

PRESBYTERY OF ALBANY

COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

MANUAL OF OPERATIONS¹

¹ This Manual of Operations is based upon *Newton Presbytery's Preparation for Ministry Policies* and adapted for use by Albany Presbytery and its Committee on Preparation for Ministry.

Table of Contents

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION.....	1
PRESBYTERIAN PRINCIPLES OF ORDINATION	1
MANUAL PREFACE	2
PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY PROCESS.....	3
COMMITTEE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND ROLE	4
DELEGATED ACTIONS AS A COMMISSION OF PRESBYTERY	4
LIAISONS WITH THE INQUIRER/CANDIDATE	5
SESSION LIAISON	5
COMMITTEE LIAISON	5
BECOMING AN INQUIRER.....	6
Purpose	6
Requirements	6
Process	6
Suitability for Ordered Ministry.....	7
BECOMING A CANDIDATE	8
Purpose	8
Requirements	8
Process	8
Fitness and Readiness	9
DURING INQUIRY AND CANDIDACY	10
General.....	10
Annual Consultation	11
Psychological Evaluation	11
Personnel File	12
EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS.....	12
Seminaries of, and related to, the Presbyterian Church (USA)	12
Course Requirements.....	13
Field Education	13
Clinical Pastoral Education	13
Transcripts.....	14
ORDINATION EXAMINATIONS	14
Bible Content Examination	14
Remaining Examinations	14
BECOMING READY – FINAL ASSESSMENT.....	14
General.....	14
Process	14
CIRCULATION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION FORM	15
FOLLOWING APPROVAL FOR ORDINATION	16
ORDINATION PLANS.....	16

FINANCIAL MATTERS.....	16
Expense Reimbursement.....	16
Financial Aid	16
Application Procedures	17
Summary of Financial Responsibilities	17
WAIVERS AND EXCEPTIONS.....	17
APPENDIX ONE – CHECKLIST.....	18
APPENDIX TWO – PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY FORMS.....	20
APPENDIX THREE – FINANCIAL AID REQUEST FORM	21
APPENDIX FOUR – POLICIES ON COMMISSIONED RULING ELDERS (CREs)	24
The Role of Commissioned Ruling Elders.....	24
Use of Commissioned Ruling Elders	24
Qualifications of Commissioned Ruling Elders.....	25
Oversight and Supervision.....	25

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

We are delighted that you wish to discern a call to ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)! The Committee on Preparation for Ministry (“CPM”) of Albany Presbytery is here to help you along this journey.

We believe that all Christians are called to ministry in their baptism. The question is not so much “if” you are called but “how” you are called. You will be in a discernment process to determine if you want to engage in ministry as a teaching elder/minister of word and sacrament, a commissioned ruling elder, or in some other role. Discerning a call is not simple, in part because there are qualities and characteristics you’ll need in professional ministry that cannot be taught in seminary. Getting top grades in seminary and meeting all the requirements may still not mean you are called to this avenue of ministry. Self-understanding, interpersonal communication skills, self-discipline in reaching goals, keeping confidences, applying theological reflection appropriately, and making use of constructive criticism are just some of the issues we’ll address with you. It will be helpful to be open to a variety of ministry contexts so that your call can be clarified and affirmed.

As we work with you in your preparation for ministry, we expect you to be proactive. *While a committee representative will be assigned to help you, the initiative rests with you to complete your requirements in a timely manner, as well as to stay in touch with your committee liaison.* This is an opportunity to display professionalism, initiative and responsibility. This will be a new experience as you move from being a church member who receives the ministry of others to being the one caring for others. The process is designed to challenge you, as well as to affirm you. It is our job to ensure that you are as well prepared as possible for professional ministry. Please do not hesitate to contact your committee liaison, as well as your session liaison from your sponsoring church. We all want you to succeed in your discernment process.

PRESBYTERIAN PRINCIPLES OF ORDINATION

The requirements of Part II of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (“Book of Order”), the Advisory Handbook on Preparation for Ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (“Advisory Handbook”) and the Manual of Operations of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry of Albany Presbytery (“Manual”) guide all preparations for ministry. They are central to the theology of call to ministry in the Presbyterian Church – a call to ministry must be perceived by the individual and confirmed by the Church through the Presbytery. The process of discernment of this call is a partnership involving the individual, their church and session, and the presbytery.

"Presbyterians believe in ‘the ministry of all the baptized’ – that all church members, regardless of their occupational choice, are engaged in ministry. That is their Christian vocation (G-1.0304). Some among them may be called by the Holy Spirit, through the church, to serve as teaching elders fulfilling the functions of the ministry of the Word and Sacrament. That ministry, then, is one among many occupations through which men and women express their God-given interests and abilities in life and daily work. Response to this calling, as to every other is approached through a careful process of exploration and testing carried on within the community of faith during which gifts and motivations are evaluated in light of the needs of the church and the world" (Advisory Handbook, pgs. 20-21).

"The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is firmly grounded in the Reformed tradition in its relationships with men and women who feel themselves called by God to be teaching elders serving in the ministries of the Word and Sacrament. Both in exploring with these persons their sense of vocation and in all subsequent procedures leading to ordination, the Reformed understanding of the church underlies what the Book of Order calls "full preparation" for ministry (G-2.0601)" (Advisory Handbook, pg. 20).

"Preparation for ordination as a teaching elder in the PC (USA) is not like certification programs where by completing all the requirements you are guaranteed to reach the goal at the end. Candidacy is about 'provid[ing] for the full preparation of persons to serve the church as teaching elders ... through the support, guidance, and evaluation of a candidate's fitness and readiness for a call to ministry requiring ordination' (G-2.0604)" (Advisory Handbook, pg. 4).

