

## V. *Preparation for Ministry Process*

The preparation for ministry process involves two phases: Inquiry and Candidacy. These two phases are designed to explore the call, evaluate the gifts, and support the preparation of men and women who feel themselves called to be ministers of the Word and Sacrament (G-14.0401). To do this effectively, each presbytery charges a Committee on Preparation for Ministry to work closely with those persons within its congregations who wish to prepare themselves for this ordained office. Since the model for the ministry of the Word and Sacrament is the ministry of Jesus Christ, it is the Committee's particular responsibility to help these individuals grow toward maturity in Christ.

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***

The purpose of Inquiry is to provide opportunities for the church and for those who believe they may be called to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament to explore and test that call together. To make this exploration as effective as possible, a network of caring, supportive relationships is initiated—first, between the Inquirer and the church session, then with the presbytery through its Committee on Preparation for Ministry, and with the theological institution. In regular consultation with the Committee, the Inquirer evaluates the personal implications and the suitability of a church occupation, is guided in prayerful examination of his or her motivation, personal faith and experience in the congregation, and makes a serious assessment of the gifts needed by ministers of the Word and Sacrament comparing them with his or her own gifts. This phase also provides the church with opportunities to respond directly to the Inquirer's questions and concerns.

#### ***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 minister of the Word and Sacrament 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 minister of the Word and Sacrament.
- 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.
- 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 period shall be at least two years, at least one year of which shall be as a Candidate, required in G-14.0403 (See G-14.0473 for exception). A presbytery may assign to its Committee on Preparation for

- Ministry the power to enroll Inquirers, with the provision that the action be reported to the next stated meeting of the presbytery. (G-9.0403)
- 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, the Inquirer consults 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 in each of the five growth areas and together negotiate appropriate new goals.

*The presbytery shall require the inquirer or candidate to submit an annual written report on progress in studies and service to the church. The seminary or institution of theological education shall make an annual report on the progress of the inquirer or candidate toward preparation for ministry. The presbytery shall conduct an annual consultation for the evaluation and nurture of the inquirer or candidates. In no case shall an inquirer or candidate be excused from these annual consultations. (G-14.0421)*

## ***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 can demonstrate adequate promise for ministry by presenting

- (1) 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;
- (2) a statement of personal faith which incorporates an understanding of the Reformed tradition;
- (3) an analysis of at least one concept from the personal faith statement regarding what it suggests about God, humanity, and their interrelationships;
- (4) a statement of what it means to be Presbyterian, indicating how that awareness grows out of participation in the life of a particular church;
- (5) 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;

- (6) statement of his or her understanding of the task ministers of the Word and Sacrament perform, including an awareness of his or her specific gifts for ministry of the Word and Sacrament and of areas in which growth is needed.

### ***B. Phase 2: Candidacy***

The purpose of this phase is to provide opportunities for the church to support persons received as Candidates in their preparation for the ministry of the Word and Sacrament.

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 ministry of the Word and Sacrament.

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 stated clerk to become a Candidate for the office of Minister of the Word and Sacrament.
- 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.
- 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 ministry of the Word and Sacrament?
  - (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 ministry of the Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?
- 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. In consultations that occur at least once a year, 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 presbytery shall require the inquirer or candidate to submit an annual written report on progress in studies and service to the church. The seminary or institution of theological education shall make an annual report on the progress of the inquirer or candidate toward preparation for ministry. The presbytery shall conduct an annual consultation for the evaluation and nurture of the inquirer or candidates. In no case shall an inquirer or candidate be excused from these annual consultations. (G-14.0421)*

## **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 Word and Sacrament. 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 and is ordinarily ordained by the presbytery of care.
- b. Withdrawal by the Candidate;
- c. Removal by the presbytery;

#### ***4. Expected Outcomes of Candidacy***

By the end of the candidacy phase, each candidate to be ordained shall demonstrate readiness to begin ministry of the Word and Sacrament by

- a. presenting evidence of competence in the fields of theology, Bible, polity, and worship and Sacraments, ordinarily attested by completion of the requirements of G-14.0450; and evidence of ministerial skill attested in the supervised practice of ministry;
- b. presenting evidence of readiness to participate in a calling presbytery's plan for transition and of plans for continuing study and growth (G-11.0103n)
- c. expressing theological views compatible with the confessional documents of the church;
- d. expressing understanding of the meaning of the questions required for ordination (W-4.4003) informed by knowledge of the church in diverse settings;
- e. revealing commitment to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament 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;
- f. 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.

