Ordination Manual
Dear ECO Community,

I am so thankful for the countless individuals who have helped to create, refine, and implement an ordination process for ECO. We have already seen a number of exceptional candidates become ordained in ECO and have dozens of others who are under care in our presbyteries. While ECO is firmly committed to unleashing the laity in our congregations, we understand that lay empowerment will happen when we have ordained clergy who have the ability to pastor and lead well in the 21st century.

You may be reading this manual as a candidate, a potential candidate, or a leader of a congregation who is helping someone discern his or her potential future as a pastor in ECO. In whatever circumstance you find yourself, I am grateful that you are taking the time to orient yourself to our process.

ECO’s process is based upon principles that will help those to whom God is calling to pastoral ministry become as prepared as possible for pastoral work. We believe that a pastor needs to show readiness in three areas:

1. **A pastor needs to obtain the necessary knowledge required to lead a congregation.** This knowledge includes, but is not limited to, knowledge of Scripture, theology, polity, and appropriate application of his or her knowledge of these areas in various situations.

2. **A pastor needs to have necessary skills for ministry.** These skills include the ability to teach, preach, cast vision, disciple others, train people, develop leaders, and work with individuals and teams.

3. **A pastor needs to display spiritual maturity.** A pastor can have skills and knowledge, but without spiritual maturity, he or she will not be an effective pastoral leader. Spiritual maturity includes a person connection with the living God, as well as the display of a Christ-like character.

Some will say that ECO’s ordination process is easier than most because we do not require candidates to jump through many hoops. However, this could not be further from the truth. The reality is that we are trying to raise the bar on Christ-like character qualities that are present within our pastors.

I look forward to watching women and men be nurtured well in this ordination process as they prepare to lead congregations and other ministries toward God’s future for ECO.

In Christ,

[Signature]

Rev. Dr. Dana S. Allin
Synod Executive
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Overview of the Ordination Process

Pre-Application Phase:
Potential ordination applicants discern within their larger community whether or not they might feel called to pursue ordination in ECO. Discerning with their larger community should include conversations with their pastors, elders, peers with whom they have worked alongside in ministry, as well as those to whom they have ministered (See “Appendix 4 – Creating a Community of Discernment”).

Becoming an Ordination Applicant:
An ordination applicant is one who has filled out an application and submitted it to the ECO National Office. The application can be obtained by emailing office@eco-pres.org. A completed application includes:
- Application – Form #1
- Statement of Faith
- Philosophy of Ministry
- Background Check Authorization Form
- $25 fee for Background Check

Moving from Ordination Applicant to Candidate:
After the application has been submitted, the ECO National Office runs the necessary background check on the applicant. Once the background check is completed, the office then forwards the application and notification of background check clearance to the appropriate presbytery’s PMOT Chair.

The PMOT, or a representative group, will meet with the ordination applicant to determine whether or not they would like to receive the applicant under their care as a candidate. If there is a mutual agreement to have the ordination applicant enroll as a candidate for ordination, then Form #2 (see “Appendix 2 – Form #2”), “Candidate Acceptance for Ordination Applicant” is filled out and submitted to the ECO National Office by the PMOT representative. The applicant is then recognized as an official ECO Candidate.

The Candidacy Process:
While the candidate is under care of the local presbytery, it is the PMOT’s responsibility to ensure that the candidate obtains the appropriate education, training, spiritual development, and experience required for pastoral ministry. The PMOT will work with a candidate until he or she demonstrates the required competencies outlined in the
“Competencies for ECO Pastors” (See “Appendix 5 – Competencies for ECO Pastors”).

**Becoming Certified Ready to Receive a Call:**
Once a candidate completes the required exams and demonstrates necessary proficiency and maturity, the PMOT deems the candidate as ready to receive a call. Upon this decision, the PMOT fills out Form #3 (See “Appendix 3 – Form #3”), “Certified Ready to Receive a Call”. The candidate is then free to explore and/or formalize call opportunities.

**Ordination:**
Once a candidate has received a call and been approved for a call by the presbytery of jurisdiction (where the call is located), the candidate will be ordained. The ordination may occur either in the presbytery of call or the presbytery of care as the candidate desires. The Stated Clerk of the calling presbytery will then communicate to the ECO National Office that the individual has been ordained.

**Becoming an Ordination Applicant**

An ordination applicant is defined as an individual who has submitted a completed application to become a candidate in ECO. There are several components necessary to complete this application.

**Application:**
The application itself is also called Form #1 (See “Appendix 1 – Form #1). Along with routine data regarding the applicant, there are several other necessary elements to complete this form. These include:

- **Verification of a Community of Discernment** – The applicant needs to be working with a Community of Discernment. The community will help the individual determine whether if he or she should become a candidate for ordination within ECO. The Community of Discernment will walk alongside the candidate throughout his or her ordination process.
- **Application Questions**
- **Vocational Ministry Experiences and References** – The candidate shall have three references. At least one of those references should be an ECO Pastor.
- **Endorsement of candidacy from the applicant’s session** – Ordinarily, the candidate will come from an ECO Church. The candidate’s session shall meet with and determine whether or not to endorse the candidate. If the candidate is
not affiliated with an ECO Church, then another church may endorse the candidate. However, that church will likely need to be instructed about ECO and the requirements for congregational endorsement (See “Appendix 6 – Guidelines and Responsibilities for Congregational Endorsement”).

**Statement of Faith**
The Statement of Faith is used frequently by candidates as well as pastors who are seeking membership in a new presbytery. It is not expected that the ordination applicant will have a fully formed and mature Statement of Faith. Submitting a Statement of Faith as this point does however indicate where a candidate might be in understanding and adherence to classic Reformed faith.

The Statement of Faith is ordinarily one-page, single spaced, and addressed the following topics: an understanding of the Triune God, a statement on the individual persons of the Trinity, creation, fall and sin, atonement, justification by faith, the church and its mission, the sacraments, the second coming, and glorification.

