The Presbytery

The presbytery's ministry to the church is at the heart of the preparation for ministry process. The presbytery provides representatives to work with inquirers and candidates (G-3.0307), elects readers to evaluate the ordination examinations approved by the General Assembly (G-3.0302b), and ultimately approves the first calls for and examines candidates for ordination as teaching elders (G-2.0702).

The presbytery's ministry with individual inquirers and candidates ordinarily is facilitated through a committee or commission (G-3.0307, and G-3.0109b(3)). As ruling and teaching elders take on these demanding responsibilities, they share the rich satisfaction of helping men and women discern their calls and grow toward readiness for the ordered ministry of teaching elder. Their time, energy and commitment offer a significant contribution to the church's future ministry.

In planning its preparation for ministry "mechanisms and processes" (G-3.0307), the presbytery may consult the material described in the "Resources" section of this *Advisory Handbook* and contact appropriate General Assembly offices for additional support and counsel. This *Handbook* seeks to provide some of the basic information a presbytery will need while also raising questions for it to consider in light of its particular mission context. The material presented in this section should be read with continual reference to G-2.06 and G-2.07 in the *Book of Order,* the second section of this *Handbook,* and the presbytery's own policies and procedures adopted to facilitate this work.

Responsibilities of the presbytery as a whole

- Designate which committee or commission will facilitate the presbytery's work with inquirers and candidates (G-3.0307 and G-3.0109b(3)) and ensure that this entity has adequate support and resources. (For the sake of convenience, this *Advisory Handbook* uses "presbytery's committee" or similar terms to refer to the entity of the presbytery—whether formally a committee or a commission—that facilitates its oversight of inquirers and candidates.)
- If the presbytery acts to empower a commission for aspects of this work, it must explicitly delegate specific actions for which the commission may act on the presbytery's behalf (e.g., approving policies and procedures; enrolling, transferring, removing inquirers and candidates; transitioning inquirers to candidacy, etc.). Any actions not explicitly delegated to the commission will continue to require approval by the presbytery in plenary session.
- The members of the committee or commission should be carefully selected, with planned tenure to assure continuity. While new members should receive careful orientation, regular training events or retreats should be provided for all members. Such training will enable them to develop procedures for relationships with inquirers and candidates and help them establish criteria by which to measure individuals' development for ordered ministry.

- Receive reports or recommendations regarding each person considered for inquiry, candidacy, certification of readiness to be examined for ordination, and approval to negotiate for service in a ministry that would require ordination as a teaching elder.
- Maintain a roll of inquirers and candidates (G-2.0609), and report actions related to this roll to the Office of the General Assembly through the online preparation for ministry management system.
- Provide for the election of standard ordination exam readers as requested by the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates (PCC) through Mid Council Ministries of the Office of the General Assembly (G-3.0302b), and report their names and terms of service through the online preparation for ministry management system.

Has your presbytery "delegated authority" to its preparation for ministry entity to act on its behalf in certain areas?

If so, what decisions are the commission authorized to make for the presbytery, and what actions must the presbytery take in plenary session?

Who may work with your inquirers and candidates on the presbytery's behalf in light of the decision to form a committee or a commission?

Is it required that every presbytery have a committee or commission specifically for the purpose of overseeing the preparation for ministry process?

There is no constitutional requirement that a presbytery have a candidates' committee or a commission on preparation for ministry. Most presbyteries, however, will find it very impractical to oversee even one or two persons under care if every matter, down to the negotiating of covenant agreements, must be accomplished by the presbytery in plenary session. For that reason, the *Book of Order* suggests presbyteries create an "entity" to facilitate this work (G-3.0307). Each presbytery—taking into consideration its size, the number of persons under care, and its overall mission plan and context—will make decisions about the type of entity it requires and its overall scope of responsibilities. For example, a presbytery might decide to form a single commission to facilitate all aspects of its responsibilities for preparing, receiving, and overseeing the ministry of teaching elders within its bounds.

How can your presbytery within its particular mission context organize itself to best facilitate its work with inquirers and candidates?