

# COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY HANDBOOK

## Guide to Ordination as a Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA) through Mission Presbytery

### PROCESS FOR PERSONS SEEKING ORDINATION AS A MINISTER OF WORD AND SACRAMENT

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## An Overview of the Process

### I. Introduction

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.” (I Corinthians 12:4-6)

“Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here I am; send me!’” (Isaiah 6:8)

If you are reading this, you or someone you know has begun to think about what it might mean to be called as a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Perhaps you are ready to explore what it might mean to embrace the vocation of a pastor; perhaps you know someone in your congregation who you sense might be called to service as a minister; perhaps you are in the midst of the preparation process already, and seek clarification as to what the next steps are; or, perhaps, you are merely testing the waters, not quite ready to articulate what has already begun to work its way to the surface in your journey of faith, what very well may be God calling you to service as a teaching elder. A person responds to God’s call to faith in Jesus Christ and service in His name through Baptism and through life and worship in the community of faith. Certainly, your pastors, as well as elders in your congregation, trusted friends and mentors have already been engaged in some form of vocational discernment with you – and will continue to be some of your closest companions and supporters along your journey.

As part of the wider community of faith, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) stands ready to explore God’s call with you when you are ready to do so as part of the formal process of preparation for ministry. This Guide outlines the principles, procedures, and practices of the CPM based on the *Book of Order* and the *Advisory Handbook for Preparation for Ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)* found on the PC(USA) website. It is to be a guide for Inquirers, Candidates, sessions, and the presbytery as together we seek to discern God’s call to individuals in our midst. We welcome you to the journey and look forward to working with you as together we pray, talk, wrestle and listen for God’s call to you, and to Christ’s Church!

### II. Purposes of the Process

The purposes of the preparation for ministry process of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are as follows:

- To help all church members, whatever their occupations, discern and fulfill their Christian vocation; and
- To provide the best possible leadership for the church by assuring that persons who feel called to the ministry of teaching elder receive the fullest personal and professional preparation for that office (*Book of Order* G-2.0601).

### III. Theological Background

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is firmly grounded in the Reformed tradition in its relationships with those who feel themselves called by God to be teaching elders. Both in exploring with these persons

their sense of vocation and in all subsequent procedures leading to ordination, the Reformed understanding of the church underlies what the Book of Order calls full preparation for ministry (G-2.0601).

Presbyterians understand the church as a community called into being by Jesus Christ. It is Christ who gives the church its faith and life, its unity and mission, its offices and ordinances, for Christ is its head in all things (F-1.02).

Presbyterians believe in the priesthood of all believers – that all church members, regardless of their occupational choice, are engaged in ministry. Some may be called by the Holy Spirit, through the church, to the ministry of teaching elder. This ministry is one among many occupations through which people express their God-given interests and abilities in life and daily work. Response to this calling is approached through a careful process of exploration and testing carried on within the community of faith during which gifts and motivations are evaluated in light of the needs of the church and the world.

The essential role of teaching elders is set forth in both the Bible and in the church's constitutional documents. Key concepts which have been proven valid by the church's experience through the years are the following:

- Ordained ministry is a gift of God to the church;
- Ordained ministers, along with ruling elders, equip church members for their ministry by proclaiming the good news in Word and Sacrament, teaching faith and caring for people by ensuring that the church's life is governed in an orderly way;
- The church actively seeks and ordains persons whose gifts and abilities equip them for the ministry of teaching elder; if a person ordained to this ministry is later called by God to other work, the church can release them from ordained office;
- A person experiences God's call to ministry privately as an inner urgency. The church, however, experiences that call publicly as it affirms that individual's gifts for ministry and confirms God's call through the acts of ordination and installation.

The relationship between the church and those who feel called to be teaching elders carries important responsibilities for all involved:

- *For congregations*, it means educating all members in the Biblical and Reformed understanding of Christian vocation and helping believers understand the call of discipleship includes making responsible occupational choices. It also means nurturing and encouraging persons seeking to discern their call to teaching elder. A critical step is for the pastor and session to provide the context within which individuals can discern the call to the ministry of teaching elder and understand the nature of this ministry. They help inquirers evaluate the suitability of their gifts and provide pastoral care and support during the preparation for ministry process. Acting as advocate for the inquirer or candidate, the session, through its moderator and presbytery commissioner(s), can call the CPM to accountability in fulfilling its responsibilities.

