

PREPARING FOR MINISTRY

A Field Guide for:

**Persons Inquiring into Ordained Ministry
&
Church Sessions That Walk Alongside Them**

Pre-Inquiry

Inquiry

Annual Consultations

Candidacy

Certification

**Committee on Preparation for Ministry
Indian Nations Presbytery**

**Send all forms and documents to:
Indian Nations Presbytery
1001 NW 25th Street, Suite 206
Oklahoma City, OK 73106**

This Field Guide is designed to serve as a resource and roadmap for persons exploring ordained ministry and the church sessions who will walk alongside them during this navigation of the CPM process in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry in Indian Nations Presbytery hopes this field guide will provide clarification and guidance, and answer many questions that arise during this 3-5-year journey.

Many resources and all the forms pertaining to this entire process are available on the denomination's website to aid you during preparation for ministry. The last page of this field guide lists a number of links to online resources available.

Field Guide Table of Contents

What will happen during the CPM Process

Process Requirements	Page 4
Pre-Inquiry Interview	Page 8
Inquiry Interview	Page 9
Annual Consultation	Page 10
Candidacy Interview	Page 12
Final Assessment / Certification Interview	Page 16
Annual Consultation for Certified Candidates	Page 18
Guidelines for Session Interview – Inquirer	Page 20
Guidelines for Session Interview – Candidate	Page 21
Guidance for Long Term Certified Candidates	Page 22
Guidance for Withdrawal, Re-Entry, and/or Those Who Are Not Actively Seeking a Call	Page 23
Useful Links	Page 24

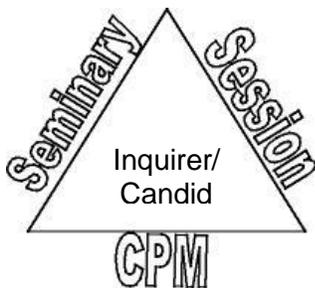
Preparing for Ministry

AN OVERVIEW OF PROCESS REQUIREMENTS AND BASICS

ABOUT THE PROCESS

The process of preparation for ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is rigorous and has specific requirements. It is a discernment process involving many people, and it is **conducted in covenant relationship** between the inquirer/candidate, the session and the presbytery through its committee on preparation for ministry (CPM). The process is **framed by particular time, education and examination requirements.**

The CPM of Indian Nations Presbytery has established requirements consistent with the *Book of Order* for the purpose of providing a normative experience and clear expectations for inquirers and candidates, session and CPM members. **Departure from these requirements will require review and approval by the CPM; and certain exceptions also will require approval by the presbytery.**



Each of the requirements in this process is fulfilled in community with the session, the seminary, field education/internship relationships, and the CPM. It is the task of a particular community to come alongside the inquirer/candidate to help her/him hear and act on God's call. The CPM cannot determine a person's calling or readiness for ordination apart from the observations and reflections of these communities. **The CPM partners in a process that relies on the assessments of the communities closest to the inquirer or candidate in making its decisions.**

Denominational resources, forms and advisory handbooks are available online at <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min>.

COVENANT RELATIONSHIP with the session

The session of the inquirer's/candidate's home church plans a **significant and supportive role**, in ensuring that care is provided on a continuous basis and in helping the inquirer or candidate to discern his/her call. Session, through an appointed liaison, should remain in regular contact with and in prayer for the inquirer/candidate throughout the process – from inquiry through ordination, including time while the inquirer/candidate is away at seminary. CPM expects that sessions will provide financial support for the inquirer/candidate, particularly by sharing in the cost of the psychological/career assessment and travel expenses for annual consultations.

Requirements relating to the session

The session prepares for its role by becoming familiar with the preparation for ministry process as outlined in the *Book of Order* and the Indian Nations Presbytery's *Field Guide*. **The session should carefully review all paperwork submitted to the clerk of session by the inquirer / candidate** prior to interviewing.

**COVENANT
RELATIONSHIP
with the CPM**

The session must submit a **written endorsement** of the inquirer/candidate to the CPM detailing the reasons for its action, **along with the original Form 1 & 2A (or Form 5A/B) documents.**

The session must appoint an **elder liaison/advocate** to walk with the inquirer/candidate throughout the process. If the elder liaison should change, the church must notify the presbytery and CPM. **When possible the elder liaison or the pastor is expected to accompany the inquirer/candidate to meetings of the CPM.**

Sessions are strongly encouraged to stay connected with CPM by inviting a member of CPM to meet with the session to talk through the preparation process any time questions or concerns arise.

