Final assessment and negotiation for service

- The easy part of "final assessment" is confirming that the educational and examination requirements of G-2.0607b-d have been fulfilled. The difficult—and most important—part is determining whether the candidate possesses the qualities listed in G-2.0607a:
  - "Wisdom and maturity of faith"—Carefully reviewing not only the "S"/"U" evaluations of the standard ordination exams but the responses themselves and the readers' evaluative comments can provide evidence in this area. Having the candidate write a summary statement of faith, often required by presbyteries as part of the examination for ordination and membership, can be another important tool.
  - "Leadership skills"—Do supervised practice of ministry reports indicate not only an open and receptive spirit to learning but also describe instances when the candidate initiated change or helped a community follow the lead of the Spirit into new ministries through group discernment processes?
  - "Compassionate spirit"— Look not only at what ministries of care the candidates have participated in, but also their personal motivations for engaging in these forms of service and their attitudes toward those whom they served. Did they show genuine concern, or condescension?
  - "Honest repute"—What have been the experiences of all covenant partners in working with the candidate? Has he consistently demonstrated integrity and openness? Has she kept commitments and freely accepted accountability when circumstances prevented meeting those commitments?
  - "Sound judgment"—Ministry as a teaching elder requires high levels of critical self-awareness and also emotional intelligence in working with others. Has the candidate been an active participant in setting goals for her or his own development and preparation for ministry? Has he or she been realistic in expectations of others?

"Final assessment" should be about a comprehensive review of all that has been discerned throughout inquiry and candidacy and not just completion of assignments specifically for this consultation.

What "evidence" of core competencies for ministry have been provided through the reports from all those who have partnered with the person during both the inquiry and candidacy phases?

- It is at the stage of "final assessment" that presbyteries will most often need to consider the possibility of granting "waivers" to either the constitutional standards (G-2.0610) or their own requirements of all inquirers and candidates as "accommodations to the particular circumstances" of a candidate. If a presbytery has not reached a decision about the person's personal and professional competencies for ordered ministry as a teaching elder, it is likely premature to be considering waiving requirements. Why

might it be necessary to grant waivers for a person who could not be "certified ready for examination for ordination, pending a call," on other grounds?

- It is the responsibility of the presbytery to decide when a candidate may begin negotiation with any congregation or agency for service that would require ordination as a teaching elder. Though each candidate's situation should be considered on its own merits, you will probably want to set some guidelines to determine under what conditions you may permit "negotiation for service" prior to a candidate having been "certified ready for examination for ordination, pending a call."

Search committees will expect candidates to be able to provide clear expectations of when they would be eligible to begin service. What procedures for approving a candidate to "negotiate for service" prior to "certification of readiness" would address such concerns?

- Candidates approved to "negotiate for service" will require certification of that approval from their presbytery in order to circulate a Personal Information Form (PIF) with the Church Leadership Connection.

Candidacy continues until ordination, withdrawal, or removal. So even after the candidate has been "certified ready for examination" and begun "negotiating for service," there should be a renewed covenant agreement with presbytery and continued regular consultations. Particular attention should be given to how the candidate will not only maintain but continue to develop ministry skills and a proactive plan for seeking a first call.