- *For inquirers and candidates* who enter into the process, it involves a sense of solemn obligation to God and to the church. In some cases this means that it is the individual's responsibility to recognize and accept the fact that they are called to a ministry other than teaching elder.
- *For presbyteries*, it means developing effective means of testing and validating the calls of those seeking to become teaching elders, providing them with pastoral care, support, guidance and oversight, and bringing to active candidacy those with appropriate abilities and motivation. To ensure that this important work is effectively carried out, those chosen to serve on the presbytery's CPM need particular gifts, skills and commitment.
- *For theological institutions*, it means upholding the Reformed standards of an educated ministry by providing scriptural, historical, doctrinal, and ecclesiastical disciplines, as well as opportunities for students to develop personal and professional skills through field education and Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE).
- *For all participants* involved in preparation for ministry, it means relating to one another in continuing openness to God's grace, with mutual trust and respect based upon the assurance that God has given everyone gifts to use in the church's ministry. Integrity requires that each partner in the preparation process speak the truth with love at all times. It is important for partners to function in a way that reflects mutual accountability and honesty in all dealings with one another.

#### **IV. Key Concepts**

The preparation for ministry process is grounded in an understanding of Christian vocation as a response to God's grace which calls all Christians to ministry, whatever their occupations. Some among them are called by the Holy Spirit, through the church, to the ministry of teaching elder.

Covenant relationships acknowledge that the Christian community's primary commitment is to God. In the context of this commitment to and covenant relationship with God, the inquirer or candidate and the CPM negotiate between themselves additional covenant agreements. These agreements affirm their mutual responsibility and provide the means for planning and evaluating the inquirer's or candidate's progress in preparing for the ministry of teaching elder.

The resulting ongoing relationships take seriously the unique background, experience and personal attributes that each person brings to the process. They enable the sharing of deep convictions, an enhanced understanding of the demands of ministry, and the self-evaluation that are essential to the process. Professional and spiritual guidance and personal support develop naturally within the context of such relationships.

Consultations with the inquirer or candidate are based on specific goals in five areas of growth development and on specific expected outcomes for both the inquiry and candidacy phases (education for ministry, spiritual development, interpersonal relations, personal growth and professional development). The purpose of consultations is to help the CPM work with the individual at their current level of achievement and, through guided conversations and the mutual negotiation of new learning contracts, to stimulate further growth in specific areas.

The inquirer or candidate shares responsibility with the CPM for their movement through the process and for planning for evaluating their growth.

The preparation for ministry process is one of continuing development. By providing a supportive community in which the inquirer or candidate assumes increasing responsibility for decisions made throughout the process, it introduces them to skills for self-development, goal setting and self-evaluation. The individual is encouraged to develop these skills into conscious, disciplined planning for personal and professional growth which should continue throughout their ministry.

Ordinarily, it takes a minimum of two years (usually three or more) to proceed from admission to the Inquiry phase to ordination as a teaching elder.

## **V. Before the Process Begins**

- a. Participate actively in the life and mission of the Church.
- b. Commit to engaging in an ongoing process of discernment with pastors, elders and other trusted mentors and friends giving particular attention and thought to the following:
  - Presbyterian/Reformed understanding of church membership, service, and vocation.
  - How serving the church as a teaching elder differs from and/or shares similarities with other forms of Christian service.
  - Your reasons for desiring to be ordained as a teaching elder.
  - The ongoing journey of faith: the various joys, struggles, doubts, and fears regarding one's faith and sense of call.
  - Financial planning prior to enrolling in seminary, including consideration of long-term financial implications (e.g., retirement issues, cumulative debt, etc.).
- c. When someone enters seminary and pursues theological education, they embark upon what is typically a three-year (or so) educational journey leading to a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree. The ecclesiastical process of preparation for ministry (related work and conversations with the CPM) often mirrors and follows that academic/educational time frame, but many times, and for many reasons, the two tracks of preparation for ministry do not begin and end exactly at the same time.

