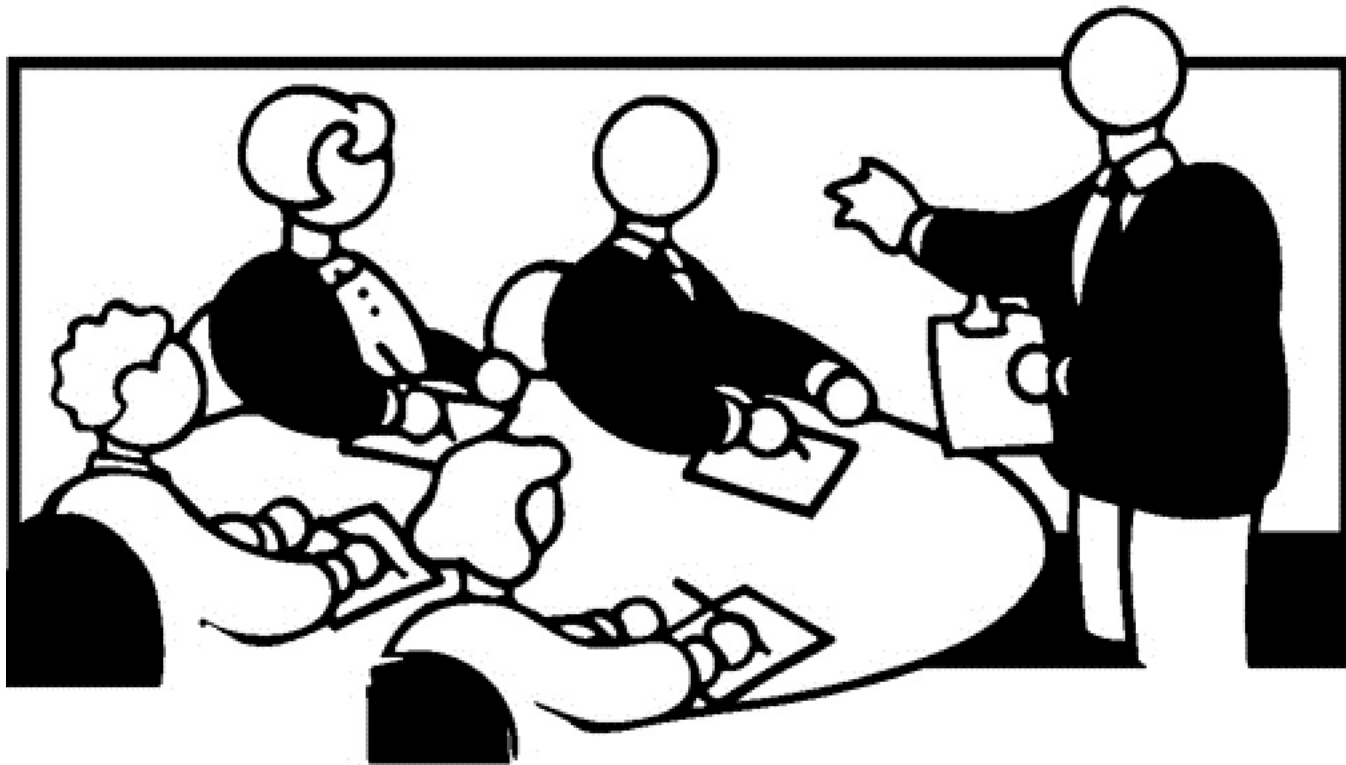


TRAINING FOR SESSIONS WITH AN INQUIRER OR CANDIDATE



TRAINING FOR SESSIONS WITH AN INQUIRER OR CANDIDATE

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SECTION I

THE PROCESS FROM THE INQUIRER'S AND CANDIDATE'S PERSPECTIVE

CONCEPT OF CALL TO MINISTRY OF WORD AND SACRAMENT



PERSON believes they have received a call from God and seeks to discern that call (As inquirer and candidate).