The CPM is committed to being a prayerful partner to discern the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives and ministries of inquirers and candidates under care of Indian Nations Presbytery. CPM members strive to build faithful relationships with sessions and seminaries that support and train inquirers and candidates. CPM will provide direction and information to equip those under care educationally and vocationally, and CPM will challenge inquirers and candidates to a mature obedience to the Holy Spirit in their life and vocation.

A CPM liaison is appointed for each inquirer/candidate to assist with the process and be in prayer and discernment with the inquirer/candidate. Depending on the duration of the care relationship, the CPM liaison may change. Questions are encouraged whenever there is uncertainty about the process or requirements. The CPM liaison guides, but does not direct or dictate the steps. All appointments for annual consultations, candidacy and certification meetings **are initiated by the inquirer/candidate** with his/her CPM liaison.

Inquirers and candidates are responsible for their process – to understand time lines, to complete requirements, and to meet with CPM at least annually, always submitting paperwork and reference lists to the presbytery office at least three weeks prior to the time of the meeting.

STAY IN TOUCH! Inquirers and candidates at all stages of the process are responsible to make certain that their liaison and the presbytery office have accurate contact information as changes occur.

**TIME
REQUIREMENTS**

An inquirer shall have been a member of the sponsoring church for at least six months prior to application for enrollment as an inquirer. Inquiry and candidacy phases shall continue for a period of no less than two years, including at least one year as a candidate.

The theological degree ordinarily required for ordination is a **Master of Divinity from an ATS accredited seminary**

EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

acceptable to the presbytery. In addition to an M.Div., or its equivalent, coursework must include one year (or equivalent) of Hebrew and one year (or equivalent) of Greek and one class each in exegesis of the Old and New Testaments using Hebrew and Greek texts as required in G-2.0607c.

Polity and reformed worship, taken for credit, is required. Course work in the areas of Presbyterian creeds, reformed theology and Presbyterian history is strongly recommended. In order to achieve satisfactory grades on the ordination exams a candidate will need a thorough knowledge of these subjects.

Seminary Role

The choice of **seminary must be approved by the CPM.** If the seminary is not a Presbyterian related institution, it should be a place where the inquirer/candidate receives an education that is rooted in the reformed tradition and where the inquirer/candidate has the opportunity to be in relationship with other Presbyterian students and faculty.

The seminary should regularly forward **transcripts and field education evaluations to the CPM** for review. The inquirer/candidate should ensure that seminary required releases have been signed so that evaluations are sent in a timely manner.

In addition to the requirements of the Book of Order, there are certain opportunities which will enrich and enhance your preparation for ministry. Therefore the presbytery requires at least one unit of clinical pastoral education (CPE) in a setting certified by the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE). A directory of CPE sites can be found at www.acpe.edu. CPM must pre-approve the proposed location. A CPM supervised field education must be completed in a PC(USA) congregation and not in a church setting similar to your home church.

Field Education

Field education/internships are part of the seminary experience. The CPM expects that each student will complete required seminary fieldwork/internship usually in the area of **general pastoral ministry.** Ordinarily this will be done in a Presbyterian church. **A written position description detailing specific responsibilities, expected outcomes, and time commitments must be provided to CPM. CPM may require additional fieldwork or internship on a case by case basis.**

CPE Internship

The CPM requires one unit of **clinical pastoral education (CPE)**, to be taken at an accredited CPE location with a licensed CPE supervisor, **approved by CPM in advance.**

Field Ed Supervisors

For both CPE and pastoral internships, the supervisor must submit an **evaluation of the inquirer's/candidate/s work** to the CPM. It is the **inquirer's/candidate's responsibility** to see that these reports are sent to the CPM as soon as they are available.

**Psychological /
Career
Assessment**

Acquire a **psychological/career assessment** from a qualified psychologist approved by the CPM sometime during the inquiry period. The psychologist's report must be received by the CPM prior to the interview to be enrolled as a candidate.

**EXAMINATION
REQUIREMENTS**

The Bible content exam is normally taken during the first year of seminary. The list of test sites and registration information is available at <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min>. The Bible content exam is offered only online. Permission of CPM is not required to take this exam.

