ORDERED MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH

G-2.0102 ORDERED MINISTRIES (ORD-07D)

The 227th General Assembly (2026) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-2.0102 Ordered Ministries be amended as follows?
(Deleted text is in ~~strikethrough~~; added text is in bold ***italics.***)

Section G-2.0102, Ordered Ministries

The Church's ordered ministries described in the New Testament and maintained by this church are deacons and presbyters (ministers of the Word and Sacrament and ruling elders). Ordered ministries are gifts to the church to order its life so that the ministry of the whole people of God may flourish. ***Each order of ministry is equally important and "one ministry is not to be ordered above another" in the way that God calls, prepares, and equips (Second Helvetic Confession 5.160, 5.161, 5.162).*** The existence of these ordered ministries in no way diminishes the importance of the commitment of all members to the total ministry of the church.

The government of this church is representative, and the right of God's people to elect presbyters and deacons is inalienable. Therefore, no person can be placed in any ordered ministry in a congregation or council of the church except by election of that body.

Ordination to the ministry of deacon, ruling elder, or minister of Word and Sacrament (also called teaching elder) is unique to that order of ministry.

Background and Rationale from the Task Force to Explore the Theology and Practice of Ordination

The affirmation that ordered ministries are non-hierarchical is deeply rooted in Reformed theology and in the historical witness of the Presbyterian Church. This conviction is clearly articulated in the Second Helvetic Confession, which teaches that "one ministry is not to be ordered above another" (5.160–5.162). From its earliest expressions, the Reformed tradition has emphasized the priesthood of all believers, rejecting any notion that ordination confers superiority, privilege, or status. Ordination is instead understood as a setting apart for service within the body of Christ, where all share in the ministry of reconciliation and God's mission.

Within this framework, the ordered ministries of deacon, ruling elder, and minister of the Word and Sacrament exist not to establish hierarchy, but to ensure that the life of the church is well ordered so that the ministry of the whole people of God may flourish. Distinctions among these ministries reflect differences in function and calling, not differences in dignity, worth, or authority.
Historically, the Presbyterian Church has resisted clericalism and the concentration of power in a single office, affirming instead a model of leadership that is collaborative, shared, and

interdependent. Each ordered ministry responds to a distinct vocation: deacons lead in compassion and service, ruling elders exercise governance and spiritual oversight, and ministers of the Word and Sacrament proclaim the gospel and administer the sacraments. These ministries are complementary rather than competitive, mutually accountable rather than ranked. The Second Helvetic Confession's insistence on the equality of ministries safeguards the church from patterns of privilege and exclusion, reminding the church that ordination is not about status but about equipping the saints for faithful service.

In a contemporary context marked by cultural and ecclesial change, reaffirming the non-hierarchical nature of ordered ministries remains essential. This commitment ensures that authority is exercised relationally and accountably, honors the diversity of gifts given by the Holy Spirit, and reflects the unity of the body described in 1 Corinthians 12. By holding fast to this principle, the church lives more fully into its calling to be a community in which all gifts are valued and all ministries serve the common mission of God.

Advice – From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises the 227th General Assembly (2026) that the Ordination Task Force Report, Recommendation D is consistent with the theological and polity foundations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), recognizing the authority of Christ as head of the church (F-1.0201) who calls and equips the church (F-1.0202).

Ordered ministry is one of the ways the church is equipped to carry out God's mission through the ministry of Jesus Christ (G-2.0102). Along with The Second Helvetic Confession, The Confession of 1967 affirms:

The church thus orders its life as an institution with a constitution, government, officers, finances, and administrative rules. These are instruments of mission, not ends in themselves. Different orders have served the gospel, and none can claim exclusive validity. A Presbyterian polity recognizes the responsibility of all members for ministry and maintains the organic relation of all congregations in the church. It seeks to protect the church from exploitation by ecclesiastical or secular power and ambition. Every church order must be open to such reformation as may be required to make it a more effective instrument of the mission of reconciliation. (9.40)

And, The Theological Declaration of Barmen states, "The various offices in the church do not establish a dominion of some over the others; on the contrary, they are for the exercise of the ministry entrusted to and enjoined upon the whole congregation." (8.20)

Therefore, the Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises approval.

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Advice and Counsel – From Racial Ethnic Advisory Committee

This amendment affirms a core Reformed conviction: ministry roles differ in function, not in dignity, worth, or authority. This is important for addressing patterns that have historically undervalued racial/ethnic leaders, particularly ruling elders and deacons.

The Assembly Committee on Theological Education and Ordination approved Item ORD-07 including D with Comment, 50/9. The 227th General Assembly (2026) approved Item ORD-07 including D, 389/84.

For the full report on ORD-07 and the full report from the Task Force to Explore the Theology and Practice of Ordination, go to https://myga.pc-biz.org/search/3001487

26-C — G-2.0104c

ORDERED MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH

G-2.0104c GIFTS AND QUALIFICATIONS (RAC-04 4b)

The 227th General Assembly (2026) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-2.0104c be added as follows:
(Deleted text is in ~~strikethrough~~; added text is in bold *italics*.)

G-2.0104 Gifts and Qualifications

c. Anti-Racism Formation

In fulfilling its responsibility for preparation for ministry, a presbytery shall require that inquirers and candidates for ordered ministry receive education and formation in ant-racism as part of their preparation for service in the Church. Such formation shall be provided at intervals and in forms determined by the presbytery, consistent with standards established by the General Assembly.

Background and Rationale

Dismantling structural racism in the church will not happen unless it becomes the collective work of all of us. And so we end by challenging ourselves–all of us together–to be faithful to the previous faithful work. Because that is how we will expose White supremacy and tear it down.

We call the Church, each of our congregations, and all councils to engage the resources of our denomination to do this work locally and connectionally. We ask you and ourselves:

1. Since the 225th GA, sessions and mid councils have been required to adopt an anti-racism policy. Has your congregation or mid council adopted a policy? Does your presbytery know which congregations have and have not adopted a policy (we strongly encourage including it in the annual checklist for minutes review), and how does your presbytery follow up? Does your session or mid council review your policy annually and talk about how you are living into it together? This requirement in the Book of Order is not simply to check off our councils' list but rather an invitation to deeper engagement.

2. Have you read the PC(USA)'s Churchwide Antiracism Policy, *Facing Racism* (https://pcusa.org/sites/default/files/Facing-Racism-new-2016-antiracism-policy-for-GA-222-approval.pdf) or considered using its study guides (https://pcusa.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/facing-racism-study-guide.pdf)?
3. Has your congregation or mid council offered training in anti-racism or cultural competency for your leaders?
4. Have you done a self-study of your own congregation's or mid council's history (https://pcusa.org/historical-society/collections/what-we-collect/products-pcusa-self-studies-racism and https://digital.history.pcusa.org/islandora/1107) to help foster conversation in your particular context? Have you sought to learn about the history of the PC(USA)'s impact on people of color, for example, the report on All-Black Governing Bodies (https://pcusa.org/sites/default/files/allblackgoverningbodies.pdf)?
5. The report of the Special Committee on Racism Truth and Reconciliation adopted by the 225th GA insisted that reconciliation required truth and reparations (https://pcusa.org/sites/default/files/special_committtee_on_racism_truth_and_reconciliation_to_225_ga.pdf). Have you considered where your congregation or mid council might be called to local acts of repair, guided by the work of the PC(USA) Task Force to Study Reparations (https://pcusa.org/sites/default/files/report_of_the_task_force_to_study_reparations1_0.pdf), the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy Resolution on Race, Reparative Justice, and the PCUSA (https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3000922), and the Center for the Repair of Historic Harms (https://pcusa.org/about-pcusa/agencies-entities/interim-unified-agency/ministry-areas/repair-historic-harms)?
6. How does your mid council identify and address the disparities in pay and installed positions for pastors of color (https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3000837)? Has your congregation been truly open to calling a pastor of color?
7. Has your congregation or mid council studied the PC(USA)'s report, "The Doctrine of Discovery: A Review of Its Origins and Implications for Congregations in the PC (USA) and Support for Native American Sovereignty" (https://pcusa.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/Doctrine-of-Discovery-Report-to-the-223rd-GA-2018-FINALIZED-COPY_As-Approved.pdf) and sought to deepen relationship with indigenous siblings and congregations in your area?
8. Has your congregation or mid council examined the particular intersection between race and gender, revealed by recent GA actions such as the Disparities Experienced by Black Women and Girls Task Force Report (https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3000676), the Resolution on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two Spirit People (https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3000824), the Resolution on Reproductive Justice: Black Maternal Birthing People and Infant Mortality (https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3000825), and the Resolution for Transwomen of Color (https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3000826)?

9. Has your congregation or mid council engaged the PC(USA) Apology to African A mericans for the Sin of Slavery and Its Legacy (https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3000895)?
10. Has your congregation or mid council considered local ways of opposing Violence a nd Hate against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001103)?
11. Is your congregation or mid council connected and committed to the Matthew 25 mo vement, and have you utilized the resources available for worship, study, and action (https://pcusa.org/about-pcusa/agencies-entities/interim-unified-agency/ministry-areas/matthew-25/resources)?
12. How is your congregation or mid council called to live into the theological commitm ents of our confessions to God's equity, equality, and justice? Most recently, the 222 nd GA added to our Book of Confessions the Confession of Belhar, which offers ric h liturgical and confessional language (https://pcusa.org/sites/default/files/belhar1.p df) with available study guides (e.g., https://www.pcusastore.com/Products/680751/t he-confession-of-belhar-leaders-guide.aspx). The Confession of 1967 (https://pcusa.org/sites/default/files/confess671_0.pdf) and the Theological Declaration of Barmen (https://static1.squarespace.com/static/595d65a4ff7c50d877d0c81e/t/5f8f3f0e49ca3477e76b0743/1603223322978/THE+THEOLOGICAL+DECLARATION+OF+BARMEN.pdf) likewise call the Chu rch to oppose any forms of discrimination, prejudice, or White Christian Nationalis m.
13. Has your congregation or mid council reflected on how it might de-center Whiteness, through resources such as Stephanie Patterson, "Decentering Whit eness in a Multiracial Society," published in *Horizons* (https://www.presbyterianwo men.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Decentering-Whiteness-in-a-Multiracial-Society-by-Stephanie-M-Patterson.pdf)?

Advice – From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)

The ACC reviewed the work of the Special Committee prior to the preparation of their final report and provided advice concerning the constitutional issues raised by their recommendations. Those discussions are reflected in the final report. The proposed amendments are constitutional, and we recommend approval.

Advice and Counsel – From the Advocacy Committee for Women and Gender Justice (ACWGJ)

The Advocacy Committee of Women and Gender Justice advises that the 227th General Assembly (2026) **approve** RAC-04.

Our committee advises the General Assembly to approve this resolution and consider further reflect ion on the robust questions it poses to every congregation concerning the adoption and attention to anti-racist policies throughout leadership and congregational life.

Advice and Counsel from General Assembly Advisory Committee on Representation (GACOR)

GACOR wishes to support the overall arc of recommendations in this final report, including suggested changes for future assemblies, including participation in the many languages that make up our body. The church's unity in diversity is reflected in the variety of languages that are spoken in our worship services, councils, and fellowship together.

Speaking to points 4 and 5 of the recommendations, it is often true that antiracism training or education is often the first step needed to address the systems and structures of racism that harms BIPOC communities and destroys the unity of the church. This is invaluable work for all church leaders in their preparation for ministry, for congregations, and as continuing education along the way. Resourcing ourselves around history, systemic impacts, and interlocking systems of harm, as well as theological opportunities for repair, is critical and faithful work for any historically white-dominant denomination in the United States. The faithful work of equipping ourselves for the work of repair is a critical call of this moment in the life of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.

That said, there is a body of research showing that compelling or requiring individuals to complete mandatory training about bias or antiracism has been shown to have mixed results, with medium to small effect sizes, and little clarity about long-term transformation.
This by no means implies the church should abandon the effort to equip itself broadly with antiracism training, as formal research is only one form of knowledge we can access. But given the amount of work that would need to go into this singular, compliance-focused effort, the lack of clear research outcomes might, at minimum, give us pause in terms of whether a Book of Order mandate is the correct or primary institutional lever by which to bring about the sort of broad and continuing transformation the report invites.

GACOR might suggest that another effective but adaptable model for encouraging antiracism training/equipping that is well-developed, nuanced, and well-facilitated might be:

1.encouraging Presbyterian Life & Witness to provide robust training resources, in the context of item 2a of this report, including vetted and well-annotated antiracism training options for all councils of the church. This could include a mandate to collect and commission training resources that can be based on the best of current research and community knowledge, adapt to local dynamics and histories or contexts of racial and church history, and attend to the continuing education needed beyond the basics. Such a set of resources might also suggest "best practices" for trainings that make sense for a variety of contexts without shying away from our history or our current systems.

1.

Rationale: A robust network of resources of this quality, with the capacity to consult with national staff around specific needs in any one locale, may be more effective in increasing the frequency, availability, and overall engagement with antiracism training than a series of mandates that our current national structure and midcouncils may struggle to resource and stay in compliance with.

