

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 guides Inquirers and Candidates and examines them for ordination, elects persons to serve on the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations, participates in providing support for the denomination's colleges and seminaries and provides a committee to work with individual Inquirers and Candidates.

The presbytery's ministry with individual Inquirers and Candidates ordinarily takes place through the work of its Committee on Preparation for Ministry. As laypersons and ministers 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 ministry of the Word and Sacrament. Their time, energy and commitment offer a significant contribution to the church's future ministry.

In planning its Preparation for Ministry strategy the presbytery may consult the printed material described in the "Resources" section of this manual and contact appropriate General Assembly offices for additional support and counsel. This manual, however, provides most of the basic information the presbytery will need. Section I provides an overview of the entire Preparation for Ministry process. Section II clarifies the role and responsibilities of both the presbytery as a whole and its Committee on Preparation for Ministry, and should be read with reference to Section 1 of this Manual and Chapter 14 of the Book of Order.

B. Responsibilities of the Presbytery

The *Book of Order* summarizes the presbytery's responsibilities as follows:

"The committee on preparation for ministry shall seek to instruct sessions on their role in the inquiry and candidacy process ... This work could best be done by the committee on preparation for ministry.... It shall be the duty of the presbytery to exercise responsibility for the spiritual growth of inquirers and candidates, to support them with an understanding and sympathetic interest and to give guidance in regard to courses of study, familiarity with the Bible and with the confessions, practical training and plans for education, including the choice of institutions, and the inquirer's or candidate's financial need. The presbytery shall also seek to give guidance and instruction to the inquirer or candidate in the faith and polity of the church. Freedom of conscience with respect to the interpretation of Scripture is to be maintained." (G-14.0306)

1. Responsibilities of the Presbytery as a Whole

- To provide a Committee on Preparation for Ministry 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

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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 Office of Resourcing Committees on Preparation for Ministry.
- To receive reports of annual 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

In providing pastoral care, guidance and support to Inquirers and Candidates it is imperative that the Committee on Preparation for Ministry show sensitivity to each individual's unique background, experience, level of maturity and personal attributes. If growth is to be effectively nurtured, members of the committee must understand and accept the individual where he or she is at each stage of the process. With the committee's help and encouragement the Inquirer or Candidate will take increasing responsibility for moving through the process and in planning for and evaluating his or her own development.

The preparation for ministry process demands that the roles, expectations and responsibilities of Inquirers or Candidates and Committee members be made clear from the beginning. The negotiation of a covenant relationship (see Overview, page 5) is an important step toward mutual understanding.

Committees should also identify particular services, resources and experiences which can enhance the growth and development of Inquirers and Candidates under their guidance. These include vocational development counseling, psychological evaluations, Clinical Pastoral Education opportunities, internships in churches, cross cultural experiences, specialized ministries and other opportunities for personal and spiritual growth. Such services and experiences may be recommended as individuals' needs are identified during the evaluation process.

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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 minister of the Word and Sacrament, one or more Committee members are required to meet with that session to explain the session's role and responsibilities during the preparation for ministry process. Some Committees use the video "Preparation for Ministry" with session during the orientation meeting or ask that it be viewed in preparation for the meeting. During this orientation the session is encouraged to discern their own call and Christian vocation, and is 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 (O-14.0302, G-14.0303c).
- 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 (G-14.0303e). 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 ministry of the Word and Sacrament before deciding to recommend to presbytery that he or she be enrolled as an Inquirer.

Form 1, “Application for Inquiry” is distributed to all Committee members for review prior to the meeting to acquaint them with the applicant.

Resources available to the Committee for background preparation: Considering Your Call and Vocation (SEIC Resource #101), Discerning Your Call and Your Gifts for Ministry, Primary Qualities for Professional Ministry (SEIC Resource #102), An Annotated Reading List (SEIC Resource #103) (See “Resources,” pages 41-46).

- After completing its interview and evaluation and making a decision, the Committee recommends to the presbytery whether or not to enroll the applicant as an Inquirer. When enrollment is recommended, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry should appoint from its membership an advisor to work closely with the Inquirer. The Inquirer and session shall be informed of this action.

