

**WASHINGTON PRESBYTERY  
COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY  
PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY POLICIES**

**INTRODUCTION**

The following policies have been adopted by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry to guide its work with inquirers, candidates and churches as they cooperate to develop leaders to serve the church, to the glory of God.

These policies **supplement** those outlined in the *Book of Order* (especially G-14.0300) and in the Preparation for Ministry PC(USA) Manual. These documents exert primary authority over the preparation for ministry process.

**COMMITTEE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry 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.

**LIAISON WITH THE SESSION**

In accordance with *Book of Order* G-14.0306b, the session of the inquirer's or candidate's home church will designate an elder to serve as liaison with the inquirer or candidate. Inquirers and candidates should make contact with their session liaison at least twice a year, and more often if the situation warrants. It is expected that the session liaison will be supportive by attending annual consultations and presbytery meetings where the inquirer or candidate is involved.

**LIAISON WITH THE COMMITTEE**

A Committee on Preparation for Ministry member will be assigned to serve as a liaison with each inquirer or candidate and with his or her session. Inquirers and candidates should make contact with their committee liaison at least twice a year, and more often if the situation warrants.

**BACKGROUND CHECK**

All inquirers must obtain and provide a copy of Act 33 & 34 clearances from the Pennsylvania State Police. These clearances are for criminal and child abuse histories.

**CAREER AND PSYCHOLOGY ASSESSMENT**

All inquirers must complete a program of career and psychological assessment in the first year as an inquirer, generally during the first year of seminary. Inquirers are responsible for signing the necessary releases to have the results of their consultation sent to the chair of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry. Copies of the report will be shared with the committee. Confidentiality is assured. Inquirers will not be advanced to the candidacy phase

until this process has been completed.

Washington Presbytery pays for one-third of the assessment, the inquirer's home church pays for a minimum of one-third, and the inquirer pays the balance.

Assessments may be conducted by the Pittsburgh Pastoral Institute, career center in Princeton, New Jersey, or other such centers approved by the CPM. CPM will currently recommend Dr. Paul Holland as the Washington Presbytery Career and Psychological Assessor.

Career assessment center appointments are generally booked months in advance; inquirers are encouraged, therefore, to call the career assessment center for an appointment as early as possible.

## **CHOICE OF SEMINARY**

Inquirers and candidates are expected to seek the approval of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry concerning their choice of seminary. In order that those preparing for ministry will have the deepest possible acquaintance with the life, mission and ethos of the Presbyterian Church (USA), Washington Presbytery expects inquirers and candidates to attend a Presbyterian Church (USA) affiliated seminary.

Those desiring to complete their educations at non-Presbyterian seminaries must receive special approval from the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) based on the guidelines and requirements specified in Appendix A of this document. Approval of a non-Presbyterian seminary will be considered an exception rather than a general rule by the CPM. Exceptions will be made on the basis of a candidate, not on the basis of the seminary. That is, approval of attendance at a particular seminary for one candidate will not serve as precedent or assurance of similar approval for another candidate. Each candidate will be evaluated individually by the CPM. See Appendix A.

## **GENERAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

In addition to the areas of study required by the *Book of Order* G-140310(3), the Committee on Preparation for Ministry will determine that the following subject areas are represented on the seminary transcripts of candidates under their care:

- Church History
- Reformed Theology
- Preaching
- Pastoral Care and Counseling
- Christian Education
- Administration
- Evangelism and Missions
- Ethics
- Spiritual Formation

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry reserves the right to require additional courses, in order to correct deficiencies in student's undergraduate or graduate program.

Inquirers and candidates are generally expected to maintain at least a "B" average (3.00 on a 4.00 system) in their course work. Course work will normally be taken for a grade rather than Pass/Fail when available.

## **CLINICAL PASTORAL EDUCATION**

Inquirers and candidates are strongly encouraged to complete at least one basic unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). Under certain conditions, the Committee on Preparation for Ministry reserves the right to require CPE. Those taking CPE are required to send a copy of their CPE final evaluation to the chair of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry. Copies of the evaluation will be shared with the committee.

## **FIELD EDUCATION**

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. At least two semesters or the equivalent of field education must be in a parish setting. Service in the inquirer's/candidate's home church is not acceptable to the committee, regardless of whether or not the seminary grants credit for the experience.

Summer ministry may be evaluated by CPM to substitute for the customary field education experiences during the academic year.

Students are encouraged to consider a full-year internship, either as part of their seminary field education or following graduation. The Committee on Preparation for Ministry reserves the right to require a full-year internship.

Students must arrange to have copies of all evaluations for their field experiences sent to the chair of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry.

## **TRANSCRIPTS**

At the conclusion of each year of seminary study, students are required to send a copy of their seminary transcripts to the chair of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry. 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 M. Div. 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 Committee on Preparation for Ministry.

## **THEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT**

A theological assessment will be administered to each inquirer/candidate prior to their senior year. CPM will provide a previously administered theological ordination examination to each inquirer/candidate. The inquirer/candidate will provide CPM with his/her written answers to the exam for review prior to his/her annual consultation. The exam will serve a two-fold purpose:

- The inquirer/candidate will benefit from a practice exam.
- CPM will assess the inquirer's/candidate's theological competence. If it is determined that additional work or guidance is needed, CPM will advise and direct the inquirer/candidate accordingly.

## **ORDINATION EXAMINATIONS**

### **Bible Content Examination**

Inquirers and candidates are strongly encouraged to take the Bible Content Examination in their first year of seminary. CPM will pay the exam fee. It is the inquirer's/candidate's responsibility to apply to take this examination, request payment from the CPM, and see that the results are sent to the chair of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry. A possible resource to prepare for this exam is Bible Basics by Duncan Ferguson, published by Westminster/John Knox.

