

**THE EASTMINSTER PRESBYTERY
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR CARE OF INQUIRERS AND CANDIDATES
FOR THE MINISTRY OF WORD AND SACRAMENT**

I. INTRODUCTION

The Body of Christ, just like the human body, needs all of its parts. Each part has a different function, all necessary for the life of the whole body. Christian calling, or vocation, is to live as members of a redeemed and faithful community, making the fullest use of our individual gifts.

It is important that those who are to be ordained as ministers of the Word and Sacrament receive full preparation for their task under the direction of the committee on preparation for ministry. For this purpose, presbyteries shall enter into covenant relationship with those preparing to become ministers of the Word and Sacrament. This relationship shall be divided into the two phases of inquiry and candidacy.

During the phases of inquiry and candidacy, the individual continues to be an active member of his or her particular church and subject to the concern and discipline of the session. In matters relating to preparation for ministry, the individual is under the oversight of the presbytery through the committee on preparation for ministry.

1. The Presbytery

The presbytery shall exercise responsibility for the spiritual growth of inquirers and candidates, to support them with an understanding and sympathetic interest, and to give guidance in regard to courses of study, familiarity with the Bible and with the confessions, practical training and plans for education including the choice of institutions, field education, and the inquirer's or candidate's financial need. The presbytery shall also seek to give guidance and instruction to the inquirer or candidate in the faith and polity of the church.

2. The Session

The session shall function in a supportive role during the phases of inquiry and candidacy to ensure that care is provided on a continuous basis. The session shall appoint an elder from the church to be a liaison with the inquirer and candidate and the presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry. The session should consider the provision of financial support for the inquirer or candidate.

II. INQUIRY PHASE

The purpose of the inquiry phase is to provide an opportunity for the church and for those who believe themselves called to ministry of the Word and Sacrament to explore that call together in such a way that a decision regarding the inquirer's suitability for ministry of the Word and Sacrament will be based on knowledge and experience of one another.

A. Process Steps

1. A person desiring to become an inquirer shall indicate to the session of the particular church to explore the personal implications of becoming a minister of the Word and

Sacrament. The person shall have been an active member of that particular church for at least six months.

2. The session and/or the prospective inquirer shall contact the moderator of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) for orientation to the process used in Eastminster Presbytery. Session orientation by a representative of the CPM shall occur prior to committee interview of the prospective inquirer.
3. The proposed inquirer shall complete Forms 1 (Applicant's Background Information), 2A (Application to be enrolled by the Presbytery as an Inquirer) The proposed inquirer shall submit Form 1 to the Moderator of the Session, as well as a copy to the Moderator of the CPM, prior to meeting with them. Form 2A shall be sent by the Session with its recommendation concerning the applicant to the Moderator of the CPM who will then forward it to the Stated Clerk following approval by the Presbytery.
4. The session shall appoint an elder to serve as a liaison between the prospective inquirer and the session.
5. Upon receipt of the recommendation of the session, an initial meeting will be scheduled with the prospective inquirer and the CPM. The purpose for this meeting is to become acquainted, to begin to develop the covenant relationship, and to explain the process involved in becoming a Minister of Word and Sacrament.
6. The committee will appoint a person to be liaison between the inquirer and the CPM.
7. Following this meeting, the CPM shall recommend to the presbytery whether to enroll the person as an inquirer. The date of the presbytery's action to enroll shall be the beginning of the covenant relationship. This period shall be at least two years, at least one year of which shall be as a candidate.
8. During the inquiry phase, the inquirer shall participate in the program at the Midwest Ministry Development Center or a similar agency agreed upon by the inquirer and the CPM. The findings shall be released to the Moderator of CPM by the inquirer. The presbytery shall be responsible for 1/3 of the cost of this program plus an additional \$100.00 for expenses. The local church is encouraged to pay 1/3 of the program cost and \$100 for expenses with all remaining costs to be paid by the inquirer.

Note: This program is **not** a test which the inquirer must pass. The purpose is to discuss and evaluate the vocational interests of the inquirer and to provide the committee with some material to discuss vocational interests and aptitudes.