2. And: Funding or offering need-based grants for presbyteries otherwise unable to fund skilled and high-quality antiracism training.

Rationale: Exploring needs-based grant funding would go far in MidCouncils where the capacity to offer appropriate and helpful antiracism education and training may be being hindered by more pragmatic barriers than motivation or requirement.
We might imagine a future where a more focused effort (or even preparation) of this sort – to require development of this sort of clear and high-quality antiracism training options and a pathway toward properly funding long-term implementation of training – could helpfully highlight the ongoing barriers to broader mandatory training becoming more effective to implement in the very near future, offer a more straightforward path toward high-quality and consistent implementation, and define clearer desired outcomes. A measured strategy like this might then become not a dilution or a harmful delay of the necessary work called for in the Special Committee's recommendations - but rather a means to strengthen what we all collectively long to do with deep effectiveness, faithfulness, and heartfulness.

The Assembly Committee on Racial Justice approved Item RAC-04 4b 59/0. The 227th General Assembly (2026) Item RAC-04 4b, 448/26.

For the full report on RAC-04 and the Special Committee on the PC(U.S.A.) and Race, go to https://myga.pc-biz.org/search/3001512

26-D — G-2.06

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COUNCILS

G-2.06 PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY (ORD-02)

The 227th General Assembly (2026) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall the title of G-2.06 be amended as follows:
(Deleted text is in ~~strikethrough~~; added text is in bold ***italics***.)

G-2.06 PREPARATION FOR ***THE*** MINISTRY ***OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENT***

Background and Rationale

The term "ministry" has always been more expansive than just the ordered ministry of the Word and Sacrament. There are many types of church ministries and vocations. Increasingly, the church is recognizing that the ministry of ruling elders, deacons, and non-ordained members of congregations is an invaluable part of the life of a congregation. Chapter Two of the Book of Order begins with sections about some of these forms of ministry.

Renaming sections G-2.06 and G-2.07 to specify the type of ministry they apply to clarifies their purpose and presents a more inclusive attitude toward the meaning of "ministry" and the various different types of ministry that exist in the church.

Advice – From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)

The overture would amend the Book of Order by relabeling and reordering certain sections under G-2.06 Preparation for Ministry and G-2.07 Ordination. The overture does not appear to change the substance of the sections.

The ACC advises that reorganization of the Book of Order to provide clarity and better alignment with subject headings is a worthwhile effort that, in itself, does not pose any constitutional issues. Because of the numerous cross-references to numbered sections, it will be necessary to correct those references as well. See, e.g., G-2.0104b, G-2.0505, G-2.0610 (internal references).

Coordination

The ACC also notes that other Items of Business are proposing changes to or reorganization of the educational and training requirements for inquirers and candidates. Coordination will be required to ensure consistency.

The Assembly Committee on Theological Education and Ordination approved Item ORD-02, 52/5. The 227th General Assembly (2026) approved Item ORD-02, 447/10.

For the full report on ORD-02, go to https://myga.pc-biz.org/search/3001442

26-E — G-2.0601

PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

G-2.0601 NATURE AND PURPOSE OF ORDINATION (ORD-07 A)

The 227th General Assembly (2026) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall Section G-2.0601 Nature and Purpose of Ordination, be amended as follows:
(Deleted text is in ~~strikethrough~~; added text is in bold ***italics***.)

G-2.0601 Nature and Purpose of Preparation

It is important that those who are to be ordained as ministers of the Word and Sacrament receive full preparation for their task under the direction of the presbytery. For this purpose, a presbytery shall enter into covenant relationship with those preparing to become ministers of the Word and Sacrament and with their sessions and congregations. This relationship shall be divided into the two phases of inquiry and candidacy. ***Presbyteries shall ensure training for the members of the presbytery body responsible for preparation for ministry, including those serving as liaisons for inquirers and candidates, and shall ensure that this training be completed a minimum of every three years and recorded in presbytery minutes. The training shall include anti-racism, intercultural competency, implicit-bias awareness, and the equitable support of LGBTQIA+ inquirers and candidates, so that the preparation process is free from discrimination.***

Background and Rationale from the Task Force to Explore the Theology and Practice of Ordination

Background:

The Task Force began its work with a sustained study of theology and the biblical witness to develop a shared definition of ordination. This definition has guided the Task Force's work and discernment throughout the past several years.

Ordination is a means by which individuals are affirmed in their call and set apart for particular service. Through the act of ordination, those appointed for this ministry attest to the bond between the church, Jesus Christ, and the apostolic witness, recalling that it is the risen Lord who is the true ordainer and the one who bestows the gift.

The term "ordination" derives from the Latin ordo (office) and ordinare (to set in order). While ordination is not clearly defined in the Bible, its foundations appear in Scriptures such as Exodus and Leviticus, where individuals are set apart for specific purposes in service to God and the community. Ordination is not synonymous with ministry itself. Rather, it names the church's act of setting individuals aside for particular responsibilities through a discerned and ordered process. In this way, ordination is inseparable from baptism and from the shared life of the covenant community.

Our understanding of ordination begins within the relationships formed by God's covenant with God's people. Covenant is not merely an agreement, but a binding relationship. Through Christ's covenant with us, we are bound to one another in Christian community and made mutually responsible and accountable—to our ministers, to our congregations, and to one another—as together we seek to live as the body of Christ.

Although covenant is often used in contemporary language as a substitute for contract or agreement, in the

Christian tradition it is the fundamental shape of our relationship with the Divine. Our confessional statements, particularly the Westminster Standards, remind us that the first covenant was established between God and humanity. When humanity could not fulfill the covenant of works, God established a covenant of grace under which we now live (6.037–42). Throughout Scripture, covenant is consistently communal in scope. God's covenant with Noah encompasses all of humanity. God's covenant with Abraham binds God to an entire people. When Jesus Christ speaks of a new covenant sealed in his blood, it is formed within personal relationships with the disciples while also opening the covenant of grace to the whole world—Jews and Greeks, enslaved and free, people of all genders (Galatians 3:28). In this covenant, those bound to Christ are also bound to one another.

The Westminster Confession of Faith describes this communal reality in its teaching on the communion of the saints, naming the Lord's Supper as "a bond and pledge of their communion with him, and with each other, as members of his mystical body" (6.161). Covenant thus always includes multiple parties: the Triune God, the individual, and the assemblies to which that individual belongs.

In Presbyterian polity, this covenantal web extends across every council of the church, individual congregations, and the holy catholic Church. A Brief Statement of Faith (1993) emphasizes that call is the work of the Holy Spirit, who "calls women and men to all ministries of the Church" (11.4). Yet it is worth asking whether an exclusive emphasis on individual call risks underplaying the communal dimension of ordered ministry. The call to serve as a deacon, ruling elder, or minister of the Word and Sacrament is not only a response to God's initiative, but also a commitment to serve a particular community as a co-worker with God (1 Corinthians 3:9).

What does it mean, then, to understand ordered ministry as the product of a covenant among God, an individual, and the council and congregation that individual serves? The Confession of 1967 offers a clear articulation of this relationship: "Each member is the church in the world, endowed by the Spirit with some gift of ministry and is responsible for the integrity of his witness in his own situation. He is entitled to the guidance and support of the Christian community and is subject to its advice and correction. He in turn, in his own competence, helps to guide the church" (9.38).

As the church considers the ordered ministries of deacon, ruling elder, and minister of the Word and Sacrament, this covenantal understanding provides both grounding and direction. It calls congregations and leaders alike to shared responsibility, mutual accountability, and faithful discernment as together we seek to answer God's call in this time and place.

. He is entitled to the guidance and support of the Christian community and is subject to its advice a nd correction. He in turn, in his own competence, helps to guide the church" (9.38).

Rationale

Between November 18, 2024, and May 5, 2025, the Task Force conducted 14 focus group interviews, seven with inquirers and candidates and seven with ministers ordained within the past five years (see Appendix A). Forty-six inquirers and candidates participated, along with 53 ministers who had been ordained within the past five years. In all groups, the question was asked about their experience with their Committee on Preparation for Ministry or its equivalent in their presbytery.

Some of the participants stated that they had had a very positive experience, while others reported challenges that included:

- Not being given information at the beginning of or during the process identifying what they needed to accomplish.

- Frustration from some who had committee chairs and liaisons that were poorly trained. Often they had to tell the committee chairs and liaisons what the committee needed to do next.

- A structure that doesn't allow liaisons to remain with their inquirers/candidates throughout the whole process because of term limits, for example.

In response, the Task Force recommends the establishment of a more consistent process across presbyteries. This process should include annual training for all members of the body responsible for preparation for ministry, both for those newly appointed and for those continuing to serve. Topics should include but not be limited to the acknowledgement of the covenant relationship between the individual, the church, the presbytery and God; an introduction to the process; an overview of the ordination exams; and the responsibilities of serving as a liaison to an inquirer or candidate.

The Task Force recommends that this training be developed by the appropriate body of the denominational offices and made available in written format, with optional video components. The training should be updated as needed and provided to presbyteries for local use. Presbyteries should maintain records within their minutes of those who have completed the training.

Advice – From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)

The Task Force's Recommendation A would require training for the presbytery body responsible for preparation for the ministry of the Word and Sacrament. The intent is to respond to the experiences of inquirers and candidates who did not feel adequately supported within their presbyteries, due to the lack of knowledge or experience of those tasked with supporting them. …. The amended text also mandates that four training subjects for the purposes of the preparation process be "free from discrimination."

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC) notes the following issues that the Assembly should consider. By using the word "shall," training will be mandated for all who serve on that presbytery body. See Preface to the Constitution ("SHALL and IS TO BE/ARE TO BE signify practice that is mandated."). First, the recommendation would make this training mandatory for "those serving as liaisons for inquirers and candidates." While the use of liaisons might be a common practice, it is not required under or defined by the Book of Order.Recommendation A could be interpreted as mandating the use of liaisons.

Second, the ACC has consistently advised that the Constitution is not intended to serve as a manual of operations. Generally, this would advocate against the creation of lists of requirements or rubrics on how to implement requirements that may be interpreted as exhaustive, and because they constrain the implementing discretion the Book of Order ordinarily reserves to councils (G-3.0106: Councils higher than the session may provide examples of policies and procedures that may be gathered into advisory handbooks. These examples illumine practices required by the Constitution but left to councils for specific implementation. Such handbooks may also offer information that enhances or secures the ministry of the particular council.). The amended text of four training subjects may be more suitably carried in an advisory handbook of the presbytery than fixed in the constitutional text, where it cannot be revised or expanded except by further amendment.

Third, the clause "so that the preparation process is free from discrimination" states a result that the required training cannot of itself guarantee, and for which the amended text provides no measure of compliance. As constitutional language, an outcome standard of this kind may prove difficult to apply, and could shift the question in any future proceeding from whether the required training was completed and recorded, typically readily verified in the minutes, to whether the particular outcome was achieved.

The ACC further notes that the phrase "this training shall ensure that this training be completed every three years" is awkward, as the training is made to ensure its own completion. Should the Assembly retain the substance of this provision, the ACC advises that the language be modified so that it places the duty on the presbytery. Such modified language may read: "Presbyteries shall provide training for the members of the presbytery body responsible for preparation for ministry, and shall ensure that it is completed every three years and recorded in presbytery minutes."

Advice and Counsel on ORD-07 A from the Advocacy Committee on LGBTQ+ Equity (ACQ+E)

The Advocacy Committee on LGBTQ+ Equity advises that the 227th General Assembly (2026) approve Ord (07) with amendment [amendment adopted by the GA].

Advice and Counsel on ORD-07 A from the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee (REAC)

The racial Equity Advocacy Committee (REAC) advises that the 227th General Assembly (2026) approve ORD 07 with amendment.

REAC gives thanks for the work of the Task Force to Explore Theology and Practice of Ordination. The Task Force listened to the experience of candidates, especially those from immigrant communities of color, and named an important truth: a system intended to be fair has not functioned equitably in practice.

Ordination in the Church involves many groups, including presbyteries, seminaries, and denominational bodies. Inequities often begin early, shaped by differences in access to education, resources, and cultural expectations, long before candidates are formerly evaluated. At the same time, these recommendations place new responsibilities on systems that already have limited capacity and uneven resources.

REAC affirms the direction of this work while naming a key tension: the Church's commitment to equity is not yet matched by the structures and accountability needed to sustain it. Without that alignment, inequities will continue, even within well-intentioned reform.

For this reason, REAC offers the following amendments to strengthen this work and support faithful and sustainable implementation.

B. Annual Training

REAC recommends that the Assembly approve amendment A with the following addition. (text to

be added is [in brackets and underlined].)

Presbyteries shall provide training for the members of the presbytery body responsible for ministry, including those serving as liaisons for inquirers and candidates and shall ensure that this training is competed annually and recorded in presbytery minutes. [This training shall include anti-racism, intercultural competency, and bias-awareness components to ensure equitable and culturally responsive discernment and assessment. Presbyteries shall also establish a process for gathering and reviewing feedback from inquirers and candidates, with particular attention to the experiences of those from marginalized communities, and shall use this feedback to inform improvement of ongoing training, discernment, and assessment practices.]