## **VI. Planning Seminary Education**

A Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seminary intentionally offers a climate and a community that nurtures a Presbyterian pastoral identity; therefore, the CPM believes that such academic and theological education provides vital preparation and essential formation for persons who will be serving PC(USA) congregations. Because of this, the CPM expects that Inquirers and Candidates

will ordinarily attend a seminary affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). A list of Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seminaries is located at the end of this document. Should the potential inquirer wish to pursue the M.Div. degree at a seminary or Bible college not affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), or one that does not have a substantive Presbyterian presence on its campus, Mission Presbytery requires prior conversation between the individual and the CPM in discerning the wisdom of that intention and desire. The CPM may require that the individual take certain core courses at a seminary of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

A Master of Divinity degree (M.Div) is a requirement. Within this degree, the following courses are required by Mission Presbytery as part of one's theological education and seminary course work:

- Biblical studies – Introduction to the Old and New Testament
- Biblical Languages and Exegesis – Hebrew and Greek languages, followed by an exegesis course in each language
- Reformed Theology
- Worship and Sacraments
- Homiletics/Preaching
- Presbyterian Polity
- Christian Education and Formation

## **VII. Preparation for Ministry Process**

The preparation for ministry process involves three phases: (1) inquiry, (2) candidacy and (3) final assessment. These phases are designed to explore the call, evaluate the gifts, and support the preparation of people who feel themselves called to be teaching elders (G-2.0601). To do this effectively, the presbytery charges a CPM to work closely with those persons within its congregations who wish to prepare themselves for this ordained office. Since the model for the teaching elder is the ministry of Jesus Christ, it is the committee's particular responsibility to help these individuals grow toward maturity in Christ.

Both the inquiry and candidacy phase of the process nurtures and tests the individual's development in five key growth areas:

1. Education for Ministry which includes evaluation of a person's academic potential and educational experiences in relation to preparation for the ministry of teaching elder;
2. Spiritual Development which provides a framework in which individuals can reflect on their personal faith journeys and their spiritual practices to discern the will of God in their lives;

3. Interpersonal Relations which provide opportunities to reflect on how an individual relates to others, one's own leadership style, and what this means in terms of the ministry of teaching elder;
4. Personal Growth through which persons reflect on who they are, what areas they need to develop, how to understand their call, and how to develop personal stewardship;
5. Professional Development to help persons develop specific skills that will enhance their effectiveness as teaching elders and as presbyters. To understand one's ministry context, the congregation, is important. Also needed is the ability to deal with conflict that may emerge in the congregation one serves.

During both the inquiry and candidacy phases, the individual's progress is measured by specific expected outcomes formulated by these five growth areas. It is important that the expected outcomes be understood as essential goals rather than simply as minimum requirements to be met. These expected outcomes serve as the focus of ongoing consultations between the inquirer or candidate, the session and the CPM. The process of inquiry and candidacy is most effective when it reflects the Biblical theme of the covenant relationship - both a response to God's faithfulness and an expression of the concern people have for one another. The process also affirms that all aspects of the church's life are based upon God's gracious promises and on the belief that God's self-giving love uplifts and upholds all that the church is and does. Throughout the entire process, all who are involved in the covenant relationship need to approach their tasks with seriousness and diligence, communicating openly and intentionally with one another.

## **A. Phase I: Inquiry**

The purpose of inquiry is to provide opportunities for the church and for those who believe they may be called to the ministry of teaching elder to explore and test that call together. To make this exploration as effective as possible, a network of caring, supportive relationships is initiated – first, between the inquirer and their church session, then with the presbytery through its CPM and often with their theological institution. In regular consultation with the committee, the inquirer evaluates the personal implications and the suitability of a church occupation, is guided in prayerful examination of their motivation, personal faith and experience in the congregation, and makes a serious assessment of the gifts needed by teaching elders, comparing them with their own gifts. This phase also provides the church with opportunities to respond directly to the inquirer's questions and concerns.

### **1. Admission to Inquiry**

A member of a congregation is considered for enrollment as an inquirer when they approach the session about the possibility of becoming a teaching elder and formally agrees with the session and the CPM to explore the implications of this quest. Enrollment is intended to be a thoughtful and deliberate step; people are encouraged to take this formal action soon after they have made their personal decision to explore this ministry so that the CPM can provide them with support and counsel as early as possible. The process and requirement of the inquiry phase is as follows:

- a. A person desiring to become an inquirer shall indicate to the session of their particular congregation a desire to explore the personal implications of becoming a teaching elder.

