

Presbytery of San Francisco
November 10, 2009

Recommended Process for Receiving & Acting on the COM Report

MOTION: That time limits be set as shown below on the clarification and discussion of COM motions; and that speeches from the floor be limited to two minutes per person.

- Time limits will apply to sections of the process marked by an asterisk
- Commissioners may ask questions for clarification of this process
- A voice vote will be taken on this motion (NOTE: a 2/3 vote is required to limit debate)

1. Validation of Ministry

Process Step	Time Limit (Minutes)
COM Presents Motion & Rationale See <i>REPORT #11- COM PART 2 2-1</i> for the first motion and rationale, plus <i>REPORT #11 – COM PART 2 6-1</i> for the Presbytery’s policy on validated ministry	10
Questions of Clarification from the Floor	Up to 15 *
Discussion of COM Motion	Up to 20 *
Vote - Balloting & Counting of Ballots	20

2. Pending Approval of the Validation of Ministry, Presentation of Candidate Lisa Larges for Trials of Ordination

Process Step	Time Limit (Minutes)
COM Presents Motion & Rationale See <i>REPORT #11- COM PART 2 2-1and following</i> for the second motion and rationale, plus <i>REPORT #11 – COM PART 2 6-1</i> for the Presbytery’s policy on examining candidates, plus <i>Book of Order G-14.0482</i> (excerpt shown below)	10
Questions of Clarification from the Floor	Up to 10 *
Candidate Lisa Larges Shares a Statement	10
COM Will Present an Initial Set of Questions	Up to 15 *
Other Commissioners’ Questions	Up to 20 *
Discussion of COM Motion	Up to 20 *
Balloting & Counting of Ballots	20

Presbytery of San Francisco
November 10, 2009

INFORMATION

See [REPORT #1 STATED CLERK 1-6 thru 1-10](#) for reminders about parliamentary procedure, including Rules of Decorum, for *Guidelines for Use in Times of Disagreement*, and for announcements RE seating, voting and press.

In section G-14.0482, of the *Book of Order* describes the “Examination for Ordination”:

The candidate shall appear before the presbytery and shall make a brief statement of personal faith and of commitment to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament. The presbytery shall receive the report of its appropriate committee that the candidate has completed all requirements, and has been certified ready for ordination pending approval of the call. The report shall include a summary of waivers and exceptions of requirements granted. The presbytery may conduct further examination of the candidate’s Christian faith and views in theology, the Bible, the Sacraments, and the government of the church as it deems necessary. If the presbytery is fully satisfied of the candidate’s qualifications, it shall approve the call and vote to proceed to his or her ordination and installation.

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY REPORT - PART 2

Presbytery of San Francisco

November 10, 2009

FOR ACTION

- 1. MOTION: That the call to Lisa Larges, as Minister Coordinator of That All May Freely Serve (TAMFS), is a validated ministry pending her ordination as a minister of Word and Sacrament.**

RATIONALE

The Committee on Ministry, West Bay, has carefully considered the Call of Lisa Larges to serve as Minister Coordinator of That All May Freely Serve. We examined the job description, responsibilities, accountabilities, and parameters. In as much as this is a pastoral job requiring preaching of the Word and administer of the Sacraments; and inasmuch as it is a match for the education, gifts and call of Lisa Larges, COM recommends Validation of the Call.

- 2. MOTION: That Lisa Larges be examined for ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament, and that within that examination we consider her departure; and, pending ordination, enroll her as a member of Presbytery of San Francisco.**

RATIONALE

The Committee on Ministry, West Bay has carefully examined Lisa Larges as a Candidate for Ministry coming before the Presbytery for “trials of ordination”. After full engagement with her biography and faith statement, as well as extended conversation about her understanding of the tenets of the Presbyterian faith, we heard her formal Departure from the Constitutional Requirement of G.6-0106b. We had compelling and respectful conversation about the theological relationship between allegiance to Jesus Christ and/or to Scripture itself.

