

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM)
Procedures and Requirements Manual
Presbytery of Baltimore

February 20, 2013

Introduction

This document contains the current procedures and requirements governing the process of preparation for ordained ministry of a teaching elder as exercised by the CPM of the Presbytery of Baltimore. This document has been prepared in accordance with the Manual of the Presbytery, in consultation with Presbytery Council. It is vitally important that all persons involved in the process of preparation for ordained ministry (Pre-Inquirers, Inquirers, Candidates, CPM members, sponsoring sessions, session liaisons, pastors, etc.) familiarize themselves with the contents of G-2.06 (“Preparation for Ministry”) in the *Book of Order*, and also this document.

If any of the contents of this document should ever be found to be inconsistent with what is found in G-2.06, the rubrics of G-2.06 shall overrule the rubrics of this document in that instance. Please note, however, that there may be certain instances in which the rubrics of this document are more rigorous or stringent than G-2.06, and so as long as the rubrics in this document are permitted by G-2.06, they shall stand in effect.

In the event of a grievance with the policies and requirements stipulated in this document, an individual may bring it to the attention of CPM. If that fails to produce a satisfactory resolution, an individual has recourse to Presbytery via Council.

I. The Process

Those considering becoming teaching elders in the Presbyterian Church (USA) (PCUSA) go through four stages: *Pre-Inquirer, Inquirer, Candidate, and Ordained to the Ordered Ministry of teaching elder*. The inquiry and candidacy phases shall continue for a period of no less than two years, including at least one year as a candidate (*Book of Order* G-2.0602).

A. Pre-Inquiry Process

1. A *Pre-Inquirer* is a person who is beginning to explore the possibility of becoming a teaching elder. He/she begins the exploration by meeting with the session of her/his own church where he/she must have been an active member for at least six months (*Book of Order* G-2.0602). The session must complete the following actions before it takes the Pre-Inquirer under care and recommends that the CPM accept the Pre-Inquirer as an Inquirer:

- a. Ask the CPM to have one of its members orient the session on details of the

process and the session's responsibilities; and

b. Appoint a supportive liaison from session to serve between the session and the Pre-Inquirer throughout the process. The session liaison is responsible for staying in touch with the person, providing oversight and care on behalf of the session, and for regularly reporting to the session on his/her progress.

2. Ideally, this entire process begins prior to an individual's selection of a seminary, so that CPM can be helpful to the individual from the very earliest stages of their vocational discernment.. The Pre-Inquirer's next steps are:

a. to review and complete Forms 1, 2A, and 2B used by the denomination in the preparation for becoming a teaching elder Information and forms are available from <http://gamic.pcusa.org/ministries/prep4min/forms-used-preparation-ministry-process/>, and

b. to schedule a meeting with CPM to seek advancement to Inquirer. CPM's role at this meeting is to help discern the nature of the person's "call" by interviewing the person concerning her/his motivation for entering the process and her/his desire to become a teaching elder. The interview will also include considerations of the Pre-Inquirer's intentions concerning choice of seminary, family and financial considerations, and possible assistance from the local church., The Pre-Inquirer should consider a PCUSA seminary. In any event, the seminary chosen must be accredited by the Association of Theological Schools and must be acceptable to the presbytery (see G-2.0607c)

3. If a Pre-Inquirer is recommended by CPM to become an *Inquirer*, two or more members of CPM are assigned as liaisons for that person (ordinarily, one teaching elder and one ruling elder). The CPM liaisons will stay in routine contact with the Inquirer throughout the process so that communication is maintained between the person and the CPM. The CPM liaisons are responsible for oversight and care of the individual and for regularly reporting to CPM on his/her progress. Inquirers should understand that members of CPM rotate on and off the committee on a regular basis, so the assigned liaisons will likely change over time. However, CPM will make every effort to provide as much continuity as possible.

4. A Pre-Inquirer does not officially become an Inquirer until Presbytery votes to receive the individual as an Inquirer, upon recommendation of CPM, at the next regularly scheduled meeting of Presbytery. The Pre-Inquirer need not be present at the Presbytery meeting when this action takes place; however, if the Pre-Inquirer is present, she/he has the opportunity to be introduced to the Presbytery, but will not be asked any questions by the Presbytery.

