



A PROCEDURE MANUAL
COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY
LEHIGH PRESBYTERY

For a second reading by the Lehigh Presbytery on September 23, 2014

This Manual is addressed to potential Inquirers and Candidates for the ministry of PCUSA Teaching Elder under care of Lehigh Presbytery. It has been written by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) as a guide to the requirements and expectations of the CPM as it carries out its responsibilities toward Inquirers and Candidates. The CPM directs all persons seeking to be Inquirers/Candidates for the ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to the statement on Freedom of Conscience contained in the PCUSA Book of Order, G-2.0105.

Pastors and Session Liaisons should also know the requirements of the Book of Order and this Manual as they counsel and support persons considering or preparing for the ordained ministry of PCUSA Teaching Elder.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR POTENTIAL INQUIRERS AND CANDIDATES:

ORDINATION: Preparation for the ordained ministry of Word and Sacrament as Teaching Elder requires deep commitment to Jesus and his Church. It requires years of academic study, practical and professional experience and development, and spiritual discipline and growth. It is not an easy preparation, nor an uncomplicated process. In our Presbyterian system, the call to ministry must be perceived by the individual AND confirmed by the Church through the Presbytery. Therefore, the Presbytery determines who is ordained as Teaching Elder.

It is important that those who are to be ordained as teaching elders receive full preparation for their task under the direction of the presbytery. For this purpose, a presbytery shall enter into covenant relationship with those preparing to become teaching elders and with their sessions and congregations. This relationship shall be divided into the two phases of inquiry and candidacy. (G-2.0601)

THE COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY (CPM): The Lehigh CPM is the presbytery partner in this covenant relationship, as the committee guides and supports Inquirers and Candidates in their preparation for ministry. The CPM also seeks to be supportive and sensitive to the needs of the spouses and/or families of Inquirers and Candidates, welcoming conversation regarding their journey through the process. The CPM shall appoint one of its members to be a liaison to each Inquirer/Candidate. The CPM liaison is responsible, on behalf of the CPM, for supervising preparation. The dominating concern of the liaison is pastoral: to help each individual accomplish the necessary preparation for ministry. Individuals are free to discuss with their liaison any concerns regarding educational, intellectual, and spiritual preparation.

THE PROCESS: The requirements of the Book of Order and the CPM guide all preparations for ministry. These requirements take precedence over seminary requirements. This Manual details the requirements for ordination of a Candidate under care of the Lehigh Presbytery to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament as a Teaching Elder in the PCUSA. These requirements have been shaped by the discernment of the Presbytery and the requirements for ordination contained in the PCUSA Book of Order, Sections G-2.01 and G-2.06. The CPM of Lehigh Presbytery expects you to be familiar with these requirements. If this manual conflicts with any part of the Book of Order, the Book of Order takes precedence.

CONTEXT: These procedures are guidelines and may be adjusted for individual circumstances on a case-by-case basis. Discuss with the CPM your own context and how you might fulfill the requirements of the Book of Order.

SUBMISSIONS AND FORMS: All documents to be submitted by Inquirers/Candidates to the CPM should be emailed to the Presbytery Office (Office@LehighPresbytery.org). References in this Manual to "Forms" is in regard to the most current "Forms used in the Preparation for Ministry Process." The denomination revises these "Forms" from time to time. Current "Forms" can be downloaded at:

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

GRANTS AND LOANS: Lehigh Presbytery has a very limited scholarship fund to aid Inquirers and Candidates during seminary. The amount varies by year according to the number and need of applicants. You may apply through your liaison or the chairperson.

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I. BECOMING AN INQUIRER

- A. PURPOSE:** *The purpose of the inquiry phase is to provide an opportunity for the church and 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 about the Inquirer's suitability for ordered ministry. (G-2.0603)*

