

REFORMATION PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, AUSTRALIAN PRESBYTERY
Moderator: Rev C Tuck Clerk: Pastor N van der Wel
C/O 206 High Street, Berserker, QLD 4701

**PROCEDURE FOR APPLICATION OF OFFICE BEARERS FROM OTHER
 CHURCHES / DENOMINATIONS**

EXTRACT MINUTE

Reformation Presbyterian Church, Australian Presbytery, met via Skype video conference, on the Twentieth of November 2020 and was constituted, was adjourned and then resumed on the Twenty-First of November 2020. Among other things,

5. Business Arising.

VII. Procedure for Application of Office Bearers from other Churches / Denominations.

The Presbytery gave attention to the document found in Appendix “E”.

It was moved, seconded, and agreed THAT:

The Presbytery approve and adopt the “Procedure for Application of Office Bearers from other Churches / Denominations”, and that it become effective at the close of this Meeting.

Extracted from the Records of the Presbytery by the Clerk on the Thirtieth of November 2020.

Pastor Neil van der Wel
 Clerk of Presbytery
 206 High Street, Berserker, QLD 4701

**PROCEDURE FOR APPLICATION OF OFFICE BEARERS FROM OTHER
 CHURCHES / DENOMINATIONS**

1. The Applicant is to correspond with the Presbytery via the Clerk, giving an account of his life and doctrine. He is to include an account of himself as an Office Bearer in Christ’s Church, including the details of his call to Office, his Ordination and the Formula used in his ordination vows. He is to set out the reasons and motives for his application to be received as an Office Bearer in the RPCAP, including a statement of his theological position, with reference to the subordinate standards and in relation to the requirements of the RPCAP Formula.
2. The Presbytery will take steps to confirm that the Applicant meets the fundamental qualifications for Office as per 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. As part of this process the Presbytery will seek references from Churches and individuals who know the applicant well. Ordinarily there will also be direct interaction between the Applicant and his family by members of the Presbytery, including time face to face.

3. The Presbytery will interview the Applicant during a formal meeting of the Presbytery.
4. Once an Applicant's fundamental qualifications for Office have been established, the Presbytery will consider the validity of the Applicant's Ordination. If the Applicant is not Biblically qualified to hold Office, the Applicant is to be informed by the Presbytery that it is unable to receive him because he is not Biblically qualified for Office, but that he may apply to be received as a member, either under the Interim Session, or within a Congregation.
5. If the Applicant's Ordination is found to be invalid, but the Applicant is otherwise Biblically qualified for Office, the Presbytery will proceed to Ordain the Applicant as per the Presbytery's usual process. See Below Point 8.
6. If the Applicant's Ordination is found to be valid, the Presbytery will then consider the relation of the Formula the Applicant previously subscribed to RPCAP Formula.
7. If the Presbytery finds that the Applicant's Ordination is valid:
 - a. When the Applicant is without a Charge, the Applicant will be received as a member of the Presbytery and under the oversight and discipline of the Presbytery, upon the signing of the RPCAP Formula, and be eligible for a Call.
 - b. When the Application is in relation to a Call to a particular RPCAP Congregation or Charge, the Applicant will be received as a member of the Presbytery and under the oversight and discipline of the Presbytery, upon the signing of the RPCAP Formula, on which occasion he is to be installed to Office in that Congregation or to that Charge, the Presbytery having previously acquired evidence of the willing agreement and informed consent of the People to receive the Applicant to that Congregation or Charge.
8. If the Applicant's Ordination is found by the Presbytery to be invalid, although the Applicant himself is considered to have the necessary gifts and graces, and to be called of God to Office, the Presbytery will proceed to Ordination.
 - a. Ordinarily the date of the Ordination will be set not less than 28 days after the Application has been approved by the Presbytery, during which time the intent of the Presbytery to ordain will be communicated to the Referees, seeking their informed consent to proceed with Ordination, and if no valid objections are received the Ordination will take place.
 - b. When the Application is in relation to a Call to particular RPCAP Congregation or Charge, the Ordination will take place at same occasion on which the Applicant is installed to that Congregation or Charge, the Presbytery having previously acquired evidence of the willing agreement and informed consent of the People to receive the Applicant to that Congregation or Charge.

