

## **Guide to the Preparation Process in the Presbytery of the James**

Welcome to the Presbytery of the James and  
the Process of Preparation  
for Ministry of the Word and Sacrament!

This Guide explains, step by step, the process of preparation for ministry of the Word and Sacrament in the Presbytery of the James.

### **Table of Contents**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Important things to know as you begin | 8. Application for Candidacy             |
| 2. Other Helpful Information             | 9. CPM Candidacy Interview               |
| 3. General Requirements                  | 10. Candidacy Examination by Presbytery  |
| 4. Application for Inquiry               | 11. The Candidacy Phase                  |
| 5. CPM Inquiry Interview                 | 12. Ordination Examinations              |
| 6. Inquiry Phase                         | 13. Application for the Final Assessment |
| 7. Annual Consultation                   | 14. Final Assessment                     |

### **1. Important things to know as you begin**

The path ahead of you is difficult. The process of preparation will make demands that challenge you in unexpected ways, intellectually, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. Much of what you have thought was sure and certain may collapse. But, by the grace of God, your readiness for the good news of Jesus Christ will grow, and you will meet again and again the One who seeks and finds the lost!

There are no guarantees. Beginning the process of preparation does not guarantee the outcome you might expect. Becoming an inquirer does not guarantee that you will be accepted as a candidate; becoming a candidate does not entitle you to be called to a congregation or other place of service; gaining a positive response from a search committee does not insure that you will be approved by the presbytery. Given the tight job market in the PC(USA), there is no guarantee that a full-time ministry position will appear for you at the end of the process of preparation. For someone who is ready to serve, however, the future is always bright. For instance, opportunities are increasing for those who are willing to combine ministry of the Word and Sacrament with another income-producing occupation.

You are responsible. The Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) oversees your preparation for ministry. As a committee of human beings, CPM is not perfect. There may be times when you think the committee could do its job better than it does. But you are responsible for your preparation. This process is a path, and you must do the walking if you are going to get anywhere. If obstacles arise on this path, you do not have the luxury of blaming others for those obstacles. You are responsible to seek help from God and from members of the body of Christ either to overcome those obstacles or to decide that God is calling you to another kind of ministry.

God is merciful. God will never fail you or forsake you. Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, knows you by name and will rescue you from every trouble and danger. The Spirit of God will give you the energy, intelligence, imagination, and love to serve others in every situation. God will give to you, to your session and congregation, and to the presbytery and its Committee on Preparation for Ministry, the wisdom to discern how best you may take up your cross and follow Jesus, our great Lord, the friend of sinners.

Revised Sep 24, 2018

## 2. Other Helpful Information

### Presbytery of the James -- Contact Information

Committee on Preparation for Ministry  
Presbytery of the James  
3218 Chamberlayne Avenue  
Richmond VA 23227

Phone 804-262-2074, 877-262-2074  
Fax 804-612-0583

[www.presbyteryofthejames.com](http://www.presbyteryofthejames.com)

Assistant to the Stated Clerk: Franklin Reding  
[franklinr@presbyteryofthejames.org](mailto:franklinr@presbyteryofthejames.org)

### Download Forms

Go to [www.presbyteryofthejames.com](http://www.presbyteryofthejames.com)

Get the drop-down menu under "Resources" and go to "Forms and Documents."

Scroll down to the section, "Committee on Preparation for Ministry".

Links for Inquiry, Annual Consultation, Candidacy, and Ordination Exams.

Link for "Guide to the Preparation Process in the Presbytery of the James".

### Financial Aid from the Presbytery

In April or May each year, CPM sends to its inquirers and candidates a financial aid application. All inquirers and candidates are eligible to fill out the application. Priority will be given to M.Div. students. The awards will be mailed in the summer.

### Pulpit Supply List

After presbytery has received you as a candidate, you are eligible to ask the Committee on Ministry (COM) to add your name to presbytery's Pulpit Supply List.