**Background Check Authorization Form:**
The candidate must provide both the written authorization form for the nationwide background check, along with the $25 fee to cover the cost of the background check. If there is any potential criminal history, it is recommended that the applicant submit a statement of explanation about such history along with his or her application.

The entire application and documents are to be emailed to the ECO National Office at office@eco-pres.org. Email is our preferred method of application submission. Alternatively, the application and documents can be mailed to the office at:

ECO
Attn: Application Team
5638 Hollister Ave Suite 210
Goleta, CA 93117

**Moving from Ordination Applicant to Candidate Status**

After the application has been submitted, the ECO National Office runs the necessary background check on the applicant. Once the background check is completed, the office then forwards the application and notification of background check clearance to the appropriate presbytery’s PMOT Chair. The applicant should hear from a
representative from the PMOT Chair within two weeks of the date that the application is submitted to the ECO National Office.

A representative from the PMOT will connect with the candidate to schedule an interview with the PMOT or an authorized group from the PMOT. The PMOT may ask for additional information prior to the interview. The PMOT may also require that the candidate’s psychological assessment be administered prior to the interview.

During the interview, the PMOT will explore the candidate’s Statement of Faith, education, experience, sense of call to ECO, spiritual maturity, and willingness to submit to the oversight and care of the PMOT.

The PMOT, or authorized group from the PMOT, may take one of the following three actions with the candidate:

1. The PMOT may **deny** the applicant’s admission to candidacy under the PMOT. If the PMOT chooses to deny the applicant, they shall inform the ECO National Office of such decision in writing.
2. The PMOT may **delay** a decision on the admission of the applicant to candidacy status with the PMOT. They may do this if there is more information needed to make a determination on a candidate. If the PMOT believes a decision on the candidate’s application will take longer than three to four months, they shall inform the ECO National Office of such a decision so that a note can be made in the candidate’s file.
3. The PMOT may accept the applicant to candidacy status. If the PMOT chooses to accept the candidate, the presbytery should submit a completed Form #2 (See “Appendix 2 – Form #2”), “Candidate Acceptance for Ordination Applicant” to the ECO National Office via email, as well as to the candidate.

Once the ECO National Office receives Form #2 from the PMOT representative, the applicant is officially a candidate for ordination in ECO.

**Candidacy Process**

**The Goal and Philosophy of the Candidacy Process:**
The goal of the candidacy process is to ensure that all future pastors demonstrate proficiency and maturity in the 10 competencies of an ECO Pastor (See “Appendix #5 –
Competencies for ECO Pastors”). These competencies are related to the pastor’s spiritual maturity, biblical and theological acuity, and skills for ministry.

The candidacy process is a mixture of standard universal elements but also takes into account the unique experience, needs, and calling of an individual candidate. Some candidates will have limited biblical education and experience. Therefore, they will need to complete significant work to rise to the level of proficiency and maturity in the various competencies. Some candidates may have done significant theological study and/or are transferring from the ordination process of other denominations. They may perhaps even already be ordained in another tradition. These candidates may be proficient in many of the competencies necessary and perhaps need focused attention in a few specific competencies. The PMOT is to evaluate the candidate and help the candidate design an appropriate action plan to enhance his or her proficiency in various needed competencies.

Creating a Development Plan:
When a competency area is lacking, the PMOT, along with the candidate, should determine the appropriate course of action to gain the required competency. Candidates cannot appropriate address all competencies at once. A conscious decision should be made to focus on a select few competencies. Candidates may gain proficiency and competency in a variety of ways including formal or informal educational opportunities, mentoring, ministry experience, spiritual direction and development, counseling, etc.

Annually, the candidate and the PMOT should develop a plan that ensures development in the required areas (See “Appendix 8 – Sample Candidate Development Plan”).

Standard Universal Requirements:
There are several standard and universal required requirements for candidates during their candidacy process.

Exams:
There are four exams required of candidates in the ECO ordination process. The first exam that is to be taken is a Bible Knowledge Exam. This exam is ordinarily taken at the beginning of a candidate’s process and ensures that the candidates have an in-depth working knowledge of the Scriptures, both individually and as a whole. This exam is a mixture of 100 multiple choice questions.
Near the end of a candidacy process, a candidate takes three written ordination exams over a one- to two-week period. The cost of the exams is $200, which covers the time and expense of the graders. The three exams are:

1. **Exegesis** – In this exam, the candidate writes a ten- to thirteen-page paper, as well as a one- to two-page outline of a sermon that would be preached on the passage. This exam tests a candidate’s ability to exegete a passage of Scripture in context.

2. **Polity and Missional Strategy** – In this exam, the candidate is given three real life scenarios and asked to respond to each of the scenarios appropriately in light of ECO Polity. Candidates must also respond pastorally and in such a way that will move the mission of God forward.

3. **Theology and Worship** – In this exam, candidates are given three real life scenarios and asked to respond. This exam demonstrates the candidate’s understanding and application of the theology of ECO, including ECO Confessional Standards and ECO Essential Tenets.

**Grading of the Exam:**
The three exams are submitted together to the ECO National Office and graded by two graders that are not members of the candidate’s presbytery. This exam process is designed to assess the candidate’s overall pastoral and theological abilities, as well as his or her perceived strengths in each of core competencies (See “Appendix 5 – Competencies for ECO Pastors”).

Candidates do not receive alphanumeric grades. Rather, they will be assessed using the terms *Outstanding, Satisfactory, or Needs Improvement*. Candidates and their PMOTs receive written comments from the graders along with an overall assessment. In addition, an assessment in each core competency regarding the candidate’s perceived strengths and weaknesses for pastoral ministry in ECO will be included.