#### ***C. Requirements to be Certified Ready for Examination, Pending a Call (G-14.0450)***

To be certified by the presbytery responsible for the Candidate's preparation, each Candidate is required to fulfill the following:

1. demonstration of readiness to begin ministry of the Word and Sacrament as required in the Expected Outcomes above.
2. presentation of a diploma and a transcript showing satisfactory grades at a regionally accredited college or university.
3. in lieu of an anticipated diploma, presentation of a transcript from a theological institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools acceptable to the presbytery. This transcript shall show satisfactory grades and presentation of a plan to complete the theological degree including Hebrew and Greek and exegesis of the Old and New Testaments using Hebrew and Greek texts;
4. presentation of satisfactory grades with the examination papers in the five areas covered by the Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates.

Ordinarily, it takes at least two years to proceed from admission to the Inquiry Phase to ordination as a minister of the Word and Sacrament. During this time, the Inquirer (or Candidate) and members of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry strive to discover and be faithful to God's purpose. The Committee's recommendations to begin and to continue the Candidacy Phase are based on prayerful reflection, on common negotiations with the Candidate, and on

their mutual discernment that God has called that person and that he or she has adequately developed in response to that call.

When conducting final assessment and certifying candidates ready to seek a call, it is important for the Committee on Preparation for Ministry to give attention to, and prepare the candidates for, some of the first-call issues which include:

- self-understanding in their role as pastor
- help for understanding the congregation they will serve in terms of history, ethos, programs, and status in the community, and in relation to the denomination
- assistance in establishing an appropriate pastoral relationship style for their situation
- support in dealing with conflict that may emerge in the congregation

The candidates are to be reminded of the resources and programs available to them as newly ordained pastors: New Pastors Seminars, Seminary Debt Program, presbytery mentor programs and pastor support groups.

## ***VI. Some Constitutional Provisions***

### ***A. Time Requirements (G-14.0403)***

*“An inquirer shall have been a member of the sponsoring congregation for at least six months prior to the inquirer phase. The inquirer and candidacy phases shall continue for a period of no less than two years, including at least one year as a candidate.”*

### ***B. Exceptions and Waivers for Extraordinary Inquirers and Candidates (G-14.0470)***

The Advisory Committee on the Constitution recommended the following interpretation regarding the word “extraordinary” to the 203rd General Assembly(1991). This recommendation was adopted in 1992 (Minutes, 1992, Part I, pages 320-321) and has constitutional authority.

“For purposes of G-14.0470 (formerly G-14.0313), a candidate is deemed ‘extraordinary’ if he or she is unusually or exceedingly qualified to receive a call but, because of some exceptional and unusual reasons (determined by presbytery to be good and sufficient), he or she cannot or should not meet the ordinary requirements.

“A candidate who is not in fact exceptionally well-qualified is not deemed ‘extraordinary’ merely because he or she cannot meet the ordinary requirements for whatever reasons.

“In the context of G-14.0470, the word ‘extraordinary’ means rare; exceptional; and exceeding the common degree, limit or measure (Minutes, 1991, Part 1, page 394).

