

OFFICER TRAINING IN THE EPC

January 26, 2024

Mark Eshoff, Stated Clerk
EPC Presbytery of the Pacific Southwest

Workshop Overview

1. Requirement to Train and Examine Officers
2. Blessing of Training Officers
3. Training Resources
 - Bible
 - EPC Leadership Training Manual
 - Westminster Standards
 - Book of Order
 - POPS Leadership Training Guide
(www.epcpops.org/resources)
4. Options for Training and Examining Officers
 1. Three-hour Workshop
 2. Day-long Retreat
 3. EPC POPS Discovery Workshop
 4. Short Course (ex. six sessions)
 5. Six month or Year-long Preparation (ex. 6-12 sessions)

Contact Information: mark@epcpops.org
(916) 452-7132
www.epcpops.org



Presbytery of the Pacific Southwest

OFFICER TRAINING IN THE EPC

EPC Officer Examination Requirements

EPC Book of Order

12-6 The examination of a Candidate for Ruling Elder or Deacon

The Session shall confer with each person elected to office in the local church to determine if that person feels called to office and is willing to serve faithfully. The Session shall examine candidates for ordination to the office of Ruling Elder or Deacon on:

1. Personal experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and progress in spiritual growth
2. Theology and Sacraments of the Church,
3. The government of the Church
4. Discipline of the Church
5. Worship of the Church
6. History of the Church
7. An understanding of the office to which one is elected

12-7 The examination of a previously ordained Ruling Elder or Deacon

- A. Those previously ordained into the office to which one has been called shall be examined by the Session on views of those subjects set forth for ordination. Each shall also give testimony of the personal experience of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ and progress in spiritual growth.
- B. Those ordained to corresponding offices in other Reformed denominations shall be examined by the Session as one being ordained. Upon successful examination, previous ordination shall be recognized. The act of ordination shall not be repeated.

OFFICER TRAINING IN THE EPC

Blessing of Training Officers

- Affirms the call
- Competent leaders
- Confident leaders
- Unity of purpose
- Understanding of the call/responsibilities
- Understanding of what the call is not
- Emphasizes importance of the role
- Awareness of vows
- Relational connection
- Growth in discipleship
- Understanding of the Church/EPC
- Broadens the knowledge base
- Conflict avoidance
- Effective use of gifts
- Effective use of time
- Positive meeting dynamics
- Builds trust in the congregation

Officer Training and Examination – OPTION #1

Sample 3-Hour Workshop



Presbytery of the Pacific Southwest

Schedule/Plan

Nominated Officers engage in self-study prior to Workshop
(see Study Plan)

Workshop:

- Introduction – Importance of Leadership in the EPC (10 minutes)
- Review of Officer Training Expectations (BoO - 10 minutes)
- What Leadership Means at _____ Church (20 minutes)
- Review of the Essentials of Our Faith (30 minutes)
- Review of the Officer Vows (30 minutes)
- Examination/Discussion with nominated officers (60-70 minutes)
- Conclusion (10 minutes)

Resources

Nominated officers receive a POPS Officer Training Manual. They also each receive a Study Plan for preparation for the examination (see below), as well as the EPC Leadership Training Guide, the Book of Order, and the Westminster Confession and Catechisms.

Session Member Role

A pair of Session members interviews nominees individually. If there aren't enough Session members, deacon nominees may be interviewed in small groups. Begin by discussing nominees' response to Question #1 (Faith story). Work through the Examination Questions #2-19 in a discussion/review format, using the Reference Guide in the Officer Training Manual. Those interviewing nominated elders should make sure they respond to each question. Once you have discussed the responses to those questions, make sure each person has a chance to respond to Questions #20-24. You will have approximately 60 minutes for this discussion, so manage your time with that in mind. When the time is complete, all participants will reconvene and close in prayer as a full group.

Officer Training and Examination – OPTION #1

Study Guide



Presbytery of the Pacific Southwest

Goal of the Training

To equip newly nominated elders and deacons to be able to fully understand and support the vows they will take as officers of the church (particularly #3 - #6) and to provide for the examination of elders and deacons by the Session prior to the congregational vote in the areas of church government, faith, doctrine and church history.