9. The inquirer shall actively participate in the life of a church, either the sponsoring church or in the seminary setting. The inquirer shall communicate regularly with the sponsoring church through their liaison.

10. Communication between the inquirer and the CPM shall be facilitated and enhanced by the liaison. Communications from the inquirer shall include official grade transcripts and reports from the seminary, college, or university prior to the annual consultation. These shall be sent to the Moderator of the CPM.
11. Approval shall be obtained from Presbytery (through CPM) before serving in a church in any capacity, except for occasional pulpit supply or seminary-supervised field education.
12. Education requirements:
 - a) The inquirer shall present to the CPM an official transcript showing satisfactory grades at a regionally accredited college or university, together with a diploma or plans leading toward graduation with at least a bachelor's degree.
 - b) The inquirer is strongly encouraged to attend a recognized Presbyterian Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). These are: Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Columbia Theological Seminary, Dubuque Theological Seminary, Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, McCormick Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Princeton Theological Seminary, San Francisco Theological Seminary, Union Theological Seminary & Presbyterian School of Christian Education and by covenant agreement: Auburn Theological Seminary, Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico
 - c) If the inquirer wishes to attend another seminary, he or she shall have the **prior** approval of the presbytery. It is expected that the theological education received by the inquirer will be in harmony with the Presbyterian and Reformed traditions, show work equivalent to a MDiv. and evidence of acquainting the student with the program and polity of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
 - d) The inquirer is required to participate in some form of practical field education while in seminary.
13. The inquirer shall meet with the CPM or its representatives annually. In no case shall an inquirer be excused from these annual consultations. The inquirer shall complete Form 3 and submit it to the CPM at least 14 days prior to the annual consultation.
14. Bible Content Examination
If the inquirer is attending seminary, he or she is encouraged to take the Bible Content Standard Ordination Examination during the first year of seminary. The exam is given only in early February, and application may be made through the seminary. The CPM Moderator should be notified of the inquirer's intention to take the examination and will supply the inquirer with a signed registration form. If a proctored examination is needed, contact the CPM Moderator at least six weeks in advance.
15. There is no specific time requirement for the inquirer phase. The phase of inquiry shall be of sufficient length for the inquirer, the session, and the committee on preparation for

ministry to decide whether the inquirer should apply to become a candidate. During this time, the committee on preparation for ministry shall make use of resources such as information provided by the inquirer, personal references, and reports from counseling services, the session, and the inquirer's institution of learning, if the inquirer is a student.

CANDIDACY

The purpose of the candidacy phase is to provide for the full preparation of persons to serve the church as minister of the Word and Sacrament. This shall be accomplished through the guidance and evaluation of candidates, using learning contracts within the context of supportive relationships.

I. TRANSITION TO CANDIDACY

A. Process Steps

1. An inquirer shall apply to the presbytery through the session of care, by use of Form 5A which will be supplied to the Session of Care by the CPM Moderator.
2. The session shall confer with the inquirer, review the evidence of the inquiry phase, and make recommendations to the presbytery through the moderator of the CPM with respect to the application.
3. The inquirer shall demonstrate adequate promise for ministry preparing a written document to include:
 - a) A statement of his or her understanding of Christian vocation in the Reformed tradition and how it relates to his or her sense of call.
 - b) A statement of personal faith which incorporates an understanding of the Reformed tradition.
 - c) An analysis of at least one concept from the personal faith statement regarding what it suggests about God, humanity, and their interrelationships.
 - d) a statement of what it means to be Presbyterian, indicating how that awareness grows out of participation in the life of a particular church.
 - e) a statement of self-understanding which reflects the inquirer's personal and cultural background and includes a concern of maintaining spiritual, physical, and mental health.
 - f) a statement of his or her understanding of the task minister of the Word and Sacrament perform, including an awareness of his or her specific gifts for ministry of the Word and Sacrament and of areas in which growth is needed.

This document is to be submitted to the moderator of the CPM. The document should be no less than one paragraph for each of the six items and no longer than six pages in total. A suggested format might be a paragraph about each statement with several additional paragraphs of explanation.