- b. The person shall have been an active member and participant of a PC(USA) congregation within the bounds of Mission Presbytery for at least six months.
- c. The session shall contact the CPM for orientation to the process of preparing for ministry.
- d. The session shall consult with the potential inquirer and, if the individual requests to be enrolled as an inquirer, shall make a recommendation on this request to presbytery through the CPM. The completed recommendation form shall be sent to the Stated Clerk of the presbytery.
- e. The potential Inquirer shall prepare, complete and send to the Stated Clerk of Mission Presbytery the appropriate forms (see "Checklist for CPM Paperwork") **at least one month** prior to the consultation with the CPM. The meetings of the CPM are listed on Mission Presbytery's website under the CPM tab.
- f. After an endorsement by the session, the potential Inquirer contacts the Chair/Co-Chair of CPM for direction on scheduling and completing a psychological evaluation through the counseling agency recommended by the CPM (note: scheduling the evaluation and receiving the report from the counselor usually takes at least two months to complete. Plan accordingly. Also, give permission for the CPM to receive a copy of the evaluation).
- g. Send official transcripts of all completed undergraduate and graduate academic work to the Stated Clerk of Mission Presbytery.
- h. Once all paperwork is received, the Chair or one the Co-Chairs of CPM contacts the potential Inquirer and schedules a meeting with the CPM. The conversation with the committee will be one that focuses on the narrative responses in the paperwork and the report from the psychological exam. This conversation is designed for the person and the CPM to begin to get to know one another. The potential Inquirer should be prepared to speak about topics such as their faith journey, sense of call (new and unformed as it may be), church involvement, understanding of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), an understanding of what it means to be Presbyterian (including polity and Reformed theology), current spiritual practices and disciplines, and an understanding of what the person believes their gifts for ministry are.
- i. As part of this conversation, the CPM will most likely suggest recommendations and/or make requirements as the person prepares for ordained ministry. These recommendations and requirements will be recorded and documented.
- j. If the CPM concurs with the session endorsement, the person will be recommended to presbytery to be enrolled as an Inquirer. The date of the presbytery's action to enroll shall be the beginning of the covenant relationship. This period shall be no less than two years and at least one year shall be as a candidate (G-2.0602).
- k. The Inquirer will be assigned a liaison to the CPM; this person will be the primary contact for the Inquirer and the committee. They will be available for questions, conversations and information through the process. The Inquirer will receive a copy of the requirements and recommendations made by the CPM. These are a guide in making plans about seminary coursework, field education, and other related ministry experiences.



- I. The phase of inquiry shall be of sufficient length for the Inquirer, the session, and the CPM to decide whether the Inquirer should apply to become a candidate. During this time, the CPM shall make use of resources such as information provided by the Inquirer, personal references, reports from counseling services, the session, and the Inquirer's institution of learning, if the inquirer is a student.

## **2. During Inquiry**

Before deciding whether to apply for candidacy, the Inquirer consults at least once a year with the CPM through their liaison. During each consultation, the committee and the inquirer assess their progress toward previously established goals in each of the five growth areas, and together negotiate appropriate new goals. Annual consultations are just that: they must happen annually. If an inquirer remains in the preparation process for two consecutive years without an annual consultation, they may be removed from the roll of inquirers by the committee, and thus from the process of preparation for ministry.

## **3. Completion of Inquiry**

The inquiry phase concludes when the CPM knows the Inquirer well enough to determine whether or not to recommend the presbytery receive them as a candidate, and when the Inquirer expresses a sense of call to this next step by fulfilling the expected outcomes of inquiry.

## **4. Expected Outcomes of Inquiry**

By the end of the inquiry phase, each Inquirer can demonstrate adequate promise for ministry by presenting:

- a. A statement of their understanding of Christian vocation in the Reformed tradition and how it relates to their 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 this 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 for maintaining spiritual, physical, and mental health;
- f. A statement of their understanding of the task teaching elders perform, including an awareness of their specific gifts for the ministry of teaching elder and of areas in which growth is needed.