### **Final Year Examinations**

*Book of Order* G-14.03 Ib requires candidates to obtain the approval of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry before they can take the ordination examinations in Bible Exegesis, Polity, Theology and Worship. Permission to take these examinations will ordinarily be given at the annual consultation prior to the beginning of the student's final year of seminary. It is the candidate's responsibility to apply to take these examinations, to request payment from the CPM, and to see that results are sent to the chair of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry.

The committee expects candidates to take the examination in Bible Exegesis, Theology, Worship and Sacraments, and Polity during their senior year of seminary.

## **PERSONAL INFORMATION FORM CIRCULATION**

Candidates are encouraged to begin writing their Personal Information Form no later than the beginning of their second semester of their senior year. Candidates must submit the final copy of the PIF to the CPM for approval.

The committee chair will not ordinarily permit candidates to circulate dossiers until the candidate has passed all five standard ordination examinations; exceptions may be granted only by vote of the full committee. The committee chair, or that person's designee, must provide written permission before the Personnel Referral Services office of the Church Vocations Ministry Unit will accept the dossier for circulation. The candidate may submit a copy of their PIF to the committee for feedback.

## **PAPERS AND FORM PRESENTED TO THE COMMITTEE**

All papers and forms submitted to the Committee on Preparation for Ministry must be sent to the committee chair no later than two weeks before the meeting at which the candidate or inquirer is to appear, so they can be duplicated and distributed to committee members.

## **FINAL ASSESSMENT/EXAMINATION FOR ORDINATION**

Prior to acceptance of a call, candidates under care of Washington Presbytery will have a final assessment with the Committee on Preparation for Ministry during which time the candidates will be prepared for examination by the presbytery.

### Statement of Faith

The statement of faith submitted at the end of the candidacy phase must be typed with a font no smaller than 12-pt, and not longer than one side of an 8 1/2" x 11" sheet of paper. It should be single-spaced, and double-spaced between paragraphs. It should be sensitive to the use of inclusive language.

The final version of the statement of faith will be duplicated and distributed in the docket for the presbytery meeting. The candidate is responsible for getting a copy of the final version to the presbytery office in time for distribution.

The statement of faith should be an authentic expression of the candidate's beliefs concerning these essential doctrines of the faith, such as: God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit; humanity; sin and forgiveness; sacraments; salvation; the authority of scripture; the nature, mission and polity of the church; discipleship; consummation.

### Sermon Audio Tape

Candidates shall submit to the Committee on Preparation for Ministry a tape of a sermon led by the candidate. This tape, along with a copy of the sermon manuscript, shall be submitted at least two weeks prior to the final assessment of the candidate.

### Written Exegesis

The written Bible Exegesis submitted with the sermon manuscript should not exceed five double-spaced pages in length.

### **WAIVERS AND EXCEPTIONS**

*The Committee on Preparation for Ministry will consider exceptions to the above policies only under the most exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. Inquiries concerning exceptions should be directed to the committee chair.*

*It should be noted that the "Extraordinary Candidate " clause in the Book of Order (G-14.0313) is intended to apply only to those who have ALREADY completed the equivalent of the constitutional requirements for ordination, by virtue of prior study, extraordinary and unusual training and service, etc. That section is not a means of relaxing requirements, but rather of declaring that requirements have already been met in alternative ways.*

## **APPENDIX A**

### **REQUIREMENTS FOR THOSE SEEKING APPROVAL TO ATTEND A NON-PRESBYTERIAN SEMINARY**

- I. Inquirers and candidates desiring to pursue their ministerial training at a seminary not affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (USA) must present a paper (not to exceed 10 double-spaced pages) to the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) specifying the

seminary training desired and presenting evidence and rationale for that selection. After a review of the case, the CPM will allow or disallow such study. In the case of disallowance, the inquirer or candidate will have the right of appeal to the presbytery.

- II. The CPM's evaluation will include (but not be limited to) consideration of the following factors:
  - A. The inquirer or candidate's personal background, faith journey, previous preparation, past church affiliation, personal strengths and weaknesses, and experience of call.
  - B. The validity of the reasons and rationale presented.
  - C. Membership of the seminary in the Association of Theological Schools.
  - D. Whether the theological position and orientation of the seminary is within the Reformed tradition.
  - E. How the seminary offers adequate education in PC (USA) polity and program.
  - F. How the seminary encourages the student's loyalty and support of the PC (USA).
  - G. The extent to which the seminary provides for the building of relationships and experiences that promote the student's identity with the denomination.
  
- III. In the case of inquirers or candidates who are not in seminary, approval of an exception must be secured from the CPM *before* matriculation in a non-PC (USA) seminary.
  
- IV. Inquirers and candidates currently enrolled in non-PC (USA) seminaries at the time they come under care of Washington Presbytery and who desire to complete their ministerial training in such locations must make application for approval immediately after they are accepted as an inquirer or candidate by the Presbytery.
  
- V. All inquirers or candidates in non-PC (USA) seminaries must submit to the CPM, prior to the beginning of the second seminary year, a written statement interpreting their experiences in the seminary and field assignments and discussing how these experiences equip them for ministry within the denominational framework of the PC (USA).
  
- VI. Any applicant who has already finished work in a non-PC (USA) seminary prior to being received as an inquirer or candidate must submit to the CPM both of the papers described above in paragraphs I and V. These papers will be the basis of dialogue between the applicant and the CPM in evaluating the adequacy of the education, training and fieldwork undertaken and in taking subsequent action on the application.