PERSON PREPARES



Studies



Writes Exams



Works in a Church and Completes
Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)

DISCERN TOGETHER

PERSON AND CHURCH

CHURCH CONFIRMS



Session



Presbytery

Committee on Preparation for Ministry

PRESBYTERY DECLARES PERSON
READY TO RECEIVE A CALL



*Calling Church or
Organization and
Presbytery Call*



Presbytery
Ordains

TWO YEARS OR MORE



Meet with Session



One year as an INQUIRER	CPM/ Session/ Presbytery	One year as a CANDIDATE	CPM	Ready for a Call
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ACCEPTS CALL



INQUIRY

G-2.0601 *Nature and Purpose of Preparation*

It is important that those who are to be ordained as teaching elders receive full preparation for their task under the direction of the presbytery. For this purpose, a presbytery shall enter into covenant relationship with those preparing to become teaching elders and with their sessions and congregations. This relationship shall be divided into the two phases of inquiry and candidacy.

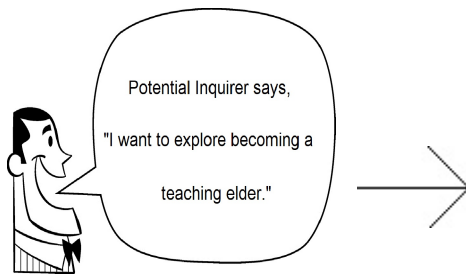
G-2.0602 *Time Requirements*

To be enrolled as an inquirer, the applicant shall be a member of the sponsoring congregation, shall have been active in the work and worship of that congregation for at least six months, and shall have received the endorsement of the session of the sponsoring congregation. The inquiry and candidacy phases shall continue for a period of no less than two years, including at least one year as a candidate.

G-2.0603 *Purpose of Inquiry*

The purpose of the inquiry phase is to provide an opportunity for the church and those who believe themselves call to ordained ministry as teaching elders to explore that call together so that the presbytery can make an informed decision about the inquirer's suitability for ordered ministry.

THE PROCESS OF BECOMING AN INQUIRER



The Presbytery's
Committee on
Preparation for
Ministry (CPM) is
called.



The potential
inquirer completes
the questionnaire
before the Session
meeting.



A CPM representative
comes to the Session to do
an orientation on vocation,
call and preparation
process.



The Session consults with
the potential inquirer. The
Session must decide to
recommend or to not
recommend the potential
inquirer for approval by
CPM. (*See questions
resource)



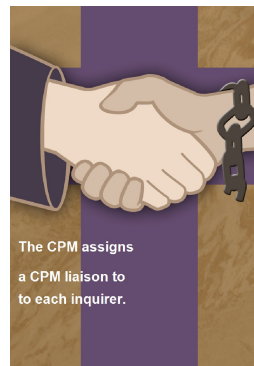
If recommended,
Session appoints
a liaison.



The CPM meets
with the potential
inquirer.



The CPM determines
whether to enroll the
person as an inquirer.



The potential inquirer takes
Career Counseling before
inquiry or during first year of
inquiry.

THE ENTRY QUESTIONING PROCESS

The call to ministry should not be taken lightly. In the PCUSA, we believe that an inward call is affirmed by the community and does not happen in isolation. The inward voice is confirmed by the communities recognition of that call. To intentionally recognize this partnership, we encourage the CPM and the Session to help the inquirer explore this dynamic relationship.

Possible questions for reflection may include:

- Describe your inward sense of call.
- How has this call been externally recognized by your community?
- What experiences have you had which lead you to the decision to explore ministry?
- Have others commented on your gifts or passion for ministry? If so, what have they said?

The Session and CPM need to listen for indicators that the call has both internal and external affirmations from God. We need to be wary of people who consistently talk about "what I have experienced . . . what God told me to do . . . what I want to do . . ." without much indication that they have been called into service by their church family or others.

PURPOSE OF INQUIRY

THE PURPOSE OF THE INQUIRY PHASE is to provide an opportunity for the church and those who believe themselves called to ordered ministry as teaching elders to explore that call together so that the presbytery can make an informed decision about the inquirer's suitability for ordered ministry. (G-2.0603)

THE INQUIRY STAGE PROVIDES A TIME to explore a perceived call to Ministry of the Word and Sacrament.

