

**The Presbytery of East Tennessee
Committee on Preparation for Ministry
Policy Handbook
(Revised February 2018)**

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2018**

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Introduction

This policy handbook for the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) of the Presbytery of East Tennessee represents operating procedures for the committee, as we seek to guide the Inquiry and Candidacy process in our Presbytery. This is a companion piece to the Form of Government and to the Presbytery Manual, as well as to the Advisory Handbook on Preparing for Ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (see appendix for link) These procedures seek to give further clarification to the role of the committee and its members, the supporting congregations, and Inquirers and Candidates through the process.

Mission Statement

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry enters a covenant relationship with those who are discerning a call as teaching elders within the PC(USA), along with their Sessions and congregations. The committee seeks to aid in discernment, to support, guide, evaluate, and make sound recommendations, so that the Presbytery can make appropriate decisions about the Inquirer's or Candidate's fitness for ordered ministry.

Expectations of CPM Members

Duties of members of the CPM include:

- Attend meetings regularly;
- Serve as liaison for Inquirers/Candidates, pray for and keep in touch with them monthly, and bring regular reports to the committee;
- Keep up-to-date on Presbytery and denominational requirements and steps for ordination.
- Be available to communicate with Sessions and do other committee work, as needed.
- CPM pays from its budget 1/3 the cost of the psychological evaluation required of inquirers to move to candidacy.

Expectations of Congregations

The Session and congregation are the “home base” for the Inquirer and Candidate and a partner in the covenant with the Presbytery. Duties include:

- Appoint a liaison to work with the Inquirer/Candidate through the process.
- At each stage of the process, meet with and evaluate the Inquirer/Candidate’s suitability to take the next step.
- Fill out appropriate forms at each stage of the process.
- Send representatives, usually the pastor and Session liaison, with the Inquirer/Candidate for final assessment and other points of transition in the process with the CPM.
- Pay 1/3 of the cost of the psychological evaluation required of inquirers to move to candidacy.

General Expectations of the Inquirer/Candidate

The Inquirer/Candidate is responsible for:

- Completing a Master of Divinity Degree at an ATS-accredited theological seminary.
- Meeting requirements at each stage of the Inquiry/candidacy process.
- Meeting with the CPM annually, either in person or through electronic means.
- Completing and returning forms in a timely manner, within one week of CPM meeting.
- Communicating regularly with the liaison about one’s on-going discernment and experiences.
- Covering the cost of travel to meet with CPM and with Presbytery, if necessary, when moving from one stage of the process to the next.
- Paying for 1/3 of the cost of the psychological evaluation required of inquirers to move to candidacy.
- Passing standard ordination exams.
- Completing a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education.
- Asking questions as needed.
- Reading and agreeing to the Presbytery Policy on Sexual misconduct, located at presbyteryeasttn.org (see link in appendix).

Pre-Inquiry

Here are the steps to enter the inquiry process:

1. Normally, when someone expresses a sense of call to ministry, he or she will first talk to her or his pastor (or other Session representative) about this sense of call and what the next steps will be.
2. The pastor contacts the Presbytery CPM chair. A representative from CPM will meet with the Session to give orientation to the process.
3. The prospective Inquirer will begin working on the application to be received as an Inquirer. This (forms 1A, 1B, and 1C) and other forms for the Inquiry/Candidacy process, may be found in the appendix or electronically from the CPM chair.
4. When the prospective Inquirer has filled out the forms, he/she will meet with the Session, who will use his/her application and form 1D to have a conversation with the prospective Inquirer about his/her walk of faith, sense of call, and plans for seminary or next steps.
5. The Session will vote whether to endorse the prospective Inquirer and, if the Session votes to endorse, will then appoint a liaison for the Inquirer. This person will serve as a support and link between the Session and the Inquirer throughout the process.
6. The Session, or a representative, will fill out form 1D, the Session Evaluation and Recommendation, which needs to be signed by several representatives.
7. The Inquirer will then prepare to meet with the CPM. This is arranged by contacting the CPM chair to determine the best date and time. All documents shall be turned in to the CPM chair at least a week before the meeting.
8. The prospective Inquirer, pastor, and liaison from Session shall come to the CPM meeting. The prospective Inquirer is also encouraged to bring along any family member or partner for support.
9. The CPM will vote whether to receive the prospective Inquirer into the process and will report its action to the Presbytery. The official date of beginning inquiry will be the date of the CPM vote.
10. The CPM will fill out form 2A to complete enrollment.