## **5. Between Inquiry and Candidacy**

During the period between Inquiry and Candidacy, the Inquirer should:

- a. Engage in continued conversations with pastors, mentors, CPM liaison, and session paying particular attention and consideration to the questions/topics for reflection listed on Forms 3 and 5A.
- b. Maintain regular and open communication with their liaisons from the session and CPM.
- c. Take and pass the Bible Content Exam (usually during the first year of seminary).
- d. One year after being enrolled as an Inquirer, meet with the CPM liaison and one other CPM member for an annual consultation. The appropriate form should be prepared and sent to the Mission Presbytery office **at least one month** prior to the consultation with the CPM. Please note:
  - it is the responsibility of the Inquirer to initiate the annual consultation.
  - if an Inquirer remains in the preparation process for two (2) consecutive years without an annual consultation, they may be removed by the Committee from the roll of inquirers, and thus from the process of preparation for ministry of the Word and Sacrament.
- e. When the Inquirer is ready to explore the possibility of being received by Mission Presbytery as a Candidate, the person should prepare, complete and send to the Mission Presbytery Office Form 5A and Form 5B (and all of their respective parts) **at least one month** prior to the consultation with the committee. Formal endorsement from their session is required after having discussed the questions for reflection on Form 5A with that body. If the annual consultation and the application to be enrolled as a candidate are to happen during the same interview, Forms 3, 5A and 5B should all be completed and sent to the Mission Presbytery Office at the same time.
- f. When applying to be enrolled as a candidate, the individual should be able to speak to the topics/questions for reflection found in Forms 3, 5A and 5B, especially the following:
  - an understanding of Christian vocation in the Reformed tradition and how it relates to their sense of call
  - a statement of personal faith which incorporates an understanding of the Reformed tradition
  - a growing understanding of the tasks teaching elders perform, including an awareness of their specific gifts for ministry (and areas within which growth is needed).
- g. Prior to meeting with the CPM, send up-to-date official transcripts of all seminary coursework undertaken to the Stated Clerk of Mission Presbytery.
- h. The inquirer shall be in the process of fulfilling the academic requirements of their seminary regarding the component(s) of Supervised Practice of Ministry (SPM) or Field Education. The CPM

expects that, ordinarily, the SPM or field education will take place within a church setting, but not within the Inquirer's/Candidate's home church. Waiver of this requirement can only come through approval of a written request from the Inquirer/Candidate which explains and justifies the need for such an exception. CPM expects that such requests will be rare, and approvals rarer still.

- i. The CPM may, at its discretion, require an Inquirer to complete an internship or extended SPM of up to twelve months in length, in addition to degree requirements imposed by the individual's seminary. The CPM requirement for this additional ministerial exposure will be based upon: (a) the individual's length of experience with and familiarity of ministerial practices in the Presbyterian Reformed Tradition, e.g., church involvement and membership history; and (b) the CPM's assessment of specific areas which are seen by the committee to need continued experience and exposure. Such a CPM direction shall not be reviewable. The CPM is willing to explore ways of meeting this requirement while concurrently limiting any individual's financial exposure.
- j. Ordinarily the CPM requires the Inquirer to satisfactorily complete one basic unit of Clinical Pastoral Evaluation (CPE) or its equivalent. This may be taken in conjunction with academic degree requirements, but CPM reserves the right to require up to two more basic units of additional CPE exposure.
- k. While the Bible Content Exam may be taken during the first year of seminary, only after completing two academic years of theological education may the Inquirer apply to take the four senior ordination exams by contacting the Chair /Co-Chair of the CPM (see the section "Timing of Exams in the Preparation Process" in *The Handbook on Standard Ordination Examinations* on the Office of the General Assembly website).

## **B. Phase II: Candidacy**

The purpose of this phase is to provide opportunities for the church to support persons received as candidates in their preparation for the ministry of teaching elder. It is the responsibility of the CPM to create an environment in which the uniqueness of each individual candidate is taken seriously. As partners in a covenant relationship, both the committee and the candidate are encouraged to work together as they plan for and evaluate the candidate's growth and development.

### **1. Admission to Candidacy**

An Inquirer becomes a Candidate by action of presbytery. At that time the Candidate formally agrees to accept the presbytery's supervision in their preparation for the ministry of teaching elder. The process of the candidacy phase is as follows:

- a. An Inquirer shall apply to candidacy through the session of their church.
- b. The session shall confer with the Inquirer, review the evidence of the inquiry phase, and make recommendations to the presbytery. The appropriate form (note: "Checklist for CPM Paperwork" under the CPM tab of Mission Presbytery's website) is sent to the presbytery's Stated Clerk.
- c. The CPM shall confer with the Inquirer and review the evidence which indicates whether the Inquirer is ready to proceed to candidacy. The candidacy conversation with the CPM will focus on

the narrative responses on Form 5A. The potential candidate should be prepared to discuss these topics in detail and depth. One way to discern if the timing is right for this conversation is to consider the questions asked by the presbytery when Inquirers are being examined at the presbytery meeting. See f. below.