- To reflect upon God's Call
- To explore personal, financial and family implications of professional ministry
- To participate in career counseling
- To pursue seminary work
- To gain practical perspective
- To work with others to discern God's will.

The inquiry phase provides a time to clarify the call to ministry. If, at the end of the inquiry phase, the inquirer, Session and CPM feel that the call to ministry is still strong, the inquirer will be recommended to proceed to the candidacy phase of ministry.

THE TIME OF INQUIRY shall be long enough (at least one year) for the inquirer, the Session, and the Committee on Preparation for Ministry to decide whether the inquirer should apply to be a candidate. (G-2.0602)

CANDIDACY

G-2.0604 Purpose of Candidacy

The purpose of the candidacy phase is to provide for the full preparation of persons to serve the church as teaching elders. This shall be accomplished through the presbytery's support, guidance, and evaluation of a candidate's fitness and readiness for a call to ministry requiring ordination.

G-2.0605 Oversight

During the phases of inquiry and candidacy, the individual continues to be an active member of his or her congregation and subject to the concern and discipline of the session. In matters relating to preparation for ministry, the individual is subject to the oversight of the presbytery within the context of their covenant relationship.

G-2.0606 Service in Covenant Relationship

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

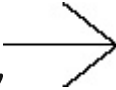
G-2.0607 Final Assessment and Negotiation for Service

A candidate may not enter into negotiation for his or her service as a teaching elder without approval of the presbytery. The presbytery shall record when it has certified a candidate ready for examination for ordination, pending a call. Evidence of readiness to begin ordered ministry as a teaching elder shall include:

- a. a candidate's wisdom and maturity of faith, leadership skills, compassionate spirit, honest reputation, and sound judgment;
- b. a transcript showing graduation, with satisfactory grades, at a regionally accredited college or university;
- c. a transcript from a theological institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools acceptable to the presbytery, showing a course of study including Hebrew and Greek, exegesis of the Old and New Testaments using Hebrew and Greek, satisfactory grades in all areas of study, and graduation or proximity to graduation; and
- d. satisfactory grades, together with the examination papers in the areas covered by any standard ordination examination approved by the General Assembly. Such examinations shall be prepared and administered by a body created by the presbyteries.

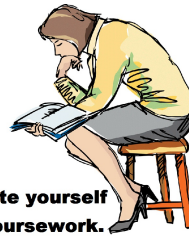
INQUIRY TO CANDIDACY

**Off to
Seminary!**

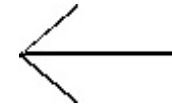
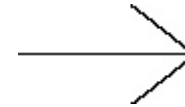


**Deepens spiritual life
and serves and participates
in the larger church body.**

**Devote yourself
to coursework.**



**Takes and passes Bible Content Exam
and develops relationships with
colleagues in ministry.**



**Annually meets with
Committee on
Preparation for
Ministry**



**Continues to discern
call**



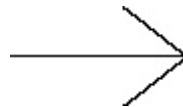
**Inform Session of the
desire to become a
candidate after at least one
year.**



**Session approves
or not**



**Meets with CPM who
recommends to
Presbytery**



**"Presbytery approves
the person as a
candidate"**



CANDIDACY TO CALL

THE CANDIDATE:

The candidate consults with the CPM annually until the candidate either: 1) meets the PC(USA) and PWNC requirements and gains approval to receive a call OR 2) until such time as they discern their call lies in other areas and ask to be removed from the care of the CPM.

