

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) Procedures and Requirements Manual Presbytery of Baltimore

Revised October 24, 2018

Introduction

This document contains the current procedures and requirements governing the process of preparation for ordained ministry of word and sacrament as exercised by the CPM of the Presbytery of Baltimore. It is meant to be read in conjunction with the Presbyterian Church (USA) CPM Handbook (<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/preparation-ministry-handbook/>). This document has been prepared in accordance with the Manual of the Presbytery, in consultation with Presbytery Council. It is vitally important that all persons involved in the process of preparation for ordained ministry (Pre-Inquirers, Inquirers, Candidates, CPM members, sponsoring sessions, session liaisons, pastors, etc.) familiarize themselves with the contents of G-2.06 (“Preparation for Ministry”) in the Book of Order, and also this document. If any of the contents of this document should ever be found to be inconsistent with what is found in G-2.06, the rubrics of G-2.06 shall overrule the rubrics of this document in that instance. Please note, however, that there may be certain instances in which the rubrics of this document are more rigorous or stringent than G-2.06, and so if the rubrics in this document are permitted by G-2.06, they shall stand in effect. In the event of a grievance with the policies and requirements stipulated in this document, an individual may bring it to the attention of CPM. If that fails to produce a satisfactory resolution, an individual has recourse to Presbytery via council.

- I. **Discernment:** Throughout the processes described below, CPM will serve as one of many partners in discernment of call. Through both formal contact (such as review of required documents, statements, grades and transcripts) serving to provide objective feedback, and informal contact (such as phone calls, emails, and personal meetings), CPM will serve to help the individual discern the ministry they believe God is preparing them to engage in.
- II. **Process:** Those considering becoming Ministers of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA) go through four stages: *Pre-Inquirer, Inquirer, Candidate, and Ordained to the Ordered Ministry of Word and Sacrament*. The inquiry and candidacy phases shall continue for a period of no less than two years, including at least one year as a candidate (Book of Order G-2.0602). Ideally, the process begins prior to an individual’s selection of seminary.
 - a. **Pre-Inquiry Process:**
 - i. A person considering ordination shall meet with the Session of her/his own church where he/she must have been an active member for at least six months with a request to be taken under care of the congregation (Book of Order G-2.0602). The Session must complete the following actions before it takes the *Pre-Inquirer* under care:
 1. Have a CPM member orient the Session on details of the process and the Session’s responsibilities.

2. Appoint a supportive liaison from Session to serve between the session and the *Pre-Inquirer* throughout the process. The Session liaison is responsible for staying in touch with the person, providing oversight and care on behalf of the Session, and for regularly reporting to the Session on his/her progress.

Interested persons ought to review and complete forms used by the denomination in the preparation for becoming a minister of word and sacrament. The forms are as follows and are to be found at

<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/application-forms/>:

1A: “Application to be Enrolled as an Inquirer”

1B: “Questions for Reflection”

1C: “Financial Planning for Theological Education”

1D: “Session Evaluation and Recommendation”

- ii. *Pre-Inquirers* shall schedule a meeting with CPM to seek advancement to *Inquirer*. At this meeting, CPM will help discern the nature of the person’s “call” by interviewing the person regarding motivation and desire to become a minister. The interview will also include considerations of the *Pre-Inquirer’s* intentions concerning choice of seminary, family and financial considerations, and possible assistance from the local church. The CPM strongly recommends the *Pre-Inquirer* consider a PCUSA seminary. A seminary must be accredited by the Association of Theological Schools and must be acceptable to the Presbytery (see G-2.0607c)
- iii. Prior to becoming an *Inquirer*, the individual shall complete a background check made available through the CPM.
- iv. If the CPM recommends the *Pre-Inquirer* to enter *Inquiry*, the *Pre-Inquirer* will be assigned at least two CPM liaisons (ordinarily, one minister of word and sacrament and one ruling elder). CPM liaisons stay in routine contact with the *Inquirer* throughout the process to ensure clear communication. CPM liaisons are responsible for oversight, care, and regular reporting to CPM on the individual’s progress. Due to committee rotations, the assigned liaisons will likely change over time. However, CPM will make every effort to provide as much continuity as possible.
- v. Upon recommendation of CPM, the Presbytery votes to receive a *Pre-Inquirer* as *Inquirer* at a regularly scheduled meeting of Presbytery. The *Pre-Inquirer* need not be present at the Presbytery meeting when this action takes place.

b. *Inquiry* Process:

- i. The CPM will encourage the *Inquirer* to take the Bible Content Exam and to schedule her/his Vocational Assessment at a CPM approved center. The CPM will secure a background check (see section XII below). The *Inquirer* is expected to read and follow the procedures set forth in this

manual and the denominational handbook. All questions are to be referred to the Session of the caring congregation and CPM liaisons.

