

**COMMISSION ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY**  
**HANDBOOK**

Conformed to the 2017-2019 *Book of Order*

Approved by Presbytery of Tampa Bay November 2017



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Some acronyms used:

PCUSA – Presbyterian Church (USA)

CPM – Commission on Preparation for Ministry

PTB – Presbytery of Tampa Bay

CPE – Clinical Pastoral Education

PIF – Pastoral Information Form filed with PCUSA when seeking a call to ministry

## I. A MINISTRY OF ENCOURAGEMENT

*Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. (Philippians 2:14-16 NIV)*

This handbook is designed to facilitate the process of shepherding women and men who feel called to ministry in the Presbyterian Church (USA). It’s a collection of details, signposts and mile-markers on the journey, from the initial sense of God’s call, to ordination as a teaching elder (minister of Word and Sacrament).

Foundational to our identity as “Presbyterian” is a commitment to well-thought-out procedures that provide an appropriate framework for faith and practice. This handbook is designed to help both the inquirer/candidate and the CPM be the best possible stewards of God’s call to ordained ministry.

But process is nothing without living faith. We understand that this journey toward ordination can only be initiated, sustained, and brought to fullness by the grace of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The gospel ministry is an amazing privilege and a weighty responsibility. The stole a minister traditionally receives at ordination is heavy because it represents the yoke of Christ, the yoke of service. The call to ministry is the call to follow Jesus as a servant leader; the call to follow Jesus assumes the call to make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20); and the call to make disciples is also the call to be a faithful and passionate follower of the way of Jesus.

Nothing in this handbook is as decisively important to ministry as the daily decision of the inquirer/candidate to follow Jesus in the spirit of Luke 10:27: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’ (NIV). Likewise John 10:10: “I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of” (*The Message*).

It is the mission of the Commission on Preparation for Ministry (“CPM”) to be a well-informed resource for potential candidates for ministry, and to encourage men and women as they navigate the particular requirements of the *Book of Order*; but always in the context of our shared journey as followers of the way of Jesus.

*“Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life” (1 Timothy 6:18-19, NIV).*

## II. DISCERNING YOUR CALL

Discerning your call, be it to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament, teaching, business, or any professional life, is the first step in laying a foundation for a life of authentic spiritual, personal, and professional growth and development. As you work with the Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) to consider your call, the process of discernment will require you to place personal awareness of your strengths and weaknesses within the context of relationships with others and with God. While we know this process will at times be challenging, we pray you will also find it to be fulfilling. Through this process you will gather the information and guidance needed to make thoughtful, holistic, God-centered decisions, not only about the possibility of seeking ordination, but about all of life in general.

As you enter into this process of discernment, we pray you will allow God to enter into decisions about your life in ways that set aside ego, personal needs and wants. We pray you are open to God's presence and voice in the process, as quiet and mysterious as that voice can be. Discernment is about the discipline of asking questions of God and others. It is about disciplined listening for answers, trusting that the Holy Spirit is speaking, however unexpected that voice may be. Discernment is about surrendering to the voice of the Spirit and trusting that the path ahead is God's path for you. Discernment is about risk, risking your life with the Holy Spirit.

There is a set of theological assumptions about discernment that includes:

- God is present and active in our daily lives.
- Our own fulfillment and greatest joy will be found when our choices are congruent with God's will for us.
- Discernment uses all of our capacities for knowing.
- The Holy Spirit guides by the principle of attraction and drawing toward the good.

It is obvious from the above that discernment is counter-cultural. It is often slow, usually requires significant personal discipline, and calls for thoughtful risk-taking. Discernment seeks wisdom, self-knowledge, personal growth, emotional maturity and spiritual development.

Careful discernment by those who feel called to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament is critically important for the future life of the church. The traditional church of the middle and latter 20<sup>th</sup> century is fast fading. While islands of the familiar will continue to exist for years to come, many of the familiar structures will be gone within the next ten to twenty years. What will be in a place of the familiar structures many have grown up with, come to know and love? This is a difficult question to answer because our culture is rapidly changing and with such changes comes the need for the church to adapt. What is certain is that the church will need leaders who have been willing to engage in the challenging and fulfilling process of discernment.

### III. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE PROCESS

The Presbytery of Tampa Bay (PTB) elects members of the Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) to carry out the responsibility to guide those people preparing for the ministry (G-3.0307). The Commission consists of 17 members, approximately half teaching and half ruling elders, who are elected for three-year terms and may serve two consecutive terms. The moderator of the CPM is elected by the Presbytery and serves as the 18<sup>th</sup> member of the CPM.

#### Leadership:

The presbytery elects the CPM moderator for an annual term, and he/she may be elected to two additional annual terms. The secretary and vice-moderator of CPM are appointed by the members of CPM.

#### Responsibilities:

The moderator:

1. Serves as a conduit of information, advice and counsel related to the CPM process for PTB.
2. Leads the members of CPM, including drafting an agenda.
3. Reports to the PTB Coordinating Team, of which the moderator or designated representative is a participating member. The moderator's report includes items for action by PTB as a whole.
4. Makes the PTB aware of actions it has voted/moved upon and brings recommended actions to the presbytery if a PTB-wide vote is needed.
5. Arranges for the orientation of sessions regarding inquirers.
6. Keeps progress records of all inquirers and candidates under care of PTB.

