

**Presbytery of Wabash Valley
Commission on Preparation for Ministry
Policy for Entering Ministry**

Approved by CPM August 21, 2012

Reported to Presbytery on September 15, 2012

We have all been called by God through our baptisms, but some have been called to ordained offices of the Church. Ordination is provided by God as a gift for the God's people. The process for ordination is God's; it is not ours or the Presbyterian Church (USA)'s. However, even though God is in control of the process, we live in community and we discern the calling in community.

The process for ordination to the office of Teaching Elder in the Presbyterian Church (USA) is a process of deep discernment. It begins when one feels and begins to discern an inner calling from God to ministry in the church. But that inner calling must be confirmed by the Church, through the session of one's local congregation, the Commission of Preparation for Ministry (CPM), and eventually the Presbytery as a whole. As a process of mutual discernment, then, completion to the process may be different for each person. For many, the process is complete upon ordination. For others the process is complete as s/he, along with the session and CPM, finds that ministry other than Teaching Elder is her/his true call to ministry. To aid in that discernment process, the presbytery, by its delegated authority to the CPM, engages many tools to evaluate a person's calling, gifts, and skills, including forms, evaluations by professionals, academic institutions, Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) programs, ordination exams, etc. The role of the CPM is to support and encourage an inquirer/candidate as s/he explores and prepares for a call to ordained ministry as Teaching Elder, but also to discern the person's gifts, skills, and call for the church.

PROCESS

The first tool the CPM uses to help discover this discernment is the process itself, which shall consist of two phases: Inquiry and Candidacy. Neither phase shall be less than one year in length. The total length of the process shall ordinarily be no more than 6 years. Ordinarily a candidate may not remain on the rolls of the presbytery more than three years after her/his final assessment.

INQUIRY

The inquiry phase is initiated by a person as s/he discerns a call to ministry. The person must be an active member in a particular Presbyterian Church (USA) congregation for at least six months prior to enrollment as an inquirer. The process begins as the member indicates her/his desire to be enrolled as an inquirer to the session of her/his local congregation and files the proper forms (Form 1) with the clerk of session. (Copies of Forms 1 and 2A should be sent to Stated Clerk through the presbytery office.) The session will contact the CPM moderator for instruction and to set up an orientation of the process for ministry. After the orientation, the session will consult with the person and if the session approves the person's enrollment as an inquirer by vote, shall make a recommendation to the CPM through the presbytery office or CPM moderator and assign a session liaison to the person. The CPM will schedule a meeting with the person and her/his session liaison, review the forms and interview the person seeking enrollment as an inquirer. If the CPM discerns a call to ministry and votes to enroll the person as an inquirer, s/he will be enrolled as an inquirer in the

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presbytery as of the date of the CPM action and the action will be reported at the next presbytery meeting. The Covenant Agreement Form will be signed by all parties before enrollment. The CPM will also assign a liaison to the inquirer and contact shall be made regularly.

During the inquiry phase, the CPM will use several tools for discerning the inquirer's gifts, skills, emotional state, and call to ministry. The following must be completed (or in the case of schooling, started) before the inquirer will be endorsed for candidacy.

- 1) Forms – the Presbytery of Wabash Valley requires the use of the denominational forms from the General Assembly. All forms must be filled out and submitted within the time set by the CPM. Other forms will be given, as necessary.
- 2) Theological Institution – though the Presbytery does encourage attendance at a PC(USA) seminary, the Presbytery of Wabash Valley does not require enrollment at one. A Masters of Divinity degree is required. If the inquirer is not enrolled in a PC(USA) theological institution, the CPM will require particular courses in polity, Reformed history and theology. A preaching class will also be required. Seminary level courses in both Greek and Hebrew, along with exegesis of Old and New Testaments, or a plan submitted to complete this course, will be required before the final assessment. Transcripts must be sent to the Presbytery office following each school year.
- 3) Midwest Ministry Development – a psychological assessment and career counseling from Midwest Ministry Development is required of all inquirers. The cost of the assessment will be divided between the inquirer's session and the CPM. The confidential record from the visit shall be released to all CPM members and CPM will discuss the results with the inquirer. The report and recommendations of Midwest Ministry Development are to be treated seriously in the discernment process by both the inquirer and the CPM.
- 4) Bible Content Exam – the Bible content Exam of the PC(USA) must be successfully completed with a passing grade of 70% or above.
- 5) Annual Consultations – at least once each year the inquirer will meet with the full CPM to discuss any issues relevant to her/his discernment process, set goals for the upcoming year and receive feedback from the CPM. 6) Other tools as deemed necessary by the CPM.

CANDIDACY

When an inquirer has completed the requirements for inquiry and has discerned a deepening sense of call, s/he must inform the session of her/his local church that s/he would like to seek a move to candidacy. The inquirer will complete Form 5A and all its requirements and submit them to the pastor or clerk of session, as well as, the presbytery office. The session shall interview the inquirer and if the session feels that a clear sense of call to ministry as Teaching Elder is present, may vote to endorse the inquirer as a candidate. Once that positive vote is taken, the inquirer must meet with the CPM and a vote must be taken whether to endorse the inquirer's request to move to the candidacy phase of the process. If the vote is positive, the inquirer will make an appearance on the floor of the next presbytery meeting for introduction and

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examination. The presbytery shall examine the inquirer on her/his personal faith, sense of call, and forms of Christian service. The inquirer's answers to questions 1 and 5 from Form 5A will be given to the presbytery in advance. Once the examination is complete, a vote is shall be taken. If the vote is positive, the person under care enters the candidacy phase, as the date of the vote.