B. STEPS TO ENROLLMENT AS AN INQUIRER

1. Be a member of a congregation of Lehigh Presbytery for at least six months (G-2.0601). You shall talk with a pastor of your congregation about your plans. If there is no pastor, you shall talk with the Clerk of Session or the Commissioned Ruling Elder (if applicable).
2. Download, complete and submit to the Clerk of Session and Chairperson of the Lehigh CPM:
 - a. Form 1A - Application to be Enrolled by Presbytery as an Inquirer
 - b. Form 1B - Questions for Reflection
 - c. Form 1C – Financial Planning for Theological Education (if applicable)
3. Have copies of transcripts and diplomas from all college work (undergraduate and graduate) sent to the CPM.
4. Meet with the session of your church. The session must take formal action on your application. If your session endorses your application, the Clerk of Session will complete Form 1D (“Session Evaluation and Recommendation”) and send it to the CPM. The session will also appoint a liaison to work with you and the CPM. See Appendix A – “Recommended Duties of the Session Liaison.”
5. Meet with the Committee on Preparation for Ministry. The CPM will:
 - a. Review with you Forms 1A, 1B, 1C (if applicable) and 1D.
 - b. Discuss with you your journey of faith, your exploration and testing of your call to ministry and your educational plans. Note: The CPM must approve your educational plans to ensure that they satisfy the requirements for ordination, including the requirements of the CPM and the Book of Order.
 - c. Prayerfully consider your application to be enrolled.
 - d. Assign you a Liason from the CPM to be your supervising partner in the process
6. If the Session and the CPM both endorse your application to enroll as an Inquirer, the CPM will present you to the presbytery to be approved and enrolled as an Inquirer. You will address the presbytery briefly concerning your exploration of a call to ministry.
7. If the presbytery approves your application and you are enrolled as an Inquirer, you must download and complete:
 - a. Form 2A – “Report of Consultation Regarding Application”
 - b. Form 2B – “Covenant Agreement and Inquirer Release”

II. BECOMING A CANDIDATE

A. PURPOSE – *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)*

B. INTRODUCTION -- Application to become a Candidate follows a period of inquiry during which you have explored and tested your call to the ministry for a minimum of one year. The candidacy phase is also a minimum of one year (G-2.0602). The CPM suggests that the following steps be completed by Inquirers between the end of the middle year of seminary and the beginning of the senior year.

C. STEPS TO BECOMING A CANDIDATE

1. Complete a Career Development Center Program (a.k.a. "Psychological Evaluation")
 - a. Lehigh Presbytery requires all Inquirers to participate in a Career Development Center program before moving to candidacy. The CPM and your seminary can recommend Career Development Centers. The CPM must approve the Career Development Center.
 - b. A Career Development Center Program usually consists of two parts: 1) a psychological evaluation completed by the applicant, and 2) a counseling session based upon the tests. The career counselor prepares an evaluative report and sends it to the applicant and to the CPM, which will be considered as part of your application for Candidacy.
 - c. During the inquiry phase, you must contact a Career Development Center, complete the program, sign the release, and make financial settlement for the service. The costs of the program will be shared (one-third by the presbytery, one-third by the congregation and 1/3 by the Inquirer). You should notify the CPM chairperson when an appointment has been made so that payment of the presbytery's third of the cost can be arranged. You are responsible for the cost of transportation, lodging, meals and incidental expenses.
2. Arrange to meet with your Session of care. Complete and submit written responses to the following questions to the Session moderator or clerk (for the purpose of discussion and soliciting feedback on your responses):
 - a. a statement of his or her understanding of Christian vocation in the Reformed tradition and how it relates to his or her sense of call;
 - b. a statement of personal faith which demonstrates an understanding of the Reformed tradition;
 - c. an analysis of at least one concept from the personal faith statement regarding what it suggests about God, humanity, and their interrelationship;
 - d. a statement of what it means to be Presbyterian, indicating how that awareness has grown out of participation in the life of a particular church;
 - e. a statement of self-understanding which reflects the Inquirer's personal and cultural background and includes a plan for maintaining spiritual, physical and mental health;
 - f. a statement of his or her understanding of the tasks Teaching Elders perform, including an awareness of his or her specific gifts for ministry of the Word and Sacrament and of areas in which growth is needed.

3. Meet with your Session of care to discuss and solicit feedback on your written responses. After meeting with your Session of care, download, complete and submit to the CPM:
 - a. Form 5A (“Application to be Enrolled by the Presbytery as a Candidate”). Along with Form 5A, submit your responses to the questions listed above (2a-2f). You may choose to update your responses after having received the feedback of the Session before submitting them to the CPM.
 - b. Form 5B (“Session Recommendation for Enrollment as Candidate”).
4. Meet with the Committee on Preparation to discuss your written responses and your application. The CPM will prayerfully consider your application to be enrolled as a Candidate and will report its recommendation to the presbytery.
5. If the CPM endorses your application to be enrolled as a Candidate, the CPM will present you to the presbytery for approval and enrollment as a Candidate. You will prepare and present to the Presbytery a Statement of Motivation which will include:
 - a. The context of how God is calling you to the ministry of Teaching Elder
 - b. Your specific gifts and suitability for this calling and growth areas within this calling
 - c. How you are being equipped for this callingThe presbytery may wish to ask further questions of you, but will be limited to questions about your journey of faith, your sense of call and your progress through the process. Theological examinations take place after the conclusion of the Candidacy phase and you are certified “ready to receive a call.”
6. If the presbytery votes affirmatively and you are enrolled as a Candidate under the care of Lehigh Presbytery, you must download and complete:
 - a. Form 5C – “Report of Consultation to become a Candidate”
 - b. Form 5D – “Covenant Agreement and Candidate Release”