We considered the constitutional guarantees of freedom of conscience, especially under G-1.0301, G-1.0305, and G-6.0108 (see below). The Historic Principles of Church Order state that “God alone is Lord of the conscience” (G-1.0301), that “there are truths and forms with respect to which men of good characters and principles may differ,” and that “in all of these we think it the duty both of private Christians and societies to exercise mutual forbearance toward each other” (G-1.0305). We heard Lisa’s heartfelt conviction that this requirement deliberately and intentionally denies the dignity of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons.

The Committee began discussion remembering that Presbyters necessarily consider any departures declared by applicants for membership in light of their own knowledge of Scripture and the Confessions, love for the PCUSA, responsibility not only to be governed by the church’s polity but to determine a clear understanding of it, and a deep desire to be guided in collective discernment by the working of the Holy Spirit. The Committee had previously received and examined excerpts from the Theological Task Force on the Peace, Unity and Purity of the Church (2006 GA), and relevant Authoritative Interpretations and Advisory Opinions.

(NOTE: An Authoritative Interpretation is a binding interpretation of our constitution and carries the weight of the General Assembly - <http://www.pcusa.org/acc/interp.htm> . An Advisory Opinion is an opinion from the Office of the General Assembly Stated Clerk trying to make more clear some provision of the constitution-- <http://www.pcusa.org/constitutionalservices/advisory-opinion.htm>.)

Advisory Opinions were helpful, but because each of the opinions give only a piece of what needs to be considered, and because there are no judicial cases that serve as precedent, we relied heavily on the most recent Authoritative Interpretation from the 2008 GA which affirmed the authoritative interpretation of G-6.0108 approved by the 2006 General Assembly (see below) and went on to say that “pursuant to G-13.011, [this General Assembly] interprets G-6.0108 to apply equally to all ordination standards of the PC (U.S.A.). Section G-6.0108 requires examining bodies to give prayerful and careful consideration, on an individual, case-by-case basis, to any departure from an ordination standard in matters of belief or practice that a candidate may declare during examination. However, the examining body is not required to accept a departure from standards, and cannot excuse a candidate’s inability to perform the constitutional functions unique to his or her office (such as administration of the sacraments.)”

Advisory Opinion #22 states in relation to this Authoritative Interpretation (AI): “We believe this modifies the 2008 GAPJC decision of *Bush v. Presbytery of Pittsburgh*, in that the scrupling [e.g. declaring a departure] of either belief or practice is now allowed. The effect of this action is to remind ordaining bodies that they bear the responsibility for determining whether any particular standard (including those described in G-6.0106b) will be a bar to that particular candidate’s ordination/installation. This Authoritative Interpretation preserves the historic right of sessions and presbyteries to determine their membership; all these decisions, however, continue to be subject to review by a higher governing body.” This AI leaves “...in place the prohibition in *Bush*, which told ordaining bodies: ‘Restatements of the *Book of Order*, in whatever form they are adopted, are themselves an obstruction to the same standard of constitutional governance no less than attempts to depart from mandatory provisions.’”

We were also influenced by the compelling fact that as of now Ms Larges is not in a covenant relationship and affirms the sacred nature of a consecrated covenantal relationship.

Discussion included understandings of “chastity” (particularly the language of G.6.0106b which chose *chastity* over *celibacy* and *in singleness* over *outside of marriage*); questions and interpretations of belief vs. practice, the definition and rationale for an essential tenet, and a look at the whole of the candidate’s character, faith statement, Reformed understandings, love of and participation in the church.

The Committee concluded, by a vote of 9 yes, 1 no, 1 abstention, that given the whole person and faith of the candidate, and the quality and context of the Departure, that this Departure does not meet the level of an essential tenet of the Presbyterian faith, and that Lisa should be approved for examination. This committee therefore presents her for “Trials of Ordination.”

Excerpts from Book of Order - CHAPTER VI - The Church and Its Officers***G-6.0106 Gifts and Requirements***

- a. To those called to exercise special functions in the church —deacons, elders, and ministers of the Word and Sacrament—God gives suitable gifts for their various duties. In addition to possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, natural and acquired, those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world. They must have the approval of God’s people and the concurring judgment of governing body of the church.
- b. Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (**W-4.9001**), or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and /or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament.