B. Inquiry Process

1. The Inquirer will be encouraged to take the Bible Content Exam (see section III below) and to schedule her/his Vocational Assessment at one of the centers of the Ministry Development Council, Inc. (see section IV below) as soon as possible after becoming an Inquirer. The Inquirer will also be asked to sign an Informed Consent/Release form to allow CPM to administer a background check (see section XII below). The CPM Procedures and requirements are available at <http://www.baltimorepresbytery.org/index.php/leaders/cpm>. The Inquirer is expected to read and follow the procedures. Questions about the procedures and requirements in this Manual should be directed to the Inquirer's liaisons in a timely fashion.

2. An Inquirer may apply to become a *Candidate* at some point during seminary studies, provided that she/he

- a. has completed denominational Forms 5A and 5B,
- b. has completed a Vocational Assessment at one of the counseling centers of the Ministry Development Council, Inc. (<http://www.ministrydevelopment.org/centers.html>),
- c. has released the results of that assessment to CPM,
- d. has provided CPM with a copy of her/his most recent seminary transcript, and
- e. has received the endorsement of his/her church session to become a Candidate.

3. The Inquirer seeking status as a Candidate needs to provide the following four documents at least three weeks prior to meeting with CPM:

- a. an autobiographical statement about his or her faith journey, specifically including a description of what has led the individual to believe he or she is called to the ordered ministry of teaching elder
- b. a statement of personal faith which incorporates an understanding of the Reformed tradition;
- c. a statement of what it means to be Presbyterian, indicating how that awareness grows out of participation in the life of a particular church; and
- d. a statement of his or her understanding of the task teaching elders perform, including an awareness of his or her specific gifts for ordered ministry of teaching elder and of areas in which growth is needed.

All four documents should be approximately one page (each) in length. Upon submission of all these materials to CPM, the Inquirer meets with CPM for more intense examination concerning sense of call, progress in the process, and the direction that future ministry may take.

4. At this time, CPM shall make use of all relevant materials in the candidate's file (including transcripts, reports from field education supervisors, recommendations from pastors or other mentors, the report from the vocational assessment, etc.) as CPM determines whether to recommend to Presbytery that the individual be enrolled as a Candidate. CPM will also consult with the General Presbyter to receive his evaluation of the fitness of the inquirer. It should be remembered that one of the primary responsibilities of CPM is to help prepare candidates for ordered ministry of teaching elders.

5. If CPM recommends that the Inquirer become a Candidate, the Inquirer will appear before the Presbytery at a stated meeting to be examined about his/her sense of call to the ordered ministry of teaching elder. (Questions about theology, including the person's Statement of Faith, are out of order during this examination by the Presbytery.) An Inquirer does not officially become a Candidate until Presbytery votes to receive the individual as a Candidate. It should be noted that advancement to Candidacy should not be construed as a guarantee that a person will eventually be judged suitable for ordination. Rather, approval of the advancement is a sign that CPM and the Presbytery currently judge that the person's progress is sufficient for the individual to move to the next level of discernment.

C. Candidacy Process

1. The candidacy phase lasts at least one year. At the end of this period and if the way be clear in all other respects, including passing the required Ordination Exams (see section III below), the Candidate may request a "Final Assessment" from CPM. At least three weeks prior to appearing before CPM for this assessment, the Candidate must provide the CPM moderator with

a. an updated Statement of Faith The Statement of Faith should be 1 – 3 pages in length, using a standard 8½ X 11 inch page, without excessive shrinking of margins or font size.

b. a sample sermon

2. CPM will critique all the materials presented and interview the Candidate further. If CPM is fully satisfied as to the candidate's sense of call for ministry, theological fitness, and adequacy of preparation, CPM will complete Form 6 and recommend to presbytery that the candidate be examined by the presbytery. This examination is based primarily on the candidate's Statement of Faith, and questions on any other area of preparation or fitness may be asked as well. The CPM Moderator is allowed to raise an objection to the Moderator of the Presbytery if she/he feels that a question is inappropriate. Upon satisfactory completion of this examination on the floor of presbytery, the candidate may begin circulating her/his Personal Information Form ("PIF").