**Psychological Evaluations:**
It is strongly recommended that PMOTs have candidates receive a psychological evaluation. There are a variety of options available for psychological evaluations that range in scope and cost. PMOTs may have some candidates take a more in-depth evaluation than other candidates. PMOTs may also have a candidate’s spouse included in the evaluation as well, in order to determine ways in which a candidate’s family life can be strengthened as they enter into the demands and pressures of ordained ministry.
In some cases, candidates will have other experiences that fulfill the need for a psychological evaluation. For example, most church planter assessments have a psychological or emotional health component as part of the assessment. PMOTs may allow such assessments to take the place of an additional psychological assessment.

Peer Review Groups:
Two of the core words within ECO are Covenant and Order. Ordained pastors are committed to living in covenant community with one another. This habit of community begins when a candidate is preparing for ordination. Each candidate should be in a covenant group with other candidate. In this covenant group, he or she can develop the practice of creating accountable connections with one another and developing a personal pastoral rule for his or her own life. The candidate should use “Appendix 9 – Guidelines for Creating Pastoral Covenant Groups” to create a covenant group.

Ideally, a covenant group of candidates should have a mentor pastor who is guiding the candidates. A mentor is not always possible to obtain but can be very helpful in the development of emerging pastors.

PMOTs have flexibility as to how candidates develop and form their various covenant groups. The needs and ability for such groups may change drastically depending on the situation. It is the PMOT’s responsibility, however, to ensure that the candidate is living out of the spirit and intention of a peer review group.

Educational Requirements:
ECO Polity states (Section 2.04) that a pastor will ordinarily have “a master’s degree from an accredited theological seminary in biblical or theological studies.” The intention of this requirement is that pastors will have a master’s level understanding of the Scriptures and Reformed theology. This expectation is also articulated in “Appendix 5 – Competencies for ECO Pastors”.

There are several ways a person may fulfill educational requirements. The most obvious and frequent way is by obtaining a master’s degree. For example, a candidate could choose to seek a Master of Divinity degree. However, a candidate may have completed the requirements for a less intensive two-year master’s degree in Biblical Studies and therefore may be qualified for ordination. Some candidates, through significant experience and wide study, may also fulfill the requirements as well.
Ministry Experience:
Candidates for ministry should not only have ministry experience prior to entering into the candidacy process, but they should have significant ministry experience while they are in the candidacy process. PMOTs should be in consultation with the candidate’s supervisor in ministry. The PMOT and the supervisor can help evaluate the candidate’s strength and weaknesses as well as design experiences that will help candidates grow in their ministry capacities.

Other Requirements:
The PMOT may have other requirements for all candidates, or particular requirements for individual candidates based upon the person’s needs. Examples of such requirements may include things like developing a philosophy of ministry, preaching a sermon for a committee, or participating in specialized or specific study.

**Becoming Certified Ready to Receive a Call**

When a candidate has completed the requirements for ministry, including demonstrating the required maturity and proficiencies that are dictated in the established competencies, the candidate may be deemed ready to receive a call. The PMOT shall determine the process by which a candidate is ready to receive a call. This process ordinarily will include a final oral examination by the PMOT or an authorized group from the committee.

When a candidate is certified ready to receive a call, the presbytery shall fill out Form #3 (See “Appendix 3 – Form #3”), “Certified Ready to Receive a Call”. This form is submitted via email to the ECO National Office. They will ensure that a background check has been completed and all previous forms have been submitted.

Once the candidate is ready to receive a call, the candidate may request that his or her information stays on file with the ECO National Office and is made available to the Ministry Partnership Team (MPT) of all presbyteries and given to all congregations who are searching for various positions.

**Ordination**

A candidate who is ready to receive a call is then able to begin the process of searching for a call. As a call begins to form, the candidate will need to work with the
Ministry Partnership Team (MPT) of the presbytery in which he or she might be ordained.

Once a call has been issued to the candidate and confirmed by the presbytery of call, the candidate will then be able to be ordained. The ordination of the candidate may occur in the presbytery of call or the presbytery of care as desired by the candidate. The ordaining presbytery shall ensure with the ECO National Office that the candidate is indeed certified ready to receive a call with a completed Form #3 on record. The ordaining presbytery shall also ensure that the candidate has indeed received a call and has been accepted into the presbytery of call, pending ordination.

After the service of ordination, the ordaining presbytery shall communicate in writing via email to the ECO National Office that the individual has been ordained, along with the date of ordination and if applicable, the name of the congregation that they will serve. Assuming the required paperwork is in order with ECO National Office, the candidate will be moved to “pastor status” within the ECO database and will be placed on the ECO website.
Appendix 1 – Form #1

APPLICATION: CANDIDATE FOR ORDAINED PASTORAL MINISTRY

Name of applicant: ___________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________
       (Last)                 (First)                   (Middle Initial)
Mailing address: ___________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________
       (Street)             (City)                  (State)               (Zip)
Physical address: ___________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________
       (If same as mailing, write ‘same’)  (Street)             (City)                  (State)               (Zip)
Preferred phone: ___________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________
       Check type (cell) / home / office)                  Check type (cell) / home / office)
Email: ________________________________________________

Name of church where you are a Covenant Partner/Member: ________________________________________________

Is this an ECO or Fellowship Church?  Yes _____ No _____

When did you become a Covenant Partner/Member of the Church?

Church address: ___________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________
       (Street)             (City)                  (State)               (Zip)
Are you currently working or volunteering at a church?  Yes _____ No _____

If yes, what is the name of the church and your position? ________________________________________________  /  ________________________________________________

Church address: ___________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________
       (Street)             (City)                  (State)               (Zip)

Present or most recent school attended: ________________________________________________

Location: ___________________________  Date of graduation: _____________  Degree: _____________

I hereby apply to be enrolled as a candidate in: ________________________________________________
       (ECO presbytery name)

Community of Discernment

Please list the members of your Community of Discernment who have already been and will continue to walk with you through your ordination process (See page 5 of the Ordination Manual for more details):

Name/Title: ___________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________
       (Last)                 (First)                   (Title)               (Phone)                 (Email)
Name/Title: ___________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________
       (Last)                 (First)                   (Title)               (Phone)                 (Email)
Name/Title: ___________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________
       (Last)                 (First)                   (Title)               (Phone)                 (Email)
Name/Title: ___________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________
       (Last)                 (First)                   (Title)               (Phone)                 (Email)
**Applicant Questions**
These questions should first be discussed with your Community of Discernment as stated in the ECO Ordination Manual. Please answer completely and submit with your application on a separate page.

