

PRESBYTERY OF GREAT RIVERS (PGR)

PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

HANDBOOK

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VERSION 2.1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION ONE - AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

I. <u>Key Concepts</u>	3
II. <u>Preparation for Ministry Process</u>	4
A. <u>Phase 1: Inquiry</u>	4
1. <u>Admission to Inquiry</u>	5
2. <u>During Inquiry</u>	5
3. <u>Completion of Inquiry</u>	5
4. <u>Expected Outcomes of Inquiry</u>	5
B. <u>Phase 2: Candidacy</u>	6
1. <u>Admission to Candidacy</u>	6
2. <u>During Candidacy</u>	6
3. <u>Completion of Candidacy</u>	6
4. <u>Expected Outcomes of Candidacy</u>	7
III. <u>Some Constitutional Provisions</u>	7
A. <u>Accommodations to Circumstances for Inquirers and Candidates</u>	7
B. <u>Service in Relationship</u>	7
C. <u>Final Assessment & Negotiation for Service</u>	7
D. <u>Transfer of Relationship</u>	7
E. <u>Removal from Relationship</u>	7
F. <u>Location of Ordination</u>	7

SECTION TWO - ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTICIPANTS

I. <u>The Inquirer and Candidate</u>	8
II. <u>The Session</u>	10
III. <u>The Presbytery</u>	13
VI. <u>The General Assembly</u>	17

SECTION THREE - RESOURCES

I. <u>A Recommended List of Questions and Criteria</u>	18
II. <u>Description of Forms Used In Preparation For Ministry</u>	19
III. <u>Flow Chart of the Process, Constitutional Requirements and Forms</u>	22

SECTION ONE: An Overview of the Process

I. KEY CONCEPTS

The preparation for ministry process is grounded in an understanding of Christian vocation as a response to God's preeminent grace which calls all Christians to ministry, whatever their occupations. Some among them are called by the Holy Spirit, through the church, to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament.

Covenant relationships acknowledge that the Christian community's primary commitment is to God. In the context of this commitment to and covenant relationship with God, the Inquirer or Candidate and the Committee on Preparation for Ministry negotiate between themselves additional covenant agreements. These agreements affirm their mutual responsibility and provide the means for planning and evaluating the Inquirer's or Candidate's progress in preparing for the ministry of the Word and Sacrament.

The resulting **ongoing relationships** take seriously the unique background, experience and personal attributes that each person brings to the process. They enable the sharing of deep convictions, an enhanced understanding of the demands of ministry, and the self-evaluation that are essential to the process. Professional and spiritual guidance and personal support develop naturally within the context of such relationships.

Consultations with the Inquirer or Candidate are based on specific goals in five areas of growth development and on specific "expected outcomes" for both the Inquiry and Candidacy Phases. The purpose of consultations is to help the Committee on Preparation for Ministry work with the individual at her or his current level of achievement and, through guided conversations and the mutual negotiation of new learning contracts, to stimulate further growth in specific areas.

The process of examination and ordination is shared by both the Candidate's presbytery and the presbytery of call. Having guided and evaluated the Candidate's progress through the cumulative series of consultations, the Candidate's presbytery meets with the Candidate in a final consultation to assess her or his readiness to receive a call. When a call is extended by a church in another presbytery, the presbytery of call ordinarily has the responsibility to examine, ordain and install Candidates. (G-2.0702). A candidate may request to be ordained in his/her presbytery of care,

Shared mutual accountability characterizes the preparation for ministry process. The Inquirer or Candidate shares responsibility for her or his movement through the process and for planning and evaluating her or his growth.

The pastor and session are responsible for helping members of the congregation understand what Christian vocation means. This is the critical foundational step in the preparation for ministry process. The pastor and session are expected to provide the context within which individuals can discern the call to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament and understand the nature of this ministry. They help Inquirers evaluate the suitability of their gifts and provide pastoral care and support during the preparation for ministry process. Acting as advocate for the Inquirer or Candidate, the session, through its moderator and presbytery commissioner(s), can call the presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry to accountability in fulfilling its responsibilities.

The **presbytery**, through the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM), provides pastoral care, guidance, support and evaluation of Inquirers and Candidates.

The **theological institution** provides academic, field education and professional resources in the guidance and evaluation of Inquirers or Candidates.

The preparation for ministry process is one of **continuing development**. By providing a supportive community in which the Inquirer or Candidate assumes increasing responsibility for decisions made throughout the process, it introduces him or her to skills for self-development, goal-setting and self-evaluation. The individual is encouraged to develop these skills into conscious, disciplined planning for personal and professional growth which should continue throughout his or her ministry.

II. PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY PROCESS G-2.06

The Preparation for Ministry process involves two phases: Inquiry and Candidacy.

Both the Inquiry Phase and the Candidacy Phase of the process nurture and test the individual's development in five key areas:

- **Education for Ministry**, which includes evaluation of the individual's academic potential and progress and reflection on the purpose of educational experiences and on their relation to preparation for the ministry of the Word and Sacrament;
- **Spiritual Development**, which provides a framework in which individuals can reflect on their personal faith journeys and their spiritual practices to discern the will of God in their lives;
- **Interpersonal Relations** which provide opportunities to reflect on how an individual relates to others, one's own leadership style, and what this means in terms of the ministry of the Word and Sacrament;
- **Personal Growth**, through which persons reflect on who they are, what areas they need to develop, how to understand their call, and how to develop personal stewardship;
- **Professional Development**, to help persons develop specific skills that will enhance their effectiveness as ministers of the Word and Sacrament and as presbyters. To understand one's ministry context, the congregation, is important. Also needed is the ability to deal with conflict that may emerge in the congregation one serves.

During both the Inquiry Phase and the Candidacy Phase, the individual's progress is measured by specific expected outcomes formulated in light of these five growth areas. It is important that the expected outcomes be understood as essential goals rather than simply as minimum requirements to be met or papers to be written. These expected outcomes serve as the focus of ongoing consultations between the Inquirer or Candidate and the session and the presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry.

The process of Inquiry and Candidacy is most effective when it reflects the biblical theme of the covenant relationship. That is, when it is both a response to God's faithfulness and an expression of the concern people have for one another. The process further affirms that all aspects of the church's life are based upon God's gracious promises and on the belief that God's self-giving love undergirds all that the church is and does. Throughout the entire process, all who are involved in the covenant relationship need to approach their tasks with seriousness and diligence, communicating openly and intentionally with each other.