- ii. An *Inquirer* may apply to become a *Candidate* provided that she/he has:
 1. completed the following denominational forms found at <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/rep4min/forms-advancing-candidacy/>:
 - 5A: Application to Be Enrolled by Presbytery as a Candidate
 - 5B: Session Recommendation for Enrollment as a Candidate
 - 5C: Report of Consultation to Become a Candidate
 - 5D: Covenant Agreement and Candidate Release
 2. completed a “Vocational Assessment” and released the results to CPM (see section V)
 3. provided CPM with a copy of her/his most recent seminary transcript(s)
 4. received the endorsement of his/her church Session to become a *Candidate*
 5. and completed an approved Healthy Boundaries Workshop or equivalent workshop at a seminary or Presbytery.
- iii. The *Inquirer* seeking *Candidacy* must provide the following three documents at least three weeks prior to meeting with CPM. Each document should be about one page in length:
 1. an autobiographical statement about his or her faith journey, specifying a sense of call to the Ordered Ministry of Word and Sacrament
 2. a statement of personal faith which incorporates an understanding of the Reformed tradition
 3. a statement of her/his understanding of the role of minister of word and sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA), including an awareness of relevant, specific gifts and of areas in which growth is needed
- iv. Upon submission of all these materials to CPM, the *Inquirer* shall meet with CPM for examination concerning sense of call, progress in the process, and the direction that future ministry may take. CPM shall make use of all relevant materials in the *Inquirer’s* file (including transcripts, reports from field education supervisors, recommendations from pastors or other mentors, the report from the vocational assessment, etc.) to determine its recommendation to Presbytery for *Candidacy*. CPM may also consult with the General Presbyter and the congregation of care to receive evaluations of the fitness of the *Inquirer*.
- v. Upon recommendation, the *Inquirer* shall appear before the Presbytery at a stated meeting to be examined about his/her sense of call to the ordered ministry of word and sacrament. (Questions about theology, including the person’s Statement of Faith, are out of order during this examination by

the Presbytery.) An *Inquirer* becomes a *Candidate* following favorable Presbytery vote. Advancement is a sign that CPM and the Presbytery currently judge that the person's progress is sufficient for the individual to move to the next level of discernment but is not a guarantee of completion.

c. **Candidacy Process:**

- i. The *Candidacy* phase should last at least one year. At the end of this period and if the way be clear in all other respects, including passing the required Ordination Exams, the *Candidate* may request a "Final Assessment" from CPM. At least three weeks prior to appearing before CPM for this assessment, the *Candidate* must provide the CPM chair with:
 1. an updated statement of faith: one page, single-space, 12 point font, numbered lines
 2. a sample sermon manuscript, audio or video

The CPM will interview the *Candidate* on the above materials. If CPM is fully satisfied as to the *Candidate's* sense of call for ministry, theological fitness, and adequacy of preparation, CPM will complete Form 6:

"Summary Report of Final Assessment"

(http://oga.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/mid_council_ministries/form6.pdf) and recommend to Presbytery that the *Candidate* be examined by the Presbytery.

- ii. The Presbytery examination is based primarily on the *Candidate's* Statement of Faith, but questions on any other area of preparation or fitness may be asked as well. The CPM Moderator is allowed to raise an objection to the Moderator of the Presbytery if she/he feels that a question is inappropriate. Upon satisfactory completion of this examination on the floor of Presbytery, the *Candidate* may begin circulating her/his Personal Information Form ("PIF").
- iii. Upon receiving a call, but prior to final acceptance of the call, the *Candidate* must be examined by the Baltimore Presbytery on her/his sense of call to this particular ministry. (Questions about any matter other than sense of call to this particular ministry, including the person's sense of call in general or the person's theology, are out of order during this examination by the Presbytery.) Upon satisfactory completion of this final examination on the floor of presbytery, the *Candidate* may be ordained to the ordered ministry of word and sacrament in the PCUSA. The ordination service itself must take place after this final examination, without undue delay.
- iv. The Presbytery examination on theological fitness and the examination on sense of call to a particular ministry may be combined into one exam in unusual circumstances. The purpose of providing two different exams is to ensure that the Presbytery is not voting on a *Candidate's* theological fitness when an ordination date has already been scheduled.