Appendix 1: Transfer of Office Bearers within the bounds of the RPCAP.

If an Office Bearer serving in one Congregation or Charge of the RPCAP relocates to another Congregation or Charge within the RPCAP, he will not automatically be installed as an Office Bearer of that Congregation or Charge. While he continues as an Ordained Officer Bearer in Christ's Church, it is necessary for the Presbytery to acquire the willing agreement and informed consent of the members and adherents of that Congregation or Charge before he is installed as an Officer Bearer among them.

Appendix 2: Glossary.

Call: A formal invitation to an Office Bearer, or one whom the Presbytery intend to ordain to Office, to serve in a particular Congregation or Charge. This Call is extended by the local Session and/or the Presbytery, with the informed consent of the People in that Congregation or Charge (Acts 6:3-6; 13:1-4; 14:23; see Luke 19:14).

Charge: An area of responsibility in which an Office Bearer is put, or sent, to fulfil the duties of his Office. This may be in the local setting of a fixed Congregations, or in the broader setting of an itinerant Ministry within certain bounds. (Acts 13:1-4; 14:23; 1 Tim 1:3; Tit 1:5,12).

Congregation: A Fixed Congregation, as described in the Westminster Assembly's Form of Presbyterial Church-Government [FOPCG], "Of Particular Congregations" – "It is lawful and expedient that there be fixed congregations, that is, a certain company of Christians to meet in one assembly ordinarily for public worship. When believers multiply to such a number, that they cannot conveniently meet in one place, it is lawful and expedient that they should be divided into distinct and fixed congregations, for the better administration of such ordinances as belong unto them, and the discharge of mutual duties." (Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; Phile 2).

Fundamental qualifications for Office: The qualifications set down in such Scriptures as 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 which prescribes what character a man must have to hold Office in Christ's Church, as evidenced in his own life and conversation, in his marriage and family, and in the wider community. This includes the requisite gifts specific to the function of each Office in the Church.

Informed consent: Consent based upon a careful evaluation of the matter in hand in light of the applicable Scriptural Principles, and in light of the facts of the matter. Those persons being asked to give such consent must be given a reasonable amount of time, and provided with all the necessary information, in order to be able to make a considered decision. "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him" (Pro 18:13).

Installation: The formal connection of an Office bearer, who has already been ordained, to a particular Congregation or Charge. (Acts 13:2-4; 1 Tim 1:3; Tit 1:5,12). Sometimes referred as an Induction.

Office Bearer: A man bearing Office in Christ's Church, whether as a Minister, Governing Elder or Deacon (1 Cor 4:1-2; Eph 4:11; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1-13; 5:17; Tit 1:5-9; 1 Pet 5:1-4).

Ordination: Per the FOPCG, “Ordination is the solemn setting apart of a person to some public church office.” (Num 8:10,11,14,19,22; Acts 6:3,5,6).

Appendix 3: What constitutes a valid ordination?

It is essential to Office in the Church that the Office Bearer is Biblically qualified, that this qualification is attested to by the people and by the Elders of the Church, that he has been duly examined as to his fitness for Office, and as to his calling to that Office. The Elders of the Church must not proceed to Ordination unless or until the Ordinand’s calling and qualification is established and attested.

Extraordinary Circumstances.

It is lawful for a man to labour in the Office of the Teaching Elder fulfilling all of the responsibilities annexed to that Office, on the basis of the call of the people, if Ordination is not available to him (Acts 18:24-26). When valid Ordination is available to him he should submit to it, and seek to come under the oversight of a Biblically constituted Presbytery.

Recognition of the Office and or the Pastoral Ministry of Men.

Where a man has been set apart to the Pastoral Office by a Congregation according to the practice of that Congregation, notwithstanding the fact that he was not ordained after the pattern established in Scripture, he is to be recognised as legitimately fulfilling the Office within the bounds of that Congregation, and by extension within the bounds of Churches that it is associated with, provided that the fundamental principles of qualification for Office have been satisfied. Where such a man applies to the RPCAP, his qualifications and gifts having been established by the Presbytery he is to be ordained according to the Scriptural pattern.

