CREATING RULING ELDER TRAINING

Leader Formation
Presbyterian Life & Witness,
An agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

G-2.0402 *PREPARATION*

When persons have been elected to the ordered ministry of ruling elder or deacon, the session shall provide a period of study and preparation, after which the session shall examine them as to their personal faith; knowledge of the doctrine, government, and discipline contained in the Constitution of the church; and the duties of the ministry. The session shall also confer with them as to their willingness to undertake the ministry appropriate to the order. If the examination is approved, the session shall appoint a day for the service of ordination and installation.

WHAT DO CHURCHES NEED?

- *Better preparation for membership first, so potential ruling elders already understand call and roles*
- *Training of nominating committees*
- *Guidance for session to take seriously the act of examination of new members*
- *Training to support the ability for effective evaluation of ministry and programs*

DETERMINE THE APPROACH

- *Osmosis*
- *One time event (meeting or retreat)*
- *Sequenced Training*
- *Training Program*
- *Mentoring*
- *Continuing education/Formation opportunities*

TRAINING MODEL COMPONENTS

- *Focus on constitutional questions for ordination/installation*
- *Build around congregation's ministry and witness*
- *Examine the responsibilities listed in the Book of Order*

FOCUS ON ORDINATION QUESTIONS

- *Do you trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?*
- *Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal, and God's Word to you?*

- *Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?*
- *Will you fulfill your ministry in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions?*

- *Will you be governed by our church's polity, and will you abide by its discipline? Will you be a friend among your colleagues in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God's Word and Spirit?*
- *Will you in your own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world?*
- *Do you promise to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church?*

- *Will you pray for and seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?*
- *Will you be a faithful ruling elder, watching over the people, providing for their worship, nurture, and service? Will you share in government and discipline, serving in councils of the church, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?*

W-4.4003

BUILT AROUND CONGREGATION'S MINISTRY AND WITNESS

Phase I

For new ruling elders

- Bible
- Polity and Structure
- Parliamentary Procedure/Running a Meeting
- Mission of the Church
- History and Theology of the Reformed Tradition
- Self- and Other-Awareness
- Spiritual Gifts
- Spiritual Practices
- Reformed Worship

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Katherine S. Michael
Westminster Presbyterian Church
Minneapolis, MN

BUILT AROUND CONGREGATION'S MINISTRY AND WITNESS

Phase II

For second term ruling elders

- Nurturing Spiritual Leaders
- Examination includes written reflection on what has been learned

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Minneapolis, MN

BUILT AROUND CONGREGATION'S MINISTRY AND WITNESS

Phase III

For those completing their terms of service but call to leadership is not over

- Gather Community of Leaders (those not currently serving on session) twice a year for continuing education

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EXAMINE THE RESPONSIBILITIES LISTED IN THE BOOK OF ORDER

Book of Order

- *G-3.01 – general responsibilities for all councils*
- *G-302 – specific responsibilities for session*
- *W-1.4004 – session's authority with worship*
- *D-2.0102 – session conducts its own trials*
- *D-3.0101 – original jurisdiction*

EVALUATING TRAINING MODELS

- *Does the training emphasize the partnership between ruling and teaching elders?*
- *Does the training provide guidance about discerning and measuring fidelity to the Word of God?*
- *Does it serve to strengthen and nurture a congregation's faith and life?*
- *Does it emphasize spiritual practices for ruling elders individually and corporately?*

EVALUATING TRAINING MODELS

- *Does it provide the theological context, as well as practical tools for leading in this particular congregation?*
- *Will it work in our particular context?*
- *Does it provide opportunities for generative conversations and depth of engagement?*
- *Does it utilize a methodology that our leadership is comfortable leading?*

OPTIONS FOR SMALLER CONGREGATIONS OR THOSE WITHOUT INSTALLED LEADERSHIP

- *Conducting training as a presbytery*
- *Gather a few churches to share training*
- *Create a training curriculum to share with small churches*

FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

WWW.PCUSA.ORG/LEADER-FORMATION

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