III. REQUIREMENTS DURING INQUIRY AND CANDIDACY

A. COMMUNICATION

1. You should communicate with the CPM on a regular basis (at least quarterly) through your liaison. You must notify the CPM within 30 days of a change of address, academic plans, or employment. Failure to do so may compromise your standing with the CPM and hinder your progress toward ordination.

B. ANNUAL CONSULTATION WITH CPM

1. Inquirers/Candidates must meet at least once per year with the CPM (face-to-face if possible, but phone/Skype call is acceptable). Your liaison will contact you about arranging this meeting. The CPM may share with you necessary travel expenses for this annual consultation. For the sake of your convenience and good stewardship, this meeting should take place when you are in the Lehigh Presbytery area during school breaks, vacations, or holidays.
2. Complete and submit Form 3 (“Pre-consultation Report on Development Areas”) at least two weeks prior to your meeting. Include most current transcripts (unless your Seminary is automatically sending transcripts to the CPM) and any completed Field Education Reports.
3. After this meeting, work with your liaison to complete Form 4 (“Report on Consultation”) and then submit to the CPM. This report will be shared with all CPM members.

C. SERVICE TO THE CHURCH

(I.E. SUPERVISED MINISTRY AND/OR SEMINARY FIELD EDUCATION)

1. Inquirers and Candidates shall, with the permission of the presbytery of care, engage in some form of supervised service to the church (G-2.0606). The CPM requires at least two units of supervised ministry or seminary field education. Each supervised ministry placement must first be approved by the CPM. A unit is normally understood as part-time service during a full academic year or full-time service during the summer.
 - a. At least one unit of supervised ministry/seminary field education must be in a congregation. It is highly recommended that the character of this congregation be different from the Inquirer's/Candidate's home church. For example:
 - an Inquirer/Candidate from a large congregation might do supervised ministry or field education in a small or medium sized congregation
 - an Inquirer/Candidate from a suburban congregation might do supervised ministry in a rural or urban congregation
 - an Inquirer/Candidate from a congregation with a male pastor might do supervised ministry in a congregation with a female pastor
 - b. At the conclusion of each supervised ministry/field education unit, completed reports signed by a supervisor must be submitted to the CPM. If a particular supervised ministry/field education experience does not have a standard report template, the CPM will provide one.
 - c. The CPM may approve that the required unit of CPE (see III.D) count as one of an Inquirer's/Candidate's two required units of supervised ministry.
2. Field education assignments that place an Inquirer or Candidate as the student intern having sole pastoral responsibility for the life of a church require the approval and oversight of the Committee on Ministry having jurisdiction over the church.
3. No Inquirer or Candidate who has not been previously ordained as a ruling elder may serve as moderator of a session, administer the Sacraments, or perform a marriage service. An Inquirer or Candidate previously ordained as a ruling elder may be authorized by the presbytery to preside at the Lord's Supper when invited by a session. (G-2.0606)

D. CLINICAL PASTORAL EDUCATION (CPE)

1. At least one unit of CPE is ordinarily required for all Inquirers/Candidates because of its disciplined approach to helping persons integrate personal, pastoral, and professional identities and issues.
2. Upon completion of CPE, you must submit a copy of your CPE's supervisor's report to the CPM.