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry of Albany Presbytery will endeavor to support, encourage and guide inquirers and candidates through prayer, actively working alongside inquirers and candidates and using its collective insight with the Spirit's leading. As an individual moves through the process according to the guidelines provided, and maintains regular and open contact with the persons and committees involved, they can expect a rich and rewarding experience. For inquirers and candidates who enter into the process, there is a sense of solemn obligation to God and to the church. In some cases, this means that it is the individual's responsibility to recognize and accept the fact that their call to ministry may be other than as a teaching elder. It is the presbytery's obligation to develop effective means of testing and validating the calls of those seeking to become teaching elders, providing them with guidance and oversight, and bringing to active candidacy those with appropriate abilities and motivation.

MANUAL PREFACE

In response to an action by the 216th General Assembly (2006), which was subsequently approved by the presbyteries, a major revision of chapter 14 ("Ordination, Certification, and Commissioning") of the Form of Government in the Book of Order occurred. As part of that revision, a number of specific procedural requirements related to "Preparation for the Office of Minister of Word and Sacrament" (G-14.0300) and "Ordination for the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament" (G-14.0400) in the 2005-2007 Book of Order were removed from the constitution and placed in the Advisory Handbook. As expressed in the introduction to the 2007 Advisory Handbook, these changes were "intended to encourage the church's movement toward a more flexible, less regulatory polity. Such a polity recognizes that there may be different and equally acceptable ways to uphold the national standards for preparation, ordination, installation, and the practice of ministry" (i).

The policies contained in this Manual are drawn from both the Advisory Handbook and the Book of Order. Since the Manual only summarizes portions of both the Advisory Handbook and the Book of Order, those preparing for ordination as well as those serving on the CPM should be familiar with the requirements contained in the Book of Order and the Advisory Handbook. The Advisory Handbook can be found at <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/>. If, at any time now or in the future, this document conflicts with any part of the Book of Order, the Book of Order takes precedence. In addition, these requirements take precedence over seminary requirements.

The following policies contained in this Manual have been adopted by Albany Presbytery to guide its CPM, inquirers, candidates and churches as they work together to develop leaders to serve the church, to the glory of God, "discerning and developing gifts in individuals so they can serve others" (Advisory Handbook, pg. 2).

This Manual contains the usual procedures required of inquirers and candidates by the CPM of the Albany Presbytery. While these procedures are informed by the Book of Order, we recognize that each inquirer or candidate is a unique person with unique strengths and needs. These procedures are guidelines and may be altered to meet the uniqueness of individuals. However, you should not assume that they will be altered. Each individual should carefully discuss with the CPM their situation and how their situation can best be met within the requirements of the Book of Order and Advisory Handbook. Since the CPM must function under the mandates of the Book of Order and the Advisory Handbook, every inquirer and candidate is also expected to know the requirements of these documents. It is therefore important for all those considering being inquirers or candidates to know the requirements in the Book of Order, the Advisory Handbook and this Manual. You should know what is required of you, know what is coming up next, and plan ahead.

PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY PROCESS

"The essential role of teaching elders is set forth in both the Bible and in the church's constitutional documents. Among its key concepts are the following:

- Ordered ministries are a gift of God to the church so that all God's people may be equipped for ministry (Ephesians 4:1-13).
- Teaching elders in particular equip all the baptized for their ministry by proclaiming the good news in Word and Sacrament, teaching faith / modeling faithfulness, joining with deacons in care for people, and together with ruling elders ensuring that the church's life is governed in an orderly way (cf G-2.0501).
- The church actively seeks and ordains persons whose gifts and abilities equip them for the ministry of the Word and Sacrament (G-2.0104); if a person ordained to this ministry is later called by God to other work, the church can release him or her from ordained office (G-2.0507).
- A person experiences God's call to ministry privately as an inner urgency. The church, however, experiences that call publicly as it affirms that individual's gifts for ministry and confirms God's call through the acts of ordination and installation (G-2.0103)" (Advisory Handbook, pg. 21).

"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 either are personally exploring their sense of a call to ordered ministry as a teaching elder or have been encouraged by the faith community to consider the possibility that God is calling them to that particular ministry. The model for the ministry of the teaching elder is the ministry of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the church's responsibility, acting primarily through the session of the person's congregation and the presbytery, is to help these individuals grow toward maturity in Christ and a deeper understanding of their place in Christ's ongoing ministry through the church" (Advisory Handbook, pg. 30).

Both the inquiry phase and the candidacy phase of the process nurture and test the individual's development in five key areas (Advisory Handbook, pg. 31):

- **Education for Ministry:** This 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 role of teaching elder.
- **Spiritual Development:** This 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:** This provides opportunities to reflect on how an individual relates to others, one's own leadership style, and what this means in terms of being a teaching elder.
- **Personal Growth:** Here a person reflects on who they are, what areas they need to develop, how to understand their call, and how to develop personal stewardship.
- **Professional Development:** This helps people develop specific skills that will enhance their effectiveness as teaching elders 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 Candidacy Phase, the individual's progress is measured through the formulation of covenant agreements (G-2.0601) that set out 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 CPM as they discern the person's suitability for this form of ministry and evaluate readiness to be examined and ordained as a teaching elder” (Advisory Handbook, pg. 31).

It would be wise to seriously consider the options available outside the conventional parish ministry. Students should be aware of the current employment situation within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

COMMITTEE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND ROLE

The CPM is concerned with the discernment of an inquirer's call to ministry and with a candidate's preparation to respond to that call. Guidance and support for inquirers and candidates are fostered through responsibilities shared by the committee with seminaries, sessions and presbytery.

During the phases of inquiry and candidacy the individual continues to be an active member of his or her congregation and subject to the concern and discipline of the session. In matters relating to preparation for ministry, the individual is subject to the oversight of the presbytery within the context of their covenant relationship (G-2.0605).