The vice-moderator presides at meetings in the absence of the moderator or as needed during meetings when the moderator requests.

A secretary may be appointed to keep minutes of the meetings and to work with the moderator in preparing reports to the council and presbytery of items needing time on the PTB agenda (including changes to policy for the work of the CPM) and informational items (including acceptance as an inquirer, consultations, and permission to circulate a PIF).

#### Meetings:

Meetings are usually scheduled by the CPM at the beginning of the year. They may be called by the moderator if needed other than when scheduled. Minutes are kept and reports made to the presbytery of actions taken.

**Responsibilities of CPM Members:**

- Attend CPM meetings monthly
- Participate prayerfully
- Be willing to be a liaison for shepherding inquirers, candidates, and future certified ruling elders under our care.
- Provide session orientation before the session recommends that a church member become an inquirer
- Participate in projects of the CPM (these vary)
- Nominate readers for the standard ordination exams to be elected by the PTB

**Responsibilities of Presbytery Office Staff:**

All decisions related to the fulfillment of CPM requirements will be made by the CPM. Nevertheless, the presbytery Coach/Coordinator is available to offer advice and/or counsel to those interested in the preparation process, to individuals under care, and for administrative assistance to the committee.

The relationship between those under care and their CPM liaison is crucial and the most important link in the care process; however, the presbytery staff position is available to assist in that ongoing relationship in any way possible.

All permanent records of previous candidates are maintained in the presbytery office. Evaluative material, including the Career and Personal Counseling Center report, the CPE evaluation report, and the field education evaluation reports will be copied and given to the moderator as working papers and are maintained and housed by the CPM moderator. Appropriate confidentiality within the committee will be maintained.

#### **IV. ORIENTATION FOR PASTORS REGARDING THE CPM PROCESS**

You may be the first contact for a young, old, or in between Samuel or Samantha seeking to discern and answer a call from God (1 Sam. 3:1-10). This orientation will help you understand the process and facilitate the journey.

An outline of the steps for discerning a call to ministry in the PCUSA:

- a. After the pastor has prayed with and counseled the pre-inquirer, the pastor shall direct the pre-inquirer to <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/forms-used-preparation-ministry-process/>. All the documents numbered 1A through 1C (Becoming an Inquirer) need to be filled out before proceeding further.
- b. Before the session of the congregation meets with the pre-inquirer, the pastor shall invite a member of the CPM to orient the session to the process as well as the session's responsibilities.
- c. Invite the pre-inquirer to meet with the session. The session should not automatically endorse pre-inquirers. The elders need to pray and consider the gifts and the call presented. If the session approves the pre-inquirer, it then selects a member to be a liaison with the person seeking to become an inquirer. The moderator and the clerk of session need to prepare Form 1D for the CPM.
- d. The session then asks the pre-inquirer to contact the Career and Personal Counseling Center located in St. Petersburg (727-867-7200) to set up a vocational assessment. The Presbytery of Tampa Bay, the local church, and the pre-inquirer share the cost of this assessment in equal thirds. The CPM must receive the confidential report of this assessment before the meeting to consider the person's application to become an inquirer.
- e. In addition to the vocational assessment, CPM needs to have in hand all parts (A – D) of Form 1 (Becoming an Inquirer) before meeting with the person:
  - CPM also prayerfully considers the gifts and sense of call. It is a commitment to walk along with and guide the person under care.
  - The CPM may vote to admit (or not) to inquirer status and reports the action to PTB. At this step the CPM is acting on behalf of PTB in admitting the person to inquirer status.
- f. The CPM will also name a member liaison for the inquirer.

**V. THE SESSION’S ROLE IN THE INQUIRY/CANDIDACY PROCESS****Guidelines for the Orientation of the Session**

The local church is provided with a challenge and an opportunity when a member of the congregation approaches the pastor and session to express the possibility that she or he has been called to ministry. It is the session’s responsibility to provide a supportive relationship in which to explore with the individual the personal implications and suitability of a full-time church vocation.

Such awareness emerges through prayerful examination of the individual’s faith, his/her motivation, and experience within the congregation, and through a shared assessment of all the responsibilities and gifts that will be needed for ministry. These are important first steps in discerning whether the individual is called by the Holy Spirit to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament.

The session is an essential link in the covenant relationship between those under care and the Presbytery of Tampa Bay. The pastor and session communicate with, and support, this individual throughout the entire period of preparation. This can be a deeply meaningful experience for all involved. In all matters relating to preparation, the individual will be under the oversight (care) of the Presbytery of Tampa Bay.

**a. Overview of the Process**

- Personal journey of call to inquiry, then to candidacy, and then to ordination is not always linear. Each phase requires serious discernment.
- PTB through the CPM (G-2.06) will instruct the session and oversee a wide variety of preparation processes.
- Formal requirements of an inquirer include church membership in the sponsoring congregation with at least six months’ activity in the work and worship of that church (G-2.0602). The enrollment minimum in inquiry/candidacy is two years, including not less than one year of candidacy.
- The session’s endorsement of the church member follows prayerful consideration. (G-2.0602)
- Regular communication needs to take place between the session and session liaison and between CPM and the CPM liaison. In addition, the inquirer/candidate is responsible for maintaining regular contact with both the session and the CPM through the appointed liaisons.
- Session’s responsibility: concern and discipline as for any active church member (G-2.0605).