Inquiry

The Inquiry phase of preparation for ministry is designed to allow the church and the person believed to be called to ordered ministry 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)

Length of Time: The Inquiry and Candidacy phases shall last at least two years in all, from the time of acceptance as an Inquirer until ordination. Ordinarily, the Inquiry phase shall last one year from the date the CPM votes to enter the person as an Inquirer. CPM approval is required to continue as an Inquirer for longer than three years.

Steps to take: During inquiry, the following steps should be accomplished by the Inquirer:

1. Complete a Misconduct Prevention Training approved by CPM.
2. Complete psychological evaluation/career counseling (see below, page 7, for details).
3. Take the Bible Content exam, ordinarily at the end of the first year of seminary (see below for details about standard ordination exams).
4. Keep the CPM updated, through the liaison from CPM, as to sense of call and progress.
5. Meet with the CPM annually, completing appropriate forms (see below for details).
6. Complete one unit of Field Education in a congregational setting. If the Inquirer is no longer in seminary, the CPM will need to approve the site and supervisor for Field Education. If the field education takes place in the regular course of seminary work, then the Inquirer shall inform the CPM of his or her plans before beginning the internship and report on it to the CPM after completion.

Annual Conversation Guidelines:

The CPM shall hold an annual conversation with each Inquirer, preferably in person. The Inquirer's pastor or Session will also be invited to attend, and the Inquirer is welcome to bring a family member along, as well, for support.

Before the annual conversation, the Inquirer/Candidate shall fill out form 3, the pre-consultation on development areas. Upon completion, it should be returned via email to the CPM chair, at least one week before the meeting.

Psychological Evaluation/Career Counseling guidelines:

The Inquirer will be evaluated by the means of psychological testing and career counseling consultation and submit the results to the CPM in accordance with these guidelines. The following evaluations are required for the psychological evaluation:

- An evaluation that assesses the individual's basic psychological profile.
- An evaluation that enhances the individual's awareness of self and functioning of self.
- An evaluation highlighting the individual's awareness of self and function of self in group dynamics.

The Inquirer is encouraged to use a pastoral counseling center or psychologist experienced in evaluating candidates for ministry. Seminaries, Presbytery offices, and the CPM can be helpful in referrals to an appropriate office.

The cost of the evaluation of the three exams shall be shared by all responsible covenantal parties: 1/3 by the Inquirer, 1/3 by the congregation of care, and 1/3 by the CPM.

The Inquirer shall sign a release, so that the report will be available to the CPM. Normally, only the chair and CPM liaison read the full report, and they report any concerns to the rest of the committee, as well as discussing these concerns with the Inquirer.

If the Inquiry or Candidacy status under the care of CPM is longer than six years, CPM may require a new career counseling and psychological evaluation.

Moving to Candidacy

When the Inquirer feels confident that he/she has the appropriate gifts for ministry and has completed the steps of the inquiry process, he/she will take the steps to move toward candidacy. The step between inquiry and candidacy is the most challenging step in the process, designed as a time for the congregation, the Inquirer, the CPM, and the Presbytery to assess whether the Inquirer's sense of call is best answered through service as a teaching elder in the church. At this step, we move from a broad sense of inquiry about vocation to a focused development of skills as a teaching elder. Ideally, this step should be taken by the summer before one's last year in seminary, to allow for ordination upon the completion of seminary.

