

Preparation for Ministry Policies

(Proposed November, 2021)

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INTRODUCTION

The policies contained in this document are drawn from both the *Advisory Handbook on Preparation for Ministry* and the *Book of Order*. Since this manual only summarizes portions of both the *Advisory Handbook* and the *Book of Order*, those preparing for ordination as well as those serving on the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (hereinafter "CPM") should be familiar with the requirements contained in the *Book of Order* and the *Advisory Handbook*. The version of the *Advisory Handbook* to which this manual refers is dated December 2017 and is version 2.1. It can be found at:

<https://www.pcusa.org/resource/preparation-ministry-handbook/>

If, at any time now or in the future, this document conflicts with any part of the *Book of Order*, the *Book of Order* takes precedence. **In addition, these requirements take precedence over seminary requirements.**

The following policies contained in this document have been adopted by The Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey (hereinafter "The Highlands Presbytery") to guide its CPM, Inquirers, Candidates, and churches as they work together to develop leaders to serve the church, to the glory of God, "discerning and developing gifts in individuals so they can serve others." (*Advisory Handbook*, p. 2)

This manual contains the usual procedures required of Inquirers and Candidates by the CPM of The Highlands Presbytery. While these procedures are informed by the *Book of Order*, we recognize that each Inquirer or Candidate is a unique person with unique strengths and needs. *These procedures are guidelines and may be altered to meet the uniqueness of individuals.* However, you should not assume that they will be altered. Each individual should carefully discuss with the CPM their situation and how their situation can best be met within the requirements of the *Book of Order* and the *Advisory Handbook*. Since the CPM must function under the mandates of the *Book of Order* and the *Advisory Handbook*, every Inquirer and Candidate is also expected to know the requirements of these documents.

Thus, some advice to Inquirers and Candidates:

1. **Know the requirements** of the *Book of Order*, the *Advisory Handbook*, and this Procedure Manual.
2. **Plan ahead.**

PRESBYTERIAN PRINCIPLES OF ORDINATION

The requirements of the *Book of Order*, the *Advisory Handbook*, and the CPM guide all preparations for ministry. They are central to the theology of call to ministry in the Presbyterian Church -- a call to ministry must be perceived by the individual and confirmed by the church through the presbytery. The process of discernment of this call is a partnership involving the individual, their church and session, and the presbytery. The CPM of The Highlands Presbytery will endeavor to support, encourage, and guide Inquirers and Candidates through prayer, actively working alongside Inquirers and Candidates and using the committee's collective insight with the Spirit's leading. As an individual moves through the process according to the guidelines provided, and maintains regular and open contact with the persons and committees involved, they can expect a rich and rewarding experience. For Inquirers and Candidates who enter into the process, there is a sense of solemn obligation to God and to the church. In some cases this means that it is the individual's responsibility to recognize and accept the fact that their call to ministry may be other than as a minister of the Word and Sacrament. It is the presbytery's obligation to develop effective means of testing and validating the calls of those seeking to become ministers of the Word and

Sacrament, providing them with guidance and oversight, and bringing to active candidacy those with appropriate abilities and motivation.

"Preparation for ordination as a minister of the Word and Sacrament in the PC(USA) is not like certification programs where by completing all the requirements you are guaranteed to reach the goal at the end. Inquiry is 'an opportunity... to explore' a person's call to ministry 'so that the presbytery can make an informed decision about the inquirer's suitability for ordered ministry' (G-2.0603). Candidacy is about 'provid[ing] for the full preparation of persons to serve the church as ministers of the Word and Sacrament... through the support, guidance, and evaluation of a candidate's fitness and readiness for a call to ministry requiring ordination' (G-2.0604)." (*Advisory Handbook*, p. 4)

"The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is firmly grounded in the Reformed tradition in its relationships with men and women who feel themselves called by God to be ministers of the Word and Sacrament serving in the ministries of the Word and Sacrament. Both in exploring with these persons their sense of vocation and in all subsequent procedures leading to ordination, the Reformed understanding of the church underlies what the *Book of Order* calls 'full preparation' for ministry (G-2.0601)." (*Advisory Handbook*, p. 20)