- d. 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.
- e. The presbytery shall receive the report and recommendation of the committee and shall examine the Inquirer with respect to their Christian faith, forms of Christian service undertaken, and motives for seeking the ministry.
- f. If the examination is approved, the presbytery shall receive the Inquirer as a Candidate in the following manner:

The moderator shall propose the following questions to the Inquirer:

- Do you believe yourself to be called by God to the ministry of teaching elder?
- 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?
- Do you accept the proper supervision of the presbytery in matters that concern your preparation for this ministry?
- Do you desire now to be received by this presbytery as a candidate for the ministry of teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?

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.

## **2. During Candidacy**

The covenant relationship between the candidate and the presbytery is expressed through the negotiation and review of a series of learning contracts based on the expected outcomes for this phase. In consultations that occur at least once a year, both the committee and the candidate assess their progress toward completion of previously established goals and negotiate appropriate new goals. It is essential that during each consultation the decision be made as to whether candidacy should be continued, especially if it becomes clear that adequate growth is not taking place.

Annual consultations are just that: they must happen annually. If a candidate remains in the preparation process for two consecutive years without an annual consultation, the committee may recommend that the presbytery remove them from the roll of candidates, and thus from the process of preparation for the ministry of teaching elder.

### **3. Completion of Candidacy**

Candidacy continues until one of two actions changes the candidacy status: (1) removal of the candidate from the roll of candidates (by request of the candidate or Presbytery action); (2) successful completion of final assessment and reception of a call to the ministry of teaching elder. In this case the following steps are involved:

- the CPM determines a candidate is ready to be examined for ordination;
- the candidate receives a call; and
- the candidate is examined, ordained and installed (ordinarily) by the presbytery of call.

### **4. Expected Outcomes of Candidacy**

By the end of the candidacy phase, each candidate shall demonstrate readiness to begin ministry as a teaching elder by:

- a. presenting evidence of competence in the fields of theology, Bible, polity, and worship and sacraments, ordinarily attested by completion of the requirements of G-2.0607 in the *Book of Order*.
- b. presenting evidence of ministerial skill attested in the supervised practice of ministry;
- c. expressing theological views compatible with the confessional documents of the church;
- d. expressing understanding of the meaning of the questions required for ordination (W-4.4003) informed by knowledge of the church in diverse settings;
- e. revealing commitment to the ministry of teaching elder within 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.

### **5. Between Candidacy and Final Assessment**

During the period between candidacy and final assessment, the candidate should:

- a. Maintain regular and open communication with their liaisons from the session and from the CPM, discussing joys, needs, concerns and areas that might need further attention and/or growth.
- b. Complete and pass all required Ordination Exams. In the event of repeated failure to pass a particular exam or exams, the CPM will meet with the Candidate to explore reasons for the continued failure to pass a particular exam or exams. If the CPM deems it necessary and good to explore alternative examination options, the CPM and the Candidate will work out a specific plan to remedy the situation in a manner acceptable to the committee. The CPM will monitor the candidate's progress in implementing the remedial plan. When the remedial process has been completed to the satisfaction of the CPM, the committee will recommend a waiver to the

presbytery, including a summary of the remedial process and a rationale for the waiver recommendation (note: this policy was adopted by Mission Presbytery on 10/23/04.)

- c. Every year after being enrolled as a candidate, the individual must participate in an annual consultation with the CPM. At the appropriate time, the candidate should complete the appropriate forms (see "Checklist for CPM Paperwork") and send to the Stated Clerk.
  
- d. If a Candidate remains in the preparation process for two consecutive years without an annual consultation, the committee may recommend that the Presbytery remove them from the roll of candidates, and thus from the process of preparation for the ministry of teaching elder.