## b. Institutional Requirements

All forms required for applicants, sessions, and CPMs may be found here:

<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/forms-used-preparation-ministry-process/>

- Applicants shall complete forms 1A-C and return these to the CPM chair
- Sessions initially approving applicants shall complete form 1D and return the completed form to the CPM chair. The church should maintain a copy as part of the session records.

PTB CPM Requirement

All applicants are required to participate in a vocational assessment through the Career and Personal Counseling Center located in St. Petersburg (727-867-7200). The church is responsible for one-third of the cost of the Career and Counseling Center's vocational evaluation as well as one-third of the cost of any required trips from outside the bounds of the presbytery to meet with session, CPM, or presbytery as a whole. The applicant and the CPM are each equally responsible for one-third of the cost.

## c. Additional responsibilities include

- Assisting members in discerning God's call for their lives.
- Listening, as the people of God, for validation of the call in a member's life.
- Having the courage to raise the hard issues and ask the hard question, i.e., would I want this person to be my pastor?
- Offering emotional and spiritual support through prayer and care.

## VI. BECOMING AN INQUIRER

The preparation for ministry process is a covenant relationship between an individual, his or her session, and the presbytery with the mutual task of nurturing the gifts of a particular person into his or her most appropriate ministry, and enhancing the witness of the Church.

The liaison between you and the presbytery is the CPM liaison. The goal is for the relationship with the CPM liaison and the CPM to be supportive, helpful, productive, and smooth. Every covenant entered into requires faith in God, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and a commitment by both the CPM liaison and the inquirer/candidate to work with one another openly and with constant concern for one another.

a. Specifics:

- Always show a human face to your liaison, who is genuinely interested in you. Inform your liaison promptly of major events in your life, such as marriage, divorce, deaths, change of schools, etc. If you feel there is a communication problem, say so. If you are struggling with something, it is hoped you will be able to discuss whatever it is with your liaison.
- Ask questions! Ask them early! Ask them frequently! Stay in contact!
- Stay in touch with your liaison. Always give your liaison, the CPM staff person and stated clerk a current address, phone number, and email address.
- Initiate communication with your liaison at least twice each year; monthly contact is not too frequent. Meet face-to-face whenever possible.
- Always respond to communication from your liaison, the CPM moderator, and the presbytery staff.
- Be in regular communication with your session liaison and invite him/her to accompany you to CPM and presbytery meetings.

- b. The Commission meets with those wishing to become inquirers after receipt and distribution to members of CPM (as appropriate) of all forms 1A through 1D, and approves (or not) their enrollment as an inquirer. There should be a quorum (of more than half the membership) present. After the first face-to-face meeting with the person wishing to come under care, further meetings may use technology to facilitate synchronous communication. CPM may determine that any meeting be face-to-face.
- c. The pre-inquirer shall be required to show proof of college completion before entering seminary.
- d. The inquirer may already be enrolled in seminary before meeting with the session and/or CPM. The seminary should be accredited by the Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada.

- e. In order that the inquirer/candidate prepare for ministry in an environment that equips to explore and articulate their identity as a Presbyterian pastor and leader, PTB recommends that they enroll in PCUSA seminaries, which currently are:
- Austin 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 (Pittsburg, PA)
  - Princeton Theological Seminary (Princeton, NJ)
  - San Francisco Theological Seminary (San Anselmo, CA)
  - Union Presbyterian Seminary (Richmond, VA)
  - Union Presbyterian Seminary (Charlotte, NC)
  - Auburn Theological Seminary (New York, NY) and
  - Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico (San Juan, PR).

**The Commission on Preparation for Ministry has the authority to decide which other seminaries are approved in this Presbytery.**

**Attendance and curriculum may need approval by the CPM.**

## **VII. BECOMING A CANDIDATE**

When an inquirer wishes to advance to candidacy, it is the responsibility of the sponsoring session to recommend this action to the CPM. Forms 5A and 5B should be submitted to the CPM moderator at least ten days before the scheduled meeting. These forms may be found here:

<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/forms-advancing-candidacy/>

a. Questions and Points of Evaluation by the Session

- Do the personal qualities show clear evidence of a healthy and vital faith in God through Jesus Christ?
- Would you follow this person?
- What do you see in this person that makes him/her someone who should be ordained to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament?
- How are faith and spirituality currently being expressed through participation in the life, mission and worship of the congregation?
- Is there understanding of the Reformed theology and tradition of the PCUSA?
- What motivations impel the sense of call? Are they healthy and positive?
- What real and potential talents for ministry are evident in this individual (e.g., the ability to communicate, interpersonal skills, compassion, leadership, administrative abilities)?
- What is the level of his/her academic interest, ability and motivation?
- What is the level of his/her physical health and stamina?
- What is the evidence of his/her emotional stability and well-being?
- What is the evidence of his/her self-discipline?
- Has the individual had a relationship with the church for a time sufficient for the session to evaluate the above?