### Reimbursement

Each time you meet with CPM, you may ask for reimbursement for your travel expenses. Submit your mileage and expenses (with receipts) using the presbytery's Expense Report (see **Download Forms** in section 2 of this Guide). CPM will also reimburse up to \$200 for travel expenses connected with the psychological evaluation, if you have to travel a long distance for it (see section 6 of this Guide).

### What happens at CPM interviews

Your interview with the committee will be in three phases: meeting the committee, waiting outside the room while the committee deliberates, and meeting the committee again to be informed of its decision.

### Waiving Requirements

According to G-2.0610, presbytery may waive almost any requirement in the preparation process, if three-fourths of the members present vote to do so. If you believe you will want a waiver from any of the requirements, discuss the matter as soon as possible with your CPM liaison.

## 3. General Requirements

### Annual Consultation

Revised Sep 24, 2018

You are required each year to complete a written report and have a formal consultation with your CPM liaison. Ideally, the consultation is a face-to-face interview. In extraordinary circumstances, however, CPM permits the interview to be done by telephone or by the internet. For more details, see section 7 of this Guide.

### **Choosing a Seminary**

Your Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree must be from a theological institution that is “accredited by the Association of Theological Schools” and “acceptable to the presbytery” (G-2.0607c). CPM recommends that you enroll in a PC(USA) seminary, because the goal of the preparation process is, after all, a ministry in the PC(USA). If you enroll in an accredited non-PC(USA) seminary, you may be required by CPM to do additional course work, tutoring, mentoring, field education, or even a year of the theological education at a PC(USA) seminary, to insure that you are prepared for ministry in the PC(USA).

### **Deadline for Documents**

In order to interview with CPM when it meets on the fourth Tuesday of the month (the committee does not meet in July and December) make sure that you have submitted your documents to the Assistant to the Stated Clerk by noon on the first Tuesday of the month. Interview time is limited, so occasionally CPM's docket is too full to accommodate everyone who wishes to be interviewed at a particular meeting. Interview time will be assigned for people in the order in which all their documents are submitted.

### **Acceptable Grades**

Grades must be satisfactory. Less than average academic performance at either college or seminary will be subject to special scrutiny by CPM.

### **Internships**

In the course of your preparation you are required to complete two internships, one in a parish and one in a Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) program. CPM wants your practical experience of ministry to be broad and varied. Your parish internship should be in a church that is different in size and setting from your home church. In rare circumstances, CPM may grant that another internship take the place of CPE, provided that the inquirer/candidate makes this request in writing, explaining how said internship will provide, or other life experiences have already provided, the learning opportunities normally provided by a basic unit of CPE. CPM may require field education work beyond what your seminary requires. CPM may require modifications in your field education program, to prepare you more adequately for ministry of the Word and Sacrament.

### **Possible Supplemental Requirements**

CPM sometimes requires work above and beyond your seminary's M.Div. curriculum:

- additional academic course work, tutoring, supervised independent study for remediation or added competence, in subjects such as Polity and Reformed Theology;
- working with a counselor, therapist, or spiritual director;
- participation in a group for support, spiritual growth, or recovery;
- pulpit supply for experience in preaching and leading worship.

### **Psychological Evaluation**

You will be required during the inquiry phase to undergo psychological testing of career and personal issues at an approved testing center (see section 6 of this Guide).

### **Time Requirements**

No less than two years must elapse between the date when CPM enrolls you as an inquirer and the date that you are ordained. Within that two-year preparation period you are first an inquirer and then a candidate. You must be a candidate for at least one year (G-2.0602). Please note that the minimum one year of candidacy is not additional to the two years of the preparation process as a whole. When you are a candidate, you are running out simultaneously the one-year clock and the two-year clock. If you think you will want to have your final assessment before completing two years, ask your CPM liaison to present your desire to the committee at a meeting prior to the one in which you want your final assessment. See Section 13 for the requirements that must be fulfilled prior to the final assessment.

### **Transcripts and Internship Evaluations**

Authorize your theological institution to send all transcripts and internship evaluations to CPM. For the mailing address, see section 2 of this Guide.