1) What gifts for ministry do I see in myself, and how am I faithfully exercising and developing those gifts?
2) What ministries have I been involved with, and who can affirm that gifts for fruitful ministry are evident in my life?
3) Where have I been drawn to serve in my local church, and how have I responded to that sense of call? If not currently serving, begin exploring where you can use your gifts at the church and start serving in those places.
4) Am I currently part of a small group or small community of people with whom I give permission to speak into my life? If not, why not? And what next steps can I take to get involved with others with whom I am sharing my life?

**Vocational Ministry Experience and References**
Please solicit recommendations from each of your supervisors at all of the ministries in which you worked or volunteered (listed below). Please list additional ministry experiences and references on a separate page:

Name of Ministry: __________________________ Dates involved: __________________________
Name/Title of Supervisor: __________________________ Reason(s) you left: __________________________
Contact Information for Ministry and Supervisor: __________________________

Name of Ministry: __________________________ Dates involved: __________________________
Name/Title of Supervisor: __________________________ Reason(s) you left: __________________________
Contact Information for Ministry and Supervisor: __________________________

Name of Ministry: __________________________ Dates involved: __________________________
Name/Title of Supervisor: __________________________ Reason(s) you left: __________________________
Contact Information for Ministry and Supervisor: __________________________

Please place an “x” on any line that applies to you:
____ I certify that no civil, criminal, ecclesiastical complaint has ever been sustained or is pending against me.
____ I am unable to make the above certification. I offer instead on the attachment a description of the complaint and/or outcome of the situation with explanatory comments.

I certify that the above statement and other information in this application are true and correct. If approved to be a candidate for ordained pastoral ministry, I promise in reliance upon the grace of God to participate diligently and wholeheartedly with the session of my sponsoring church, the presbytery’s Pastoral Ministry Ordination Team and my Peer Review group in matters that concern my preparation for ordained ministry.

Applicant’s signature: __________________________ Date: __________________________
Supplemental Forms:
Please complete the following documents and submit along with the application:

**Statement of Faith**
Please submit a one-page Statement of Faith.

**Essential Tenets of the Reformed Faith**
Please complete a statement of your commitment to the *Essential Tenets of the Reformed Faith*.

**Philosophy of Ministry**
Please complete a Philosophy of Ministry dealing with your experience in ministry, sense of calling, gifts for ministry and areas of needed growth.

**Background Check Authorization Form**
Please include the $25 background check fee if you are paying via check. If you prefer to submit payment via credit card, please make sure that you first submit all documents and then call ECO’s Financial Administrator, Shelby Goss, at 805-201-9019 to pay via credit/debit card.

**Applicant Agreement and Signature:**
I certify that everything I have submitted in this application is true and correct. I further certify that any documents that I was supposed to create were created by me and not by someone else. It is my desire to become an ECO Candidate for Ordained Pastoral Ministry.

Applicant’s signature: ___________________________ Date: __________________

**Session Evaluation and Recommendation:**

The session of ___________________________, ___________________________, ___________________________

(Name of Church) (City) (State)

recommends ___________________________ for candidacy and application process.

(Name of Applicant)

______________________________
(Signature of Clerk of Session or Session Representative) (Date)
Application Completion Checklist:

Below is a checklist that might be helpful to you when ready to submit your application.

☐ Application Itself
☐ Applicant Questions #1-4
☐ Statement of Faith
☐ Philosophy of Ministry
☐ Background Check Authorization Form
☐ Background Check Payment (Please submit all documents first before making the payment).
  - Submit payment either by sending a check to the ECO office or calling ECO’s Financial Administrator, Shelby Goss, at 805-201-9019 to pay via credit/debit card.

Submission:

When submitting documents, please scan and email them to office@eco-pres.org (email is our preferred method).

Alternatively, you can mail the documents to:
ECO
Attn: Skye Stevenson
5638 Hollister Ave Suite #200
Goleta, CA 93117
CONFIDENTIAL

Background Check Authorization

Print Name: ____________________________
(First) (Middle) (Last)

Former Name(s) and Dates Used:

Current Address Since:
(Mo/Yr) (Street) (City) (Zip/State)

Previous Address From:
(Mo/Yr) (Street) (City) (Zip/State)

Previous Address From:
(Mo/Yr) (Street) (City) (Zip/State)

Social Security Number: ____________ DOB: ____________

Telephone Number: ____________________________

Driver’s License Number/State: ____________________________

Background Questions for Candidates and Potential Pastors

Have you ever been the subject of official discipline by a Session or Presbytery? Yes ☐ No ☐

Is any official disciplinary action pending at the present time? Yes ☐ No ☐

Have you ever been the subject of official disciplinary proceedings by another denomination that resulted in disciplinary action? Yes ☐ No ☐

Are any official disciplinary proceedings by another denomination pending at the present time? Yes ☐ No ☐

Have you ever renounced jurisdiction of any church or denomination to avoid disciplinary action? Yes ☐ No ☐

Has a civil lawsuit, criminal charge, or official ecclesiastical complaint been filed against you for sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation or misconduct, physical abuse, child abuse or financial misconduct? Yes ☐ No ☐

Have you ever been convicted of a felony? Yes ☐ No ☐

Has your employment ever been changed because you attempted or actually engaged in:

Sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation or misconduct? Yes ☐ No ☐
Physical abuse? Yes ☐ No ☐
Child abuse? Yes ☐ No ☐
Financial misconduct? Yes ☐ No ☐
Has your employment ever been changed in order to avoid facing or to avoid being terminated because of charges of actual or attempted:
  Sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation or misconduct? Yes □ No □
  Physical abuse? Yes □ No □
  Child abuse? Yes □ No □
  Financial misconduct? Yes □ No □

Have you ever been placed on administrative leave in your employment? Yes □ No □

FOR ANY "YES" ANSWERS, PLEASE PROVIDE EXPLANATION ON SEPARATE PAGE.