### **C. Phase III: Final Assessment / Certified Ready for Examination, Pending a Call**

To be certified ready for examination, pending a call, each candidate is required to fulfill the following:

- a. Demonstration of readiness to begin ministry of teaching elder as required in the expected outcomes above.
- b. Presentation of a diploma and a transcript showing satisfactory grades at a regionally accredited college or university.
- c. Presentation of a diploma and a transcript showing satisfactory grades of all seminary coursework undertaken from a theological institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools. If this is not yet available by the time of the scheduled final assessment interview, approval of final assessment will be contingent upon receipt of the diploma and transcripts.
- d. Presentation of satisfactory grades with the examination material/papers in the five areas covered by the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates (see *The Book of Order*, G-2.0607).
- e. Presentation to the CPM of an exegesis paper on a particular Biblical text showing all relevant exegetical research/work used to support a sermon including a written description of the contemporary need to which it was/will be addressed.
- f. A sermon manuscript based on the above text and preached to the CPM as part of the Final Assessment.
- g. A one-page statement of faith.
- h. A draft of the Candidate's Personal Information Form (PIF). **Please note:** PIFs cannot be circulated or sent to Pastor Nominating Committees prior to successful completion of the final assessment interview.
- f. The following certifications:

- Attendance and completion of a boundaries workshop/seminar/class which must include a discussion and explanation of sexual ethics and standards of conduct for officers in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The candidate shall forward certification of such attendance to the presbytery's Stated Clerk. Such certification shall appear in the candidate's CPM file prior to the final assessment interview.
- Attendance and completion of a workshop/seminar/class focusing on financial planning, including topics related to fiscal fitness, debt, tax issues for clergy and retirement savings plans. The candidate shall forward certification of such attendance to the presbytery's Stated Clerk. Such certification shall appear in the candidate's CPM file prior to the final assessment interview.

The committee and Candidate will discuss all aspects in discerning readiness for ordination as a Minister of Word and Sacrament in the PC(USA). Upon a successful assessment, the Candidate will be certified ready for examination, pending a call.

#### **D. After Final Assessment**

- a. Candidates certified as ready to accept a call in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) should be willing and able to seek a call within three (3) years of certification. If, after three years, the Candidate is not actively seeking an ordained call, CPM will address this situation with the Candidate.
- b. Candidates shall continue annual consultations with the CPM until such time as they are ordained to the ministry of teaching elder.
- c. If a candidate remains in the preparation process for two consecutive years without an annual consultation, the committee may recommend that the Presbytery remove them from the roll of candidates, and thus from the process of preparation for the ministry of teaching elder.
- d. Upon receiving the good news of a call, the Candidate shall inform the CPM when they have accepted a call and completed the ordination process.

#### **VIII. The Top Ten Things to Remember During the CPM Process**

1. Do not stop going to church. Do not neglect your worship and prayer life.
2. Please do not assume that you are the exception to the rule.
3. At times, the process of preparing for ministry will seem like it is a difficult one. This is not because the CPM sets out to make it so, but because ministry and discipleship are joyfully challenging. Growth and transformation call us to change, and that is not always pleasant or easy.

4. The preparation for ministry process takes at least two years; you must be a candidate for one of those years before you can be ordained (see *The Book of Order*, G-2.0602).
5. Tell the truth. Be honest, genuine, and authentic. Be who you are, not who you think we want you to be. After all, that's what people will want in their pastor – you.
6. Paperwork is due no later than one month prior to meeting with the CPM.
7. Maintain communication with your liaison and your session. Talk to them and talk to us.
8. This process is about you, but it is not all about you. Ordination to one of the church's ordered ministries is not the simple recognition that a person possesses gifts for ministry, or that an office suits a person's abilities. Ordination is certainly not about access to position, influence, and power in the church. Ordination is the church's act of recognizing the movement of the Holy Spirit in the interactions among the whole church's ordering of ministries, its standards for these ministries, and its current needs, together with prayerful discernment by persons, congregations, and presbyteries. Ordination is a gift, not a right.
9. Plan ahead. We are all in this together but, ultimately, your paperwork is your responsibility (not your liaison, not your session and not the presbytery office). It is your job to make sure your forms, etc. get to the presbytery office by the deadline. You are welcome to call the office if you have questions about what you lack or what is missing. Your session may send in various forms of paperwork for you, but it's your job to make sure that happens, and that your file is complete.
10. The CPM stands ready to pray with you, to rejoice with you, to struggle with you, and to give thanks for your gifts as together we discern where God may be calling you, and where God may be calling us, as members of the church of Jesus Christ.