The other four "senior" exams (polity, theology, worship and Bible exegesis) are normally taken **after** the second year of seminary and **after** field education experiences are completed. Ordinarily CPM will require candidates to take all four of the "senior" exams at the same time. **Candidates must register and pay online at <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min> each time exams are to be taken. Candidates must have permission of the CPM to take these exams, so plan ahead and pay attention to deadlines.**

Ordination examination forms and sample ordination exams can be accessed at <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/senior-ordination-exams>.

**CPM
PROCEDURES
REGARING
MULTIPLE
FAILURES OF
ORDINATION
EXAMS**

What follows are requirements of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry related to retaking ordination examinations (not including the Bible content exam). If any candidate has difficulty passing any of the ordination exams, CPM will recommend study resources.

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 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.

Considerations

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, noting official documentation and diagnosis of the learning disability.

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.

Any other impediment explained in writing to CPM will be considered at the sole discretion of the CPM on a case by case basis.

PRE-INQUIRY INTERVIEW

If an individual believes God may be calling him or her to ministry as a teaching elder in the PC(USA) and wishes to explore this sense of call with the larger church body, it is appropriate to seek enrollment as an inquirer. The requirements and suggested steps are as follows:

Must be an active member of his/her church for at least six months.

Initiate a conversation with his/her pastor about his/her sense of call and the possibility of entering the process of preparation for ministry in the Presbyterian Church.

Obtain a copy of the *Book of Order*, CPM manuals, and the forms used in the preparation for ministry process from the denomination's website: <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/forms-used-preparation-ministry-process>.

Complete Form 1 and the appropriate portions of **Form 2A & B**. These provide the framework of the pre-inquiry meeting with the session.

Order transcripts showing a bachelor degree and any graduate work to date for submission with your application.

Schedule inquiry interview with session.

The session must decide whether to **support** (G-2.0602) and **endorse** this person to enter the preparation for ministry process.

The clerk of session submits all paperwork, including the session's endorsement letter to CPM c/o Indian Nations Presbytery, 1001 NW 25th Street, Suite 206, Oklahoma City, OK 73106.

CPM members are available to answer questions about the process and to visit with the pre-inquirer's session to clarify the purpose and requirements when invited to do so.

Pre-Inquirer

- **Meet with his/her pastor** to discuss matters of call.
- **Acquire information** about the preparation process and a set of forms.
- Complete and submit **Form 1 and 2 with transcripts** to his/her session.

Pre-Inquirer & Session Interview

CPM Roles

Who is responsible for what?

- **Meet with the session** for inquiry interview.
- **Inquirers and candidates at all stages of the process are responsible to make certain that their liaison and the presbytery office have accurate contact information as changes occur.**

Church/Session

- **Pastor counsels with pre-inquirer** about readiness to begin the preparation process.
- **Pastor prepares the session** for the pre-inquiry interview. (See "Guidelines for a session interview with an inquirer" found on page 22.
- **The session** reads submitted paperwork, conducts the interview, votes to endorse the person for enrollment in the process, assigns a session liaison and prepares a written letter of recommendation.
- **The clerk of session** sends Form 1, 2, transcripts, and session's endorsement letter to the presbytery office.

CPM

- **Assigns the applicant to a CPM liaison upon receipt of the paperwork.**

What will happen during the . . .

INQUIRY INTERVIEW

Framing Questions

"Do I believe that God may be calling me to pastoral ministry? Does somebody else believe that I am called to pastoral ministry? What are the personal implications of becoming a teaching elder?"

Who is responsible for what?

Applicant

- Inform your session liaison or pastor of the date and time of the inquiry interview with CPM, so that the elder or pastor can attend.
- Forward academic transcripts of your bachelor's degree and any seminary work undertaken to the presbytery office, if not already done.

Session

- Applicant's liaison, pastor or other session representative attends the inquiry interview with CPM.

CPM

- Review the application packet, including the session endorsement letter and transcripts of academic work, prior to the CPM meeting.
- **CPM Form One:** make a point of calling references listed there.

- Assign a CPM liaison to the applicant, identify goals for the inquiry period, discuss the applicant’s choice of seminary, and establish expectations regarding the next step in the process.

What the CPM looks for in the interview

Does the applicant show him/herself to be someone with a vital faith in God and a journey characterized by humility and a desire for spiritual maturity? Is this person willing and able to make an honest self-assessment? Does the applicant have a strong connection with his/her congregation and does this community of faith note the presence of gifts for ministry? What seminary has the applicant chosen and why?

