

Education and Candidacy

Chair: Rev. Aaron Greydanus
Reporter: Rev. Matthew Haan

III. Candidacy Committee

A. Materials

1. Candidacy Committee Report, pp. 225-241
2. Candidacy Committee Supplement Report

B. Privilege of the Floor: Susan LaClear, director of Candidacy, and to an additional member of the Candidacy Committee, if one is present.

C. Recommendations

1. That synod adopt the proposed revisions to the Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a and the corresponding changes to the Commissioned Pastor Handbook.

Note: Proposed additions are indicated by underline, and proposed deletions are indicated by ~~striketrough~~.

Proposed changes to Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a [final paragraph]

~~Commissioned pastor job descriptions related to the ministry of chaplaincy must be approved in consultation with Chaplaincy and Care Ministry. The mandate, characteristics, and guiding principles that define chaplains~~noncongregational ministers ~~ordained as ministers of the Word are applicable to chaplains~~commissioned pastors ~~ordained to noncongregational roles under Article 23. Commissioned pastor job descriptions related to the ministry of chaplaincy must be approved in consultation with Thrive.~~

Proposed changes to Commissioned Pastor Handbook, page 11

B. Special mention regarding ~~chaplaincy~~ noncongregational roles and the office of commissioned pastor

It bears special mention that ~~one of the most productive uses of the office of commissioned pastor has been~~can serve in the area of chaplaincy ~~and in other noncongregational roles.~~

From Church Order Supplement, Article 23-a:

~~Commissioned pastor job descriptions related to the ministry of chaplaincy must be approved in consultation with Chaplaincy and Care Ministry. The mandate, characteristics, and guiding principles that define chaplains~~noncongregational ministers ~~ordained as ministers of the Word are applicable to chaplains~~commissioned pastors ~~ordained to noncongregational roles under Article 23. Commissioned pastor job descriptions related to the ministry of chaplaincy must be approved in consultation with Thrive.~~

Proposed changes to Commissioned Pastor Handbook, page 27

For supervision of doctrine and life it ~~may be helpful~~ is important to specify in a letter of mutual covenant the frequency and nature of expected reports and visits to the calling church. Ministers of the Word and commissioned pastors who serve outside

the bounds of the local church, along with their calling churches, will be enabled to enjoy a meaningful relationship through such explicit statements of understanding. ~~Thrive The Office of Chaplaincy and Care Ministry~~ has a template for such a letter, called a “Covenant of Joint Supervision,” that can be used for commissioned pastor chaplains, and it is available on their website (on crcna.org search “Chaplaincy Covenant of Joint Supervision”). A more generalized “Covenant of Joint Supervision” template for noncongregational commissioned pastor roles can also be found on the stated clerk resources page of the crcna.org website (sites.google.com/crcna.org/statedclerks/resources-best-practices).

Ground:

This information has been directed specifically to chaplains, but it should be broadened to apply also to others who serve in any noncongregational roles in which there is joint supervision.

2. That synod adopt the proposed revisions to the Church Order Supplement, Article 24-a and 24-b and the corresponding changes to the Commissioned Pastor Handbook.

Note: Proposed additions are indicated by underline, and proposed deletions are indicated by ~~strikethrough~~.

Supplement, Article 24-a

~~Persons already ordained as~~ Commissioned pastors may serve in ~~be called to~~ positions of solo leadership in an established church only in specific circumstances. ~~Three of these circumstances were specified before 2019 in Church Order Articles 23-b, 23-c, and 23-d.~~

1. Commissioned pastors who are planting a church may continue to serve for “a reasonable period of transition” after the church becomes an organized congregation.
2. Commissioned pastors who serve in an organized church alongside a minister of the Word may, in exceptional circumstances, move into the senior/solo role if the minister of the Word leaves.
3. In unique ministry contexts a commissioned pastor may be called to serve in an organized congregation.

~~A fourth was adopted by Synod 2018:~~

4. Use of the commissioned pastor office as a “bridge” to becoming a minister of the Word (described in Article 24-b)

~~All four are now presented and~~ further explained in the Commissioned Pastor Handbook (sections IV, I ~~and J~~ C and D). ~~A classis may decide to make such appointments contingent upon implementation of a learning plan leading toward meeting the qualifications for minister of the Word, as described in Church Order Article 24-b.~~ In all cases in which a commissioned pastor serves in a solo leadership position in an emerging or organized church, it is mandatory that such a person, in cooperation with classis, shall develop and complete a contextualized learning plan for denominational orientation, adopted by classis and approved by the Candidacy Committee, as described in the Commissioned Pastor Handbook. A commissioned pastor who is called to serve in a solo or lead role in an organized church must meet the approval of classis and the concurrence of synodical deputies, who shall be present at the examination.