### **Your CPM Liaison**

The CPM liaison is your primary link to the committee, a resource and an advocate for you on the committee. The liaison cannot function for you if you do not keep in touch with her or him. You must stay in contact with your liaison! Respond promptly to emails or phone calls. Report any change in your contact information. Ask any questions you have about the preparation process. Discuss your plans and hopes. Send a copy to your session liaison when you email your CPM liaison, and vice versa, in order to maintain contact with both your church and CPM.

## **4. Application for Inquiry**

To start:

- You must be a member of a PC(USA) congregation. You must have been active in the work and worship of that congregation for at least six months before you can be enrolled as an inquirer (G-2.0602).
- Speak to the pastor of your church about your desire to explore becoming a minister of the Word and Sacrament.
- Contact the Assistant to the Stated Clerk (see section 2 of this Guide) and ask to begin the inquiry process.
- Read the Book of Order G-2.06 about the preparation process. Remember that the Book of Order contains only the requirements that apply everywhere in the PC(USA). **The Guide that you are now reading contains the rules that apply to inquirers and candidates in the Presbytery of the James.**
- Have official transcripts for all academic work done after high-school sent to you or to the Assistant to the Stated Clerk.
- Download the forms relevant to the application for inquiry (see **Download Forms** in section 2 of this Guide).

Once CPM is aware of your interest, it will send one of its members to the session of your church to explain to them the process of preparation.

Complete the application.

- Complete Forms 1A and 1B.
- Form 1C is optional.
- Print Form 1D, but do not fill it out. The session will complete it after interviewing you.
- You do not have to fill out or print Form 2A (CPM will complete it after interviewing you), but you should read it before your interview.
- On Form 2B enter your name in the first blank, then print out the form.

Ask your clerk of session to arrange for you to meet with the session to gain its endorsement of your application for inquiry. Submit to the clerk a copy of the following:

Revised Sep 24, 2018

- Forms 1A, 1B, 1C (if you have filled it out), 1D, and 2B. Ask the clerk whether to send them in hard-copy or by email;
- your transcripts.

Meet with the session of your church.

- Session uses the questions in Form 1D to guide its discussion with you.
- Session records its action on Form 1D.
- Session appoints a session liaison for you and records his or her contact information on Form 1D.
- The moderator of session, you, and a witness sign Form 2B.
- Clerk of session gives you the completed Form 1D and the signed Form 2B.
- Clerk of session keeps a copy of your application.

Deliver your application to the Assistant to the Stated Clerk (see **Deadline for Documents** in section 3 of this Guide).

- Email Forms 1A and 1B. Email 1C only if you have completed it.
- Email Form 1D. If the clerk filled it out by hand, scan it and email it as an attachment.
- The pages requiring signatures have to be sent again, this time with real, not type-written, signatures. Send them in hard-copy form by U.S. mail, fax them, or scan them and email them as attachments. The relevant pages are these:
  - \* the first page of Form 1A (the signature at the end of Form 1B is optional).
  - \* the last page of Form 1C (only if you decide to fill it out).
  - \* Form 2B.
- Deliver official transcripts in their original, hard-copy form, or else have them sent to the Assistant to the Stated Clerk for CPM in official downloadable form.

Verify when you will meet CPM by emailing the Assistant to the Stated Clerk for CPM.

- Your interview is likely to begin sometime between 1:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m.
- Be sure that your pastor and/or session liaison can come with you to the interview. CPM requires at least one of them to be present. Invite others also, if you wish.

## 5. CPM Inquiry Interview

To prepare for the interview:

- Read Form 2B, the covenant agreement.
- Read **What Happens at CPM interviews** in section 2 of this Guide.
- Read **Possible Supplemental Requirements** in section 3 of this Guide.
- Bring to the CPM interview a copy of your application, in case you need to refer to it.

Focus of the Inquiry Interview:

- In this interview the question in CPM's mind is, "Is the applicant willing to work cooperatively with CPM in exploring whether God is calling him or her to ministry of the Word and Sacrament?"

