

## **The Preparation for Ministry Process for Inquirers and Candidates – Presbytery of Florida**

Note: The Presbytery of Florida’s Committee on Preparation for Ministry will be referred to as the CPM. All forms referred to in this process can be found online at <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/forms-used-preparation-ministry-process/>. The process outlined is meant to be descriptive of what is typically expected, for the better preparation of CPM members, Sessions, and individuals under care/seeking to be under care, knowing that individual circumstances may sometimes require some adaptation.

### **Becoming an Inquirer**

1. Applicant is a member of sponsoring congregation in the presbytery, having been active in the work and worship of that congregation for at least six months.
2. Applicant notifies pastor/session of interest in exploring a call to ordained ministry and/or seminary. Preferably this happens before an applicant applies to seminary.
3. Session notifies CPM Chair of applicant’s interest.
4. CPM representative makes contact with the pastor and/or a member of the Session (and applicant?) for orientation and introduction to online/presbytery resources. Session liaison appointed to provide support and guidance in the process. (Note: to the chair’s knowledge, this is not currently happening in our presbytery).
5. Applicant completes forms 1A, 1B, and 1C and submits to session for review.
6. Session interviews applicant, votes to recommend applicant to CPM (if not, provides pastoral care and assists applicant in addressing prohibitive issues or exploring other vocational options and notifies CPM chair), makes recommendation to CPM by submitting form 1D, as well as forms 1A-1C to CPM Chair, who arranges a face-to-face meeting with the applicant and the committee.
7. CPM reviews Forms 1A-1D, interviews applicant in person and decides (on behalf of Presbytery) whether to enroll applicant as Inquirer. If yes, CPM liaison is appointed, and forms 2A and 2B are completed, including goals for growth. Date for next in-person consultation are discussed, as well as the expectation for communications in between meetings (generally a minimum of quarterly check-ins with CPM and session liaison).

8. CPM reports the reception of Inquirer into care at next Presbytery meeting (generally held in January, May, and October of each year), and if possible introduces inquirer. CPM chair enrolls inquirer into the Online System for Managing Inquirer/Candidate Rolls at <http://p4m.pcusa.org>. This will generate a temporary username and password that will be emailed to the Inquirer for use when updating contact information and enrolling for ordination exams.

### **As an Inquirer**

9. When ready, the inquirer applies and enrolls in an accredited Presbyterian Church USA seminary, unless otherwise approved by the CPM and registers for classes, with the guidance and support of the CPM and Session.
10. Inquirer checks in as agreed upon (monthly/quarterly) with Session and CPM liaisons. If applicant misses an agreed upon time for check in, liaisons initiate contact. If no response, CPM chair is notified and follows up until inquirer is reached and relationship is restored. The CPM chair should check in with each inquirer/candidate at least once in between annual consultations to make sure candidate is receiving proper support from the Session and CPM liaisons.
11. Inquirer meets in person with CPM committee no later than one year after becoming an inquirer to report progress (using Form 3, submitted to CPM at least one week prior to meeting) and revise goals, and discuss process and timeline for transitioning to candidacy. If travel is a significant burden on the Inquirer, he or she may request to video conference/conference call into the meeting. If the CPM liaison feels the Inquirer is ready to transition to candidacy before the annual consultation, he or she will notify the CPM chair and go over the requirements and deadlines with the Inquirer at least a month prior to the next planned face-to-face meeting with the CPM. After the meeting with CPM, the completed report (Form 4) is sent to the inquirer/candidate, theological institution, and sponsoring session. The inquirer may seek reimbursement for one third the cost of travel and lodging expenses for annual consultations by emailing the CPM chair. The request must be recorded in the minutes of a CPM meeting and forwarded to the Presbytery Executive in order for funds to be released.
12. After a year of seminary is completed, the inquirer should notify the CPM liaison and chair of his/her intent to register for the Bible Content exam (see <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/bible-content-exam/>). This step may also happen after an Inquirer has become a candidate. The inquirer will use the username and password mentioned in #8 to register via <https://exams.pcusa.org>. The inquirer may seek reimbursement for half the cost of this and all other ordination exams by emailing the CPM chair. The request must be recorded in the minutes of a

CPM meeting and forwarded to the Presbytery Executive in order for funds to be released.

13. The Inquirer completes a psychological evaluation by Dr. Don Winslett of the Child and Family Development Center at 900 Garden Gate Circle in Pensacola (Phone: [\(850\) 478-0008](tel:8504780008)) or other provider approved by the CPM (your seminary may have a recommendation), and designates the CPM chair as the entity to receive the report. The CPM will cover 1/3 the cost of this evaluation, the Inquirer is responsible for 1/3, and the sponsoring session is responsible for 1/3 of the cost.

