

*The Presbytery of New York City*

## **Committee on Preparation for Ministry**

# **Handbook for Inquirers and Candidates**

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Dear Inquirers and Candidates and those who journey with them,

All Christians are called to ministry in the Church of Jesus Christ. This *vocation* stands at the center of our faith and practice no matter what our particular professional occupation. Each among us has different gifts, talents, and abilities, and therefore each Christian's call is different and particular. The responsibility of the church, then, is to assist all in discerning how they are called by God to service.

Along this journey, some in the church find themselves particularly called to ordered ministry as deacons, ruling elders, and teaching elders (or ministers of Word and Sacrament). These ordered ministries of the church do not indicate status or privilege but mark that some are called to bring particular gifts and service to the church so that the ministry of the whole people of God may flourish. The call to ordered ministry begins with an inner urgency, but the church then 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.

In the Presbytery of New York City, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry is responsible for the church's work of discernment with those who are called to be teaching elders. This work and process is described in section G-2.06 of the *Book of Order*.

The care process is a covenant relationship involving God, the inquirer/candidate, the Session, and the Presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM). The CPM of the Presbytery of New York City has a number of particular guidelines and processes that are described in this handbook. In addition to these particular guidelines, we have the following expectations of all involved in the process:

- **Make the process a top priority.** CPM expects an inquirer and candidate to complete the requirements for certification within five years. While this may not be possible in a very few extenuating circumstances (and CPM will consider those), the committee expects a five-year process in which there is cohesion, direction, and momentum, with one thing building on another. Should it appear to CPM that any circumstance – whether it is personal, financial, or other – comes between the inquirer/candidate and completion of the requirements for certification in five years, the committee will discuss the situation with the inquirer/candidate to help him/her discern what the issues are and to decide how and in what way to move forward.
- **Joyfully accept the Committee's supervision.** CPM, as a keeper of a care process, is a supervisory entity, not merely a consultative one, and must balance care and concern for those in the process with attention to the peace, unity, and purity of the Church. Decisions about process, goals, achievements, and requirements are made in covenant consultation with the inquirer/candidate and his/her session. CPM needs to be aware and approve of any and all elements in the process.
- **Keep in touch with the Committee.** Inquirers and candidates should take initiative in maintaining regular and open communication with the committee regarding experiences, progress in preparation for ministry, and other issues pertaining to educational, spiritual, and personal development. They should respond promptly and responsibly to all communications, correspondence, and requests for reports and information by the committee, includ-

ing pre-interview annual consultation reports, together with transcripts, signed field education/internship evaluations, and copies of ordination exams and exegesis papers.

- **Show the love and justice of Jesus Christ in life and ministry.** Throughout the process, CPM seeks to discern a person's readiness to particular service as a teaching elder. While there are a number of specific requirements that must be completed, CPM also looks for inquirers and candidates to demonstrate the love and justice of Jesus Christ in life and ministry through wisdom and maturity of faith, leadership skills, a compassionate spirit, honest repute, and sound judgment (G-2.0607a).

We are grateful to God that you are in this process of discerning your Christian vocation, and we pray God's guidance for all of us as we seek to be faithful together.

In Christ's service,

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry of the Presbytery of New York City

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## Section 1: Introduction

The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) specifies, in G-2.06, a process for preparation for becoming a teaching elder (also called a Minister of Word and Sacrament) in the Presbyterian Church (USA). Each person considering ordered ministry as a teaching elder and every Session sponsoring and supporting such a person should be familiar with this part of the *Book of Order*.

The Presbytery of New York City has established the Committee on Preparation for Ministry to coordinate its work with those wishing to become teaching elders. CPM works as an agent of all persons in the preparation process: the individual inquirer or candidate, the sponsoring Session, and the Presbytery. CPM has considerable latitude in determining the requirements and process for inquirers and candidates that will enable them to complete the requirements of the *Book of Order*. Nevertheless, there are specific points at which the committee cannot proceed without bringing a recommendation that must be voted by the Presbytery.

By developing this Handbook, the CPM of the Presbytery of New York City expresses its intent to:

- Explain the process;
- Be as clear and open as possible about the obligations of all parties involved; and
- Build a nurturing relationship between the presbytery and those under its care.

