

COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY POLICY
related to the *Book of Order* Chapter 14
Presbytery of Cincinnati
Adopted September 11, 2007

This policy shall be in effect at least until the CPM receives and reviews the advisory handbook mentioned in the *Book of Order* G-14.0402. The policy is extracted from Chapter 14 of the 2005-07 *Book of Order*. Citations in brackets [] refer to corresponding sections in the current *Book of Order*.

INQUIRY DEFINED

The purpose of the inquiry phase is to provide an opportunity for the church and those who believe themselves called to ministry of the Word and Sacrament to explore that call together in such a way that the decision regarding the inquirer's suitability for ministry of the Word and Sacrament will be based on knowledge and experience of one another.

Inquiry Phase

The process and requirement of the inquiry phase shall be as follows:

A person desiring to become an inquirer shall indicate to the session of the particular church a desire to explore the personal implications of becoming a minister of the Word and Sacrament.

The person shall have been an active member of that particular church for at least six months.

The session shall contact the committee on preparation for ministry for orientation to the process used in that presbytery.

The session shall consult with the person and, if the individual requests to be enrolled as an inquirer, shall make a recommendation to presbytery through the stated clerk with respect to the request.

Upon receipt of the recommendation of the session, the committee on preparation for ministry shall recommend to the presbytery whether to enroll the person as an inquirer. The committee on preparation for ministry shall interview the person before making its recommendation. The date of the presbytery's action to enroll shall be the beginning of the covenant relationship. This period shall be at least two years, at least one year of which shall be as a candidate, required in G-14.0401 [G-14.0403]. (See G-14.0313c [G-14.0473] for exception.) A presbytery may assign to its committee on preparation for ministry the power to enroll inquirers, with the provision that the action be reported to the next stated meeting of the presbytery. (G-9.0403)

The phase of inquiry shall be of sufficient length for the inquirer, the session, and the committee on preparation for ministry to decide whether the inquirer should apply to become a candidate. During this time, the committee on preparation for ministry shall 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.

By the end of the inquiry phase, each inquirer shall demonstrate adequate promise for ministry by presenting

1. 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;
2. a statement of personal faith which incorporates an understanding of the Reformed tradition;
3. an analysis of at least one concept from the personal faith statement regarding what it suggests about God, humanity, and their interrelationships;
4. a statement of what it means to be Presbyterian, indicating how that awareness grows out of participation in the life of a particular church;
5. a statement of self-understanding which reflects the inquirer's personal and cultural background and includes a concern for maintaining spiritual, physical, and mental health;
6. a statement of his or her understanding of the task ministers of the Word and Sacrament 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.

CANDIDACY DEFINED

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 guidance and evaluation of candidates, using learning contacts within the context of supportive relationships.

Candidacy Process

The process of the candidacy phase is as follows:

An inquirer shall apply to the presbytery through the stated clerk to become a candidate for the office of minister of the Word and Sacrament through the session of his or her church.

The session shall confer with the inquirer, review the evidence of the inquiry phase, and make recommendations to the presbytery through the stated clerk with respect to the application.

The committee on preparation for ministry shall confer with the inquirer and review the evidence which indicates whether the inquirer is ready to proceed to candidacy.

The committee on preparation for ministry shall make a definite recommendation to the presbytery with respect to whether the inquirer should be received as a candidate. Presbytery shall act on every committee recommendation regarding application for candidacy.

The presbytery shall receive the report and recommendation of its committee and shall examine the inquirer in person with respect to his or her Christian faith, forms of Christian service undertaken, and motives for seeking the ministry.

If the examination is approved, the presbytery shall receive the inquirer as a candidate after the following manner. The moderator shall propose the following questions to the inquirer:

1. Do you believe yourself to be called by God to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament?

2. Do you promise in reliance upon the grace of God to maintain a Christian character and conduct, and to be diligent and faithful in making full preparation for this ministry?
3. Do you accept the proper supervision of the presbytery in matters that concern your preparation for this ministry?
4. Do you desire now to be received by this presbytery as a candidate for the ministry of the Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?

If these questions are answered in the affirmative, a brief charge shall be given, the candidate's name shall be recorded on the presbytery's roll of candidates, and the proceedings shall close with prayer.

The presbytery may provide, at the request of the candidate and his or her session, for the service of reception to be conducted by a commission of presbytery in the presence of the candidate's congregation.

The phase of candidacy 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 accord with G-14.0312 [G-14.0463].