What the applicant looks for

Does someone else think I’m called to pastoral ministry?
 What contexts of ministry do I need to seek out in order to test this sense of call?
 What seminary to choose – or – why have I chosen the one I have? Does my seminary of choice provide opportunity for experiencing the ethos of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?

CPM perceptions of the applicant based on the written materials submitted and questions for the applicant that grow out of the interview.

Comments shared with CPM by **references** that are pertinent to the interview.

“Take Home” messages from CPM to the applicant

The **standard expectations** regarding the process, including conversations about the inquirer’s seminary selection and coursework (normally toward an M.Div. at an ATS accredited seminary within the reformed tradition, doing course work required by the *Book of Order*).

Make plans to take the Bible content exam. Normally this exam is taken in the first year of seminary.

Plan on completing two internships. (A general pastoral internship/fieldwork in a setting approved by CPM and one unit of CPE at an accredited CPE location.)

Become involved in ministry in a local church setting to help with the discernment process.

Work with your pastor and/or session liaison in order **to set goals for the inquiry period.** Have them make use of the five areas described on Form Three as a guide to the formulation of these goals.

What will happen during the . . .
ANNUAL CONSULTATION

An annual consultation is required, even after final certification, until ordination. After each annual consultation, the CPM, by vote, will recommend to the presbytery whether to continue the inquirer/candidate/certified candidate under care.

Framing Question

How are you growing, what are you learning, how can we help you?

Who’s responsible for what?

Inquirer/Candidate

- Contact CPM liaison to **schedule your annual consultation.**
- **Complete Form 3** and submit to the presbytery office at least **3 weeks** prior to appointment.
- **Have transcripts and field education reports** for work done in the past year sent to the presbytery office **at least 3 weeks prior to your appointment.**
- **Be prepared** to discuss questions, concerns or special requests with CPM.
- **Inquirers and candidates at all stages of the process are responsible to make certain that their liaison and the presbytery office have accurate contact information as changes occur.**

CPM

- **Review** all material sent in preparation for the consultation.
- **Carefully review** Form 3 and any field education reports and transcripts. **Contact references listed on Form 3.** CPM also may speak with field education supervisors.
- **Evaluate** inquirer’s/candidate’s progress in light of reports from references.
- Make **recommendation.**
- Help the inquirer/candidate set **goals** for the coming year.

What the Committee on Preparation for Ministry looks for

Is this person continuing to demonstrate a willingness to make an **honest self-assessment** of strengths and weaknesses?

Do **adjustments** need to be made in the plan that CPM has worked out with the inquirer/candidate?

Have **goals** been fulfilled. Why or why not?

What are the inquirer’s/candidate’s **perceptions** about progress of the preparation process?

Growth and development in the five areas listed on Form 3.

Did I set **realistic goals** for myself and what did I learn by meeting them (or not meeting them)?

Do I want to **continue** in this process?

How do I need to **grow** and what **goals** do I want to set for the coming year?

What the inquirer/candidate looks for

CPM’s perceptions and **questions** based on review of paperwork.

Comments made by references that are pertinent to the interview.

Specific requirements that CPM has asked the inquirer/candidate to fulfill during the coming year.

“Take Home” messages from CPM to the inquirer/candidate

Inquirers and candidates at all stages of the process are responsible to make certain that their liaison and the presbytery office have accurate contact information as changes occur.

What will happen during the . . .

Candidacy Interview

Framing Question

What did you learn about yourself during the inquiry period, and what kinds of relationships, contexts for ministry, or course work would be most helpful to you as you prepare for ordination? Describe how you and others have perceived that God has confirmed your call to pastoral ministry in the PC(USA).

When timing is appropriate, the candidacy interview may take place in conjunction with an annual consultation. In such cases the inquirer must submit both Form 3 and Form 5, along with required statement and essay, transcripts, and reports.