A. Phase 1: Inquiry G-2.0603

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.

1. Admission to Inquiry

A member of a congregation is considered for enrollment as an Inquirer when he or she approaches the session about the possibility of becoming a Teaching Elder and formally agrees with the session and with the presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry to explore the implications of this quest. Enrollment is intended to be a thoughtful and deliberate step; people are encouraged to take this formal action soon after they have made their personal decision to explore this ministry so that the presbytery's Committee can provide them with support and counsel as early as possible. The process and requirement of the inquiry phase can be as follows:

- a. 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 Teaching Elder.
- b. The person shall have been an active member of that particular church for at least six months
- c. The session shall contact the Committee on Preparation for Ministry for orientation to the process used in that presbytery.
- d. 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. The Stated Clerk shall communicate this request to the Committee on Preparation for Ministry Moderator.

- e. 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 covenant relationship shall be at least two years, at least one year of which shall be as a Candidate. (G-2.0602)
- f. 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.

2. During Inquiry

Before deciding whether to apply for candidacy and in order to remain in good standing the Inquirer must consult at least once a year with the Committee on Preparation for Ministry. During each consultation, the Committee and the Inquirer assess her or his progress toward previously established goals and together negotiate appropriate new goals. The Committee votes at each consultation whether the Inquirer will continue in the process.

3. Completion of Inquiry

The Inquiry Phase concludes when the Committee on Preparation for Ministry knows the Inquirer well enough to determine whether or not to recommend that the presbytery receive him or her as a candidate.

4. Expected Outcomes of Inquiry

By the end of the inquiry phase, each Inquirer will demonstrate adequate promise for ministry by presenting to CPM in writing:

- 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 incorporates 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 interrelationships;
- d. a statement of what it means to be Presbyterian, indicating how that awareness grows 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 concern for maintaining spiritual, physical, and mental health;
- f. statement of his or her understanding of the task Teaching Elders perform, including an awareness of his or her specific gifts for ministry as a Teaching Elder and of areas in which growth is needed.
- g. A report from Midwest Ministry Center assessing the Inquirer's fitness for ministry. Customarily, the cost of this assessment is shared in equal parts by the Inquirer, his/her congregation and the Presbytery of Great Rivers. The inquirer must sign a release for the report to go to the CPM.

B. Phase 2: Candidacy G-2.0604

The purpose of this phase is to provide opportunities for the church to support persons received as Candidates in their preparation for being ordained as Teaching Elder.

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry to create an environment in which the uniqueness of each individual Candidate is taken seriously. As partners in a covenant relationship, both the Committee and the Candidate are encouraged to work together as they plan for and evaluate the Candidate's growth and development.

1. Admission to Candidacy

An Inquirer becomes a Candidate by action of presbytery. At that time the Candidate formally agrees to accept the presbytery's supervision in her or his preparation for the office of Teaching Elder.

The process of the candidacy phase can be as follows:

- a. An Inquirer shall apply to the presbytery through the session of his or her church and the presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry to become a Candidate for the office of Teaching Elder.
- b. 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 Inquirer's application. The Stated Clerk shall communicate this information to the CPM moderator.
- c. 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
- d. 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.
- e. 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.
- f. 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 office of Teaching Elder?
 - (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 office of Teaching Elder in the PCUSA?
- g. 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.
- h. A 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.

2. During Candidacy

The covenant relationship between the Candidate and the presbytery is expressed through the negotiation and review of a series of learning contracts based on the expected outcomes for this phase. To remain in good standing, there must be consultations at least once a year, in which both the Committee and the Candidate assess her or his progress toward completion of previously established goals and negotiate appropriate new goals. It is essential that during each consultation the decision be made as to whether Candidacy should be continued, especially if it becomes clear that adequate growth is not taking place. The Committee votes at each consultation whether the Candidate will continue in the process.

3. Completion of Candidacy

Candidacy continues until the presbytery acts in one of three ways to remove the Candidate's name from the Roll of Candidates:

- a. Completion of the preparation for ministry process with a call to the ministry of the office of Teaching Elder. In this case, the following steps are involved:
 - (1) the Committee on Preparation for Ministry determines that the Candidate is ready to be examined for ordination;
 - (2) the Candidate receives a call; and
 - (3) the Candidate is ordinarily examined and approved for ordination by the presbytery of call (G-2.0702) A candidate may request to be ordained in his/her presbytery of care,
 - (4) a candidate shall not be ordained before the full two year period of covenant relationship required, at least one year of which shall be as a Candidate. (G-2.0602)
 - b. Withdrawal by the Candidate; (G-2.0609)
 - c. Removal by the presbytery; (G-2.0609)

4. Expected Outcomes of Candidacy/ Requirements to be certified ready to receive a call.

By the end of the candidacy phase, each candidate to be ordained shall demonstrate readiness to begin the office of Teaching Elder by meeting all of the requirements of G-2.0607.

III. Some Constitutional Provisions

A. Accommodations to Particular Circumstances for Inquirers and Candidates (G-2.0610)

- Some accommodations and waivers are possible. See G-2.0610.

B. Service in Covenant Relationship (G-2.0606)

- Some requirements are made about service to a congregation by a candidate/inquirer.

C. Final Assessment and Negotiation for Service (G-2.0607)

A candidate having completed or nearly completed the minimum two year covenant relationship (G-2.0602) “may not enter into negotiation for his or her service as a teaching elder without approval of the presbytery of care. The presbytery shall record when it has certified a candidate ready for examination by a presbytery for ordination, pending a call. Evidence of readiness to begin ordered ministry as a teaching elder shall include:

- a) a candidate’s wisdom and maturity of faith, leadership skills, compassionate spirit, honest repute, and sound judgment;
- b) a transcript showing graduation, with satisfactory grades, at a regionally accredited college or university;
- c) a transcript from a theological institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools acceptable to the presbytery, showing a course of study including Hebrew and Greek, exegesis of the Old and New Testaments using Hebrew and Greek, satisfactory grades in all areas of study, and graduation or proximity to graduation; and
- d) examination materials, together with evaluations that declare those materials satisfactory in the areas covered by any standard ordination examination approved by the General Assembly. Such examinations shall be prepared and administered by a body created by the presbyteries.

D. Transfer of Relationship (G-2.0608)

At the request of the inquirer or candidate and with the approval of the sessions and presbyteries involved, a presbytery may transfer the covenant relationship of an inquirer or candidate.