DELEGATED ACTIONS AS A COMMISSION OF PRESBYTERY

The CPM has been given authority by the presbytery to act as its delegated commission in the following areas:

- To receive inquirers
- To remove an individual from the inquirer status
- To execute annual consultations with inquirers and candidates
- To give permission to a candidate to circulate their Personal Information Form
- To transfer inquirers and candidates to other presbyteries
- To receive inquirers and candidates by transfer from other presbyteries

The CPM offers the following guidelines and requirements, with the understanding that it may modify or change them where permitted by the Book of Order.

LIAISONS WITH THE INQUIRER/CANDIDATE

SESSION LIAISON

The session of the individual's home church will designate an elder to serve as liaison to the inquirer/candidate. The inquirer/candidate and their session liaison should make contact at least once per quarter, and more often if the situation warrants.

Recommended duties of the session liaison:

- Learn the background of the inquirer or candidate, if it is not already known.
- Stay in touch via personal visits, phone calls or emails. Become acquainted in ways that seem natural to both the liaison and the inquirer/candidate.
- Take an interest in their academics, field education, annual consultation and other activities related to their preparation for the ministry of teaching elder.
- Share with the CPM, especially at the time of annual consultation, any areas of particular need which the inquirer/candidate may have, either financial or personal.
- Identify ways to keep the congregation aware of the progress of the inquirer/candidate.
- Initiate conversation with the session on the possibility of providing financial assistance or other tangible support. Consider, with the session, the possibility of assisting in the payment of necessary expenses incurred, especially with regard to the annual consultation.
- At the presbytery meeting at which the candidate is examined for ordination, make sure someone has been appointed to go outside of the meeting to be with the candidate and their family when presbytery is making its decision.
- Be present at the service of ordination and/or installation.
- Pray.
- Become acquainted with this Manual so that all requirements and procedures are known and the liaison can provide timely support.
- Periodically discuss with the session the progress of inquirer/candidate.

In summary, the liaison should be a friend and offer a personal, moral and spiritual interest in the inquirer or candidate's training for the ministry. Hopefully, in performing these tasks, the liaison will also grow in grace and faith.

COMMITTEE LIAISON

A member or members of the CPM will be assigned to serve as a liaison with each inquirer/candidate. The inquirers/candidates and their committee liaison shall make contact at least quarterly, and more often if the situation warrants. Annually, the inquirer/candidate shall meet in person. The liaison should keep the CPM updated on the inquirer's/candidate's progress on goals, be present at presbytery and CPM meetings as appropriate, and act as a channel to help with any concerns or questions which the inquirer/candidate may have. In addition, the committee liaison should connect regularly with the inquirer's/candidate's session liaison.

BECOMING AN INQUIRER

Purpose

The purpose of the inquiry phase is to provide an opportunity for the church and those who believe themselves called to ordered ministry as teaching elders to explore that call together so that the presbytery can make an informed decision about the inquirer's suitability for ordered ministry. (G-2.0603) (Advisory Handbook, pg. 38)

Requirements

To be enrolled as an inquirer, the applicant shall be a member of the sponsoring congregation, shall have been active in the work and worship of that congregation for at least six months, and shall have received the endorsement of the session of the sponsoring congregation. (G-2.0602) (Advisory Handbook, pg. 38)

The stated clerk of the presbytery shall be asked to carry out a criminal background check on all applicants. The results must be received by the CPM prior to accepting the applicant as an inquirer.

Process

- The applicant should discuss their plans with their pastor.
- If necessary, the sponsoring session shall contact CPM to understand the process and their role.
- The applicant must obtain and complete Forms 1A ("Application to be enrolled by Presbytery as an Inquirer"), Form 1B ("Questions for Reflection"), Form 1C ("Financial Planning for Theological Education"). Forms 1A and 1B should be submitted to the applicant's session. **(All forms referred to in this Manual can be found and downloaded at <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/forms-used-preparation-ministry-process/>.)**
- The applicant must meet with the session of their church. The session must take formal action on the application to become an inquirer. If the session endorses the application, the clerk of session will complete Form 1D ("Session Evaluation and Recommendation") and send it to the CPM of Albany Presbytery. The session will also appoint a liaison to work with the applicant and the CPM.
- The applicant must have copies of transcripts and diplomas from all college work (undergraduate and graduate) sent to the CPM.
- The applicant must meet with the CPM. The CPM will review the applicant's background information (Forms 1A-D). The CPM will discuss with the applicant their journey of faith, their exploration and testing of their call to ministry, as well as their educational plans.

- If approved by the CPM, Form 2A “Report of Consultation regarding application”) shall be completed. This form records the official results of the application and establishes the growth objectives agreed to by the new inquirer and the CPM. The completed report is sent to the new inquirer, the theological institution and the sponsoring session. Form 2B (“Covenant Agreement and Inquirer Release”) will also be signed by the applicant, the moderator of the sponsoring session and the moderator of CPM to acknowledge the new covenant relationship. In addition, CPM will present the applicant’s name to the presbytery to be enrolled as an inquirer. In preparation for that meeting, the applicant must prepare a brief written paragraph of biographical information that might include schooling, church relationship, volunteer work or employment, family, children, interests, etc. The CPM encourages the applicant to be present at this presbytery meeting so that they may be introduced to the presbytery.

Note: The CPM must approve the applicant’s educational plans, specifically the theological institution where education requirements are completed. Attending a seminary of or related to the PC (USA) is strongly recommended; other seminaries that are members of the American Association of Theological Seminaries will require special consideration. PC (USA) seminaries are listed under “Educational Requirements.” Every educational program must be so planned as to complete all requirements for ordination, including the requirements of the CPM as set forth herein.