## **IX. Presbyterian Church (USA) Seminaries**

Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Austin, TX  
Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA  
University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, Dubuque, IA  
Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary, Atlanta, GA  
Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY  
McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, IL  
Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, PA  
Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, NJ  
San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Anselmo and Redlands, CA  
Union Presbyterian Seminary, Richmond, VA and Charlotte, NC



## Seminaries related to the PC(USA) by Covenant Agreement

Auburn Theological Seminary, New York, NY  
Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico, San Juan, PR

### **X. Checklist for CPM Paperwork**

The following paperwork must be turned into the presbytery's Stated Clerk no later than one month prior to the scheduled meeting of CPM. Forms may be found on the website of Mission Presbytery. Click on "Committees" and then "Committee on Preparation for Ministry."

#### Inquiry

- **Forms 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D; Forms 2A and 2B.**  
*This includes a response to the nine (9) narrative questions.*
- **A copy of one's psychological evaluation report.**  
*Prospective inquirers must request and "release" provider to send a copy of the evaluation to the CPM (the Mission Presbytery office).*

#### Annual Consultation only

- **Form 3.**
- **Up-to-date transcripts of academic work.**
- **Evaluation(s)** from 1) the supervisor of Supervised Practice of Ministry placement and/or CPE supervisor, and 2) Self-Evaluation of these ministry experiences (if new or updated).
- **Any other relevant information beneficial to the CPM** (e.g., If inquirer has been required by CPM to seek counseling, an evaluation/report from that person. Or, if inquirer has undertaken other tasks or ministry opportunities not highlighted in their responses on Form 3).

*For any annual consultation, the inquirer/candidate will meet with their CPM liaison and one other member of the CPM at a mutually agreed upon time (not with the entire CPM). Send forms to the Stated Clerk.*

#### Annual Consultation & Candidacy

- **Form 3.**
- **Up-to-date transcripts of academic work.**
- **Evaluation(s)** from 1) the supervisor of Supervised Practice of Ministry placement and/or CPE supervisor, and 2) Self-Evaluation of these ministry experiences.
- **Any other relevant information beneficial to the CPM** (e.g., If inquirer has been required by CPM to seek counseling, an evaluation/report from that person. Or, if inquirer has

undertaken other tasks or ministry opportunities not highlighted in their responses on Form 3).

- **Forms 5A and 5B.** (Note: Only one set of references is necessary for Forms 3 and 5A.)  
*This includes a response to the six (6) narrative questions.*

### **Annual Consultation & Final Assessment**

- **Form 3.**
- **Up-to-date transcripts of academic work.**
- **Evaluation(s)** from 1) the supervisor of Supervised Practice of Ministry placement and/or CPE supervisor, and 2) Self-Evaluation of these ministry experiences.
- **Any other relevant information beneficial to the CPM** (e.g., If candidate has been required by CPM to seek counseling, an evaluation/report from that person. Or, if candidate has undertaken other tasks or ministry opportunities not highlighted in their responses on Form 3).
- **Exegesis paper of a particular Biblical text.**
- **Sermon manuscript based on the above text.**  
*Reminder: The candidate will preach this sermon for the CPM as part of the Final Assessment.*
- **One-page statement of faith.**
- **Draft of Personal Information Form (PIF).**

### **Final Assessment only**

- **Exegesis paper of a particular Biblical text.**
- **Sermon manuscript based on the above text.**  
*Reminder: The candidate will preach this sermon for the CPM as part of the Final Assessment.*
- **One-page statement of faith.**
- **Draft of Personal Information Form (PIF).**

### **XI. A Final Note:**

Do not send any of this paperwork to the CPM Chair-Co-chairs or to your liaison (with the exception of those anticipating annual consultations). Please send all paperwork by mail or email to the Stated Clerk.

If by mail: **Mission Presbytery (for CPM)**  
**7201 Broadway, Suite 303 San Antonio, TX 78209**  
**Attention: Stated Clerk**

If email: [statedclerk@missionpby.org](mailto:statedclerk@missionpby.org)

If paperwork has not been received by the stated deadline, then the inquirer/candidate will not be able to meet with the CPM at its next meeting. The CPM will gladly welcome the Inquirer/Candidate at the next stated meeting of CPM once their file is complete.