

**Guidelines for Shepherding Inquirers and Candidates in Preparation for the
Office of Minister of the Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA)**

Reference: Book of Order, Section G-14.0300 – G-14.0313

Sensing the Call:

While many aspiring Ministers of the Word and Sacrament sense the Call these days as adults, often as a second career opportunity, teens that recognize their desire to become ministers may have access to programs designed to encourage them to consider the ministry within their church. An example of such a program can be found at Second Presbyterian within our presbytery. In addition, Presbyterian Seminaries, such as Pittsburgh and Princeton, sponsor summer programs for Junior and Senior students considering ministry as a career. When a member of a congregation senses a Call to ministry, the usual sequence of events includes:

1. Individual discusses the potential career choice with his/her pastor and other interested and trusted mentors for wisdom and advice.
2. Advised that to become an Inquirer, the individual must have been an active member of the congregation of the sponsoring Presbyterian church for 6 months or longer.
3. The pastor, or a member of the sponsoring church, contacts the presbytery office, who refers the potential Inquirer to the Moderator of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM).
4. At the request of the Moderator of CPM, the presbytery office sends a “discernment” packet to the potential Inquirer.
5. The potential Inquirer completes Forms 1, 2A and 2B.
6. The potential Inquirer then meets with the Session of the sponsoring church to be received as a potential Inquirer and be referred to the Committee on Preparation for Ministry of Whitewater Valley Presbytery. The Moderator of CPM, or a CPM member, attends the Session meeting, explains the process, and urges support of the Session for the potential Inquirer. Expectations of the sponsoring church with regard to support are explained to the Session. “The session shall function in a supportive role during the phases of inquiry and candidacy to assure that care is provided on a continuous basis. The session shall appoint an elder from the church to be a liaison person with the inquirer or candidate and the appropriate presbytery committee. The session should consider the provision of financial support for the inquirer or candidate.” (G-14.0306b). A Session Liaison from the sponsoring church is then assigned to work with the potential Inquirer and the CPM in support of the applicant throughout the process, and a copy of the Session Liaison responsibilities are given to the liaison (copy appended to this document).
7. Completed forms with the appropriate signatures of the Session personnel are forwarded to the CPM Moderator at least one week prior to the date of the scheduled meeting of the potential Inquirer with the CPM.

Orientation to the Committee on Preparation for Ministry process:

Prior to the initial meeting with the CPM, the CPM Moderator or a member of the CPM meets with the potential Inquirer for an informal conversation to orient the person to the CPM process. This CPM member may subsequently become the Inquirer's liaison to CPM. At this visit, the CPM member schedules the potential Inquirer for his/her first meeting with the CPM for affirmation as an Inquirer and the first annual consultation meeting with the CPM. The CPM member should assure that Forms 1 and 2 are forwarded to the CPM at least one week prior to the scheduled CPM meeting.

The Inquirer 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 the 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.” (Book of Order, G-14.0302). The period under care of the CPM shall be at least two years, of which at least one year shall be as an Inquirer, and at least one year as a Candidate. (G-14.0303e and G-14.0401). The inquiry phase shall be of sufficient length for the inquirer, the Session, and the CPM to decide whether the inquirer should apply to become a Candidate. (G-14.0303f).

“By the end of the inquiry phase, each inquirer shall demonstrate adequate promise for ministry by presenting

1. 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;
2. a statement of personal faith which incorporates an understanding of the Reformed tradition;
3. an analysis of at least one concept from the personal faith statement regarding what it suggests about God, humanity, and their interrelationships;
4. a statement of what it means to be Presbyterian, indicating how that awareness grows out of participation in the life of a particular church;
5. a statement of self-understanding which reflects the inquirer's personal and cultural background and includes a concern for maintaining spiritual, physical, and mental health;
6. a statement of his or her understanding of the task ministers of the Word and Sacrament perform, including an awareness of his or her specific gifts of ministry of the Word and Sacrament and of areas of which growth is needed.” (G-14.0303g).
7. a one-page statement that includes basic biographical information and how you have come to discern God's call in your life to the ministry of Word and Sacrament through your faith journey, your gifts for ministry and your service in the church. (Requirement of Whitewater Valley Presbytery).