Preparing for the Candidacy Interview

Inquirer

- Obtain a **psych exam / career assessment** at an approved location and have it forwarded to the presbytery office. The cost is shared by the inquirer, session and presbytery.
- Inform your pastor and session liaison of your **desire to move to candidacy. Schedule a meeting with the session.**
- **Complete Form 3** (if an annual consultation is also being conducted) **and Form 5A&B. Write a statement of faith and an essay** as instructed in the section "Demonstrating adequate Promise for Ministry" (next section). Submit these to your session prior to appearing for the candidacy interview.
- **Contact your COM liaison** to schedule the candidacy exam.
- **Submit an electronic copy** of Form 3 (if annual consultation) and the essay and statement of faith to CPM at least 3 weeks prior to your appointment with CPM.
- Ask the seminary to forward **transcripts and field education reports** to the presbytery office.
- Inform your **pastor or ruling elder liaison** as to the date & time of your candidacy meeting with CPM so that the pastor or ruling elder can be present.

Session / Liaison

- **The pastor/ruling elder liaison** must **counsel** with the inquirer regarding the inquiry process and be a part of discerning if a move to candidacy is warranted at this time.
- **Prepare the session** for the candidacy interview (see "Guidelines for a Session Interview with a Candidate") and make plans to **accompany the inquirer** when he/she meets with CPM.

- **The session** reviews the inquirer’s candidacy essay, statement of faith, and **Form 5A&B**, conducts the **interview**, votes whether to endorse the inquirer to the presbytery, and prepares a **written endorsement** or recommendation to be sent to the presbytery.
- **The clerk of session forwards Form 5A&B**, the essay, statement of faith, and the session’s letter of endorsement to the presbytery office.

CPM

- **Presbytery office receives paperwork from the clerk of session and forwards to CPM.**
- **Prior to the candidacy interview, review** Form 5, the essay and statement of faith, academic transcripts, psychological/career assessment report, and any field education evaluations prior to the interview with the applicant for candidacy.
- Conduct reference checks with those listed on Form 5, with field education supervisors, and others as may be needed.

Demonstrating Adequate Promise for Ministry

The Book of Order states that, by the end of the inquiry phase, each inquirer shall demonstrate adequate promise for ministry.

CPM expects that your reflections on the six areas identified in Form 5A will be incorporated into an essay in the following form:

1. **A candidacy essay** of not more than 1,500 words answering the following question – ***“Why do you believe God is calling you to ministry as a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and how is the Body of Christ affirming this call?”*** In your answer, be sure to reflect upon the following:
 - What have you learned about yourself during the discernment process of inquiry?
 - How has your faith grown during this process?
 - What have you learned about the office of teaching elder and how well suited are you to this office?
 - Why do you believe that the Presbyterian Church is the best place to act on this call to ministry?
2. **A statement of faith** similar in style to the one you would present to presbytery at an ordination examination. (500 words, one page)

What CPM looks for

Review Form 5 with special attention to the statement of faith and the candidacy essay.

Session’s written endorsement recommending that the inquirer be received as a candidate.

Review of any **field education reports** and **seminary transcripts** (church internships, CPE, etc.)

Call **references** listed on Form 5 and speak with field education supervisors.

Has the applicant been **active in the life and ministry** of the Church and how do the applicant's references characterize him/her? Do the references suggest that he/she is growing in his/her faith and sense of call?

Can the applicant articulate a **sense of call** and does he/she demonstrate a visible passion for ministry as a teaching elder?

Does the applicant show an **ability to integrate** biblical and theological studies with daily life and apply these studies to the context of ministry?

Does this person demonstrate a **realistic awareness** of the nature of pastoral work in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?

Does this person continue to demonstrate willingness to make an **honest self-assessment** of strengths and weaknesses?

What Applicant looks for

Do I believe God is calling me to ministry as a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and is my **community affirming** me in this call?

How can I best **steward** the gifts that God is giving me?

What do I need to do to **make the most** of this preparation process?

“Take Home” Messages from CPM to the Applicant

CPM perception of the applicant is based on the written statement submitted and discussed with the applicant during the interview.

Comments made by the **references** that are pertinent to the interview.

CPM's ability to hear the **inquirer's perceptions** about his/her progress in the preparation process.

Recommendations regarding

- **Best tools** to prepare for ordination
- **Spiritual growth** (worship, peer support/prayer, spiritual direction)
- **Personal development** (counseling, physical health, attention to relationships with friends, spouse, children, etc.)
- **Education for ministry** (appropriate course work informed by desire for learning and strengthening areas of weakness)
- **Practical experience** (the kind of internship and supervisor that would be most beneficial)
- **Specific requirements** that CPM wishes the applicant to fulfill during the candidacy period

Presbytery Exam

The inquirer shall present himself/herself to the presbytery for examination in the following areas:

1. Christian faith
2. Forms of Christian service undertaken

3. Motives for seeking the ministry

The candidacy essay will be given to members of the presbytery.