Resources

POPS Officer Training Manual

EPC Leadership Training Guide: <https://epc.org/wp-content/uploads/Files/4-Resources/5-Downloadable-EPC-Resources/B-Training-Manuals-Study-Guides/LeadershipTrainingGuide.pdf>

Westminster Confession and Catechisms: <https://epc.org/wp-content/uploads/Files/1-Who-We-Are/B-About-The-EPC/WCF-ModernEnglish.pdf>

EPC Book of Order (online link: <https://epc.org/wp-content/uploads/Files/4-Resources/5-Downloadable-EPC-Resources/A-ConstitutionDoctrine/BookOfOrder2022-2023.pdf>)

Preparation

The following are suggestions for preparation for the training sessions.

Officer Training Manual

This will be the guide for our teaching and discussion. The teaching will focus on “The Essentials of Our Faith” on page 3 and on the Questions and Reference Guide on pages 5 – 7. Although we won’t be spending the time to work through the detailed information on pages 12-26, it provides a good vehicle to do more in-depth personal or group study of our beliefs and our system of government. As officers of the church, your knowledge in these areas is expected as you participate in leadership of the church and a more detailed review would enhance your understanding of the ministry context into which God has called you.

Leadership Training Guide

This is the guide provided by the EPC denomination to equip all the officers in each church. It has an excellent summary of both church history and theology. We

(over)

recommend that you read as much of it as possible prior to the training session. Of particular note are the following sections, which would be important to study:

Page 3 – 5	Ordination Vows and backup references on each of the vows
Chapter 4	Theology
Chapter 6	Christology
Chapter 7	Soteriology (Salvation)
Chapter 12	Church Government

Book of Order

This is made up of the Book of Government, Book of Worship and Book of Discipline. We will use this as a reference for addressing the discussion and examination questions. The current Book of Order is available online, so we suggest that you download it on your computer or mobile device.

Westminster Confession and Catechisms

Read through the Shorter Catechism (beginning on page 113), which is a summary of all that is addressed in the full Confession. Note any responses for which you have questions or disagreements.

Additional Information

We intend for the training and examination to be cordial and educational. The training portion will be accomplished as a single group and the discussion/examination portion will consist of small groups of elder/deacon elects and one or two elders, who will work through, in a discussion format, a selection of questions from the list on pages 5-6 of the Officer Training Manual.

Thank you again for your willingness to grow in your knowledge and faith as you lead in your ministry!

Officer Training and Examination – OPTION #2

Sample Day-long Retreat (6 hours)



Presbytery of the Pacific Southwest

Retreat Plan

Nominees engage in self-study prior to Workshop (see Study Plan)

Retreat:

- Introduction – Importance of Leadership in the EPC (5 minutes)
- Review of Officer Training Expectations (BoO - 10 minutes)
- What Leadership Looks Like at _____ Church (10 minutes)
- Review of the Essentials of Our Faith (30 minutes)
- Review of the Officer Vows (30 minutes)
- Break into Small Groups to engage in Group Studies based on pages 12-26 of Officer Training Manual (90 minutes)

Group 1: Pages 12-14

Group 2: Pages 15-17

Group 3: Pages 18-20

Group 4: Pages 21-23

Group 5: Pages 24-26

- Lunch (60 minutes)
- Small Groups feed back the results of their study (60 minutes)
- Examination/Discussion with nominated officers (60 minutes)
- Conclusion (5 minutes)

Resources

Nominated officers receive a POPS Officer Training Manual. They also each receive a Study Plan for preparation for the examination (see below), as well as the EPC Leadership Training Guide, the Book of Order, and the Westminster Confession and Catechisms.

Session Member Role

A pair of Session members interviews nominees individually. If there aren't enough Session members, deacon nominees may be interviewed in small groups. Begin by discussing nominees' response to Question #1 (Faith story). Work through the Examination Questions #2-19 in a discussion/review format, using the Reference Guide in the Officer Training Manual. Those interviewing nominated elders should make sure they respond to each question. Once you have discussed the responses to those questions, make sure each person has a chance to respond to Questions #20-24. You will have approximately 60 minutes for this discussion, so manage your time with that in mind. When the time is complete, all participants will reconvene and close in prayer as a full group.