G-6.0108 Freedom of Conscience— Individual and Corporate

- a. It is necessary to the integrity and health of the church that the persons who serve in it as officers shall adhere to the essentials of the Reformed faith and polity as expressed in *The Book of Confessions* and the Form of Government. So far as may be possible without serious departure from these standards, without infringing on the rights and views of others, and without obstructing the constitutional governance of the church, freedom of conscience with respect to the interpretation of Scripture is to be maintained.

Within Certain Bounds

- b. It is to be recognized, however, that in becoming a candidate or officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds. His or her conscience is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church so long as he or she continues to seek or hold office in that body. The decision as to whether a person has departed from essentials of Reformed faith and polity is made initially by the individual concerned but ultimately becomes the responsibility of the governing body in which he or she serves. (G-1.0301; G-1.0302) ¹

¹ Very early in the history of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, even before the General Assembly was established, the plan of reunion of the Synod of New York and Philadelphia contained the following sentences: “That when any matter is determined by a major vote, every member shall either actively concur with or passively submit to such determination; or if his conscience permit him to do neither, he shall, after sufficient liberty modestly to reason and remonstrate, peaceably withdraw from our communion without attempting to make any schism. Provided always that this shall be understood to extend only to such determination as the body shall judge indispensable in doctrine or Presbyterian government.” (Hist. Dig. (P) p. 1310.) (Plan of Union of 1758, par. II.)

2006 General Assembly Authoritative Interpretation regarding section G-6.0108 of the Book of Order:

[This section was approved by the General Assembly and stands as an authoritative interpretation of our constitution to be used by all governing bodies of the church.]

- a. The *Book of Confessions* and the Form of Government of the *Book of Order* set forth the scriptural and constitutional standards for ordination and installation.
- b. These standards are determined by the whole church, after careful study of Scripture and theology, solely by the constitutional process of approval by the General Assembly with the approval of the presbyteries. These standards may be interpreted by the General Assembly and its Permanent Judicial Commission.
- c. Ordaining and installing bodies, acting as corporate expressions of the church, have the responsibility to determine their membership by applying these standards to those elected to office. These determinations include:
 - (1) Whether a candidate being examined for ordination and/or installation as elder, deacon, or minister of Word and Sacrament has departed from scriptural and constitutional standards for fitness for office,
 - (2) Whether any departure constitutes a failure to adhere to the essentials of Reformed faith and polity under G-6.0108 of the *Book of Order*, thus barring the candidate from ordination and/or installation.
- d. Whether the examination and ordination and installation decision comply with the Constitution of the PC(USA), and whether the ordaining/installing body has conducted its examination reasonably, responsibly, prayerfully, and deliberately in deciding to ordain a candidate for church office is subject to review by higher governing bodies.
- e. All parties should endeavor to outdo one another in honoring one another's one another in honoring one another's decisions, according the presumption of wisdom to ordaining/installing bodies in examining candidates and to the General Assembly, with presbyteries' approval, in setting standards.

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY
Presbytery of San Francisco
November 10, 2009

A STATEMENT OF FAITH
Lisa Larges

I believe in the fullness of the expression of grace in the one God manifest in three persons sovereign, Christ and Holy Spirit.

I believe in the sovereign God who, in love called all things into being, creating all that is seen and unseen. This God is the ground of our being, source of life, the rock to which we cling. I take solace in the mystery that though this God is wholly other from me, I am fully and completely loved by God as is all of God's creation. There is nothing that is in me that is not known by God, and God's good purpose for my life and for the whole of life is to live in love according to God's will.

I believe in Jesus Christ the full expression of the love of God made manifest to us in the life and witness of the one Jesus of Nazareth. Through him unfolded the mystery of the incarnation, God becoming flesh: Full human and fully divine. God's graciousness towards us is revealed to us in that God emptied God's self coming to us as a newborn child of the son of Mary and sojourning with us in all of human life. This Jesus proclaimed the realm of God, challenging all temporal authority, calling all persons to repentance, subverting power, teaching, healing, and daily communing with God. Through him, God's love for us and graciousness towards us, were fulfilled and our redemption from sin was accomplished. Through Jesus, justice and mercy were made one. Through his birth, life, death, and resurrection the way of salvation was made known to us, and the work of salvation was complete.

