

The Ordination and Installation of a Minister

Book of Government §14-1A

The call from the congregation to the pastor, having been approved by the presbytery, the presbytery shall appoint a commission to ordain and install the pastor. At a date and time approved by the presbytery, a worship service shall be conducted. A sermon suitable to the occasion may be preached. Following the preaching of the Word, the person presiding may invite the elected candidate to come forward and stand facing him and the commission before the congregation. Having first prayed for God's continuing support and guidance upon the church and the candidate, the person presiding may give an account of the conditions necessary for serving as a pastor and of the importance of the pastorate in the life of the church, using words such as the following "Ordination Preamble":

The one, true and universal church is both invisible and visible. The Invisible Church, which will be the Church Victorious on the great day of Christ's return, is composed of all those who have throughout the ages belonged to Jesus Christ, claiming only him as Lord and Savior. The Visible Church is the church on earth, sometimes called the Church Militant. It is composed of all those in every place who profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and who, together with their children, submit to his law and lordship. The Visible Church is bound together in its essential unity where scriptural discipline is practiced, where the Word is rightly proclaimed, where the sacraments are properly observed, and where loving fellowship is maintained.

The evangelical church, as part of the Visible Church, believes the perfecting of the order of the Visible Church is best established where the scriptural doctrine of government by presbyters gathered in church courts is practiced. The Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ, has given three offices to the Church. These are: Ministers of the Word (known as Teaching Elders or Pastors), Ruling Elders, and Deacons. The particular church should prayerfully search the Scriptures and choose for officers those who are best qualified. These offices are not indications of special pre-eminence by those who hold them, but rather indicate a call to service, to ministry, to special discipleship and the evidencing of the fruit of the Spirit in every part of life.

According to Scripture, those who hold the office of Pastor should be sound in faith and have an aptitude for teaching. Their lives should reflect holiness and discipline that brings honor to Christ. The duties of the Pastor shall be to preach and expound the Word, to be God's prophet to the people, and the people's priest before God. As the law of love places certain duties upon each Christian, the Pastor is especially bound to fulfill those duties and to be an example to all.

The members of this congregation have elected you to this high office and you are now required to answer the prescribed questions.

For a candidate being ordained and installed and for one coming into the Evangelical Presbyterian Church from some other denomination, the person presiding shall propose the following questions:

1. Do you reaffirm your faith in Jesus Christ as your own personal Lord and Savior?
2. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, totally trustworthy, fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, the supreme, final and the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
3. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Catechisms of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?
4. Do you promise that if at any time you find yourself out of accord with the system of doctrine as taught in the Scriptures and as contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the

Catechisms of this Church, you will on your own initiative make known to your Presbytery the change which has taken place in your views since the assumption of this ordination vow?

5. Do you affirm and adopt the “Essentials of Our Faith” without exception?
6. Do you subscribe to the government and discipline of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church?
7. Do you promise subjection to your fellow Presbyters in the Lord?
8. Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to accept the office of the holy Ministry from love of God and a sincere desire to promote His glory in the Gospel of His Son?
9. Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in promoting the truths of the Gospel and the purity and peace of the Church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise to you on that account?
10. Will you seek to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all your duties as a Christian and a Minister of the Gospel, whether personal or relative, private or public; and to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your manner of life, and to walk with exemplary piety before the flock of which God shall make you overseer?
11. Are you now willing to take the charge of this church, agreeable to your declaration when accepting this call? And do you, relying upon God for strength, promise to discharge to it the duties of a Pastor?

For a candidate previously ordained in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church the following questions shall be asked:

1. Are you now willing to take the charge of this church, agreeable to your declaration when accepting their call? And do you, relying upon God for strength, promise to discharge to it the duties of a Pastor?
2. Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to accept the office of Pastor of this congregation out of love for God and a sincere desire to promote his glory in the Gospel of his Son in this place?
3. Do you promise to continue to be zealous and faithful in promoting the truths of the Gospel and the purity and peace of the Church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise to you on that account?
4. Will you seek to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all your duties as a Christian and a Minister of the Gospel, whether personal or relative, private or public; and to endeavor by the grace of God to adorn the profession of the Gospel in your manner of life, and to walk with exemplary piety before the flock of which God has made you overseer?

When the candidate has responded affirmatively to the questions, the person officiating shall address the following questions to the congregation:

1. Are you, the members of this congregation, ready to receive _____ as your Pastor?
2. Do you promise to submit to _____ in matters of spiritual discipline, and to receive with humility and love the word of truth?
3. Do you promise to support your Pastor with your prayers, to give encouragement in [his/her] work, and to assist [him/her] in every way as [he/she] seeks to instruct you in the things of the Lord and to lead you in the building of the Kingdom of God in this place?
4. Do you recommit yourselves to fulfill the terms of the call you have extended and to make provision for your Pastor’s needs that the name of Christ might be glorified?

When the congregation has responded affirmatively, the candidate may kneel and the members of the Commission may lay hands on him or her. In the case of a minister previously ordained in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, the laying on of hands may be omitted. A suitable prayer may be offered and the candidate set apart to the office of the Gospel ministry. At the conclusion of the prayer, the candidate shall stand and the person presiding may say:

By the authority of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church and the Presbytery of _____, I declare that _____ has been ordained to the Gospel ministry of this Church, and that [he/she] has been duly and properly installed as Pastor of this congregation, agreeable to the Word of God and the laws of this Church. As such [he/she] is entitled to be given support, encouragement, honor, and obedience in the Lord. In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. And now as a token of that support, we extend to you the right hand of fellowship.

All members of the Commission (and any other ruling and teaching elders present) may give the new pastor the right hand of fellowship. It is appropriate that a charge suitable for the occasion be given to the new pastor and to the congregation. The worship service may then conclude with a hymn of praise and the benediction. The Commission shall make careful account of the event and inscribe the occasion in its permanent records.