Complete “Report of Enrollment as an Inquirer by Presbytery” from Form 2A and return it to the Office of Resourcing Committees on Preparation for Ministry, 100 Witherspoon Street, Room M004, Louisville KY 40202-1396.

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.

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

- Throughout the Inquiry Phase, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry holds annual consultations with each Inquirer to explore the appropriateness of the ministry of the Word and Sacrament as an occupational choice and to guide his or her development for that ministry (G-14.0303f). 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. (See Overview, page 5 for a fuller description of these areas and their goals.)
- 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.

At least 14 days prior to each consultation, the Inquirer completes and returns to the Committee Form 3, “Pre-Interview Annual Consultation Report,” as a basis for discussion. This form, with attachments, can provide for meeting the requirements of G-14.0308.

- “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” (G-14.0309b).

Use Form 4, “Report of Annual Consultation” for reporting purposes.

- Specific considerations may guide the Committee’s assessment of an Inquirer’s suitability to prepare for the ministry of the Word and Sacrament. Careful individual assessment may also help the Committee to recommend experiences to enhance the Inquirer’s growth and development.

See “Some Considerations to Guide the Committee’s Assessment of an Inquirer’s Suitability for the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament,” page 29, and “Resources for Evaluation and Guidance,” page 30. For “Observations and Suggestions for the Interview Process, see “Resources,” page 42.

- Subsequent consultations follow the same pattern, with particular attention to issues identified in the Book of Order (G-14.0309).
- The Inquiry Phase concludes when the Committee on Preparation for Ministry knows the Inquirer well enough to determine whether or not to recommend him or her to the presbytery for enrollment as a Candidate.
- Following action by the session and receipt of Form 5A, “Application to be Received 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 (G-14.0305c).

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In preparing its recommendation, the Committee should consider the Inquirer's application materials, all personal interviews with the Inquirer, all consultation records and whether the Inquirer as a person appears to be suited for the ministry of the Word and Sacrament. The Committee also reviews the Inquirer's demonstration of adequate promise for ministry according to the expected outcomes of inquiry set forth in G-14.0303g(1)-(6).

- After considering the preceding evidence the Committee makes a recommendation to presbytery (G-14.0305d).
- 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 fulfill their Christian vocation. .

Consultations

The goals and expected outcomes of each of the five areas of growth (see page 5) 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, of course, must decide for itself what "growth" in each of these five areas might mean 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 Word and Sacrament 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?

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- 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. Resources for Evaluation and Guidance

(1) Career counseling

Comprehensive, in-depth career counseling is offered by the centers affiliated with the Ministry Development Council and other service providers. This process can help the participant understand how her or his values, interests and potential and acquired capabilities, as well as her or his own personality and sense of call, fit into an occupational choice. By previous agreement with the participant and the center, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry can request access to written reports of this experience. Career counseling is most valuable if the Inquirer has volunteered to participate and when the nature and purpose of the process are carefully interpreted to the Inquirer in advance. (A descriptive brochure is available from the Office of Resourcing Committees on Preparation for Ministry. See "Resources," page 42.)

(2) Psychological evaluation

This process involves consultation(s) with a clinical or counseling psychologist. The primary purpose of such an evaluation is to determine the Inquirer/Candidate's psychological health and fitness for ministry and to screen for pathology. Greatest value is achieved if the Inquirer participates voluntarily and receives careful prior orientation as to the consultation' s nature and purpose. The Committee should establish a working relationship with the psychologist so that her or his reports can be accurately interpreted to the Committee. The psychologist' s familiarity with religious values and with the requirements of professional ministry will greatly enhance the results of such an evaluation. Psychological evaluation is usually combined with career counseling when the service is provided by a Ministry Development Council accredited counseling center.

Note: The above resources should be regarded as background for the Committee' s continuing counseling relationship with the Inquirer.