[Suitability for Ordered Ministry](#)
(Advisory Handbook, pgs. 41-43)

A decision will be made at the end of the inquiry phase as to whether the overall experience of this phase points toward a future in the ministry of teaching elder for the inquirer, or whether his or her gifts and passions suggest a better fit with other ministries of the church. A successful outcome of inquiry is finding that area of ministry whether or not it means continuing further in preparation as a candidate for ordered ministry as a teaching elder.

The following six areas are part of what is used to discern the outcome of the inquiry phase:

1. The inquirer should be able to articulate an understanding of Christian vocation in the Reformed tradition and how it relates to his or her personal sense of call.
2. She or he should be able to express their personal faith in a manner that demonstrates an understanding of the Reformed tradition.
3. He or she should be able to expound upon at least one concept from that personal faith statement at greater depth explaining what it suggests about God, humanity, and their interrelationships.
4. The inquirer should be able to explain what it means for them to be Presbyterian, indicating how that awareness grows out of participation in the life of a particular church.
5. She or he should be able to discuss their personal and cultural background as it relates to the ministry of Word and Sacrament, including a concern for maintaining personal spiritual, physical and mental health. Inquirers should also be able to relate their own personal cultural location to changes in American society and its increasingly multicultural character.
6. He or she should be able to express their understanding of the tasks teaching elders perform, including expression both of his or her specific gifts for this particular ministry and of areas in which further growth is needed.

BECOMING A CANDIDATE

Purpose

The purpose of the candidacy phase is to provide for the full preparation of persons to serve the church as teaching elders. This shall be accomplished through the presbytery's support, guidance, and evaluation of a candidate's fitness and readiness for a call to ministry requiring ordination. (G-2.0604)

A presbytery's decision to move an individual from inquiry to the candidacy phase indicates a communal discernment of that person's suitability for ordered ministry as a teaching elder. If the presbytery is still uncertain about whether an inquirer's gifts are suitable for the ministry of Word and Sacrament, the individual needs to continue in the inquiry phase rather than establish false expectations by prematurely transitioning to candidacy. (Advisory Handbook, pgs. 43-44)

Requirements

- The inquirer will have passed the Bible Content Exam prior to seeking candidacy.
- The inquirer will have completed at least one full year of seminary while under care of the CPM.
- The inquirer will have participated in a psychological evaluation as set forth under "Educational Requirements."

Process

The CPM suggests that the request for candidacy status be completed by inquirers between the end of the first year of seminary and the beginning of the third year of seminary.

- Form 5A ("Application to be Enrolled by the Presbytery as a Candidate") must be completed and submitted to the CPM along with the following statements (to be no longer than one page each):
 - 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.
 - A statement of personal faith, which incorporates an understanding of the Reformed tradition.
 - An analysis of at least one concept from the personal faith statement regarding what it suggests about God, humanity and their inter-relationships.
 - A statement of what it means to be Presbyterian, indicating how that awareness grows out of participation in the life of the church.
 - 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.
 - A statement of his or her understanding of the tasks Ministers of the Word & Sacrament perform, including an awareness of his or her specific gifts for ministry in the Word & Sacrament and areas in which growth are needed.
- The inquirer must meet with the session of their church. The session must take formal action to endorse the application to become a candidate. If the session endorses the

application, the clerk of session will complete Form 5B and will send it to the chairperson of the CPM. The session will also appoint (or reappoint) a liaison to work with the inquirer and the CPM.

- The inquirer must meet with the CPM to discuss the statements and application. The CPM must take formal action to endorse the application and must report this action to the presbytery.
- If the CPM endorses the application, it shall present its recommendation to the presbytery for approval and the inquirer shall be examined for candidacy on the floor of presbytery at the next most convenient meeting. No formal statement of faith will be presented at this time, but the inquirer must submit a “Statement of Call” along with a short biography (no longer than a page) to the presbyters as part of the presbytery docket for the meeting which the inquirer will attend. The presbytery may wish to ask further questions of the inquirer with respect to the inquirer's Christian faith and journey, forms of Christian service undertaken, motives for seeking the ministry, and overall preparation.
- If the presbytery votes affirmatively, the inquirer shall be enrolled as a candidate under the care of the Albany Presbytery. At that time the candidate formally agrees to accept the presbytery's guidance, support and supervision in her or his preparation for becoming a teaching elder. Form 5C “Report of Consultation to become a Candidate” shall be completed. This form records the official results of the application and establishes the growth objectives agreed to by the candidate and the CPM. The completed report is sent to the candidate, the theological institution and the sponsoring session. Form 5D (“Covenant Agreement and Candidate Release”) will also be signed by the applicant, the moderator of the sponsoring session and the moderator of CPM to acknowledge the new covenant relationship.

Fitness and Readiness

A candidate may not enter into negotiation for his or her service as a teaching elder (whether through the Church Leadership Connection or more informal means) without the approval of the CPM upon completion of all the denominational requirements for “negotiation for service” or “certification for readiness to be examined by a presbytery for ordination, pending a call” (which always carries with it permission to “negotiate for service”). ^[ES01] The presbytery shall record when the CPM has certified a candidate ready for examination by a presbytery for ordination, pending a call (see “Becoming Ready – Final Assessment” for more information). Evidence of readiness to begin ordered ministry as a teaching elder shall include:

- A candidate's wisdom and maturity of faith, leadership skills, compassionate spirit, honest repute, and sound judgment;
- A transcript showing graduation, with satisfactory grades, at a regionally accredited college or university;
- A transcript from a theological institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools acceptable to the presbytery, showing a course of study that includes the subject areas listed under “Educational Requirements,” satisfactory grades in all areas of study, and graduation or proximity to graduation;
- Examination materials, together with evaluations that declare those materials satisfactory, 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-2.0607); and,

- Completion of field education and clinical pastoral education according to the requirements detailed under “Educational Requirements.”

