

# Procedures for Considering Candidates and Ministerial Applicants

Presbytery of the United States of America

The following are rules of procedure for considering candidates desiring to prepare for the ministry, and also ministers or licentiates applying for admission from another ecclesiastical body.

## THE NEED FOR SPECIFIED PROCESS

There is need for rules of procedure which, while respecting the framework of existing Free Church legislation, take into account the situation in the United States by ensuring that successful candidates and applicants will have been immersed in the church's witness, testimony and identity. It is likely that most applications to this Presbytery will be from Americans who have no background in the Free Church of Scotland. Ensuring that candidates have a thorough acquaintance with our church's history, worship, theology and practice is essential for maintaining in the United States a long-term witness committed to the principles of the Free Church.

## CATEGORIES OF APPLICANTS

There are two distinct categories of applicants. 1. Candidates desiring to prepare for the ministry, and 2. Ordained ministers or licentiates applying for admission from another ecclesiastical body.

## CANDIDATES DESIRING TO PREPARE FOR THE MINISTRY

1. The applicant must have been a member in good standing in the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) for two years. The candidate must make application through his Session, on the form approved for the purpose by the Training of the Ministry and Admissions Committee. The Session, using the prescribed form, forward to the clerk of Presbytery a written testimony expressing satisfaction with the applicant's spiritual experience, general demeanour and reputation.
2. Presbytery must examine the applicant concerning his call to the ministry and possession of requisite gifts of personality, temperament and ability, and submit their report to the Training of the Ministry and Admissions Committee.
3. The Training of the Ministry and Admissions Committee shall then in accordance with Assembly legislation determine whether the applicant be granted recognition as a candidate for the ministry of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) and, if recognition be given, the Committee shall prescribe in accordance with Assembly legislation the precise course of studies to be followed. The Training of the Ministry and Admissions Committee shall also determine the standard which the candidate has attained in his studies, and if on completion of his studies the candidate has attained the required standard, the Committee shall issue the Completion Certificate required in order for the candidate to apply to the Presbytery for license.
4. During the years of training for the ministry, candidates are under the pastoral care of their Presbytery and when they have entered on specifically theological studies are, in

addition to the examinations of the Training of the Ministry and Admissions Committee, examined year by year by their Presbyteries in Scripture, theology and practical religion. Continuance of their candidacy depends on Presbytery being satisfied with the results of their examinations.

5. The candidate must at the beginning of the last year of his seminary education inform the Training of the Ministry and Admissions Committee of his intention to apply for license in this Presbytery. The Training of the Ministry and Admissions Committee will then inform the Presbyteries and Synods, and if no objection is received by 30<sup>th</sup> April, Presbytery may proceed to his trials for license.

6. Though during the course of their training, candidates for the ministry engage in public preaching from time to time at the invitation of the moderator or interim moderator of a Session, they are not formally licensed to preach until they have completed their prescribed studies, received from the Training of the Ministry and Admissions Committee certification that they have complied with the requirements of the Committee, and have passed examinations conducted by Presbytery. Trials for license will be conducted by Presbytery in the areas of English Bible, Hebrew, Greek, theology, apologetics, church history, practical religion, and in Free Church practice, church principles and history. The candidate will also be required to deliver a sermon to the Presbytery. The following written exercises are required: Either (a) Exercises prescribed by the Presbytery in Apologetics, Old Testament Exegesis, New Testament Exegesis, Church History and Systematic Theology or (b) At the Presbytery's discretion the three Free Church Seminary discourses may be received in lieu of three of the exercises specified in (a) above.

7. Once the candidate has satisfactorily completed his trials for license, given satisfactory answers to the questions required by the Act of Assembly and signed the Formula, he may be licensed by Presbytery. The probationer will then be eligible for a call to a pastoral charge.

8. If a candidate who has been licensed by this Presbytery receives and pursues a call within the bounds of the Presbytery of the United States of America, he will proceed to trials for ordination.