## Section 2: The Care Process

In its present form and in its antecedents, the Presbyterian Church (USA) has a strong commitment to an educated and qualified ministry. Particular requirements have been established to ensure that members of all congregations are provided quality instruction in the Christian faith, for leadership of worship of God, appropriate nurture toward spiritual growth, and competent leadership in the administrative and programmatic affairs of the church.

Meeting the standards required by the church for its leadership is no easy task. The preparation for ministry process is better seen as an arduous undertaking than as an easy process with minimal requirements. The work of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry should be seen as a “gate-keeping/enabling” task. It is only at this point in the constitutional process of the Presbyterian Church (USA) that responsibility is given for the credentialing of persons who will be teaching elders in the church.

It is important to keep in mind that the entire process of preparation for becoming a teaching elder, as it involves the individual, the individual’s Session, and CPM, is a “care” process. The responsibility for pastoral care and personal support of the inquirer or candidate remains that of the church of membership. However, the counsel, guidance, and liaison relationships of the process are designed and intended to be empathetic and supportive even though CPM may impose certain requirements that a person may not be eager to undertake.

Above all, the care process is a **covenant relationship**. In this relationship, we acknowledge that the primary commitment of the Christian community is to God as everyone involved af-

firms our mutual responsibility for the ministry of the Church. This covenant relationship is formally made with God, the inquirer/candidate, and the Committee on Preparation for Ministry, but the Session and theological institution also participate in this relationship. Through this relationship, the committee and the inquirer/candidate set goals for development, evaluate progress toward preparation for ministry, and together discern the call of God to the ministry of the teaching elder.

While there are a substantial number of specific requirements that must be completed during the care process, the Presbytery through the Committee on Preparation for Ministry also has wide latitude in determining a person's readiness for ordered ministry as a teaching elder. At the conclusion of this process, the Committee must have evidence of a candidate's wisdom and maturity of faith, leadership skills, compassionate spirit, honest repute, and sound judgment (G-2.0607) before certification (Section 12).

### **Section 3: Organization of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry**

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry generally consists of eighteen members, nine teaching elders and nine ruling elders, elected by the Presbytery. The committee acts on behalf of presbytery in certain matters related to preparation for ministry and makes recommendations to presbytery about other matters. There are two key elements in the way CPM is organized that are helpful to understand how the committee understands and fulfills its responsibilities.

#### **Committee Moderator**

The Committee Moderator schedules, prepares the agenda for, and moderates all meetings of the committee. The Moderator is also responsible for all official correspondence between the committee and persons under its care or the Sessions of churches in which such persons are members.

#### **CPM Liaison**

Every inquirer and candidate who is under the care of the committee is assigned a CPM Liaison. The CPM Liaison is the primary contact for the person under care and will provide counsel and advice to the inquirer or candidate. The CPM Liaison and inquirer/candidate should be in regular contact and relationship to be aware of matters of concern to the CPM.

### **Section 4: Becoming an Inquirer**

According to the *Book of Order*, "the purpose of the inquiry phase is to provide an opportunity for the church and for those who believe themselves called to ordered ministry as teaching elders to explore that call together so that the presbytery can make an informed decision regarding the inquirer's suitability for ordered ministry" (G-2.0603).

## When to Become an Inquirer

A potential inquirer must be a member of the sponsoring congregation and active in its work and worship for at least six months (G-2.0602).

There are no rigid rules for when in the educational process an individual should become an inquirer, although the ideal time is at the beginning of seminary. Potential inquirers should remember that the inquiry period is just that – a time for inquiry and exploration. Initiating the process does not imply the intent or the need to see the process through until ordination or a promise from CPM or Presbytery that ordination or a call will be the end result.

## Length of the Inquiry Period

The CPM of the Presbytery of New York City requires that the inquiry period last **at least one year**. The phase of inquiry shall be of sufficient length for the inquirer, the Session, and the Committee on Preparation for Ministry to discern whether the inquirer should apply to become a candidate. During this time, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry will make use of resources such as information provided by the inquirer, personal references, and reports from counseling services, the Session, and the inquirer's institution of learning, if the inquirer is a student.

Some of the factors affecting the length of the inquiry period are:

- The individual's level of maturity;
- The educational status of the individual; and
- The time needed for the individual to complete any of the requirements that CPM defines for the inquiry period.