Following the examination, the moderator will ask the following questions and offer a brief charge and prayer:

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

Reminder

Inquirers and candidates at all stages of the process are responsible to make certain that their liaison and the presbytery office have accurate contact information as changes occur.

What will happen during the . . .

Final Assessment / Certification Interview

A final assessment is conducted to demonstrate readiness to begin ministry as a teaching elder.

Framing Question

So you want to be a pastor . . . ? Show us.

- **All ordination examinations passed**
- **CPE and field education / internship experiences completed with evaluations received by CPM**
- **Presentation of a transcript from an ATS seminary acceptable to the presbytery showing satisfactory grades and the date the degree conferred, or be enrolled in the final semester at an ATS seminary with a satisfactory plan to complete the degree within 90 days**
- **All references checked by CPM liaison**

Candidate

Who's Responsible for what?

- **Contact** CPM liaison asking to be placed on the agenda for a final assessment/certification exam.

- **Prepare or provide a ten-minute sermon with exegetical notes to share with CPM (and possibly presbytery) as part of the final assessment.**
- **Prepare a statement of faith for an ordination examination.**
- **Prepare a PIF** (Personal Information Form) through Church Leadership Connection <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/clc>.
- **Send** ordination exams, final transcript, statement of faith, sermon/exegesis, and PIF to the presbytery office **at least three weeks prior** to the meeting date.

CPM

- **Review** ordination exam results, statement of faith, sermon and exegetical notes, and PIF with at least 2 references.
- **Conduct reference checks** with internship supervisors and seminary (if candidate is completing final semester at the time of final assessment.)
- **Conduct final assessment.**
- **Prepare a written summary** of the candidate's preparation process and final assessment.

What CPM looks for

Does this person articulate faith in Christ and a commitment to ministry as a teaching elder? Can he/she communicate a reformed understanding of theology, the Bible, the Sacraments, and the government of the PC(USA)?

Does the applicant have a **working pastoral theology**? Can he/she apply his/her theological and biblical training to practical pastoral situations?

Has the applicant demonstrated a growing ability to work within the context of the **Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)**?

Is this person continuing to demonstrate a willingness to make an **honest self-assessment** of his/her strengths and weaknesses?

Does the **PIF reflect a realistic self-assessment**?

What the applicant looks for

Do I believe I am called to pastoral ministry and am I properly prepared?

For what kind of position am I best suited?

Do those who know me best agree with me?

How can I be a pastor to this CPM today?

Posting the PIF

Upon completion of the final assessment and CPM's certification of readiness to receive a call, the candidate should enter his/her PIF on the Church Leadership Connection website: <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/clc>.

Negotiating for Service

A candidate is not authorized to negotiate for a call until certified ready to receive a call. In particular circumstances prior to certification, a candidate may enter into negotiation for his/her ministerial service ONLY IF:

- Two full years of theological education have been completed and the candidate is enrolled in the final semester of seminary.
- An annual consultation has been conducted within the least year.
- All ordination examinations have been passed.
- Prior approval of the CPM and the appropriate committee on ministry has been obtained.

(Student pastor relationships will be negotiated as field education or service as a Christian educator, not as an ordained call.)

Regarding Ordination Reminder

The **presbytery placing the call to a candidate for ministry** ordinarily conducts the **ordination examination and ordains.**

Inquirers and candidates at all stages of the process are responsible to make certain that their liaison and the presbytery office have accurate contact information as changes occur.

**What will happen during the . . .
Annual Consultation for Certified Candidates**

A written annual report must be filed even after certification. A personal interview is also required every year. The purpose is to confirm your request to continue under care as a certified candidate and to continue in discernment and covenant relationship until a call is received.

Inquirers and candidates at all stages of the process are responsible to make certain that their liaison and the presbytery office have accurate contact information as changes occur.

Expectations of certified candidates

Certified candidates are expected actively to engage in and prepare for further ministry as they seek a validated call. Such activities, in consultation with CPM, shall ordinarily include:

- Maintaining and circulating an active PIF
- Active participation in a congregation of the PC(USA)
- Continuing education
- Attendance at presbytery meetings
- Ongoing spiritual formation
- At least annual consultations with session liaison and CPM liaison

- Clearly articulate a sense of call
- Fulfilling agreements made at annual consultations
- Pursuing a call to ministerial service

Certified candidates who fail to engage in such activities over the course of a year ordinarily shall not be continued in the care process.