Where a man was set apart to Office by the Elders of an independent congregation governed by a plurality of Elders, Biblical requirements otherwise having been satisfied, his Ordination is recognised as valid.

Invalid Ordination.

Where a person is evidently disqualified from Office at the time of Ordination, that Ordination is invalid (Judg 17:10-13; 1 Kings 12:31; 13:33; 2 Chr 11:15; 13:9; Eze 44:7-8; 1 Tim 2:11-12).

Where a man has been ordained according to the pattern of Scripture but is subsequently found to be disqualified from Office, he is to be deposed by the Elders, and from that point on he may not exercise any of the functions of Office in the Church (e.g. Judas; Demas; Rom 16:17-18; Tit 3:10-11).

Where the man is Biblically qualified for Office, but the setting apart to Office did not fulfil the fundamental principles and requirements set out in Scripture, the Presbytery is to proceed to Ordination after following due process.

Appendix 4: Material from the Sub-ordinate standards

The Westminster Confession of Faith [WCF], Chapter 27: Section 4, refers to “a minister of the Word lawfully ordained” (1 Cor 4:1; Heb 5:4) and WCF Chapter 28: Section 2, regard to the administration of Baptism, mentions “a minister of the gospel, lawfully called thereunto” (Matt 3:11; 28:19-20; John 1:33). The Westminster Larger Catechism [WLC], Answer 158 reads, “The Word of God is to be preached only by such as are sufficiently gifted (1 Tim 3:2,6; Eph 4:8-11; Hos 4:6; Mal 2:7; 2 Cor 3:6), and also duly approved and called to that office” (Jer 14:15; Rom 10:15; Heb 5:4; 1 Cor 12:28-29; 1 Tim 3:10; 4:14; 5:22).

The Westminster FOPCG gives the following summary of Biblical doctrine “Concerning the Doctrinal Part of Ordination of Ministers”:

1. No man ought to take upon him the office of a minister of the word without a lawful calling. (John 3:27; Rom 10:14,15; Jer 14:14; Heb 5:4)
2. Ordination is always to be continued in the church. (Tit 1:5; 1 Tim 5:21,22)
3. Ordination is the solemn setting apart of a person to some publick church office. (Num 8:10,11,14,19,22; Acts 6:3,5,6)
4. Every minister of the word is to be ordained by imposition of hands, and prayer, with fasting, by these preaching presbyters to whom it doth belong. (1 Tim 5:22; Acts 14:23; Acts 13:3)**
5. The power of ordering the whole work of ordination is in the whole presbytery, which, when it is over more congregations than one, whether those congregations be fixed or not fixed, in regard of officers or members, it is indifferent as to the point of ordination. (1 Tim 4:14)
6. It is agreeable to the word, and very expedient, that such as are to be ordained ministers be designed to some particular church, or other ministerial charge. (Acts 14:23; Tit 1:5; Acts 20:17,28)
7. He that is to be ordained minister, must be duly qualified, both for life and ministerial abilities, according to the rules of the apostle. (1 Tim 3:2-6; Tit. 1:5-9)
8. He is to be examined and approved by those by whom he is to be ordained. (1 Tim 3:7,10; 1 Tim 5:22)
9. No man is to be ordained a minister for a particular congregation, if they of that congregation can shew just cause of exception against him. (1 Tim 3:2; Tit. 1:7)
10. Preaching presbyters orderly associated, either in cities or neighbouring villages, are those to whom the imposition of hands doth appertain, for those congregations within their bounds respectively. (1 Tim 4:14)
11. In extraordinary cases, something extraordinary may be done, until a settled order may be had, yet keeping as near as possibly may be to the rule. (2 Chr 29:34-36; 2 Chr 30:2-5)
12. There is at this time (as we humbly conceive) an extraordinary occasion for a way of ordination for the present supply of ministers.

*[**Note: Regarding No.4, the view of RPCAP is that it is not only “preaching presbyters”, but also those presbyters who govern yet do not preach, ought to be ordained by the imposition of hands, and prayer, with fasting, and also ought to be equally involved in the ordination of other presbyters. Ordination is an act of government, and there is an equality in government between governing Elders and Ministers (2 Chr 19:8-10; 1 Tim 5:17).]*