Training alone has not consistently led to equitable outcomes. Without accountability and feedback, training can become a requirement rather than a catalyst for change. Pairing training with candidate feedback helps ensure that practices improve over time and that inequities are addressed in practice, not only in intention.

Comment from the Unification Commission

The report of the Task Force to Explore the Theology and Practice of Ordination contains several proposed amendments, which, if passed, would have financial, logistical and staffing implications for Presbyterian Life & Witness (PL&W).

While recommendations A and B create additional requirements for presbyteries, there is also an impact on staff within PL&W. Training and resources are already available to presbytery bodies responsible for preparation for ministry. The recommendation states that presbyteries will provide the training and determine the best method for background checks, etc., but presbyteries historically look to Presbyterian Life & Witness (PL&W) staff for guidance and resources in order to fulfill the Book of Order requirements

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The Assembly Committee on Theological Education and Ordination approved Item ORD-07 A 50/9. The 227th General Assembly (2026) approved Item ORD-07 A, 389/85.

For the full report on ORD-07, the Task Force to Explore the Theology and Practice of Ordination and all advice and advocacy go to https://myga.pc-biz.org/search/3001487

26-F — G-2.0603

PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

G-2.0603 Purpose of Inquiry (ORD-07 B)

The 227th General Assembly (2026) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-2.0603 in the Form of Government be amended as follows?
(Deleted text is in ~~strikethrough~~; added text is in bold *italics*.)

G-2.0603 Purpose of Inquiry

The purpose of the inquiry phase is to provide an opportunity for the church and those who believe themselves called to ordered ministry as ministers of the Word and Sacrament to explore that call together so that the presbytery can make an informed decision about the inquirer's suitability for ordered ministry. ~~They shall provide a certificate of completion of boundary training, which includes the topic of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training with recertification at least every thirty-six months.~~ ***Such preparation shall include a certificate of completion of boundary training, which includes the topic of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training, and anti-racism training with recertification at least every thirty-six months.*** The presbytery shall determine which trainings are approved to meet the criteria of these ~~two~~ requirements***. The presbytery shall require background checks for inquirers at the onset of the inquiry process. Additionally, the presbytery shall require an evaluation of inquirers, including psychosocial and vocational inventories, during their inquiry phase.***

Background and Rationale from the Task Force to Explore the Theology and Practice of Ordination

Background

See Background for 26-E.

Rationale

In G-2.0603 there are requirements for completion of boundary training every thirty-six months. As a committee or commission meets with a person wishing to become an inquirer, it is important to understand issues that may surface that will need to be addressed and gifts that can be lifted up or nurtured during the process. And after the Inquirer is enrolled it is critical for the presbytery to run a background check since the inquirer or candidate will likely be serving congregations or in other contexts where they will be ministering with others as part of a supervised ministry.

The Task Force also affirms the importance of a preparation process that supports inquirers in developing self-knowledge regarding their strengths and areas for growth. Psychosocial and vocational evaluation tools can assist in identifying trauma history and general indicators of mental health and well-being. Such evaluation may include an initial orientation meeting between the inquirer and a clinician, followed by assessment and a subsequent interview to review findings, correct any factual errors, and address questions or concerns raised by the inquirer. Once finalized, the evaluation report should be shared with both the inquirer and the body responsible for the inquirer's preparation for ministry.

Advice – From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)

Rec B

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises the 227th General Assembly to approve Item COM 22-B.

Rationale

This item intends to amend the Book of Order G-2.0603 by adding a requirement that background checks for inquirers be completed at the outset of the inquiry process, and, additionally, that required evaluation, including psychosocial and vocational inventories, be conducted during the inquiry phase of the preparation process. Nothing in the Constitution precludes the addition of this proposed common practice to the Book of Order.

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC) advised the 221st General Assembly (2014) with respect to Item 06-04, noting that "the Form of Government was designed to be taken as a whole in describing the form of our life together. It purposefully avoids procedures and details better included in operating manuals, standing rules, or guidelines." In this instance, however, the widespread use of background and other checks across the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) suggests that including a requirement for background checks in the Book of Order reflects an established practice of the church, rather than prescribing the specific procedural details of presbyteries' manuals of operations. As the ACC further advised the 221st General Assembly:

Many presbyteries already conduct background checks, including criminal background checks, as part of their duties to counsel nominating committees. Under G-3.0301c the presbytery is already charged with the responsibility of receiving teaching elders, which may include conducting appropriate background checks prior to any examination and reception.

Further, an authoritative interpretation of the Constitution approved by the 211th General Assembly (2019) (1999, 65, 706, 12.013-019, CR 97-1) affirms that it is entirely constitutional for a presbytery to use psychological and psychiatric evaluation of minister members and those in the ministry preparation process: "presbyteries possess sufficient authority to utilize psychological and psychiatric services in evaluating candidates for ministry." Therefore, there is no constitutional barrier to instituting presbytery background checks as a common practice.

Coordination

The ACC alerts the General Assembly that other overtures are proposing changes to or reorganization of requirements for inquirers and candidates, and coordination will be needed.

Advice and Counsel on ORD-07 B from the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee (REAC)

The racial Equity Advocacy Committee (REAC) advises that the 227th General Assembly (2026) approve ORD 07 with amendment.

REAC gives thanks for the work of the Task Force to Explore Theology and Practice of Ordination. The Task Force listened to the experience of candidates, especially those from immigrant communities of color, and named an important truth: a system intended to be fair has not functioned equitably in practice.

Ordination in the Church involves many groups, including presbyteries, seminaries, and denominational bodies. Inequities often begin early, shaped by differences in access to education, resources, and cultural expectations, long before candidates are formerly evaluated. At the same time, these recommendations place new responsibilities on systems that already have limited capacity and uneven resources.

REAC affirms the direction of this work while naming a key tension: the Church's commitment to equity is not yet matched by the structures and accountability needed to sustain it. Without that alignment, inequities will continue, even within well-intentioned reform.

For this reason, REAC offers the following amendments to strengthen this work and support faithful and sustainable implementation.

B. Background Checks

REAC recommends that the Assembly approve amendment B with the following additions and with caution.

(Text to be added is [in brackets and underlined].)

> The presbytery shall require background checks for inquirers at the onset of the inquiry proc ess. Additionally, the presbytery shall require an evaluation of inquirers, including psychoso cial and vocational inventories, during their inquiry phase. [Presbyteries shall ensure that all evaluations and background checks are conducted and interpreted using culturally compete nt, bias-
>
> aware practices, and shall provide appropriate accommodations for candidates from racial/et hnic, immigrant, and multilingual communities, and shall clearly communicate how these to ols are used in discernment and decision-making.]

These tools do not function neutrally. They can reflect and reinforce broader social inequities. Back ground checks may disproportionately affect racial/ethnic communities, and standardized evaluatio ns may reflect Euro-centric assumptions or misinterpret cultural differences. Language barriers may also affect outcomes. Because practices vary widely across presbyteries and these tools carry s ignificant weight in decision-making, REAC urges caution and emphasizes the need for clear, equitable standards.

Advice and Counsel on ORD-07 B from the Advocacy Committee on LGBTQ+ Equity (ACQ+E)

The Advocacy Committee on LGBTQ+ Equity advises that the 227th General Assembly (2026) approve Ord (07) with amendment [amendment adopted by the GA].

B. Background Checks

ACQ+E recommends that the Assembly approve amendment B with the following addition.

(Text to be added is [in brackets and underlined].)

> The presbytery shall require background checks for inquirers at the onset of the inquiry proc ess. Additionally, the presbytery shall require an evaluation of inquirers, including psychoso cial and vocational inventories, during their inquiry phase. [These evaluations shall be cond ucted by providers who demonstrate competency regarding sexual orientation and gender id entity, and the results shall be used to discern fitness for ministry without pathologizing the inquirer's or candidate's identity. It is recommended that all background checks and evaluati ons are conducted using LGBTQIA+ culturally competent bias awareness practices.]

Comment from the Unification Commission

The report of the Task Force to Explore the Theology and Practice of Ordination contains several proposed amendments, which, if passed, would have financial, logistical and staffing implications for Presbyterian Life & Witness (PL&W).

While recommendations A and B create additional requirements for presbyteries, there is also an impact on staff within PL&W. Training and resources are already available to presbytery bodies responsible for preparation for ministry. The recommendation states that presbyteries will provide the training and determine the best method for background checks, etc., but presbyteries historically look to Presbyterian Life & Witness (PL&W) staff for guidance and resources in order to fulfill the Book of Order requirements The Assembly Committee on Theological Education and Ordination approved Item ORD-07 B 50/9. The 227th General Assembly (2026) approved Item ORD-07 B, 389/85.

For the full report on ORD-07, the Task Force to Explore the Theology and Practice of Ordination and all advice and advocacy go to https://myga.pc-biz.org/search/3001487

26-G — G-2.0603

G-2.06 PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

G-2.0603 Purpose of Inquiry (CON 09)

The 227th General Assembly (2026) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-2.0603 in the Form of Government be amended as follows?
(Deleted text is in ~~strikethrough~~; added text is in bold *italics*.)

G-2.0603 Purpose of Inquiry

The purpose of the inquiry phase is to provide an opportunity for the church and those who believe themselves called to ordered ministry as ministers of the Word and Sacrament to explore that call together so that the presbytery can make an informed decision about the inquirer's suitability for ordered ministry. ~~They shall provide a certificate of completion of boundary training, which includes the topic of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training with recertification at least every thirty-six months. The presbytery shall determine which trainings are approved to meet the criteria of these two requirements.~~

Background and Rationale

When the training requirements were added to the Book of Order, the language that was inserted was worded poorly, and as a result it is ambiguous. In its current form, it is unclear whether boundary training must be recertified every thirty-six months, or if the 36 months applies only to child abuse prevention. Also, the language about the training does not match the policy requirements: "child sexual abuse prevention training" vs. "child, youth, and adults with vulnerabilities protection policy". Some of the insertions were also misplaced when the requirements were added. While the intent was to apply the training requirements to certain categories of people, in some cases the placement of the language needs to be reconsidered.

For Inquirers/Candidates, the language was inserted into G-2.0603 "Purpose of Inquiry", but this training has nothing to do with the Purpose of Inquiry. A more appropriate place for this requirement would be in a section addressing the required Education and Training prior to ordination.

Advice – From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)

Coordination

The ACC alerts the General Assembly that other overtures are proposing changes to or reorganization of training requirements for the categories of persons affected by this Item [], and coordination will be needed.

Editor's Note: This proposed amendment goes with proposed amendment 24-H.

The Assembly Committee on Constitutional Interpretation amended the overture language following advice from the ACC and then approved Item CON-09,.41/7. The 227th General Assembly (2026) approved Item CON-09, 465/4.

For the full report on CON-09, go to https://myga.pc-biz.org/search/3001441

26-J — G-2.0606

G-2.06 PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

G-2.0606 Service in Covenant Relationship (ORD-02)

The 227th General Assembly (2026) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

> **Shall the title of G-2.0606 in the Form of Government be amended as follows?**
> (Deleted text is in ~~strikethrough~~; added text is in bold *italics*.)
>
> > G-2.0606 ***Supervised*** Service ***While Under Care of the Presbytery*** ~~in Covenant Relationship~~

Background and Rationale

Renaming sections G-2.06 and G-2.07 to specify the type of ministry they apply to clarifies their purpose and presents a more inclusive attitude toward the meaning of "ministry" and the various different types of ministry that exist in the church.

Advice – From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)

The overture would amend the Book of Order by relabeling and reordering certain sections under G-2.06 Preparation for Ministry and G-2.07 Ordination. The overture does not appear to change the substance of the sections.

The ACC advises that reorganization of the Book of Order to provide clarity and better alignment with subject headings is a worthwhile effort that, in itself, does not pose any constitutional issues. Because of the numerous cross-references to numbered sections, it will be necessary to correct those references as well. See, e.g., G-2.0104b, G-2.0505, G-2.0610 (internal references).

Coordination

The ACC also notes that other Items of Business are proposing changes to or reorganization of the educational and training requirements for inquirers and candidates. Coordination will be required to ensure consistency.

Editor's Note: If 26-H and/or 26-I are approved, the numbering of the paragraphs will be adjusted accordingly.

The Assembly Committee on Theological Education and Ordination approved Item ORD-02, 52/5. The 227th General Assembly (2026) approved Item ORD-02, 447/10.

For the full report on ORD-02, go to https://myga.pc-biz.org/search/3001442

26-K — G-2.0607

G-2.06 PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

G-2.0607 Final Assessment and Negotiation for Service (ORD-07 C)

The 227th General Assembly (2026) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-2.0607 Final Assessment and Negotiation for Service be amended as follows:
(Deleted text is in ~~strikethrough~~; added text is in bold *italics*.)