## Major Steps in Becoming an Inquirer

A person interested in becoming an inquirer should:

- Discuss interest in becoming an inquirer with his/her pastor. The pastor (or Moderator of Session) should then contact the CPM Moderator to schedule a Session Orientation to explain the process and Session's responsibilities **before** the potential inquirer meets with the Session.
- Complete Forms 1A, 1B, and 2A, found at <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/prep4min/forms-used-preparation-ministry-process/>.
- Submit these completed forms to pastor and/or moderator of Session so that they may be circulated to all members of the sponsoring Session.
- Meet with the sponsoring Session to receive their endorsement. Follow up with the appointed Session Liaison, the primary contact and support person with the Session.
- Work with the Clerk of Session to complete Form 1D (page 1 only) and send the original and appropriately signed copies of Forms 1A, 1B, 1D, and 2A to the CPM Moderator *via email*. (Be sure to keep a copy.)

- When the appropriate forms are received, the potential inquirer will receive an email from the CPM Moderator to schedule an interview with CPM. All paperwork must be submitted before an interview will be scheduled.
- Once an interview with CPM is scheduled, the prospective inquirer shall contact the Session Liaison and pastor or moderator of Session and ask that they attend the interview as well.
- Meet with CPM (see below).
- A CPM Liaison will be assigned if the CPM enrolls the person as an inquirer. The liaison should be contacted after the meeting to follow up on any issues that came up during the meeting.

### **Interview with CPM**

Interviews with CPM generally take place at the Presbytery office (475 Riverside Drive at 120th Street in Manhattan) on the fourth Monday evening of the month.

After introductions, the prospective inquirer will give a five-minute account of his/her faith journey. Then the Session Liaison will be invited to describe ways in which the prospective inquirer has been active in his/her church. The pastor will be invited to speak as well.

Members of the committee will ask the prospective inquirer questions of clarification, if any, concerning the application forms and faith journey.

After these questions, the prospective inquirer, pastor and Session Liaison will be excused from the room while the committee discusses and votes on enrolling the person as an inquirer.

When the prospective inquirer, the pastor, and Session Liaison are invited back into the meeting room, the Moderator will inform them of the committee's decision. If the vote is affirmative, the Moderator will advise the inquirer of the next steps s/he should take, including scheduling an appointment for a psychological assessment (Section 5) at the earliest possible opportunity, and other goals for the coming year. The CPM acts to enroll inquirers on behalf of the presbytery, so the inquirer is officially enrolled as an inquirer on the date that the CPM votes affirmatively.

### **Responsibilities of Inquirers**

The responsibilities of an inquirer are:

- Participate in psychological and career counseling. **This must occur before moving to candidacy.**
- Submit a certified copy of all transcripts showing graduation from a regionally-accredited college or university.
- Begin a field education placement approved by the Committee (Section 6).
- Continue active participation in the life and mission of the Church (G-2.0605).

- Participate responsibly with CPM in the goal-setting, evaluation, and decision-making processes of the committee and show initiative in communication with the committee and moving the process forward.
- Give diligent attention to educational and developmental tasks involved in preparation for service as a teaching elder. If not already begun, the inquirer should begin studies at an accredited theological institution approved by the presbytery (Appendix B) towards completion of a Masters of Divinity degree. Before applying for candidacy, the inquirer should complete or have a plan for completion of the following courses at an accredited seminary:
  - Presbyterian Polity
  - Reformed Theology
  - Reformation History
  - Introduction to Hebrew
  - Introduction to Greek
  - Course requiring translation and exegesis of Greek text, with a passing grade on a final exegesis paper
  - Course requiring translation and exegesis of Hebrew text, with a passing grade on a final exegesis paper

## Section 5. Psychological Assessment

All inquirers are required to complete an in-depth psychological and career counseling assessment, to be arranged soon after becoming an inquirer. Inquirers are to be evaluated at **Trinity Counseling Center** in Princeton, NJ. Inquirers in this Presbytery who are studying or working in another part of the country may be given permission by CPM to complete their counseling requirement at another counseling center. If the inquirer wishes to pursue this option, s/he should speak to CPM during the initial interview or contact the Moderator.

The cost of the Psychological Assessment at Trinity Counseling Center is \$1,390, split evenly between the Inquirer, the Presbytery of New York City and the sponsoring congregation (\$463.33 each).