"Presbyterians believe in 'the ministry of all the baptized' – that all church members, regardless of their occupational choice, are engaged in ministry. That is their Christian vocation (G-1.0304). Some among them may be called by the Holy Spirit, through the church, to serve as ministers of the Word and Sacrament. That ministry, then, is one among many occupations through which men and women express their God-given interests and abilities in life and daily work. Response to this calling, as to every other, is approached through a careful process of exploration and testing carried on within the community of faith during which gifts and motivations are evaluated in light of the needs of the church and the world." (*Advisory Handbook*, p. 20)

PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY PROCESS

"The essential role of ministers of Word and Sacrament is set forth in both the Bible and in the church's constitutional documents. Among its key concepts are the following:

- Ordered ministries are a gift of God to the church so that all God's people may be equipped for ministry (Ephesians 4:1-13).
- Ministers of Word and Sacrament (also referred to as teaching elders) in particular equip all the baptized for their ministry by proclaiming the good news, teaching faith/modeling faithfulness, joining with deacons in care for people, and together with ruling elders ensuring that the church's life is governed in an orderly way (cf. G-2.0501).
- The church actively seeks and ordains persons whose gifts and abilities equip them for the ministry of the Word and Sacrament (G-2.0104); if a person ordained to this ministry is later called by God to other work, the church can release him or her from ordained office (G-2.0507).
- A person experiences God's call to ministry privately as an inner urgency. The church, however, experiences that call publicly as it affirms that individual's gifts for ministry and confirms God's call through the acts of ordination and installation (G-2.0103)." (*Advisory Handbook*, p. 21)

The preparation for ministry process involves two phases: Inquiry and Candidacy. These two phases are designed to explore the call, evaluate the gifts, and support the preparation of men and women who either are personally exploring their sense of a call to ordered ministry as ministers of Word and

Sacrament or have been encouraged by the faith community to consider the possibility that God is calling them to that particular ministry. The model for ministers of Word and Sacrament is the ministry of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the church's responsibility, acting primarily through the session of the person's congregation and the presbytery, is to help these individuals grow toward maturity in Christ and a deeper understanding of their place in Christ's ongoing ministry through the church.

"While both the inquiry and candidacy phases of the process have their particular purposes defined by the *Book of Order* (G-2.0603 and 2.0604), they accomplish those purposes by promotion and assessment of the individual's development in five key areas:

1. Education for Ministry, including evaluation of the individual's academic potential and progress, and reflection on their educational experiences in relation to their preparation for service as a minister of the Word and Sacrament.
2. Spiritual Development, providing a framework in which individuals can reflect on their personal faith journey and their spiritual practices to discern the will of God in their lives.
3. Interpersonal Relations, providing opportunities to reflect on how one relates to others, one's leadership style, and what they mean in terms of the functions and responsibilities of the ministry of the Word and Sacrament.
4. Personal Growth, through which persons reflect on who they are, what areas they need to develop, how to understand their call, and how to develop personal stewardship.
5. Professional Development, to help persons develop specific skills that will enhance their effectiveness as ministers of the Word and Sacrament and as presbyters, especially in the areas of understanding one's ministry context and the ability to deal with conflict that may emerge in ministry settings where one serves." (*Advisory Handbook*, p. 31)

During both the Inquiry Phase and Candidacy Phase, the individual's progress is measured through the formulation of covenant agreements (G-2.0601) that set out specific expected outcomes formulated in light of these five growth areas. It is important that the expected outcomes be understood as essential goals rather than simply as minimum requirements to be met or papers to be written. These expected outcomes serve as the focus of ongoing consultations between the Inquirer or Candidate and the session and the presbytery's CPM as they discern the person's suitability for this form of ministry and evaluate readiness to be examined and ordained as a minister of Word and Sacrament.

It would be wise to seriously consider the options available outside the conventional parish ministry. Students should be aware of the current employment situation within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

COMMITTEE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The CPM is concerned with the discernment of an Inquirer's call to ministry and with a Candidate's preparation to respond to that call. Guidance and support for Inquirers and Candidates are fostered through responsibilities shared by the committee with seminaries, sessions, and the presbytery. The CPM offers the following guidelines and requirements, with the understanding that it may modify or change them where permitted by the *Book of Order*.