4. The CPM shall examine the inquirer for readiness to proceed to candidacy, using the document prepared by the inquirer (see #3) and review other evidence which indicates whether the inquirer is ready to proceed to candidacy.

5. The CPM shall make a definite recommendation to the presbytery with respect to whether the inquirer should be received as a candidate. Presbytery shall act on every committee recommendation regarding application for candidacy.
6. The presbytery shall receive the report and recommendation of its committee and shall examine the inquirer in person with respect to his or her Christian faith, forms of Christian service undertaken, and motives for seeking the ministry.
7. If the examination is approved, the presbytery shall receive the inquirer as a candidate after the following manner. The moderator shall propose the following questions to the inquirer:
 - a) Do you believe yourself to be called by God to the ministry of Word and Sacrament?
 - b.) Do you promise in reliance upon the grace of God to maintain a Christian character and conduct, and to be diligent and faithful in making full preparation for this ministry?
 - c.) Do you accept the proper supervision of the presbytery in matters that concern your preparation for this ministry?
 - d) Do you desire now to be received by this presbytery as a candidate for the ministry of the Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?
8. If these questions are answered in the affirmative, a brief charge shall be given, the candidate's name shall be recorded on the presbytery's roll of candidates, and the proceedings shall close with prayer.
9. A presbytery may provide, at the request of the candidate and her or his session, for the service of reception to be conducted by a commission of the presbytery in the presence of the candidate's congregation.

II. CANDIDACY PHASE

1. The candidate shall actively participate in the life of a church, either the sponsoring church or in the seminary setting. The candidate shall communicate regularly with the sponsoring church through their liaison.
2. Communication between the candidate and the CPM shall be facilitated and enhanced by the liaison. Communications from the candidate shall include official grade transcripts and reports from the seminary, prior to the annual consultation. These shall be sent to the Moderator of the CPM.
3. Approval shall be obtained from Presbytery (through CPM) before serving in a church in any capacity, except for occasional pulpit supply or seminary-supervised field education.
4. The candidate shall meet with the CPM or its representatives annually. In no case shall a candidate be excused from these annual consultations. The candidate shall complete Form 3 and submit it to the CPM at least 14 days prior to the annual consultation.

5. The other four examinations may be taken by inquirers and candidates after completion of two full years of theological education. These four examinations shall only be taken upon approval by the committee on preparation for ministry of the inquirer's or candidate's presbytery. Request to take the Standard Ordination Examinations must be sent to the CPM Moderator 60 days prior to the scheduled exams.
6. Prior to the final year of theological education, each candidate will be asked to present a preliminary Personal Information Form for advice and guidance to the CPM at the annual consultation. The PIF should be submitted to the Moderator along with Form 3 at least 14 days in advance of the consultation. The PIF may be circulated only after permission is given by the CPM.

III. EXAMINATION OF CANDIDATE FOR READINESS FOR ORDINATION

1. By the end of the candidacy phase, each candidate to be ordained shall demonstrate readiness to begin ministry of the Word and Sacrament. The candidate's presbytery shall require a candidate to fulfill the following requirements to be certified as to be ready for examination for ordination, pending a call:
 - a) demonstration of readiness to begin ministry of the Word and Sacrament.
 - b) presentation of a transcript showing satisfactory grades at regionally accredited college or university, together with a diploma.
 - c) presentation of a transcript from a theological institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools acceptable to the presbytery, the transcript showing satisfactory grades, and presentation of a plan to complete the theological degree including Hebrew and Greek and exegesis of the Old and New Testaments using Hebrew and Greek texts.
 - d) presentation of satisfactory grades together with the examination papers in the five areas covered by the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates: theology, Bible content, Biblical Exegesis, polity, and worship and Sacraments.
 - e) evidence of ministerial skill attested in the supervised practice of ministry.
 - f) presentation of evidence of readiness to participate in a calling presbytery's plan for transition and of plans for continuing study and growth.
 - g) expression of theological views compatible with the confessional documents of the church.
 - h) expression of an understanding of the questions required for ordination informed by knowledge of the church in a diverse settings.
 - i) commitment to the ministry of Word and Sacrament within the discipline of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) with personal maturity, spiritual depth, and a capacity to respond to the needs of others, including colleagues in ministry.
 - j) presenting a written sermon, together with a description of the contemporary need to which it was addressed and an exegetical interpretation of the biblical material out of which the sermon arose. This sermon shall be preached before the calling presbytery or a committee thereof.
2. The candidate will present a brief statement of personal faith and of commitment to the ministry of Word and Sacrament before the presbytery. Whenever possible this statement

