

## **Examination and Reception into Trinity Presbytery**

### **I. General Guidelines**

Guiding Principles and Goals: It is the policy of Trinity Presbytery to require that ministers wishing to become members of our Presbytery, to labor inside the bounds of our Presbytery, or to be ordained by our Presbytery be held to a high standard of preparation and screening. The goal of these policies is to call all teaching elders to holy living and diligent preparation for their task, and to further the peace, unity and purity of Trinity Presbytery and the PC(USA). Familiarity with and compliance with the Transition Checklist is the responsibility of all parties. The COM Examination Sub-Committee will provide all persons wishing to become members of Trinity Presbytery with a copy of the Examination and Reception into Trinity Presbytery policy prior to their examination.

### **II. Educational Requirements**

- A. Ordinarily ministers or candidates seeking to become members of Trinity Presbytery will have a Masters of Divinity degree from a PC(USA) Theological Seminary or a denominational seminary of a church in full communion with the PC(USA). (see Appendices B & C in *The Book of Order*)
- B. In the event that a minister or candidate's M.Div. degree is not from a PC(USA) seminary (or equivalent as defined above), the minister or candidate may make a request for an exception to the examining committee of Committee on Ministry. To be considered for an exception ordinarily requires passing grades on all areas of the PC(USA) ordination exams or qualification under the terms of G-2.0505 (for ministers from other bodies/denominations).

### **III. Trinity Presbytery Committee On Ministry Pastoral Transition Checklist (Transition Checklist)**

- A. In the case of dissolution of a pastoral relationship, the Committee on Ministry (COM) will appoint a liaison for the Session. The departing minister arranges a meeting between The Session and COM Liaison, which is scheduled to occur after the minister's departure date. The purpose of this meeting is to train the Session in the transition process, to review the *Policy for Pastors and Churches Concluding a Pastoral Relationship*, and to provide assistance in securing interim pastoral leadership.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed
- B. The General Presbyter (or someone designated by the General Presbyter) should be asked to fill the pulpit on the Sunday after the pastor leaves in order to declare the pulpit vacant, to share with the congregation the process involved in the pastor search process and to explain the partnership in this process between the Presbytery and the congregation.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed
- C. The Session notifies COM Liaison or General Presbyter of the plans to form a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC).  
\_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed

- D. The COM approves having the Session call a congregational meeting for the purpose of electing a PNC and appoints a COM Liaison where this has not already been done.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed
- E. Congregation elects PNC  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed
- F. General Presbyter and COM Liaison meet with the PNC at its first meeting to instruct the Committee in the process for calling a new pastor. The Liaison continues to assist the PNC throughout the process.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed
- G. The PNC should ordinarily conduct a congregation-wide event to discern the mission and future directions for the church, using leadership and resources suggested by the COM.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed
- H. PNC completes the Ministry Information Form (MIF), with assistance from the COM Liaison, in light of the data gathered by the PNC. The purpose of the MIF is to describe the church so that a prospective pastor can clearly understand the church. The MIF is completed online by the PNC using a login ID and Password provided by Presbytery Staff who will also provide technical assistance. Instructions may be found at [www.pcusa.org/clc](http://www.pcusa.org/clc).  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed
- I. The Session approves the MIF, position description, Terms of Call, and has the Clerk of Session sign it.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed
- J. The COM approves the MIF, and Terms of Call.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed
- K. Upon approval of the MIF by the Session and COM, “matches” with Personal Information Forms (PIF’s) of prospective pastors will be made by presbytery staff. While the PNC should be open to suggested names from a variety of sources, initial clearance for consideration of all candidates shall be secured through the presbytery office. Any referrals sent directly to the PNC should be forwarded to the presbytery office/General Presbyter for clearance. While this clearance must be received **before** the PNC makes initial contact with the pastor, it **does not** mean that prospective pastors have been screened thoroughly. The PNC should appraise the COM Liaison of its progress and initial conversations with prospective pastors.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed
- L. After studying PIFs, checking personal references, listening to sermons, holding telephone/conference calls or video conference interview, visiting and hearing candidates in their own pulpits when possible, etc., the PNC should select a priority list of three to five persons. When the PNC has created this priority list, the General Presbyter shall be contacted to perform an Executive Check with the staff of the candidate’s current presbytery, before inviting the candidate for a local interview.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed

M. The General Presbyter informs the PNC Chairperson and the COM Liaison which candidates passed or failed the Executive Check.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed

N. The PNC continues the call process with those candidates passing the Executive Check.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed

O. Trinity Presbytery requires the PNC to review both a Statement of Faith and a Faith Journey Statement that meets the requirements of sections IV and V of this policy from each candidate that is considered. In the case of an Associate Teaching Elder Search – the Senior Teaching Elder must give written approval of the candidate’s Statement of Faith and Faith Journey Statement to the chairperson of the PNC and the COM Liaison before that candidate may be listed as a finalist for the position.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed

P. PNC informs COM Liaison of finalists and forwards all documentation to the Liaison  
\_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed

Q. The PNC will invite the Liaison to meet candidates who come for a local interview. The COM Liaison will help the PNC design an interview process to enable the PNC to get to know each candidate in a uniform way. Included in this design will be an introduction to the church and community.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed

R. If, as a part of this interview, the PNC decides that they want to continue the process with that candidate, the candidate shall be asked to sign the Background Check Consent Form [attached]. The PNC is required to conduct the following background checks:

1. SSN Verification and Address History Trace
  2. National Criminal Database Check
  3. National Sexual Offenders Registry Check (and depending on the state of residency, an additional county-wide search may be necessary)
  4. Social Media and Google Search
  5. A Motor Vehicle Records Search
  6. Employment or Education Verification (optional)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed

S. Reference Checks (see attached Reference Check Form) and these Background Checks must be completed and their completion certified by the General Presbyter before a call is extended to a candidate. Candidates for service refusing to submit to these references and background checks must write a letter to the COM explaining their reasons and asking for an exemption. If an exemption is granted, then the COM must communicate this exemption in writing to the candidate, the chair of the PNC, and to the Presbytery at the time of their reception.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed

T. After a call is extended and accepted, the Chairperson of the PNC forwards the PIF, Statement of Faith , Faith Journey, results of Reference and Background Checks, and agreed upon

Terms of Call to the General Presbyter and COM Liaison. Candidates for Ordained Ministry are also required to submit:

1. A letter from the Presbytery of Care certifying them ready to receive a call.
2. Certified transcripts of seminary work
3. The PC(USA) Ordination Exam Papers
4. The results and written verification of the Psychological Exams conducted by the Presbytery of Care.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed

U. Terms of Call will be examined and approved by the Presbytery Stated Clerk and COM.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed

V. The Examinations Sub-Committee schedules a meeting for the examination for Ordination and/or Installation of the Candidate. At this meeting, the COM Liaison will ensure that the Sub-Committee receives all documents listed in #T at least 72 hours prior to the examination of the candidate. The Sub-Committee will ensure that the Candidate has access to both this policy and the Standards of Ethical Conduct for Ordained Officers in the Presbyterian Church (USA) at least 72 hours prior to the examination.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed

W. The Examinations Sub-Committee examines and approves the Candidate and accompanying documents, and verifies that reference checks and background checks have been completed.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed

X. Upon approval, the Candidate receives installation forms which are to be completed and returned to the Presbytery Office as soon as possible.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed

Y. The Examinations Sub-Committee presents its recommendation and ALL supporting documents (listed in # T) to the entire COM for consideration.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed

Z. The COM notifies the PNC of approval or disapproval of the candidate. After approval by the entire COM, the candidate is free to begin making arrangements to move onto the field (for example – making arrangements to purchase or rent housing, applying for housing loans or arranging for movers).

\_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed

AA. After the COM approves a pastor/candidate, the Session is free to call a congregational meeting to hear and to act upon the recommendation of the PNC.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed

BB. The PNC writes letters informing candidates who are no longer being considered, so that each candidate will know his/her status with the Committee.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed

CC. COM presents candidate to Trinity Presbytery for approval and, pending an affirmative vote, the candidate is enrolled as a member of Trinity Presbytery. Plans for ordination and/or installation are approved by the Presbytery at this same meeting. After approval by Trinity Presbytery, the candidate is free to move onto the field of their new ministry.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed

DD. COM recruits a mentor for the new member of Presbytery.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed

#### **IV. Guidelines For Writing A Statement Of Faith**

- A. The Statement of Faith required in preparation for Trinity Presbytery membership examination is to reflect what the candidate believes about each of the topics listed below. The process of writing this statement will involve wrestling with these key theological issues and expressing personal beliefs in a lucid manner. If quotations from sources are included, they must be cited in footnotes.
- B. The Statement of Faith will address the listed tenets and may include other concepts that the candidate considers necessary. The Statement of Faith may be up to two pages in length.
1. Triune God (include statements describing your understanding of the three persons of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit)
  2. God as creator of all things and God’s relationship to creation and humanity in its fallen state.
  3. The person and work of Jesus Christ including an understanding of the incarnation, atonement, resurrection, and ascension.
  4. The Holy Spirit and the Spirit’s relationship to justification and sanctification and the empowerment of the Church.
  5. The Church and Her mission, including the role of the sacraments
  6. Scripture, its origin, use, authority and interpretation for you personally and for the Church.

#### **V. Guidelines For Writing A Journey Of Faith Statement**

- A. The Journey of Faith document required for Trinity Presbytery membership examination is to include at least the following biographical information in narrative format:
1. Family of origin and current family composition.
  2. History of education including names of institutions and degrees earned.
  3. Experiences and individuals that provided turning points in the discovery of your faith and call.
    - a) Meaningful experiences as a member or pastor of specific churches.
    - b) Meaningful mission and service experiences.
  4. Development of the sense of call to service as a “teaching elder”. What is your current sense of call in the next step in your journey?
- B. The Journey of Faith Statement should not exceed one page.