3. Upon receiving a call, but prior to final acceptance of the call, the candidate makes one final appearance on the floor of presbytery, to be examined on her/his sense of call to this particular ministry. (Questions about any matter *other* than sense of call to this particular ministry, including the person's sense of call in general or the person's theology, are out of order during this examination by the Presbytery.) Upon satisfactory completion of this final examination on the floor of presbytery, the candidate may be ordained to the ordered ministry of teaching elder in the PCUSA.

4. Preparations for the service of ordination may be completed prior to this final examination, but the ordination service itself must take place after this final examination. (This allows for an ordination to take place very soon after this final examination on sense of call to this particular ministry.)

5. The examination on theological fitness and the examination on sense of call to a particular ministry may be combined into one exam in unusual circumstances. The purpose of providing two different exams is to ensure that the presbytery is not voting on a candidate's theological fitness when an ordination date has already been scheduled.

II. Scholarships

Seminary debt is an issue of significant concern for many inquirers, candidates, and seminary graduates. CPM encourages inquirers and candidates to seek out financial assistance from as many sources as possible. A page containing information about scholarships available to members of Baltimore Presbytery is maintained at the presbytery website (www.baltimorepresbytery.org) and is updated periodically. In addition, CPM has very limited scholarship funds which inquirers or candidates may apply for through their liaisons to the committee.

III. Ordination Exams

1. There are five ordination exams provided by the General Assembly that must be passed in order to be ordained as a teaching elder in the PCUSA: Bible Content, Biblical Exegesis, Worship and Sacraments, Theological Competence, and Church Polity. These exams are offered twice a year. Full information about the exam schedule, format, application forms, deadlines, and fees is available at <http://gamec.pcusa.org/ministries/prep4min/standard-ordination-exams/>. The Bible Content exam is usually taken during the first full year of seminary, and Inquirers are encouraged to take it as early as possible.

2. The other four exams are usually taken as a group during the senior year of seminary, but only after the person has completed her/his language requirement in both Greek and Hebrew. The exams are usually taken at the seminary the student attends. If they are not offered at a particular seminary, arrangements can be made to have the student take his/her exams at a participating institution. Only in very special circumstances, and with the approval of the Presbytery, can the exams be administered elsewhere.

3. There is a fee to take each exam. CPM will pay for each Inquirer or Candidate to take each exam *once*. If an Inquirer or Candidate fails an exam, the cost of taking that exam a second time is the responsibility of the Inquirer or Candidate.

4. To register to take an exam, the Inquirer or Candidate must submit a completed application to the CPM moderator (along with a check for the cost of the exam, if the exam is being taken for a second or subsequent time). The CPM moderator will sign the form, arrange for payment of the fee through the presbytery office (unless it is a retake), and submit the materials to the Office of Examination Services. It is the responsibility of the Inquirer or Candidate to ensure that her/his application reaches the CPM moderator in a timely fashion. The process to take an exam begins on line and information is available at:

<http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/prep4min/standard-ordination-exams/>. Except under extraordinary circumstances the CPM moderator will approve taking exams only after appropriate courses have been passed.

5. Failing an ordination exam is not unusual. The overall “pass rate” each year usually ranges between 70 and 80 percent. Inquirers and Candidates should not assume that they will pass all five exams on their first attempt. Persons who have failed an exam should review the failed exam with their liaisons, pastors, or other parties who may be able to provide guidance.

6. If an Inquirer or Candidate has failed an examination twice, CPM will set up a discernment group to work with the individual prior to retaking the exam. When CPM has good reason to believe that repeated failures to pass an exam are not the result of lack of adequate knowledge on the part of the Inquirer or Candidate, CPM can recommend to Presbytery that the Inquirer or Candidate be allowed to use some alternate means by which to ascertain the readiness of the candidate for ministry in the areas covered by the standard ordination examinations. The process for pursuing an alternate means of meeting ordination examination standards is governed by the *Book of Order* (section G-2.0610) and the local policy of the Presbytery of Baltimore. The policy of the Presbytery of Baltimore is: An *ad hoc* examining committee of no more than five and no fewer than three members of the Presbytery shall be established by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry. A majority of the examining committee shall be teaching elders. The examining committee shall devise and administer an examination which is designed to demonstrate the candidate’s knowledge of the given area at the same depth required for passing the national examinations. The examination may have written and oral components. Grading of the examination shall be conducted by the examining committee, and shall be reported to the candidate and to the Committee on Preparation for Ministry in a timely manner. The candidate may pass with one dissenting vote from the membership of the *ad hoc* committee. The Committee on Preparation for Ministry shall report the results at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Presbytery. It should be understood that the grading of this alternate exam will be as rigorous as the grading by national readers in regularly administered exams. CPM is prepared to fail a locally examined Inquirer or Candidate if his/her work does not measure up to expected standards. 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.