DURING INQUIRY AND CANDIDACY

General

- An individual is required to be enrolled under care of the presbytery as an inquirer for at least one year and as a candidate for a minimum of one additional year. Usually, and desirably, the time under care of the presbytery lasts for more than two years. During inquiry/candidacy the individual shall remain on the active roll of their home church and subject to its concern, discipline, and prayers.
- The CPM shall appoint one or more of its members to be a liaison(s). The CPM liaison is responsible, on behalf of the CPM, for guiding the individual’s educational preparation. The dominating concern of the liaison(s) is pastoral: to help the individual accomplish the necessary preparation to fulfill their ministry. Any concerns about the individual’s educational, intellectual and spiritual preparation may be discussed with the liaison(s).
- The individual should communicate with the CPM on a regular basis through the liaison. The CPM must be notified of any change of address or academic plans.
- During inquiry and before the CPM will endorse an application to become a candidate, the inquirer must participate in a psychological evaluation
- During inquiry and candidacy, the individual must meet with their CPM liaison(s) in person at least once a year. Ideally, that meeting would take place ahead of any annual consultation or evaluation to transition to the next phase in the ordination process. Meeting in person provides an opportunity to deepen relationship, for the liaison to become familiar with the individual’s progress towards yearly growth objectives or rationale for transition, and to go over together any papers and forms that need to be submitted to the CPM ahead of the meeting
- All papers and forms submitted to the CPM are to be mailed or e-mailed to the CPM liaison and chairperson at least two weeks before the meeting at which the inquirer/candidate is to appear, so they can be made available to committee members in a timely manner.
- All inquirers and candidates under care are expected to conduct themselves in an ethical manner and pursuant to the presbytery’s Sexual Misconduct Policy.

Annual Consultation

- In preparation for the annual consultation, the inquirer/candidate must complete Form 3 ("Pre-consultation report on development areas") and submit it to their liaison and the chairperson of CPM at least two weeks before the meeting at which the inquirer/candidate is to appear. If financial aid is being requested, then Form 1C and/or the CPM's Financial Aid Request Form (see Appendix Three) must also be completed and submitted.
- Transcripts and field education reports, if applicable, should be included in the submission to the CPM.
- The inquirer/candidate may review Form 3 with their liaison.
- Then inquirer/candidate must meet with the CPM, **which will make a determination of whether to continue the individual under care** and review recommendations for growth in the coming year. Form 4 ("Report on Consultation") will be completed at that meeting and a copy sent to the inquirer/candidate, theological institution and sponsoring session.
- **During the preparation for ministry process generally and at annual consultations specifically, it is important for the inquirer/candidate to demonstrate active engagement and progression through the preparation for ministry process. If not demonstrated, the CPM may need to consider whether or not to withdraw them from the process. A request to re-enter the process following a withdrawal will warrant special consideration. Additionally, requirements already completed will be evaluated on the basis of *if they provide meaningful information about the person's current readiness to begin ministry.***

NOTE: The CPM may share necessary travel expenses for annual consultation(s). Those in need of financial assistance may make application to the CPM using the Financial Aid Request Form (see Appendix Three). For the sake of convenience and good stewardship, it is recommended that this meeting take place when the inquirer/candidate is in the area of Albany Presbytery during school breaks, vacations or holidays.

Psychological Evaluation

All inquirers must complete a psychological evaluation ideally six months prior to their one-year review after becoming enrolled as an inquirer, but no later than six months prior to their application to proceed to candidacy. **Please note that the inquirer is the subject of the assessment and the CPM is the counselor's client of record. The inquirer is responsible for signing the necessary releases to have the results of their psychological evaluation sent to the chair of the CPM.** [ESO2] The psychological evaluation will be reviewed with the members of the CPM and discussed with the inquirer at their annual consultation. Confidentiality is assured. This evaluation is a tool to be used to point out strengths and areas where growth is needed. It may also highlight areas of concern and bring to light issues which need to be addressed in order for the inquirer to become an effective teaching elder. Inquirers will not be advanced to the candidacy phase until this process has been completed.

The CPM requires all psychological evaluations to be completed through its designated center/counselor. Those ready to schedule a psychological evaluation should contact their CPM liaison or the chairperson to find out the name and contact details. As appointments may fill up months in advance, inquirers are encouraged to make an appointment as early as possible. [ESO3]

The liaison and chairperson of the CPM should be notified when an appointment has been made so that payment of the presbytery's (1/3), church's (1/3) and inquirer's (1/3) shares of the cost may be arranged. The inquirer is responsible for the cost of transportation, lodging, meals and incidental expenses. Financial assistance may be available. Those in need of financial assistance may make application to the CPM using the Financial Aid Request Form (see Appendix Three).

Personnel File

A permanent file shall be kept at the presbytery office for all inquirers and candidates under care of this presbytery. Access will be strictly limited and confidentiality will be maintained at all times. The file shall contain, but is not limited to, the following documents:

- All forms of the PC (USA) preparation for ministry process which have been submitted
- All financial forms
- Written documents which have been directed to or from the inquirer or candidate
- Correspondence/reports from the internship supervisor(s)
- Transcripts
- The psychological evaluation report
- Background check
- Results of the ordination exams

EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Seminaries of, and related to, the Presbyterian Church (USA)

Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Austin, TX
Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA
University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, Dubuque, IA
Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary, Atlanta, GA
Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY
McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, IL
Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, PA
Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, NJ
San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Anselmo, CA
Union Presbyterian Seminary, Richmond, VA and Charlotte, NC
Auburn Theological Seminary, New York, NY
Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico, San Juan, PR

Course Requirements

Hebrew (2 semesters or equivalent)
Greek (2 semesters or equivalent)
Old Testament Exegesis
New Testament Exegesis
Church History
Reformed Theology
Reformed Worship and Sacraments
Preaching (2 semesters or equivalent)
Pastoral Care and Counseling
Christian Education
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Polity

In addition, the CPM reserves the right to require additional courses, in order to correct deficiencies in students' undergraduate or graduate programs.