- d. **Extended Process:** If a *Candidate* is in the process for an extended period of time (more than 6 years), additional steps may be required. Such *Candidates* may be required to complete the following:
- i. Meet with CPM as a whole to reconfirm the sense of call and discuss plans for finalizing ordination
 - ii. Update the *Candidate's* statement of faith and present it to the committee
 - iii. Be subject to regular background checks
 - iv. Complete continuing education requirements
 - v. Stay current on healthy boundaries trainings and all trainings required by CPM

III. Scholarships: CPM encourages *Inquirers* and *Candidates* to seek out financial assistance for seminary from as many sources as possible. The CPM liaison will provide the individual with information on available funds from the Baltimore Presbytery for seminary costs. CPM has very limited scholarship funds which *Inquirers* or *Candidates* may apply for through their liaisons to the committee.

IV. Ordination Exams: There are five ordination exams provided by the General Assembly that must be passed in order to be ordained as a minister of word and sacrament in the PCUSA: Bible Content, Biblical Exegesis, Worship and Sacraments, Theological Competence, and Church Polity. See: <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/standard-ordination-exams/>

- a. The *Inquirer* or *Candidate* shall seek approval from the CPM liaison and moderator to take exams. The Bible Content exam should be taken in the first full year of seminary and *Inquirers* are encouraged to take it as early as possible. The other four exams should be taken during the final year of seminary and after the person has completed her/his language requirement in both Greek and Hebrew.
- b. CPM will pay for each *Inquirer* or *Candidate* to take each exam only once. *Inquirers* and *Candidates* should not assume that they will pass all five exams on their first attempt. Persons who have failed an exam are encouraged to review the failed exam with their liaisons, pastors, or other parties who may be able to provide guidance.
- c. If an *Inquirer* or *Candidate* has failed an examination twice, CPM will set up a discernment group to work with the individual prior to retaking the exam a third time. When CPM has good reason to believe that repeated failures to pass an exam are not the result of lack of adequate knowledge on the part of the *Inquirer* or *Candidate*, CPM can recommend to Presbytery that the *Inquirer* or *Candidate* be allowed to use some alternate means by which to ascertain the readiness of the candidate for ministry in the areas covered by the standard ordination examinations. The process for pursuing an alternate means of meeting ordination examination standards is governed by the Book of Order (section G-2.0610) and the local policy of the Presbytery of Baltimore. The policy of the Presbytery of Baltimore is:
 - i. An *ad hoc* examining committee of no more than five and no fewer than three members of the Presbytery shall be established by the Committee on

Preparation for Ministry. A majority of the examining committee shall be ministers of word and sacrament.

- ii. The examining committee shall devise and administer an examination which is designed to demonstrate the *Inquirer's* or *Candidate's* knowledge of the given area at the same depth required for passing the national examinations. The examination may have written and oral components. Grading of the examination shall be conducted by the examining committee and shall be reported to the *Inquirer* or *Candidate* and to the CPM in a timely manner. The *Inquirer* or *Candidate* may pass with one dissenting vote from the membership of the *ad hoc* committee. The CPM shall report the results at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Presbytery. It should be understood that the grading of this alternate exam will be as rigorous as the grading by national readers in regularly administered exams. CPM is prepared to fail a locally examined *Inquirer* or *Candidate* if his/her work does not measure up to expected standards. A full account of the reasons for exception shall be included in the minutes of the Presbytery and communicated to the Presbytery to which an *Inquirer* or *Candidate* may be transferred.
- iii. Examination results should be mailed or scanned to CPM liaison.