By the end of the candidacy phase, each candidate to be ordained shall demonstrate readiness to begin ministry of the Word and Sacrament by

1. presenting evidence of competence in the fields of theology, Bible, polity, and worship and Sacraments, ordinarily attested by completion of the requirements of G-14.0310 [G-14.0430]; and evidence of ministerial skill attested in the supervised practice of ministry;
2. presenting evidence of readiness to participate in a calling presbytery's plan for transition and of plans for continuing study and growth (G-11.0103n and G-14.0506 [G-14.0533], last sentence);
3. expressing theological views compatible with the confessional documents of the church;
4. expressing understanding of the meaning of the questions required for ordination (G-14.0405) [W-4.4000] informed by knowledge of the church in diverse settings;
5. revealing commitment to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament within the discipline of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) with personal maturity, spiritual depth, and a capacity to respond to the needs of others, including colleagues in ministry;
6. presenting a written sermon, together with a description of the contemporary need to which it was addressed and an exegetical interpretation of the biblical material out of which the sermon arose. This sermon shall be preached before the calling presbytery or a committee thereof.

CONSULTATION AND GUIDANCE

Annual Consultation

The committee on preparation for ministry shall provide for an annual consultation with each person on the rolls of inquirers and candidates. The purpose of the consultation shall be for the evaluation and nurture of inquirers and candidates. Such consultation may be held by the entire committee or may be carried out by persons appointed by the committee either from its own

membership or with similar responsibilities in a presbytery within which the inquirer or candidate is pursuing a course of study or engaged in other approved service, except in the case of the final assessment, which should be conducted by the committee on preparation for ministry of the candidate's presbytery. Presbytery, together with the session and the inquirer or candidate, shall bear the necessary expenses of the annual consultation, which shall be concerned with the spiritual growth and needs of the individual, the financial planning for his or her educational program, and with his or her relation to the church and progress in the program of study leading to ordination for ministry. Each consultation shall include a decision, made by the whole committee, whether to continue or terminate the period of inquiry or candidacy. This decision shall be reported to presbytery.

Written Report

There shall be a written report of each annual consultation, including a statement of the individual's strengths and areas of needed growth, prepared jointly by the committee or its representative and the inquirer or candidate. The presbytery shall be notified of receipt of these reports and the reports themselves shall be submitted to the individual, the sponsoring session, and the theological institution.

Content

The content of these annual consultations shall include, but need not be limited to, assessment of the inquirer's or candidate's development in terms of the outcomes for the appropriate phase and the following in the appropriate years:

Prior to Theological Education

In the years prior to entering theological education, discussion of the inquirer's or candidate's preparation for theological education and for personal growth;

First Year Theological Education

For annual consultations which cover the time period of the first year of theological education, a general assessment of her or his experience and the implications this has for her or his future professional ministry. The primary focus of this consultation(s) shall not be one of formal examination but of guidance and counseling with the inquirer and candidate. At this consultation(s) the student may ask the committee on preparation for ministry to present to the presbytery any request for an exemption from formal educational requirements of G-14.0310b(2) [G-14.0450b] and G-14.0310b(3) [G-14.0450c], such as language provisions. Should the presbytery be willing to make such an exception, the procedures of G-14.0313a [G-14.0471] shall be followed;

Second Year Theological Education

For annual consultations which cover the time period of the second year of theological education, an assessment of the inquirer's or candidate's experience similar to that held in the previous year(s). In addition, the consultation(s) shall include a discussion with the individual on progress in preparation for ordination, including a preliminary statement of faith, a review of all grades, field education reports, and other appropriate evaluations. The presbytery also shall satisfy itself of the individual's thorough knowledge of the Bible. To this end, the presbytery shall accept a certificate of passing grade on the Bible Content examination of G-14.0310d(2)

[G-14.0431a]. The committee on preparation for ministry and the inquirer or candidate shall discuss the means by which any deficiencies are to be removed.

Negotiation for Service

In no case shall an inquirer or candidate be excused from these annual consultations. Prior to the completion of two full years of theological education or its equivalent, prior to that year's annual consultation, and prior to the successful completion of all ordination exams or to the presbytery's certification of readiness according to the provisions of G-14.0313b [G-14.0472], no inquirer or candidate shall enter into negotiation with a church for his or her ministerial services except by a three-fourths vote of the members of presbytery present, with the reasons therefore recorded in the minutes of presbytery.