(3) Reports from the educational institution

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If the Inquirer is presently enrolled in a college or university, reports regarding academic progress. If the Inquirer is presently enrolled in a theological institution, reports regarding academic progress, field education and Clinical Pastoral Education experiences, and the theological institution' s assessment of her or his gifts for ministry and progress in preparing for ministry.

(4) Reports and reflections on the Inquirer' s participation in a Presbyterian congregation.

(5) Letters of reference from persons representing different areas of the Inquirer' s life. These letters may be supplied by the Inquirer or the Committee may request that references be persons representing specific categories (e.g. pastor, elder, professor, employer, peer, adult acquaintance, etc.). Note that such letters may have limited value due to their relative lack of objectivity and to the Committee's lack of knowledge of the author' s frame of reference and degree of perception.

(6) Persons experienced in interviewing techniques who may be helpful as Committee members or resource persons, e.g., psychologists, social workers, Clinical Pastoral Education supervisors, pastoral counselors, career counselors. Also see "Resources," page 42, for "Observations and Suggestions for the Interview Process.

d. Phase 2: Candidacy

Candidacy is a time of continuing pastoral guidance and support by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry. As indicated in the Book of Order, "... This shall be accomplished through the guidance and evaluation of candidates, using learning contracts within a context of supportive relationships." (G-14.0304)

- 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 (G-14.0305e). If the presbytery votes to receive the Inquirer as a Candidate, he or she is asked to respond to the constitutional questions (G-14.0305f(1)-(4)). 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 (G14.0305h).

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

Complete and Return "Report of Enrollment as a Candidate by Presbytery" from Form 5A to the Office of Resourcing Committees on Preparation for Ministry

- The presbytery continues its regular consultations with the Candidate through the Committee on Preparation for Ministry. As described in the Inquiry Phase (page 28), these consultations focus on goals in each of the five areas of growth

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and development (see Process Summary, page 5) and are based on the expected outcomes for the Candidacy Phase as set forth in the *Book of Order* G-14.0305j.

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-Interview Annual Consultation Report,” and submits it at least fourteen days prior to each consultation to provide the basis for discussion.

Form 4, “Report of Annual 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.

Specific additional issues are identified in the *Book of Order* (G-14.0309a,b,c) for the Committee to consider in successive consultations with the Candidate prior to his or her entering the theological institution and during the first two years of theological education.

- Consultations continue to be held at least once annually without exception (G-14.0309). At each consultation the decision is made as to whether or not Candidacy should be continued, especially if it becomes clear that adequate growth is not taking place. The decision should be reported as a recommendation to presbytery.
- Presbytery action is required for transfers of covenant relationship and for the granting of exceptions and waivers. There are also constitutional restrictions regarding initiation of negotiation for service.

For constitutional provisions see pages 11-13.

- Candidacy continues until the enrollee’s name is removed from the roll of Candidates by action of the presbytery in one of three ways: withdrawal by the Candidate; removal by presbytery (G-14.0312); or completion of the preparation for ministry process with a call to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament (G-14.0305j) and ordination.

Use Form 7B, “Report of Ordination of a Candidate or Withdrawal or Removal of an Inquirer or Candidate” to report such actions to the Office of Resourcing Committees on Preparation for Ministry, 100 Witherspoon Street, Room M004, Louisville KY 40202-1396.

- 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 (G-14.0310).

In conducting this assessment the Committee focuses on the expected outcomes of Inquiry (G-14.0303g), the expected outcomes of Candidacy (G-14.0305j), on each of

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the requirements of certification set forth in G-14.0310 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 ministry of the Word and Sacrament.

- 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 (G-14.0310a). 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.

- Presbytery procedures for presenting and receiving a call are set forth in G-14.0507.
- For interpretations of presbytery procedures relating to Examination and Ordination (G-14.0401, G-14.0402), see page 13.
- When plans for ordination have been approved by the appropriate presbytery, the presbytery notifies the Office of Resourcing Committees on Preparation for Ministry by using Form 7B, "Report of Ordination of Candidate...."
- 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 or destroyed. 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, as suggested above.