7. All five examinations must be passed satisfactorily before a Candidate may request to have her/his Final Assessment for ordination.

8. Examinations are ordinarily returned to the student. Once the student has received the examinations and has reviewed the comments of the readers, the student must deliver the examinations to CPM. The examinations become part of the candidate's permanent file.

IV. Vocational Assessment

1. It is vitally important for the health and vitality of the PCUSA that it only ordain people to the ordered ministry of teaching elder who have a sufficient degree of psychological fitness. To that end, it requires that each Inquirer undergo a vocational assessment. This assessment includes a battery of tests and an interview with an appropriately licensed and credentialed psychologist. Inquirers must use one of the counseling centers of the Ministry Development Council, Inc. (<http://www.ministrydevelopment.org/centers.html>).

The Inquirer *must* authorize the center to release the report to CPM if the Inquirer wishes to continue in the process.

2. CPM does not allow Inquirers to undergo testing at any other centers. This is to help ensure the consistency of our process and fairness to all Inquirers.

3. CPM may conclude from this assessment that an Inquirer is not an appropriate candidate for ordination and may recommend to Presbytery that the individual be removed from the process, or alternatively may impose additional conditions or requirements on the individual before considering her/him for further advancement in the process. It is often the case that the vocational assessment will uncover psychological issues operating in an individual's life that may need to be addressed; these may range from the mild to the severe. If a vocational assessment recommends that the individual seek individual or group therapy, CPM Shall determine if the recommendation(s) will be enforced.

4. CPM will pay one-third of the cost of the vocational assessment. The Inquirer and/or the home church are responsible for the other two-thirds. Costs for travel, meals, and lodging are the responsibility of the Inquirer. The Inquirer should ask for financial assistance from her/his home church. Some centers are able to provide low-cost lodging. In clear cases of financial hardship, the Inquirer may request additional help from the CPM.

V. Other Denominations

From time to time ministers ordained in other denominations seek to become teaching elders in the PCUSA. Such persons must first confer with Baltimore Presbytery's Committee on Ministry (COM) and be referred to CPM by the COM moderator or by the Executive Presbyter. It becomes CPM's responsibility to ensure that the minister has sufficient credentials to engage in ministry in this denomination. CPM then interviews that person, creates a process of study and discernment as

necessary depending on the particular circumstances, and oversees that process. Helping the person build a sense of and an appreciation for PCUSA's Reformed theology is a crucial step in the process. There may be particular issues that need be carefully addressed by CPM. For example, an individual who demonstrates a commitment to "believer's baptism" may have issues with the Reformed tradition's understanding of infant baptism; or an individual who demonstrates a reticence about the ordination of women may have issues with the PCUSA's commitment to the full inclusion of women in the life and ministry of the church; or an individual who affirms a belief in God that is not Trinitarian in nature may have issues with the church's historic confessions of faith. Issues, such as these, need to be carefully addressed by CPM. Studies in or knowledge of biblical Greek and Hebrew and satisfactory completion of the five Ordination exams (see above) are part of the required process for those seeking transfer unless Baltimore Presbytery grants a waiver by a ¾ vote.

VI. Character of Life

As stated in the *Book of Order*, the manner of life of those called to exercise special functions in the church "should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world" (G-2.0104). An Inquirer or Candidate who demonstrates a tendency to engage in behavior that does not exemplify the gospel is not a suitable candidate for ordination. CPM can and will ask such individuals to withdraw from the ordination process voluntarily, and, if necessary, will recommend that the presbytery remove the individual from the process by vote.