A candidate may not enter into negotiation for his or her service as a minister of the Word and Sacrament without approval of the presbytery of care. The presbytery shall record when it has certified a candidate ready for examination by a presbytery for ordination, pending a call. Evidence of readiness to begin ordered ministry as a minister of the Word and Sacrament shall include:

a. a candidate's wisdom and maturity of faith, leadership skills, compassionate spirit, honest repute, and sound judgment;

b. a transcript showing graduation~~,~~ with satisfactory grades, at a ~~regionally accredited~~ college or university ***or an international equivalent as determined by the presbytery*****;**

c. a transcript from a theological institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools acceptable to the presbytery, showing a course of study including Hebrew and Greek, exegesis of the Old and New Testaments using Hebrew and Greek, satisfactory grades in all areas of study, and graduation or proximity to graduation; and

d. examination materials, together with evaluations that declare those materials satisfactory in the areas covered by any standard ordination examination approved by the General Assembly. ~~Such examinations shall be prepared and administered by a body created by the presbyteries.~~ ***These materials may be either Standard Ordination Exams or Senior Ordination Portfolios. The body responsible for preparation for ministry in the candidate's and the candidate may together determine which examination materials to use, including a possible combination of the Standard Exams and the Senior Ordination Portfolio.***

(1) Standard Ordination Exams shall be prepared, administered, and evaluated by a body created by the presbyteries.

(2) In the case of use of the Senior Ordination Portfolios, the (Senior Ordination Portfolios) may be prepared by the candidate for ministry according to standards established by a body created by the presbyteries. The body responsible for

preparing candidates for ministry in the candidate's presbytery may evaluate the portfolio and subsequently submit both the portfolio and its evaluation to a body established by the presbyteries for final evaluation. Senior Ordination Portfolios, or any senior examination as approved by the presbytery, shall be evaluated using culturally competent, bias-aware standards established by a body created by the presbyteries. Presbyteries shall ensure that evaluation practices are consistent, transparent, and informed by anti-racism, intercultural competency, and equitable assessment principles.

Background and Rationale

More Academic Access by Relaxing Undergraduate Accreditation Requirements

The recommendation to delete the requirement for a transcript from a regionally accredited college or university can be especially important for inquirers and candidates from other countries or cultures, whose college experience may not be in a regionally accredited school. Other inquirers and candidates may have taken their coursework in a Bible college.

Reflection on the Current Standard Ordination Exams

The current system of ordination examinations was introduced to the Presbyterian Church in the United States at the 116th General Assembly (1976) and approved by the 117th General Assembly (1977). At the time, standardized assessment was understood to be the most reliable way to determine readiness for ordination. In the decades since, however, the church and the wider educational community have come to recognize significant limitations in standardized testing as a measure of vocational readiness.

Reliable studies have shown that standardized examinations, such as the Bible Content

Examination, often fail to assess candidates equitably. These tests can disadvantage candidates from immigrant churches whose primary languages, cultural frameworks, and worship practices differ from those assumed by the examinations. They also disadvantage individuals who do not perform well on standardized tests, regardless of their theological depth, pastoral capacity, or faithfulness. Perhaps most significantly, standardized examinations provide little opportunity to know the candidate as a whole person or to discern the depth of their call, formation, and commitment to ministry. (See Appendix G.)

At present, the church assesses candidate competencies through the Bible Content Examination (BCE) and four Standard Ordination Examinations in Polity, Worship and Sacraments, Theology, and Biblical Exegesis.

The BCE is a timed, multiple-choice assessment designed to test an inquirer's ability to recall specific biblical passages. It is offered only twice each year. Preparation typically requires extensive memorization, including study of a question bank containing hundreds of prior questions, alongside general biblical knowledge to respond to new material.

The structure of the BCE carries unintended pastoral consequences. Candidates who do not pass are often required to retake the examination repeatedly as a prerequisite for ordination, unless an alternative examination is offered by their presbytery. Because the exam is taken in shared settings, failure can be experienced publicly among peers, creating a sense of shame early in the ordination process. For some, this experience becomes discouraging enough to interrupt or end their pursuit of ordained ministry, not because of a lack of call or gifting, but because of the structure of the assessment itself. (See Appendices E and F.)

The Standard Ordination Examinations likewise present significant challenges. These examinations are offered only three times per year and require candidates to commit up to eight consecutive days of intensive testing. This schedule often conflicts with seminary coursework, employment obligations, caregiving responsibilities, and the need for rest and Sabbath. No alternative dates are provided, and limited consideration is given to the cumulative physical, emotional, and spiritual strain placed on candidates during the testing period.

Polity and Worship and Sacraments are each nine-hour, three-part examinations taken within a tightly prescribed four-day window, with strict word limits. The Biblical Exegesis examination overlaps this period and must be completed within a five-day window. Candidates are prohibited from sharing any personal information that might identify them, including name, gender or sexuality, racial or cultural identity, geographic context, seminary affiliation, disability status, or lived experience. While this anonymity is intended to promote fairness, it also prevents evaluators from understanding how a candidate's theology and interpretation are shaped by context, ministry setting, and lived faith.

Many presbyteries respond to repeated exam failures by offering alternative examinations. While this practice reflects pastoral concern, these alternatives vary widely and lack shared standards or evaluation criteria.

These realities suggest that the current examination model, while once well-intended, has its limitations in serving the church's discernment needs effectively or equitably. They underscore the need for assessment practices that are rigorous, contextual, pastoral, and capable of engaging the whole person in whom God's call is being discerned.

A New Option

The additional assessment model presented here as the Senior Ordination Portfolio offers a more comprehensive and whole-person approach to discernment. This option is intended to be considered fully equivalent to the standard ordination examinations for assessing a candidate's call and potential for ministry. In this time and place, the church recognizes the importance of attending to a candidate's cultural context and unique God-given gifts and experiences, which testify to the ways God has been faithfully at work in an individual's life and to how that call has taken shape within a particular ministry context.

The person behind an essay matters to God and therefore should matter to the body responsible for preparation for ministry. Who better to bear witness to their trust in Jesus Christ, articulate a lived relationship with God's Word, express sincere reception of the Reformed faith, and demonstrate their capacity to serve with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love than the candidate themself? The

Senior Ordination Portfolio allows candidates to speak in their own voice and to present their formation as an integrated whole rather than as isolated responses to anonymous examination prompts.

The hope of this Task Force is to recenter the covenantal relationship between candidates and the body responsible for preparation for ministry toward collegiality and the spirit of friendship professed among colleagues in ministry in the ordination vows. We encourage these bodies to know candidates personally, to understand their unique gifts and ministry interests, and to accompany them with care and attentiveness. Such a process can strengthen the covenant partnership by helping candidates discern and thrive in their first ordained call.

By prioritizing person-centered assessment that identifies both strengths and areas for growth, this approach seeks to build the capacity of candidates and the presbyteries in which they learn and serve. Candidates with fresh senses of call often bring energy, creativity, and new imagination to presbyteries in need of renewal. Intentional encouragement, mentoring, and accompaniment can play a decisive role in sustaining candidates as they pursue new forms of ministry.

In practical terms, this approach removes the former requirement of anonymity and strict time constraints associated with traditional examinations. Instead, candidates are invited to reflect prayerfully on their education, experiences, gifts, and sense of call and to present a cumulative portfolio of work and theological reflection to the body responsible for preparation for ministry. In doing so, the church affirms that the diverse and intersectional identities of those whom God calls, along with the varied contexts in which they serve, are not obstacles to discernment but essential dimensions of God's call into ordained ministry.

Usage of this Model

This Task Force envisions the Senior Ordination Portfolio and the Standard Ordination Examinations as equally acceptable and comprehensive options. We recommend that the Senior Ordination Portfolio be offered at the point of candidate assessment ordinarily associated with the Standard Ordination Examinations—after a candidate has been received as a candidate and prior to being certified as call ready, typically during the final year of seminary education or shortly after graduation.

The portfolio should be holistic in nature and submitted as a single, comprehensive body of work that addresses all required areas of assessment. It should be presented to the body responsible for preparation for ministry during the period following candidacy and prior to a determination of readiness to receive a call.

The Senior Ordination Portfolio is recommended by the Task Force as an alternative option for evaluating the readiness of candidates for ministry. Candidates should be permitted, in consultation with the body responsible for preparation in their presbytery, to select the assessment model by which they prefer to be evaluated—either the Standard Ordination Examinations or the Senior Ordination Portfolio.

We further recommend that candidates consult with academic advisors, supervisors, or personal mentors as needed when curating their portfolios. Candidates are encouraged to draw upon and adapt

work from seminary coursework, field education, church or chaplaincy internships, and other ministry experiences. Portfolio materials should reflect the candidate's educational formation, spiritual discernment, and leadership in real ministry contexts.

The portfolio may also serve as a resource for a candidate's Personal Discernment Profile, highlighting ministry interests, gifts, and skills as candidates seek their first call. Portfolio elements may consist of distinct pieces addressing different competencies or may be woven together around a common theme, according to the candidate's preferences and sense of call.

Advice for the Body Responsible for Preparation for Ministry Evaluation Process
The purpose of this process is to provide candidates with a meaningful opportunity to present their education, experiences, and sense of call, enabling the body responsible for preparation for ministry to understand and affirm the candidate's unique gifts and readiness for ordained service.

A specific recommendation for evaluation of the Senior Ordination Portfolio is provided in Appendix C.

The Scope of the Portfolio

Competencies to be Included in a Candidate's Portfolio:

1. Polity
2. Exegesis & Bible Content
3. Worship & Sacraments
4. Classical & Modern Theology

1. Polity

Candidates should demonstrate their ability to appropriately reference and adhere to the PC(USA) Book of Order in their ministry setting.

Candidates will provide a reflective piece that demonstrates how a ministry experience was navigated using the Book of Order. The reflection should, at minimum, include:

a. An overview of the ministry context,
b. A description of the experience to be evaluated,
c. 5 or more citations from the Book of Order, and
d. A thoughtful reflection of the candidate's subjective and objective evaluation of the experience and their recommendations for best practice.

2. Biblical Content and Exegesis

The Task Force has deemed the Bible Content Examination unnecessary for evaluating a candidate's fitness for ministry. The completion of Hebrew Bible and New Testament courses, and completion of exegesis assessment by portfolio or exam, shall suffice for assessing basic biblical literacy.

Candidates should demonstrate their ability to appropriately exegete passages from the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, draw upon scholarly resources, and apply biblical exegesis to thoughtfully engage a ministry setting.

Candidates will provide two exegetical projects – one passage from the Hebrew Bible, and one passage from the New Testament. Candidates will thoroughly exegete a passage, then incorporate their exegesis into a creative piece (sermon, Bible study, presentation, multimedia artwork, etc.) that applies their exegesis to a modern ministry context.

Each reflective piece should, at minimum, include:

a .Scholarly Exegetical Work

i. A selected translation, or a candidate's original translation, of a biblical text,

ii. A word study of at least three words of the original language of the text, and referencing scholarly resources,

iii A thorough review of commentaries an historical context of the text,

iv Citations for any references used, and a bibliography.

b Ministry Presentation

i An overview of the ministry context and intended audience.

ii An original piece that applies exegesis to a modern ministry context.

iii This presentation could take a variety of creative forms – sermon, Bible study, presentation, multimedia artwork, etc. – that apply exegesis to a modern ministry context. Note: Candidates should complete two projects – one project for a passage from the Hebrew Bible and one project for a passage in the New Testament.

3. Worship & Sacraments

Candidates should demonstrate their ability to prepare Presbyterian worship liturgies that show people the pattern of the gospel to strengthen their witness and service, as well as, sacramental signs that show forth the mysteries of grace in word and action. [G-2.0501]

Candidates should prepare two liturgies. One of the liturgies should specifically include observing a sacrament, and the second liturgy should point to a special season or celebration in the life of a church.

Both liturgies should include:

a An overview of the ministry context and description of the liturgical occasion/season, participants, and worship space.

b As many original components as possible but may also draw upon a variety of liturgical resources, with citations.

c Elements of Presbyterian worship, including scripture, prayers, music selection, and a sermon/message outline.

d A brief reflection on how this liturgy adheres to Book of Order guidelines, with citations.

e A brief reflection of the candidate's liturgy planning process and the spiritual impact of the worship experience.

f Candidates may optionally submit multimedia files of recordings, song selections, bulletins, worship visual presentations, pictures of the worship space, or other creative worship planning expressions.

4. Classical & Modern Theology

Candidates should demonstrate their ability to communicate central concepts of Reformed theology and connect this theology to ministry settings or contemporary issues.

Candidates will provide a reflective piece that incorporates:

a A central theme of Reformed Theology Scripture
b 3 citations from the Book of Confessions
c A Classical-era theologian (before 1900)
d A Modern-era theologian (after 1900)
e Application of concept to a ministry setting or contemporary issue

See Appendix B for a presbytery evaluation tool. See Appendix D for portfolio models from other denominations.

Advice – From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises the 227th General Assembly to approve Item ORD-07-C.