b. The CPM then

- Meets with and examines the inquirer either face-to-face or using technology with a video-conference such as Skype or FaceTime.
- Votes on admission to candidacy. This responsibility has been given to the CPM per updated Bylaws.
- At a later date, presents the candidate(s) at a meeting of PTB. As part of this presentation, the candidate offers a 5-7 minute statement responding to the following:
  - ❖ Statement of understanding of Christian vocation in the Reformed tradition and how it relates to your sense of call
  - ❖ Statement of personal faith which incorporates an understanding of the Reformed tradition
  - ❖ Statement of being Presbyterian
  - ❖ Statement of self-understanding
  - ❖ Statement of the role and tasks of teaching elders

- Questions from the floor of PTB.
- Questions from the moderator to the individual (s):
  - ❖ Do you believe yourself to be called by God to ministry as a teaching elder in the PCUSA?
  - ❖ 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 ministry as a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church (USA)?
- Appropriate prayer for the candidate by a person appointed by the CPM moderator in consultation with the candidate-elect.

## **VIII. ONGOING ACTIVITIES AND REQUIREMENTS OF THE PERSON UNDER CARE**

Although an annual consultation is no longer required, the person under care, in conjunction with the CPM liaison or moderator, may request a consultation between required steps. The person should then submit Form 3 (“Pre-consultation report on development areas”) at least one week in advance of the scheduled consultation; after the consultation Form 4 (“Report on Consultation”) should be completed by the moderator or secretary and shared with the sponsoring session. These forms may be found here:

<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/forms-annual-consultations/>

***SUPERVISED FIELD EDUCATION*** (sometimes called “field work”) should be included in the curriculum of the seminary where the person under care is enrolled. **This experience should take place at a site that is outside of the church where the person under care is a member or is serving on staff.** At the end of the experience the supervisor should provide a written evaluation for CPM. The person under care should also submit a self-evaluation of the experience. Every effort should be made to fulfill this requirement at least one time within the PCUSA.

***CLINICAL PASTORAL EDUCATION (CPE)***--one unit is required. People coming under care will be required to take at least one unit of CPE before being approved to circulate a PIF. This requirement may be waived for reasonable circumstances by a two-thirds vote of CPM at the request of the candidate.

***PREACH A SERMON*** – This sermon may be presented to the CPM or at a regional or full stated presbytery meeting if the regional members of the CPM are present to affirm the completion and appropriateness of the sermon to the entire CPM.

***TRANSCRIPTS*** - Persons under care are required to authorize the delivery of annual transcripts to CPM. They should also authorize the seminary to report the completion of final requirements for graduation. These should be sent to the Presbytery of Tampa Bay, Attn: CPM Moderator.

**IX. PROCEDURES REGARDING MULTIPLE FAILURES OF ORDINATION EXAMS**

What follows are requirements adopted by the CPM related to retaking ordination examinations (not including the Bible Content Exam).

Ordinarily, three failures of any exam will mean termination of the preparation process and removal from the roll of inquirers and candidates.

Permission to make a fourth and final attempt to pass may be granted by the CPM if:

- It is determined that the inquirer/candidate shows very high potential for ministry;
- The inquirer/candidate has passed three of the four exams; and
- The inquirer/candidate can clearly demonstrate that he or she has taken advantage of all appropriate study resources and reviewed these options with the CPM liaison.

In order to be fair to all inquirers and candidates, an attempt to determine test-taking impediments will be made:

- At the time of the inquiry review with CPM, determination will be made and recorded as to whether the person has ever been diagnosed and/or treated for a learning disability.
- In cases where there has been such a diagnosis, documentation must be presented to the CPM and placed in the individual's file.
- A request will be made to the Career and Personal Counseling Center to include in the report any indications of a possible learning disability they may observe in their assessment process. It must be understood that this will not be a diagnosis and will not constitute documentation.
- In instances of English as a second language, determination will be made in the Inquiry review about the possibility of the need to write exams in another language.
- Inquirers and candidates who have concerns regarding their exam performance should be proactive in inquiring with CPM and the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Exams for appropriate and allowable accommodations that are available.

The Office of the General Assembly only maintains results for the standard examinations on behalf of the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates (PCC). For candidates who were assessed by alternate means, the process is that minutes of the presbytery action approving the alternate means (which must include a "full account of the reasons for any . . . alternate means") are to be placed in the candidate's file along with the report of the assessment body and the minutes of the meeting where those results were reported back to the presbytery. That documentation is to be communicated to any presbyteries to which the inquirer or candidate might be transferred or along with the standard exams transcript in cases where the candidate is subsequently considered for a call. (See G-2.0610 and the discussion of alternate means of assessment in the Advisory Handbook on Preparing for Ministry in the PC(USA).)