Prior to completion of the process for ordination, each person shall attend a "Healthy Boundaries" or other sexual misconduct prevention training workshop administered by the presbytery.

VII. Seminary Grades

CPM requires each seminary student to release an authorized transcript to CPM at least once annually. If the seminary has some form of mid-course assessment, CPM or a representative may seek to participate, if only as an observer. Required courses cannot be taken pass/fail.

VIII. Languages

For both Greek and Hebrew, Baltimore Presbytery's CPM requires a semester-long (or the equivalent, with approximately 40 contact hours of class time) exegesis course in the language, separate from basic studies in each language.

IX. Parish Internship / Field Education

Baltimore Presbytery's CPM, and most seminaries, requires satisfactory completion of a church internship or field education. This often occurs following the first year of seminary. The church internship or field education can be either full-time (10 weeks) in the summer or part-time during the academic year, for a minimum of 400 contact hours. A report on the outcome of the internship or

field education must be submitted to CPM by a person in a supervisory role in the sponsoring church.

X. Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)

Baltimore Presbytery's CPM requires at least one unit of CPE. This can be done full-time during the summer or part-time during the school year. The CPE program must be accredited by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (APCE); a full list of such institutions is available at www.apce.org (as of this writing, there are five such institutions in the state of Maryland). A report from a CPE supervisor must be submitted to CPM at the conclusion of the program.

XI. Annual Consultations

CPM requires an annual consultation with each of its Inquirers and Candidates. The denominational Form 3 must be completed prior to the annual consultation, and the denominational Form 4 must be completed jointly by the Inquirer/Candidate and the Inquirer/Candidate's liaisons during or following the consultation. Currently, CPM is asking every Inquirer and Candidate to come to an annual consultation in August of each year; if that is absolutely impossible, the Inquirer or Candidate must make appropriate alternative arrangements with the committee *prior to* the date of that consultation.

XII. Background Checks

Prior to accepting a call to an ordainable position within the PCUSA, and prior to any internship or employment with a local congregation within the Presbytery of Baltimore, the Inquirer or Candidate will be asked to complete a background check. Inquirers will be asked to sign an Informed Consent/Release form for this purpose at the beginning of the inquiry process. The Informed consent/Release Form is available at: <http://gamc.pcusa.org/ministries/prep4min/forms-used-preparation-ministry-process/>

XIII. Gatekeeper Functions

1. CPM makes no guarantee to any Inquirer or Candidate that she/he will successfully complete the process and be ordained. Most people do, but CPM on occasion finds a person unsuitable for ordained ordered ministry of teaching elder in the PCUSA. This can happen at any point in the process and can occur for a variety of reasons, some of which may involve:

- Issues regarding character of life
- Unhealthy family relationships that may interfere with school and/or ministry
- Issues of physical and/or mental health (excluding ADA-type disabilities)
- Unfavorable vocational assessment
- Poor internship, field education, or CPE performance
- Weak sense of call
- Failure to demonstrate satisfactory readiness for ministry spiritually,

- psychologically, academically or ethically
- Lack of theological compatibility with the PCUSA
- Determination that the person is not gifted or fit for pastoral ministry.

2. While CPM is given the responsibility of caring for those in the process, it is also given the responsibility of serving as the denomination's gatekeeper for those seeking to be new teaching elders. CPM must and does take both these roles seriously. CPM recognizes that candidates are ordained for service in the entire denomination, not just for Baltimore Presbytery or a particular local church and thus maintain the highest standards for recommending candidates..

3. It is also the case, from time to time, that an individual who faithfully engages in the process of inquiry and discernment comes to realize, of their own accord, that she or he feels called to some vocation other than ordered ministry of teaching elder in the PCUSA. When that happens, CPM rejoices that the process of inquiry has been successful, and celebrates with the individual as he or she voluntarily withdraws from the ordination process and pursues his or her calling.

4. In the majority of cases, however, CPM is pleased and privileged to rejoice with individuals who are truly called by God to ordained to the ordered ministry as teaching elder in the Presbyterian Church (USA), and celebrates as the process of preparation comes to a close, as candidates are ordained, and as new chapters begin in the lives of these individuals and in the life of the church.