PRESBYTERY REQUIREMENTS:

- Career Counseling (Prior to Candidacy)
- Supervised Ministry
- Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)
- Reformed Theology Course
- Polity Course
- PC(USA) Seminary Experience for at least one year or similar exposure to the life and thought of the PC(USA), as determined by CPM
- Hebrew and Old Testament
- Greek and New Testament
- Preaching and Worship

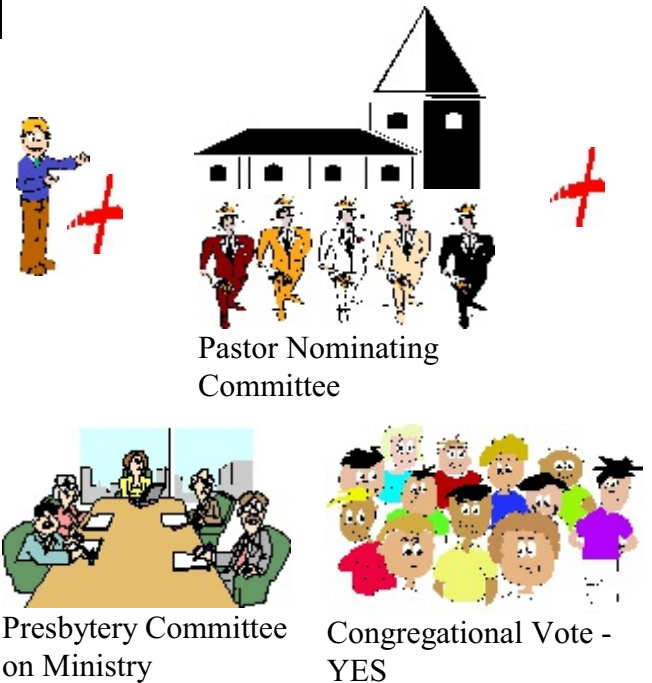
PC(USA) REQUIREMENTS:

- A Candidate for at least one year
- Passes all five ordination exams
- Graduates from accredited Seminary
- Sermon, exegesis and preaching
- Meets outlined *Book of Order* requirements



Meets with CPM annually.

When a candidate is certified ready to receive a call, a call may be from a congregation or an organization. When a candidate receives a call, the candidate meets with the Committee on Ministry of the receiving Presbytery. The candidate then fulfills the preaching requirement and is approved by the calling Presbytery. The person is then ordinarily ordained by the calling Presbytery, but can be approved in their home Presbytery, depending on the preferences of all involved.



COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY
PRESBYTERY OF WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

INQUIRER AND CANDIDATE INDEBTEDNESS POLICY

The policy of The Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) is to encourage inquirers and candidates to take responsibility for their own fiscal management. This policy is to provide guidelines for inquirers and candidates to help prevent or to minimize indebtedness incurred in seminary and the reduction of debt incurred previously.

All persons applying to be inquirers and candidates are asked annually to submit financial forms stating their assets, debts, liabilities, and projected expenses for the coming year. If debts exist or are anticipated, the inquirers and candidates are asked to describe how they plan to manage this situation.

All seminary students are required to meet with a financial aid person at the seminary (with the exception of those students who can demonstrate they have no need of financial aid). Students will be asked to report back to the Committee on Preparation for Ministry if debt will be incurred and to find options to prevent this debt.

The Board of Pensions offers a “Fiscal Fitness” workshop at each PC(USA) seminary between January and May. If inquirers or candidates have financial debt, or are in jeopardy of accumulating debt in seminary, they will be required to attend the seminar or something equivalent. Students not attending a PC(USA) seminary will be asked to attend a Fiscal Fitness workshop or its equivalent.

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry will make available to inquirers and candidates information concerning the Latta and Bridges Scholarship Funds. For those not attending a PC(USA) seminary, the CPM suggests they call the Financial Aid for Studies Office of the Presbyterian Church (USA) (Phone # 888-728-7288).

The CPM will suggest that the congregations of which inquirers and candidates are members provide scholarship support in the form of grants. The Committee on Preparation for Ministry has limited resources. It will try to provide a limited amount of scholarship and debt reduction funds when available.