**X. APPROVAL TO CIRCULATE A PERSONAL INFORMATION FORM (PIF)**

The candidate may be validated as ready to seek a call (G-2.0607) and circulate a Personal Information Form after at least one year as a candidate and fulfillment of the following requirements:

- a. Presented transcripts from an accredited college, showing graduation, and an accredited seminary, showing graduation or proximity to graduation, including a course of study in the Old and New Testaments that includes Greek and Hebrew exegesis.
- b. Passed all of the standard ordination exams of PCUSA.
- c. Exhibited leadership skills, wisdom, and maturity of faith.
- d. Had at least one field study course in a PCUSA setting as a part of the seminary course.
- e. Taken one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (exception noted above in Section VIII)\*\*
- f. Present a brief sermon (no more than fifteen minutes) with information as to the circumstances for sermon\*\*
  - This sermon may be presented to the CPM or at a regional or full stated presbytery meeting if the regional members of the CPM are present to affirm the completion and appropriateness of the sermon to the entire CPM.
  - This sermon, if presented at a regional or full stated presbytery meeting, does not replace the Final Assessment by CPM.

CPM votes on this validation (as the representative of PTB) and reports to the PTB using Form 6, signed by the CPM moderator and recorded by the stated clerk of PTB. Form 6 may be found here:

<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/forms-complete-cpm/>

G-2.0610 states that any exceptions granted to the above requirements must be approved by a three-quarters vote of the presbytery after receipt of good and sufficient reasons for the exception.

The moderator of the CPM certifies this action to the Vocations Office of the Presbyterian Church (USA) in reply to a request from that office.

Records of meetings and progress of those under care will be kept in a secure file in the PTB office. This will include inactive files of those who have completed their studies and are seeking a call or have received one.

The responsibility for the final examination for ordination rests with the calling council of the church.

\*\*This is not a requirement of the *Book of Order*.



## XI. RESOURCES FOR THE PROCESS

### a. Forms used in the process

- All forms are available at:

<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/forms-used-preparation-ministry-process/>

- ❖ FORM 1A *Application to be enrolled by Presbytery as an Inquirer*+
- ❖ FORM 1B *Questions for Reflection*+
- ❖ FORM 1C *Financial Planning for Theological Education*+
- ❖ FORM 1D *Session Evaluation and Recommendation*++
- ❖ FORM 2A *Report of consultation regarding application*+++
- ❖ FORM 2B *Covenant Agreement and Inquirer Release*+++
- ❖ FORM 3 *Pre-consultation report on development areas*+
- ❖ FORM 4 *Report on Consultation*+++
- ❖ FORM 5A *Application to be Enrolled by Presbytery as a Candidate*+
- ❖ FORM 5B *Session Recommendation for Enrollment as Candidate*++
- ❖ FORM 5C *Report of Consultation to become a Candidate*+++
- ❖ FORM 5D *Covenant Agreement and Candidate Release*+++
- ❖ FORM 6 *Summary Report of Final Assessment*+++

+ responsibility of person seeking or under care

++ responsibility of the session

+++ responsibility of CPM

++++ responsibility of Stated Clerk in consultation with CPM moderator

(This replaces Policy #4, Guidelines for Distribution of Forms, date on or about 1990)

**XII. SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR BOTH SESSION AND CPM**

- a. At the time of approving a person to become an inquirer:
  - Tell us about yourself, your family, and your church and ministry experience.
  - Tell us about your personal faith in Jesus Christ.
  - Why do you want to become a teaching elder?
  - What is your understanding of what it means to be an inquirer?
  - What type of ministry activities have you enjoyed most? Least?
  - How can we help you explore those aspects of ministry you haven't tried yet?
  - What are your plans for seminary?
  - What's one thing your references will tell us about you?
- b. At the time of recommending advancement to candidacy:
  - How have you grown in your faith and in your sense of call as a result of your time in seminary and your field experience?
  - What have you found to be disappointing?
  - What type of ministry activities have you enjoyed most? Least?
  - What is happening in your relationship with Jesus Christ?
  - In what areas do you feel you still need to grow? How do you plan to pursue growth in those areas?
  - How can the commission (or session) help you prepare for your ministry?
- c. At the time of candidate's seeking a final assessment and permission to circulate a PIF:
  - Questions should be designed to ascertain the person's readiness to begin a ministry as a teaching elder. Areas that may be covered include competence in theology, Bible, polity, worship and sacraments, the meaning of the ordination questions (W-4.0404), personal maturity, spiritual depth, and capacity to respond to the needs of others.

**XIII. GUIDELINES FOR CPM LIAISON**

- a. Establish and maintain a close working relationship with the inquirer/candidate (i.e., remember birthdays and other special events).
- b. Include the inquirer/candidate in your prayer life.
- c. Keep the CPM current about the status of the assigned inquirer/candidate.
- d. Keep the inquirer/candidate current on the actions of CPM that might have an impact on the status of their covenant with the presbytery.
- e. Be in communication with the session's liaison about the inquirer/candidate and be an advocate for inquirer/candidate with session.
- f. Establish and keep current a personal file on the inquirer/candidate.
- g. When needed, be a channel of communication among the inquirer/candidate, the CPM moderator, and the session liaison.

Be responsible for completion of Form 4 (*Report on Consultation*)

<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/forms-used-preparation-ministry-process/> during the interview, including signatures. Return the form to the CPM moderator.