To move to candidacy, the Inquirer shall take the following steps:

1. Complete the application for candidacy (form 5A) and send it to the Session and the CPM.
2. If the Inquirer is in seminary, provide the CPM with a transcript prior to entering candidacy.
3. Meet with the Session to discuss progress and sense of call, using form 5a as a guide. The Session will then vote whether to endorse the Inquirer for candidacy, and will complete form 5b, sending it to the CPM.
4. Meet in person with the CPM (this may be at the same time as the annual conversation, in which case the Inquirer shall also complete form 3)
5. After receiving the CPM's endorsement to move to candidacy, appear at the Presbytery meeting for examination and to receive Presbytery endorsement. Write a one-page statement of faith and call, including the story of the Inquirer's sense of call, sense of what God is calling him or her to do in ministry, as well as his/her commitment to Christ and to the Presbyterian Church. This statement shall be submitted to the CPM chair two weeks before the Presbytery meeting.
6. The official date of candidacy shall be the date that the Presbytery endorses the Inquirer to move to candidacy.

Questions for the Presbytery examination for candidacy:

The chair may ask the Inquirer some of the following questions, to begin the Presbytery examination:

- What gifts for ministry do you and others recognize in the person's life?
- Where might your gifts for ministry fit in response to the needs of the church and God's people broadly in the world?
- What are the functions that, within the Reformed tradition, distinguish the ministry of teaching elders from other forms of ministry (such as the ordained service of deacons and ruling elders)? Why do you believe yourself to have the gifts, temperament, and interests that would enable him/her to fulfill those functions of a teaching elder?
- How willing and able are you to follow the call of God's Spirit to serve in this ministry wherever that may lead?
- How does a Reformed understanding of Christian vocation relate to one's sense of call?
- How do you use your character and commitment to faith to lead others in the church?
- How does your Statement of Faith reflect the Reformed tradition?
- What does it mean to be Presbyterian, and how does that awareness grow out of participation in the life of a particular church?
- How does your personal and cultural background relate to the ministry of Word and Sacrament, including a concern for maintaining spiritual, physical, and mental health?
- What have you learned from experiences of working in various settings, and how are your particular gifts being used in a ministry setting?
- Where is God calling you to serve, and how does that fit with family commitments and other needs?

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-2.0604)

Length of time: Candidacy shall last at least one year from the time the Presbytery votes to enter the person as a Candidate. Ordinarily, candidacy shall not continue beyond three years. CPM approval is required to continue the candidacy phase beyond that time.

Steps to take: During Candidacy, the following steps shall be accomplished by the Candidate:

1. Complete a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education at an accredited site that has been pre-approved by CPM.
2. Keep the CPM updated, through the liaison, as to sense of call and academic progress.
3. If the Candidate is in seminary, provide the CPM with a transcript at the annual consultation.
4. Meet with the CPM annually, completing appropriate forms (see page 8).
5. Successfully complete standard ordination exams (see page 11).

Candidacy is a time of developing skills for ministry as a teaching elder. Thus, deepening of academic work, pastoral experience, and personal reflection are emphasized in this phase of the process.

Standard Ordination Exam Guidelines:

A review of the Information about the PC(USA) Standard Ordination Exams is strongly recommended. (See appendix for website).

The registration ID can be obtained from the CPM moderator after you are registered. (A link to registration is in the appendix.) CPM must give its approval before the Inquirer/Candidate takes any standard ordination exam, and all Standard Ordination Exams must be successfully completed before the Candidate is certified ready to receive a call.

The Bible Content Exam is ordinarily completed after the first year of seminary.

The Standard Ordination Exams (Worship/Polity/Theology/Exegesis) will ordinarily be taken after completing two years of full-time seminary.