To secure an appointment for a psychological assessment at Trinity, call the Center at (609) 924-0060 and be prepared to provide the following contact information: *name, address, home and cell phone numbers, and email address* and similar contact information for the contact person of the inquirer's home church for billing purposes. After this initial call, a psychologist will be assigned and will call back to set up the appointment.

On the day of the appointment, the inquirer should bring a check for \$463.33 as his/her portion of the bill. The Presbytery and home church session will be billed for the balance.

After the report of the psychological assessment is received by the Moderator, a subgroup of CPM including the Moderator and the liaison will meet with the inquirer to review and discuss its findings. These reports are held in strict confidence within the CPM process.

## Section 6: Field Education

During the inquiry phase the inquirer must complete a field education placement (G-2.0606). This is an essential step in the discernment process before candidacy. To provide for congregational experience, greater understanding of the workings, theology and polity of the Presbyterian Church (USA), and for continued growth into the role as a professional in ministry, this experience must be completed in a congregation of the Presbyterian Church (USA) *other than and different from his/her home congregation*.

In this experience encompassing at least 400 hours (full-time over 12 weeks in the summer or 10 hours per week for an academic year), the inquirer must engage in theological reflection with the pastor of the congregation on a regular and frequent basis and complete a written midpoint and final evaluation of the experience. The placement should include opportunities for a wide range of experiences in the congregation with various age groups and not be limited to working with one particular ministry. The inquirer should gain a deeper understanding of preaching, worship leadership, polity, pastoral care, and teaching throughout the field education experience.

The assignment of a field education placement often coincides with field education done through and arranged by the inquirer's seminary, but confirmation of a placement through an inquirer's theological institution does not guarantee acceptance of it by CPM. The choice of field education should be discussed with the CPM as a part of setting goals for professional development during the inquiry interview and/or annual consultations. *The Committee must review and approve the field education placement **before** such service begins to give its permission (G-2.0606)*, and CPM reserves the right to discern if the goals of a field education placement have been met as part of its review of the inquirer's readiness to move to candidacy.

If the inquirer comes to CPM with field education previously completed, CPM may in its discretion accept the previous placement as fulfilling these requirements.

Inquirers and candidates must submit a copy of midpoint and final evaluations of their field education placement to the committee.

## Section 7: Retreat and Annual Review

All inquirers and candidates are required to participate in an annual review for the evaluation and nurture of the inquirer or candidate. In the Presbytery of New York City, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry conducts a retreat each year which ordinarily serves this purpose. Attendance and participation at this retreat each year is required and fulfills the annual consultation requirements. Those inquirers and candidates who cannot attend the scheduled retreat may request permission to complete this requirement through an alternative method, including a face-to-face meeting, a conference call, or Internet-based video chat with members of CPM. Those who are given permission to fulfill the annual review requirement through an alternative method should make plans to attend the CPM retreat in person the next year.

The retreat for inquirers and candidates is generally held on a Saturday at a church convenient to various locations in the Presbytery. It includes time for worship, meeting with committee

members, sharing stories with others in the preparation for ministry process, and learning about practices of faith important for service as a teaching elder. This day-long event is a key part of the ongoing relationship between CPM and those under its care.

As part of the retreat, inquirers and candidates will meet with committee members to discuss their progress toward goals for development. To facilitate this conversation and provide a written record of the meeting, all inquirers and candidates attending the retreat must confirm their attendance by submitting Form 3 at least two weeks before the retreat. (Those candidates who have been certified should use the separate form that will be distributed to them.) At some point during or after the retreat, all those who attended must complete Form 4-PNYC, "Report of Annual Consultation," discuss it with their Liaisons, and submit it to the committee within one month. Those who attend the retreat but do not submit the required paperwork will not be given credit for attending. (Inquirers and candidates who meet with the committee for annual consultations at regular meetings of the committee must also complete these forms.)

Form 3 may be found at <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/prep4min/forms-used-preparation-ministry-process/>. In addition to the required information on these forms, inquirers and candidates should include on them any supply preaching that they have done over the past year.

## **Section 8: Scholarships and Financial Assistance**

The Committee has funds each year to cover a portion of the cost of the psychological assessment for inquirers, expenses related to the annual retreat, and other special needs. After these core expenses are covered, the Committee may have funds available to assist inquirers and candidates with various expenses related to theological education and the overall process of preparing for ordered ministry as a teaching elder. An application for these funds is available on the CPM portion of the Presbytery website or from the Committee moderator. All disbursements must be authorized by a majority vote of the Committee.