E. Removal from Relationship (G-2.0609)

An inquirer or candidate may, after consultation with the session and the presbytery, withdraw from covenant relationship. A presbytery may also, for sufficient reasons, remove an individual’s name from the roll of inquirers and candidates, reporting this action and the reasons to the session, to the individual, and, if appropriate, to the educational institution in which the individual is enrolled. Prior to taking such action, the presbytery or the Committee on Preparation for Ministry shall make a reasonable attempt to give the candidate or inquirer an opportunity to be heard concerning the proposed removal.

F. Location of Ordination (G-2.0702)

The presbytery placing the call to the candidate for ministry shall ordinarily examine, ordain, and install the candidate.

Section Two: Roles and Responsibilities of Participants

I. THE INQUIRER AND CANDIDATE

A. Role of Inquirers and Candidates

Responding to God's call to ministry is an exhilarating and demanding experience. The ministry of the Word and Sacrament is particularly challenging to prepare for and to fulfill. It stretches every human capacity and touches every dimension of life.

As a person discerns his or her call and begins the process of preparation for ministry, the counsel and guidance of the pastor and session of the home church are available, along with that of presbytery and the theological institution.

The denomination has designed the process of preparation for ministry to enable one to participate fully in discerning the type of ministry for which she or he is best suited and to plan and evaluate one's own preparation and development in consultation with the presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry. Although demanding, the process is not intended to be simply a series of imposed requirements; its focus is, rather, on the covenant relationships between persons who are deeply committed to the church and those who are preparing for ministry. As an individual enters into these relationships and assumes responsibility for moving through the process according to the guidelines provided, and maintains regular and open contact with the persons and committees involved, he or she can expect a rich and rewarding experience.

B. Responsibilities of Inquirers and Candidates

1. Before the Process Begins

- Participate actively in the life and mission of the Church.
- Initiate discussions of a sense of call with pastor, college chaplain or other spiritual advisor, or persons whose opinions one respects.
- Be an active member of a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregation for at least six months.

2. Phase 1: Inquiry

To begin the process, indicate to the session the desire to explore the implications of becoming a Teaching Elder. At least six months of active church membership is required before this step can be taken. The following forms are found at <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/rep4min/application-forms/>

Individual completes and submits to the moderator of session the following:

- 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"***

- Session fills out and sends to the Committee on Preparation for Ministry: ***Form 1D "Session Evaluation and Recommendation"***
- Upon approval of the session, individual requests to be enrolled by presbytery as an Inquirer.

Complete Form 2A, "Report of Consultation Regarding Application" and send a copy with CPM's enrollment report to session for recording of endorsement.

- Participate in one or more interviews with the presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry.

It is imperative that the roles, expectations, and responsibilities of Inquirer or Candidate and Committee members be made clear from the beginning. Discuss these issues and negotiate a covenant relationship with the Committee at the first interview or consultation.

Use Form 2B, “Covenant Agreement and Inquirer Release” to formalize this relationship.

- Throughout the Inquiry Phase, consult with presbytery’s Committee on Preparation for Ministry to plan for and evaluate growth and development.

Complete and return Form 3, “Pre-consultation report on development areas” to the Committee on Preparation for Ministry at least 21 days before each Consultation.

Working jointly with representative(s) of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry, complete Form 4, “Report on Consultation.”

- As requested by the Committee, participate in career counseling.
- Continue active membership and participation in a PCUSA congregation.
- With the approval and under the guidance of the presbytery, engage in some form of service to the church or field education.
- To complete the Inquiry Phase, meet with the session for a review of evidence indicating readiness to proceed to Candidacy.

Adequate promise for ministry must be demonstrated according to the expected outcomes of Inquiry and any other requirements agreed to in previous consultations.

- Meet with presbytery’s Committee on Preparation for Ministry for an evaluation of readiness to be recommended to presbytery for reception as a Candidate.
- Adequate promise must again be demonstrated. The Inquiry Phase generally lasts a minimum of one year, but can continue for as long as is necessary to make the decision as to whether a person’s God-given gifts will be best utilized through the office of Teaching Elder
- In case of termination of the covenant relationship with a person who decides against or is denied admission to Candidacy, other ways in which that person might express his or her vocation may be explored through a group discernment process with the aid of the session and the Committee on Preparation for Ministry.

3. Phase 2: Candidacy

- For admission to Candidacy, apply to presbytery through the session and the presbytery’s Committee on Preparation for Ministry. The following forms are found at <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/application-forms/>

Complete and submit Form 5A, “Application to be enrolled by Presbytery as a Candidate” to session for review and recommendation to presbytery. Session fills out Form 5B “Session recommendation for Enrollment as Candidate”

- Once the CPM has officially endorsed the individual for candidacy, the person shall appear before the presbytery to be examined with respect to Christian faith, forms of Christian service undertaken, and motives for seeking the ministry.
- The Candidate and her or his session may request that a commission of presbytery conduct a service of reception in the presence of the Candidate’s congregation.
- During Candidacy, maintain a relationship with the Committee on Preparation for Ministry through: consultations held at least annually, participation with committee to negotiate and review learning contracts, participation in reviews of growth and progress, and preparation of reports.

Form 3, “Pre-consultation report on development areas” must be submitted before each consultation to fulfill presbytery requirements.

- Continue active church membership.
- With the approval and under the guidance of presbytery, engage in some form of service to the church or field education.
- Successfully complete course requirements at a regionally accredited college or university and at a theological institution acceptable to the presbytery and accredited by the Association of Theological Schools.
- Successfully complete examinations in the areas covered by Presbytery’s Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates.
- Before seeking a call, and ordinarily in the final year of theological education, meet with the Committee on Preparation for Ministry for a final assessment of readiness to receive a call. This consultation focuses on the outcomes of Candidacy.
- Complete Personal Information Form (PIF) and receive approval from the Committee on Preparation for Ministry to explore obtaining a call. Submit the completed PIF to the Church Leadership Connection Office for circulation and participation in the denomination’s procedures for exploring a call to service.
- A one page Personal Statement of Faith must be submitted to CPM to be shared during examination by the presbytery.
- Complete examination for ordination, administered on the floor of the presbytery of call.

If the presbytery finds the call in order and determines that it is for the good of the whole church, it shall inform the person being called of its decision and shall proceed to present the call through the presbytery having jurisdiction over the candidate.