If CPM enrolls you as an inquirer, the following things will happen.

- The moderator of CPM explains briefly what you are expected to do next.
- CPM appoints a CPM liaison for you. Read **Your CPM Liaison** in section 3 of this Guide.
- The CPM Moderator and a witness sign the covenant agreement on Form 2B.

On the date you are enrolled as an inquirer, the period of preparation officially begins.

- Read **Time Requirements** in section 3 of this Guide.

You will receive a follow-up letter about a week after the CPM meeting.

- The letter will state CPM's decision about your application.
- The letter will state any particular instructions that CPM has given you.
- With this letter you will receive a copy of Forms 2A and 2B.

Revised Sep 24, 2018

- Your original application will be kept in your CPM file at the presbytery office.

## 6. Inquiry Phase

"The purpose of the inquiry phase is to provide an opportunity for the church and those who believe themselves called to ordered ministry of the Word and Sacrament 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).

In the first six months of your inquiry phase, complete the required psychological testing.

- You are required to undergo psychological testing of career and personal issues.
- CPM, your church session, and you will each pay one third of the fee.
- Take your third and the church's third when you go for the testing.
- CPM will pay its third after it receives the final report of the evaluation.
- Authorize the counseling service to mail the final report to CPM (see section 2 of this Guide).
- CPM prefers that you use one of the following counseling centers:

(1) Ministry Development Services  
Presbyterian Psychological Services  
6100 Sardis Road  
Charlotte NC 28270  
704-554-9222  
mdvs@ministryds.org  
www.ministryds.org

(2) Center for Pastoral Counseling  
1716 Chain Bridge Rd  
McLean VA 22101  
703-903-9696  
info@pastoralcounseling.com  
pastoralcounseling.com

- If you want to use another counseling center (because, for instance, you are in seminary far from Richmond) discuss the matter with your CPM liaison.
- See **Reimbursement** in section 2 of this Guide.

After completing the psychological evaluation, and prior to the end of your first year as an inquirer, have the annual consultation with your CPM liaison. See section 7 of this Guide.

- The first annual consultation is the best time to begin discussing any requirements from which you may want to be exempted (see G-2.0610). If you anticipate wanting such an exemption, talk with your CPM liaison about it now.

Stay in touch with your home church and your session liaison. You might send a letter that can be published in your church's newsletter to keep everyone informed.

- It is a good idea, when you email your CPM liaison, to send a copy to your session liaison, to keep your session informed of what is going on in your preparation process.

If you have not already done so, enroll in Master of Divinity (M.Div.) program in a theological seminary. Read **Choosing a Seminary** in section 3 of this Guide.

Your seminary will require you to do internships. CPM also requires internships. Before you choose an internship, discuss your options with your CPM liaison. Read **Internships** in section 3 of this Guide.

You are encouraged to take the Bible Content Examination in your first year of seminary, but you are not required to do so. Read **Ordination Examinations**, section 12 of this Guide.

Revised Sep 24, 2018

## 7. Annual Consultation

Every inquirer and candidates shall complete each year a written progress report (Form 3). The written report serves as the basis for an in-depth conversation with your CPM liaison (results of which are recorded in Form 4). The report and the conversation are required.

Normally the first consultation will occur approximately one year after the person was received as an inquirer. Others will follow on a yearly basis. As timely completion of these consultations is necessary for the evaluation and nurture of the inquirer or candidate, the CPM expects them to be completed without unnecessary delay. If circumstances require a consultation to be delayed, the inquirer or candidate should address a request for such a delay to the CPM, giving adequate reason for the delay and a date by which the consultation will be completed. Upon review the CPM will either grant the request or give reason for not doing so. If a delay is not requested or is not granted and a consultation is six months late, an inquirer or candidate must give reason to the CPM in writing and state his or her intention to continue the covenant relationship with the CPM. A delay of six months or more could be reason to remove the inquirer or candidate from the covenant relationship.