All service to the church is with the approval and under the guidance of the Inquirer's or Candidate's CPM. Therefore, Inquirers and Candidates must obtain the committee's approval prior to accepting any position that entails ongoing ministry in the church, whether paid or volunteer.

DELEGATED ACTIONS AS A COMMISSION OF PRESBYTERY

The CPM has been given authority by The Highlands Presbytery to act as its delegated commission in the following areas:

- To receive Inquirers
- To certify Candidates ready to receive a call
- To give permission to a Candidate to circulate their Personal Information Form (PIF)
- To execute annual consultations with Inquirers and Candidates
- To remove an individual from the Inquirer or Candidate status

LIAISONS WITH THE INQUIRER/CANDIDATE

Session Liaison

The session of the individual's home church will designate an elder to serve as liaison to the Inquirer or Candidate. The Inquirer/Candidate and their session liaison should make contact at least once per quarter, and more often if the situation warrants.

Recommended duties of the session liaison:

- Learn the background of the Inquirer or Candidate, if it is not already known.
- Stay in touch via personal visits, email, or phone. Become acquainted in ways that seem natural to both the liaison and the Inquirer or Candidate.
- Take an interest in his or her academics, field education, annual consultation, and other activities related to their preparation for the ministry of Word and Sacrament.
- Share with the CPM, especially at the time of annual consultation, any areas of particular need which the Inquirer or Candidate may have, either financial or personal.
- Identify ways to keep the congregation aware of the progress of the Inquirer/Candidate.
- Initiate conversation with the session on the possibility of providing financial assistance or other tangible support. Consider, with the session, the possibility of assisting in the payment of necessary expenses incurred.
- At the presbytery meeting at which the Candidate is examined for ordination, make sure someone has been appointed to accompany the Candidate and their family when presbytery is making its decision. This applies to both physical and virtual spaces.
- Be present at the service of ordination and/or installation.
- Pray.
- Become acquainted with this manual so that all requirements and procedures are known and the liaison can provide timely support.
- Periodically discuss with the session the progress the Inquirer/Candidate is making.

In summary, the liaison should be a friend and offer a personal, moral, and spiritual interest in the Inquirer's/Candidate's training for the ministry. Hopefully, in performing these tasks, the liaison will also grow in grace and faith.

Committee Liaison

A member or members of the CPM will be assigned to serve as a liaison with each Inquirer or Candidate. The Inquirers/Candidates and their committee liaison should make regular contact. The liaison should keep the CPM updated on the Inquirer's/Candidate's progress on goals, be present at presbytery and CPM meetings, and act as a channel to help with any concerns or questions which the Inquirer/Candidate may have.

BECOMING AN INQUIRER

Purpose

"The purpose of the inquiry phase is to provide an opportunity for the church and those who believe themselves called to ordered ministry as ministers of Word and Sacrament 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)." (*Advisory Handbook*, p. 38)

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. (G-2.0602) (*Advisory Handbook*, p. 39)

The stated clerk of The Highlands Presbytery shall be asked to carry out a criminal background check on all applicants. The results should be received by the CPM prior to accepting the applicant as an Inquirer. If the background check has not been done prior to becoming an Inquirer, it must be done prior to advancing to candidacy.

Process

- The applicant should discuss their plans with their pastor.
- If necessary, the sponsoring session shall contact the CPM to understand the process and their role.
- The applicant must obtain and complete Form 1A ("Application to be Enrolled as Inquirer"), Form 1B ("Questions for Reflection") and Form 1C ("Financial Planning"): <https://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/application-forms/> These forms should be submitted to the CPM at least two weeks prior to the meeting.
- The applicant should make copies of Form 1D ("Session Evaluation and Recommendation") for each member of their church's session.
- The applicant must meet with the session of their church. The session must take formal action on the application to become an Inquirer. If the session endorses the application, the clerk of session will complete Form 1D and send it to the CPM of The Highlands Presbytery. The session will also appoint a liaison to work with the applicant and the CPM.