Long-term Certified Candidates

If at the conclusion of four or more years, a certified candidate has yet to be ordained, CPM shall counsel seriously with the candidate concerning whether he/she wishes to continue in the process. If the candidate should wish to continue, CPM shall consider the request and may require additional preparation for ministry, ordinarily to include:

- A formal renewed endorsement from the session of the candidate's home church
- A contract for continuing education
- An additional psychological evaluation or equivalent vocational counseling
- Significant changes to the candidate's PIF
- A recognizable shift in the candidate's strategy for seeking a validated call.

If such criteria are not met, the candidate shall not be continued in the care process. Candidates who withdraw of their own accord may re-enter the process at the discretion of the committee on preparation for ministry.

Framing Question

What is your ongoing sense of call to ministry as a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and how are you actively pursuing that call?

Preparing for the annual interview

Certified Candidate

- **Complete and submit** the annual report form for certified candidates and **schedule annual consultation** with CPM liaison.
- **Certified candidates who are not actively engaged in a search and call process** should be prepared to explain their plans for ordained ministry.

Session / Liaison

- Session liaison and candidate continue regular / annual contact.

CPM

- **Contact references** from Annual report form prior to annual consultation.
- **Conduct annual consultation.**
- **Recommend** whether presbytery continue the covenant relationship.

Types of questions you may be asked

What self-imposed limitations might be affecting your selection in the call process?

What changes can/could you make to increase your prospects for a call?

What changes or circumstances are outside of your control?

What realistic, tangible goals can be made during this annual consultation to help you stay accountable for moving forward in the process?

Have you considered that your call to ministry as a teaching elder might have changed?

What other ways might your gifts and talents be used in non-ordained ministry?

Reminder

Inquirers and candidates at all stages of the process are responsible to make certain that their liaison and the presbytery have accurate contact information as changes occur.

Guidelines for a Session Interview with an Inquirer

The *Book of Order* states that 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.*

In short, inquiry is a way of testing and examining a call. Inquiry is meant to take place in community. It is a process that is an act of the body. At this stage it is not the role of the session to ratify or affirm the call, but to enter into a period of discernment with the inquirer. Thus the session's primary role is to discover why an applicant wants to enter into the inquiry process and to make a judgment regarding whether or not that is an appropriate step to take.

As you undertake this process of assessment, do so in a spirit of humility and with a desire to discern how God is at work in the applicant's life. The person before you senses God's call in his/her life and thus should be treated with reverence and respect. Your role at this point in the process is not to simply celebrate the applicant's subjective sense of call and automatically make an endorsement to the presbytery. You have a judgment to make that will have an impact on the future of the Presbyterian Church. So go about this process with compassion and intelligence, making use of prayer and seeking to be responsive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

To prepare for a session interview with an applicant for the inquiry stage, read over the applicant's responses to the questions on CPM form # 1. When the applicant

appears before the session evaluate the applicant in light of the considerations listed below.

1. Does the applicant demonstrate a vital relationship with Jesus Christ? Is this person's faith journey characterized by a desire for spiritual maturity?
2. Is this person someone who is able to make an honest assessment of him/herself? Do you sense that this person possesses the emotional maturity that a person inquiring into a call to pastoral ministry ought to possess?
3. Does this person's inner sense of call seem genuine and healthy?
4. Does this person have the gifts and talents needed to be a minister of Word and Sacrament; or, are the seeds of these gifts present and do you sense that this person demonstrates potential? For example, does this person have a compassionate presence, a searching intellect, a love for God's Word, etc.?

(Additional questions for use by the session in making this assessment can be found on page seven of Form 1.)

Guidelines for a Session Interview with an Applicant for Candidacy

The *Book of Order* states that the purpose of the candidacy phase ". . . is to provide for the full preparation of persons to serve the church as teaching elders." The period of inquiry is dedicated to the work of discernment of call and the candidacy phase is dedicated to the work of preparation for ministry. During the inquiry period the inquirer is to be working with the question: "Am I called to be a teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?" By the time he/she appears before the session to apply to be received as a candidate, he/she should have an affirmative answer to this question and be able to support that answer when questioned about his/her sense of call.