During the initial meeting of the potential Inquirer with the CPM:

1. Inquirer discusses his or her sense of call and concept of ministry.
2. Sponsoring pastor and/or Session liaison are encouraged to attend.
3. CPM provides a two-page description of the Inquirer Phase to the new Inquirer.

If the CPM votes to accept the Inquirer under care, then:

1. CPM refers Inquirer to Mid-West for psychological evaluation.
2. Requests transcripts to be sent from school of enrollment.
3. Assigns CPM liaison and informs Inquirer of the CPM responsibilities.
4. Clarifies educational responsibilities and schedule for moving through inquirer and candidacy phases.
5. Explains that Inquirer is expected to take the Bible content exam during the first year of seminary (February).
6. CPM explains that individuals under care are expected to come before the CPM once a year for an annual consultation, at which time Form 3 should be submitted at least one week prior to the scheduled meeting date to allow for review by the CPM members prior to the CPM meeting. During these yearly meetings, academic transcripts are reviewed, progress toward meeting yearly goals set up on form 4 are reviewed, financial status and needs are reviewed, and the results of the Mid-West psychological and personality evaluation is reviewed. If appropriate, completed Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) experience and Field Education experience evaluations are also reviewed.
7. Following each yearly meeting, Form 4 is to be completed, setting up one-year goals for the Inquirer, which are brought back to the CPM for adoption.
8. The liaison will set up and maintain an ongoing file documenting the Inquirer's progress in the Presbytery office.
9. The Inquirer may withdraw from the status of being under care of the CPM at any time. Form 7B should be completed if this occurs.
10. After one full year of seminary and being under care of the CPM, the Inquirer may ask to become a Candidate.

If the CPM denies the applicant Inquirer status, the CPM Moderator will discuss the reasons for denial with the applicant, the sponsoring Session, Session liaison, and Moderator of the Session, giving specific rationale for the denial, and providing suggestions for the next step in the process.

The Candidate Phase:

“The purpose of the candidacy phase is to provide for the full preparation of persons to serve the church as ministers of the Word and Sacrament.” (Book of Order, G-14.0304).

After at least one full year as an Inquirer, and usually during the second or third year of seminary, the student may apply to become a Candidate. This application is done through the Session of his or her church. The Inquirer completes Form 5A and 5B before meeting with the Session. The Session confers with the Inquirer, reviews the evidence of the inquiry phase, and makes a recommendation to the presbytery with respect to the application. Forms 5A and 5B are signed by the appropriate Session members and forwarded to the CPM Moderator and Stated Clerk of the Presbytery at least one week prior to the date that the potential Candidate is slated to meet with the CPM. If the Session has approved the application to advance to Candidate status, the CPM liaison arranges time on the CPM agenda, and assures Form 5A and 5B, and possibly Form 3 if this coincides with the annual visit to CPM, are sent to the CPM Moderator at least one week prior to the meeting date for circulation and review by the CPM members. The CPM will:

1. Review Forms 5A, and 5B, (and Form 3 if appropriate).
2. Review the Inquirer's goals for the past year.
3. Ask the Inquirer some theological questions.
4. Review the autobiographical statement prepared by the Inquirer for the Presbytery meeting.

(If the Session does not approve the advancement to Candidate status, the sponsoring pastor, Session, Session liaison, and perhaps CPM Moderator and CPM liaison, should consider how best to support the Inquirer.)

If the CPM votes to approve the advancement to Candidate status, then the:

1. Moderator arranges for time on the Presbytery meeting docket for the Candidate to be introduced to the presbytery.
2. The Moderator and Liaison help the Candidate finalize the autobiographical statement for use at Presbytery, and give a copy to Presbytery staff for posting.
3. Moderator briefs and prepares candidate for the Presbytery meeting.
4. Moderator introduces and oversees discussion at Presbytery meeting.
5. Liaison attends presbytery meeting to support candidate, if able and available.
6. Presbytery shall examine the inquirer with respect to his or her Christian faith, forms of Christian service, and motives for seeking the ministry.
7. Presbytery votes on whether to affirm the Candidate (simple majority required).
8. Candidate is asked questions of commitment from the Book of Order, G-14.0305f.
9. Moderator arranges for Candidate to receive \$200 for books as a gift from Whitewater Valley Presbytery.