- The applicant must have copies of transcripts and diplomas from all college work (undergraduate and graduate) sent to the CPM.
- The applicant must meet with the CPM. The CPM will review the applicant's background information (Forms 1A, 1B, 1C and 1D), Form 2A, including "Growth Objectives," and Form 2B ("Inquirer's Covenant Agreement and Release"). The CPM will discuss with the applicant their journey of faith, their exploration and testing of their call to ministry, as well as their educational plans.
- If approved by the CPM, the CPM will present the applicant's name to The Highlands Presbytery to be enrolled as an Inquirer. In preparation for that meeting, the applicant must prepare, in writing for inclusion in the presbytery's "Meeting Material," a brief paragraph of biographical information that might include schooling, church relationship, volunteer work or employment, family, children, interests, etc. The CPM encourages the applicant to be present at this presbytery meeting so that they may be introduced to the presbytery.

Note: the CPM must approve the applicant's educational plans, including specifically the theological institution where education requirements are completed. Approval is ordinarily given for Presbyterian seminaries; other seminaries that are members of the American Association of Theological Seminaries may be considered. There is a list of approved seminaries on page 14 of this manual. Every educational program must be so planned as to complete all requirements for ordination, including the requirements of the CPM as set forth herein.

Suitability for Ordered Ministry
(*Advisory Handbook*, pp. 41-42)

A decision will be made at the end of the Inquiry Phase as to whether the overall experience of this phase points toward a future in the ministry of Word and Sacrament for the Inquirer, or whether his or her gifts and passions suggest a better fit with other ministries of the church.

As part of an Inquirer's preparation to become a Candidate, they should prepare written reflections on the six areas outlined below (approximately one half to one page each). These particular areas have been referred to in the past as "outcomes of inquiry."

1. An understanding of Christian vocation in the Reformed tradition and how it relates to their personal sense of call.
2. An expression of their personal faith in a manner that demonstrates an understanding of the Reformed tradition. Note: This is not expected to be a formal Statement of Faith.
3. An analysis of one concept from the personal statement of faith. An analysis of at least one concept from that personal faith statement at greater depth explaining what it suggests about God, humanity, and their interrelationships.
4. An explanation of what it means for them to be Presbyterian, indicating how that awareness grows out of participation in the life of a particular church.
5. A discussion of their personal and cultural background as it relates to the ministry of Word and Sacrament, including a concern for maintaining personal spiritual, physical, and mental health. Inquirers should also be able to relate their own personal cultural location to changes in American society and its increasingly multicultural character.

6. An explanation of their understanding of the tasks ministers of the Word and Sacrament perform, including expression both of his or her specific gifts for this particular ministry and of areas in which further growth is needed.

Everyone in the process must recognize that when a presbytery enters into the Candidacy Phase with an individual, the expectation is established that once preparation is completed that person will find a call to this ministry. If the presbytery is still uncertain about whether an Inquirer's gifts are suitable for the ministry of Word and Sacrament, the individual needs to continue in the Inquiry Phase rather than establish false expectations by prematurely transitioning to candidacy.

BECOMING A CANDIDATE

Purpose

"The purpose of the candidacy phase is to provide for the full preparation of persons to serve the church as ministers of Word and Sacrament. 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)

"A presbytery's decision to move an individual from inquiry to the candidacy phase indicates a communal discernment of that person's suitability for ordered ministry as a minister of Word and Sacrament." (*Advisory Handbook*, p. 44)

"If the presbytery is still uncertain about whether an inquirer's gifts are suitable for the ministry of Word and Sacrament, the individual needs to continue in the inquiry phase rather than establish false expectations by prematurely transitioning to candidacy." (*Advisory Handbook*, p. 43)

Requirements

- The Inquirer will have passed the Bible Content Exam prior to seeking candidacy.
- The Inquirer will have completed one full year of seminary while under care of the CPM.
- The Inquirer will have participated in a psychological evaluation as set forth on page 13 of this manual.
- The Inquirer will submit written responses to the six statements listed under "Suitability for Ordained Ministry" above.
- If a criminal background check has not already been done, the stated clerk of The Highlands Presbytery shall obtain the results of the background check prior to application for Candidate status.

Steps to Becoming a Candidate

The CPM suggests that the request for candidacy status be completed by Inquirers between the end of the first year of seminary and the beginning of the third year of seminary.