I believe in the Holy Spirit who sanctifies our lives by calling us daily to repentance, leading us to turn from sin, and guiding us to a holy life marked by the rule of love. It is by the work of the Spirit that our hearts are held captive to the Word of God revealed through the Scriptures. Through the Spirit we are called together into fellowship with one another in this community of struggle and witness called the Church. Through the Spirit and by the Spirit alone the Christ is revealed to us in each person, and a reverence for life is restored.

In sovereign love and by the power of the Spirit, God gave us the Holy Scriptures. It is by the work of the Spirit that we find in Scripture the living Word disclosed. In them is contained the narrative of a chosen people, God's intention of covenantal relationship, and the nature of God which is for us. By the Scriptures we come to know and to love the one Jesus, the Word of God in flesh.

Through the Scriptures and by the power of love we are convicted of sin by which we cast God from the center of our lives and live under the false notion that we can remain apart from the love of God. This sin permeates our being, breaks the bonds of trust, and thwarts the way of love. Evil wrought by sin is manifest in society as oppression, violence, greed, the destruction of God's good creation, and the objectification of life.

I believe there is but one thing greater than the despair of sin and that is the certainty that nothing will separate us from the love of God. God's love was completed in Jesus, and through his life, death and resurrection the way of redemption was revealed to us. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, emboldened by the love of Christ, through faith alone we turn again to God and are restored to right relation with God, our neighbor and all creation. Daily we seek God's boundless forgiveness and through love seek to live more deeply into God's good pleasure for our lives.

Through the Spirit we are bound together in the one body of Christ known as the Church, and together we are commissioned to proclaim the unbounded good news that God's love is for all. As one body we are strengthened by the gifts of the sacraments. In Baptism, we are joined to the fellowship of believers and in communion we partake with the first disciples in the great feast of the realm of God proclaimed in Christ's death, resurrection, and return. Together as believers we constitute the holy priesthood, each one called to serve and honor God. The whole of our vocation is summed up in the appeal of John: beloved, let us love one another. This is to be our work until God's mystery is made known when all of time shall be redeemed and creation restored by the resounding Word of God's holy and everlasting "Yes!"

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY
Presbytery of San Francisco
November 10, 2009

Lisa Larges Biographical Statement

I was born, the youngest of two girls, in 1963, in La Crosse Wisconsin. To this day, my sister is a die hard Packers fan, but you can take that up with her! Like me, my sister is also blind, and when I was four, we moved to Minneapolis so that my sister and I could attend Minneapolis public schools which had an excellent and innovative program for visually impaired students.

... Time passed. ... I graduated from High School and went to St. Olaf College, sojourning among the Lutherans and graduating in 1985.

After college I moved to the Bay Area to attend San Francisco Theological Seminary. On graduating in 1989 I received the Preaching Prize and a scholarship for academic excellence as awarded by the faculty.

After graduating from Seminary I stayed in the Bay area where I worked first for 10 years as a massage therapist at the University of California San Francisco Medical School, and then for 2 years as a product researcher at a Dot.com start up in Burlingame. During these 12 years I had the opportunity to preach several times a year both in the Bay Area and in various churches around the country. In response to the General Assembly's 1993 call for dialogue regarding the service of gay and lesbian persons in the life of our church, I created the Witness for Reconciliation Project, which provided an opportunity for Bay Area Presbyterians to share their faith journeys. In 2002 I was called to serve as the Regional Partnership Coordinator for That All May Freely Serve, a Missional, grassroots organization advocating for all who are disenfranchised in the church, especially lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members. . In August of 2007, upon the retirement of our founding Minister Director, I became the Minister Coordinator for TAMFS.

I was baptized and raised in the Presbyterian Church. Church life, especially the Bible Study and Prayer groups that I was a part of from adolescence through college. was foundational both to my faith, and to my desire to serve the church. In the Bay Area I found a home at Noe Valley Ministry, where the deep caring of the small congregation for one another and for the neighborhood, and a congregation-wide commitment to Spiritual growth both inspire and challenge me.

I came under care in the Twin Cities Presbytery in 1986, and was transferred to be a candidate in San Francisco Presbytery in 1997. I regard these years as a candidate to be a blessing to me, as I have come to know, love, and respect the church and our Reformed Tradition, in a way that I could not have as a 23 year old starting out, and to grow in faith and experience.