SECTION II

THE SESSION'S PERSPECTIVE AND RESPONSIBILITY

THE SESSION'S RESPONSIBILITIES - DISCERNING/GATE KEEPING AND NURTURING

DISCERNING/GATE KEEPING

The Session has the responsibility of deciding whether or not to commend to Presbytery members of the congregation who seek to become inquirers and candidates to the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament. The Session needs to remember that the inquirers/candidates are at the beginning of the journey to ordination and will learn and grow as they progress in their own journey. They are not expected to be "ready to receive a call" until they have completed the necessary steps for their own preparation and growth. The Session is there to encourage, challenge and help clarify the candidate's sense of call during the process.

- Does the person's faith enlighten life or obscure it?
- Does the inner sense of call seem real to you, and healthy?

The Session has the responsibility of recommending the person engaged in the process to the CPM for inquiry and candidacy phases. The Session will appoint a liaison who will work with the candidate and the CPM. This person should be someone who is committed to continuing through the process with the candidate/inquirer.

- Who is the CPM? The Committee on Preparation for Ministry is a Presbytery appointed committee which consists of both Teaching Elders and Ruling Elders. They are from all geographic regions of the Presbytery and come from a variety of different churches, large and small.

Granted, there is a big journey ahead for the applicant before ordination, but you ought to be able to assume that when that journey is completed, you would accept, with enthusiasm, this person as your pastor.

- Does the person have the talents to be a minister of the Word?
- Would you be willing to have this person as your pastor once they have completed seminary and ordination exams? If not, what are your concerns?

SESSION INTERVIEW WITH APPLICANTS

(from Pittsburgh Presbytery)

---TO THE INQUIRY PHASE---

SOME ISSUES FOR ATTENTION AND EVALUATION BY THE SESSION WHEN EXAMINING THE GIFTS AND MOTIVATIONS OF A PROSPECTIVE INQUIRER:

1. What personal qualities are evidence of a healthy and vital faith in God through Jesus Christ?
2. How is the faith currently being expressed through the individual's participation in the worship, life and mission of this congregation?
3. What various motivations impel the sense of call (e.g. service to God and the world, compassion for God's children, guilt, the need for power and status)?
4. What real and potential talents for ministry are evident in this individual (e.g. the ability to communicate, interpersonal skills, leadership or administrative abilities)?
5. What is the level and adequacy of the individual's academic interest, ability and motivation?
6. What is the evidence of his or her physical health and stamina?
7. What is the evidence of his or her emotional well-being?
8. What is the evidence of his or her self-discipline?

SESSION INTERVIEW WITH APPLICANTS

---TO THE CANDIDACY PHASE---

The transition to the candidacy phase of call is a time to discern more deeply the inquirer's gifts and call to ministry. It is the Session's responsibility to identify potential challenges and gifts that the candidate may need to explore. The Session is the ecclesiastical body which knows the candidate best, and so it is incumbent upon the Session to "speak the truth in love" as they see potential roadblocks to the candidate's call to the office of Teaching Elder. The questions from the inquiry phase (as listed in the book previously) should be reviewed and expanded upon at this time.

At times, it becomes clear that a particular candidate may not be called to ordained ministry as Teaching Elder. If this becomes clear, this revelation should not be seen as a "failure," but a recognition that the office of Teaching Elder is but one of many ways in which people are "called" into ministry in the body of Christ.

If the Session feels that the inquirer is being led to continue the journey to professional ministry, they will recommend the inquirer to the CPM, who will then recommend the inquirer to the Presbytery for candidacy.

THE SESSION'S RESPONSIBILITIES - NURTURING

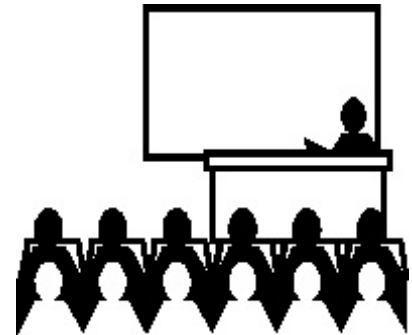
You send an inquirer/candidate away (like a missionary)



To Seminary



Foreign Languages....
Greek???...Hebrew???
...Theology???...???