**XIV.           RECOMMENDED DUTIES OF THE SESSION LIAISON**

**The session of the pre-inquirer's church appoints a ruling elder to act as liaison with the inquirer/candidate and with CPM as they explore and evaluate the inquirer/candidate's progress in preparation for ministry.**

- a. Some of the ways in which liaisons may be of assistance:
  - Learn the background of your inquirer or candidate if you do not already know it: parents, siblings, school, college, avocational interests and abilities, birthday, name of spouse (if married), name(s) of child(ren) (if any), (proposed) seminary, progress toward ordination, financial needs, etc.
  - Visit, write, or phone to introduce yourself.
  - Become acquainted in ways that seem natural to you and the inquirer/candidate.
  - Take an interest in the inquirer/candidate's academics, field education, consultations, and other activities related to preparation for the ministry of teaching elders.
  - Share with CPM, especially at the time of consultations, any areas of particular need for the inquirer/candidate—whether financial or personal.
  - Become aware of when the inquirer/candidate will be home and try to make some contact, even if only a phone call.
  - Identify ways to keep the congregation aware of the names of its inquirers/candidates (away at seminary or at home) who have entered a covenant relationship with the presbytery and are preparing to become teaching elders.
  - Initiate conversation with your session on the possibility of providing financial assistance or other tangible support to your inquirer/candidates.
  - Consider, with your session, their responsibility for assisting in the payment of necessary expenses incurred in relation to visits for consultation with the CPM.
  - At the presbytery meeting at which the candidate is examined for ordination, make sure someone has been appointed (check with your pastor or the CPM moderator) to go outside the meeting to be with the candidate and family when PTB is making its decision. This will occur at the presbytery issuing the call. This may be your opportunity for a call on behalf of the candidate to the calling church or agency to ask that they have someone to perform this ministry on behalf of you and the candidate's home church.
  - Be present, if at all possible, at the service of ordination and/or installation.
  - Remember your inquirer/candidate in prayer.
  - Write your inquirer/candidate on special occasions (e.g., birthdays or anniversaries).
  - Become acquainted with the CPM handbook so that you are aware of requirements and procedures and can provide timely support (e.g., appearances before PTB, consultations, ordination examinations, final assessment, etc.).
  - Discuss with your session the progress the inquirer/candidate is making, as reflected in consultation reports prepared by CPM and sent to the sponsoring session.
  - The role of the spouse of the inquirer/candidate is particularly important. Try to be as supportive, sensitive and understanding as you can of the spouse. Let the CPM know if there are ways the Commission may better assist the spouse of the inquirer/candidate who is preparing for a new role.
  - In a word, be a friend and lend a sense of your personal, moral, and spiritual interest in, and support of inquirer/candidates in training to become a teaching elder.
  - In performing your tasks, you will also grow in grace and faith.

**XV. FINANCIAL SUPPORT INFORMATION**

- a. **Career counseling cost policy:** career testing costs will be paid
- one-third by the PTB,
  - one-third by the home church, and
  - one-third by the inquirer.
  - Lodging, food, and transportation are normally paid by the inquirer.
- b. **Travel cost policy:** reimbursement will be made for inquirers/candidates coming from beyond presbytery bounds for:
- Initial consultations
  - Attendance at a regional or Presbytery meeting to be presented as a CPM-approved candidate and fulfill requirements listed under Section VII in this Handbook - “Becoming a Candidate” (required)
  - Costs: One-third will be paid by the PTB, one-third paid by the home church, and one-third paid by the inquirer/candidate.
  - Appropriate receipts, ticket charges, and documentation or copies of same must be submitted to CPM with request for reimbursement.
- c. **Scholarship Policy:**
- The Presbytery of Tampa Bay has limited funds available annually to support inquirers and candidates, especially during their formal education in seminary (or equivalent). Documented need, hardship, or special circumstances may affect the amount of the award. Payments are made directly to inquirers/candidates to be applied to the direct cost of seminary. These scholarships are separate from the reimbursements listed above.
  - Applicants must 1) hold inquirer or candidate status in the Presbytery of Tampa Bay; 2) must have all CPM reporting forms up to date; 3) must be in good standing academically with their seminary; 4) must be enrolled for the ensuing period of study during which the scholarship will apply.
  - To be considered for support, applicants should apply by letter to the CPM, stating need, the amount of the request, and the due date of the seminary payment(s). Applications should be submitted well in advance of the due dates (no less than 60 days). Awards will be made on a rolling basis during each PTB budget year, in modest amounts, until the funds are expended.

**d. Presbytery Candidate Indebtedness Policy:****When Presbytery of Tampa Bay is the presbytery of care**

Because the Presbytery, the sponsoring congregation, the Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM), and other PC(USA) institutions provide financial support to persons exploring their call to ministries of the church, and because indebtedness resulting from educational expenses can impose significant burdens, it is imperative that all parties do their best to manage financial resources with optimum stewardship.

