

Ordination Summary Sheet

for the Sovereign Grace Churches

(as reflected in the Second Edition of the Book of Church Order)

REQUIREMENTS FOR ORDINATION

The Second Edition of the *Book of Church Order* stipulates four requirements for the ordination process: (1) approval by the local church, (2) the completion of both the written and oral ordination examinations, (3) subscription to both the Sovereign Grace Statement of Faith and Sovereign Grace Polity as outlined in the Book of Church Order, and (4) approval by the Regional Assembly of Elders. These ordination procedures and processes will likely evolve as the new ordination standards are published by the Theology Committee and approved by the Council of Elders. Below is a summary of the current steps toward ordination.

STEPS TOWARD ORDINATION

STEP ONE: LOCAL CHURCH TRAINING AND APPROVAL

1. The local team of elders administers the procedures/process for determining a candidate's qualifications for eldership (BCO-9.3). This will vary from church to church. Local teams can request the Sovereign Grace Ordination Assessment Tool which will help in the evaluation process.¹ It would be helpful to inform the Regional Leader and the Regional Ordination Committee as soon as a man is officially being considered for eldership.
2. After the elders determine that a candidate is fit for potential eldership, members of the local congregation should have the opportunity to submit in writing observations, critiques, or affirmations regarding the candidate's fitness for ministry (BCO-9.2).²

STEP TWO: THE ORDINATION STANDARDS (EXAMS)

1. Upon completing the local requirements, the candidate must register with the local eldership and the Regional Assembly of Elders "*any and all reservations or disagreements he has with the Sovereign Grace Statement of Faith*" in writing (BCO-9.3.6). The local eldership is responsible to investigate any exceptions before presenting any candidate to the Regional Assembly of Elders (BCO-9.3.6).
2. The candidate must then complete the written and oral ordination examinations (administered by the Regional Ordination Committee). This process begins by the

¹ After the candidate completes the assessment, current elders can also complete the assessment tool evaluating the candidate and then the results can be compared and discussed. Contact the Ordination Chair for this tool.

² Helpful suggestions for elder-led/congregational involvement are contained within the BCO-9.2-3.

local church contacting both the Regional Leader and the Chair of the Regional Ordination Committee. The Ordination Chair will provide the candidate with a study guide for the written and oral examinations.

3. At the appropriate time [to be agreed upon by both the OC and the local church] the written ordination examination will be sent to the local church and will be proctored by an elder or representative of the local staff. The completed exam is then sent back to the Ordination Chair and a team of at least three graders will independently grade the exam. The scores will be tallied and averaged for a composite written score.

4. After the written exam has been completed the Ordination Chair will arrange for the candidate to take the oral ordination examination (unless the composite written exam score did not meet requirements). This examination will be attended by the candidate and three Sovereign Grace Elders on the Regional Ordination Committee. This examination will take place on selected dates unless otherwise agreed upon.³ The exam will not exceed 3 hours.

STEP THREE: REGIONAL ASSEMBLY OF ELDERS

1. Upon completion of the examinations the candidate must also appear before the Regional Assembly of Elders. The candidate is presented by the local church, and the Regional Ordination Committee will give testimony that the candidate has passed the written and oral exams. The candidate will receive approval by a simple majority vote after any 'necessary and relevant questioning' (BCO-9.3.6). If a man is approved by his local elders and has passed the Sovereign Grace Ordination Standards, then the Regional Assembly can reject him only for heterodoxy or for scandalous or serious sin.

2. If the Regional Assembly of Elders determine that the candidate can subscribe to the Statement of Faith,⁴ the candidate will then subscribe to the Sovereign Grace Statement of Faith and submit to the polity practices of Sovereign Grace as contained in the Book of Church Order by signing two copies of the avowal statement contained within the Book of Church Order (BCO-9.3.6).

STEP FOUR: ORDINATION SERVICE IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

1. After all these requirements are met, the local church publicly announces a date for an official ordination service (BCO-9.3.7).

2. The Regional Leader (or his representative) along with the local eldership will be present at the ordination service. The Regional Leader will commend the candidate

³ Unless circumstances necessitate special exceptions, oral examinations will take place at SG conferences, Regional gatherings, and Council of Elders meetings.

⁴ If the candidate has substantial differences that cannot be reconciled to the SG Statement of Faith, a representative from the Ordination Committee will recommend a course of doctrinal study that will address the situation (9.3.6).

to the congregation (BCO-9.3.9) and the local elders will ask both the candidate and the congregation to publicly affirm a series of questions as stipulated in the Sovereign Grace Book of Church Order (BCO-9.3.9).

3. The local elders and Regional Leader will lay hands on the candidate and publicly commend him to God through prayer.