- Form 5A ("Application to be Enrolled by the Presbytery as a Candidate") must be completed and submitted to the Inquirer's session.
- The Inquirer must meet with the session of their church. The session must take formal action on

the application to become a Candidate. If the session endorses the application, the clerk of session will complete Form 5B and will send it to the chairperson of CPM. The session will also appoint (or reappoint) a liaison to work with the Inquirer and the CPM.

- The Inquirer must meet with the CPM to discuss the statements and application. The CPM must take formal action on the application and must report this action to the presbytery. The Inquirer and the CPM will also complete Form 5C concerning "Growth Objectives."
- Form 5D ("Covenant Agreement and Candidate Release") will be completed and signed by the applicant, session and CPM.
- The CPM shall present the Inquirer and its recommendation to The Highlands Presbytery. Members of the presbytery will have the opportunity to ask questions with respect to the Inquirer's Christian faith and journey, forms of Christian service undertaken, motives for seeking the ministry, and preparation. No formal statement of faith will be presented at this time.
- If the presbytery votes affirmatively, the Inquirer shall be enrolled as a Candidate under the care of The Highlands Presbytery. At that time the Candidate formally agrees to accept the presbytery's guidance, support and supervision in their preparation for becoming a minister of Word and Sacrament.

Fitness and Readiness

A Candidate may not enter into negotiation for their service as a minister of Word and Sacrament without approval of The Highlands 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 minister of Word and Sacrament shall include (G-2.0607):

- a candidate's wisdom and maturity of faith, leadership skills, compassionate spirit, honest repute, and sound judgment;
- a transcript showing graduation, with satisfactory grades, at a regionally accredited college or university;
- 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
- satisfactory grades, together with the examination materials 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.

DURING INQUIRY AND CANDIDACY

General

- An individual is required to be enrolled under care of the presbytery as an Inquirer for at least one year and as a Candidate for a minimum of one additional year. Usually, and desirably, the time under care of the presbytery lasts for more than two years. During inquiry/candidacy, the individual shall remain on the active membership roll of their home church and subject to its concern, discipline, and prayers.
- The CPM shall appoint one or more of its members to be a liaison. The CPM liaison is responsible, on behalf of the CPM, for guiding the individual's educational preparation. The primary concern of the liaison is pastoral: to help the individual accomplish the necessary preparation to fulfill their ministry. Any concerns about the individual's educational, intellectual, and spiritual preparation may be discussed with the liaison.
- The individual should communicate with the CPM on a regular basis through the liaison. The CPM must be notified of any change of contact information or academic plans.
- During inquiry and before the CPM will act on an application to become a Candidate, the Inquirer must participate in a psychological evaluation.
- During inquiry and candidacy, the individual must personally meet at least once a year with their CPM liaison as set forth below to complete papers and forms to be submitted to the CPM.
- All papers and forms submitted to the CPM are to be submitted to the CPM chairperson no later than one week before the meeting at which the Candidate or Inquirer is to appear, so they can be made available to committee members.
- All Inquirers and Candidates under care are expected to conduct themselves in an ethical manner and pursuant to the presbytery's sexual misconduct policy.

Annual Consultation

- In preparation for the annual consultation, the Inquirer/Candidate must complete Form 3 and submit this to their liaison and the chairperson of CPM as soon as possible and contact their liaison to arrange a personal meeting to review.
https://oga.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/mid_council_ministries/form3.pdf
- Transcripts and field education reports, if applicable, should be included in the submission to the CPM.
- The Inquirer/Candidate should meet with their liaison to review Form 3.
- The Inquirer/Candidate must meet with the CPM, who will make a determination of whether to continue the individual under care and review recommendations for growth in the coming year. Form 4 ("Report on Annual Consultation") will be completed at that meeting.

Psychological Evaluation

All Inquirers must complete a psychological evaluation approximately six months prior to their one year review after becoming enrolled as an Inquirer. Inquirers are responsible for signing the necessary releases to have the results of their psychological evaluation sent to the chairperson of the CPM. The psychological evaluation will be reviewed with the members of the CPM and discussed with the Inquirer at their annual consultation. Confidentiality is assured. This evaluation is a tool to be used to point out strengths and areas where growth is needed. It may also highlight areas of concern and bring to light issues which need to be addressed in order for the Inquirer to become an effective minister of Word and Sacrament. Inquirers will not be advanced to the Candidacy Phase until this process has been completed.

