

Ordination Process
Commission on Preparation for Ministry
Transylvania Presbytery

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Purpose

“It is important that those who are to be ordained as minister of the Word and Sacrament receive full preparation for their task under the direction of the presbytery. For this purpose, a presbytery shall enter into a covenant relationship with those preparing to become ministers of the Word and Sacrament and with their sessions and congregations.” (Book of Order G-2.0601)

The Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) has been given the authority by the presbytery to direct and oversee the process of preparation for ordained ministry. The responsibility is two-fold; (1) to guide, nurture, and support inquirers and candidates through the process, and (2) to assure that they “receive full preparation for their task under the direction of the presbytery.” (Book of Order G-2.0601) These two tasks are intertwined and the assurance of preparation (interviews, examinations, etc.) should always be done with the intent to guide, nurture, and support those in the process.

This is a complicated and difficult process, academically and emotionally. The purpose of this document is to clearly define the requirements and expectations for those seeking ordination in the PC(USA) with the Presbytery of Transylvania in order to make the process more manageable. While the expectation is that all inquirers and candidates will meet the stated requirements and timing, the CPM also understands that there may be situations where exceptions will need to be considered.

Relationship

“This relationship shall be divided into two phases of inquiry and candidacy.” (Book of Order G-2.0601)

Inquiry

Inquiry is a time of discernment during which an individual works with their congregation, session, and the CPM to understand their call to ministry. “The purpose of the inquiry phase is to provide an opportunity for the church and those who believe themselves called to ordered ministry as ministers of the Word and Sacrament to explore that call together so that the presbytery can make an informed decision about the inquirer’s suitability for ordered ministry.” (Book of Order G-2.0603)

Candidacy

Once an individual has discerned that God is calling them to ordained ministry in the PC(USA), they become a candidate and focus on their preparation for ministry. Where inquiry is a time of discernment, candidacy is a time of preparation. “The purpose of the candidacy phase is to provide for the full preparation of persons to serve the church as ministers of the Word and Sacrament. 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.” (Book of Order G-2.0604)

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Timing

“To be enrolled as an inquirer, the applicant shall be a member of the sponsoring congregation, shall have been active in the work and worship of that congregation for at least six months, and shall have received the endorsement of the session of the sponsoring congregation. 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)

- The entire process from the date of becoming an inquirer to the date of ordination must be at least two years, with a minimum of one year as a candidate.
- There is no time requirement for inquiry. For example, an individual can become an inquirer and then be received as a candidate 6 months later. This would mean that they would be a candidate for at least 18 months.
- An individual becomes an inquirer on the date the CPM votes to accept them as an inquirer.
- An individual becomes a candidate by vote of the presbytery; therefore, the date they become a candidate is the date of the presbytery meeting, not the date the CPM votes to recommend them to the presbytery for candidacy. This is extremely important because the one year minimum begins on the date of the presbytery meeting which could be several months after the candidate meets with the CPM.
- The final step in the process is the final evaluation by the CPM which certifies that a candidate is ready to receive a call, pending examination for ordination. The minimum two-year time requirement is from the date of becoming an inquirer to date of ordination; however, one can be certified ready to receive a call prior to the end of the two years allowing the candidate to begin talking with churches and negotiating a call.

Seminary Education

“Evidence of readiness to begin ordered ministry as a minister of the Word and Sacrament shall include:

- 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. Such examinations shall be prepared and administered by a body created by the presbyteries.” (Book of Order G-2.0607)

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Required Course Work

- Hebrew language and exegesis
- Greek language and exegesis
- Reformed theology
- Reformed worship and sacraments
- Preaching
- Pastoral Care
- PC(USA) Polity
- Christian Education
- Field education

It is important that someone considering becoming an inquirer discuss their educational plans with the CPM before enrolling in seminary. Non-PC(USA) seminaries may be acceptable to the CPM, but they may not offer all of the required classes (e.g., Hebrew and Greek language and exegesis, reformed theology, reformed preaching and worship, and PC(USA) polity). If the seminary chosen does not offer all of the required classes, it is the responsibility of the inquirer/candidate to fulfill these requirements through some other means that is acceptable to the CPM.