Supplement, Article 24-b

~~In various cases a~~ Persons already ordained as commissioned pastors who are called to serve in a solo/lead role in an organized church ~~shall may desire or be encouraged to~~ seek ordination as a minister of the Word, following the process prescribed in Article 6, including the required education. ~~Though not expected in all circumstances of persons serving as commissioned pastors, a plan toward candidacy as a minister of the Word may be beneficial for the pastor and the church.~~ The learning plan agreement shall be in place before calling a commissioned pastor to a solo/lead pastor role in an organized church. ~~Local ministries in partnership with their classis and synodical deputies may consider the advisability of constructing such a plan, and of using~~ The use of a renewable “term call” should be employed for such cases as a way to hold the commissioned pastor accountable to making progress in the plan.

Grounds:

- a. This route is increasingly used by churches to call individuals who have not yet been trained or ordained as commissioned pastors. In these situations, ordination comes before CRC-specific training, relational connection, or vetting. This does not align with the value our denomination places on ensuring that ordained clergy are well-trained and formed for ministry. This practice also tends to place undue stress on the classis, the church, and the individual who is entering ministry. The Candidacy Committee believes that specifying that this route is for persons “already ordained as commissioned pastors” would address these concerning issues.
- b. Specifying that this pathway is for those “already ordained” could also create and encourage opportunities for ordained commissioned pastors serving in associate positions to be considered for lead/solo roles if they are willing to commit to the process of “bridge ordination.”
- c. Synodical deputy concurrence is appropriate because of the significance of the role of a solo/lead pastor role in an organized church for the wider denomination (cf. Supplement, CO Art. 45, b. 2).
- d. Concurrence affirms and anticipates an increasing engagement with the denomination as laid out in the learning plan.
- e. This will serve to build broader confidence and provide consistent standards for the qualifications of the person in solo/lead roles.

B. Changes to the Commissioned Pastor Handbook

We propose that the text on pages 11-13 of the Commissioned Pastor Handbook be changed as follows (with additions indicated by underline and deletions by ~~striketrough~~):

Synodically approved rules for Article 24-a

There are three scenarios in which an individual who is already ordained as a commissioned pastor may be called to serve as a lead or solo pastor in an established church through the use of Church Order Article 24-a:

1. Commissioned pastors who are planting a church may continue to serve for “a reasonable period of transition” after the church becomes an organized congregation.
2. Commissioned pastors who serve in an organized church alongside a minister of the Word may, in exceptional circumstances, move into the senior/solo role if the minister of the Word leaves.

3. In unique ministry contexts a commissioned pastor may be called to serve in an organized congregation.

Regarding scenario 1 above:

Ordinarily, the office of commissioned pastors who serve in emerging congregations will terminate when a group of believers becomes an organized church. However, upon organization and with the approval of the newly formed council and the classis, commissioned pastors may continue to serve the newly organized church until an ordained minister of the Word is installed or until they have served the newly organized church for a reasonable period of transition. If the newly organized church desires to call the commissioned pastor to remain in this position beyond that period of transition, the commissioned pastor shall begin the process of Article 24-b "bridge ordination." ~~Commissioned pastors who continue to serve a newly organized congregation beyond this reasonable period of transition must seek the permission of classis with the concurrence of the synodical deputies.~~

Regarding scenario 2 above:

Commissioned pastors may also serve in organized congregations along with a minister of the Word and may serve as chaplains in institutional settings in the community. Commissioned pastors who have served an organized congregation along with a minister of the Word may, in exceptional circumstances, with the approval of classis and the concurrence of synodical deputies, continue serving that congregation as a solo pastor after the minister of the Word has left. In this scenario, the commissioned pastor shall begin the process of Article 24-b "bridge ordination."

Regarding scenario 3 above:

Commissioned pastors may be called to serve as solo pastors in organized congregations if the classis, with concurring advice of synodical deputies, ascertains that ~~such congregations are from a ministry context where the~~ standards for pastoral preparation required by Articles 6, 7, or 8 are not presently ~~practical~~ possible for one of the following reasons:

(a) The prescribed training is not offered in a language spoken by the commissioned pastor.