- a. An exception to the educational requirements listed in G-14.0471 indicating a specified alternative course of study, can be granted only by a three-fourths vote of the members of the presbytery present.
- b. Waiver of the examination requirements listed in G-14.0472 cannot be granted until an Inquirer or Candidate has twice failed to receive a satisfactory grade. Action by presbytery and the successful completion of an alternate pattern are required (see exception for candidate with disability, G-14.0472).
- c. Waiver of the time requirements listed in G-14.0473 is granted to an extraordinary Inquirer or Candidate only by three-fourths vote of the members of the presbytery present. *Under no circumstances is the time requirement to be less than one year as a candidate.* (G-14.0403)
- d. *“The foregoing exceptions shall hold if the presbytery has received the inquirer or candidate from another presbytery that approved the exemption of any of these requirements, the reception of the candidate having confirmed the action of the dismissing presbytery.”* (G-14.0474).

**C. Annual Consultation (G-14.0421)**

*“The presbytery shall conduct an annual consultation for the evaluation and nurture of the inquirer or candidate. In no case shall an inquirer or candidate be excused from these annual consultations.”* (G-14.0421)

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry is given several options for conducting an annual consultation. The provisions are intended to underscore the importance of these mandatory consultations:

According to the old Book of Order, presbytery, together with the session and the Inquirer or Candidate, shall bear necessary expenses of the annual consultation, which shall be concerned with the spiritual growth and needs of the individual, the financial planning for his or her educational program, and with his or her relation to the church and progress in the program of study leading to ordination for ministry. The annual consultation may be held by the entire committee or may be carried out by persons appointed by the committee either from its own membership or with similar responsibilities in a presbytery within which the inquirer or candidate is pursuing a course of study or engage in other approved service, except in the case of the final assessment, which should be conducted by the committee on preparation for ministry of the candidate’s presbytery.

Each consultation shall include a decision, made by the whole committee, whether to continue or terminate the period of inquiry or candidacy. This decision shall be reported to the presbytery.

**D. Service in Covenant Relationship (G-14.0420)**

*“The committee on preparation for ministry shall monitor the covenant among presbytery and inquirers and candidates and the session. Inquirers and candidates shall be encouraged to engage in some form of supervised service to the church. The advisory handbook for committees on preparation for ministry shall provide guidance for supervision, evaluation, and reports on the service and preparation*

*for ministry of inquirers and candidates. No inquirer or candidate who has not been previously ordained as an elder may serve as moderator of a session, administer the Sacraments, or perform a marriage service. An inquirer or candidate previously ordained as an elder may be authorized to administer the Lord's Supper. (See G-6.0304, G-7-0306, G-10.0103, G-11.0103z, and G-14.0562.)"*

Field education assignments that are under the supervision of a theological institution do not require presbytery approval; however, field education assignments that place an Inquirer or Candidate as the student intern having sole pastoral responsibility for the life of a church require the counsel and oversight of the committee on ministry having jurisdiction over the church. An Inquirer or Candidate shall not undertake to serve a church, even as a temporary supply, without the approval of the presbytery having jurisdiction over the church as well as the approval of the Inquirer's or Candidate's presbytery.

A previously commissioned lay pastor who becomes an Inquirer or Candidate may continue to be authorized to administer sacraments in accordance with the presbytery's previous grant of authority under G-14.0562.

***E. Negotiation for Service (G-14.0440)***

*"A candidate who has completed two full years of theological education or its equivalent, who has had an annual consultation within the previous year, and who has successfully completed all ordination examinations or has received presbytery's certification of readiness according to G-14.0472 may, with approval of the committee on preparation for ministry (CPM) and the appropriate committee on ministry, enter into negotiation for his or her ministerial service. For candidates who have not yet completed the two years of theological education or successfully completed all ordination examinations, the presbytery of care may, by three-fourths vote, permit a candidate to proceed to negotiate for service prior to certification of readiness to received a call."*

***F. When Ordination Exams May Be Taken (G-14.0431)***

*"Inquirers or candidates are encouraged to take the Bible Content Examination in their first year of seminary. The other four examinations may be taken by inquirers or candidates after completion of two full years of theological education. These four examinations shall only be taken upon approval by the committee on preparation for ministry of the inquirer's or candidate's presbytery."*