Rationale

This item intends to amend Book of Order G-2.0607 by modifying the current list of evidence of readiness to begin ordered ministry. These recommended modifications include a proposed change to the undergraduate degree transcript requirements to remove the required attainment and reporting of satisfactory grades and to remove the requirement that the college or university at which the undergraduate degree is earned be regionally accredited. Secondly, a Senior Ordination Portfolio has been proposed as an alternative equivalent form in which examination materials may be presented for evaluation by a presbytery to declare such materials as "satisfactory in the areas covered by any standard ordination examination approved by the General Assembly" (G-2.0607d).

A substantive consideration of the process of preparation for ministry and the ordination and examination process occurred at the 2012 and 2014 General Assemblies. In response to the referral from the 220th General Assembly (2012): Item 07-07, On Reevaluating the Process by Which Ordination Exams Are Written, Administered, and Graded (Minutes, 2012, Part I, p. 682), the Special Committee to Review the Preparation for Ministry Process and Standard Ordination Exams noted the following distinction between "fitness or readiness" and "suitability" in the rationale of its 2014 report (Minutes, 2014, Section 2, 06 - Church Polity and Ordered Ministries, Item 06-12) to further delineate the intended role of ordination exams:

> The standard written ordination exams are not designed to discern "suitability" for ministry. In the candidacy phase, "fitness and readiness" are to be established (G-

2.0604), with the standard written exams to be one tool for that work (G-2.0607d). "Suitability," in the language of the Book of Order, is to be established during the inquiry phase (G-2.0603). The committee proceeded with its work with this understanding of the exams' purpose.

The committee considered the history of the standard written ordination exams. They were established in order that presbyteries would have some method to test all candidates on a denomination-wide basis. Individual calling presbyteries could then trust that a candidate coming from another presbytery was able to articulate adequate responses to ministry situations with both Reformed theological and pastoral concerns in view. This method of examination continues to stand as the only denomination-wide standard for evaluating candidates, and for this reason the committee deemed it valuable enough to keep.

We confirmed that seminaries continue to use written, timed examinations as part of their assessment of students. Therefore, such exams in and of themselves are not a strange and foreign concept to candidates. However, we also noted that during seminary studies particular students may be allowed to substitute other work and forms of examination, and that some specific courses do not require exams at all.

We concluded that retaining written, timed exams simply in order to mirror seminary methods does not have a viable basis.

This rationale affirms the potential admissibility of alternative equivalent forms in which examination materials may be presented for evaluation by a presbytery to declare such "materials as satisfactory in the areas covered by any standard ordination examination approved by the General Assembly" (G-2.0607d). Thus, there are no constitutional prohibitions to the use of alternate forms of examination, provided these forms are approved by the General Assembly.

Comment – Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examination for Candidates (PCC)

The Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examination for Candidates (PCC) affirms the call to revisit and possibly revise the examination process. However, given the pastoral, financial, and logistical implications, the PCC recommends the Assembly disapprove Recommendation Cii.

Recommendation Cii refers to "a body created by the presbyteries," which constitutionally is the PCC (G-2.0607).

Rationale

Established in 1965, the PCC exists "to assist and support the work of presbytery committees which are responsible for the examination of candidates for ordination, to provide a more equitable standard of expectation among all the presbyteries, and to offer candidates a more uniform basis for their preparation for ordination examination" (PCC Guiding Principles).

The PCC is tasked primarily with the preparation and administration of the ordination examinations, in addition to organizing and training presbytery-elected readers to evaluate the exams. The General

Assembly has approved five exam areas: Bible Content, Biblical Exegesis, Theological Competence, Worship and Sacraments, and Church Polity.

The PCC meets annually in-person to write the exams and on-line for three additional weeks each year to administer and oversee evaluation of exams by presbytery-elected readers.

The proposed amendment expands the PCC's responsibilities to include an additional method of testing, the senior portfolio. The recommendation also gives the PCC a direct role in evaluation of the portfolio and the standard exams, a role and unprecedented authority that has never been granted to the PCC.

The ordination exams provide a common tool for assessment of all candidates. When circumstances require, G-2.0610 authorizes presbyteries to administer and evaluate alternative exams, which can be formulated in ways suitable for individual candidates. Therefore, adding a portfolio option to G-2.0607 is unnecessary.

Pastoral Implications

As currently administered, the exams are evaluated anonymously by readers elected by all presbyteries. The PCC continues to affirm the importance of anonymous review because it minimizes unconscious bias toward or against an individual or a group. Anonymity at this step seeks to provide as much equity as possible in assessing candidates.

The addition of evaluation to the role of the PCC, per the proposed G-2.0607d(1), would reduce the number of evaluators from several hundred presbytery-elected readers to the current roster of 24 PCC members, increasing the chance that diverse voices are excluded from the evaluation process.

In the proposed amendment, it is unclear if a presbytery is required to adopt both options, exam and portfolio, or if a presbytery can choose to require one or the other. This would create a system in which one presbytery may have more assessment options than another, creating imbalance among presbyteries and inequity toward candidates. If a presbytery is allowed to require exams only, the purpose of the amendment is null.

The proposed G-2.0607d(2) states that final evaluation of the portfolio rests with the PCC. Equity and constitutional questions arise when a group outside a presbytery determines whether G-2.0607d has been satisfied.

Financial Implications

The PCC’s work is funded by exam registration fees. The changes necessitated by this proposal would place a substantial financial burden on candidates. This consequence alone counsels against approval.

The amended G-2.0607d requires the PCC to develop a format, guidelines, and evaluation standards for portfolios, while also assessing completed portfolios. This requirement assumes that the PCC would also oversee portfolio revisions.

In the proposed amendment, the PCC must still administer the existing exams. Adding the portfolio requires expanding PCC membership by at least 6 members increasing the cost of the annual meeting by approximately $2,500.00 per additional participant.

Making this body responsible for evaluating the portfolio rather than organizing and training presbytery-elected readers to evaluate exams could require additional in-person meetings resulting in additional costs.

Since the portfolio combines competencies, a portfolio covering all five exam competencies required by the General Assembly would cost the candidate at least the same amount as five standard exams.

Logistical Implications

The addition of "evaluation" to the PCC's mandate would require members to give additional weeks of in-person service above and beyond other commitments to their local congregation, presbytery, jobs, and family. The PCC believes this change will preclude young adults, ruling elders, bi-vocational pastors, those with children or others under their care at home, and many solo pastors from bringing their wisdom and experience to the PCC. This will compound the already difficult task of ensuring that the breadth of the church's voices is part of the examination process.

Approval of recommendation Cii would require significant changes to the PCC's Guiding Principles. This document is amended and approved by the PCC itself before coming to the Assembly for approval. Any changes to the PCC's Guiding Principles would need to come to the 228th General Assembly in 2028. This could prevent implementation of a portfolio until after that meeting.

A new assessment method that meets the current constitutional standards would require recruiting, electing, and training new members of the PCC. This could further delay implementation.

In accordance with the current Guiding Principles, the PCC will continue to implement changes to the exam process to better serve candidates and the church. The PCC is already engaged in conversations concerning revision to better meet the changing landscape of theological education and the emerging needs of the church. The PCC is committed to continuing that work to find more equitable, sustainable, and appropriately rigorous means of assessing candidates for ministry in the PC(USA).

Because of the importance of this work, the financial implications of any change, and the need to ensure that any change benefits candidates, the PCC recommends disapproval of Recommendation Cii.

Advice - From the Advocacy Committee for LGBTQIA+ Equity (ACQ+E)

ACQ+E recommends that the Assembly approve amendment C with the following addition.

(2) Senior Ordination Portfolios shall be prepared by the candidate for ministry according to standards established by a body created by the presbyteries. The body responsible for preparing candidates for ministry in the candidate's presbytery shall evaluate the portfolio and subsequently

submit both the portfolio and its evaluation to a body established by the presbyteries for final evaluation. [***The evaluation of the portfolio shall recognize the validity of diverse Reformed theological perspectives, including those arising from the lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ persons and the contributions of Queer Theology to the life of the Presbyterian Church.***]

LGBTQIA+ individuals continue to face barriers to full inclusion in the Church. Our Book of Order clearly stipulates that our Church is committed to full inclusion, and individuals cannot be discriminated against due to sexual orientation and gender identity. These amendments ensure that inquiries and candidates under care will receive appropriate support and guidance from the overseeing body appointed by the presbytery for their journey to ordered ministries.

Advice -From the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee (REAC)

REAC recommends that the Assembly approve amendment C with the following addition to ensure equity, consistency, and accountability.

(Text to be added is [in brackets and underlined].)
[(3) Senior Ordination Portfolios shall be evaluated using culturally competent, bias-aware standards established by a body created by the presbyteries. Presbyteries shall ensure that evaluation practices are consistent, transparent, and informed by anti-racism, intercultural competency, and equitable assessment principles.]

REAC urges caution, as this represents a significant structural shift without the infrastructure needed for equitable implementation. Without shared standards, clear guidance, and sufficient resourcing, portfolios risk becoming a new site of inequity rather than a remedy for existing disparities.

REAC encourages the Assembly to consider a more coordinated and sustainable approach, especially if the structures required are not yet in place. A phased implementation, including pilot contexts and shared evaluation frameworks, may better support equitable and consistent outcomes.

REAC strongly supports removing the "regionally accredited" undergraduate requirement, which expands access for candidates from diverse educational and cultural backgrounds.

Portfolios offer promise as a more holistic way to assess readiness, reducing reliance on standardized exams and better supporting diverse candidates. However, presbyteries vary widely in capacity and resources. Without safeguards, this may lead to uneven expectations and outcomes.

REAC supports maintaining standard exams as an option, while calling for continued review for equity, stronger language accommodations, and greater diversity among evaluators. Flexibility alone does not ensure equity.

This amendment raises an important theological question: how does the Church discern readiness for ministry? REAC affirms that readiness is not measured solely by academic performance and that the Church must be able to recognize gifts across diverse communities and contexts.

Comment – From the Committee on Theological Education

Recommendation C(ii) provides the opportunity for assessment for readiness to receive a call as minister of word and sacrament through Senior Ordination Portfolios, with the initial responsibility for evaluation granted to the presbytery of care and final evaluation by a body established by the presbyteries. While we agree that clear alternate paths for assessment of candidates are in order, we note two concerns: (1) there is no standard for the creation or evaluation of the portfolios, and (2) the portfolio model creates opportunities for inequity.

No standard for the creation or evaluation of the portfolios — The Task Force's rationale provides a potential framework for the portfolio; however, the amendment states that the portfolio should be prepared according to "standards established by a body created by the presbyteries" (G-2.0607d.2). The amendment provides for an alternate form of evaluation when the tool/standard for evaluation has not been established. We seek clarity on the following matters:

It seems to be presumed that "a body created by the presbyteries" will be the same body created by the presbyteries to prepare, evaluate, and administer the Standard Ordination Exams: the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates (PCC). Is this indeed the body, and is it the correct body based upon expertise and bandwidth?

The institutions associated with COTE are experienced with upholding standards for accreditation, designing evaluations which measure the intended knowledge and capacities, and crafting curricula to form learners to meet the intended goals. We know that forming an evaluation tool as important as a single capstone assessment for ordination will require great intentionality and time. To change the book of order without the intentionality to design the appropriate assessment seems premature. The PC(USA)-related seminaries have a responsibility to ready their students for service in the PC(USA). Will the preparation required for successful completion of the Portfolio and assessment of Ordination Exams be the same?

The portfolio model creates opportunities for inequities and discrimination — Again, COTE agrees with the Task Force that Ordination Exams, alone, are not an adequate measure of a candidate's readiness for call. However, we are concerned that without greater discernment and shifted oversight, the portfolios may fail to solve and may even perpetuate the inequities they are designed to eliminate. Ordination exams were introduced in the Presbyterian Church in the United States (1977), not simply as a reliable way to assess readiness for ministry but also as a way of creating equitable evaluation. Removing the evaluations from presbyteries, helps to prevent from candidates being denied ordination because of their race, gender, sexuality, or general chemistry with the local body. Different presbyteries have different cultural competencies, which may value, prepare, and nurture one candidate over another. The recommended amendments provide room for inequity and discrimination in two ways:

(1) G-2.0607d.2 says that the body responsible for preparation for ministry and the candidate "shall together determine which examination materials to use," allowing for lack of uniform application of criteria and decision making across the denomination.
(2) G-2.0607d.2 establishes the body responsible for preparation for ministry as the first evaluator of the portfolio, eliminating the protections put in place by the anonymity of the Ordination Exams.

The Task Force's rationale upholds the Standard Ordination Exams and Senior Ordination Portfolios as "fully equivalent." Without the tool established for the compilation and evaluation of the portfolios, it is impossible to tell whether the expectations and assessment are indeed equivalent. This creates a two-tiered examination process, which may be compounded by presbyteries applying different criteria for determining the exam of choice.

Editor's Note: If 26-H and/or 26-I are approved, the numbering of the paragraphs will be adjusted accordingly.