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY
Presbytery of San Francisco
November 10, 2009

Lisa Larges' Statement of Departure from G-6.0106b
and Affirmation of Essentials of Faith and Polity

"The Church of Jesus Christ is the provisional demonstration of what God intends for all of humanity. The Church is called to be a sign in and for the world of the new reality which God has made available to people in Jesus Christ. The new reality revealed in Jesus Christ is the new humanity, a new creation, a new beginning for human life in the world: Sin is forgiven. Reconciliation is accomplished. The dividing walls of hostility are torn down. The Church is the body of Christ, both in its corporate life and in the lives of its individual members, and is called to give shape and substance to this truth." G-3.0200 Inclusive

In gratitude for the Church and its particular expression as the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), for the ways in which it has taught me of the love of God, of the work of salvation in Jesus Christ and of the demands on our lives to love and serve one another and this sweet world; for all that the church has meant in my life, and in hope for all that the church can and must be in a world desperate to know of God's love, grace, and mercy: therefore, out of gratitude, love and hope for the church, I am compelled by my conscience and charged by my faith to firmly, clearly, and in every way declare that the provisions at G-6.0106b are a mar upon the church and a stumbling block to its mission. As a matter of faith, conscience and integrity I can neither actively concur nor passively submit to this provision, and as a candidate for Minister of Word and Sacrament I submit to the Presbytery of San Francisco through its Committee on Ministry this statement of departure.

Insofar as "*The decision as to whether a person has departed from essentials of Reformed faith and polity is made initially by the individual concerned,*"¹ I offer the following rationale which has led me to conclude that:

- a. the standards set forth at G-6.0106b do not express essentials of Reformed faith and polity
- b. further, the standards expressed at G-6.0106b are indeed contrary to essentials of Reformed faith and polity and therefore
- c. to actively concur or passively submit to the standards expressed at G-6.0106b would require that I should elevate a flawed standard above standards of faith and polity which I understand to be essential.

Rationale

1. Jesus Christ alone is the authority to which all other authorities are subordinate. This faith claim is essential to our faith and polity and the joy and substance of our witness. The preliminary principles that head our "Form of Government" assert:

"All power in heaven and earth is given to Jesus Christ by Almighty God, who raised Christ from the dead and set him above all rule and authority, all power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. God has put all things under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and has made Christ Head of the Church, which is his body." G-1.0100a

¹ See at G-6.0108b

And

“In affirming with the earliest Christians that Jesus is Lord, the Church confesses that he is its hope and that the Church, as Christ’s body, is bound to his authority and thus free to live in the lively, joyous reality of the grace of God.” G-1.0100d.

By this essential of our faith and polity, officers in this communion promise to *“...trust in Jesus Christ as Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church.”*² All other vows upheld by officers in this church flow from this first declaration of obedience to Christ.

Yet the provision at G-6.0106b sets a contrary standard: *“Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture ...”* Our tradition upholds the promise that Scripture is the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ, the living Word and author and perfecter of our faith. To lead a life *“in obedience to Scripture”* sets the authority of Scripture above the authority of Christ and returns us to life under the law. This misstatement of our theological understanding of Christ’s preeminence is my primary scruple regarding this provision, and the errors found in the remainder of the section at G-6.0106b arise, I believe, from this initial misconception.

2. The provision further states that *“all who are called to office in the church shall live a life ... in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church.”*

Our Constitution defines the functions of the Confessions at G-2.0100b:

“These statements identify the church as a community of people known by its convictions as well as by its actions. They guide the church in its study and interpretation of the Scriptures; they summarize the essence of Christian tradition; they direct the church in maintaining sound doctrines; they equip the church for its work of proclamation.”

In the requirement that officers of the church be conformed to the historic Confessional standards of the church, the provision at G-6.0106b misstates the proper use and function of the Confessions. Scripture calls us to be imitators of Christ. To conform our lives to a lesser standard trespasses on both the authority of Christ and Scripture.

The fourth question put to all officers of the church expresses the right ordering of authority within the Reformed tradition: *“Will you fulfill your office in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions?”*³

3. The text of G-6.0106b continues by singling out one particular derived standard from the historic confessional standards, namely, *“the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001), or chastity in singleness.”*

By my conscience, faith and theology I cannot and will not accept the terms of this standard.