Field Education

Inquirers and candidates shall, with the permission of the presbytery of care, engage in some form of supervised service to the church. No inquirer or candidate who has not been previously ordained as a ruling elder may serve as moderator of a session, administer the sacraments, or perform a marriage service. An inquirer or candidate previously ordained as a ruling elder may be authorized by the presbytery to preside at the Lord's Supper when invited by a session (G-2.0606).

Inquirers and candidates are expected to complete the equivalent of four semesters of one-day-per-week supervised field education as part of their seminary program. Two consecutive semesters shall be completed in a PC (USA) parish setting. The remaining two semesters (or equivalent) may be completed in an alternative ministry setting, and may include the required unit of CPE. It is recommended that at least one of these settings includes a ministry context other than the person's own racial or cultural experience. **Service in the inquirer's/candidate's home church is not acceptable to the presbytery, regardless of whether or not the seminary grants credit for the experience.** A mid-year and final report from the field education position is to be sent to the CPM chair within 30 days of the completion of the respective academic term.

The CPM reserves the right to require additional field education (including Clinical Pastoral Education – see next section) due to circumstances and/or readiness for a call. All field education plans must be submitted to and approved by the CPM prior to acceptance of the position.

Clinical Pastoral Education

Inquirers and candidates are required to complete a basic unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), as accredited by the ACPE Inc. and to send a copy of their CPE final evaluation to their liaison and the chair of the CPM. Results of the evaluation will be shared with the CPM and will remain in the inquirer's/candidate's file.

Transcripts

At the conclusion of each year of seminary study, students are required to send a copy of their seminary transcript to the chair of the CPM. An unofficial transcript ("student copy" or photocopy) is acceptable for this purpose, with the exception of the final transcript, which must be an official transcript, indicating receipt of the Master of Divinity degree. The final transcript must include the seminary registrar's raised seal, and must be mailed directly from the seminary registrar to the chair of the CPM.

ORDINATION EXAMINATIONS

Bible Content Examination

Inquirers are strongly encouraged to take the Bible Content Examination as soon as possible after enrolling in seminary and must pass this examination before applying for candidate status. It is the inquirer's responsibility to apply to take this examination and to pay any examination fees. Those in need of financial assistance may make application to CPM using the Financial Aid Request Form (see Appendix Three).

Remaining Examinations

Candidates must obtain the approval of the CPM before they can take the ordination examinations in Bible Exegesis, Polity, Theology, and Worship and Sacraments. These exams are ordinarily taken no earlier than the student's final year of seminary. Permission to take these examinations will ordinarily be given at the annual consultation prior to the beginning of the student's final academic year of seminary. It is the candidate's responsibility to apply to take these examinations and to pay any examination fees.

BECOMING READY – FINAL ASSESSMENT

General

Ordinarily during the second half of their senior year (after January), the candidate may begin the final steps to becoming "certified ready to be examined by a presbytery for ordination, pending a call." **The steps outlined below must be completed before the CPM can certify the candidate's readiness, thereby allowing the candidate to "negotiate for service" and eventually to be presented to the presbytery of call for examination for ordination. Permission to "negotiate for service" prior to a candidate being "certified ready to be examined by a presbytery for ordination, pending a call" will require special consideration.** ^[ESO4]

Process

- The candidate should carefully review the steps necessary and complete all requirements for "Final Assessment of Readiness to Begin Ordained Ministry" as detailed in G-2.0607.
- The candidate must be a candidate for at least one year.
- The candidate must submit to CPM (carefully prepared and typed double spaced):

- **Sermon:** The sermon, including the reading of the Scripture, should be no more than 10 minutes in length. A copy of the sermon manuscript or outline must be submitted to the CPM at least two weeks ahead of the CPM meeting at which it will be preached.
- **Exegesis:** Exegetical study of the biblical material out of which the sermon arose including a study of key words, discussion of context, notes on significant points of grammar and variant readings and an interpretation of the passage.
- **Statement of Faith:** This statement should be a statement of the candidate's personal faith (not a restatement of a creed) and ought to address such doctrines as the nature of the Godhead, the meaning of salvation in Christ, the life and mission of the Church, the authority of Scripture and the role of the sacraments. The statement of faith should not be longer than one side of an 8 ½" x 11" sheet of paper. It should be single-spaced, and double-spaced between paragraphs. We recommend sensitivity to the use of inclusive language.
- The candidate must meet with the CPM to discuss all aspects of their preparation and readiness for ministry.

NOTE: It is the CPM's responsibility to certify the candidate "ready to be examined by a presbytery for ordination, pending a call." Certification of the validity of a particular call is the responsibility of the presbytery (usually through the committee on ministry) in which the calling body or church is located. When another presbytery is issuing the call, the CPM will still conduct the final assessment as a means of determining the candidates' readiness. The difficult, and most important, part is determining whether the candidate possesses the qualities listed in G-2.0607a and Advisory Handbook, pgs. 85-86:

1. Wisdom and maturity of faith
2. Leadership skills
3. Compassionate spirit
4. Honest repute
5. Sound judgment

CIRCULATION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION FORM

The CPM will approve PIFs for circulation only once the candidate has been "certified ready to be examined by a presbytery for ordination, pending a call" or otherwise been given permission to "negotiate for service." [ES05] Candidates are encouraged to begin writing their Personal Information Forms ("PIFs") during the second half of their senior year at the latest. Following their final assessment, they must submit their final PIFs to the chair of the CPM for CPM review. Once approved, the CPM chair, or that person's designee, must provide written permission before the Church Leadership Connection (pcusa.org/clc) will accept the PIF for circulation.