The Assembly Committee on Theological Education and Ordination approved Item ORD-07 C 50/9. The 227th General Assembly (2026) approved Item ORD-07 C, 389/85.

For the full report on ORD-07, the Task Force to Explore the Theology and Practice of Ordination and all advice and advocacy go to https://myga.pc-biz.org/search/3001487

26-L — G-2.0607

G-2.06 PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

G-2.0607 Final Assessment and Negotiation for Service (ORD -02)

The 227th General Assembly (2026) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-2.0607 Final Assessment and Negotiation for Service be amended as follows:
(Deleted text is in ~~strikethrough~~; added text is in bold *italics*.)

A candidate may not enter into negotiation for his or her service as a minister of the Word and Sacrament without approval of the presbytery of care. The presbytery shall record when it has certified a candidate ready for examination by a presbytery for ordination, pending a call. Evidence of readiness to begin ordered ministry as a minister of the Word and Sacrament shall include:

a. a candidate's wisdom and maturity of faith, leadership skills, compassionate spirit, honest repute, and sound judgment;

b. a transcript showing graduation, with satisfactory grades, at a regionally accredited college or university;

c. a transcript from a theological institution ~~accredited by the Association of Theological Schools acceptable to the presbytery~~, showing ~~a course of study including Hebrew and Greek, exegesis of the Old and New Testaments using Hebrew and Greek,~~ satisfactory grades in all areas of study ***in accordance with the educational requirements in G-2.0606*****,** and graduation or proximity to graduation; and

d. examination materials, together with evaluations that declare those materials satisfactory in the areas covered by any standard ordination examination approved by the General Assembly. Such examinations shall be prepared and administered by a body created by the presbyteries.

Background and Rationale

... by adding a subsection that explicitly spells out the required education and training that must be completed prior to Ordination as a minister of the Word and Sacrament…[24-I]

Advice—From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)

The overture would amend the Book of Order by relabeling and reordering certain sections under G-2.06 Preparation for Ministry and G-2.07 Ordination. The overture does not appear to change the substance of the sections.

The ACC advises that reorganization of the Book of Order to provide clarity and better alignment with subject headings is a worthwhile effort that, in itself, does not pose any constitutional issues. Because of the numerous cross-references to numbered sections, it will be necessary to correct those references as well. See, e.g., G-2.0104b, G-2.0505, G-2.0610 (internal references).

Coordination

The ACC also notes that other Items of Business are proposing changes to or reorganization of the educational and training requirements for inquirers and candidates. Coordination will be required to ensure consistency.

Editor's Note: If 26-H and/or 26-I are approved, the numbering of the paragraphs will be adjusted accordingly. The reference number in this item will also be edited accordingly. This item goes with 24-I and seems to be dependent upon 24-I being approved.

The Assembly Committee on Theological Education and Ordination approved Item ORD-02, 52/5. The 227th General Assembly (2026) approved Item ORD-02, 447/10.

For the full report on ORD-02, go to https://myga.pc-biz.org/search/3001442

26-M — G-2.07

G-2.07 ORDINATION (ORD-02)

The 227th General Assembly (2026) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-2.07 ORDINATION title be amended as follows:
(Added text is in *italics*.)

G-2.07 ORDINATION ***TO THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENT***

Background and Rationale

The term "ministry" has always been more expansive than just the ordered ministry of the Word and Sacrament. There are many types of church ministries and vocations. Increasingly, the church is recognizing that the ministry of ruling elders, deacons, and non-ordained members of congregations is an invaluable part of the life of a congregation. Chapter Two of the Book of Order begins with sections about some of these forms of ministry.

Renaming sections G-2.06 and G-2.07 to specify the type of ministry they apply to clarifies their purpose and presents a more inclusive attitude toward the meaning of "ministry" and the various different types of ministry that exist in the church.

Advice – From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)

The overture would amend the Book of Order by relabeling and reordering certain sections under G-2.06 Preparation for Ministry and G-2.07 Ordination. The overture does not appear to change the substance of the sections.

The ACC advises that reorganization of the Book of Order to provide clarity and better alignment with subject headings is a worthwhile effort that, in itself, does not pose any constitutional issues. Because of the numerous cross-references to numbered sections, it will be necessary to correct those references as well. See, e.g., G-2.0104b, G-2.0505, G-2.0610 (internal references).

Coordination
The ACC also notes that other Items of Business are proposing changes to or reorganization of the educational and training requirements for inquirers and candidates. Coordination will be required to ensure consistency.

The Assembly Committee on Theological Education and Ordination approved Item ORD-02, 52/5. The 227th General Assembly (2026) approved Item ORD-02, 447/10.

For the full report on ORD-02, go to https://myga.pc-biz.org/search/3001442

26-N — G-2.1002

G-2.10 COMMISSIONING RULING ELDERS TO PARTICULAR PASTORAL SERVICES

G-2.1002 Training, Examination and Commissioning (ORD-07 F)

The 227th General Assembly (2026) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-2.1002 Training, Examination and Commissioning be amended as follows:
(Deleted text is in ~~strikethrough~~; added text is in bold *italics*.)

G-2.1002 Training, Examination and Commissioning

A ruling elder who seeks to serve under the terms of G-2.1001 shall receive such preparation and instruction as determined by the presbytery to be appropriate to the particular commission. ***This shall include completion of a denominational baseline for education and preparation of ruling elders for limited pastoral service, study not necessarily at a master's level, and demonstration of competent understanding and application of Presbyterian polity, Reformed worship and sacraments, Reformed theology, biblical interpretation of the Old and New Testaments, preaching, Christian Education, and pastoral care.*** Such preparation shall include a certificate of completion of boundary training, which includes the topic of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training with recertification at least every thirty-six months. The presbytery shall determine which trainings are approved to meet the criteria of these two requirements. The ruling elder shall be examined by the presbytery as to personal faith, motives for seeking the commission, and the areas of instruction determined by presbytery. A ruling elder who has been commissioned and later ceases to serve in the specified ministry may continue to be listed as available to serve, but is not authorized to perform the functions specified in G-2.1001 until commissioned again to a congregation or ministry by the presbytery.

Background and Rationale

The Book of Order (G-2.1001) affirms the authority of presbyteries to commission ruling elders for pastoral service but does not establish baseline educational expectations for commissioned pastors. As a result, preparation standards vary widely across presbyteries, creating inconsistency, inequity, and confusion for candidates, congregations, and presbyteries alike.

Establishing a denominational baseline for education—while preserving presbytery authority to adapt, expand, or grant exceptions—provides clarity and shared expectations without undermining contextual discernment. A common framework affirms the seriousness of pastoral responsibility while allowing presbyteries to respond flexibly to local needs.

A baseline educational standard strengthens the integrity of commissioned pastor ministry by ensuring consistent preparation in theology, polity, worship and sacraments, biblical interpretation, preaching, Christian education, and pastoral care. It also supports cross-presbytery recognition and mobility, offering continuity for leaders who move between contexts and confidence for congregations served by commissioned pastors.

This recommendation does not impose a master's-level requirement or replace presbytery judgment. Instead, it provides a shared foundation that enhances accountability, equity, and pastoral readiness while honoring the Presbyterian commitment to ordered ministry and local discernment.

Advice – From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises the 227th General Assembly that Item [], while constitutional in purpose, presents the following issues that the Assembly should consider.

G-2.1002 specifies presbytery authority in the training process for those ruling elders seeking to serve in limited pastoral service as CREs:

… presbyteries currently have constitutional authority to determine the specific preparation and instruction appropriate to service in each particular commission, as well as approve which trainings meet the criteria for completion of boundary training, including the topics of sexual misconduct and child sexual abuse prevention.

Historical Note

The ACC further notes that a substantive consideration of the process of preparation for ministry occurred at the 2012 and 2014 General Assemblies. In response to Item 06-08 at the 221st General Assembly (2014), the Committee on Theological Education offered the following perspective concerning a systematized system of CRE preparation:

A recent Committee on Theological Education (COTE) sponsored study of Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) training programs found most severely lacking. The COTE is charged by the General Assembly to maintain and develop a system of theological education from the perspective of the whole church. Until adequate systems of preparation for CREs are normalized, we cannot endorse [expanded use of CREs in congregational settings.]

Comment – From the Committee on Theological Education

...The Task Force's recommendation takes a positive step by identifying the required areas of study. However, COTE is concerned that (1) the standards for preparation and evaluation remain unclear, and (2) potential exists for inequitable application of requirements and examination from presbytery to presbytery.

<u>The standards for preparation and evaluation remain unclear</u> — Amended G-2.1002 states that preparation and education "shall include completion of study, not necessarily at a master's level, and demonstration of competent understanding and application" of the prescribed areas.

We are grateful for the committees work to identify expected commissioned pastor competencies. However, study not necessarily at a master's level, may vary drastically from presbytery to presbytery.

We are aware of a great breadth of training requirements for commissioned pastors, with presbyteries requiring as little as three total hours of training, and as much as ≈1/3 of a Master of Divinity degree. Without identifying the core competencies required of a reformed pastoral leader, it is impossible to provide the appropriate training and to evaluate whether a candidate is adequately prepared for the call.

G-2.0601-G-2.607 guide the education, discernment opportunities, nurture, and timeframe for ministers of word and sacrament. This course of preparation informs the examination process (which further reinforces necessary education) and the work of Committees/Commissions on Preparation for Ministry responsibilities for equipping, nurturing, and assessing discerning ministers of word and sacrament. As increasing numbers of commissioned pastors step forward to serve, their nurture requires the same clarity of expectation and purposeful accompaniment in the preparation process.

We empathize with the urgency that mid councils and congregations feel to fill vacant pulpits. Unfortunately, without greater clarification, presbyteries still lack a clear roadmap for commissioned pastor education. Pastoral leadership is a tremendous honor and sacred responsibility. As trends in theological education and Christian vocation shift, commissioned pastors are increasingly stepping into the teaching-elder responsibilities, with the role of shepherding our reformed theological beliefs and practices in their congregations. COTE would welcome the opportunity to partner with a body overseeing commissioned pastor readiness to shape preparation in a way that honors both the anxious longing for pastoral leadership and the high calling to pastoral vocation.

<u>Potential exists for inequitable application of requirements from presbytery to presbytery</u> —

G-2.1002 states that a ruling elder who seeks to serve as a commissioned pastor "shall receive such preparation and instruction as determined by the presbytery." The proposed amendment expands that "this shall include . . . demonstration of competent understanding and application." If setting expectations and evaluating understanding are the responsibility of 166 different presbyteries, (1) it will remain difficult for commissioned pastors to serve across presbytery lines and (2) will compound the possibility — for the same reasons that senior ordination portfolio evaluation may perpetuate inequity — that favoritism and prejudice creep into the evaluation process. While it can feel like formalized study and a uniform, denominational examination process are hurdles to service, these guardrails protect congregations from well-intentioned but under-equipped pastoral leaders, and protect vulnerable ruling elders, whose preparation may be overshadowed by our human sinfulness to allow race, gender, socio-economic bracket, sexuality (and so on) to inform our evaluation.

Advice -From the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee (REAC)

<u>Provide Evaluation Standards</u>

REAC recommends that the Assembly approve amendment G with the following addition:
(Text to be added is [in brackets and underlined].)

This shall include completion of study, not necessarily at a master's level, and demonstration of competent understanding and application of Presbyterian polity, Reformed worship and sacraments,

Reformed theology, biblical interpretation of the Old and New Testaments, preaching, Christian education, and pastoral care. [Presbyteries shall ensure that such training is culturally competent, accessible to candidates from racial/ethnic and immigrant communities, and evaluated using bias-aware standards.]

This amendment helps create more consistent preparation across presbyteries. However, without explicit attention to equity, training may continue to reflect dominant cultural assumptions and disadvantage some candidates. Differences in access to preparation and guidance may also lead to uneven outcomes.

The Assembly Committee on Theological Education and Ordination approved Item ORD-07 including F with Comment, 50/9. The 227th General Assembly (2026) approved Item ORD-07 including F, 389/84.

For the full report on ORD-07 and the full report from the Task Force to Explore the Theology and Practice of Ordination, go to https://myga.pc-biz.org/search/3001487

26-O — G-2.1002

G-2.10 COMMISSIONING RULING ELDERS TO PARTICULAR PASTORAL SERVICES

G-2.1002 Training, Examination and Commissioning (RAC-04 4c)

The 227th General Assembly (2026) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-2.1002 Training, Examination and Commissioning be amended as follows:
(Deleted text is in ~~strikethrough~~; added text is in bold *italics*.)

G-2.1002 Training, Examination and Commissioning

A ruling elder who seeks to serve under the terms of G-2.1001 shall receive such preparation and instruction as determined by the presbytery to be appropriate to the particular commission. Such preparation shall include a certificate of completion of boundary training, which includes the topic of sexual misconduct, ~~and~~ child sexual abuse prevention training, ***and anti-racism training*** with recertification at least every thirty-six months. The presbytery shall determine which trainings are approved to meet the criteria of these two requirements. The ruling elder shall be examined by the presbytery as to personal faith, motives for seeking the commission, and the areas of instruction determined by presbytery. A ruling elder who has been commissioned and later ceases to serve in the specified ministry may continue to be listed as available to serve, but is not authorized to perform the functions specified in G-2.1001 until commissioned again to a congregation or ministry by the presbytery.