To be eligible for ordination, the Book of Order requires a relationship with the presbytery of at least two years, including at least one year as a Candidate. (G-2.0602)

Remember that the church’s session continues to act as an advocate during both the Inquiry and Candidacy Phases; through its moderator and presbytery commissioner(s) it can call the presbytery’s Committee on Preparation for Ministry to accountability in fulfilling its responsibilities.

Candidacy continues until ordination, withdrawal, or removal.

II. THE SESSION

A. Role of Session

The pastor and session are responsible for communicating to all church members what is meant by “the ministry of all believers” and for helping members discern and fulfill their Christian vocation.

1. Developing Vocational Awareness

To ensure that committed, knowledgeable persons continue to be involved in the life and mission of the church and the world, it is essential that the session take seriously its responsibility for developing vocational awareness among members of the congregation. A biblically-grounded, theologically sound understanding of Christian vocation integrated into the church’s program will help members recognize opportunities to fulfill their Christian vocation within the context of their secular occupations.

2. Developing Awareness of the Call to Ministry of the Office of Teaching Elder

Members of congregations should also be aware of the Office of Teaching Elder as an occupation through which many dimensions of Christian service can be realized. This opportunity should be emphasized in all church programs, from Christian education classes and youth and young adult groups, to men’s and women’s programs.

It is therefore essential that pastors, sessions and local congregations:

- challenge all members to become aware of their Christian vocation;
- develop and implement thoughtful and creative means by which highly qualified persons may be challenged to consider a vocation in the Office of Teaching Elder;

- help potential Inquirers get in touch with the presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry as early as possible;
- give high priority to developing and maintaining vital, theologically sound youth programs which are in harmony with the Presbyterian and Reformed traditions; and
- assure that youth ministry leaders are carefully selected and trained, theologically competent and appropriate role models.

3. Exploring the Call to Office of Teaching Elder

When a member of the congregation approaches the pastor and session to express the possibility that she or he has been called to the Office of Teaching Elder, the local church is provided with a challenge and an opportunity. It is the session's responsibility to provide a supportive relationship through which it can explore with the individual the personal implications and suitability of a church occupation.

According to the Constitution, the relationship between the session and the individual Inquirer is part of the Inquiry Phase of the preparation for ministry process. Its purpose is to provide an opportunity for the church and for those who believe themselves called to Office of Teaching Elder to explore that call together in such a way that a decision regarding the Inquirer's suitability for ministry of the Word and Sacrament will be based on knowledge and experience of one another.

Such knowledge and experience emerge through prayerful examination of the Inquirer's motivation, personal faith and experience in the congregation, through examination of his or her knowledge of the responsibilities of a Teaching Elder, and through a serious assessment of the gifts needed by Teaching Elder. These are the first important steps in discerning that the individual has indeed been called by the Holy Spirit, through the church, to the office of Teaching Elder. Studies indicate that the lives and work of dedicated pastors and effective congregations have a significant impact on the lives of Inquirers and Candidates.

4. Supporting Inquirers and Candidates

The pastor, session and congregation communicate with and support Inquirers and Candidates throughout the entire period of preparation. This can be a most meaningful experience for those involved.

Along with its specifically prescribed responsibilities, it is important that the session continue to express its concern and support by contacting the individual and his or her family at important times, such as annual consultations with the Committee on Preparation for Ministry, appearances before presbytery, academic examination periods, Presbyteries' Cooperative Examination periods, when presbytery makes its final assessment of the Candidate, when a call is being negotiated, on holidays, anniversaries, etc.

B. Responsibilities of the Session

- To develop among church members an awareness of their Christian vocation and challenge them with responsible Christian stewardship of their talents.
- To encourage persons with appropriate motivation and abilities to consider preparation for the office of Teaching Elder or other church occupations.

1. Phase 1: Inquiry

Admission to Inquiry begins when a person who has been a church member for at least six months indicates to that church's pastor and session his or her sense of call to the office of Teaching Elder. This is the first step toward establishing an ongoing relationship with the session and presbytery's Committee for the purpose of exploring and testing the sense of call.

Some Issues for Attention and Evaluation by the Session When Examining the Gifts and Motivations of a Prospective Inquirer

- What personal qualities are evidence of a healthy and vital faith in God through Jesus Christ?
- How is that faith currently being expressed through the individual's participation in the worship, life and mission of this congregation?

- What various motivations impel the sense of call? (e.g., service to God and the world, compassion for God's children, guilt, the need for power and status)
- What real and potential talents for ministry are evident in this individual? (e.g., the ability to communicate, interpersonal skills, leadership or administrative abilities)
- What is the level and adequacy of the individual's academic interest, ability and motivations?
- What is the evidence of his or her physical health and stamina?
- What is the evidence of his or her emotional well-being?
- What is the evidence of his or her self-discipline?
- How does the individual plan to finance his or her education?

Ask the applicant to complete Form 1A "Application to be enrolled by Presbytery as an Inquirer," Form 1B "Questions for Reflection," and Form 1C "Financial Planning for Theological Education"

- Contact the Committee on Preparation for Ministry requesting orientation to the preparation for ministry process used in that presbytery.
- Meet with representative(s) of the presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry to receive orientation in the preparation for ministry process. Ordinarily the orientation will take place prior to the presbytery enrolling the inquirer.

At this meeting distribute the applicant's completed Form 1 to session members for review prior to session's meeting with the applicant.

- Consult with the person requesting enrollment as an Inquirer and make a decision whether or not to endorse the applicant as an Inquirer.
- Appoint a Ruling Elder (or a group of persons including at least one elder) to act as liaison with the Inquirer and with the presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry and to participate with the Inquirer and the Committee as they explore and evaluate his or her progress.
- Make a recommendation to presbytery, through the Committee on Preparation for Ministry, regarding the applicant's request to be enrolled as an Inquirer.

Indicate session's endorsement or non-endorsement on Form 1D "Session Evaluation and Recommendation" and submit Forms 1A, 1B, 1C and 1D to the presbytery.

- If the session, the committee or presbytery decides not to accept the individual's name for enrollment as an Inquirer at this time, the session continues to provide support, counsel and guidance to the individual as she or he seeks to discover an appropriate occupational expression of his or her Christian vocation.
- During the Inquirer Phase, the session participates with the inquirer and presbytery's committee in evaluating the Inquirer's growth and progress.
- For completion of the Inquiry Phase, the session meets with the Inquirer to review evidence indicating his or her readiness to proceed to Candidacy. This evidence includes personal interviews with the Inquirer, all consultation reports, the Inquirer's demonstration of adequate promise for ministry according to the expected outcomes.
- The session makes a decision regarding whether to recommend to presbytery that the Inquirer proceed to Candidacy Phase.
- The session pays for at least one third of the expenses associated with required career assessment.