Before you have your annual consultation with your CPM liaison --

- Two months prior to the anniversary date of your enrollment as an inquirer, download the forms for the Annual Consultation (Read **Download Forms** in section 2 of this Guide).
- Complete Form 3 and email it as an attachment to your CPM liaison.
- Contact the Assistant to the Stated Clerk for CPM (see Section 2 of this Guide) to make sure CPM has received a recent transcript and evaluations for any internship you have completed.
- Your CPM liaison will check the references you listed on pages 20-21.

During and after your annual consultation you and your CPM liaison complete Form 4.

- Both you and your CPM liaison sign Form 4.

The CPM liaison will submit the annual consultation documents to CPM, and CPM will vote whether you should continue in the process of preparation.

- CPM Moderator signs Form 4;
- CPM notifies you that your annual consultation was approved or not approved.
- CPM reports its action at the next meeting of presbytery.

## 8. Application for Candidacy

When you have completed the psychological evaluation and the first annual consultation, you may apply to be received as a candidate. The process of applying for candidacy tests whether your sense of your call to the ministry is confirmed by the church.

It is prudent to become a candidate before your second year of seminary ends, so that the required one year of candidacy will end around the time you graduate.

After interviewing with CPM, you will have to appear before presbytery to be examined for candidacy. Presbytery meetings are on the 3rd Saturday of February, the 3rd Tuesday of June, and the 3rd Saturday of October. If presbytery receives you as a candidate at one of those meetings, your one year period of candidacy will count as having started on the day you interviewed with CPM and gained the committee's endorsement of your application for candidacy.

Contact the Assistant to the Stated Clerk for CPM (see section 2 of this Guide) to make sure CPM has received a recent transcript and evaluations for any internship you have completed.

Revised Sep 24, 2018

Download the application for candidacy (see **Download Forms** in section 2 of this Guide).

Complete the following forms.

- Form 5A.
- Print Form 5B, but do not fill it out. The session will complete it after interviewing you.
- Complete Form 5 Essays. Print it out.
- On Form 5D, enter your name in the first blank, then print out the form.

Ask your clerk of session to arrange for you to meet with the session to gain its endorsement of your application for candidacy. Submit to the clerk a copy of the following (ask the clerk whether to send them in hard-copy form or by email):

- Forms 5A, 5B, Essays, and 5D;
- a copy of your most recent transcript and any internship evaluations you have.

Meet with the session of your church.

- Session uses Form 5B to record its decision about your application and to record the session liaison's information.
- The session moderator, you, and a witness sign Form 5D.
- Clerk of session keeps a copy of your application.
- Clerk gives to you a copy of the completed Form 5B.
- Clerk gives you the original, signed-and-dated Form 5D.

Deliver your application to the Assistant to the Stated Clerk for CPM (see **Deadline for Documents** in section 3 of this Guide).

- Email Form 5A, Essays, and 5D.
- Email Form 5B. If the clerk filled it out by hand, scan it and email it as an attachment.
- The pages requiring signatures have to be sent again, this time with real, not type-written, signatures. Send them in hard-copy form by U.S. mail, fax them, or scan them and email them as attachments. The relevant pages are these: the first page of Form 5A and Form 5D.
- Scan and email all evaluations of all internships that you have done.
- Deliver official transcripts in their original, hard-copy form, or else have them sent to the Assistant to the Stated Clerk in official downloadable form.
- Check with the Assistant to the Stated Clerk to verify that CPM has Forms 3 and 4 for an annual consultation completed within the past twelve months.

Verify when you will meet CPM by emailing the Assistant to the Stated Clerk (see section 2 of this Guide).

- Your interview is likely to begin sometime between 1:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m.
- Be sure that your pastor and/or session liaison can come with you to the interview. CPM requires at least one of them to be present. Invite others also, if you wish.