(b) The context is one that ~~The ministry context is ordinarily one in which cultural differences (e.g., ethnic, social, economic, educational, language) between the congregation and its ministry context on the one hand, and the dominant culture of the denomination as expressed in the seminary, other leadership development entities, and broader denominational life on the other hand (a) presents~~ significant obstacles to raising up Indigenous leadership in ways that are sustainable by the respective congregations and communities, and ~~(b) have this~~ has resulted in limited- or non-availability of competent Indigenous leaders trained for ministry via one of the prescribed routes for ministry of the Word.

It is obvious that great wisdom is needed in decisions regarding approval of a commissioned pastor for service as a solo or lead pastor in an organized congregation. In all three scenarios above, the deliberation of classis and the advice of synodical deputies are required. Terms used in these statements of synod have a purposeful flexibility allowing for a contextual decision.

A commissioned pastor who is called to serve in a solo or lead role in an organized church must meet the approval of classis and the concurrence of synodical deputies, who shall be present at the examination.

We propose that the text on pages 19- 20 of the Commissioned Pastor Handbook, be changed as follows:

The Candidacy Committee pondered this matter and proposed the following guideline, approved by synod: “At some point prior to any examination for ordination of a commissioned pastor being considered for a solo pastor position in an emerging or organized church, the classis must ascertain that a learning plan has been approved by the classis and agreed to by the Candidacy Committee, and synodical deputies must affirm through a written report that such approvals have taken place” (Acts of Synod 2017, p. 689).

~~Note also that the nature of the role of synodical deputies in this process is limited. A classis acts only to affirm that they have evidence that a learning plan has been formed and carried out in consultation with the Candidacy Committee. The synodical deputies concur only that such an action has taken place. In such cases, synodical deputies shall concur with classis on (a) the use of Article 24, (b) the job description of the commissioned pastor, and (c) the examination of the commissioned pastor candidate. It is conceivable, and likely, that such concurrence for the use and job description could be done via email and that the physical presence of the deputies at the classis meeting would be necessary only for concurrence on the examination. ~~is not required.~~ The concurrence of synodical deputies is intended to build broader confidence and provide consistent standards for examinations of persons serving in solo/lead roles. ~~The task of synodical deputy concurrence with the classis judgment of fitness for ministry is not required because commissioned pastors, as locally ordained servants, serve under the authority of the local classis, not the denomination.~~~~

Grounds:

- a. Grounds for the proposed changes to Church Order Supplement, Articles 24-a and 24-b also apply to these proposed changes to the Commissioned Pastor Handbook.
- b. Since Calvin Theological Seminary’s M.Div. and EPMC programs are available in distance learning format, it seems that in almost all of the “exceptional scenarios” listed in the Commissioned Pastor Handbook an encouragement should be added for the individual to move toward Article 24-b “bridge ordination.” The barriers of language and of very specific cultural contexts (scenario 3) would remain an exception.
- c. Synodical deputy concurrence is appropriate because of the significance of the role of a solo/lead pastor role in an organized church for the wider denomination (cf. Supplement, CO Art. 45, b. 2).
- d. Concurrence affirms and anticipates an increasing engagement with the denomination as laid out in the learning plan.

3. That synod affirm the process recommended by the Candidacy Committee for congregations to hire unordained individuals as temporary stated supply when no ordained candidate can be found to fill their solo/lead pastoral position (section VI).

4. That synod declare those persons listed in section I, A as candidates for ministry in the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Their names are as follows: Peter Urie Bae, Joseph Bartels, Tha Bawi, Kyle Beckrich, Rylan Brue, Josiah Chapman, Raymond Evans, Masao Fujishima, Julia Gho, Kanghyeon Heo, Kyo Chan Koo, Dylan Kern, Peter Kranenburg, Israel Ledee, Kevin Lobert, Caley Meza, Rachel Park, Christopher Smid, and Matthew Sun.

5. That synod approve the extensions candidacy as recommended in Candidacy Committee Supplement section I, B. Their names are as follows: Jeremiah Bašurić, Melissa Burmaster, David Kerkstra, Young Geol Lee, Charles Mutinga, Michelle Oh, Jonathan Sturrus, and Lorinda VanderWerp.

6. That synod approve the action of the Candidacy Committee in declaration of need for those persons listed in section II for affiliation under Church Order Article 8. Their names are as follows: Mavindi Mbuba, Jean Gomes, Soonhyuk Kwon, Kenneth Labbe, and Han-Sung Kim.