CPM financial assistance may be requested for seminary-related costs associated with the Master of Divinity degree, additional courses or field education required by CPM, psychological assessments, ordination exams, and travel expenses related to required meetings with CPM. Certified candidates may request financial assistance for continuing education events and conferences if funds are available after October 1 of each year.

CPM financial assistance is intended to reflect the shared, covenantal nature of the care process. Sessions and congregations should also be involved in the financial support of inquirers and candidates, so CPM assistance will ordinarily cover only up to one-third of any given expense.

All financial assistance is granted on the basis of documented need and available funding. Submitting an application for funds does not guarantee that they will be awarded. Each inquirer or candidate is ordinarily limited to financial assistance totaling \$500 per calendar year. Amounts above \$500 per calendar year must be approved by a three-fourths vote of the Committee and show a matching contribution from the inquirer's or candidate's home congregation. Proper backup documentation of actual expenses may be required before funds can be released.

## Section 9: Becoming a Candidate

According to the *Book of Order*, “the purpose of the candidacy phase is to provide for the full preparation of persons to serve the church as teaching elders. 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).

### When to Become a Candidate

There is no fixed duration for the inquiry period, although it lasts for at least a year. As part of the ongoing relationship of care, the CPM Liaison is in a good position to advise the inquirer about when to apply for candidate status.

In any case, an inquirer is expected to have completed the psychological assessment and have submitted a mid-point evaluation of field education to the Committee before s/he may be enrolled as a candidate.

### Length of the Candidacy Period

The candidacy period must be ***at least one full year*** (G-2.0602). It lasts until the candidate receives an approved call and is examined and ordained, or until the candidate’s name is removed from the roll of candidates in accordance with G-2.0609 and Section 13. If CPM votes to recommend to Presbytery that the inquirer be enrolled as a candidate, Presbytery will ordinarily act on this recommendation at its next regularly scheduled meeting. Unlike the inquiry process, the date of enrollment as a candidate is the date on which Presbytery votes that the inquirer should be enrolled as a candidate, not the date on which CPM meets with him/her and votes to make a recommendation for such status.

### Requirements Before Candidacy

**Before** applying to become a candidate, an inquirer must:

- Complete a psychological assessment.
- Complete at least one-half of an approved field education placement and submitted a written mid-point evaluation to the committee.
- Complete, or have a plan for completing, educational requirements.
- Discuss his/her interest in becoming a candidate with the Session and CPM liaisons.

### Major Steps in Becoming a Candidate

When these requirements are complete, the inquirer may proceed to apply for candidacy.

- Complete Form 5A and its supplemental questions found at <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/prep4min/forms-used-preparation-ministry-process/>.
- Submit these completed forms to the pastor or moderator of Session so that they can be circulated to all members of the sponsoring Session.
- Meet with the Session.

- Work with the Clerk of Session, who will send the appropriately signed original copies of Forms 5A and 5B to the CPM Moderator *via email*. The inquirer should also keep a copy.
- The CPM Moderator will contact the inquirer to schedule an interview with the committee.
- Once an interview has been scheduled, the inquirer should invite his/her Session Liaison and pastor and to accompany him/her to the interview.
- Meet with CPM for a candidacy interview, which follows the same general format as that of inquiry interviews. During the candidacy interview, members of CPM will be considering the integrity of the inquirer's call to ministry and service as a teaching elder in deciding whether or not to recommend to Presbytery that the inquirer be received as a candidate.
- Contact the CPM Liaison after the meeting to follow up on any issues that came up during the meeting.
- If approved, appear at the designated meeting of Presbytery, speak for 3-5 minutes on **sense of call**, and answer any questions that come from the floor of Presbytery on the inquirer's **sense of call**.
- If Presbytery votes to enroll the inquirer as a candidate, s/he will be asked to answer the Constitutional Questions put by the Moderator of Presbytery. A prayer and charge will conclude the reception of the candidate.