2. Transition from Inquiry to Candidacy

When the Inquirer is ready for admission to Candidacy the session ***fills out Form 5B "Session recommendation for Enrollment as Candidate"***

- ***Indicate Session's endorsement or non-endorsement on the Inquirer's completed Form 5B "Session recommendation for Enrollment as Candidate" and submit to presbytery.***
- provides support and makes a statement, if requested, when she or he is examined by presbytery.

- If the Inquirer is not received by presbytery as a Candidate at this time, the session continues to support, counsel and guide the individual as she or he seeks to discover an appropriate occupational expression of her or his Christian vocation.

3. Phase 2: Candidacy

- After the presbytery examines and votes to approve the Inquirer's becoming a Candidate, the Candidate and her or his session may request that a commission of presbytery conduct a service of reception in the presence of the Candidate's congregation.
- During Candidacy the session provides support and pastoral care to the Candidate and her or his family, maintaining the liaison relationship with both the Candidate and the presbytery Committee.
- The session receives and reviews reports of each consultation.
- The session removes the Candidate's name from the church roll when notice is received of her or his ordination.

It is important to recall that the session acts as an advocate for both Inquirers and Candidates and through its moderator and presbytery commissioner(s), can call the presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry to accountability in fulfilling its responsibilities.

III. THE PRESBYTERY

A. Role of the Presbytery

The presbytery's ministry to the church is at the heart of the preparation for ministry process. The presbytery participates in providing support for the denomination's colleges and seminaries and provides a committee to work with individual Inquirers and Candidates. The presbytery elects persons to serve on the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations, and the presbytery guides Inquirers and Candidates and examines them for ordination.

The presbytery's ministry with individual Inquirers and Candidates takes place through the work of its Committee on Preparation for Ministry. As Ruling Elders and Teaching Elders take on the demanding responsibilities of membership on this Committee, they share the rich satisfaction of helping men and women discern their calls and grow toward readiness for the office of Teaching Elder. Their time, energy and commitment offer a significant contribution to the church's future ministry.

B. Responsibilities of the Presbytery

1. Responsibilities of the Presbytery as a Whole

- To provide a Committee on Preparation for Ministry or other groups to work with its Inquirers and Candidates and ensure that this committee has adequate support and resources. Committee members should be carefully selected, with planned tenure to assure continuity. While new members should receive careful orientation, regular training events or retreats should be provided for all committee members. Such training will enable committees to develop their own procedures for relationships with Inquirers and Candidates and help them establish their own criteria by which to measure individuals' development.
- To receive the committee's reports and recommendations regarding each applicant for Inquiry and Candidacy; enroll Inquirers and examine and vote whether to approve the Inquirer's becoming a Candidate.
- To record the name of each Inquirer and Candidate on its rolls and report this to the General Assembly Office.
- To receive reports of consultations.
- To grant exceptions and waivers to Preparation for Ministry requirements.
- To transfer Inquirers and Candidates to the care of other presbyteries.
- To remove the names of Inquirers and Candidates from its rolls when appropriate.
- To transfer Candidates for ordination when requested.
- To examine and ordain Candidates who have received a call to ministry and to report these ordinations to the appropriate General Assembly offices.

2. Responsibilities of the Presbytery through its Committee on Preparation for Ministry

a. Phase 1: Inquiry

- When the Committee on Preparation for Ministry receives information from a session that a member of their church has indicated a desire to explore the personal implications of becoming a Teaching Elder, one or more Committee members should meet with that session to explain the session's role and responsibilities during the preparation for ministry process. During this orientation, members of the session are encouraged to discern their own call and Christian vocation, and are informed about the particular evaluative criteria and procedures used in that presbytery and, with the Committee representatives, discusses ways the session and the Committee can work together most effectively.
- After the applicant has agreed to enter into a covenant relationship with the session and the presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry and has received the session's endorsement for enrollment as an Inquirer, he or she meets for an interview with the Committee. The purpose of this initial interview is to allow the Committee to make a preliminary assessment of the applicant's motives, seriousness of intent and general suitability for the office of Teaching Elder before deciding to recommend to presbytery that he or she be enrolled as an Inquirer.
- **Forms 1A "Application to be enrolled by Presbytery as an Inquirer," 1B "Questions for Reflection," and 1C "Financial Planning for Theological Education" are distributed to all Committee members for review prior to the meeting to acquaint them with the applicant.**
- After completing its interview and evaluation and making a decision, the Committee recommends to the presbytery whether to enroll the applicant as an Inquirer. When enrollment is recommended, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry should appoint from its membership an advisor liaison to work closely with the Inquirer. The Inquirer and session shall be informed of this action.

Complete Form 2A "Report of Consultation Regarding Application to become an Inquirer"

- committee reports and recommendations to Presbytery to enroll applicant as an Inquirer

Use Form 2B, "Covenant Agreement and Inquirer Release" to formalize this relationship.

- It is imperative that the roles, expectations and responsibilities of the Inquirer and Committee members be clarified and a covenant relationship be negotiated at the first interview or consultation.
- Throughout the Inquiry Phase, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry holds consultations with each Inquirer to explore the appropriateness of the office of Teaching Elder as an occupational choice and to guide his or her development for that ministry. Each consultation focuses on goals for growth and development in each of five key areas: Education for Ministry, Spiritual Development, Interpersonal Relationships, Personal Growth and Professional Development.
- During each consultation the Committee and the Inquirer assess what progress has been made toward fulfilling previously established goals in each of the five areas and together negotiate appropriate new goals. The Committee votes at each consultation whether the Inquirer will continue in the process.

At least 21 days prior to each consultation, the Inquirer completes and returns to the Committee Form 3, "**Pre-consultation report on development areas**," as a basis for discussion.

Use Form 4, "Report on Consultation" for reporting purposes.