Different
Culture/Environment



Over worked - No sleep

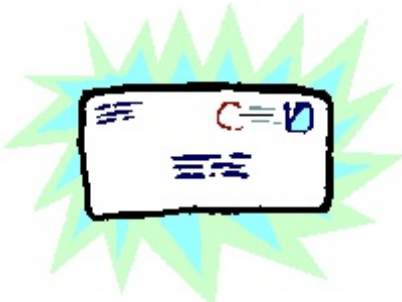


NO MONEY...
Empty Pockets



HELP!!

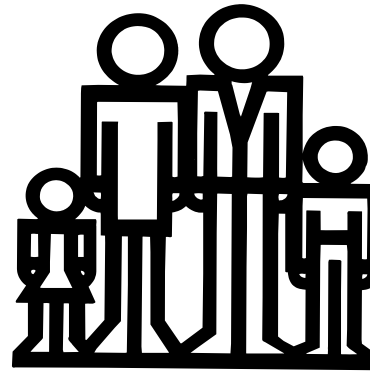
YOU CAN HELP!!



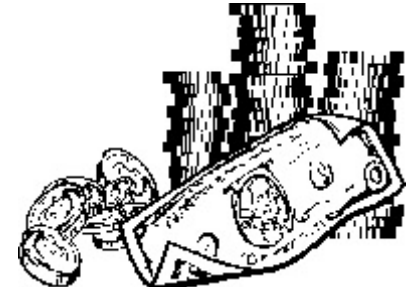
Letters from the church to candidate/inquirer.



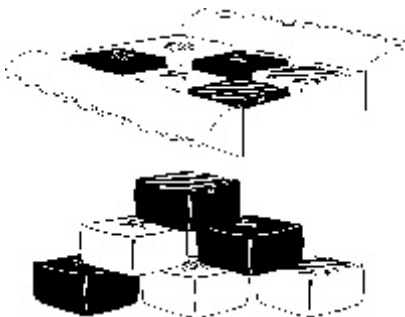
Send church newsletter to candidate/inquirer. Update church with candidate/inquirer information through newsletter.



Remember spouse and child(ren)



Financial Support



WOW! Homemade goodies from home. What a surprise!



My church prays for me. They remember to pray for me during exams. I am on their prayer list.



Wonderful! You want me to preach or be liturgist!

WAYS TO SUPPORT AND NURTURE

Your support of an inquirer or candidate during their process of preparing for the ministry is extremely important. Pray for them regularly and include them in the prayer requests in your bulletin. You are their community and may be their chief means of support. Make an extra effort to keep in touch to share their struggles and joys. Show love.

I. Pray for them.

One candidate went back to seminary after attending a church in our Presbytery. This church listed the inquirers and candidates that were members as a part of their prayer requests. The returning seminary student said, “I wish my church would pray for me. How different my seminary journey might be if they would. I am not sure my church would remember my name.”

II. Keep them a part of the church.

Invite inquirers and candidates to take part in worship. Use them as liturgists and ask them to preach. This not only gives them experience, but also visibility with the congregation. Invite them to participate in the Christmas service.

If the seminarian has not had much experience in the church, invite them to Session meetings, to help with shut-in communion, to visit in the hospital, to attend presbytery, etc.

Put them on the church mailing list to receive bulletins and newsletters.

Ask them to write an update at least once or twice a year to share in the church newsletter.

Recognize them in church when they become an inquirer or candidate. Have a special prayer or commitment liturgy for them. (When they become a candidate, recognize them in worship and have them repeat the answers to their questions. Print their statement of faith in the newsletter.)

III. Remember them when they are away.

Send cards, goodies (brownies, cookies, etc.) and other crazy things. (Right before exams, two people on one hall got boxes of goodies from the circles of their church. What a wonderful gift! One person even got surprises from the Senior High group.)

Send a gift at Christmas. It may be a card, book or money.

Remember the families. If a seminarian has a spouse or children, remember them with cards and letters.

IV. Support them financially if you are able.

Support your inquirer or candidate financially, if possible. If your church cannot, talk to the Presbytery or others to see if other help is available. Even a few dollars helps. (One church sent its candidate \$20 for their birthday and told them to eat out.)