Officer Training and Examination – OPTION #2

Study Guide



Presbytery of the Pacific Southwest

Goal of the New Officer Training Retreat

To equip newly nominated elders and deacons to be able to fully understand and support the vows they will take as officers of the church (particularly #3 - #6) and to provide for the examination of elders and deacons by the Session prior to the congregational vote in the areas of church government, faith, doctrine and church history.

Resources

POPS Officer Training Manual

EPC Leadership Training Guide: <https://epc.org/wp-content/uploads/Files/4-Resources/5-Downloadable-EPC-Resources/B-Training-Manuals-Study-Guides/LeadershipTrainingGuide.pdf>

Westminster Confession and Catechisms: <https://epc.org/wp-content/uploads/Files/1-Who-We-Are/B-About-The-EPC/WCF-ModernEnglish.pdf>

EPC Book of Order: <https://epc.org/wp-content/uploads/Files/4-Resources/5-Downloadable-EPC-Resources/A-ConstitutionDoctrine/BookOfOrder2022-2023.pdf>

Preparation

The following are suggestions for preparation for the training sessions.

Officer Training Manual

This will be the guide for our teaching and discussion. The teaching will focus on “The Essentials of Our Faith” on page 3, the Vows on page 4, and on the Questions and Reference Guide on pages 5 – 6. We will work through the detailed information on pages 12-26 during the retreat. As officers of the church, your knowledge in these areas is expected as you participate in leadership of the church and as you follow God’s call in your ministry context.

Leadership Training Guide

This is the guide provided by the EPC denomination to equip all the officers in each church. It has an excellent summary of both church history and theology. We

(over)

recommend that you read as much of it as possible prior to the training session. Of particular note are the following sections, which would be important to study:

Page 3 – 5	Ordination Vows and backup references on each of the vows
Chapter 4	Theology
Chapter 6	Christology
Chapter 7	Soteriology (Salvation)
Chapter 12	Church Government

Book of Order

This is made up of the Book of Government, Book of Worship and Book of Discipline. We will use this as a reference for addressing the discussion and examination questions. The current Book of Order is only available online, so we suggest that you download it on your computer or mobile device.

Westminster Confession and Catechisms

Read through the Shorter Catechism (beginning on page 113), which is a summary of all that is addressed in the full Confession. Note any responses for which you have questions or disagreements.

Additional Information

We intend for the training and examination to be cordial and educational. The training portion will be accomplished as a single group and the discussion/examination portion will consist of small groups of elder/deacon elects and one or two elders, who will work through, in a discussion format, a selection of questions from the list on page 5 of the Officer Training Manual.

Thank you again for your willingness to grow in your knowledge and faith as you lead in your ministry!

Officer Training and Examination – OPTION #3

POPS Discovery Workshop – One Day



Presbytery of the Pacific Southwest

- Scheduled 1-2 times per year based on availability of a church to host it
- Sponsored and taught by Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders from the Presbytery of the Pacific Southwest (sample flyer attached)

Format:	8:30 am	Breakfast Snacks
		Welcome / Introductions
	9:00	Introduction to EPC Polity / Book of Order
	12:00 pm	Lunch
	1:00	Essentials of our Faith
		Introduction to the Westminster Confession
	4:00	Conclusion

Examination of new officers conducted by the Session of each local church (see sample examination questions in POPS Officer Training Manual).

DISCOVERY WORKSHOP

February 11, 2023

9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Sanger Community Church, Sanger, CA

1610 Jensen Avenue

Sanger, CA 93657

559-875-2553



Discovery Workshops prepare seminary graduates, candidates, teaching elders, ruling elders and incoming pastors from other denominations to understand, join and/or fully participate in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. They also provide an opportunity for connection within the EPCPOPS community. The workshop will give ruling elders an overview of the doctrine and government of the denomination, and is sufficient training for any incoming ruling elders to prepare for the examination by their local church Session. The workshop also helps pastors and candidates prepare for the EPC written and oral examinations. In addition, participants will gain understanding of the priorities and ethos of the EPC and the Presbytery of the Pacific Southwest. The Presbytery currently requires all candidates and any pastor entering the Presbytery from another denomination to attend the workshop. The workshop and lunch are provided at no cost.