- Specific considerations may guide the Committee's assessment of an Inquirer's suitability to prepare for the office of Teaching Elder. Careful individual assessment may also help the Committee to recommend experiences to enhance the Inquirer's growth and development.
- Following action by the session and receipt of Form 5A, "Application to be enrolled by Presbytery as a Candidate," the Committee on Preparation for Ministry meets with the Inquirer to review evidence indicating whether or not he or she is ready to proceed to the Candidacy Phase and has fulfilled all the expected outcomes for Inquiry and any other requirements agreed to in previous consultations.

- After considering the preceding evidence the Committee makes a recommendation to presbytery.
- Through its Committee on Preparation for Ministry the presbytery is responsible for continuing to guide and support both those whom it does and does not recommend to be enrolled as Candidates. Those who are denied Candidacy at this time should be helped through a group discernment process or a Ministry Development Center program to discover appropriate occupations through which they can fulfil their Christian vocation.

Consultations

The goals and expected outcomes of each of the five areas of growth provide the focus for each consultation. By using these goals the Committee can discover the Inquirer's current level of experience and achievement and, through guided conversations and appropriate new learning contracts, stimulate further growth in appropriate areas. **The Committee will decide for itself what signifies "growth" and how an Inquirer might show evidence of such growth.** Creativity should be used in thinking through these areas and goals with the individual Inquirer so that she or he does not see this experience simply as the writing of required papers in order to qualify for Candidacy.

b. Some Considerations to Guide the Committee's Assessment of an Inquirer's Suitability to Continue Preparation for Ministry of the office of Teaching Elder by proceeding to the Candidacy Phase.

Personal Issues:

- How would you describe the Inquirer's commitment to God and to the world?
- How deeply does she or he demonstrate self-awareness?
- How does she or he demonstrate a sense of responsibility and self-direction?
- How does the Inquirer relate to people?
- How effective are her or his leadership skills?
- How does she or he seem to tolerate stress?
- Does the Inquirer appear to be open to the influence of others?
- How does she or he seem to relate to authority figures?

Educational issues:

- Does he or she demonstrate adequate academic skills?
- Is there sufficient motivation for scholastic achievement?
- Is she or he meeting the constitutional requirements?
- Does she or he have adequate experience in a local church or other context for experiential learning?
- Has she or he made appropriate theological education plans?

Situational issues:

- Are there financial obstacles?
- Are there health limitations?
- Are there family or spouse considerations?
- Are the Inquirer's present goals feasible and realistic?

Occupational issues:

- Is the Inquirer's blend of temperament, abilities, coping style, values and motivation suitable for the ministry of the Word and Sacrament?
- Should she or he consider a specialized ministry or alternate occupations?
- Does the Inquirer have a realistic understanding of the occupational demands and job opportunities in the ministry of the Word and Sacrament?

c. Phase 2: Candidacy

Candidacy is a time of continuing pastoral guidance and support by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry. This shall be accomplished through the guidance and evaluation of candidates, using learning contracts within a context of supportive relationships.”

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry receives and if the Committee decides to recommend moving to the Candidacy stage, the Committee fills out Form 5C “Report of Consultation to become a Candidate” and Form 5D “Covenant Agreement and Candidate Release.”

- After the Committee on Preparation for Ministry completes its evaluation of the Inquirer and presents to the presbytery its report and recommendation as to whether the Inquirer should or should not be received as a Candidate, the Inquirer appears before the presbytery to be examined with respect to his or her Christian faith, forms of Christian service and motives for seeking the ministry.
- If the presbytery votes to receive the Inquirer as a Candidate, he or she is asked to respond to the “Candidacy questions to be used before Presbytery” in Section 3-1. A charge is given, the Candidate’s name is recorded on the roll of Candidates and prayer is offered.
- Upon request, the presbytery may arrange for a service of reception to be conducted before the Candidate’s congregation.

As with Inquirers, the presbytery, through its Committee on Preparation for Ministry, and the session, are responsible for continuing to guide both those whom it recommends for Candidacy and those whom it does not.

- The presbytery continues its regular consultations with the Candidate through the Committee on Preparation for Ministry. As described in the Inquiry Phase, these consultations focus on goals in each of the five areas of growth and development.

As during Inquiry, planning for and evaluating growth during Candidacy and the negotiation of new learning contracts continue to involve the active participation of both the Candidate and the Committee.

The Candidate completes Form 3, “Pre-consultation report on development areas,” and submits it at least 21 days prior to each consultation to provide the basis for discussion.

Form 4, “Report on Consultation” is completed and signed by both the Candidate and the appropriate Committee person after each Consultation and becomes part of the Candidate’s permanent file.

Before seeking a call, and ordinarily in the final year of theological education, and before a Candidate may accept a call, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry meets with the Candidate for a final assessment of his or her readiness in all respects to receive a call.

- In conducting this assessment, the Committee focuses on the expected outcomes of Inquiry the expected outcomes of Candidacy, on each of the requirements of certification and on any additional items negotiated between the presbytery and the Candidate.
- Evidence that the Candidate has achieved the expected outcomes is based on her or his academic performance and experience in supervised field education or other activities discussed and agreed upon by the Committee as relevant to preparation for the office of Teaching Elder.
- The Committee completes its evaluation and reports to presbytery a summary of the final assessment along with the date the Committee certified the Candidate ready for examination for ordination, pending a call. When requested, the presbytery transmits this report to the presbytery of call.

Use Form 6, "Summary Report of Final Assessment of Candidate's Readiness to be Examined for Ordination" to transmit this report.

Upon completion of the preparation process the Candidate's file is either kept by the Committee (for a specified period of time) or given to the Candidate. In cases where the Candidate and Committee have dealt with highly sensitive issues that are a matter of record, the Committee may want to retain the Candidate's file.

VI. THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

A. The Office of Vocation:

- Provides guidance, consultation, and resource materials to presbytery Committees on Preparation for Ministry to assist them with vocational discernment and ministry preparation of Inquirers and Candidates.
- Provides appropriate vehicles to enable presbytery Committees on Preparation for Ministry to exchange resources, policies, and models for their ministry.
- Participates in synod and presbytery training events for members of Committees on Preparation for Ministry.
- Provides guidance to presbyteries on particular sections of the Book of Order that deal with preparation for ministry.
- Works through seminaries and presbytery Committees on Preparation for Ministry to encourage collaboration as they work with Inquirers and Candidates.
- Works with seminary staff and Inquirers and Candidates providing guidance on preparation for ministry, ordination exams, and the call process.
- Serves as liaison with the Ministry Development Council and its centers in support of preparation for ministry.
- Maintains and makes available a list of seminary contact persons and moderators of Committees on Preparation for Ministry.
- With the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee, coordinates the development, administration, and grading of ordination examinations.
- Provides coaching to Candidates seeking their first call.