The Candidate Phase lasts until he or she receives an approved call and is examined and ordained. During the candidacy phase, the Candidate:

1. Completes his or her seminary education.

2. Continues annual consultation visits to CPM, completing Forms 3 and 4 commensurate with each visit, reviewing attainment of past goals and setting new ones as appropriate for the Candidate's progress.
3. Provides course transcripts for review by the CPM to determine if course requirements are being fulfilled.
4. Takes CPE, and provides supervisory and self-evaluations to the CPM for review.
5. Takes the four standard ordination exams, usually in the final year of seminary. The CPM Moderator or designate must sign a form authorizing the Candidate to sit for each exam, and all four exams must be passed satisfactorily in order to be ordained.
6. Serve an internship, report to CPM on the internship, and provide the candidate's internship supervisor's report for the CPM to review.

Progress toward ordination:

According to the Book of Order, by the end of the candidacy phase, each candidate to be ordained shall demonstrate readiness to begin ministry of the Word and Sacrament by

1. presenting evidence of competence in the field of theology, Bible, polity, worship and Sacraments, ordinarily attested by completion of the requirements of G-14.0312; and evidence of ministerial skill attested in the supervised practice of ministry;
2. presenting evidence of readiness to participate in a calling presbytery's plan for transition and of plans for continuing study and growth (G-11.0103n and G-14.0506);
3. expressing theological views compatible with the confessional documents of the church;
4. expressing understanding of the meaning of the questions required for ordination (G-14.0405) informed by knowledge of the church in diverse settings;
5. revealing commitment to the ministry of the 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;
6. 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. The sermon shall be preached before the calling presbytery or a committee thereof as a part of the appearance of the candidate as set forth in G-14.0402. In Whitewater Valley Presbytery, the CPM hears and evaluates the sermon.

A Candidate that requests to be certified to receive a call must demonstrate readiness to be ordained as noted above. The CPM or liaison will:

1. Arrange for time on the CPM agenda for the Candidate to meet with CPM for this purpose.

2. Direct the Candidate to prepare a sermon to be preached before the CPM and a 2 – 4 page exegesis of the passage upon which the sermon will be based. The sermon will be critiqued by CPM, and the theology and exegesis of the sermon discussed with the Candidate.
3. Direct the Candidate to prepare a one-page statement of faith to be reviewed by CPM, in preparation for submission to Presbytery. If needed, proposed revisions to the statement of faith will be suggested to the Candidate. The CPM Moderator and membership will discuss finalization of the statement of faith with the Candidate in preparation for submitting it to Presbytery.
4. The exegesis paper, and statement of faith should be submitted to the CPM moderator at least one week prior to the date that the Candidate will meet with the CPM to be certified to allow time to circulate the material to the CPM members for review before the CPM meeting. A written copy of the sermon to be preached before the CPM should be provided to each CPM member present at the time the Candidate meets with the CPM.
5. CPM moderator reviews candidate's Personal Information Form (PIF) as it is finalized. The candidate must be certified before the PIF can be circulated.
6. Moderator approves release of the PIF into the PC(USA) vocations data base.
7. Moderator informs presbytery staff of candidates' search for a call.
8. Staff and moderator provide reference checks as asked.
9. Moderator completes Form 6.

If the CPM denies the candidate certification to seek a call:

1. Rationale for the denial must be explained to the candidate.
2. The next steps in the process should be determined and suggested to the candidate.
3. Support should be offered to the candidate.
4. Conversation should be initiated by the CPM moderator and/or liaison with the candidate's pastor.

Once a candidate is certified, and the candidate is then nominated for a position (call), preparation for ordination includes:

1. The candidate informs the CPM moderator and liaison of the Call.
2. The presbytery Committee on Ministry determines which presbytery will examine for ordination. The Book of Order states: "The presbytery placing the call to a candidate for ministry shall ordinarily examine and, contingent upon the candidate's successful completion of that examination and all the requirements in G-14.0402, the presbytery responsible for the candidate's preparation for ministry shall ordinarily ordain the candidate." (G-14.0314).

