Preparing for ministry through ministry practice

The presbytery's committee overseeing preparation for ministry is responsible for monitoring the covenant among presbytery, inquirers/candidates, and the session. Inquirers and candidates are required to engage in some form of supervised service to the church. Such ministry practice needs to be done under the guidance of supervisors who will provide reports evaluating the service and ministry performed.

Field education assignments that are under the supervision of a theological institution do not require presbytery approval; however, field education assignments that place an inquirer or candidate as the student intern having sole pastoral responsibility for the life of a church require the counsel and oversight of the presbytery having jurisdiction over the church. An inquirer or candidate should not undertake to serve a church, even as a temporary supply, without the approval of the presbytery having jurisdiction over the church as well as the approval of the presbytery's committee overseeing the inquirer's or candidate's preparation for ministry.

Service in Covenant Relationship

Inquirers and candidates shall, with the permission of the presbytery of care, engage in some form of supervised service to the church. No inquirer or candidate who has not been previously ordained as a ruling elder may serve as moderator of a session, administer the Sacraments, or perform a marriage service. An inquirer or candidate previously ordained as a ruling elder may be authorized by the presbytery to preside at the Lord's Supper when invited by a session.

G-2.0606

An inquirer or candidate previously ordained as a ruling elder who has been invited by a session to administer the Lord's Supper may do so only when authorized by the presbytery of which the congregation is a member (and by the inquirer or candidate's presbytery of care if the congregation is in another presbytery), but such authorization is not a usual or customary component of preparation for ministry. No inquirer or candidate who has not previously been ordained a ruling elder may serve as moderator of a session, administer the Sacraments, or perform a marriage service.

A ruling elder currently "commissioned for particular pastoral service" (G-2.10) who enters the preparation for ministry process as an inquirer may continue to be authorized to administer sacraments or perform marriage services in accordance with the presbytery's continuing commission. However, authority to exercise those responsibilities of ministry is limited to the setting identified in the commission; it does not extended to other ministry contexts (such as seminary field education placements) without a specific act of the presbytery revising the commission. It is also possible that an inquirer or candidate previously ordained as a ruling elder and having fulfilled the presbytery's training and examination requirements (G-2.1002) may likewise be "commissioned for particular pastoral service." In either case, it will be very important for the entities charged with overseeing these areas of the presbytery's work to maintain clear lines of communication with one another and carefully establish their respective relationships with any individuals

simultaneously in these distinct roles.

How might presbytery entities responsible for overseeing ruling elders commissioned for particular pastoral service and for overseeing preparation for ministry coordinate when such elders are also discerning and preparing for a possible call as teaching elders?