

**Report of the Committee on Ministry
September 14-15, 2007**

In Response to the Action of the Presbytery of Grand Canyon at its June 9, 2007 Meeting

Background

The Presbytery of Grand Canyon approved at the March 16-17, 2007 Stated Meeting that the presbytery consider informally the Overture from the Session of the Kingman Presbyterian Church, received as an item of new business at its January 20, 2007 Annual Meeting, by engaging in a structured process of Mutual Invitation and Dialogue for at least both the March 16-17, 2007 and June 9, 2007 Stated Meetings.

The Kingman Overture reads as follows:

In its discernment of the essentials of Reformed polity and for the sake of the peace, unity, and purity of the church, the Presbytery of Grand Canyon adopts the principle that compliance with the standard for ordination adopted by the whole church in the *Book of Order* is an essential of Reformed polity. Therefore, any departure from the standards for ordination expressed in the *Book of Order* will bar a candidate from ordination and/or installation by this governing body. Provisions of the *Book of Order* are signified as being standards by use of the term “shall”, is/are to be, “requirement,” or equivalent expression.

At the June 9, 2007 Stated Meeting the Presbytery of Grand Canyon approved the following action:

Motion: In response to the Overture from the Session of Kingman Presbyterian Church and as the Presbytery continues discernment and dialogue on how best to respond in the matter of Ordination Standards and Presbytery Membership the Presbytery requests that the Committee on Ministry do the following for consideration of the Presbytery and report back at the September 14-15, 2007 Meeting:

1. Provide a summary of what takes place now and what our policies/practices are on the examination of both Candidates for Ministry and those already ordained who are transferring to the presbytery; and
2. Recommend changes to our policies, guidelines, practices, and processes designed to assist the presbytery in its obligation to gain a broader vision of each candidate’s or minister’s faith and manner of life and the presbytery’s responsibility to conduct such examinations reasonably, responsibly, prayerfully and deliberately.

In approving this Motion, the presbytery understands and affirms that:

1. we are not bringing the dialogue and discernment process to an end at this time;
2. nor are we presuming that the process will lead to a particular consensus or conclusion;
3. nor are we precluding a vote on the Kingman Overture itself should the presbytery wish to pursue it.

In response to the above request the Committee on Ministry (COM):

- spent the major portion of its June 26th meeting in discussion of the above assignment and appointed a task group consisting of Rev. Jim Noble (Desert Hills), Rev. Shelly Moe (Celebration of Life), Rev. Mary Saylor (Emmanuel), Elder Paul West (Palo Cristi) and Dick Coffelt (Stated Clerk/Ex-officio) to do further study/research and bring back specific recommendations responsive to the request of the presbytery for additional COM discussion and consideration;
- rescheduled its July 24th meeting to August 7th in order to give the task group time to do its work;
- spent the major portion of the August 7th meeting in further discussion of the task group’s study/research and drafted recommendations, and
- met again at its regular August 28th meeting to review the additional work done by the task group based upon COM’s previous discussions and finalized its report for presentation at the September 14-15, 2007 Stated Presbytery meeting.

In response to the Motion approved at the June 2007 meeting of Grand Canyon Presbytery, the Committee on Ministry (COM) recommends the following documents to Grand Canyon Presbytery:

- 1) Document C-6; which is a summary of the constitutional responsibilities of the presbytery and current practices of the Committee on Ministry (COM), the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) and the presbytery itself, with regard to the examination of those persons preparing for ordination to the office of Minister of Word and Sacrament, those persons preparing to become Commissioned Lay Pastors, and those persons who are already ordained Ministers who are seeking membership in Grand Canyon Presbytery. This document is intended for information purposes only. It speaks to part one of the request for information referred to COM by the Presbytery's Motion. It is hoped that this document will address some of the concerns that members of presbytery may have about the quality and the constitutionality of our current practice.
- 2) Document C-7; which is a proposal for some revisions to the current practices. Please note that all items which represent a change in, or addition to, current practice are presented in **bold type**. In reviewing current practice COM finds that there are a number of areas regarding the examination of candidates for membership in this presbytery which could be improved upon.
 - a. Current practice allows for a pastor to be serving in active ministry for several months before that person is examined by the presbytery. This leads to a perfunctory, "rubber stamp" sort of examination. It could potentially lead to serious problems if a pastor already functioning in a call were found to be unacceptable to the presbytery. Items 3 and 8 of C-7 attempt to address this concern.
 - b. Current practice does not require already ordained Ministers of Word and Sacrament to submit a statement of faith to the COM or to the Presbytery even though this is a common practice in many other presbyteries. Adopting such a practice would allow us to become acquainted with our colleagues in ministry on a much deeper level than is possible through the current examination process. It would provide Minister members with an opportunity to reflect on how their practice of ministry has influenced and shaped their theology. Item 4 of C-7 addresses this concern.
 - c. Current practice does not outline a process for a Minister of Word and Sacrament or a Candidate for ordination to register a "scruple" (exception) with provisions of the Constitution. The amended report of the Theological Task on Peace, Unity and Purity, approved by the 217th General Assembly (2006) has redirected our attention to this historic Presbyterian practice. Items 6, 7, 9, 10 and 11 of document C-7 suggest a process for the discussion of "scruples" (exceptions) which the COM believes is both fair and faithful to the Constitution.

It is now believed likely that if the wording of the Kingman Session Overture were the action adopted by the presbytery that it would ultimately be found to be an "irregularity" under *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)* according to the findings of similar court (i.e. Synod PJC) decisions. Therefore, COM recommends to Grand Canyon Presbytery document C-7 for a first reading at the September 14-15, 2007 Presbytery Meeting with proposed adoption at the November 3, 2007 Presbytery Meeting. If Document C-7 is approved by the Presbytery, the COM would then move that the Overture from the Session of Kingman Presbyterian Church be answered by the approval of Document C-7 "Examination for Membership Policy" (dated November 3, 2007) and that it be considered responsive to the concerns raised by the Kingman Session Overture.

This Report approved by the
Committee on Ministry at its August 28, 2007 meeting
for distribution to the Presbytery in the
Call to the September 14-15, 2007 Stated Meeting