Help with career counseling. (Presbytery asks each church that is able to pay \$840 for the inquirer's career and personal counseling that is required, plus room and mileage.) If the church is unable to pay the full price of counseling, please contact the CPM to see how we may assist the church financially in paying for the counseling process.

Encourage your church to participate in the 1% Theological Education Fund that goes to support the Presbyterian Seminaries.

V. Be honest and discerning.

Be prepared as a Session to meet with an inquirer when they decide to become a candidate. Listen carefully to their call and desires. Would you like this person as your pastor? If you feel this person should not pursue the ministry, be open and honest with your concerns. The most unkind thing you could do would be to let them have a horrible experience in a church when they could be successful in another vocation.

VI. Have pastor and liaison keep in personal contact.

Listen and do not expect everything to be easy. Seminary can be a hard place to be. The academic pressures can be enormous. Family commitments add to the pressure. Experiences in churches are sometimes far from wonderful. Listen, question, nurture, laugh and cry with the inquirer or candidate.

Have the Session liaison call several times a year to find out how things are going and if there are needs. Have the pastor call, also. If the liaison goes off the Session, determine how the Session will stay in touch. Maybe have a second sponsor.

If a new pastor comes to the church, it is extremely important they get to know the candidates. Often, the previous pastor worked closely with them when they were trying to discern his/her call from God. Many times, the pastor can be the most significant contact with the church. If the pastor does not know them, they may feel cut off from their church.

*These are suggestions from inquirers and candidates.

GOALS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SESSION

G-2.0605 Oversight

During the phases of inquiry and candidacy, the individual continues to be an active member of his or her congregation and subject to the concern and discipline of the session. In matters relating to preparation for ministry, the individual is subject to the oversight of the presbytery within the context of their covenant relationship.

G-2.0704 Record of Ordination

The presbytery of call shall record the ordination and installation, along with written affirmation of the new teaching elder to the obligations undertaken in the ordination questions, and enroll the teaching elder as a member of the presbytery. The stated clerk of the presbytery shall report these actions to the General Assembly, the presbytery of care, and to the congregation of which the candidate was formerly a member.

(It is important to remember that the Session acts as an advocate for both Inquirers and Candidates and, through its moderator and presbytery commissioner(s), can call the Presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry to accountability in fulfilling its responsibilities.)

SECTION III

THE PRESBYTERY'S COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY (NURTURING AND DISCERNMENT)



Walk with
inquirer/candidate

NURTURING:

- Exercise responsibility for the spiritual growth of inquirers and candidates.
- Support them with understanding and sympathetic interest.
- Give guidance in regard to courses of study, familiarity with the Bible and with the confessions, practical training and plans for education, including the choice of institutions, field education, and the inquirer's or candidate's financial need.
- Give guidance and instruction in the faith and polity of the church.

DISCERNMENT:

- Interview the person to determine if they should be recommended as an inquirer.
- Confer with the inquirer and review the evidence which indicates whether the inquirer is ready to proceed to candidacy.
- Make sure candidate has met all requirements, conduct a final assessment to certify a candidate "ready to receive a call" and recommend the candidate to the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry.



COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

(TO THE INQUIRER)

I. Role of CPM

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry desires to support you through this process of preparing for the ordained ministry. We are available for you. Our plan is to meet with you annually. Our committee will also receive reports from your CPE, counseling, supervised ministry and seminary reviews. Please send us your transcripts from college and other graduate and seminary work. We also request you complete the financial aid form. This will be used to help you in your journey.

Someone from our committee will review the process of exploring a call and being ready for ordination as a Minister of the Word and Sacrament. (See Attached.) They will also review the special requirements of this presbytery. This process is occasionally modified by the General Assembly, so both the committee and you must take responsibility to stay informed. You will need to let us know if you have questions or if we can help in any way.

II. Liaison

In order to be supportive, one person from this committee will serve as your liaison. Call them with any needs you may have. This person will also help set up annual meetings and answer any questions. If you cannot get in touch with your liaison, please call the Presbytery office or committee chair.