The CPM requires that the evaluation be done at:

Physis Associates
Dr. Dennis J. O'Hara
109 Fox Knoll Lane
West Chester, PA 19380
800-220-3774 or 610-269-3037

The chairperson of the CPM should be notified when an appointment has been made so that payment of the presbytery's (1/3), church's (1/3), and Inquirer's (1/3) shares of the cost may be arranged. The Inquirer is responsible for the cost of transportation, lodging, meals, and incidental expenses. Financial assistance may be available. Appointments are generally booked months in advance. Inquirers are encouraged, therefore, to call the center for an appointment as early as possible.

Personnel File

A permanent file shall be kept at The Highlands Presbytery office for all Inquirers and Candidates under care of this presbytery. Access will be strictly limited and confidentiality will be maintained at all times. The file shall contain, but is not limited to, the following documents:

- All forms which have been submitted for annual consultations
- All financial forms
- Written documents which have been directed to or from the Inquirer or Candidate
- Correspondence/reports from the internship supervisor
- Transcripts
- Psychological evaluation report
- Results of Ordination Exams
- Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) final evaluation

EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Seminaries of, and related to, the Presbyterian Church (USA)

Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Austin, TX
Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA
University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, Dubuque, IA
Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary, Atlanta, GA
Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY
McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, IL
Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, PA
Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, NJ
San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Anselmo, CA
Union Theological Seminary & Presbyterian School of Christian Education, Richmond, VA
Union/Auburn Theological Seminary, New York, NY
Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico, San Juan, PR

Educational Requirements

Hebrew (equivalent of 2 semesters)
Old Testament Exegesis*
Greek (equivalent of 2 semesters)
New Testament Exegesis*
Church History
Reformed Theology
Reformed Worship and Sacraments
Preaching
Pastoral Care and Counseling
Christian Education
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Polity

**When possible, CPM encourages students to take these courses in their original languages.*

In addition, the CPM reserves the right to require additional courses, in order to correct deficiencies in a student's undergraduate or graduate programs.

Field Education

Inquirers and Candidates are expected to complete the equivalent of two semesters of one-day-per week supervised field education in a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) parish setting as part of their seminary program. **Service in the Inquirer's/Candidate's home church is not acceptable to the presbytery, regardless of whether or not the seminary grants credit for the experience.** A mid-year and final report from the field education position is to be sent to the CPM chairperson within 30 days of the completion of the respective academic term.

The CPM reserves the right to require a second year of field education in a Presbyterian Church due to circumstances and/or readiness for a call. All field education plans must be submitted to and approved by the CPM prior to acceptance of the position. Inquirers/Candidates will be required to resign from their home sessions and cease any active leadership roles in their home congregations while they are serving their field education assignments.

Students are encouraged to consider a full-year full time field education placement, either as part of their seminary field education or following graduation.

Clinical Pastoral Education

Inquirers and Candidates are required to complete a basic unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), as accredited by the Accreditation Council for Psychoanalytic Education (ACPE), Inc. and to send a copy of their CPE final evaluation to the chairperson of the CPM. Results of the evaluation will be shared with the committee and will remain in the Inquirer's/Candidate's file.

Transcripts

At the conclusion of each year of seminary study, students are required to send a copy of their seminary transcript to the chairperson of the CPM. An unofficial transcript ("student copy" or photocopy) is acceptable for this purpose, with the exception of the final transcript, which must be an official transcript, indicating receipt of the Master of Divinity degree. The final transcript must include the seminary registrar's raised seal, and must be mailed directly from the seminary registrar to the chairperson of the CPM.

ORDINATION EXAMINATIONS

Bible Content Examination

Inquirers are strongly encouraged to take the Bible Content Examination as soon as possible after enrolling in seminary and must pass this examination before applying for Candidate status. It is the Inquirer's responsibility to apply to take this examination and to pay any examination fees.

