

# **Guidelines for the Examination of Inquirers recommended for Candidacy**

## ***Guiding Principles***

The first phase of preparation for ministry is one of mutual discernment between the local church, the Presbytery (largely through the Committee on Preparation for Ministry), and the inquirer. After a minimum of one year, the successful completion of the Bible Content Exam, and the completion of a psychological evaluation an inquirer may pursue moving to the candidacy phase. At this time all three parties again covenant to continue the process of discernment and preparation for ordination. By the time a Candidate comes to Presbytery they have been endorsed for candidacy by both the session of their church and the CPM (Committee on Preparation for Ministry).

It is in this same spirit of discernment and care that the Presbytery is encouraged to approach the examination for Candidacy. According to the Advisory Handbook:

The presbytery shall receive the report and recommendation of its committee and shall examine the Inquirer in person with respect to *his or her Christian faith, forms of Christian service undertaken, and motives for seeking the ministry.* (From Preparation for Ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Advisory Handbook, page 9 emphasis added)

The bounds of our examination for candidacy on the floor of Presbytery are informed by the above guidelines. This is not a theological examination (this comes after theological training is complete and prior to ordination), but rather an opportunity to explore an individual's faith and sense of call to the role of Minister of the Word and Sacrament.

## ***Helpful guidelines for formulating questions***

Although we face some time constraints we will be best served and best serve future candidates by giving them an opportunity to demonstrate their personal faith, commitment to Christian service and a sense of call to the role of teaching, preaching and administering the sacraments. Therefore, we need to carefully consider the quality of the questions we ask.

## ***Suggestions for formulating good questions:***

- Come to the examination having prepared. This is best accomplished by taking time to carefully read and study a inquirers statement of call

and biographical information prior to the examination period and then formulate questions based on this material.

- Clear and concise questions that allow an inquirer to demonstrate their call to ministry and personal faith.
- All questions should be limited to a singular subject so they can be understood and are not overly burdensome to answer.

***Pitfalls to avoid:***

- It is best to avoid overly complicated and detailed questions that serve only to confuse the inquirer.
- Our goal is not to formulate questions to entrap the inquirer in a tricky or divisive conundrum.
- Speculative questions with little or no practical relevance to ministry.
- This is never an opportunity for members of Presbytery to debate or discuss 'hot topics' or theological differences among themselves.

**Possible questions:**

1. Has your understanding of your call changed or strengthened during the Inquirer phase, and if so, how has it changed or strengthened? What occurred to change or strengthen your sense of call? How has your understanding of your sense of call changed during the Inquirer phase?
2. What is an area of the Reformed tradition that particularly connects with your desire to serve the Presbyterian Church USA?
3. What does being "Presbyterian" mean to you?
4. What has made you sense a calling specifically to the Presbyterian Church USA?
5. How have you maintained a balance between health, study and personal faith during the Inquirer phase?
6. Which area of Ministry do you think others would say you need to work on the most?
7. How do you see your call as a Teaching Elder different from a call to the mission field, or as a Ruling Elder or working in a secular field as a Christian?
8. Tell us about your educational experience so far.
9. What are you most excited about regarding your sense of call and future service in the Church?
10. How has Jesus been a part of your faith journey?