III. Annual Review

The CPM is required to meet with you every year for an annual consultation. You will receive a form to be completed before your annual review. It is a helpful tool for reflection and gives us background to allow for sharing. It should be mailed to the Presbytery office three weeks in advance of your scheduled meeting so that it can be distributed to the members of the committee. This will allow the meeting time to be spent talking with you instead of reading the form. You should complete both the reflections for last year, but also the form on goals and areas of growth.

IV. Be in Charge

The committee and its members are not perfect. Be in charge of your journey. For example, if the committee fails to set up an annual review, call and set it up. If you have questions as to which type of CPE or supervised ministry to do, call your liaison. If there is an unanticipated problem or opportunity, call.

V. Prayer Support

You will be supported by our prayers, and most particularly by the prayers of your liaison. Let your liaison know if you have specific requests. Our prayers go with you on this journey.

Presbytery of Western North Carolina Special Requirements

The General Assembly has set requirements for candidates to be ordained.

The Presbytery of Western North Carolina, like most presbyteries, has additional requirements. Our Presbytery's special requirements are as follows:

- I. **Personal and Career Counseling:** Comprehensive, in-depth career counseling is offered by the Presbyterian Psychological Services in Charlotte. This process is helpful in understanding how values, interests, capabilities and personality fit into a vocational choice. These reports are reviewed by the inquirer/candidate and shared with the committee. This helps the committee to be supportive. Career counseling is normally paid for by the Session. If done elsewhere, at a greater expense, arrangements will need to be made. Counseling is required before a person can become a candidate. If your session is not able to pay for career counseling, please contact the CPM and see what resources may be available for assistance.

The candidate needs to call Dr. Lenore Wilkinson (704/554-9222) to set up an appointment. This is normally a two-day process.

- II. **Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE):** One unit of CPE is required. CPE consists of 400 hours of supervised education, generally in a hospital or hospice environment. Many presbyteries require this and most seminaries include it as an option in their program.
- III. **Supervised Ministry or Field Education:** Supervised ministry should ordinarily consist of an intensive summer internship or a part-time internship for two semesters. It is expected that the candidate works under a supervisor who can speak to your gifts for ministry. The committee requires a full, final evaluation from your supervised ministry from your immediate supervisor.
- IV. **Presbyterian Polity Course.** Our Presbytery requires that the candidate take a Presbyterian Polity course. It is recommended that it be scheduled before ordination exams.
- V. **Reformed Theology:** Our Presbytery requires that the candidate take theology courses that will include Reformed Theology. It is recommended this be taken before the ordination exams.

- VI. Presbyterian Seminary:** Since you are seeking ordination to the office of Teaching Elder in the PC(USA), it is a strong preference of the committee that you attend a PC(USA) seminary. While exceptions can be made, please recognize that specific requirements may not be met at a non-PC(USA) seminary and may cause additional course work to complete the process toward ordination. If there is a compelling reason to attend a non-PC(USA) seminary, we ask you to meet with the CPM to explain and discuss these reasons with us first and receive an exception from the requirement. Exceptions should be explored before an inquirer enrolls in a particular seminary or university to avoid any potential problems. This way, the committee will be able to assist you in mapping out an alternative course of study.

Other Considerations:

- I. Church Internship:** If an inquirer/candidate does not have a strong background in the PC(USA), we strongly encourage the addition of a year-long internship in a PC(USA) congregation. This would offer additional experience in preaching, teaching and pastoral care. It would also help them determine if ministry is where they feel called and what areas of ministry they find most fulfilling. It could help identify to areas of growth.
- II. Ordination Exams:** The candidates must pass all five ordination exams before the CPM can allow them to circulate their Personal Information Form (resume). Therefore, they should take these exams as soon as possible. The Bible Content Exam may be taken in February or August after your first semester. Currently, the others cannot be taken before the completion of two years of seminary.
- III. Requirements:** The committee and General Assembly require that each candidate satisfactorily complete coursework in Greek and New Testament Exegesis, and Preaching and Worship.