Final Year Examinations

Candidates must obtain the approval of the CPM before they can take the ordination examinations in Bible Exegesis, Polity, Theology, and Worship and Sacraments, and these exams can be taken no earlier than the student's final year of seminary. Permission to take these examinations will ordinarily be given at the annual consultation prior to the beginning of the student's final academic year of seminary. It is the Candidate's responsibility to apply to take these examinations and to pay any examination fees.

REMOVAL FROM COVENANT RELATIONSHIP

Inquiry and candidacy continue until a presbytery acts in one of three ways to end the covenant relationship and remove the person's name from its roll of Inquirers and Candidates.

1. Once a Candidate who has been "certified ready for examination for ordination" receives a call approved by a presbytery and has been examined, ordained and installed, the presbytery of call notifies both the session and the presbytery of care to remove the person from the membership roll of the congregation and the roll of Inquirers and Candidates of the presbytery of care.
2. Persons under care as either an Inquirer or Candidate may withdraw from the process by notifying their session and the CPM.
3. As part of CPM's delegated authorities, the CPM may act on its own to end the covenant relationship, because it has determined that an Inquirer is not suitable for ordered ministry as a minister of Word and Sacrament or that a Candidate's continuing preparation would not result in a determination of "fitness" and "readiness." If a person is removed from the process by the CPM,

the CPM must report its action to both the session and the presbytery at their next respective meetings. As the CPM reviews the policies and procedures for this action with the person, it should make every effort to be supportive and caring. The CPM must also explain as clearly as possible why the decision has been made, emphasizing the person's strengths, as well as indicating the weaknesses that led to the decision. Suggestions through a group discernment process for alternative occupations or forms of ministry and service should be discussed with the person. In addition, the person's home church pastor and session liaison should be contacted to explain the action, giving them the reasons for the action, and alternatives that were suggested. Finally, an opportunity for the person and their advocates to be heard by the CPM should be provided.

READINESS FOR MINISTRY – FINAL ASSESSMENT

General

During the second half of their senior year (after January), Candidates may begin the final steps to becoming "ready" to receive a call. These steps must be completed before the CPM can consider the Candidate "ready" to receive a call and therefore be presented to the presbytery for examination for ordination.

Steps to Becoming Ready

- The Candidate should carefully review the steps necessary and complete all requirements for "Final Assessment of Readiness to Begin Ordained Ministry" as detailed in G-2.0607.
- The Candidate must be a Candidate for at least one year.
- As part of the CPM's delegated authorities, the Candidate must submit to CPM (carefully prepared and typed double spaced):
 - **Sermon:** Such sermon, including the reading of Scripture, should be no more than 10 minutes in length. A copy of the sermon manuscript or outline must be submitted to the CPM at the exit interview. This same sermon will be preached at a CPM meeting.
 - **Exegesis:** Exegetical study of the biblical material out of which the sermon arose including a study of key words, discussion of context, notes on significant points of grammar and variant readings, and an interpretation of the passage.
 - **Statement of faith:** This statement should be a statement of the Candidate's personal faith (not a restatement of a creed) and ought to address such doctrines as the nature of the Godhead, the meaning of salvation in Christ, the life and mission of the Church, the authority of Scripture, and the role of the Sacraments. The statement of faith should not be longer than one side of an 8 ½" x 11" sheet of paper. It should be single-spaced, and double-spaced between paragraphs. We recommend sensitivity to the use of inclusive language.
- The Candidate must meet with the CPM to discuss all aspects of their preparation and readiness for ministry.

NOTE: It is the CPM's responsibility to certify the Candidate ready to receive a call. Certification of the validity of a particular call is the responsibility of the presbytery (usually through the Committee on Ministry) in which the calling body or church is located. When another presbytery is issuing the call, the committee will still conduct the final assessment as a means of determining the Candidate's readiness. The difficult, and most important, part is determining whether the Candidate possesses the qualities listed in G-2.0607a:

1. Wisdom and maturity of faith
2. Leadership skills
3. Compassionate spirit
4. Honest reputation
5. Sound judgment

CIRCULATION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION FORM

Candidates are encouraged to begin writing their Personal Information Form (PIF) no later than the summer before their senior year of seminary. Candidates must submit the final copy of the PIF to the chairperson of the CPM for review.