E. EXAMINATIONS

1. Before you can be certified ready to receive a call by the CPM, seek a call and/or circulate your PIF, you are required to **pass five PCUSA Ordination examinations (G-2.0707d)**:
 - a. **Bible Content Exam:** normally taken during the first or second year in seminary. The Bible Content examination is intended to assess one's knowledge of stories, themes and pertinent passages in the Old and New Testaments.
 - b. **Senior Ordination Exams:** normally taken the fall of senior year. They are designed to assess the ability to integrate academic theological study with the practical work of ministry in a pastoral context in the areas of Biblical Exegesis, Theological Competence, Worship and Sacraments, and Church Polity.
2. The CPM must authorize all Inquirers/Candidates to write or rewrite ordination exams. **Registration and Authorization to (re)write ordination examination(s)** is done through the PCUSA website. The chairperson will automatically be notified by the PCUSA of your request to (re)write exams and will only authorize the writing of exams if the CPM has officially voted to affirm the request to write.
 - a. <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/standard-ordination-exams/>
3. When you take an examination, your **graded examination (pass or fail) will be made available to the** Chairperson of the CPM through the online examinations system. As soon as you receive your exam results, contact your Liason to celebrate your successes and/or make plans to retake any failed exams. Usually positive steps can be taken to improve performance on a second try. If you fail an exam more than once, the CPM will carefully review the steps you are taking before granting permission to retake the exam.
4. Exemptions and alternative arrangements for consistent unsatisfactory grades on ordination exams are rare, but allowed by the PCUSA constitution. If a presbytery judges that there are good and sufficient reasons why a Candidate should not be required to satisfy the requirements of G-2.0607d, it shall approve by three-quarters vote some alternate means by which to ascertain the readiness of the Candidate for ministry in the areas covered by the standard ordination examinations. 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 (G-2.0610).
5. Satisfactory grades on all ordination exams will be considered current by the CPM for five years from the date of receiving the satisfactory grades. After five years, Inquirers/Candidates will normally be required to retake the examinations.

F. DISCONTINUATION OF THE PROCESS

1. It is at the discretion of the CPM, at any point during the Preparation for Ministry process, to discontinue your status as an Inquirer or Candidate if you are not meeting the requirements outlined in this Manual and/or are in violation of the BOO (G-2.0609).
2. If an Inquirer or Candidate remains in their particular phase of the process beyond five years, the CPM may recommend the discontinuation of the process.
3. If the process is discontinued, the individual may choose to begin the process anew by applying to become an Inquirer.
4. If the process is discontinued, the CPM may provide two counseling sessions for the individual.

IV. FINAL ASSESSMENT FOR ORDINATION

A. GENERAL:

1. The presbytery shall record when it has certified a Candidate ready for examination for ordination, pending a call. A Candidate may not enter into negotiation for service as a Teaching Elder without approval of the presbytery (G-2.0607). The approval for ordination will be made by the Lehigh Presbytery. After the CPM affirms your readiness for ordination, the presbytery will act on the recommendation of the CPM. During the second half of your candidacy period you may begin these final steps to becoming "ready" to accept a call.
2. These steps (IV.B) must be completed before Lehigh Presbytery can certify you "ready" to accept a call and subsequently present you to the presbytery of call for examination.

B. STEPS TO BECOMING "READY"

1. You must be a Candidate for the ministry of Word and Sacrament for at least one year.
2. You should carefully review and be sure you can provide "Evidence of readiness to begin ordered ministry as a teaching elder" as detailed in G-2.0607.
 - 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. satisfactory grades, together with the examination papers in the areas covered by any standard ordination examination approved by the General Assembly. Such examinations shall be prepared and administered by a body created by the presbyteries.
3. Submit to the CPM (if you have not already done so, and as soon as possible following graduation):
 - a. Reports from all units of Field Education/Supervised Ministry
 - b. Report(s) from unit(s) of CPE (or CPE equivalent approved by CPM)
 - c. Your PIF
 - d. Sample Sermon, accompanied by a statement of the contemporary need to which it is addressed;
 - e. Exegetical Study of the biblical material out of which the sermon arose, including a study of key words, discussion of context, notes on significant points of grammar and variant readings, and an interpretation of the passage;
 - f. Statement of Faith (not to exceed two pages). This statement should contain your personal faith (not a restatement of a creed) and ought to address such doctrines as the nature of the Godhead, the meaning of salvation in Christ, the life and mission of the Church, the authority of Scripture, and the role of the Sacraments;
4. Arrange through your liaison to preach a sermon in the presence of members of the CPM, or other persons co-opted by the CPM for this purpose.

5. Meet with the CPM to discuss all aspects of your preparation and readiness for ministry, including:
 - a. Your completion of the constitutional requirements for ordination.
 - b. Your plans for continued study and growth.
 - c. The compatibility of your theological views with the confessional documents of the church.
 - d. Your understanding of the ordination questions.
 - e. Your commitment to ministry of Word and Sacrament as a Teaching Elder within the Presbyterian Church (USA).

