



Process at a glance

Minister of Word and Sacrament

Updated November 2023

This document can illuminate the journey to Ministry of Word and Sacrament. This is an aid only. Please consult the CPM policies and procedures manual available on the Presbytery website for the most accurate information on the process.

Applying to Enter Discernment

- **Read the CPM Policies and Procedures Manual and the PC(USA) Handbook on Preparation for Ministry**

These two documents provide insight on the preparation process locally and nationally. These will be the primary references for your discernment and preparation process as you work with the CPM.

- **Explore theological education and graduate M.Div. programs**

You do not need to be accepted to a graduate program prior to applying, but you will need to complete information about financing your theological education. The CPM page has a link to help you explore Presbyterian seminaries.

- **Complete an application**

Available on baltimorepresbytery.org

- **Meet with the Session of your congregation**

On the final form of your application packet (1D), the Session will certify that they have examined you and endorse your entrance into the inquiry phase of the discernment and preparation process.

- **Connect with your Session liaison**

The Session will assign you a congregational liaison who will help facilitate support, connection, and care for you while in the process.

- **Meet with the CPM**

At your first meeting with the CPM, the commission will get to know you, review your application, discuss your reflection questions, and enroll you under care.

- **Complete Forms 2A and 2B**

These two forms document an individual's entry into the discernment and preparation process.

- **Initiate a Background Check**

The CPM screens every individual under care on a regular basis. The cost is covered by the commission.

- **Place the inquirer on the Presbytery meeting docket**

The Presbytery must vote to receive the individual as an inquirer under care.

The Inquiry Phase

- **Connect with your CPM liaison**

The CPM assigns every individual under care at least one liaison who will help guide and support you through the discernment and preparation process. They serve as a primary point of contact with the CPM. You should plan on speaking to your liaison on a regular basis (often once a quarter).

- **Begin your graduate program**

If you have not already done so, you will begin an M.Div. program at an approved graduate institution. Transcripts should be sent to the CPM every year.

- **Schedule a Vocational and Psychological Assessment**

During the inquiry stage, your vocational and psychological assessment provides deeper insight to support discernment and exploration of vocational ministry. The CPM covers one third of this cost, with the remainder of the fee left to you and your congregation.

- **Pass the Biblical Content Exam (BCE)**

The Biblical Content Exam (BCE) is the first, most foundational exam that is required of all Ministers of Word and Sacrament. It is administered several times a year online and proctored in-person in a wide range of cities and locations.

- **Annual Consultations**

Every year in the late summer or early fall, every person under care of the Presbytery will meet with the CPM to reflect on their sense of call, preparation, and overall journey. A standard evaluation form (Form 3) documents your progress on the goals set the year prior.



- **Complete Form 4**

The individual's liaison should complete Form 4 in consultation with the commission. This form outlines specific goals for the inquirer or candidate that they should meet in the coming year.

- **Complete reflection assignments**

You will need to complete three reflections: (1) an anti-racism reflection; (2) a reflection on the role of a Minister of Word and Sacrament; and (3) a spiritual autobiography that explores your sense of call and faith journey.

- **Complete Presbytery training**

The Presbytery requires Healthy Boundaries and Dismantling Racism training for all individuals under care. These are offered on a semi-regular basis.

- **Prepare a preliminary statement of faith**

Your statement of faith does not need to be as comprehensive or theologically-informed as the one that will be submitted at your final examination by the Presbytery.

Progressing to Candidacy

- **Complete the candidacy application packet**

The packet is available on the Presbytery website and will include additional reflection.

- **Meet with the Session of your congregation for a second endorsement**

They will complete the second form in your application packet to progress to candidacy.

- **Meet with the CPM for your candidacy interview**

At this meeting, the CPM will focus on sense of call. Through this interview, you and the CPM will gain clarity on your vocational discernment and next steps.

- **Complete Forms 5C and 5D**

These forms document the CPM's interview with the individual, set expectations, and form a covenant with the individual under care.

- **Attend a Presbytery meeting to be examined on sense of call**

After an introduction and initial question by the CPM chair, the Presbytery will have an opportunity to explore your sense of call through structured questions. You will not be asked about your statement of faith and at no time is your preparedness up for discussion.

The Candidacy Phase

- **Complete your senior ordination exams**

The remaining four standard examinations (exegesis, theological competence, worship/sacraments, and polity) should be completed during your candidacy and after you have passed the requisite coursework.

- **Complete Clinical Pastoral Education**

Clinical pastoral education (CPE) strengthens the individual's pastoral skills while cultivating habits of self-reflection and self-supervision. One unit must be completed through an accredited program (CPSP or ACPE).

- **Complete a pastoral internship and other field education**

You should complete field education through your graduate institution, which will require reflection and supervisory evaluations.

- **Update your statement of faith**

Revise your statement of faith to be ready for examination by the CPM and Presbytery. This will be used on your Personal Discernment Profile (PDP) when seeking a call.

- **Send a sermon manuscript and audio or video recording**

This helps document and verify that you have a working competency with preaching, both in preparing the sermon and in delivering it effectively.

- **Meet with the CPM for your certification interview**

At this meeting, the CPM will explore both your sense of call and preparation. This interview certifies that you have met the requirements of the preparation process and satisfactorily demonstrate the competencies and professional standards expected of all Ministers of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA).

- **Complete Form 6**

This form certifies the candidate and allows them to seek a call in other Presbyteries.

- **Attend a Presbytery meeting to be examined**

This final examination by the Presbytery formally certifies you ready to receive a call. Presbyters can ask questions on both your sense of call and statement of faith, though questions on the latter will be more common.