The CPM will consider the PIF for approval to circulate once the Candidate has passed all five standard ordination examinations and is in their final semester of seminary having completed all other requirements. The CPM chairperson, or that person's designee, must provide written permission before the Church Leadership Connection (pcusa.org/clc) will accept the PIF for circulation.

FOLLOWING APPROVAL FOR ORDINATION

The Candidate is still responsible to the CPM and under its care until the individual receives a call and is ordained. It is not uncommon for a period of time to elapse between the completion of all requirements for ordination and the receipt of a call.

The CPM continues to have care and concern for the Candidate and continues to carry them in prayer. The CPM will continue to express this concern through the required annual consultation and annual report. This report may be less structured and formal than what is done during the seminary years, but it is essential to stay in contact with the Candidate to help as they continue their theological, intellectual, professional, and spiritual growth and preparation for ministry. The liaison will continue their role as support during this period.

ORDINATION PLANS

"Ordination to the ordered ministry of minister of the Word and Sacrament is an act of the whole church carried out by the presbytery, setting apart a person to ordered ministry. Such a person shall have fulfilled the ordination requirements of the presbytery of care and received the call of God to service to a congregation or other work in the mission of the church that is acceptable to the candidate and to the presbytery of call." (G 2.0701)

"The presbytery placing the call to the candidate for ministry shall ordinarily examine, ordain, and install the candidate." (G-2.0702)

Both the services of ordination and installation (if they are separate services) are services of the presbytery and are to be conducted according to the provision in the Directory for Worship. If the presbytery responsible for the service has particular policies regarding the conduct of the service beyond those in the Directory for Worship, it needs to ensure the Candidate is aware of these requirements at the very beginning of the planning process.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Financial Aid

The Highlands Presbytery expects Inquirers and Candidates applying for financial aid to first seek support from all other available sources. Within the limits of available funds, the presbytery may award scholarship grants to its Inquirers or Candidates who meet the following criteria:

- Demonstrated financial need
- Enrolled at least half-time in a Master of Divinity program at a seminary approved by the CPM (the definition of "half-time" will be that used by the seminary)
- Making "satisfactory progress" in the Master of Divinity degree program, according to the seminary's definition of that term (i.e. not on academic probation)

Application Procedures

Applicants for financial aid must submit a completed scholarship application form to the CPM chairperson. Scholarship grant decisions will be made at the next meeting of the CPM. With their application form, applicants must also submit an updated copy of Form 1C as well as a copy of ONE of the following documents from their seminary:

- Their financial aid "award letter" for the academic year for which they are applying for aid, OR
- A financial aid transcript, showing the year in which they are applying for aid, OR
- A letter from the financial aid director of their seminary, indicating the amount of financial aid they will be receiving in the year for which they are applying for aid.

Awards

Scholarships may be used at the students' discretion to cover tuition, fees, room, board, books, medical insurance, or other necessary expenses.

Limitations

Scholarship aid will not ordinarily be awarded for more than six semesters of study. One way to earn extra money during the school year and the summer is to guest preach at churches throughout the presbytery.

Summary of Financial Responsibilities

The Inquirer/Candidate must be aware that they are financially responsible for costs incurred while pursuing their degree, including, but not limited to the following:

- ⅓ of the psychological evaluation costs
- Exam application fees
- Education expenses including books and fees
- Housing and board

WAIVERS AND EXCEPTIONS

The CPM will consider exceptions to the above policies only under the most exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. Inquiries concerning exceptions should be directed to the CPM chairperson. The CPM will be governed in this regard by the *Book of Order*:

"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." (G-2.0610)

APPENDIX ONE – Checklist

Applicant:

- Session approval
- Completed forms to CPM
- Release form for Background Check
- Picture for applicant's folder

Inquirer:

- Passing grade on the Bible Content Exam
- Annual Consultation (complete with Form 3 submitted to CPM)
- Psychological Evaluation
- Session approval to move to Candidate status
- Submission of "Suitability for Ordained Ministry" statements

Candidate:

- Pass Ordination Exams
- Annual Consultations (complete with Form 3 submitted to CPM)
- Clinical Pastoral Education
- Field Education
- Complete Coursework, including Reformed Theology classes and Exegetical work
- Statement of Faith