## 9. CPM Candidacy Interview

Focus of the Candidacy Interview:

In this interview CPM wants to answer the question, "Are you called to ministry of the Word and Sacrament in the PC(USA)?" More specifically, the committee wants to discern whether that call (1) is clear in your own heart, and (2) has been confirmed in your practical experience of ministry. The committee reviews the evidence gained during the inquiry phase and determines whether the evidence demonstrates adequate promise for ministry. CPM is not expecting you to have all the knowledge and skills of a minister at this point, but it does want to see that your beliefs, gifts, and traits indicate a good fit between you and ministry of the Word and Sacrament in the PC(USA).

To prepare for the interview,

- read Form 5D, the covenant agreement;
- read **What Happens at CPM interviews** in section 2 of this Guide;
- read **Possible Supplemental Requirements** in section 3 of this Guide;

Revised Sep 24, 2018

- bring to the CPM interview a copy of your application, in case you need to refer to it.

If CPM recommends that presbytery receive you as a candidate, the following things happen.

- The moderator of CPM explains briefly what you are expected to do next.
- The CPM Moderator and a witness sign the covenant on Form 5D.

On the date that CPM interviews you and votes to recommend that presbytery receive you as a candidate, your minimum one-year period of candidacy will begin, provided that you are successful later when presbytery examines you for candidacy (see section 10 of this Guide).

- In other words, if after you are examined by the whole presbytery, that governing body votes to receive you as a candidate, the start of your candidacy period will be back-dated to the day of your CPM candidacy interview.

You will receive a follow-up letter about a week after the CPM meeting.

- The letter will state CPM's decision about your application.
- The letter will state any particular instructions that CPM has given you.
- With this letter you will receive a copy of Forms 5C and 5D.

After you receive the follow-up letter from CPM, submit to the Assistant to the Stated Clerk for CPM the names of two people who are willing to participate in the candidacy ceremony in the presbytery meeting (see section 10 of this Guide).

- Assign one person to give the charge and the other to lead the closing prayer.
- Typically a minister and an elder in our presbytery do these tasks. They might be your pastor and your session liaison. The charge and the prayer must be brief (the charge no longer than 3 minutes).
- Note that if more than one candidate are received at the presbytery meeting, then one or more of your persons will not be able to serve, because only one charge is given, and only one closing prayer offered.

## **10. Candidacy Examination by Presbytery**

Presbytery's stated meetings are on the third Saturday of February, the third Tuesday of June, and the third Saturday of October. Consequently, several months may pass between your interview with CPM and your examination by presbytery.

Invite your church, family, and friends to the meeting at which presbytery will examine you.

- Once the docket for the presbytery meeting is set (about 2 weeks prior to the meeting), go to the presbytery website and find the agenda. Your examination will happen during the CPM report.
- The CPM report is an "Order of the Day." This means that you can be confident that the report will happen close to the time set for it.
- Plan to arrive before the meeting starts, so that you can be present for the opening worship and see how presbytery conducts its business. (Remember that you are preparing to become a minister of the Word and Sacrament, for whom participation in presbytery is required!)

During the CPM report, you and the other persons (if any) to be examined that day will stand in front of the presbytery and make a statement (maximum 5 minutes) speaking to three topics:

- your personal faith and experience of God's grace;
- your call to the ministry and motives for seeking the ministry;
- ways in which you have served the church, and which affirm your call.

The presbytery will be free to ask you questions about the same topics.

After the examination, the presbytery will vote whether to receive you as a candidate.

If you are successful in the presbytery's examination, there will be a brief ceremony in which you are formally received as a candidate.

- The moderator of presbytery will ask you questions:
  - \* Do you believe yourself to be called by God to ministry of the Word and Sacrament?
  - \* 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?
  - \* Do you accept the proper supervision of the presbytery in matters that concern your preparation for this ministry?
  - \* Do you desire now to be received by this presbytery as a candidate for ministry of the Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA)?
- Someone will give a brief charge or exhortation to the candidate(s), and someone else will conclude the ceremony with prayer.

## 11. The Candidacy Phase

"The purpose of the candidacy phase is to provide for the full preparation of persons to serve the church as ministers of the Word and Sacrament. 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). At the end of this period, you should be able to demonstrate "readiness to begin ordered ministry as a minister of the Word and Sacrament" (G-2.0607).

