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).