### **Responsibilities of Candidates**

The responsibilities of candidates are to:

- Continue active participation in the life and mission of the Church (G-2.0605).
- Participate responsibly with CPM in the goal-setting, evaluation, and decision-making processes of the committee and show initiative in communication with the committee and moving the process forward.
- Give diligent attention to and complete educational and developmental tasks involved in preparation for service as a teaching elder. This includes completion of the Master of Divinity degree at an accredited theological institution approved by the presbytery.
- Fulfill the schedules and time requirements prescribed by the *Book of Order* and CPM.
- Take initiative in maintaining regular and open communication with CPM regarding experiences, progress in preparation for ministry, and other issues pertaining to educational, spiritual, and personal development.

A candidate may not enter into negotiation for service as a teaching elder without approval of the committee through final assessment and certification (Section 12). Candidates may request permission of CPM to be placed on the Presbytery's Pulpit Supply List, but they may not

preach regularly more than twice per month in a congregation other than his/her home congregation without permission of CPM.

## **Section 10: Ordination Exams**

(ADMINISTERED BY THE PRESBYTERIES' COOPERATIVE COMMITTEE ON EXAMINATIONS FOR CANDIDATES)

Before final assessment and certification of readiness for examination for ordination, a candidate must submit "satisfactory grades, together with the examination papers in the areas covered by any standard ordination examination approved by the General Assembly" (G-2.0607d).

These examinations are:

1. Bible Content Examination
2. Open Book Bible Exegesis
3. Theological Competence
4. Worship and Sacraments
5. Church Polity

### **Timing of Examinations**

Inquirers or candidates are encouraged to take the Bible Content Examination in their first year of seminary. The other four examinations may be taken by inquirers or candidates after completion of two full years of theological education or whenever the CPM Moderator otherwise certifies readiness. The exams may be taken in one sitting or in smaller groups based on the preference of the candidate.

The Bible Content Examination is offered twice a year, in early February and early September. This examination assesses the candidate's knowledge of the form and content of the Old and New Testaments. It is a 100-item, multiple-choice examination. For sample tests and help preparing for the Bible Content Examination see [www.whitneyhq.com/biblecontent](http://www.whitneyhq.com/biblecontent). The other four examinations are offered twice a year, in January and August. These examinations are provided in the form of essay questions.

Examination information, dates, deadlines, and registration are available online at <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/prep4min/standard-ordination-exams/>. The CPM moderator will be asked to give permission to take the exams as part of the online registration process.

CPM often conducts preparation sessions for the ordination exams. The Moderator will announce these sessions via email.

Graded exams, whether passing or failing, must be forwarded to the presbytery office for inclusion in the CPM file. Candidates should keep a copy as well.

## **Section 11: The Personal Information Form**

The Personal Information Form (PIF) is distributed by Call Referral Services of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The purpose of the PIF is to give persons seeking a call the opportunity:

- To provide information about themselves, their sense of call, capabilities and training, experience, personal/professional style, hopes, and spiritual aspirations.
- To obtain an interview with Pastor Nominating Committees (PNCs) or other groups entrusted with the responsibility of extending a call.
- To help them prepare for the interview.

### **When to Submit the PIF**

The *Book of Order* requires that a candidate have the approval of presbytery before entering into negotiation for his/her service as a teaching elder (G-2.0607). CPM completes this process on behalf of the presbytery.

Once the conditions in Section 12 have been met, the candidate may approach the CPM Moderator to schedule his/her final assessment and be “certified ready to receive a call” and therefore to circulate his/her PIF (see Section 12). Once the request to circulate the PIF has been approved by CPM, and the candidate has submitted his/her PIF online, Call Referral Services will contact the CPM Moderator to attest to his/her certification.

Questions about submission of the PIF once it has been approved by CPM should be directed to the CPM Moderator or Call Referral Services in Louisville at 1-888-728-7228 ext. 8550.

### **Obtaining a Blank Personal Information Form**

A blank PIF can be downloaded from [www.pcusa.org/clc](http://www.pcusa.org/clc).

## **Section 12: The Final Assessment**

Before a candidate can receive a call or begin negotiation for service as a teaching elder, the presbytery must certify that the candidate is ready for examination for ordination, pending a call (G-2.0607). CPM completes this certification on behalf of the presbytery in a process known as the **final assessment** and reports its completion to the Presbytery.