In extraordinary circumstances, the CPM may make other decisions regarding the exams, depending on the individual circumstances of the Candidate. If a Candidate is unsuccessful in passing an exam after two attempts, or if the Candidate has a documented learning disability and wishes to take an alternative exam, the CPM will consider requests on an individual basis. Refer to The Book of Order policy found at G-2.0610 "*Accommodations to Particular Circumstances*"

When a presbytery concludes there are good and sufficient reasons for accommodations to the particular circumstances of an individual seeking ordination, it may, by a three-fourths vote, waive any of the requirements for ordination in G-2.06, except for those of G-2.0607d. If a presbytery judges that there are good and sufficient reasons why a candidate should not be required to satisfy the requirements of G-2.0607d, it shall approve by three-fourths vote some alternate means by which to ascertain the readiness of the candidate for ministry in the areas covered by the standard ordination examinations. A full account of the reasons for **any waiver or alternate means to ascertain readiness shall be included in the minutes of the presbytery and communicated to the presbytery to which an inquirer or candidate may be transferred.**

Final Assessment/Certified Ready to Receive a Call

When a Candidate has completed the above steps of candidacy, he or she may come to the CPM for final assessment, in which the CPM acts to certify the Candidate ready to receive a call. This step allows the Candidate to begin to circulate a PIF and formally look for a call within the PC(USA). Ideally, this step will be taken midway through the final semester of seminary, to maximize the possibility of being placed soon after graduation.

The final assessment shall take place in person, and may include the annual conversation, in which case Form 3 shall also be completed.

A week before the final assessment, the Candidate will provide the following for the CPM:

- A 1-2 page written Statement of Faith.
- A copy of the Candidate's Personal Information Form (PIF).
- A sermon manuscript or outline, with preparation notes which may include research, illustrations, and/or exegesis of the text. The Candidate shall preach this sermon to the CPM.

In this assessment, the CPM will listen to the Candidate's sermon and have a conversation with the Candidate, looking not only for academic completion and skill-development, but readiness to put those skills to work in ministry in the church.

Upon the Candidate's being certified ready to receive a call, the CPM chair will endorse the Candidate's PIF, so that it may be circulated within the PC(USA).

In particular circumstances, the CPM may certify a Candidate ready to receive a call, pending completion of certain requirements, such as passing one remaining ordination exam, completing field education requirements, etc., as long as the Candidate is candid about these caveats in any conversation with a search committee.

While Certified Ready to Receive a Call: Steps to Take:

1. Stay in touch with the CPM, through the liaison.
2. Take an active role in a congregation, continuing to worship, serve, and take leadership positions and continuing education opportunities, as available.
3. Meet annually with the CPM, completing the appropriate forms.

CPM approval is required to continue to maintain certification for longer than three years.

First Call

When the Candidate is in the process of receiving a call, and before meeting with the Committee on Ministry (COM) of the calling Presbytery, he/she should be in touch with the CPM about the possibility of the call.

The Candidate shall also notify the CPM of the following events regarding the first call:

- The date for Presbytery examination
- The date(s) of Ordination and Installation.

Following ordination, the candidacy process is complete.

Exceptions

Inquirers or Candidates who desire transfer to other congregations and/or presbyteries after coming under the care of the CPM must engage in conversation with both churches, and if/where appropriate, both CPM's before making this decision.

Revisions to this Policy Handbook shall be granted with a 3/4 committee vote, to be upheld by Presbytery with a simple majority vote.

Appendix

Advisory Handbook: [Advisory Handbook on Preparing for Ministry in the Presbyterian Church \(U.S.A.\)](#). URL is:

http://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/prep4min/pdfs/p4mah_2015_rel_2.0.pdf

Presbytery of East Tennessee Sexual misconduct policy:

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5651f81ae4b0991ab3142eea/t/5653c0fee4b096a50bf55f13/1448329470499/SexualMisconductPolicy_Aproved2009-11-10_.pdf

Forms for preparation for ministry process (Forms 1A-5D):

[http://oga.PC\(USA\).org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/forms-used-preparation-ministry-process/](http://oga.PC(USA).org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/forms-used-preparation-ministry-process/).

Information on the standard PC(USA) ordination exams:

<http://oga.PCUSA.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/standard-ordination-exams/>

Ordination registration: <https://exams.pcusa.org/open/>

PC(USA) Book of Order 2015-2017 (free):

http://oga.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/book-of-order2017-electronic.pdf