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I hereby authorize ECO and its designated agents and representatives to conduct a comprehensive review of my background causing a consumer report and/or an investigative consumer report to be generated for employment and/or volunteer purposes. I understand that the scope of the consumer report/investigative consumer report may include, but is not limited to the following areas: verification of social security number; credit reports, current and previous residences; employment history, education background, character references; drug testing, civil and criminal history records from any criminal justice agency in any or all federal, state, county jurisdictions; driving records, birth records, and any other public records.

I further authorize any individual, company, firm, corporation, or public agency (including the Social Security Administration and law enforcement agencies) to divulge any and all information, verbal or written, pertaining to me, to ECO or its agents. I further authorize the complete release of any records or data pertaining to me which the individual, company, firm, corporation, or public agency may have, to include information or data received from other sources.

ECO and its designated agents and representatives shall maintain all information received from this authorization in a confidential manner in order to protect the applicants personal information, including, but not limited to, addresses, social security numbers, and dates of birth.

Signature: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

Notice to California, Minnesota, and Oklahoma Residents:
Please check the box below if you wish to receive a copy of a consumer report that is requested.
☐ I wish to receive a copy of any Background Check Report that is requested on me.

Privacy Act Notice
Authority: 49 U.S.C. §114 authorizes the collection of this information. This statute applies only to the gathering and retention of information by federal authorities. ECO is not a federal authority.

HOWEVER - multiple states and other jurisdictions also require a notice of privacy for certain personal information retrieved and stored that includes social security numbers or identification. This notice discloses to you the use of this information and its purpose for all jurisdictional requirements.

Purpose: ECO will use this information to conduct a background assessment on certain employees who may have access to confidential information and other persons called to and ordained as pastors in ECO.

Routine Uses: The information will be used by and disclosed to churches and affiliated church ministries in the selection and/or approval of persons for employment or ordination.

Disclosure: Furnishing this information (including your SSN) is voluntary; however, failure to furnish the requested information may delay or prevent the completion of your background assessment, which may prevent or delay your employment or pastoral ordination.
Form #2: Candidate Acceptance for Ordination Applicant

| The Presbytery of: (Presbytery Name) | Accepts the ordination applicant, to become an official Candidate for ordained pastoral ministry and to continue forward in the ECO ordination process. |
| ____________________________ | ____________________________ |
| (Applicant Name) | (Signature) |
| (Date) | |

To be received by: The ECO National Office and Candidate

Appendix 2 – Form #2
Form #3: Certified Ready to Receive a Call

To be received by: The ECO National Office and Candidate

The Presbytery of _______________________ approves
(Presbytery Name)

________________________________________
(Candidate Name)

as ready to receive a call.

PMOT Representative: ________________________  _________
(Signature)  (Date)
Appendix 4 – Creating a Community of Discernment

In ECO, we believe that when someone enters a process to prepare for ordination, that person needs to have the support, encouragement, and wisdom of a Community of Discernment. A Community of Discernment is a group of people who deeply love and care for the candidate and who have the ability to speak the truth in love into the candidate’s life. The Community of Discernment may not be people who all know each other, and they may not physically meet together as a group. However, the Community of Discernment should be in regular contact with the candidate individually and may engage in collective conference calls with the candidate.

Prior to entering the ordination process, the potential candidate should form a Community of Discernment. The Community of Discernment is the potential candidate’s “inner circle”. This group will ordinarily be at least five individuals and include: his or her spouse (if applicable), pastor, a member of the leadership of his or her home church, a person who has benefitted from his or her ministry, and a couple of close spiritual friends. There may be people added to the Community of Discernment after the individual becomes a candidate. These people could include a member or liaison from the PMOT and/or people from the potential’s candidate new ministry context.

Prior to the individual becoming a candidate:
In order for the individual to become an ECO Candidate, he or she must form a Community of Discernment. This community should engage with the individual to help discern if the individual should seek to become a candidate for ministry in ECO. In addition, the leadership of the candidate’s congregation will need to endorse the candidate. However, depending upon the dynamics of the congregation, the leadership board will not have as much intimacy with the candidate as the Community of Discernment. Therefore, the Community of Discernment should also ensure that the individual is ready to become a candidate by focusing on three specific areas:

1. **Aptitude, Calling, Gifting, and Fruitfulness in Ministry** – The community should ask if the potential candidate has been involved in significant ministry and if it has been fruitful. This experience doesn’t have to be in a paid capacity, however the experience in ministry should have involved significant opportunities to teach, disciple, and lead others.

2. **Spiritual and Personal Maturity** – The following questions should be asked: Does the potential candidate have a growing relationship with the Lord and
continue in habits that contribute to that growth? Does the candidate possess maturity when working with others?

3. **Biblical and Theological Competency** – The potential candidate will continue to grow in his or her knowledge of Scripture and theology during the ordination process. However, the candidate should already possess a depth of understanding of Scripture and have a personal theology that is consistent with the Reformed tradition.

If the individual does not yet demonstrate a baseline quality in these three areas, the Community of Discernment should encourage the candidate to grow in knowledge, experience, and spiritual maturity. The Community of Discernment may also feel that the individual is called in a different direction and will want to work with the individual accordingly.

If the Community of Discernment does feel the individual should pursue a call to ministry, then they may continue to support the candidate during his or her ordination process.