- It deliberately and intentionally denies the dignity and lived experience of same gender loving people.

² See at W-4.4003a

³ W-4.4003d

- In so doing it raises one category of persons, heterosexual persons, above all others and thereby makes an idol of heterosexuality.
- Its formulation is based on a certain interpretation of Scripture to the exclusion of other interpretations, which are as sound, held by faithful Christians within our church.⁴
- It imposes a false and impossible choice upon same gender loving persons by not recognizing faithful covenanted relationships between two persons of the same gender.
- It puts the church and its officers in an untenable position by failing to acknowledge the expanded definition of legal marriage as a “*contract between two persons*,” as held at this writing, in the jurisdictions of six U.S. states.
- By elevating this standard above any others it has caused our church to be mired in inappropriate and scandalous inquiries into the sexual acts of persons seeking Ordained office.
- It removes sex from the context of intimacy and covenantal relationship and denies the fullness and richness of committed loving relationships between persons of the same gender.
- It denies the full humanity of lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender persons by focusing solely and exclusively on one part of their lives.
- It distracts the church from seeking a deeper understanding of sexual ethics, so that sexual misconduct by officers of this church continues at an alarming rate.
- It puts upon the door of the church an “*Unwelcome*” sign for all gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons and their families.
- It props up and provides religious cover for acts of violence committed against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons.
- It has caused schism within our church by driving out gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons who cannot fellowship within a church which regards them categorically as inferior.
- It is a scandal to the Gospel and destroys the peace, unity and purity of the church.

In my own life, while I affirm the moral values of fidelity and chastity, I will not and can not claim chastity in singleness unless and until fidelity between two persons of the same gender within a covenantal relationship is recognized.

I will not submit in any way to a reduction of who I am as a Lesbian to language about “*practice*,” nor will I participate in perpetrating such a false and demeaning dichotomy upon any other member of this church.

⁴ “The interpretation of Scripture, we confess, does not belong to any private or public person, nor yet to any Kirk for pre-eminence or precedence, personal or local, which it has above others, but pertains to the Spirit of God by whom the Scriptures were written. When controversy arises about the right understanding of any passage or sentence of Scripture, or for the reformation of any abuse within the Kirk of God, we ought not so much to ask what men have said or done before us, as what the Holy Spirit uniformly speaks within the body of the Scriptures and what Christ Jesus himself did and commanded. . . . We dare not receive or admit any interpretation which is contrary to any principle point of our faith, or to any other plain text of the Scripture, or to the rule of love.”
Book of Confessions 3.18

4. The text of G-6.0106b concludes with this mandate: “Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament.”

It is an essential of Reformed faith that sin is a condition of our being and not a bill of particulars. There is no assertion more foundational to our Reformed understanding of Scripture than that God, who alone knows our hearts, is alone our judge. The examination of one’s conscience and contrition for particular sins arises out of gratitude for God’s astounding and unending grace. While, under the authority of Scripture, we are accountable to one another for guidance and admonition, there is, nonetheless, no test of righteousness that might in any way impinge on the humble, simple, and direct acceptance of the gift of God’s incontrovertible, unsurpassable and all-sufficient grace through Jesus the Christ. This concluding sentence at G-6.0106b reflects an incomplete and misleading formulation of the understanding of sin and repentance within our tradition, and leads back to a kind of “*works righteousness*.”

Conclusion

I affirm with joy the standards as expressed at G-6.0106a and believe them to be a sufficient expression of both the gifts and the requirements for officers of the church.

I can and I will affirm with joy all the questions for ordination found at W-4.4003.

I believe that as a candidate called to serve in this Church as Minister of Word and Sacrament, nothing in my faith or in my manner of life departs from the essentials of Reformed faith and polity.