Complete your seminary course work (see **Acceptable Grades** in section 3 of this Guide).

Complete your internships (see **Internships** in section 3 of this Guide).

Take the ordination examinations (see section 12 of this Guide).

You are required to have an annual consultation with your CPM liaison every year that you are in the preparation process (see section 7 of this Guide).

Stay in touch with your home church and your session liaison. You might send a letter that can be published in your church's newsletter to keep everyone informed.

## 12. Ordination Examinations

Currently there are five ordination examinations: Bible Content, Biblical Exegesis, Theological Competence, Worship & Sacraments, and Church Polity.

Go to this site to learn about the exams, when they are administered, and how to register for them.

<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/standard-ordination-exams/>

Bible Content Exam (BCE):

- You may apply to take the BCE without getting approval from CPM.
- You are encouraged, but not required, to take the BCE in your first year of seminary.

The other four (the "senior") exams are Biblical Exegesis, Theological Competence, Worship & Sacraments, and Church Polity.

- You may take these exams as an inquirer or as a candidate.
- You may take one or more of these exams only after completing two years of theological education, and only with the approval of CPM. CPM wants to verify that you have done the academic study, and gained the supervised practical experience, sufficient for a reasonable chance of passing.
- So think ahead! Before applying to take any of these four exams, ask your CPM liaison to ask CPM for approval.

Revised Sep 24, 2018

Accommodations:

- If you have a disability which affects your test-taking ability, a disability that is documented by a person or persons acceptable to CPM, then CPM may approve accommodations for your taking of the exam. CPM and your church will share with you any additional costs of the examination.
- If you fail at least twice to pass an exam, you may ask CPM to seek presbytery's approval to provide an alternate means of ascertaining your competence. Presbytery, by a three-fourth's, vote may approve a means other than the standard ordination examinations "to ascertain the readiness of the candidate for ministry in the areas covered by the standard ordination examinations" (G-2.0610).

### **13. Application for the Final Assessment of Readiness to Begin Ministry as a Minister**

The final step in the preparation process is the final assessment of readiness to begin ordered ministry of the Word and Sacrament (G-2.0607). If your final assessment is successful, CPM will certify that you are ready to be examined for ordination, pending a call. Note that this final assessment is not the same as your examination by a presbytery for ordination (for which, see G-2.0702 and G-3.0306).

Successful completion of the final assessment will permit you to seek a call, circulate your Personal Information Form (PIF), and negotiate for your service as a minister of the Word and Sacrament.

You must complete the following requirements prior to your final assessment:

- graduate from a regionally accredited college or university, with satisfactory grades (G-2.0607b);
- complete two full years of theological education at a theological institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools acceptable to the presbytery, showing Greek and Hebrew exegesis (G-2.0607c);
- complete an annual consultation within the past twelve months (see section 7 of this Guide);
- pass all ordination examinations (G-2.0607d).

Prepare your Personal Identification Form (PIF).

- The PIF is the resume or curriculum vitae for people seeking a call to ordered ministry in the PC(USA).
- To create your PIF, go to <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/clc/>
- You will create this document prior to your final assessment interview with CPM, but you will be unable to distribute it until CPM authorizes its distribution.
- It is a good idea to ask your CPM liaison to review your PIF as you write it.

Deliver the following documents to the Assistant to the Stated Clerk, or else make sure that CPM already has them. Email them as attachments as much as possible.

- official transcripts (all academic work after high-school; transcripts must be submitted in hard-copy form, or else in official downloadable form);  
The transcript from a theological institution must show "a course of study including Hebrew and Greek, exegesis of the Old and New Testaments using Hebrew and Greek, satisfactory grades in all areas of study, and graduation or proximity to graduation" (G-2.0607c).
- all internship evaluations;
- a completed personal information form (PIF);
- a written sermon, together with a description of the contemporary need to which it is addressed, and an exegetical interpretation of the biblical material out of which the sermon arose;
- a statement of faith.
  - \* This statement should be about one page in length and have no footnotes or annotations.
  - \* Readers of your statement should be able to sense both your personal faith and your understanding of topics that are important in the reformed confessional tradition.
  - \* You are required to express your views on at least the following topics: God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, human nature and sin, grace, justification, sacraments, church, Scripture, and the mission of the church.