During the candidacy phase, the CPM and the candidate will use a number of tools to discern the candidate's academic preparedness and pastoral skills. In addition to #1 and 2 from above tools of inquiry, the following tools will be employed:

- 1) Field Education – CPM may encourage specific forms of field education experience depending on the candidate. The theological institution's requirements for field education will be the standard for CPM's requirements.
- 2) Clinical Pastoral Education – one unit of CPE shall be completed before the final assessment. This unity will ordinarily take place at an accredited CPE site of the student's choosing.
- 3) Annual Consultations – at least once a year, the candidate will meet with the full commission to discuss any relevant issues to her/his discernment process, set goals for the upcoming year and receive feedback from the CPM.
- 4) Ordination Examinations – the four remaining ordination exams shall ordinarily be taken during or after the candidate's third year of seminary. If an examination is not passed, the CPM will assess with the candidate why failure occurred and ways to correct the inadequacies (course work, field education, tutoring, etc.). Candidates who have previously failed any or all the standard ordination exams twice or more are eligible to submit a written request to the CPM for an alternate means to show competence in the failed area(s). After review, consultation and discernment with the candidate, which may include a professional assessment of the candidate's difficulties, the CPM will determine whether the candidate should be authorized to re-take the exam(s) or should be recommended to the Presbytery of Wabash Valley for an alternative process. An alternate means shall only be considered when the CPM determines that the candidate is otherwise ready to receive a call and will be dealt with on a case-by case basis.

OPTION 1 –

A Task Group (appointed by CPM) will consult with resource people (seminary professors from McCormick Theological Seminary, persons in the presbytery who are or have recently been readers for ordination exams and others as needed) to create an exam similar in content to the standard exams where content and pastoral response may be solicited and evaluated. This may be given as an exam or as a paper to be prepared. Ordinarily, some sort of resource paper (similar to the Standard Ordination Resource papers for graders) will be proved for the committee. The Task Group and the candidate will agree on the time and conditions when the exam or paper will be prepared, including a time and date when the candidate will meet with the Task Group to have the examination. The candidate will then meet with the

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Task Group at which time the candidate will respond to oral questions and “defend” her/his work, similar to a dissertation defense. The candidate shall leave the room and the Task Group will evaluate and vote on competence. A majority vote means a successful meeting of the alternate means of measurement. A recommendation for an exception will then be taken to the presbytery for its vote (a three-fourths vote of the members present). The minutes of the presbytery will reflect reasons for the exception and that the alternative measures were met.

FINAL ASSESSMENT

Only after completion of all the assessment tools listed above and in conversation with the CPM, a person who has been in the candidacy phase for at least one year may be examined by the CPM and certified ready to receive a call. Before this time, the candidate cannot engage in conversation with a church that will result in an ordained position or send out a Personal Information Form (PIF). In preparation for the final assessment, the candidate shall fill out the required forms, prepare and preach a sermon for the CPM and be ready to discuss the exegetical method s/he used in preparation, and complete a final statement of faith. The candidate may also complete a PIF, but may not send it out until the CPM has given approval to do so. After the examination, the CPM will vote to certify the candidate ready to receive a call. If that vote is positive, the candidate will post her/his PIF and begin seeking a call. Once a call is established, s/he will follow the process for examination in the presbytery of call. If the process for seeking a call extends more than 3 years after the final assessment, the candidate will be examined again to be certified ready to receive a call and the CPM will discern with the candidate the reason for delay, the appropriateness of remaining on the rolls of the Presbytery of Wabash Valley, the candidate’s sense of call and other circumstances affecting her/his status as a candidate.

EXEMPTIONS

Exemptions to this process will be considered only for extraordinary circumstances when an inquirer or candidate has demonstrated an inability to complete a part of the process in the way described above and the CPM discern that valid reasons exist to waive or change a part of the process.

Book of Order, 2011-2013:

G-2.0607 Final Assessment and Negotiation for Service

A candidate may not enter into negotiation for his or her service as a teaching elder without approval of the presbytery. The presbytery shall record when it has certified a candidate ready for examination 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.

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satisfactory grades, together with the examination papers in the areas covered by any standard ordination examination approved by the General Assembly. Such examinations shall be prepared and administered by a body created by the presbyteries. G-2.0610 Exceptions
By a three-fourths vote, a presbytery may waive any of the requirements for ordination in G-2.06, except for those of G-2.0607d. If a presbytery judges that there are good and sufficient reasons why a candidate should not be required to satisfy the requirements of G-2.0607d, it shall approve by three-quarters vote some alternate means by which to ascertain the readiness of the candidate for ministry in the areas covered by the standard ordination examinations. A full account of the reasons for exception shall be included in the minutes of the presbytery and communicated to the presbytery to which an inquirer or candidate may be transferred.