month).
5. A session wishes presbytery to contract with an ordained clergy from another denomination or lay person to preach for an extended period of time (in excess of one month).

### **Exam Process**

1. The exam process begins when the CPT Liaison for a PNC notifies the chair of the Exam Committee that a call has been extended (Situation 1 and 2 from above) or the Stated Clerk, the Presbytery Executive, or the chair of CPT notifies the chair of the Exam Committee of the need to examine someone filling a pulpit for an extended period of time (Situations 3-5 from above).
2. The chair of the Exam Committee will contact the person to be examined to schedule the examination and request the following documents: The Personal Information Form or other form of resume, a one page biographical sketch, and a one page statement of faith.
3. In the case of a call to an installed position, the chair of the Exam Committee shall obtain from the CPT Liaison for the calling congregation a synopsis of the call process and a summary of the needs of the congregation. This information will include but not be limited to the results of the Holy Cow profile (CAT or Conversation), along with the Ministry Information Form.
4. The chair of the Exam Committee will contact the Presbytery Executive to get the results of background vetting with the pastoral candidate's Executive or other officials, or other similar officials for those coming from outside the PC(USA).

5. The chair of the Exam Committee will contact the chair of the PNC or the Clerk of Session (in cases 3-5 from above because the lack of a Search Committee) and discuss the search process and what strengths of ministry have been identified by the committee or session in the candidate for the position.
6. The chair of the Exam Committee will share with the members of the committee the documents and information obtained.
7. On the day of the examination the Exam Committee will meet with the person to be examined (ordinarily face to face). Members of the church's PNC or Session may accompany the person to  

be examined to the meeting, but may not be present in the examination. The exam will touch on the four areas of emphases identified by the book of Order of the PC(USA): Theology, Bible, Polity, Worship and Sacraments, as well as the readiness of the person be examined to do the work to which he or she has been called or for which he or she has been contracted (if the person being called or contracted is already a member of presbytery the exam will only cover suitability for the particular call or position).
8. If the person to be examined passes the exam the Exam Committee will recommend to CPT that the Exam be sustained, and that the session be allowed to 1) call a congregational meeting to elect the candidate to the position to which he or she has been called (situation 1 and 2 from above), or; 2) submit a contract to CPT for approval (Situation 3-5 from above). If the Exam Committee does not approve the exam it will be reported to CPT.
9. In the case that the Teaching Elder being called or contracted with is a member of another Presbytery or another Reformed Denomination with which the PC(USA) is in full communion, that Teaching Elder will be scheduled to be presented on the floor of presbytery by a representative of the Exam Committee, ordinarily the chair. The person being presented will submit their Statement of Faith and Biographical Sketch for publication in the Presbytery Handbook and will present a brief statement on their faith and sense of call to ministry. Following this presentation there will be an opportunity for questions from the floor, after which the Teaching Elder will be welcomed into membership in Shenandoah Presbytery and asked to sign the Book of Obligation.
10. Should a motion be made to reconsider the CPT's action under its Commission Authority the Teacher Elder being called or contracted will be asked to step outside of the meeting room along with visitors from the calling church (other than the appointed Commissioner(s) for that congregation). Following discussion and vote on the motion to reconsider, the Teaching Elder will be called back in and notified of the result.

### **Explanation of Commission Authority**

This policy includes commission authority for the Committee on Pastoral Transition to act on the presbytery's behalf to sustain the examinations of those called to pastoral positions in Shenandoah Presbytery, approving the calls, and welcoming the Teaching Elders into membership in Shenandoah Presbytery. This commission authority gives CPT authority to sustain exams, grant permission for ministry to begin, approve terms of call, and approve membership of a commission to install the Teaching Elder to their position as well as the date and time of the service to install. The called pastor would then be presented at the next stated presbytery meeting without vote unless a motion would be made to rescind or amend the CPT's decision. Such a motion would ordinarily require a 2/3 vote of the presbytery to proceed.