Background and Rationale

The Work To Which All Presbyterians Are Called

Dismantling structural racism in the church will not happen unless it becomes the collective work of all of us. And so we end by challenging ourselves–all of us together–to be faithful to the previous faithful work. Because that is how we will expose White supremacy and tear it down.

We call the Church, each of our congregations, and all councils to engage the resources of our denomination to do this work locally and connectionally. We ask you and ourselves:

1. Since the 225th GA, sessions and mid councils have been required to adopt an anti-racism policy. Has your congregation or mid council adopted a policy? Does your presbytery know which congregations have and have not adopted a policy (we strongly encourage including it in the annual checklist for minutes review), and how does your presbytery follow up? Does your session or mid council review your policy annually and talk about how you are living into it together? This

requirement in the Book of Order is not simply to check off our councils' list but rather an invitation to deeper engagement.

Advice - from General Assembly Committee on Representation (GACOR)

GACOR wishes to support the overall arc of recommendations in this final report, including suggested changes for future assemblies, including participation in the many languages that make up our body. The church's unity in diversity is reflected in the variety of languages that are spoken in our worship services, councils, and fellowship together.

Speaking to points 4 and 5 of the recommendations, it is often true that antiracism training or education is often the first step needed to address the systems and structures of racism that harms BIPOC communities and destroys the unity of the church. This is invaluable work for all church leaders in their preparation for ministry, for congregations, and as continuing education along the way. Resourcing ourselves around history, systemic impacts, and interlocking systems of harm, as well as theological opportunities for repair, is critical and faithful work for any historically white-dominant denomination in the United States. The faithful work of equipping ourselves for the work of repair is a critical call of this moment in the life of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.

That said, there is a body of research showing that compelling or requiring individuals to complete mandatory training about bias or antiracism has been shown to have mixed results, with medium to small effect sizes, and little clarity about long-term transformation.

This by no means implies the church should abandon the effort to equip itself broadly with antiracism training, as formal research is only one form of knowledge we can access. But given the amount of work that would need to go into this singular, compliance-focused effort, the lack of clear research outcomes might, at minimum, give us pause in terms of whether a Book of Order mandate is the correct or primary institutional lever by which to bring about the sort of broad and continuing transformation the report invites

GACOR might suggest that another effective but adaptable model for encouraging antiracism training/equipping that is well-developed, nuanced, and well-facilitated might be:

1 encouraging Presbyterian Life & Witness to provide robust training resources, in the context of item 2a of this report, including vetted and well-annotated antiracism training options for all councils of the church. This could include a mandate to collect and commission training resources that can be based on the best of current research and community knowledge, adapt to local dynamics and histories or contexts of racial and church history, and attend to the continuing education needed beyond the basics. Such a set of resources might also suggest "best practices" for trainings that make sense for a variety of contexts without shying away from our history or our current systems.

Rationale: A robust network of resources of this quality, with the capacity to consult with national staff around specific needs in any one locale, may be more effective in increasing the frequency, availability, and overall engagement with antiracism training than a series of mandates that our current national structure and midcouncils may struggle to resource and stay in compliance with.

2. And: Funding or offering need-based grants for presbyteries otherwise unable to fund skilled and high-quality antiracism training.

Rationale: Exploring needs-based grant funding would go far in MidCouncils where the capacity to offer appropriate and helpful antiracism education and training may be being hindered by more pragmatic barriers than motivation or requirement.

We might imagine a future where a more focused effort (or even preparation) of this sort – to require development of this sort of clear and high-quality antiracism training options and a pathway toward properly funding long-term implementation of training – could helpfully highlight the ongoing barriers to broader mandatory training becoming more effective to implement in the very near future, offer a more straightforward path toward high-quality and consistent implementation, and define clearer desired outcomes. A measured strategy like this might then become not a dilution or a harmful delay of the necessary work called for in the Special Committee's recommendations - but rather a means to strengthen what we all collectively long to do with deep effectiveness, faithfulness, and heartfulness.

Either way, we offer this feedback and set of alternative possibilities in the spirit of deep affirmation and support of the Special Committee's work, resources, and invitations – while also seeking collaboration and discernment from the Assembly around what must be our core goal: meaningful formation that leads to liberatory action and restorative practice within the PC(USA), that the church's true unity in diversity would be reflected more and more in our common life.

Advice –From the Advocacy Committee for Women and Gender Justice (ACWGJ)

The Advocacy Committee of Women and Gender Justice advises that the 227th General Assembly (2026) **approve** RAC-04.

Our committee advises the General Assembly to approve this resolution and consider further reflect ion on the robust questions it poses to every congregation concerning the adoption and attention to anti-racist policies throughout leadership and congregational life.

Advice – From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)

The ACC reviewed the work of the Special Committee prior to the preparation of their final report and provided advice concerning the constitutional issues raised by their recommendations. Those discussions are reflected in the final report. The proposed amendments are constitutional, and we recommend approval.

Coordination

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution also notes that other Items of Business propose changes to or reorganization of educational and training requirements. Coordination will be required to ensure consistency throughout the Book of Order.

The Assembly Committee on Racial Justice approved Item RAC-04 4c 59/0. The 227th General Assembly (2026) Item RAC-04 4c, 448/26.

For the full report on RAC-04 and the Special Committee on the PC(U.S.A.) and Race, go to https://myga.pc-biz.org/search/3001512

26-P — G-2.1002

G-2.10 COMMISSIONING RULING ELDERS TO PARTICULAR PASTORAL SERVICES

G-2.1002 Training, Examination and Commissioning (CON-09)

The 227th General Assembly (2026) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-2.1002 Training, Examination and Commissioning be amended as follows:
(Deleted text is in ~~strikethrough~~; added text is in bold *italics*.)

G-2.1002 Training, Examination and Commissioning

A ruling elder who seeks to serve under the terms of G-2.1001 shall receive such preparation and instruction as determined by the presbytery to be appropriate to the particular commission. ~~Such preparation shall include a certificate of completion of boundary training, which includes the topic of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training with recertification at least every thirty-six months.~~ ***Those preparing to be commissioned shall complete boundary training which includes the topic of sexual misconduct; shall complete training in the prevention of abuse of children, youth; and shall provide the presbytery with certificates of completion of these trainings, with recertification at least every thirty-six months***. The presbytery shall determine which trainings are approved to meet the criteria of these two requirements. The ruling elder shall be examined by the presbytery as to personal faith, motives for seeking the commission, and the areas of instruction determined by presbytery. A ruling elder who has been commissioned and later ceases to serve in the specified ministry may continue to be listed as available to serve, but is not authorized to perform the functions specified in G-2.1001 until commissioned again to a congregation or ministry by the presbytery.

Background and Rationale

When the training requirements were added to the Book of Order, the language that was inserted was worded poorly, and as a result it is ambiguous. In its current form, it is unclear whether boundary training must be recertified every thirty-six months, or if the 36 months applies only to child abuse prevention. Also, the language about the training does not match the policy requirements: "child sexual abuse prevention training" vs. "child, youth, and adults with vulnerabilities protection policy". Some of the insertions were also misplaced when the requirements were added. While the intent was to apply the training requirements to certain categories of people, in some cases the placement of the language needs to be reconsidered.

For Commissioned Ruling Elders (and those preparing to be commissioned), the location of the language is appropriate, but the language itself is nonsensical, stating: "Such preparation shall include a certificate of completion…" However, a certificate is not in itself "preparation".

The proposed set of revisions adjusts the language of the training requirements to remove ambiguity and more appropriately places the language within the sections of the Book of Order to apply to the people it was intended to affect.

Advice – From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)

The overture proposes amendments that take a wholistic view of the placement and wording of training requirements in the Book of Order for sexual misconduct and abuse prevention for children, youth, and adults with vulnerabilities, which are found in G-2.0603 (inquirers and candidates), G-2.1002 (Commissioned Ruling Elders), G-2.1103 (Certified Christian Educators), and G-3.0106 (Councils).It adds two sections expressly requiring training of Sessions and ministers of the Word and Sacrament, which were assumed to be encompassed but not clearly so.

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises that reorganization of the Book of Order to provide clarity and better alignment with subject headings is a worthwhile effort that, in itself, does not pose any constitutional issues. Because of the numerous cross-references to numbered sections, it will be necessary to correct those references as well. See, e.g., G-2.0104b, G-2.0505, G-2.0610 (internal references).

1. Child Abuse Training
The current language of the Book of Order requires "child sexual abuse prevention training." (E.g., G-2.1002). The proposed amendment refers instead to "training in the prevention of abuse of children, youth, and adults with vulnerabilities." The proposed language is broader than sexual abuse, and the General Assembly will want to be clear on its intentions if a change is made.

Coordination
The ACC alerts the General Assembly that other overtures are proposing changes to or reorganization of training requirements for the categories of persons affected by this Item and coordination will be needed.

Advice –From the Advocacy Committee for Women and Gender Justice (ACWGJ)

The Advocacy Committee on Women and Gender Justice (ACWGJ) advises that the 227th General Assembly (2026) approve CON-09.

The Advocacy Committee for Women and Gender Justice supports this overture as a clear and thoughtful effort to strengthen the PC(USA)'s commitment to safety, accountability, and care. By clarifying and appropriately locating requirements for boundary and abuse prevention training, this action helps ensure consistent practices that better protect those who are most vulnerable, including women, children, and others at risk of harm. We affirm this work as an important step toward fostering communities of trust, integrity, and justice across the life of the Church.

The Assembly Committee on Constitutional Interpretation approved Item CON-09,.41/7. The 227th General Assembly (2026) approved Item CON-09, 465/4.

For the full report on CON-09, go to https://myga.pc-biz.org/search/3001441

26-Q — G-2.1002

G-2.10 COMMISSIONING RULING ELDERS TO PARTICULAR PASTORAL SERVICES

G-2.1002 Training, Examination and Commissioning (ORD-07 H)

The 227th General Assembly (2026) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-2.1002 Training, Examination and Commissioning be amended as follows:
(Deleted text is in ~~strikethrough~~; added text is in bold *italics*.)

G-2.1002 Training, Examination and Commissioning

A ruling elder who seeks to serve under the terms of G-2.1001 shall receive such preparation and instruction as determined by the presbytery to be appropriate to the particular commission. Such preparation shall include a certificate of completion of boundary training, which includes the topic of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training with recertification at least every thirty-six months. The presbytery shall determine which trainings are approved to meet the criteria of these two requirements**.** ***A presbytery may determine that a Certified Christian Educator, who is a Ruling Elder has met the education and training requirements for commissioning, provided they are also examined and commissioned in accordance with G-2.1002 and G-2.1004.*** The ruling elder shall be examined by the presbytery as to personal faith, motives for seeking the commission, and the areas of instruction determined by presbytery. A ruling elder who has been commissioned and later ceases to serve in the specified ministry may continue to be listed as available to serve, but is not authorized to perform the functions specified in G-2.1001 until commissioned again to a congregation or ministry by the presbytery.

Background and Rationale

Certified Christian Educators who are ruling elders have already completed a rigorous process of theological and practical preparation that aligns closely with the competencies required for serving as a commissioned pastor. Their certification includes demonstrated proficiency in biblical interpretation, Reformed theology and polity, worship and sacraments, educational leadership, and pastoral care—areas that mirror the foundational requirements outlined in G-2.1002. Recognizing this preparation affirms the integrity and depth of their training while avoiding unnecessary duplication of coursework. It also promotes flexibility in meeting leadership needs across the denomination, particularly in contexts where pastoral resources are limited. Furthermore, this provision honors the denomination's standards by acknowledging a nationally recognized certification process governed by the PC(USA), ensuring accountability and consistency. By allowing Certified Christian Educators who are ruling elders to fulfill commissioning requirements, the church affirms their gifts, supports equity in leadership pathways, and strengthens its capacity for mission and ministry without compromising theological or pastoral integrity.

It is important to note that under current practice, many Certified Christian Educators are not members of the congregations they serve and are therefore not eligible to serve as ruling elders in those contexts. Recommendation J of the Task Force proposes a pathway that does not currently exist in PC(USA) polity. This proposed amendment provides a clear, accountable, and orderly pathway within the existing framework of ordered ministry and presbytery authority.

Advice – From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises the 227th General Assembly that the proposed amendment to G-2.1002 (Training, Examination, and Commissioning) raises the following constitutional considerations.

The amendment would permit a presbytery to determine that a Certified Christian Educator who is also a ruling elder has satisfied the educational and training requirements for commissioning to pastoral service, provided that the individual is subsequently examined and commissioned in accordance with G-2.1002 and G-2.1004.