***G. Transfer of Covenant Relationship (G-14.0461)***

*"A presbytery may transfer the covenant relationship of an inquirer or candidate to another presbytery, but only with the approval of the receiving presbytery and the inquirer or candidate. An inquirer or candidate shall not transfer her or his membership to a particular church under the jurisdiction of another presbytery without the approval of the presbytery responsible for the person's preparation for ministry. Whenever a presbytery approves such a transfer, it shall send to the other presbytery a certificate of its approval, its records concerning the individual, and the reasons for the request for transfer. Failure of an inquirer or candidate to follow this procedure shall result in the forfeiture of standing as an inquirer or candidate. No presbytery may restore the candidate's status except by beginning again at the inquiry phase."*

***H. Removal from Covenant Relationship (G-14.0463)***

*“An inquirer or candidate may, after consultation with the session and the committee on preparation for ministry, withdraw from covenant relationship. A presbytery may also, for sufficient reason, remove an individual’s name from the roll of inquirers or 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. In both instances, prior to final action, the committee on preparation for ministry shall make a reasonable attempt to give the inquirer or candidate and other parties of interest an opportunity to be heard by that committee.”*

The presbytery may arrange for the continued guidance and support of those who withdraw or are removed from the roll of Inquirers or Candidates.

**I. Final Assessment (G-14.0450)**

*“In the final year of theological education or when a candidate has satisfied all of the requirements of this section, and before the candidate has received a call, the committee on preparation for ministry of the candidate’s presbytery shall conduct a final assessment of the candidate’s readiness to begin ordained ministry. A summary of this assessment shall be reported to the presbytery and shall be transmitted to a calling presbytery when requested. The committee of preparation for ministry shall report to the presbytery when it has certified a candidate ready for examination for ordination, pending a call. This consultation shall focus on the outcomes of inquiry and candidacy and shall include all the requirements of certification:*

*“a. demonstration of readiness to begin ministry of the Word and Sacraments as required to fulfill the candidacy phase of preparation;*

*“b. presentation of a transcript showing satisfactory grades at a regionally accredited college or university, together with a diploma;*

*“c. presentation of a transcript from a theological institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools acceptable to the presbytery, the transcript showing satisfactory grades, and presentation of a plan to complete the theological degree including Hebrew and Greek and exegesis of the Old and New Testaments using Hebrew and Greek texts;*

*“d. presentation of satisfactory grades together with the examination papers in the five areas covered by the Presbyteries’ Cooperative Committee on Examinations for Candidates.”*

**J. Location of Ordination (G-14.0481) and (G-14.0484)**

*“The presbytery placing the call to a candidate for ministry shall ordinarily examine and, contingent upon the candidate’s successful completion of that examination and all requirements in G-14.0450, the presbytery responsible for the candidate’s preparation for ministry shall ordinarily ordain the candidate.”*

*“The presbyteries and the candidate may agree that the ordination take place in the calling presbytery, in which case the presbytery may ordain and install the candidate at the same time at a service of worship in the presence of the calling congregation.*

**K. Examination and Ordination (G-14.0480, G-14.0482)**

*“Ordination for the office of minister of the Word and Sacrament is an act of the whole church carried out by the presbytery, setting apart a person to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament.”*

*“The candidate shall appear before the presbytery and shall make a brief statement of personal faith and of commitment to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament. The presbytery shall receive the report of its appropriate committee that the candidate has completed all requirements, and has been certified ready for ordination pending approval of the call. The report shall include a summary of waivers and exceptions of requirements granted. The presbytery may conduct further examination of the candidate’s Christian faith and views in theology, the Bible, the Sacraments, and the government of the church as it deems necessary. If the presbytery is fully satisfied of the candidate’s qualification, it shall approve the call and vote to proceed to his or her ordination and installation.”*

***L. Integration***

Every call to a candidate shall be accompanied by a description of the presbytery’s plan for the integration of new ministers into the life and work of presbytery (G-11.0103n)