- V. **Vocational Assessment:** The CPM requires that each *Inquirer* undergo a vocational assessment to determine psychological fitness for ministry. This assessment includes tests and an interview with an appropriately licensed and credentialed psychologist.
- a. The *Inquirer* must authorize the center to release the report to CPM if the *Inquirer* wishes to continue in the process. The CPM does not allow *Inquirers* to undergo testing at any centers not previously approved by the CPM.
 - b. CPM may conclude from this assessment that an *Inquirer* is not an appropriate candidate for ordination and may recommend to Presbytery that the individual be removed from the process, or alternatively may impose additional conditions or requirements on the individual before considering her/him for further advancement in the process. It is often the case that the vocational assessment will uncover psychological issues operating in an individual's life that may need to be addressed; these may range from the mild to the severe. If a vocational assessment recommends that the individual seek individual or group therapy, CPM shall determine if the recommendation(s) will be enforced.
 - c. CPM will pay one-third of the cost of the vocational assessment. The *Inquirer* and/or the home church are responsible for the other two-thirds. Costs for travel, meals, and lodging are the responsibility of the *Inquirer*. The *Inquirer* should ask for financial assistance from her/his home church. In clear cases of financial hardship, the *Inquirer* may request additional help from the CPM.
- VI. **Ordained Ministers of other Denominations:** Ministers ordained in other denominations seeking to become ministers of word and sacrament in the PCUSA must first confer with Baltimore Presbytery's Committee on Ministry (COM) and, in particular, the Credentialing Committee under COM before being referred to CPM

by the COM moderator or by the Executive Presbyter. The CPM determines whether the minister has sufficient credentials to engage in ministry in the PCUSA. CPM then interviews that person, creates a process of study and discernment as necessary depending on the particular circumstances, and oversees that process. The CPM shall consider any potential theological, pastoral, or practical conflicts with ordained ministry in the PCUSA. Studies in or knowledge of biblical Greek and Hebrew and satisfactory completion of the five Ordination exams (see above) are part of the required process for those seeking transfer unless Baltimore Presbytery grants a waiver by a ¾ vote. A statement of faith shall be submitted to CPM upon request; that statement will be discussed in a meeting with the minister.

- VII. Character of Life:** As stated in the Book of Order, the manner of life of those called to exercise special functions in the church “should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world” (G2.0104). An *Inquirer* or *Candidate* who demonstrates a tendency to engage in behavior that does not exemplify the gospel is not a suitable candidate for ordination. CPM can and will ask such individuals to withdraw from the ordination process voluntarily, and, if necessary, will recommend that the Presbytery remove the individual from the process by vote.
- VIII. Seminary Grades:** CPM requires each seminary student to release an authorized transcript to CPM at least once annually. Basic required courses (listed below) cannot be taken pass/fail. *Inquirers* or *Candidates* must take a course in each of the following areas:
- a. Basic Studies in Greek and Hebrew
 - b. Greek Exegesis of a New Testament Book
 - c. Hebrew Exegesis of a book from the Hebrew Scriptures
 - d. Reformed Theology (or upper-level study of a Reformed theologian)
 - e. Reformed Worship
 - f. Presbyterian Polity
 - g. Pastoral Care
 - h. Preaching
- IX. Parish Internship / Field Education:** The CPM requires satisfactory completion of a church internship or field education, following the first year of seminary. The church internship or field education can be either full-time (10 weeks) in the summer or part-time during the academic year, for a minimum of 400 contact hours. A report on the outcome of the internship or field education must be submitted to CPM by a person in a supervisory role in the sponsoring church.
- X. Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)** The CPM requires at least one unit of CPE. This can be done full-time during the summer or part-time during the school year. The CPE program must be accredited by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (APCE); a full list of such institutions is available at <http://www.apce.edu>. A report from a CPE supervisor must be submitted to CPM at the conclusion of the program.
- XI. Annual Consultations:** CPM requires an annual consultation with each of its *Inquirers* and *Candidates*. The denominational Form 3: Pre-Consultation Report on Development Areas must be completed prior to the annual consultation, and the

denominational Form 4: Report on Consultation must be completed jointly by the *Inquirer/Candidate* and the *Inquirer/Candidate's* liaisons during or following the consultation. For both see: <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/forms-annual-consultations/>

- XII. Gatekeeper Functions:** The CPM makes no guarantee to any *Inquirer* or *Candidate* that she/he will successfully complete the process and be ordained. Sometimes the individual realizes, of their own accord, that she or he feels called to some other vocation and shall submit a written statement of withdrawal from the process to the CPM chair. The CPM may find an individual unsuitable for ordination for the following reasons:
- a. Issues regarding character of life
 - b. Unhealthy family relationships that may interfere with school and/or ministry
 - c. Issues of physical and/or mental health (excluding ADA-type disabilities)
 - d. Unfavorable vocational assessment
 - e. Poor internship, field education, or CPE performance
 - f. Weak sense of call
 - g. Failure to demonstrate satisfactory readiness for ministry spiritually, psychologically, academically or ethically
 - h. Lack of theological compatibility with the PCUSA
 - i. Determination that the person is not gifted or fit for pastoral ministry.