The Constitution already assigns to the presbytery the authority to determine the training and preparation required for ruling elders who are to be commissioned to pastoral service. G-2.1002 provides that presbyteries are responsible for establishing and approving the training that prepares ruling elders for such service and for examining them prior to commissioning. Because this responsibility is already delegated to presbyteries, the proposed language does not substantially alter the constitutional allocation of authority. Rather, it would provide a specific example of preparation that a presbytery may recognize when determining whether the training requirements have been satisfied.

The Assembly may wish to consider, however, whether inserting a specific credential into the constitutional text could unintentionally narrow the flexibility currently afforded to presbyteries. The Form of Government generally avoids listing particular programs, certifications, or curricula, preferring instead to establish principles and leave the determination of appropriate preparation to the presbytery. In this case, the presbytery already retains discretion to recognize prior theological or educational preparation when evaluating candidates for commissioning.

The Assembly may also wish to consider whether naming one particular certification program in the Constitution could raise questions about the status of other forms of preparation that presbyteries might deem equivalent or appropriate for their contexts. The current language of G-2.1002 allows presbyteries to adapt their training requirements to local needs and circumstances without constitutional amendment.

Finally, the amendment does not change the constitutional requirements that the ruling elder must still be examined by the presbytery and commissioned to a specific ministry before exercising the functions described in G-2.1001. The presbytery's responsibility for examination, commissioning, and oversight would remain unchanged.

Accordingly, the Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises that the proposed amendment is constitutionally permissible, but the Assembly may wish to consider whether the change is necessary given the discretion already granted to presbyteries under G-2.1002.

The Assembly Committee on Theological Education and Ordination approved Item ORD-07 including H with Comment, 50/9 . The 227th General Assembly (2026) approved Item ORD-07 including H, 389/84.

For the full report on ORD-07 and the full report from the Task Force to Explore the Theology and Practice of Ordination, go to https://myga.pc-biz.org/search/3001487

26-W — G-3.0301

G-3.03 THE PRESBYTERY

G-3.0301 Composition and Responsibility (ORD-07 E)

The 227th General Assembly (2026) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-3.0301 Composition and Responsibility be amended as follows:
(Deleted text is in ~~strikethrough~~; added text is in bold *italics*.)

G-3.0301 Composition and Responsibility

The presbytery is the council serving as a corporate expression of the church within a certain district and is composed of all the congregations i and ministers of the Word and Sacrament within that district. The presbytery shall adopt and communicate to the sessions a plan for determining how many ruling elders each session should elect as commissioners to presbytery, with a goal of numerical parity of ministers of the Word and Sacrament and ruling elders. This plan shall require each session to elect at least one commissioner j and shall take into consideration the size of congregations as well as a method to fulfill the principles of participation and representation found in F-1.0403 and G-3.0103. Ruling elders elected as officers of the presbytery shall be enrolled as members during the period of their service. A presbytery may enroll, or may provide by its own rule for the enrollment of, ruling elders during terms of elected service to the presbytery or its congregations***., and shall enroll ruling elders who are commissioned to limited pastoral service under G-2.1001 only for the duration of the active commission. The ruling elder so commissioned shall have voice and vote in the presbytery only during the term of the active commission under this section.***

The minimum composition of a presbytery is ten duly constituted sessions and ten ministers of the Word and Sacrament, unless an exception is approved by its synod and the General Assembly giving consideration to the responsibilities assigned to presbyteries in G-3-01 and G-3.03.

The presbytery is responsible for the government of the church throughout its district, and for assisting and supporting the witness of congregations to the sovereign activity of God in the world, so that all congregations become communities of faith, hope, love, and witness. As it leads and guides the witness of its congregations, the presbytery shall keep before it the marks of the Church (F-1.0302), the notes by which Presbyterian and Reformed communities have identified themselves through history (F-1.0303) and the six Great Ends of the Church (F-1.0304)

In light of this charge, the presbytery has responsibility and power **to:**

a. *provide that the Word of God may be truly preached and heard*. This responsibility shall include organizing, receiving, merging, dismissing, and dissolving congregations in consultation with their members; overseeing congregations without pastors; establishing pastoral relationships and dissolving them; guiding the preparation of those preparing to become ministers of the Word and Sacrament; establishing and maintaining those ecumenical relationships that will enlarge the life and mission of the church in its district; providing encouragement, guidance, and resources to congregations in the areas of mission, prophetic witness, leadership development, worship, evangelism, and responsible administration to the end that the church's witness to the love and grace of God may be heard in the world.

b. *provide that the Sacraments may be rightly administered and received*. This responsibility shall include authorizing the celebration of the Lord's Supper at its meetings at least annually and for fellowship groups, new church developments, and other non-congregational entities meeting within its bounds; authorizing and training specific ruling elders to administer or preside at the Lord's Supper when it deems it necessary to meet the needs for the administration of the Sacrament; and exercising pastoral care for the congregations and members of presbytery in order that the Sacraments may be received as a means of grace, and the presbytery may live in the unity represented in the Sacraments.

c. *nurture the covenant community of disciples of Christ.* This responsibility shall include ordaining, receiving, dismissing, installing, removing, and disciplining its members who are ministers of the Word and Sacrament l; commissioning ruling elders to limited pastoral service; promoting the peace and harmony of congregations and inquiring into the sources of congregational discord; supporting congregations in developing the graces of generosity, stewardship, and service; assisting congregations in developing mission and participating in the mission of the whole church; taking jurisdiction over the members of dissolved congregations and granting transfers of their membership to other congregations; warning and bearing witness against error in doctrine and immorality in practice within its bounds; and serving in judicial matters in accordance with Church Discipline.

Background and Rationale

The Book of Order (G-2.1001) clearly affirms the presbytery's authority to determine the scope of service for commissioned pastors, including whether they are granted voice and vote within the presbytery while actively commissioned to serve a congregation. This provision reflects the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s commitment to ordered ministry, local discernment, and contextual flexibility.

While commissioned pastors are not ministers of Word and Sacrament, they are entrusted with significant pastoral responsibilities and shall be granted voice and vote while serving in a commissioned ministry. Voice and vote acknowledges the commissioned pastors' active participation in the life and governance of the church, affirming their role as spiritual leaders and partners in ministry.

Advice – From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises the 227th General Assembly (2026) to approve item __-__ with the following modifications.

This proposed amendment to G-2.1001 would make explicit that commissioned pastors, also known as commissioned ruling elders, would have a voice and vote in the presbytery while commissioned to a validated ministry. The Advisory Committee on the Constitution advises that the proposed amendment to G-2.1001 is constitutional in purpose, and recommends approval with a perfecting amendment to improve clarity with language that ties the proposed privilege directly to the active commission under G-2.1001 and its term. Such modifying language may be: "The ruling elder so commissioned shall have voice and vote in the presbytery only during the term of the active commission under this section."

The reason for this perfecting amendment is that though "commissioned to a limited pastoral service" in G-2.1001 constitutes a form of validated ministry, the phrase "validated ministry" could be misread as a separate or narrower category than a commission "to serve a congregation," which risks avoidable debate and uneven application. Modifying the language by anchoring voice and vote to "commission," as an act of the presbytery, this language will preserve the intent, reduce misinterpretation, and promote consistent implementation. Additionally, modifying with the use of the specific phrase, "the ruling elder so commissioned," avoids the ambiguous antecedent "they" by supplying a clear subject.

Coordination

If the General Assembly approves this amendment, G-3.0301 will also need to be amended to be in resonance with this section of the Book of Order. See ACC advice in Fb.

Advice -From the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee (REAC)

...Voice and Vote for Commissioned Pastors

REAC recommends that the Assembly approve both amendments in section F.

REAC strongly supports granting voice and vote in presbytery to commissioned pastors while serving in a validated ministry. This amendment corrects a long-standing inequity that has disproportionately affected racial/ethnic, immigrant, and marginalized communities whose commissioned leaders have historically been excluded from full participation in presbytery governance.

The Assembly Committee on Theological Education and Ordination approved Item ORD-07 including E with Comment, 50/9 . The 227th General Assembly (2026) approved Item ORD-07 including E, 389/84.

For the full report on ORD-07 and the full report from the Task Force to Explore the Theology and Practice of Ordination, go to https://myga.pc-biz.org/search/3001487

26-Y — G-3.0306

G-3.03 THE PRESBYTERY

G-3.0306 Membership of the Presbytery (CON-09)

The 227th General Assembly (2026) directed the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:

Shall G-3.0306 Membership of the Presbytery be amended as follows:
(Deleted text is in ~~strikethrough~~; added text is in bold *italics*.)

G-3.0306 Membership of the Presbytery

Each presbytery determines the ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are its members and validates the ministries in which they are to be engaged. It shall be guided in this determination by written criteria developed by the presbytery for validating ministries within its bounds (G-2.0503a).

The presbytery shall examine each minister of the Word and Sacrament or candidate who seeks membership in it on his or her Christian faith and views in theology, the Sacraments, and the government of this church.

The presbytery may designate ministers of the Word and Sacrament to work as teachers, evangelists, administrators, chaplains, and in other forms of ministry recognized as appropriate by the presbytery. Those so designated may administer the Sacraments at times and places authorized by the presbytery.

Every minister of the Word and Sacrament shall ordinarily be a member of the presbytery where his or her work is situated or of the presbytery where she or he resides. The presbytery may grant a minister permission to engage in work validated ministry that is outside its geographic bounds or which is not under its jurisdiction, but no presbytery shall permit a minister to engage in work that is within the geographic bounds of another presbytery and which is properly within the responsibility of another presbytery without consent of that presbytery. Such permission shall be obtained from both presbyteries and shall be reviewed and renewed annually.

Minister members of the presbytery shall complete boundary training which includes the topic of sexual misconduct; shall complete training in the prevention of abuse of children and youth; and shall provide the presbytery with certificates of completion of these trainings, with recertification every thirty-six months. The presbytery shall determine which trainings are approved to meet the criteria of these two requirements, and may offer exemptions to these requirements at its discretion.

A minister of the Word and Sacrament who is serving in a church outside the United States may, with the approval of the presbytery, accept membership in that church for the period of such service without affecting his or her membership in a presbytery of this church.

Background and Rationale

When the training requirements were added to the Book of Order, the language that was inserted was worded poorly, and as a result it is ambiguous. In its current form, it is unclear whether boundary training must be recertified every thirty-six months, or if the 36 months applies only to child abuse prevention. Also, the language about the training does not match the policy requirements: “child sexual abuse prevention training” vs. “child, youth, and adults with vulnerabilities protection policy”.

Some of the insertions were also misplaced when the requirements were added. While the intent was to apply the training requirements to certain categories of people, in some cases the placement of the language needs to be reconsidered.

...For Ministers of the Word and Sacrament, the requirements were never directly applied to them. By inserting the requirements in the “Preparation for Ministry” phase and also applying them to all council members (which includes the ministers who moderate session), the trainings became required for new ministers and also for those serving a congregation, but they missed active ministers who had already been ordained but were now serving in other validated ministries (chaplaincy or campus ministry, for example). It would be more appropriate to explicitly require these trainings for all minister members while offering presbyteries the discretion to exempt retired ministers from the requirements.

The proposed set of revisions adjusts the language of the training requirements to remove ambiguity and more appropriately places the language within the sections of the Book of Order to apply to the people it was intended to affect.

Advice – From the Advisory Committee on the Constitution (ACC)

4. Retired Ministers
The proposed amendment would exempt “retired ministers” from the requirement for boundary training and abuse prevention training “at the discretion of the presbytery.” At the 226th General Assembly (2024), the following authoritative interpretation was adopted by the General Assembly: G-3.0106 does not define the specific requirements for boundary training beyond the inclusion of “the topic of sexual misconduct, and child sexual abuse prevention training" (G-3.0106). A presbytery may therefore determine for itself what those additional requirements should be. A presbytery could, for example, decide to waive boundary training for persons who are incapacitated, with the caution that age, per se, is not an incapacity. Alternatively, a presbytery could require boundary training only for those members of presbytery who are actively engaged in ministry, with the presbytery defining what “actively engaged in ministry” means. (https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001325).

In one sense, by limiting the exemption to "retired ministers," the proposed amendment narrows the scope of authority already granted to presbyteries to determine who might be exempted from the trainings as a matter of presbytery rule. Even with this amendment, it remains the case that presbyteries have the authority to determine for itself what trainings requirements should be for its members (G-3.0101, "[p]owers not mentioned in the Constitution are reserved to the presbyteries."), so the amendment does not add a meaningful change and might introduce more uncertainty.

If the 227th General Assembly believes that it would be valuable to codify the 2024 authoritative interpretation within the Book of Order, the ACC advises that the proposed language can be made clearer by more closely tracking the language of the authoritative interpretation:

"The presbytery shall determine which trainings are approved to meet the criteria of these two requirements[and whether to waive boundary training for certain persons]. Ministers who have been designated as retired may be exempted from these training requirements at the discretion of the presbytery.]"

The Assembly Committee on Constitutional Interpretation approved Item CON-09, 41/7 .
The 227th General Assembly (2026) approved Item CON-09, 465/4.

For the full report on CON-09, go to https://myga.pc-biz.org/search/3001441