

Session Orientation on the Preparation for Ministry Process

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The Path to Ordination as a Teaching Elder (Minister of Word and Sacrament)

Inquiry

Person hears God's call

- Contacts pastor to discuss his / her call and how to proceed
- Pastor notifies Session of person's desire to become an Inquirer in the ordination process

Meets with Session for Session endorsement

- If Session endorsement granted, session liaison is assigned to the prospective Inquirer
- Session/Pastor/Liaison completes Session Recommendation Form and Letter of Endorsement (formerly known as Form 1D and 2B)

Prospective Inquirer submits application to presbytery

- Forms 1A-D, one-page biographical sketch, and transcripts of all previous academic work
- Completes ministerial assessment
- Meets with CPM to become inquirer
- If enrolled as an inquirer
 - CPM liaison is assigned
 - Inquirer paperwork filed with presbyter/Louisville consultation

Candidacy

After one year of inquiry, individual completes application to be enrolled as a candidate

- Completes Form 5A & essay questions
- Meets with Session for Session endorsement
- Session Evaluation/Recommendation Regarding Enrollment as a Candidate
 - Form 5B
- Inquirer files application with presbytery office
 - Forms 5A & B, along with one-page faith statement, one-page faith journey, transcripts, field education/internship evaluations
- Meets with CPM for Candidacy interview
- CPM completes/files with presbytery
- Presbytery files forms with Louisville
 - Goes before Presbytery to be examined/accepted as Candidate for ordination

Final Assessment

After 1 year of candidacy and completing all requirements, the candidate may apply for Final Assessment

- Complete written requirements
- Meet with CPM for interview
- Receive certification of readiness to receive a call

Next Steps

Once certified ready to receive a call, a candidate remains under care of both Session and CPM. During this time he/she

- Circulates PIF and receives a call
- When the candidate is ordained, she/he is removed from church and CPM rolls

Requirements for Ordination

Education Requirements

In addition to completing a Master of Divinity, to be certified ready to receive a call by the Presbytery of Greater Atlanta, the candidate must satisfy these education requirements:

1. In compliance with G-2.0607 (Final Assessment and Negotiation for Service), the satisfactory completion of the following courses from a theological institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools:
 - a. Hebrew
 - b. Greek
 - c. Old Testament Exegesis
 - d. New Testament Exegesis
 - e. Reformed Theology
 - f. Presbyterian Polity
2. These courses may not be taken pass/fail; a letter grade is required.
3. For both Greek and Hebrew, the following is required:
 - a. A full course (not abbreviated or concise), ordinarily two semesters or a summer;
 - b. A course in which the student demonstrates proficiency in translating and interpreting biblical texts from the original language. This competency may be incorporated into a full course of language instruction, or an introductory or elective course that affords the student an opportunity to work in the original languages. Students may be asked to submit a paper to CPM in which they demonstrate such proficiency.

Students may be asked to submit a syllabus for these courses for review to determine whether the courses satisfy PC(USA) requirements.

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)

Our presbytery requires one unit of CPE in an ACPE certified center

- Takes place in a hospital context (usually)
- Emotionally challenging and enriching
- Provides an experiential context for deeper emotional and spiritual maturity: “seasoning”, “a dose of real life”
 - Life/Death
 - Family dynamics
 - Crisis situations
 - Spiritual distress
 - Face-to-face with fear, hope, despair, sorrow, joy
 - Test of one’s limits and faith resources

Ordination Exams

Every Candidate is required to pass five ordination exams

- Bible Content Exam
- Worship and Sacraments
- Presbyterian Polity
- Theology
- Biblical Exegesis

Role of the Session

Call

- Develop an awareness of Christian vocation in the congregation
- Educate congregation about the ordination process
- Encourage those in the congregation in whom you see gifts for ministry to consider theological education and preparing for ordained ministry

Inquiry

- Contact CPM and arrange for a session orientation
- Interview applicant seeking Session endorsement to become an inquirer in the ordination process (see next page)
 - NOTE: Applicant shall be a member of the sponsoring congregation **and shall have been active in the work and worship** of that congregation for at least 6 months
- Appoint Session liaison
- Keep up with and care for student
 - Support student with prayer, visits, financial resources
 - Give student role in worship,
 - Ask Session liaison(s) to regularly report to Session on the student(s) under Session's care
 - Keep congregation informed about student(s) under Session's care
- Financial Support
 - Psychological Evaluation
 - Interviews/Annual Consultations
 - Seminary tuition, books, insurance, living expenses
- Pray together for the person under care

Candidacy

- Meet with inquirer/interview/decide if inquirer should become a candidate
 - Attend presbytery meeting when inquirer becomes candidate
 - Celebrate as a congregation when inquirer becomes candidate
- Review Annual Consultations
- Keep up with and care for student
- Financial Support
 - Ordination Exams
 - Robe/Stoles
- Pray together for the person under care
- Remember that a Candidate is "under care" until he/she receives a call and is ordained
- Remove candidate from church rolls when call is received

The Session's Interview with an Inquirer

As a session prepares to conduct an interview with a potential inquirer, it is important that its familiarity with the applicant not preclude exploring some serious questions about the person's gifts for ministry. Sessions have in the past found questions like the following to be very helpful:

1. What personal qualities demonstrate evidence of a healthy and vital faith in God through Jesus Christ?
2. How is that faith currently being expressed through the individual's participation in the worship, life and mission of this congregation?
3. What motivations, whether positive or negative, impel the person's sense of call? Service to God and the world? Compassion for God's children? Guilt? A 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, leadership skills, cross-cultural competencies, emotional intelligence, and motivations?
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?
9. How does the individual plan to finance his or her education?

Role of the Session Liaison

An elder is appointed to act as liaison with the Inquirer / Candidate and with presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) and to participate with the Inquirer / Candidate and CPM as they explore and evaluate his or her progress in the preparation for ministry.

Some of the ways in which the liaison might participate in the process:

1. Learn the background of the Inquirer
2. Take an interest in his / her academic, field education, annual consultation and other activities relocated to preparation for ministry.
3. Discuss with the Session the progress the Inquirer / Candidate is making. Share with areas of particular need for the Inquirer / Candidate.
4. Become aware when the Inquirer / Candidate will be home and try to make some contact, ideally in person.
5. Identify ways to keep the congregation aware of the progress of the Inquirer / Candidate.
6. Initiate conversation with the Session on the possibility of providing financial assistance or other tangible support.
7. If possible, attend the CPM meetings as the person becomes an Inquirer and Candidate and attend the Presbytery meeting at which he or she is examined for Candidacy.
8. Attend the service(s) of ordination and installation.
9. Remember your Inquirer / Candidate in prayer.
10. Write your Inquirer / Candidate on special occasions.
11. Be a friend and lend to your Inquirer / Candidate a sense of your personal and spiritual interest in and support of him / her in training for ministry.
12. Hopefully, in performing this role, you will also grow in grace and faith!

Responsibilities of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM)

It is important that those who are to be ordained as teaching elders receive a 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.

Role of CPM

- Provide session orientation
- Act as a support for those that have heard a call
- Set goals for the inquirer/candidate
- Provide advice and guidance about the ordination process, discernment, preparing for ordination exams, etc.
- Prepare and file reports with presbytery and PC(USA) home office
- Authorize candidate to take ordination exams
- Conduct final assessment: certify candidate ready to receive a call
- Review candidate's PIF (personal information form)
- Ensure accountability to standards: Sometimes the CPM must say "No" to those in the ordination process/under its care