B The Office of Financial Aid for Studies, administers scholarships and loans for those preparing for ministry.

Section Three: A Listing of Resources

I. RECOMMENDED LISTS OF QUESTIONS AND CRITERIA

A List of Questions for Session Inquiry Endorsement Interviews

- What personal qualities are in evidence of a healthy and vital faith in God through Jesus Christ?
- How is that faith being expressed through the individual's participation in the worship, life and mission of this congregation?
- What various motivations impel the sense of call? (e.g., service to God and the world, compassion for God's children, guilt, the need for power and status)
- What real and potential talents for ministry are evident in this individual? (e.g., the ability to communicate, interpersonal skills, leadership or administrative abilities)
- What is the level and adequacy of the individual's academic interest, ability and motivations?
- What is the evidence of his or her physical health and stamina?
- What is the evidence of his or her emotional well-being?
- What is the evidence of his or her self-discipline?
- How does the individual plan to finance his or her education?

A List of Outcomes for Inquiry

- A statement of her or his understanding of Christian vocation in the Reformed tradition and how it relates to her or his sense of call;
- A statement of personal faith which incorporates an understanding of the Reformed tradition;
- An analysis of at least one concept from the personal faith statement regarding what it suggests about God, humanity and their interrelationships;
- A statement of what it means to be Presbyterian, indicating how that awareness grows out of participation in the life of a particular church;
- 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; and
- A statement of her or his understanding of the task of Teaching Elder perform, including an awareness of her or his specific gifts for office of Teaching Elder and of areas in which growth is needed.

A list of Questions for Candidacy

- Do you believe yourself to be called by God to the office of Teaching Elder?
- 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?
- Do you accept the proper supervision of the presbytery in matters that concern your preparation for this ministry?
- Do you desire now to be received by this presbytery as a candidate for the office of Teaching Elder in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?

A List of Candidacy Interview Questions

Personal Issues:

- How would you describe the Inquirer's commitment to God and to the world?
- How deeply does she or he demonstrate self-awareness?
- How does she or he demonstrate a sense of responsibility and self-direction?
- How does the Inquirer relate to people?
- How effective are her or his leadership skills?
- How does she or he seem to tolerate stress?
- Does the Inquirer appear to be open to the influence of others?
- How does she or he seem to relate to authority figures?

Educational Issues:

- Does he or she demonstrate adequate academic skills?
- Is there sufficient motivation for scholastic achievement?
- Is she or he meeting the constitutional requirements?
- Does she or he have adequate experience in a local church or other context for experiential learning?
- Has she or he made appropriate theological education plans?

Situational Issues:

- Are there financial obstacles?
- Are there health limitations?
- Are there family or spouse considerations?
- Are the Inquirer's present goals feasible and realistic?

Occupational Issues:

- Is the Inquirer's blend of temperament, abilities, coping style, values and motivation suitable for the office of Teaching Elder?
- Should he or she consider a specialized ministry or alternate occupations?
- Does the Inquirer have a realistic understanding of the occupational demands and job opportunities in the office of Teaching Elder?

A List of Candidacy Questions for Use Before Presbytery

- Do you believe yourself to be called by God to the office of Teaching Elder?
- 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?
- Do you accept the proper supervision of the presbytery in matters that concern your preparation for this ministry?
- Do you desire now to be received by this presbytery as a candidate for the office of Teaching Elder in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?

A List of Outcomes for Candidacy

- Presenting evidence of competence in the fields such as theology, Bible, polity, and Worship and Sacraments, of ministerial skill attested in the supervised practice of ministry;
- Presenting evidence of readiness to participate in a calling presbytery's plan for transition and of plans for
- Expressing theological views compatible with the confessional documents of the church;
- Expressing understanding of the meaning of the questions required for ordination (W-4.4003) informed by knowledge of the church in diverse settings;
- Revealing commitment to the office of Teaching Elder within 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;
- 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 as a part of the appearance of the candidate.

II. DESCRIPTION OF FORMS USED IN THE PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY PROCESS

All these forms are found online at <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/forms-used-preparation-ministry-process/>

Form 1A “Application to be enrolled by Presbytery as an Inquirer”

To be completed initially by the applicant seeking to be enrolled. Both the committee/commission overseeing preparation for ministry and the presbytery’s actions regarding the application are recorded on this form. It provides basic information regarding the applicant’s background, identity, and interests. This form includes a list of personal references.

Form 1B “Questions for Reflection”

These questions are to be completed by the applicant as a basis for direct discussion first with the session of the applicant’s home church and later with the presbytery’s committee/commission overseeing preparation for ministry.

Form 1C “Financial Planning for Theological Education”

Using basic information provided by the applicant, this spreadsheet automatically generates a projection of the applicant’s financial resources and needs relative to the required seminary training.

Form 1D “Session Evaluation and Recommendation”

This form is completed by the applicant’s session and forwarded along with the other application forms to the presbytery’s committee/commission overseeing preparation for ministry. The form includes questions that may guide the session’s discussion with the applicant and provide support for its recommendation to the committee/commission overseeing preparation for ministry.

Form 2A “Report of Consultation regarding application”

In addition to formulating its recommendation to the presbytery to enroll the applicant as an inquirer, the committee/commission overseeing preparation for ministry should also establish goals for the first year the new inquirer will be under care. This form records the growth objectives agreed to by the new Inquirer and the committee/commission overseeing preparation for ministry. The completed report is sent to the enrollee, the theological institution, and the sponsoring session.

Form 2B “Covenant Agreement and Inquirer Release”

A signed acknowledgement of the new covenant relationship entered into by the inquirer, the session and the committee/commission overseeing preparation for ministry. The inquirer release sets in motion an understanding that permits the committee/commission overseeing preparation for ministry to secure information necessary to make responsible decisions and recommendations.

Form 3 “Pre-consultation report on development areas”

This report, completed by the inquirer/candidate before each consultation, evaluates progress in accomplishing previously agreed-upon goals and objectives. The form requests a listing of completed courses, and includes specific questions to be addressed in each of the five growth areas.

Form 4 “Report on Consultation”

A summary report of the consultation, completed by the committee/commission overseeing preparation for ministry and the inquirer/candidate, that indicates developmental progress in the five key areas along with growth objectives agreed to for the next year. The completed report is sent to the inquirer/candidate, theological institution, and sponsoring session.