CONTENT

EPC Polity / The Book of Order
EPC Essentials of Our Faith
Westminster Standards



PRESENTERS



Guy Boyer

Teaching Elder – Valley Community Church, San Jacinto, CA
Member – POPS Ministerial Committee



Mark Eshoff

Stated Clerk – Presbytery of the Pacific Southwest
Executive Minister – Fremont Presbyterian Church, Sacramento, CA

REGISTRATION and QUESTIONS

Registration: <https://epcpops.wufoo.com/forms/m17ddv510hg8ojp/> or through epcpops.org/events/

Email: Mark Eshoff, Stated Clerk at mark@epcpops.org or call (916) 452-7132

Please register by **Monday, February 6, 2023**

Officer Training and Examination – OPTION #4

Six Session Short Course



Presbytery of the Pacific Southwest

Goal of the New Officer Training Course

To equip newly nominated elders and deacons to be able to fully understand and support the vows they will take as officers of the church and to provide for the examination of elders and deacons by the Session prior to the congregational vote in the areas of church government, faith, doctrine and church history.

Resources

POPS Officer Training Manual

EPC Leadership Training Guide: <https://epc.org/wp-content/uploads/Files/4-Resources/5-Downloadable-EPC-Resources/B-Training-Manuals-Study-Guides/LeadershipTrainingGuide.pdf>

Westminster Confession and Catechisms: <https://epc.org/wp-content/uploads/Files/1-Who-We-Are/B-About-The-EPC/WCF-ModernEnglish.pdf>

EPC Book of Order: <https://epc.org/wp-content/uploads/Files/4-Resources/5-Downloadable-EPC-Resources/A-ConstitutionDoctrine/BookOfOrder2022-2023.pdf>

Meeting #1	Introduction – Importance of Leadership in the EPC (10 minutes) Review of Officer Training Expectations (BoO - 10 minutes) What Leadership Means at _____ Church (20 minutes) Review of the Essentials of Our Faith (30 minutes)
Meeting #2	Review of the Officer Vows (30 minutes) Theology of the EPC (Officer Training Manual - pages 12-15)
Meeting #3	Theology of the EPC (Officer Training Manual - pages 16-19)
Meeting #4	Polity of the EPC (Officer Training Manual - pages 20-23)
Meeting #5	Polity of the EPC (Officer Training Manual - pages 24-26)
Meeting #6	Discussion/Examination with nominated officers (60-70 minutes) Session members conduct individual examinations

Officer Training and Examination – OPTION #5

6-Month or Year-long Course



Presbytery of the Pacific Southwest

Goal of the New Officer Training Course

To equip newly nominated elders and deacons to be able to fully understand and support the vows they will take as officers of the church and to provide for the examination of elders and deacons by the Session prior to the congregational vote in the areas of church government, faith, doctrine and church history.

Resources

EPC Leadership Training Guide

<https://epc.org/wp-content/uploads/Files/4-Resources/5-Downloadable-EPC-Resources/B-Training-Manuals-Study-Guides/LeadershipTrainingGuide.pdf>

Westminster Confession and Catechisms

<https://epc.org/wp-content/uploads/Files/1-Who-We-Are/B-About-The-EPC/WCF-ModernEnglish.pdf>

EPC Book of Order

<https://epc.org/wp-content/uploads/Files/4-Resources/5-Downloadable-EPC-Resources/A-ConstitutionDoctrine/BookOfOrder2022-2023.pdf>

See attached sample class syllabus

FREMONT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Elder Boot Camp

COURSE SYLLABUS



WEEK 1

Welcome and Overview of Course

Focus on Fremont: Essentials of Our Faith, Fremont Mission Statement and Leadership Culture