**Supporting a candidate during his or her ordination process:**
The Community of Discernment should regularly be in contact with the candidate and support the candidate in the following ways:

- Find out the specific needs of the candidate and continue to list those needs in prayer.
- Help the candidate process his or her experiences in ministry.
- Walk the candidate in his or her own spiritual growth as appropriate.
Appendix 5 – Competencies for ECO Pastors

Presbytery Ministry Ordination Teams (PMOT) are tasked with overseeing the development of ECO’s future pastors. Rather than simply assuming that obtaining a particular degree will ensure the development of the right kind of pastor, ECO seeks to identify the qualities and characteristics that should be developed prior to an individual being ordained. There is considerable work that needs to be done to fully articulate and shape these qualities. In this document are the ten preliminary qualities that PMOTs will be using to both evaluate candidates, as well as guide those candidates in their continued development.

ECO wants to ensure that the whole of a leader is developed and is not simply an increase in knowledge or the development of skills. These 10 Core Competencies therefore can be articulated into three broader categories of “BE–KNOW–DO”.

- **BE** – Are the competencies associated with the character and integrity of a leader in his or her relationship with God and with others? Competencies #1 and #2 could be classified as the “BE competencies”.
- **KNOW** – Are the competencies associated with what a leader knows intellectually and is able to apply in various situations? Competencies #3-#5 are related more closely to a candidate’s knowledge.
- **DO** – Are the competencies associated with a leader’s skill and ability? Competencies #6-#10 are related primarily to what a leader is able to do.

**Competency #1 – Maturity of Faith and Personal Call** – The extent to which the leader has an intimate and personal relationship with the Triune God that is continually formed through a variety of practices.

**Competency #2 – Personal Integrity** – The extent to which the leader’s actions and attitudes are consistent with the desires of God and the example of Jesus.

**Competency #3 – Biblical Knowledge and Interpretation** – The extent to which the leader understands the entire Bible and has the ability to study and apply Scripture appropriately.

**Competency #4 – Theological Knowledge** – The extent to which the leader understands, embraces, and is able to apply both the core of the Christian faith as well as the Reformed faith of ECO as expressed in *ECO Essential Tenets* and *ECO Confessional Standards*. 
Competency #5 – Polity Knowledge and Application – The extent to which the leader understands ECO Polity and ECO’s ethos and values, as well as his or her ability to appropriately apply this knowledge in various situations.

Competency #6 – Sacramental Knowledge and Practice – The extent to which the leader understands the sacraments from a Reformed perspective and is able to celebrate those sacraments in appropriate circumstances and contexts.

Competency #7 – Missional Engagement – The extent to which the leader is able to take the incarnational posture of Christ into a surrounding context to bring about transformation in the Kingdom.

Competency #8 – Leadership Development – The extent to which the leader is able to help others determine their giftedness and calling, as well as his or her ability to help others develop greater competency.

Competency #9 – Team Leadership – The extent to which the leader is able to work with and lead others (both individually and corporately) who has a variety of gifts, personalities, and experiences.

Competency #10 – Preaching – The extent to which the leader can preach both topically and exegetically in ways that are true to the meaning of the scriptures, as well as clear, winsome, well-organized, and contextually appropriate.
Appendix 6 – Guidelines and Responsibilities for Congregational Endorsement

As someone senses that God may be calling him or her to ordained ministry, his or her sending congregation has a huge privilege and responsibility in the discernment and development process. ECO asks the leadership of the congregation to prayerfully and intentionally engage in the discernment process with the potential candidate.

When an individual is applying to become a candidate for ministry in ECO, the leadership of his or her congregation must endorse him or her in that process. Further, the endorsing congregation has the responsibility to continually engage with the individual as he or she goes through the process.

This document contains information that will help the leadership of the congregation discern whether or not someone is ready to engage in the ordination process. In addition, it outlines the candidate’s responsibilities throughout the process.

Determining the suitability of an individual to enter ECO’s candidacy process:
An individual will begin to sense God’s call to ordained ministry. This sense of call may begin in the soul of the individual or through the recognition of gifting by those in the person’s community. While the potential candidate for ministry will continue to discern during his or her process of ordination, the potential candidate should display some basic qualities and characteristics that demonstrates readiness to begin the process toward ordained ministry. The leadership of the congregation should confirm that these character qualities are present prior to endorsing the candidate and encouraging him or her to engage in the process.

1. Aptitude, Calling, Gifting, and Fruitfulness in Ministry – The community should ask if the potential candidate has been involved in significant ministry and if it has been fruitful. This experience doesn’t have to be in a paid capacity, however the experience in ministry should have involved significant opportunities to teach, disciple, and lead others.

2. Spiritual and Personal Maturity – The following questions should be asked: Does the potential candidate have a growing relationship with the Lord and continue in habits that contribute to that growth? Does the candidate possess maturity when working with others?

3. Biblical and Theological Competency – The potential candidate will continue to grow in his or her knowledge of Scripture and theology during the ordination process. However, the candidate should already possess a depth of
understanding of Scripture and have a personal theology that is consistent with the Reformed tradition.

If the leadership of the congregation feels that the candidate possesses the above qualities and characteristics, they can endorse the individual for ministry as a part of the individual’s application (Form #1).

Journeying with the candidates during his or her ordination process:
A sponsoring congregation doesn’t complete their role with the candidate after they begin the process. The congregation, especially its leadership, is an important partner in the ordination journey.

The sponsoring congregation should do the following:

- **Support the candidate financially.** At a minimum, the congregation should be willing to help pay for necessary psychological testing, ordination exams, and other affiliated expenses. They may also provide some expenses for education. The congregation should articulate to the candidate how they will support the candidate financially.

- **Continue to support the candidate spiritually.** The congregation should be regularly checking in with the candidate and discovering how best to pray for the candidate.