The role of the session at this stage is to hear the inquirer's story with respect to what he/she learned during the period of inquiry and to make a judgment about the inquirer's readiness to begin the preparation stage of the process. The *Book of Order* asks the session to address questions to the inquirer that relate to his/her Christian faith, the forms of Christian service he/she has undertaken and his/her motives for seeking the ministry. In preparation for this interview members of session are asked to read the inquirer's candidacy essay that he/she is required to prepare for the session and the presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry.

As you prepare for and conduct the interview with the Inquirer keep in mind the following questions:

1. Does the applicant demonstrate a vital relationship with Jesus Christ? Is this person's faith journey characterized by a desire for spiritual maturity?
2. Has this person been active in the life and ministry of the church? Has he/she demonstrated certain gifts for ministry?

3. How well does this person articulate his/her call? Is that call affirmed by others in the congregation?

As you undertake this process of assessment remember that you are playing a vital role in a process that will have an enduring impact on the future of the Presbyterian Church.

CONSULTATIONS WITH CANDIDATES CERTIFIED TO RECEIVE A CALL

- a. For recently certified candidates, the current CPM liaison should remind the candidate that they are required to file an annual report and schedule an annual consultation – each year after final certification until they have been ordained. If they, at some point, choose to withdraw from the care covenant relationship, they should inform CPM of that decision in writing.
- b. For certified candidates who have not had contact with CPM in excess of one year; we recommend the following procedures to re-establish contact and to address status:
 - i. Send a letter to the last known address, informing the certified candidate of the need to schedule an annual consultation. Send a copy to the clerk of the session where, according to our records, they are under care.
 - ii. If no response is received within the time frame specified in the first letter; send a second letter, certified mail, informing the candidate that if we do not hear from them within 30 days from the date of the letter; CPM will be recommending to Presbytery that the candidate be removed from care. Send a copy of this second letter to the clerk of the session where, according to our records, they are under care.
 - iii. At the annual consultation, (assuming the candidate asks to continue under care), discuss the questions contained in the annual report form (revised to specifically address certified candidate issues) with particular emphasis on what the candidate is doing to actively seek a call and why the candidate wishes to continue under care. CPM would have discretion to suggest additional work, on a case by case basis, for candidates who have been certified in excess of 5 years. Examples of the type of requirements that may be appropriate include:
 - Revised statement of faith
 - Retaking one or more ordination exams to demonstrate current competency
 - Retaking the psychological exam, if warranted
 - Continuing education coursework, which may include an additional internship, if warranted

CPM would then vote on whether to continue the certified candidate under care at the conclusion of the annual consultation.

- c. Certified candidates who are not actively seeking a call may choose to withdraw from the covenant relationship by requesting the same in writing on the annual report form. At that point, the CPM will provide the withdrawing certified candidate with a final assessment report reflecting the work that has been completed and a letter from presbytery attesting to the fact that the certified candidate voluntarily withdrew from the covenant relationship and was "in good standing" with the presbytery at the time of withdrawal. This assessment form and letter would provide the candidate with current status information that they could provide to another presbytery, should they at some point in the future decide to re-enter the process. It would be up to that other presbytery to decide what requirements they might need from a candidate seeking to enter their presbytery's care. Candidates who wish to withdraw from the care relationship and later return under care of presbytery would be subject to the recommendations described in the next section.

WITHDRAWAL AND RE-ENTRY IN PRESBYTERY

If a candidate in good standing desires to withdraw or has withdrawn, reinstatement to the process and the status for re-entry shall be in the sole discretion of CPM.

JURISDICTION ENDS

The committee's jurisdiction for any given inquirer/candidate ends at the later of (1) the person completes the entire Committee on Preparation's oversight process and receives a call to be ordained to serve within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) or other agency whose work has been validated as a position of service or call or (2) the person withdraws from the inquiry/candidacy process or is removed by the presbytery. The end of the Committee on Preparation's jurisdiction over an individual seeking ordination is made a matter of permanence in the Indian Nations Presbytery minutes through its action.

USEFUL LINKS

What is Christian vocation?

<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/christianvocation>

Preparation for Ministry information (including links to Preparation for Ministry forms and ordination examinations)

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

Church Leadership Connections (including links to forms, opportunity lists)

<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/clc>