Teaching and Discussion: Bible and Sacraments

Westminster Confession: Overview / Chapters 1-2, 27-29

Introduction of Book: *"Humility"* (by C.J. Mahaney)

Polity: Book of Order Overview / Book of Worship / Book of Discipline

Reading for Next Class: Leadership Training Guide (LTG) – Chapters 3, 9
Book – *"Humility"*
Romans 1:18-3:20

WEEK 2

Teaching: Romans 1:18-3:20 – Condemnation

Sin has infected the bloodstream of all humanity; and therefore all of humanity has received a guilty verdict. God's wrath is revealed from heaven against the sin of humanity. There is no distinction between religious or non-religious. His wrath is demonstrated by giving humanity over to their hard hearts. God is holy. Humanity is sinful; therefore, people deserve God's just judgment.

Westminster Confession: WC Chapters 3-7, 25

Book Discussion: *Humility*

Polity: Book of Government (BoG) Chapters 1-4

Focus on Fremont: Elder Job Description

Reading for Next Class: LTG – Chapters 4-5
Book – *"A Praying Church"* (by Paul Miller) – Chapters 1-9
Romans 3:21-5:21

WEEK 3

Teaching: Romans 3:21-5:21 - Justification

God has made a way for sinful people to be made right with Himself.

God in His grace declares people righteous who would trust in Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. The good news of the gospel is not only did Christ take our sins, but he gave us his righteousness. This is the basis by which we are accepted by God. Christ was treated as if he lived the life we lived, so we could be treated as if we lived the life he lived. The guilty verdict fell upon Christ.

Westminster Confession: Chapters 8-12

Book Discussion: *A Praying Church* - Chapters 1-9

Polity: BoG Chapters 6-8

Focus on Fremont: Elder Vows

Reading for Next Class: LTG – Chapters 6-8
Book – Book – “*A Praying Church*” – Chapters 10-16
Romans 6:1-7:25

WEEK 4

Teaching: Romans 6:1-7:25 – Sanctification

The process by which believers become holy. While justification is a one-time act, sanctification is an ongoing act of the Spirit in the life of the believer. Sanctification is the ongoing work of the Spirit in the Christian by which they become who they are. Paul starts many of his letters off by referring to the Christians as saints (even in Corinth!). Sanctification is the ongoing process through which we more and more resemble our status as saints.

Westminster Confession: Chapters 13-16

Book Discussion: *A Praying Church* - Chapters 10-16

Polity: BoG Chapters 9-10

Focus on Fremont: Fremont Ministry Organization, Teams and Staff

Reading for Next Class: LTG – Chapters 1-2
Book – “*A Praying Church*” – Chapters 17-22
Romans 8-11

WEEK 5

Teaching: Romans 8-11 – Glorification

God is completely sovereign and therefore brings all things to fruition as He has decreed.

God is not only committed to saving and sanctifying His Church, but He is also committed to see us into our eventual, promised glorified state.

Westminster Confession: Chapters 17-20, 34

Book Discussion: A Praying Church - Chapters 17-22

Polity: BoG Chapters 11-13

Focus on Fremont: Protocol and Meeting Guidelines

Reading for Next Class: LTG – Chapters 12-13
Book – “A Place to Belong” (by Megan Hill)
Romans 12-16

WEEK 6

Teaching: Romans 12-16 - Consecration

In light of all the amazing doctrinal truths of Romans 1-11, the only fitting response is a life of worship. Our entire lives as Christians are to be a lavish response to the grace we have received.

Westminster Confession: Chapter 35

Book Discussion: A Place to Belong

Polity: BoG Chapters 16-20

Focus on Fremont: Budget Process and Administrative Information

Extra Reading: LTG Chapters 8, 10, 11, 14

Standard Class Schedule

12:00 Lunch
12:05 Teaching and Discussion
12:50 Westminster Confession
1:05 Break
1:15 Book Discussion
1:30 Polity
1:45 Focus on Fremont
2:00 Closing

SESSION EXAMINATION – Sunday, September 24th (12:00 – 3:00)