shall be sent in the call for the presbytery meeting at which the candidate will be examined.

3. The presbytery will have the opportunity to examine the candidate for his or her Christian faith and views in theology, the bible, the Sacraments, and the government of this Church as it deems necessary.
4. The floor shall be opened for questions by the rest of the presbytery commissioners.
5. The examination will be arrested when there is a call to do so, or the moderator of the presbytery determines that the presbytery has completed what it was called to do.

TIME ELEMENTS

A candidate who does not receive a call to the ministry within one year after graduation from seminary, who is living outside the bounds of the presbytery, and has been certified ready to receive a call will be encouraged to transfer her/his candidacy to the presbytery of residence.

EDUCATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR INQUIRERS AND CANDIDATES

When choosing courses to meet the requirements of the seminary, it is expected that inquirers and candidates will select classes in order to become competent in the following

Biblical Studies

Greek and Hebrew Language and Exegesis

Church History (Including History of the Reformation and the History of the Presbyterian Church)

Practical Theology (including Polity of the PC(USA), Reformed Worship, Homiletics, Christian Education, Pastoral Counseling)

Field Education: At least one unit of field education in a congregation is required. The setting for supervised field education should not be the inquirer's/candidate's home church.

Clinical Pastoral Education: One unit of CPE in a supervised setting is required. Any alternative must be approved by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry.

Forms used in this process:

- Form 1: APPLICATION FOR INQUIRY: BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR SESSION
- Form 2A: APPLICATION TO BE ENROLLED BY THE PRESBYTERY AS AN INQUIRER
- Form 2B: INQUIRER COVENANT AGREEMENT AND RELEASE
- Form 3: PRE-INTERVIEW ANNUAL CONSULTATION REPORT
- Form 4: REPORT OF ANNUAL CONSULTATION
- Form 5A: APPLICATION TO BE RECEIVED AS A CANDIDATE
- Form 5B: CANDIDATE COVENANT AGREEMENT AND RELEASE
- Form 6: SUMMARY REPORT OF CANDIDATE'S FINAL ASSESSMENT OF READINESS TO BE EXAMINED FOR ORDINATION

Form 7: REPORT OF TRANSFER, WITHDRAWAL OR REMOVAL OF
 INQUIRER OR CANDIDATE OR ORDINATION OF A CANDIDATE

APPENDIX A - Annual Consultations

The presbytery shall require the inquirer or candidate to make an annual written report (using Form 3) concerning progress in studies and service to the church, including a report from the individual's institution of learning.

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry shall provide for an annual consultation with each person on the rolls of inquirers and candidates. The purpose of the consultation shall be for the evaluation and nurture of inquirers and candidates. The content of these annual consultations shall include, but need not be limited to, assessment of the inquirer's or candidate's development.

In the years prior to entering theological education, discussion of the inquirer's or candidate's preparation for theological education and for personal growth. For annual consultations which cover the time period of the first year of theological education, a general assessment of her or his experience and the implications this has for future professional ministry. The primary focus of this consultation(s) shall not be one of formal examination but of guidance and counseling with the inquirer and candidate. For annual consultations which cover the time period of the second year of theological education, an assessment of the inquirer's or candidate's experience similar to that held in the previous year(s). In addition, the consultation(s) shall include a discussion with the individual on progress in preparation for ordination, including a preliminary statement of faith, a review of all grades, field education reports, and other appropriate evaluation.

Approved by the Committee on Preparation For Ministry, June 4, 2008