Field Education

“Inquirers and candidates shall, with the permission of the presbytery of care, engage in some form of supervised service to the church.” (Book of Order G-2.0606) Inquirers and candidates are required to complete two units of field education that is approved by CPM prior to beginning the work:

1. Supervised internship with a congregation or other ministry that is approved by the CPM. The inquirer or candidate must submit their request to the CPM in writing for approval. Typically the internship will not be at the inquirer/candidate’s home church, and may be in a non-traditional setting that is more appropriate to their understanding of their call (e.g., homeless shelter).
2. Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) which is standardized educational program approved by ACPE and under the supervision of ACPE trained and approved supervisors. Additional information can be found at www.acpe.edu.

“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.” (Book of Order G-2.0606)

CPM Shepherds

When an applicant is received by the CPM as an inquirer, the CPM will appoint one member of the CPM to be the inquirer's shepherd. The shepherd's role is to encourage inquirers and candidates, to help nurture their growing sense of call, and provide prayer and support as they navigate the process of preparation for ministry. Shepherds have the following responsibilities:

1. The shepherd is the primary communication channel between the inquirer/candidate and the CPM and should contact inquirers and candidates at least quarterly to:
 - a. Provide prayer and support
 - b. Check on progress in school and other activities related to the ordination process
 - c. Answer questions about the process or assist in finding answers
 - d. Report back to the CPM
2. Contact inquirers and candidates about one month prior to ordination exams to provide prayer and support, and to ask if any specific help is needed during the preparation for the exams
3. Arrange for and complete the annual consultation
4. Communicate as necessary with the inquirer's or candidate's session liaison to report on their progress

The appointed shepherd will work with the inquirer/candidate through the entire process until the candidate receives a call to serve a church, at which time, they become the responsibility of the appropriate commission within the presbytery. If the shepherd leaves the CPM before the candidate completes the process, a new shepherd will be appointed by the CPM.

Confidentiality

Conversations between applicants, inquirers, candidates and the CPM and their shepherd are understood to be confidential; however, it is also understood that information shared with the shepherd will be considered information to be shared with the entire CPM.

Ordination Process

1. Inquirer

Requirements to become an inquirer:

- a. Must be an active member of an PC(USA) congregation for at least six months.
- b. Must meet with and obtain the endorsement of the session in their congregation.
- c. Forms 1A, 1B, 1C, and 1D must be completed and submitted to the moderator of the CPM no less than one month prior to the inquirer interview with the CPM. These forms can be downloaded from the PC(USA) website (www.pcusa.org).
- d. Submit to the CPM moderator transcripts from all academic work completed beyond high school.
- e. Complete a psychological evaluation at a site specified by the CPM.

Assessment:

- f. Meet with CPM to discuss the information on the forms submitted (see 1c above), sense of call, and future plans.
- g. Once received as an inquirer, the CPM will assign a shepherd (see “CPM Shepherds” above).

2. Candidacy

Requirements to become a candidate:

- a. Begin seminary education at a seminary approved by the CPM (see “Seminary Education” above).
- b. Complete annual consultations with CPM.
- c. Attend the CPM annual retreat.
- d. Submit to the CPM moderator updated transcripts for any work completed since becoming an inquirer.
- e. Meet with and obtain the endorsement of the session in their congregation (form 5B).
- f. Complete forms 5A and 5B and submit them to the CPM moderator. These forms can be downloaded from the PC(USA) website (www.pcusa.org).
- g. Submit to the CPM, documentation showing satisfactory completion of a at least one field education experience (see “Field Education” above).
- h. Submit to the CPM a one-page biographical statement (12-point font, single spaced) discussing their Christian faith, Christian service, and motives for seeking ordination. This will be printed in the presbytery docket when the inquirer goes before the presbytery to become a candidate.
- i. Submit to the CPM a one-page (12-point font, single spaced) personal statement of faith to be printed in the presbytery docket, that must include, but not be limited to, statements on the following:

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- i. The Trinity and each person of the Trinity
 - ii. The authority of scripture
 - iii. The sacraments
- j. All documentation must be submitted to the CPM moderator no less than one month prior to the examination by the CPM.