C. PERSONAL INFORMATION FORM (PIF) -- PERMISSION TO CIRCULATE

1. During your year of candidacy, you should begin to prepare your Personal Information Form. The CPM (or your liaison) may be consulted for advice and guidance. A copy of your PIF draft must be sent to the chairperson. PIF's are managed through the online Church Leadership Connection (CLC). To download the PIF template, visit the CLC at: <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/clc/>
2. Once you have passed the Bible Content Exam and all four senior ordination exams, you may seek permission from the CPM to input your PIF into the CLC system, to manually circulate your PIF and to seek a call.
3. To receive this permission, you must have your annual consultation with the CPM after the conclusion of your second year of seminary (see III.B). During this meeting, you will review your annual consultation documents, field education and CPE evaluations, transcripts, plans for your senior year, and plans for seeking a call.

D. AFTER YOU HAVE BEEN APPROVED FOR ORDINATION

1. You are still in a covenant relationship with the CPM and under its care until you receive a call and are ordained. It is not uncommon for a period of time to elapse between the completion of all requirements for ordination and the receipt of a call. The CPM will continue to discern a Candidate's standing in the process during this time (see III.F).
2. The CPM continues to have care and concern for you and continues to carry you in its prayers. The CPM will continue to express this concern through the required annual consultation and annual report (see III.B).
3. The presbytery placing the call to the Candidate for ministry shall ordinarily examine, ordain, and install the Candidate (G-2.0702). Any exceptions should be approved by both the presbytery and congregation of call. The Candidate will make arrangements for ordination with the appropriate officers of the calling presbytery. If required, the Candidate shall give attention to the make-up of the administrative commission appointed to conduct the ordination.

APPENDIX A

RECOMMENDED DUTIES OF THE SESSION LIAISON

Committee on Preparation for Ministry
Lehigh Presbytery

The Book of Order provides for the appointment of an Elder (or a group of persons including at least one Elder) to act as liaison with the Inquirer/Candidate and with Presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) – and to participate with the Inquirer/Candidate and Presbytery's Committee as they explore and evaluate his/her progress in the preparation for ministry.

Outlined below are some of the ways in which the Session liaison can be of assistance:

1. Learn the background of your Inquirer/Candidate if you do not already know it: parents, siblings, school, college, a vocational interests and abilities, birthday, name of spouse (if married), name(s) of child(ren) (if any), (proposed) seminary, progress toward ordination, financial needs.
2. Become acquainted in ways that seem natural to you and the Inquirer/Candidate.
3. Take an interest in his/her academic, field education, Annual Consultation and other activities related to preparation for the ministry of the Word and Sacrament.
4. Share with the CPM, especially at the time of Annual Consultation, any areas of particular need for Inquirer/Candidate – whether financial or personal.
5. Become aware of when the Inquirer/Candidate will be home and try to make some contact, even if only a phone call.
6. Identify ways to keep the congregation aware of the names of its Inquirers/Candidates (away at Seminary or at home) who have entered a covenant relationship with the Presbytery and are preparing for ministry of the Word and Sacrament.
7. Initiate conversation with your Session on the possibility of providing financial assistance or other tangible support to your Inquirers/Candidates.
8. Consider, with your Session, the possibility of assisting in the payment of necessary expenses incurred in relation to visits for Annual Consultation with the Committee on Preparation for Ministry.
9. Be present if at all possible at the service of ordination and/or installation.
10. Remember your Inquirer/Candidate in prayer.
11. Write your Inquirer/Candidate on special occasions (e.g. birthdays or anniversaries).
12. Become acquainted with the "Preparation for Ministry" manual so that you are aware of requirements and procedures and can provide timely support (e.g. appearances before Presbytery, Annual Consultation, Presbyteries' Cooperative Examinations, Final Assessment).
13. Discuss with your Session progress Inquirer/Candidate is making, as reflected in the Summary Report of Annual Consultation prepared by the Presbytery Committee on Preparation for Ministry, and sent to the sponsoring Session.
14. The role of the spouse of the Inquirer/Candidate is particularly important. Try to be as supportive, sensitive and understanding as you can of the spouse. Let the CPM know if there are ways the CPM may better assist the wives/husbands of Inquirers/Candidates in preparing for their new roles.
15. In a word, be a friend and lend to your Inquirer/Candidate a sense of your personal, moral and spiritual interest in, and support of, him/her in training for the ministry of the Word and Sacrament.