

GUIDELINES FOR ELECTING READERS FOR ORDINATION EXAMS

Role of Presbyteries in Electing Readers

In the Presbyterian Church (USA), presbyteries have the joy and the responsibility of preparing candidates for ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. These responsibilities include support, guidance, prayer, evaluation and discernment for inquirers and candidates under their care.

Presbyteries also play a vital role in the preparation process by electing elders and ministers to serve as readers for the senior ordination examinations. Readers *must be elected* through an approved process in their individual Presbyteries. Presbyteries are urged to consider the PC(USA)'s commitment to the principles of inclusiveness and representation in electing readers. The term (length) of service is determined by the Presbytery.

Ordination exams may be written in Spanish and Korean as well as in English. Presbyteries are encouraged to elect readers who are bilingual (Spanish/English or Korean/English). It is important to remember that training sessions and resource materials are provided for all readers in English.

It is appropriate for presbyteries to elect individuals who have served effectively as readers in the past, yet also to consider the potential of other presbyters to serve in this area of ministry. Presbyteries may choose to elect members of their Committees on Preparation for Ministry to serve as readers. This is not required, but it does provide the CPMs with hands-on experience in the examination process. Presbyters who have previously served as members of CPMs often have the knowledge and experience to serve well as readers. Newly ordained ministers will be familiar with the exams and the exam process, but may not yet have enough practical ministry experience to serve the reading process well.

It is also appropriate for each presbytery to elect alternate readers. These persons may be called upon on short notice if a primary reader is unable to serve, or if more readers are needed to grade exams. Please consider electing at least one experienced reader who would be able to serve well if needed.

For the sake of the integrity of the process, presbyteries may NOT elect elders who have been enrolled as inquirers and candidates under their care to serve as readers.

Qualifications and Responsibilities of Readers

Reading groups meet twice a year, in March and October, in various geographical areas of the United States to read the four senior ordination exams administered in January and August. In deciding whom to nominate/elect, you should consider the following qualifications and qualities of good readers.

- Serving as a reader for ordination exams is both a demanding and a rewarding task. Readers need to be in good physical and mental health. They must be able to function effectively

through a long workday – generally from 8:30 a.m. until 9:30 p.m. – with breaks for meals. Some of the reading groups meet in sites where participants have to transition between accommodations, meeting rooms, and/or meals for up to a half-mile. They must be able to read and evaluate a number of exams each day.

- It is important for individuals who are elected to serve as readers to be open to a wide spectrum of theological perspectives, and to be able to assess examinations on their own merit rather than evaluating the exams based on personal theological perspectives.
- Readers must also be able to write clear, thorough, constructive and pastorally sensitive comments in response to the exams that they grade.
- Participants are expected to spend time ahead of the meeting in preparation for the task of reading, generally between ten and twenty hours.
- It is important for readers to have strong backgrounds in the Presbyterian/Reformed tradition so that they will be able to evaluate how well the exams demonstrate a Reformed understanding and practice of theology, worship, polity, and scriptural interpretation.
- Readers need not be familiar with Greek and Hebrew, but part of the task includes assessing a candidate's ability to work with the original language of a Biblical text. Conveners of the reading groups provide assistance for those who have little or no knowledge of Greek and Hebrew.

Reading groups elect representatives from their members to serve on the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates, which prepares the exams and facilitates the reading process. Readers who are elected to serve on the PCC are expected to have some expertise in one or more of the areas of examination (Bible Content and Exegesis, Reformed Theology, Worship and Sacraments, and Church Polity). They are also expected to lead training sessions for their reading groups and to write resource papers as background materials for the readers. Members of the PCC serve four-year terms.

Thank You!

The quality and integrity of the examination and grading process is determined, in large part, by the quality and effectiveness of those who read the exams. Presbyteries are urged to elect readers whom they would trust to grade the exams of their own inquirers and candidates. The people whom you elect as readers will work hard to provide a vital service to the church as a whole and to the future leadership of the church. Most of them, if not all, will find this to be a rich and rewarding experience as well. Thank you for your commitment to this process!