It is strongly recommended that the inquirer have their shepherd review their biographical statement and statement of faith before submitting them to the CPM moderator.

Assessment and examination:

- k. Meet with the CPM to discuss the biographical statement, personal statement of faith, work completed during inquiry, and sense of call. At this point in the process, it is not appropriate for the CPM to be asking general questions about the Bible, Theology, etc. except to clarify the personal statement of faith. All questions should focus only on the candidate, and their understanding of their faith and call to ministry. The CPM will vote to recommend the individual to the presbytery for examination for candidacy.
- l. Following the assessment, the CPM and inquirer will complete forms 5C and 5D. Both forms will be signed by the CPM and the inquirer.
- m. Appear before the presbytery for examination. The inquirer, on the floor of the presbytery, will be asked to do the following:
 - i. Present a short (three-minute maximum) summary of their biographical statement (see 2h above).
 - ii. Answer one question asked by the moderator of the CPM or designate.
 - iii. Answer questions asked from the floor of the presbytery.The rules for the type of questions that can be asked are the same as stated in 2k above.
- n. After the examination, presbytery will vote to receive the inquirer as a candidate for ministry. The date of the presbytery meeting is the date that candidacy begins (see "Timing" above).

3. Final Assessment

Requirements for final assessment:

- a. Been a candidate for at least 9 months and the total time from becoming an inquirer must be at least 21 months.
- b. Complete annual consultations with CPM.
- c. Attend the CPM annual retreat.
- d. Submit to the CPM transcripts from an accredited seminary or divinity school showing completion of all educational requirements for a Masters degree (see "Seminary Education" above). The candidate may complete their final assessment during their final semester of seminary as long as graduation is imminent. If the final assessment is before graduation, transcripts for all work completed at the time must be submitted. A full transcript showing graduation

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will be required before the candidate is released by the CPM for examination for ordination.

- e. Satisfactory completion of all standard ordination exams.
- f. Submit to the CPM, documentation showing satisfactory completion of a second field education experience (see “Field Education” above).
- g. An updated statement of faith using the same parameters as for candidacy.
- h. Prepare a draft Personal Information Form (PIF) to allow the CPM to provide feedback and advice on the PIF and the call process.
- i. Prepare a short worship service including liturgy, scripture reading, sermon, and prayers that the candidate will use to lead worship with the CPM. The sermon should be one that is intended for, or previously preached to, a congregation.
- j. All documentation must be submitted to the CPM moderator no less than one month prior to the examination by the CPM.

Assessment:

- k. Meet with the CPM for the assessment. The candidate will lead the CPM in worship using the liturgy and materials prepared in 3i above. Following worship, the CPM will provide feedback about worship and may ask questions about anything related to the candidate’s call, faith journey, statement of faith, or education, including general questions about theology, worship, polity, etc.
- l. If the CPM determines that the candidate is ready to seek a call, they will be “certified ready to receive a call pending examination for ordination.” The candidate may then begin to talk with pastor nominating committees or other ecclesial hiring body and negotiate terms of call.

4. Following Final Assessment

- a. Even if a candidate is certified ready to receive a call, they cannot be ordained until it has been at least two years since becoming an inquirer, and been a candidate for at least one year (see “Timing” above).
- b. The candidate remains under the care of the CPM until they have received and accepted a call to serve a church. Until that time, they must still attend the annual CPM retreat and complete annual consultations.
- c. Once a candidate receives and accepts a call, they are no longer under care of CPM and will work with the appropriate commission within the presbytery to approve the terms of call and be examined for ordination.