3. The moderator facilitates the examination for ordination with the Stated Clerk of our presbytery if the examination will be done in the presbytery of care.
4. The statement of faith is reviewed for the final time.
5. The candidate or CPM moderator submit the statement of faith to the Stated Clerk and staff for web posting.
6. The candidate and moderator work on questions to initiate the examination, and the moderator chooses the “first question”.
7. The candidate chooses the pastor to pray after the examination.

At the time of examination for ordination during presbytery meeting, the order of events include:

1. The CPM moderator introduces the candidate, gives a brief biography of the candidate, directs the presbyters to the page containing the statement of faith, and asks the first question.
2. The moderator of presbytery oversees further questioning.
3. The CPM liaison, or another CPM member, escorts the candidate from the room.
4. The CPM moderator moves to approve the candidate for ordination, and then fields presbytery questions before a vote is taken.
5. If the presbytery votes to approve the motion, the candidate is escorted back into the room, and a prayer of blessing is offered by the designated pastor chosen previously by the candidate. Other friends and supporters join in that circle.

Final actions in the approval of ordination process:

1. The moderator refers the candidate to the Committee on Ministry staff for initiation of the ordination protocol.
2. The CPM moderator reviews the candidate’s file and completes Form 7.
3. The candidate’s file is archived at the moderator’s instruction once the candidate is ordained.

Other considerations:

If a candidate withdraws from the process, Form 7b is completed and distributed as it directs.

If a candidate transfers into the presbytery mid-process, “a presbytery may transfer the covenant relationship of an inquirer or candidate to another presbytery, but only with the approval of the receiving presbytery and the inquirer or candidate. An inquirer or candidate shall not transfer her or his membership to a particular church under jurisdiction of another presbytery without the approval of the presbytery responsible for the person’s preparation for ministry. Whenever a presbytery approves such a transfer, it shall send to the other presbytery a certificate of its approval, its records concerning the individual, and the reason for the request for transfer. Failure of an inquirer or candidate to follow this procedure shall result in the forfeiture of standing as an inquirer or candidate. No

presbytery may restore such a person's status except by beginning again under provision of G-14.0303." (Book of Order, G-14.0311).

If a candidate seeks to be examined for ordination within our presbytery who has been under care elsewhere, the following policy will apply to any Candidate for Ministry from another presbytery who seeks or has a call in Whitewater Valley Presbytery.

1. Candidates from other presbyteries who have a call in this presbytery will ordinarily be examined for ordination by their home presbytery. (Congregations and Pastor Nominating Committees who may be considering calling or contracting with a Candidate of another presbytery must inform the Candidate of this policy.)
2. Candidates from other presbyteries who are not "certified ready to receive a call" but who have a position in this presbytery that has been validated by the Committee on Ministry (COM), must be counseled that they still must complete the examination process before they can be ordained, and that # 1 and # 4 apply.
3. Candidates who are "certified ready to receive a call", have received a call within this presbytery, have been approved for membership by COM, and who wish to be examined for ordination by this presbytery, will be presented to the presbytery as follows: "_____ is a candidate "certified ready to receive a call" under care of _____ presbytery and, at their request, is being presented without recommendation, positive or negative."
4. Candidates from other presbyteries who are not "certified ready to receive a call" and who have or are seeking a Call in this presbytery, and who want to be examined for ordination by this presbytery, will be informed that the Committee on Preparation for Ministry must first interview them. If the CPM agrees to receive the candidate under its care, the Candidate shall transfer their candidacy and all files to this presbytery. ("Transfer of Covenant Relationship", G-14.0311). Candidates who so transfer must be examined by this presbytery.
5. If requested to do so, this Presbytery is open to ordaining candidates on behalf of the candidate's home presbytery.

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry shall provide an annual "coaching" session for presbytery on how to interview candidates being examined for ordination.

Respectfully submitted,
Committee on Preparation for Ministry
Whitewater Valley Presbytery
March 2006
Revised September 11, 2006