Revised Sep 24, 2018

\* You are required to express your views in a way that is compatible with the confessional documents of the PC(USA).

- If you are still in seminary when you apply for the final assessment, submit a schedule for completing your educational requirements.
- Check with the Assistant to the Stated Clerk to verify that your CPM file contains Forms 3 and 4 for an annual consultation completed within the past twelve months.

Verify when you will meet CPM by emailing the Assistant to the Stated Clerk (see section 2 of this Guide).

- Your interview is likely to begin sometime between 1:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m.
- Invite your pastor and/or session liaison or others to be present, if you think their presence will be an encouragement to you. CPM welcomes them but does not require them to be present for the final assessment.

#### **14. Final Assessment of Readiness to Begin Ordained Ministry**

This interview with CPM is called "the final assessment" or "the readiness interview." It focuses on the outcomes of both the inquiry phase and the candidacy phase.

The scope of the interview includes the outcome of the inquiry phase: Are you called to ministry of the Word and Sacrament in the PC(USA)? Is this call clear in your own heart? Has your call been confirmed in your practical experience of ministry?

The scope of the interview includes also the outcome of the candidacy phase: Are you prepared for ministry of the Word and Sacrament in the PC(USA)?

In the final assessment, CPM has the following questions in mind:

- Do you show evidence of "wisdom and maturity of faith, leadership skills, compassionate spirit, honest repute, and sound judgment" (G-2.0607a)?
- Are you competent in the areas of theology, Bible, polity, and worship and sacraments?
- Do you show evidence of ministerial skill in the supervised practice of ministry?
- Do you express theological views compatible with the confessional documents?
- Do you show understanding of the ordination questions (W-4.0404), informed by knowledge of the church in diverse settings?
- Do you show a commitment to ministry as a minister of the Word and Sacrament within the Presbyterian discipline, and a capacity to respond to the needs of others, including colleagues in ministry?
- Can you prepare a sermon that is faithful to the text and is appropriate to the needs of a congregation?
- Are you ready to participate in a calling presbytery's plan for transition?
- Do you intend to continue studying and growing?

Prepare for the CPM interview:

- Read carefully the ordination questions (W-4.0404). Do you understand the commitment a person makes who answers the questions affirmatively? Are you ready to answer them affirmatively? You are not expected to answer the questions in this interview, but this would be a good time to discuss any hesitation you feel about answering them.
- Bring to the interview a copy of your application, so that you can refer to it if you need to.

If CPM decides to certify you ready to be examined for ordination, pending a call, then the following things will happen.

- The CPM Moderator will authorize you and Church Leadership Connection to circulate your PIF.
- You are free to negotiate the terms of a call.

If CPM decides to certify you ready to be examined for ordination, upon condition that you complete one or more requirements, then the following will happen.

- You complete the unfulfilled requirements.
- You send to CPM proof that all remaining requirements are met.
- CPM Moderator authorizes you and Church Leadership Connection to circulate your PIF.

The final assessment prepares you for later examinations that you will undergo before presbytery and before the Committee on Ministry's examination subcommittee.

- Even if CPM certifies you ready, it may require you to get some coaching in certain areas, so that you will be better prepared to succeed in subsequent examinations.

You will receive a follow-up letter about a week after the CPM meeting.

- The letter will state CPM's decision.
- The letter will state any particular instructions that CPM has given you.

NOTE: Even after you have been certified ready to be examined for ordination, pending a call, you must continue to have an annual consultation with your CPM liaison at the appropriate time of the year. This requirement continues until you are ordained or otherwise exit the process of preparation.

Seeking a Call:

- Go to the Church Leadership Connection (CLC) webpage on the PC(USA) site for seeking a call:  
<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/clc/>