### **Requirements Before Final Assessment**

The final assessment may be scheduled at any time after the candidate has been a candidate for at least three months. The following items must be in the candidate’s file before the final assessment:

- Papers showing satisfactory grades in the areas covered by the standard ordination examinations (G-2.0607d).
- A transcript showing graduation, with satisfactory grades, at a regionally accredited college or university (G-2.0607b).
- A transcript from a theological institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools acceptable to the Presbytery (Appendix B), showing satisfactory grades in a course of study including Hebrew and Greek and exegesis of the Old and New Testaments using Hebrew and Greek texts, and graduation or proximity to graduation (G-2.0607c).

- The final evaluation from any and all field education and/or Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) placements completed by the candidate before or during his/her preparation process.

### **Purpose of the Final Assessment**

At the final assessment, the committee reviews the candidate's preparation for ministry and seeks to determine if s/he is ready for examination for ordination, pending a call. Four particular elements of this determination include:

- Theological views compatible with Reformed theology as expressed in the *Book of Confessions*.
- Reflection on and willingness to fulfill the requirements of the ordination vows (W-4.4003) informed by knowledge of the church in various settings.
- A commitment to service as a teaching elder within the discipline of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) with wisdom and maturity of faith, leadership skills, compassionate spirit, honest repute, and sound judgment (G-2.0607a).
- Sound exegetical skill and preaching ability, as evidenced in the paper submitted to the CPM and the sermon preached before the committee.

### **Documents for Final Assessment**

The documents necessary to submit to the CPM for the Final Assessment are:

1. a one-page written statement of faith
2. an exegetical paper, exegeting a passage written in the original language that differs from the language translated in the candidate's Biblical Exegesis ordination exam
3. a written sermon (8-10 minutes in length) based on the exegetical passage, with a description of the congregation to which it is to be preached
4. a draft of the candidate's PIF.

All documents are to be submitted to the CPM Moderator no later than *two weeks* prior to the date of the assessment.

### **At the Assessment:**

- The Moderator will direct the interview to the Statement of Faith. Questions may be asked and clarifications sought. Committee members will express their opinions as to its strengths, weaknesses, and omissions. Any specific requirements for alterations will be discussed and approved by the committee after the candidate has been excused.
- The Moderator will then direct the interview to the PIF. Committee members will be invited to comment on the PIF, asking questions for clarification and giving advice to the candidate.
- The Moderator will then direct the interview to the exegetical paper. Committee members will be invited to comment and ask questions for clarification.

- The Moderator will direct the interview to the written sermon. This sermon, lasting 8-10 minutes, will then be preached by the candidate.
- Following discussion of the sermon, any other questions can be asked by committee members in ascertaining the readiness of the candidate for ministry.
- After the candidate is excused from the room, the committee will discuss the candidate's final readiness for service as a teaching elder and consider any further actions that should be required of the candidate. These various suggestions will be discussed by the committee and voted on or adopted by consensus. Examples include reworking an element of the Statement of Faith or PIF, expanding the exegetical paper, or rewriting parts of the sermon for clarification.
- A vote is then taken as to whether to sustain the Final Assessment or stop the Assessment until the candidate meets further requirements.
- When the candidate returns to the room and the committee's decision is shared, s/he may request clarification of any additional requirements.

The newly-certified candidate may close the interview with prayer.

Once the final assessment is complete, the candidate is permitted to contact PNCs and to search for a call. S/he may be placed on the Presbytery's Pulpit Supply list without further consultation with the CPM. The candidate remains under care of the CPM until ordination and must continue attending the annual retreat and completing the annual review process. The examination for ordination is conducted by the Committee on Ministry and Presbytery of the calling Presbytery.

### **Section 13: Leaving the Process**

While CPM hopes that all who enter the process will see it through to its completion with ordination to service as a teaching elder, we recognize that personal circumstances and/or the movement of the Holy Spirit may cause inquirers/candidates to withdraw from the process. To do so, the inquirer/candidate must send a written request for removal to the Committee and be in consultation with his/her Session. If the inquirer/candidate, Session, and CPM all concur, CPM may act on behalf of presbytery to remove the inquirer/candidate from the rolls (G-2.0609).

CPM may discern that an inquirer/candidate cannot demonstrate the particular call to ministry and service as a teaching elder and may recommend to the Presbytery that the inquirer/candidate be removed from the care process (G-2.0609). The CPM will consult with the inquirer/candidate and his/her Session before taking this action, and Presbytery approval is required.