Finally insofar as “*the decision as to whether a person has departed from essentials of Reformed faith and polity ... ultimately becomes the responsibility of the governing body in which he or she serves*”⁵ I hereby submit this statement and seek with you the wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

Lisa Larges, December 2007, Revised, September, 2009

⁵ See at G-6.0108b

COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY
Validated Ministry Policy
Approved by the Presbytery of San Francisco September 12, 2006

Introduction

The accountability process between specialized ministers and the Presbytery is a two-way relationship between the Committee on Ministry and ministers. Specialized Ministers represent the Presbytery in a variety of settings and their Ministries are a resource for and significant part of, the mission of the Presbytery. By the same token, the Presbytery has an obligation to its ministers for being a resource for them and providing support and counsel.

In validating the Ministries of Specialized Ministers, there is no simple “cookie cutter” mold we can follow. The decision must ultimately be made in each individual case, taking into account the geographical and missional needs of the Presbytery, the gifts and call of an individual, family circumstances and job availability. We need to recognize the fact that in many families, both partners are employed. This requires more creativity in addressing issues of employment and ministry with families than it has in past generations.

Principles Governing the Validation of Ministries by San Francisco Presbytery:

Ministry is a profession as well as a calling. Almost any work performed by a Minister of Word and Sacrament, except for the administration of the sacraments, can be performed by an elder with special gifts and preparation. An essential difference, therefore, lies in the perception of both the person performing the work and the presbytery in which the minister holds membership and to which he/she has primary accountability. Providing all standards are met, does the individual choose to be identified by and dedicated to the Profession of Ministry and hold membership in the Presbytery? Does the person seeking the validation of his/her ministry see it as a way to proclaim the Word through this work, and through the work to reflect theologically on its meaning, seek out opportunities to administer the sacraments and be responsive to doing the same as the occasion arises? Do the presbytery and the employing body also acknowledge the validity of this proclamation of the Word, theological reflection and service of the sacraments in this employment setting?

Validated ministries (as defined in G-11.0408) will conform to the standards in the Book of Order for Ministry of Continuing Members as set forth in G-11.0403, and will be based upon the descriptions of ordained office found in G-6.0100 and G-6.0200. Ministers of Word and Sacrament serving in validated ministries will be aware of the New Vision goals and processes of San Francisco Presbytery and through their work, participate in the fulfilling of this New Vision.

Process for Validating Calls

In order to have a call validated, ministers or candidates will address the following:

- a. The specific work to which they have been called, including job title and general responsibilities, terms of compensation, and the institution(s) to which they are accountable.**
- b. How the ministry makes use of their theological education.**
- c. How they are (or intend to be) involved in the Presbytery. Minimum standards for involvement in the Presbytery and congregations include:
attendance at three Presbytery meetings per year,
participation in the committee life of the Presbytery and
availability to moderate sessions and preach in congregations.**
- d. The nature of the institution or organization to which they are accountable, the accountability of that structure for fair employment practices, and institutional provisions for insurance accountability. In the case of a person engaged in private practice, evidence of insurance and participation in a professional organization is necessary.**
- e. The name of the congregation in which they worship and serve.**

Ministers continuing in validated ministries will complete a short form annually, confirming their continuation in that call, and reporting any changes in it. In all cases, the burden is on the minister to demonstrate that the ministry should be validated.

In the process of reviewing validated ministries, a member of the Committee on Ministry will speak with any ministers entering into new or revised work, and will meet every three years with each member of Presbytery serving in a validated ministry (other than in a call to a congregation, or honorably retired).

The Committee on Ministry is responsible for reviewing and recommending the validation of ministries to the Presbytery.

PRESBYTERY OF SAN FRANCISCO

As approved by Presbytery on May 8, 2007

The process for the examination of Candidates for Ministry who have been “found ready to examined” by another Presbytery and who are being examined for ordination and membership by the Presbytery of San Francisco.

This process fulfills the responsibility described in ~~G-14.0314 & G-14.0401 and 2~~ **G-14.0481-.0483** (*Citations updated to reflect changes in Book of Order 2007-2009 and following*)

The Policy

This process will be used for all Candidates who have been under care of another presbytery but are being examined for membership in the Presbytery of San Francisco. To begin this process the Candidate must have a validated call to serve a church or agency within the Presbytery and have been found ready to be examined by their Committee on Preparation for Ministry. If a Candidate is given permission to have her/his final trials of Ordination in their presbytery of care and then seek transfer to the Presbytery of San Francisco then they would follow the process for Transfer of Minister Members from other presbyteries.

