

Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM)
Presbytery of Boston
Guidelines toward Ministry

This document contains some guidelines and steps required to become a Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA), in accordance with the Book of Order.

Those who feel called by God to become a Presbyterian minister will go through the following stages: *Pre-Inquirer, Inquirer, Candidate*. The Inquirer and Candidate phases shall last for a period of at least two years, including one year as candidate. The goal of the process is to help individuals to acquire lifelong patterns of growth in ministry.

Pre-Inquirer:

- a) begins to explore the possibility of becoming a minister with the session of her/his PCUSA congregation, where she/he has been an active member for at least six months.
- b) If the session agrees, it will appoint a liaison from session, who will provide oversight and care on behalf of the session and will attend the Annual Consultations with the Inquirer.
- c) The Pre-Inquirer will complete denominational Forms 1, 2A, and 2B (available from CPM or at www.pcusa.org/prep4min) and schedule a meeting with CPM requesting to become an Inquirer. At this interview CPM will help discern the nature of the person's call, and discuss financial considerations as well as the choice of seminary.
- d) If CPM recommends the move to Inquirer, a liaison from among its members will be appointed. The liaison will stay in regular contact with the Inquirer throughout the process.
- e) Both the session and CPM will make the Inquirer aware of both the financial cost of the process as well as the impact the process has on the family.

Since CPM members rotate on and off, inquirers and candidates will likely have more than one liaison during the whole process.

Inquirer:

- a) The Inquiry phase will last a minimum of one year, but usually lasts two years, during which time the Inquirer continues to be an active member of her/his church and subject to the concern and discipline of the session.
- b) The purpose of the "inquiry" phase is to provide the church/session, the Inquirer, and
 - a. CPM an opportunity to explore the call together and to test the Inquirer's suitability for ministry of Word and Sacrament.
- c) Inquirers will meet with CPM annually and fill out denominational Form 3 before each annual consultation. At each meeting, goals for the coming year will be set (denominational Form 4).
- d) The Presbytery of Boston will support the Inquirer and provide guidance in regard to courses of study, familiarity with the Bible and the confessions.
- e) Before an Inquirer can move on to candidacy, she/he has to take a psychological evaluation exam at the The Danielsen Institute Clinic, 185 Bay State Road, Boston, MA 02215, phone: 617-353-3047; daninst@bu.edu. The cost is usually divided in 3 equal parts: 1/3 paid by the NEPPG, 1/3 by CPM and 1/3 by the Inquirer.
- f) The Inquirer applies to his/her session for its approval to move to candidacy.
- g) The Inquirer and her/his session have to complete denominational Forms 5A and 5B.
- h) Inquirer and liaison meet with CPM.
- i) CPM votes to confirm that the Inquirer is clearly called to Word and Sacrament and is able to pursue further Preparation for Ministry as a candidate.
- j) Inquirer meets with the Presbytery of Boston and presents her/his Faith Journey at a Stated Meeting. Presbytery votes to move to Candidacy.

Candidate:

- a) The candidacy phase lasts at least one year.
- b) The purpose of the “candidacy” phase is to prepare the Candidate fully to serve the church as minister of Word and Sacrament. “This shall be accomplished through the guidance and evaluation of the Candidate, using learning contacts with the context of supportive relationships” (BoO G-14.0405).
- c) The Candidate will meet with CPM annually and fill out denominational Form 3 before each annual consultation. At each meeting goals for the coming year will be set (denominational Form 4).
- d) The Candidate has to pass all Ordination Exams as required by the General Assembly to be ordained as a minister of Word and Sacrament in the PCUSA: Bible Content, Biblical Exegesis, Worship and Sacraments, Theological Competence, and Church Polity. See www.pcusa.org/exams
- e) The Candidate is required to do one semester of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). The CPE program must be accredited by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (APCE): www.apce.org
- f) The Candidate will do at least one year of Field work, chosen in consultation with CPM , which will ordinarily be in a Presbyterian Church which will not be her/his home church.
- g) The Candidate must provide CPM with a Statement of Faith before CPM’s final assessment.
- h) After the final, positive, assessment, the Candidate appears before Presbytery of Boston to discuss Statement of Faith.
- i) CPM certifies Candidate Ready to Receive a Call.
- j) CPM approves circulation of Personal Information Form (PIF) to explore obtaining a call and negotiate for his/her ministerial service.
- k) Candidates who have passed final assessment and been certified “ready to receive a call” continue to be under care of the CPM until they receive a call and are ordained. As candidates under care, they are to make an annual written report and consultation with their CPM (G-14.0421). The purpose of the consultation shall be for the valuation and nurture of candidates, to discuss such issues as sense of call, current participation in a local church, efforts to pursue a call, and personal circumstances that might be affecting pursuit of a call.

Because of the issues and problems faced by many newly ordained persons, it is important for support and caring to extend beyond the preparation stage. For instance, prior to her or his ordination, the Candidate’s session, theological institution and the presbytery responsible for her or his preparation (through its Committee on Preparation for Ministry and its Committee on Ministry) can actively help the Candidate become aware of what may be involved in her or his adjustment to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament.

- a) These issues include:
- b) The individual’s changing identity and role;
- c) The importance of on-going personal, spiritual and professional development, and
- d) self care;
- e) The nature of the specific call and the leadership style required;
- f) How she or he can negotiate clear and mutually satisfying expectations with the
 - a. calling church or organization;
- g) How to deal with conflict that may emerge in the congregation one serves;
- h) The presbytery’s structure and work and the responsibilities of presbyters.

From: **Preparation for Ministry Advisory Handbook**

<http://www.pcusa.org/prep4min/pdf/cpmmanual.pdf>

- i) The role of family and spouse and the relationship with them.