- **Encourage the candidate’s growth in ministry.** In some situations, the candidate will be removed geographically from their sponsoring congregation as they attend seminary. In this case, the congregation should ensure that the candidate is connected with another congregation where he or she can use his or her skills for ministry. In other situations, the candidate will continue to be directly involved in the sponsoring congregation. In this case, the congregation should ensure that the candidate has continued opportunities to minister and be stretched.

- **Review and give input to the candidate’s current plan for growth.** The plan for growth is a document put together by the PMOT based on feedback from the candidate and leaders in the candidate’s ministry context.
Appendix 7 – Annual Consultation Report
Growth and Development in the Last 12 Months

Candidate’s Name: ___________________________________________

Primary Phone: ________________  Secondary Phone: ________________

Annual Consultation (date): __________________

A. Education for Ministry

B. Spiritual Disciplines – Briefly describe your spiritual disciplines, including your participation in worship and mission of a Presbyterian congregation.

C. Interpersonal Relations – Describe your relationship with your peers, authority figures, family, and others who are significant to you. What are the implications of those relationships for your ministry?

D. Personal Growth – Describe recent experiences of emotional impact, if any, and how you dealt with them.
E. *Professional Growth* – Describe recent experiences of emotional impact, if any, and how you dealt with them.

F. List other issues which you wish to discuss with the committee including financial needs, family concerns, etc.

G. Have you submitted your Statement of Faith / Philosophy of Ministry / Confirmation of *ECO Essential Tenets*?
Appendix 8 – Sample Candidate Development Plan
Name: Sally Sample
Date: 12/1/2015

Overview:
Sally Sample has been in the candidacy process for two years. Prior to entering the process, Sally had been involved in the student ministry at her church where her responsibilities included leading a discipleship group of several students and occasionally teaching in a large group setting.

Sally moved from her home church to attend seminary and has been involved with a larger congregation in the area where she is leading an adult small group. She has taken a full year of coursework at the seminary, primarily related to biblical and theological study. Sally’s peers and supervisors affirm her strong personal faith, character, and ability to work well with others.

Sally is not sure of her post-seminary call but would like to be prepared to be a solo pastor of a smaller church after graduation.

Growth Plan:
Sally has great potential as a solo pastor but needs some different experience in the coming year in order to have the needed competency for such ministry. In addition to continuing her coursework, Sally needs to engage in ministry in a smaller congregation. A formal internship needs to be established within a small congregation. Sally may or may not receive compensation for the internship, but the pastor of the congregation needs to be willing to walk with Sally in the following aspects of ministry:

- **Participate in all aspects of at least two memorial services.** Participation should include pastoral care of the individual prior to his or her passing, meeting with the family to plan the memorial service, working with the pastor as he or she puts together the logistics of the service, and participating in the actual memorial service.

- **Preach at least 6 times.** The pastor should work with Sally on the study and crafting of the messages as well as the planning of the worship service.

- **Participate in the planning and leading of services in Lent, Holy Week, and the Advent season.**

- **Attend occasional session meetings and debrief with the pastor.**

- **Write three separate case studies on issues and challenges with the congregation.**
• **Participate in the budget preparation process.**
• **Meet with several elders to understand the ministry of the congregation from their perspective.**
• **The pastor will also need to work with Sally on maintaining a lifelong posture of spiritual growth in the midst of ministry.**

In addition to the internship above, Sally needs to do the following:

• Meet and interview two to three other solo pastors to gain from their experience.
• Meet and interview a pastor who has seen his or her congregation double in size.
• Attend session meetings of one or two other congregations.

Sally also needs to continue her relationship with her covenant group and provide the PMOT with a copy of their covenant.

__________________________   ______
Chair/Liaison of PMOT        Date
__________________________   ______
Candidate                    Date
Appendix 9 – Guidelines for Creating Pastoral Covenant Groups

Part of being in a “Covenant Order” is the willingness for pastors to commit to the care and accountability of other pastors. In ECO, we believe this commitment will increase our capacity to be the pastors we sense that God is calling us to be. We understand that there are forces inside of us as human beings that can make it easier to be individualists and to resist being known. We know that we will remain blind to being “curved in upon ourselves” (Luther) unless someone helps us to see and repent. Hence, we believe that the Covenant Order provides the external accountability to keep us focused upon our missional calling and our biblical/theological roots.

Thus, a pastor shall be part of a Pastoral Covenant Group (PCG) in order to increase accountability and encouragement as well as to spur one another on toward love and good deeds. The purpose of these groups is to coach, encourage, and pray for one another as the pastors in the covenant group strive for greater missional effectiveness by:

- Exploring the health of each other’s current ministries
- Exploring the future objectives of each other’s ministries
- Address challenges and obstacles to meeting those objectives
- Share best practices and insights
- Explore each other’s physical, spiritual, relational, emotional, vocational, and congregational health

These PCGs are ordinarily five to eight pastors organized around a relational willingness to commit. There could be groups organized with similar church types or proximate geography. These groups could be ones already in existence from years past. They may also consist of pastors in similar life or ministry stages. It would be one of the hopes of ECO that the groups might include a vision for mentoring younger pastors. Normally, due to the vulnerability and desired relational intimacy, the groups will be same-gender.

Pastoral Covenant Groups will be peer-to-peer relationships. They shall meet together face-to-face at least once a year. They are also encouraged to find ways to connect throughout the year. PCGs shall begin with the questions provided below, but may appropriately include materials from various Pastoral Rules, or other resources.

Composition of the Pastoral Covenant Groups:
Each shall be comprised of five to eight pastors, representing congregations or other related ministries. These groups can be comprised of pastors who are all in ECO. The groups are self-selective. For ECO Pastors, each presbytery’s Committee on Ministry (or equivalent) shall ensure that all pastors are participating in a PCG.

**Commitment:**
The PCG should stay together for three to four years, thus giving a period of time to bond. After that period of time, you may re-covenant, or you may change the composition of the group. This commitment provides a natural breaking point if change is needed.