#### ORDAINED MINISTERS AND LICENTIATES APPLYING FOR ADMISSION FROM ANOTHER ECCLESIASTICAL BODY

1. Ordained ministers and licentiates applying for admission from another ecclesiastical body must have the following documents sent to the clerk of Presbytery: satisfactory evidence testifying that he is a minister or licentiate in good standing; the Application for Admission form approved by the Training of the Ministry and Admissions Committee; and two letters of reference.

2. Applicants who received their ministerial training elsewhere than our Free Church Seminary will be required to supplement their studies in Free Church practice, church principles and history, under the direction of Presbytery. When they have completed the supplementary studies, they will be examined by Presbytery in these areas. The supplementary studies directed by Presbytery are outlined in an appendix below.

Applicants will be examined by Presbytery in theology and the Westminster Standards, and in the areas of Free Church practice, church principles and history.

3. A report on these examinations will be forwarded to the Training of the Ministry and Admissions Committee, along with the Application for Admission form and related documents.

## EXAMINATIONS COMMITTEE OF PRESBYTERY

The Presbytery is faced with a logistical difficulty in conducting interviews and the thorough examination of candidates. The meetings of Presbytery are sometimes conducted by conference call. In order to maintain the role of all members of Presbytery in the examination of candidates, while also providing an adequate allotment of time necessary for a high standard of examination, the examinations will be conducted as follows.

1. An Examinations Committee will be comprised of all ministers and elders resident in the United States.
2. The Examinations Committee will hold meetings at a convenient location within the bounds of Presbytery, when the candidate will be examined and deliver a sermon. All members of Presbytery who are able to attend will have opportunity to participate in the examination of the candidate.
3. The Examinations Committee will forward to all members of Presbytery a full report of these examinations, along with a recording of the sermon delivered by the candidate for licensure.
4. Presbytery will review these materials and all other documentation associated with the candidate's application, and request that the candidate be present at a meeting of Presbytery, albeit by conference call. There will be a Presbytery meeting at which all members of presbytery will have opportunity to ask questions of the candidate. Afterwards the Presbytery will determine whether to sustain the candidate's examinations.
5. All examinations will be held privately.

## APPENDIX: REQUIRED SUPPLEMENTARY STUDIES

The following specifications are required of ordained ministers or licentiates applying for admission from another ecclesiastical body.

- A. Applicants are required to take a course in Free Church Practice supervised by the Presbytery Clerk.
- B. Applicants are assigned the following reading list:
  1. *The Practice of the Free Church of Scotland* (1995 edition).
  2. James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ* (2 vols.).
  3. William Cunningham, *Discussions on Church Principles* (chapters 1, 2, 7-13).
  4. William Cunningham, *Historical Theology* (Vol. 1, chapters 1, 2, 13; Vol. 2, chapters 26-27).
  5. Thomas M'Crie, *Statement of the Difference* (sections 6-8).
  6. *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Vol. 1, chapters 31-38; Vol. 2, chapters 26-34).

7. George N.M. Collins, *The Heritage of Our Fathers*.
8. Alexander Stewart and J. Kennedy Cameron, *The Free Church of Scotland, 1843-1910: A Vindication*.
9. Andrew Gray, *Catechism on the Principles and Constitution of the Free Church of Scotland*.
10. Murdoch Murchison and Iain H. Murray, *When Justice Failed in Church and State*.
11. *Declaration of Reconstitution of the Historic Free Church of Scotland*.
12. John Macleod, *Scottish Theology in Relation to Church History*.

C. On the basis of the above studies, Presbytery will examine the applicant in the areas of Free Church practice, church principles, and history, prior to the Presbytery sending the applicant's Application for Admission form to the Training of the Ministry and Admissions Committee.

D. A report on the results of this examination will be sent to the Training of the Ministry and Admissions Committee, along with the applicant's Application for Admission form. All information for consideration at the March meeting of the Training of the Ministry and Admissions Committee will be forwarded to the committee by the end of February.