FOLLOWING APPROVAL FOR ORDINATION

The candidate is still responsible to the CPM and under its care until the individual receives a call and is ordained. It is not uncommon for a period of time to elapse between the completion of all requirements for ordination and the receipt of a call. The CPM continues to have care and concern for the candidate and continues to carry them in its prayers. The CPM will continue to express this concern through the required annual consultation and annual report. This report may be less structured and formal than what is done during the inquiry and candidacy phases, but it is essential to stay in contact with the candidate to help as they continue their theological, intellectual, professional, and spiritual growth and preparation for ministry. The liaison will continue their role as support during this period.

ORDINATION PLANS

Ordination to the ordered ministry of teaching elder is an act of the whole church carried out by the presbytery, setting apart a person to ordered ministry. Such a person shall have fulfilled the ordination requirements of the presbytery of care and received the call of God to service to a congregation or other work in the mission of the church that is acceptable to the candidate and to the presbytery of call (G-2.0701). The presbytery placing the call to the candidate for ministry shall ordinarily examine, ordain and install the candidate (G-2.0702).

Both the services of ordination and installation (if they are separate services) are services of the presbytery and are to be conducted according to the provision in the Directory of Worship. If the presbytery responsible for the service has particular policies regarding the conduct of the service beyond those in the Directory for Worship, it needs to ensure the candidate is aware of these requirements at the very beginning of the planning process.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Expense Reimbursement

The CPM may share with the inquirer/candidate, at the prevailing presbytery rate, necessary travel expenses for annual consultation(s). It is the responsibility of inquirers and candidates to submit an accounting of expenses to the CPM chair. The presbytery reserves the right to make alternative arrangements for annual consultations (e.g. sending a member of presbytery to conduct the consultation, or authorizing another presbytery's CPM to conduct the consultation).

Financial Aid

Albany Presbytery expects inquirers and candidates requesting financial aid to first seek support from all other available sources. Within the limits of available funds, the presbytery may award financial aid to help offset preparation for ministry-related costs to its inquirers or candidates who demonstrate financial need.

Application Procedures

Applicants for financial aid must submit a completed Financial Aid Request Form (see Appendix Three) to the CPM chair. With their request form, applicants must also submit an updated copy of Form 1C.

Summary of Financial Responsibilities

The inquirer/candidate must be aware that they are financially responsible for costs incurred while pursuing ordination, including, but not limited to the following:

- 1/3 of the psychological evaluation costs
- Exam application fees
- Education expenses including books and fees
- Housing and board

WAIVERS AND EXCEPTIONS

The CPM will consider exceptions to the above policies only under the most exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. Inquiries concerning exceptions should be directed to the CPM chair. The CPM will be governed in this regard by the relevant sections of the Book of Order, G-2.0610:

When a presbytery concludes there are good and sufficient reasons for accommodations to the particular circumstances of an individual seeking ordination, it may, by a three-fourths vote, 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-fourths 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 any waiver or alternate means to ascertain readiness shall be included in the minutes of the presbytery and communicated to the presbytery to which an inquirer or candidate may be transferred.

APPENDIX ONE

PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY CHECKLIST

**PRESBYTERY OF ALBANY
COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY
PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY CHECKLIST**

Applicant:

- Submit completed Forms 1A, 1B, 1C (if applicable) to session
- Meet w/session for endorsement (Form 1D completed)
- Submit completed Forms 1A-D to CPM, along w/transcripts and diplomas from all undergraduate and graduate college work
- Criminal background check
- Meet w/CPM for enrollment as Inquirer (Forms 2A and 2B completed)

Inquirer:

- Bible Content Exam
- Psychological Evaluation (at least six months prior to annual consultation)
- Annual Consultation (complete Form 3 and submit to CPM two weeks in advance)
- Submit completed Form 5A to session
- Meet w/session for endorsement as Candidate (Form 5B completed)
- Submit completed Forms 5A-B to CPM, along with candidate statements
- Meet w/CPM for endorsement as candidate
- Presbytery of care sense of call examination (Forms 5C and 5D completed)

Candidate:

- Remaining Ordination Exams
- CPE (evaluation reports to CPM)
- Field Education (evaluation reports to CPM)
- Annual Consultations (complete Form 3 and submit to CPM two weeks in advance)
- Begin to write Personal Information Form (“PIF”) (approved by CPM Chair following final assessment)
- Complete Coursework (copies of transcripts to CPM at end of each academic year; final, official transcript upon completion of MDiv degree to CPM)
- Submit sermon, exegesis and statement of faith to CPM
- Meet w/CPM for final assessment (including preaching the sermon)
- Circulate PIF and receive a call
- Presbytery of call ordination examination

APPENDIX TWO

PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY FORMS

All forms used in the preparation for ministry process and referred to in this Manual can be found and downloaded at the following link:

<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/forms-used-preparation-ministry-process/>

APPENDIX THREE

FINANCIAL AID REQUEST FORM

**PRESBYTERY OF ALBANY
COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY**

FINANCIAL AID REQUEST FORM

Name _____ Date _____

Personal Information

Current Address _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Cell _____ Email _____

Social Security Number _____ Date of Birth _____ Place of Birth _____

Family Information

Parent/Guardian (if dependent) _____

Current Address _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Cell _____ Email _____

Spouses Name _____ Email _____

Names and ages of any children or dependents:

Seminary attending _____

Current Year/Year Entering _____ First _____ Second _____ Third _____

I am seeking financial aid for help with the following preparation for ministry-related costs:

Financial Data

List all current financial obligations (including any student loans)

To whom owed	Monthly Balance	Original Balance	Current Balance
1. _____			
2. _____			
3. _____			

Anticipated Expenses

Tuition/Fees	\$ _____
Room	\$ _____
Board	\$ _____
Books	\$ _____
Insurance	\$ _____
Transportation	\$ _____
Other (over \$500)	\$ _____
Other (over \$500)	\$ _____
Total Expenses	\$ _____

Anticipated Resources

Cash Available	\$ _____
Family Contribution	\$ _____
Expected Earnings (include summer)	\$ _____
Assured Aid (grants/loans)	\$ _____
Field Ed Stipend	\$ _____
Other	\$ _____
Other	\$ _____
Other	\$ _____
Total Resources	\$ _____

Balance needed to meet expenses \$ _____

Are you seeking other assistance of which you are not yet assured?