### **Seeking Candidacy**

14. When Inquirer is ready to seek candidacy (this may also be encouraged by his or her CPM or session liaison), he or she notifies the session and CPM liaisons, completes Form 5A and submits to Session and CPM for review. CPM chair initiates background check through the presbytery office. Note that if an inquirer hopes to be able to seek a call in the final semester of seminary, he or she should seek to be examined by the Presbytery in October of the year prior to their final year of seminary (in a three year MDiv program, this would be the October of their middler year, which means he or she should seek endorsement from their session and CPM by August/September). The Book of Order requires that candidacy last at least one year, and that the whole process last at least two years.
15. Session meets in person with Inquirer, reviews evidence of Inquiry Phase, and makes recommendation to CPM, using Form 5B, which is completed by the inquirer's session and forwarded to the CPM. Questions that may guide the session's discussion with the inquirer and provide support for its recommendation to the committee/commission overseeing preparation for ministry may be found in the "Advisory Handbook" on pages 41 - 42. Attach a letter explaining rationale for the session's action in light of inquirer's suitability.
16. CPM confers in person with Inquirer, review evidence of Inquiry phase (including psychological evaluation), and makes recommendation to Presbytery regarding candidacy, using Form 5C, "Report of Consultation to become a Candidate," a signed acknowledgement of the new covenant relationship entered into by the candidate and the committee/commission overseeing preparation for ministry. This form also establishes growth areas for candidate. The completed report is sent to the inquirer/candidate, theological institution, and sponsoring session, and Stated Clerk of Presbytery, along with a request that an examination of the Inquirer be added to the docket for the next Presbytery meeting.

17. The Presbytery receives the CPM recommendation and examines the Inquirer, who should be prepared to speak about their faith journey, their sense of call to the ministry of Word and Sacrament, their gifts and suitability for ministry, what they learned/discerned during the Inquiry phase, and their areas for continued growth and answer questions related to those topics. If examination is approved by Presbytery, the CPM completes Form 5D, "Covenant Agreement and Candidate Release," sends copies to all signing parties and to the Stated Clerk, and updates the status of the Inquirer in the Online Management System.

### **As a Candidate**

18. Candidate checks in as agreed upon (usually quarterly) with Session and CPM liaisons for support and review of goals. If applicant misses an agreed upon time for check in, liaisons initiate contact. If no response, CPM chair is notified and follows up until inquirer is reached and relationship is restored. The CPM chair should check in with each inquirer/candidate at least once in between annual consultations to make sure candidate is receiving proper support from the Session and CPM liaison.
19. Candidate satisfactorily completes at least 1 unit of Clinical Pastoral Education, and sends a copy of the final assessment to the CPM chair.
20. Candidate satisfactorily completes at least one supervised internship in a Presbyterian congregation (unless an exception is granted by the CPM). The CPM should be consulted for guidance about pursuing an internship that may test or stretch a candidate's sense of call. A copy of any final assessment by the supervisor should be sent to the CPM chair or a member of the CPM may consult via phone or email with the supervisor about the candidates suitability for ordained ministry as a Minister of Word and Sacrament, and any concerns or growth areas identified.
21. After completion of the relevant coursework (usually two full years of theological education), Candidate requests permission to take the Standard Ordination Exams. CPM must attest that the applicant has completed adequate academic preparation in each examination area and has adequate supervised experience in the area of practical ministry.
22. Candidate registers for and successfully passes the Standard Ordination Exams in the areas of Bible Content (usually completed in the second year of seminary), Biblical Exegesis, Theological Competence, Worship and Sacraments, and Church Polity (see <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/standard-ordination-exams/>).

### **Seeking a Call/Becoming Ordained**

23. After at least a year of candidacy, the CPM conducts a final assessment of the Candidate's readiness to receive a call. Final assessment includes a sermon preached by the Candidate to the CPM (or recorded on video) and oral examination. According to the Book of Order (G-2.0607), "[e]vidence of readiness to begin ordered ministry as a minister of the Word and Sacrament shall include:
- a. a candidate's wisdom and maturity of faith, leadership skills, compassionate spirit, honest repute, and sound judgment;
  - b. a transcript showing graduation, with satisfactory grades, at a regionally accredited college or university;
  - c. 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
  - d. examination materials, together with evaluations that declare those materials satisfactory in the areas covered by any standard ordination examination approved by the General Assembly.

If assessment is approved, CPM certifies Candidate as ready to receive a call and approves circulation of Personal Information Form by Candidate.

24. Candidate prepares PIF and seeks a call, typically through the church's Church Leadership Connection matching system and/or self-referrals. If the candidate is seeking an initial call to a validated ministry other than pastoring a congregation, he or she should consult the presbytery of call's policies regarding validated ministries. Candidate continues to check in with Session and CPM as agreed upon for support and guidance as he or she seeks a call.
25. Provided a call is pending, Candidate is examined for ordination by Committee on Ministry in the calling presbytery and/or on the floor of that Presbytery. If approved, Candidate negotiates terms of call with the calling church/entity.
26. Ordination and installation recommended in calling presbytery (though one may choose to be ordained in one's home church and presbytery).
27. After ordination or upon transfer to another presbytery, CPM chair changes status in online management system to reflect that the applicant is no longer under active care of the Presbytery of Florida