- 1) Before being admitted into Inquirer status, persons seeking our care shall meet with a designee of the presbytery's CPM, who will counsel them regarding likely levels of seminary indebtedness, likely employment prospects in the several ministries of the PC(USA), and likely salary ranges (for example, the current median income for the denomination reported by the Board of Pensions, and the minimum effective salary established by the Presbytery).
- 2) Once under care, Inquirers should meet with a Board of Pensions regional representative or a Presbyterian Foundation representative early during their studies, in order to assess net worth, and to make a plan for financing the cost of seminary. Once completed, a copy of this plan will be placed in the CPM chairperson's confidential file.
- 3) Inquirers should, during their inquiry year(s) or as specified by their seminary, participate in a "Fiscal Fitness" (or equivalent) workshop sponsored by the Board of Pensions or the Presbyterian Foundation of the PC(USA). Inquirers may request from CPM one-third of their travel and accommodations costs. If funding permits, CPM may grant support on a need basis. Note that some aid, such as the Board of Pensions Assistance Grants, requires participation in these workshops *before applications will be accepted* (see #1 below, following a call).
- 4) The CPM will work with each inquirer and candidate towards using his or her available assets to pay for the cost of seminary tuition and room and board rather than incurring indebtedness. If indebtedness cannot be avoided, the CPM will continue to seek sources to assist with seminary debt repayment, and to endorse applications for aid, as appropriate.
- 5) The CPM will provide a current list of known options for pursuing grants and interest-free loans and funding that may be available through the Financial Aid for Studies Office of the Presbyterian Church (USA).
- 6) The CPM will be an advocate with the congregation of which the candidate is a member, and with other congregations of the presbytery as appropriate, in order to generate financial support for the candidate in the form of grants or interest-free scholarships.

**When the Presbytery of Tampa Bay is the Presbytery of Call.**

- 1) Any minister serving a first call following graduation from seminary, who comes with any educational indebtedness, shall be required to show evidence of having attended a financial planning workshop such as a Fiscal Fitness workshop sponsored by the Board of Pensions, or other financial planning workshop. If the minister has not attended such a workshop, he/she shall be required to do so within twelve months of start-up. The cost of registration fee, accommodation and travel for such a workshop will be considered a legitimate reimbursable expense from study leave allowance.
- 2) The Commission on Ministry shall encourage calling congregations to utilize further educational debt reduction as a point in negotiating salary with a prospective pastor who is a recent seminary graduate.

5/18/2017 – Approved by PTB

**XV. CAREER AND PERSONAL COUNSELING CENTER**

**SAINT PETERSBURG, FL 33712  
3200 58<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE SOUTH  
TELEPHONE 727-867-7200**

Sessions are either one or two days long. During extensive interviews, the Center staff member uses both autobiographical materials and assessment instruments listed below to enhance a client's understanding of their skills, personal assets, and vulnerabilities pertinent in the world of work.

**a. ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS:**

- Questionnaires, prepared in advance of the first interview, require participants to be introspective concerning their career history, personal history, and accomplishments.
- **16 Personality Factors** – a full scale personality inventory
- **Shipley Institute of Living Scale:** a two-part test of intellectual functioning, with an estimated IQ score
- **Strong Interest Inventory**
- **Myers Briggs Type Indicator** – identifies preferences rather than competencies
- **Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory**
- Other inventories may be used from time to time.

**b. FOUR DIMENSIONS OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT** are considered during the program:

- Psycho-social dimensions
- Fitness dimensions
- Vocational dimensions
- Physical dimensions

- c. This assessment is totally confidential. The participant receives a written report and must sign a release for the report to be sent the CPM moderator, PTB.
- d. There are assessment centers in other areas of the country that may be used if more easily scheduled from the seminary location. The Presbytery pays for one-third of the cost of the assessment, usually at the time it receives the written report.
- e. The report becomes a part of the secure individual file and is never shared over the Internet.

## CHECKLIST OF COMPLETION STEPS IN THE PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY PROCESS

**Step 1: Applicant is an active member of a sponsoring congregation for at least 6 months.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Form 1 A (Application to be enrolled by Presbytery as an Inquirer), B (Questions for Reflection) and C (Financial Planning for Theological Education) is received by session (date) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Applicant has been an active member for at least 6 months (date of membership) \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 2: Session notifies CPM of applicant.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Session notifies CPM (date) \_\_\_\_\_ and CPM arranges to meet with session (date) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ CPM determines who will meet with session (name) \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 3: CPM meets for session orientation.**

\_\_\_\_\_ To interpret the preparation process including time requirements, financial considerations, denominational and presbytery expectations; discuss the meaning of call and ministry in the Reformed tradition; provide copies of the manual, forms, appropriate resources, presbytery and CPM policies.

**Step 4: Session interviews applicant; makes recommendation to CPM/presbytery, chooses session liaison.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Session interviews applicant and makes a decision whether to receive the applicant as an inquirer

\_\_\_\_\_ Form 2A (Report of Consultation regarding application) is completed by applicant and session

\_\_\_\_\_ Session sends Forms 1D (Session Evaluation and Recommendation) and 2A to CPM (date received by CPM) \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 5: Vocational assessment.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Applicant has vocational assessment and report is received by CPM moderator before Step 6.