Form 5A “Application to be enrolled by Presbytery as a Candidate”

To be completed initially by the Inquirer seeking to be advanced to candidacy. The recommendations of the session and the committee/commission overseeing preparation for ministry along with the action taken by the presbytery are recorded on this form.

Form 5B “Session recommendation for Enrollment as Candidate”

This form is completed by the inquirer’s session and forwarded to the presbytery’s committee/commission overseeing preparation for ministry. Questions that may guide the session’s discussion with the inquirer and provide support for its recommendation to the committee/commission overseeing preparation for ministry may be found in the "Advisory Handbook" on pages 39 - 41. Attach a letter explaining rationale for the session’s action in light of inquirer’s suitability.

Form 5C “Report of Consultation to become a Candidate”

A signed acknowledgement of the new covenant relationship entered into by the candidate and the committee/commission overseeing preparation for ministry. This form also establishes growth areas for candidate. The completed report is sent to the inquirer/candidate, theological institution, and sponsoring session.

Form 5D “Covenant Agreement and Candidate Release”

A signed acknowledgement of the new covenant relationship entered into by the candidate, the session and the committee/commission overseeing preparation for ministry. The candidate release sets in motion an understanding that permits the committee/commission overseeing preparation for ministry to secure information necessary to make responsible decisions and recommendations.

Form 6 “Summary Report of Final Assessment”

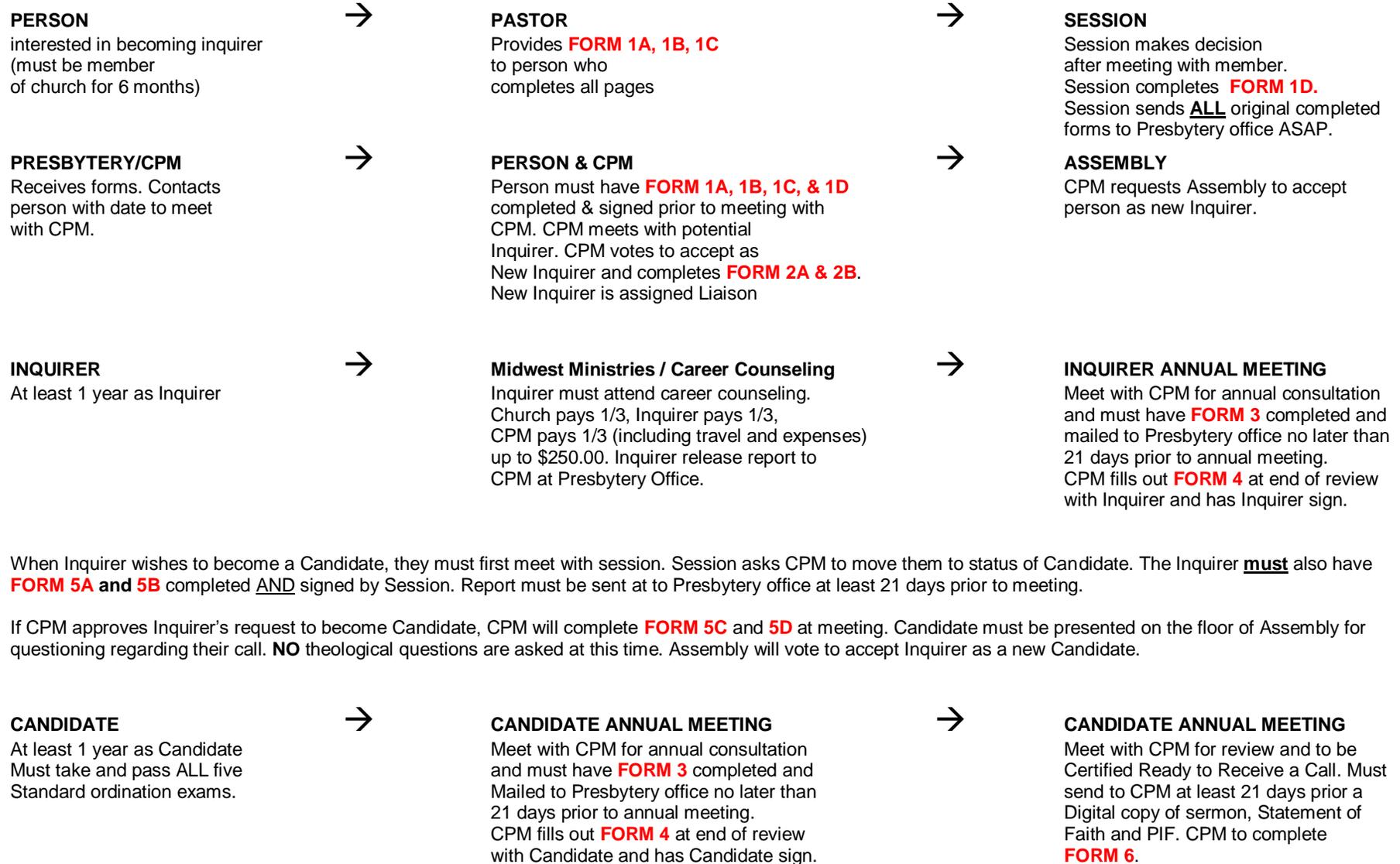
This form, completed by the committee/commission overseeing preparation for ministry, acknowledges that the committee/commission overseeing preparation for ministry of the candidate’s presbytery has conducted a final assessment of the candidate’s preparation and readiness to begin ministry. It certifies that she/he has successfully completed all requirements of the denomination and the committee/commission overseeing preparation for ministry and so is ready to be examined for ordination. It should be accompanied by supporting documentation that is identified on the form. (Since this report may need to be shared with another calling presbytery, all presbyteries should use this form as issued.)

Online Reporting to Mid Council Ministries of the Office of the General Assembly

Since January 2014 the Office of the General Assembly has exclusively used online management systems for presbyteries to report actions related to their inquirers and candidates. The system also provides direct access to senior ordination exams and their evaluations as well as Bible Content Exam results, and is to be used by presbyteries to report their ordination exam readers to the Presbyteries’ Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates (PCC). Both a “User’s Guide” and a “Quick Reference Sheet” have been prepared to assist presbyteries in the use of the system.

<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/exam-system-users-guide/>

Presbytery of Great Rivers **CPM Flow Chart**



CPE is not a requirement but it is highly recommended.