**Pre-work:**
Each pastor will need to prayerfully spend time developing his or her thoughts and answers to the Covenant questions. The time each pastor spends on these questions will be significant and strategic. The answers or thoughts arising from these questions may provide the basis for discussion among the group. If the group agrees, written copies of the answers may be distributed ahead of time.

**Meeting Sites:**
Ideally, there might be a retreat-like setting for the annual meeting – away from normal work locations. The group can decide what location might be best and may include a rotation of hosting among the various members of the group.

**Time Commitment:**
It would be best to plan on eight hours of talking time together. Table fellowship is encouraged. An overnight somewhere might be helpful.

**Suggested Outline of Initial Meeting**

1. Getting to know each other
   a. Log in with brief introductions and current ministry context
   b. Sharing biographical histories
   c. Sharing of call stories
2. Going deeper
   a. Sharing of 6 areas of disclosure of health:
      i. Spiritual
      ii. Relational
      iii. Physical
      iv. Emotional
v. Vocational
vi. Congregational

b. Engage in prayer after each person shares. Sharing continues into the next morning, if needed. Vulnerability and trust will grow over time together.

3. Conclusion and looking ahead
   a. Concluding questions might include:
      i. What did we all learn from this exercise?
      ii. How will accountability work over the next year?
      iii. When will we meet again?
   b. Ideally, the next meeting location, date, and time will all be set before all parties depart.

Challenges:
Pastoral Covenant Groups are something new for many of us. It may feel awkward in the beginning. For the PCGs to have maximum effect, each pastor will need to focus on humility and vulnerability. Initially, groups should intentionally work on developing trust, being genuinely open, and practicing transparency. Confidentially is paramount. Cynical attitudes and gossip will need to be resisted. Bragging would be out of place – yet a focus on what the Holy Spirit has done or is doing in your midst is to be celebrated. Best practices should be shared and enjoyed by all. Mistakes and failures can be learning experiences for each pastor.

While this proposed structure may serve as a starting point for PCGs, the groups may find that as relationships develop, meetings and structure may change. Groups may decide to include continuing education or learning opportunities as they gather. Or, they may engage in more structured prayer, Scripture meditation, or theological engagement as part of their time together. Although the structures and/or process can be flexible, the core purpose of these covenant groups – authentic accountability and faithful encouragement – should not be neglected.

Suggested Outline of Initial Meeting

Introductions and Biographical Questions:
1. Describe your family of origin and how it is now.
   a. What is/was the greatest influence of your father? How has/did that relationship change and grow over time?
b. What is/was your relationship like with your mother? How has/did that relationship change and grow over time?

c. Describe your relationship(s) with your sibling(s) and how they have shaped and formed you.

2. Discuss your current family situation.

   a. What are the joys and challenges in your current familial relationships?
   b. If married, how would you describe your marriage? What are the joys and delights of life with your spouse? How does your spouse encourage or challenge your relationship with Christ? Describe some of the past challenges or disappointments in your marriage and how you and your spouse overcame them. How are you upholding fidelity in your marriage?
   c. If not married, describe your relationship status? Are you divorced, widowed, never been married, dating? How is that for you? Are you joyful, content, grieving, unsettled, lonely, thankful? How are you upholding a chaste life?
   d. Are you a parent? Describe your relationship with your child(ren). What joys and challenges have you experienced in parenthood?

Health Questions

1. Spiritual Health

   a. What does spiritual health look like in your mind? Where are you in relation to that ideal? How are you actively engaging in your relationship with Christ? Are you keeping a regular quiet time? Are you actively engaging in a scriptural study or meditation outside of your pastoral responsibilities? How is your prayer life? What prayer practices do you find particularly fruitful in your walk with Christ? How would you describe your worship practices? Describe your practice of confession of sin and repentance.

2. Relational Health

   a. What would relational health look like in your mind? Where is that strongest and weakest in your current experience? What relationships cause you the greatest struggle? Are there areas of reconciliation or conflict that need to be addressed? How will you go about resolving that conflict? In which relationships do you find peace and joy? Are there relationships in your life that you have neglected or relationships that have run their course? Are you engaged in any relationships right now that are pulling or drawing you away from your primary familial relationships or pastoral relationships?

3. Physical Health
a. What is ideal physical health for you? What gets in your way from being in that place? What will you do to get there in the coming year? Do you exercise regularly? What are your eating habits? Do you get regular sleep? Have you struggled with any illnesses, chronic pain, or other debilitating health issues? What types of medications do you take, if any? Do you have any issues with drug abuse? Do you have a healthy relationship with alcohol consumption?

4. Emotional Health
   a. What does it mean to be emotionally healthy? Where are you in relation to that ideal? What makes you angry, sad, and/or frustrated? Do you struggle with depression? What things, situations, or people do you avoid and why? When have you delighted in the Lord? When are you joyful, peaceful, or content? In what ways do you struggle or wrestle with doubt?

5. Vocational Health
   a. Vocational health may be a new term. It means we are working in healthy ways by balancing our use of time, Sabbath, power, collegiality, and humility/pride. Where are you in this season of life? Are you actively keeping a Sabbath? How are you modeling a healthy work/life balance to others in your congregation and among the staff of the church? Are you practicing proper stewardship of your finances? What does stewardship look like for you and your family? In what ways are you praying and discerning your current sense of call?

6. Congregational Health
   a. How would you describe the health of the congregation you serve? What dysfunctions have existed in the past or are currently present? What is the nature of conflict within the congregation and how have you all dealt with it? Describe your relationship with the session of the church. How have you all worked together to discern and cast the vision of the congregation? Is there a healthy development of spiritual leaders with the congregation? How has the congregation adapted to change in the past and/or how are they currently adapting to change? Describe and discuss your Mission Affinity Group relationships and meetings. What challenges lie ahead for the congregation?