### **Section 14: Exceptions**

The policies and procedures set forth in this handbook and the *Book of Order* may be waived in certain exceptional circumstances when the CPM and Presbytery find that an inquirer/candidate brings unique gifts and integrity of call to ministry and service as a teaching elder.

- Any policy or requirement set forth solely in this Handbook may be waived by a three-fourths vote of CPM.
- Any of the requirements of the preparation process explicitly outlined in G-2.06 of the *Book of Order* (with the exception of the ordination exams required in G-2.0607d) must be waived by a vote of the Presbytery. CPM may recommend such exception upon a three-fourths vote of the Committee, and the Presbytery must then vote to approve the exception by a three-fourths vote (G-2.0610).
- Ordination exams (Section 10 of this Handbook and G-2.0607d) may not be waived. However, if a candidate is unable to pass one or more of these examinations, CPM may recommend to Presbytery by a three-fourths vote that the candidate be permitted to show readiness in the area(s) covered by the exam(s) through an alternative method. The Presbytery must then vote to approve the use of an alternative method by a three-fourths vote (G-2.0610).

In all cases, the reasons for such waivers and exceptions will be recorded in the minutes of CPM and/or Presbytery, included in the inquirer/candidate file, and communicated to any other presbytery upon transfer.

*Due to the high standard required for waiver of any requirement, inquirers and candidates should plan to complete all the stated requirements of the preparation process without receiving an exception under this policy.*

## **Appendix A: Definitions of Acronyms**

<b>CIF:</b>	Church Information Form
<b>COM:</b>	Committee on Ministry
<b>CPE:</b>	Clinical Pastoral Education
<b>CPM:</b>	Committee on Preparation for Ministry
<b>EP:</b>	Executive Presbyter
<b>GA:</b>	General Assembly
<b>PC(USA):</b>	Presbyterian Church (USA)
<b>PIF:</b>	Personal Information Form
<b>PNC:</b>	Pastor Nominating Committee

## **Appendix B: Approved Theological Institutions**

### **Presbyterian Theological Seminaries**

- [Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary](#), Austin, Texas
- [Columbia Theological Seminary](#), Decatur, Georgia

- [University of Dubuque Theological Seminary](#), Dubuque, Iowa
- [Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary](#), Louisville, Kentucky
- [McCormick Theological Seminary](#), Chicago, Illinois
- [Pittsburgh Theological Seminary](#), Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- [Princeton Theological Seminary](#), Princeton, New Jersey
- [San Francisco Theological Seminary](#), San Anselmo, California
- [Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary](#), Atlanta, Georgia
- [Union Presbyterian Seminary](#), Richmond, Virginia, and Charlotte, North Carolina

### **Seminaries Related to the PC(USA) by Covenant Agreement**

- [Auburn Theological Seminary](#), New York, New York
- [Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico](#), San Juan, Puerto Rico

### **Other Approved Theological Institutions**

- [Fuller Theological Seminary](#), Pasadena, California
- [Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary](#), South Hamilton, Massachusetts
- [Harvard Divinity School](#), Cambridge, Massachusetts
- [New Brunswick Theological Seminary](#), New Brunswick, New Jersey, and Queens, New York
- [New York Theological Seminary](#), New York, New York
- [Union Theological Seminary](#), New York, New York
- [Yale Divinity School](#), New Haven, Connecticut

Other seminaries and theological institutions accredited by the Association of Theological Schools may be approved on a case-by-case basis by a three-quarters vote of CPM.

<h2><b>Appendix C: Important Websites</b></h2>
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[www.pcusa.org](http://www.pcusa.org)

The denominational homepage of the Presbyterian Church (USA)

[www.nycpresbytery.org](http://www.nycpresbytery.org)

The Presbytery of New York City's website

<http://www.nycpresbytery.org/committees-councils/preparation-for-ministry/>PNYC CPM Website – including this Handbook and Resources for Ordination Exams

<http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/prep4min/>Denominational Resources for Preparation for Ministry

<http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/prep4min/forms-used-preparation-ministry-process/>  
central repository of forms for the CPM process

<http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/prep4min/standard-ordination-exams/>  
Official Information for Ordination Exams, including registration

<http://www.whitneyhq.com/biblecontent/>  
Bible Content Exam preparation, including old exams

[www.pcusa.org/clc](http://www.pcusa.org/clc)  
Church Leadership Connection, for PIF and call process information