**Step 6: CPM interviews applicant and makes recommendation on enrollment as an inquirer.****CPM liaison appointed**

\_\_\_\_\_ CPM arranges date to meet with applicant (date) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ CPM reviews/discusses with applicant the following goals of the interview; nature and theology of call; discernment of the nature of applicant's sense of vocation; determination whether applicant has potential and qualities necessary for the professional ministry; preparation of the applicant for evaluation process lasting more than 1 year

\_\_\_\_\_ CPM decides whether to recommend to presbytery enrolling applicant as an inquirer

\_\_\_\_\_ CPM determines who will attend presbytery meeting to report recommendation to presbytery, or this may be reported in the CPM written report to presbytery.



## CHECKLIST OF COMPLETION STEPS IN THE PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY PROCESS

**Step 7: Presbytery enrollment of inquirer.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ CPM presents written report to the presbytery as part of its minutes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Applicant is enrolled as an Inquirer; CPM moderator creates account for Inquirer at PC(USA) website.

**Step 8: Review of preparation process and progress. Develop covenant agreement for guidance, goals, consultations, and reports.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ CPM discusses with inquirer the goals and responsibilities of inquirer/CPM and completes Form 2A & 2B (Covenant Agreement and Inquirer Release)
- \_\_\_\_\_ CPM appoints liaison
- \_\_\_\_\_ CPM reviews with inquirer the preparation for ministry process including the following presbytery requirements:  
Field Education and Clinical Pastoral Education (see p. 14)

\_\_\_\_\_ CPM and inquirer estimate timelines for completing steps in the preparation for ministry process

**Step 9: Inquirer applies to become a candidate through session.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ CPM sends Form 5A (Application to be Enrolled by Presbytery as a Candidate) to inquirer for completion and submission to session (date sent) \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ Inquirer completes Form 5A and schedules meeting with session

**Step 10: Session confers with inquirer. Reviews evidence of inquiry phase and makes recommendation to CPM/presbytery.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ CPM communicates with session liaison information session requests to determine inquirer's progress
- \_\_\_\_\_ Session meets with inquirer and decides whether to recommend continuation of inquiry phase, withdrawal from the process, or moving to candidacy; completes Form 5A and 5B (Session Evaluation and Recommendation Regarding Enrollment as a Candidate) and submits the forms to CPM along with a letter explaining rationale for the session's actions.

## CHECKLIST OF COMPLETION STEPS IN THE PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY PROCESS

- Step 11: CPM confers with inquirer, reviews evidence of inquiry phase, and makes recommendation regarding candidacy;**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ CPM receives Form 5A and 5B from session (date received) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ CPM, session liaison, and inquirer schedule to meet (date ) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ CPM decides whether to recommend to presbytery continuation of inquiry phase, removal from the process, or enrollment as a candidate  
 \_\_\_\_\_ CPM completes form 5C (Report of Consultation Regarding Application to become a Candidate) if enrollment is recommended
- Step 12: Presbytery receives CPM recommendation.**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ CPM schedule with stated clerk on the docket for presentation of the inquirer and the CPM's recommendation at the presbytery meeting (date) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ CPM prepares inquirer for examination by presbytery and determines information to be given to presbytery  
 \_\_\_\_\_ CPM (usually the Moderator or CPM liaison to inquirer) presents the inquirer to presbytery
- Step 13: Review of preparation process and progress. Develop covenant agreement for guidance, goals, consultations, and reports.**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ CPM reviews with candidate progress in meeting course requirements, including competency in Hebrew and Greek; presbytery requirements; expected outcomes of candidacy; and requirements for certification for a call; and estimates new timelines for completion of steps the preparation process  
 \_\_\_\_\_ CPM establishes new covenant with candidate and completes Form 5D (Covenant Agreement and Candidate Release)
- Step 14: Presbyteries' Cooperative Examinations.**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Candidate submits request to write exams to PCUSA <https://exams.pcusa.org>  
 \_\_\_\_\_ CPM moderator receives copies of completed exams at the PCUSA on-line site and reviews comments of readers.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ CPM reviews with candidate completion of denomination and presbytery requirements, the final assessment, preparation and circulating the PIF, examination by the presbytery and ordination, and the first call.

**CHECKLIST OF COMPLETION STEPS IN THE PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY PROCESS****Step 15: CPM conducts final assessment of candidate's readiness to receive a call.**

\_\_\_\_\_ CPM schedules with candidate a time, date, and place for final assessment  
\_\_\_\_\_ CPM conducts final assessment reviewing all requirements for ordination, and presents summary of assessment to presbytery (date) \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 16: CPM certifies candidate ready to receive a call and reports to presbytery.**

\_\_\_\_\_ CPM certifies candidate ready to receive a call, and completes Form 6 (Summary Report of Final Assessment) and reports to presbytery (date) \_\_\_\_\_ as well as affirms this at P4M site

**Step 17: CPM approves circulation of PIF to explore obtaining a call.**

\_\_\_\_\_ CPM reviews presbytery policy for approving circulation of PIF and confirms this at P4M site

**Step 18: Negotiation for service/call.**

\_\_\_\_\_ CPM monitors candidate's progress in negotiating a call and reviews completion of requirements