

Ordination to Validated Ministry

The question is often asked, “Can we ordain a candidate to a validated ministry?” A candidate can be ordained to a validated ministry as it aligns with the guidelines of the Presbytery and the *Book of Order*. “Ordination to the ordered ministry of teaching elder is an act of the whole church carried out by the presbytery, setting apart a person to ordered ministry. Such a person shall have fulfilled the ordination requirements of the presbytery of care and received the call of God to service to a congregation **or other work in the mission of the church** that is acceptable to the candidate and to the presbytery of call” (G-2.0701, emphasis added).

“A teaching elder is a member of a presbytery and shall be engaged in a ministry validated by **that** presbytery” (G-2.0503, emphasis added). The function of a validated ministry shall:

1. demonstrate conformity with the mission of God’s people in the world as set forth in Holy Scripture, *The Book of Confessions*, and the *Book of Order* of this church;
2. serve and aid others, and enable the ministry of others;
3. give evidence of theologically informed fidelity to God’s Word;
4. be carried on in accountability for its character and conduct to the presbytery in addition to any organizations, agencies, and institutions served; and
5. include responsible participation in the deliberations, worship, and work of the presbytery and in the life of a congregation of this church or a church in correspondence with the PC(USA)” (G-2.0503a)

“Each Presbytery determines the teaching elders who are its members and validates the ministries in which they are to be engaged” (G-3.0306). Examples of ministries that a presbytery might consider function in such a way that they feel it necessary to ordain an individual include but are not limited to: educators, chaplains, pastoral counselors, campus ministers, missionaries, evangelists, administrators, social workers.

“When teaching elders are called to validated ministry beyond the jurisdiction of the church, they shall give evidence of a quality of life that helps to share the ministry of the good news. They shall participate in a congregation, in their presbytery, and in ecumenical relationships and shall be eligible for election to the higher councils of the church and to the boards and agencies of those councils” (G-2.0503)

There needs to be an evident call to ordered ministry whether that be to a particular congregation or to a validated ministry (G-2.0103). The individual must meet the criteria laid out in the *Book of Order* and the “written criteria developed by the presbytery for validating ministries” (G-3.0306) as well as “have the approval of God’s people and the concurring judgment of a council of the church” (G-2.0104).

Just as “each presbytery determines the teaching elders who are its members and validates the ministries in which they are to be engaged” (G-3.0306), the status of all teaching elders engaged in validated ministry should be reviewed annually by the presbytery (G-2.0503a).