The prospective member must meet all the constitutional requirements for ordination to Word and Sacrament as specified in the *Book of Order*. Any alternate means to meet particular ordination requirements that have been approved by the presbytery of care shall be noted and reported to this presbytery.

The Candidate is asked to supply the COM with a one-page statement of faith, a short personal biography and a release form for all their files from the Committee on Preparation for Ministry of their presbytery of care. All these documents shall be received in this Presbytery’s office at least two weeks prior to their meeting with the COM.

The examination takes place before the calling congregation or session votes on the candidate. Ideally this meeting will take place during the visit when the person candidates for a position. The examination is part of a larger interview with the prospective minister member. The interview is an opportunity for the COM to get to know the person, build a supportive relationship with the prospective new member, and help with the transition process.

The COM examination will be done by the appropriate East Bay or West Bay regional COM group. When an examination is done at a special called meeting of the COM group, all members will be invited and a minimum of 5 members must be present. In the event that the recommendation of the COM group is not received by the Presbytery, an extended examination/interview of a prospective member could be done by the combined East Bay / West Bay COM groups in order to address issues raised by the Presbytery.

Steps

1. The prospective candidate/minister member will come before the COM at an appointed time. The candidate may bring a representative from the calling church/agency to the meeting with prior permission of a COM moderator. This guest will be invited to participate at appropriate

- times during the meeting. The minister must supply the COM with a one-page statement of faith and a short personal biography as well as their CPM files from the presbytery of care and any other documents the COM may request.
2. The examination will be done in the context of a larger interview process where the committee and the candidate/prospective member get acquainted and learn of the ministry to which the candidate is being called. The COM will use this time to assess any changes that might need to be included in the call and make recommendations to the candidate/church/agency that they feel will be helpful.
 3. The candidate shall be examined on his or her Christian faith and views in theology, the Sacraments, and the government of this church as well as asked the nine ordination questions and any other inquiry deemed appropriate in light of the responses of the candidate/prospective minister member. This will include questions about G-6.0106b. Additional questions shall be asked as the COM seeks a fuller understanding of the candidate and the nature of the call. The COM must be rigorous and deliberate in seeking a full understanding of the candidate's faith and practice as well as an understanding of the Reformed Tradition. The COM will perform its duties prayerfully and responsibly, respecting those being examined as a sister or brother in Christ. The COM will follow the guidance of G-6.0108a and b as to determining acceptable acts of freedom of conscience of prospective minister members.
 4. After the interview/examination the committee will vote to recommend to Presbytery to ordain or not to ordain the candidate. A recommendation to ordain would also include a recommendation to receive the candidate as a minister member of the Presbytery. The candidate will be presented to Presbytery and members of Presbytery will be invited to ask questions of the COM representative(s) about the process and ask questions of the prospective member about his or her Christian faith and views in theology, the Sacraments, and the government of this church. Consideration shall be given to what questions are appropriate for this meeting and what questions should be referred to the COM for an extended examination of the prospective member if needed.
 5. If in the course of their examination the COM finds the candidate to have expressed possible departures from the standards of the *Book of Confessions* and/or *Book of Order* as a matter of conscience about non-essentials tenets, these findings shall be included in the report to Presbytery. As guided by G-6.0108a and b, it is ultimately the responsibility of the Presbytery to determine if a candidate/prospective minister member's act of conscience fits within acceptable bounds of our Reformed faith and polity.
 6. In situations where the COM votes to recommend that a person not be ordained and received into membership in the Presbytery, the COM liaison and chair of the committee will meet as soon as possible with the Pastor Nominating Committee or calling agency and explain the reasons for the recommendation of COM.
 7. At the meeting where the candidate/prospective member is examined they will be asked to introduce him/herself to the Presbytery and share the nature of the work to which he/she has been called. At this meeting a printed one page biography and one page statement of faith will be presented to the Presbytery.
 8. In the event that the members of Presbytery feel a need for further examination of the candidate an extended examination/interview of candidate/prospective member may be done by the full COM. Issues and questions raised by the Presbytery shall be addressed at this meeting.
 9. When the full COM does an extended examination/interview it will make its recommendation to the next meeting of Presbytery with a report of its findings.