Source: _____ Amount: \$ _____

What amount are you seeking with this application? \$ _____

Do you prefer lump sum? _____ Installments (amount/frequency)? _____

To whom should the checks be made payable to? _____

Submit to: Committee on Preparation for Ministry
Presbytery of Albany
1915 Fifth Ave
Troy, NY 12180

APPENDIX FOUR

POLICIES ON COMMISSIONED RULING ELDER (CREs)²

The Role of Commissioned Ruling Elders

A commissioned ruling elder (“CRE”) is a person ordained to the office of ruling elder who has been commissioned by a presbytery to carry out a particular ministerial assignment for a stated period of time. Unlike ordained status, which is permanent unless relinquished or rescinded, even if the ordained ruling or teaching elder no longer occupies the position to which she or he was ordained, commissioned status is temporary. It lasts for the duration of the assignment to which the person was commissioned. The functions that the CRE is authorized to carry out (celebrating the sacraments, for instance, or officiating at marriages) may not be performed after the commission terminates, unless another commission that includes those functions is issued.

Many ruling elders are engaged in important ministries in and for their home congregations, at the request and under the supervision of the pastor and session. Ruling elders may also be authorized to carry out pastoral functions in their home churches, such as celebrating the sacraments and moderating session, by action of the presbytery under G- 3.0301. Neither of these forms of service in a ruling elder’s home church requires a commission.

Use of Commissioned Ruling Elders

In furtherance of its strategy for mission, Albany Presbytery will, when possible, try to make creative use of persons who have prepared for commissioned service and who seek opportunities to serve. The presbytery will consider commissioning appropriately-trained ruling elders to serve under the following circumstances:

1. To carry out pastoral functions in immigrant and racial/ethnic congregations and fellowships, if a teaching elder with the necessary language skills and cultural knowledge cannot be found.
2. To carry out part-time pastoral functions in congregations that have a vital mission but cannot, in the judgment of the committee on ministry (“COM”), secure the pastoral services of a teaching elder or minister of another denomination who is eligible for temporary membership in presbytery.
3. To carry out pastoral functions in a larger parish comprised of several congregations under the supervision of a pastor who is a teaching elder.
4. To serve in various specialized ministries for which they have the appropriate training.

In every case:

- The commission shall specify the functions the CRE is authorized to perform.
- The commission shall be reviewed annually by presbytery, as required by G-2.1001.
- The ruling elder commissioned under the terms of G-2.1001 shall work under the supervision of the presbytery through the Committee on Ministry.

² These *Policies on Commissioned Ruling Elders (CREs)* incorporate the essential tenets of Albany Presbytery's 2012-approved *Preparation Program for Commissioned Ruling Elders* and the 2014 publication of *A Policy for the Use of Commissioned Ruling Elders in Albany Presbytery*.

- A teaching elder shall be assigned as a mentor and supervisor, as required in G-2.1004.

Ruling elders will not be commissioned under the following circumstances:

1. To serve as pastors in congregations that, in the judgment of the COM, have the resources to support a full-time teaching elder at the presbytery's minimum level. The role of CRE is intended to complement, not supplant, the ministry of teaching elders.
2. To serve in their congregation of membership. As noted above, this does not preclude ruling elders carrying important functions in their home congregations, including worship leadership, under the supervision of the pastor and the session; nor does it preclude presbytery authorization of ruling elders to celebrate the sacraments or moderate session in their congregation of membership, as provided in G-3.0301.
3. As a means for ministers of other denominations who do not meet the requirements of G-2.0505 to serve as pastors of Presbyterian congregations

Qualifications of Commissioned Ruling Elders

Qualifications for commissioned ruling elders will be determined by the demands of the particular commission. The committee on preparation for ministry ("CPM") will determine the requirements for a particular position and whether candidates for the position have the requisite knowledge, skills and abilities. CPM offers a general program of preparation; participants should understand that completion of the program does not guarantee a commission and that particular positions may require more or different preparation.

In the case of commissions that authorize the CRE to preach and preside in worship, the CRE must have grounding in the following areas:

1. The contents of the Bible in the language of the community being served.
2. Presbyterian principles for the interpretation of Scripture.
3. Basic Christian doctrine and the major themes of Reformed theology.
4. The meaning of the sacraments and the structure of worship in the Reformed tradition.

In the case of commissions that authorize the CRE to provide pastoral care, the CRE must have:

1. A basic understanding of human personality and psychology.
2. Training to recognize situations in which expert professional care is required.

All CREs must meet the presbytery's clearance requirements, including psychological assessment and criminal background checks, and participate in the Boundary Awareness program.

Oversight and Supervision

The COM will exercise oversight of the deployment of CREs and will, on behalf of the presbytery, exercise supervision of CREs. Specifically, the COM shall:

1. Propose to presbytery that particular positions be open to ruling elders qualified to seek a commission.
2. Work with the congregation or ministry agency to consider CREs qualified for a position that presbytery has opened to CREs.

3. Conduct the necessary clearance reviews.
4. Bring the proposal to commission a particular ruling elder to presbytery for its approval.
5. Assign a teaching elder as mentor and supervisor for the CRE (G-2.1004), if the commission is approved.
6. Conduct the annual review of the CRE and bring any proposal for renewal of the commission to presbytery.

The PC(USA), Office Of General Assembly, provides additional information on commissioned ruling elders on its website, at the following link:

<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/clp/>.