



# Inquirer and Candidate Process Guidelines

Kiskiminetas Presbytery  
Committee on Preparation for Ministry

June 2009

This manual is for inquirers and candidates under the care of Kiskiminetas Presbytery as well as for ministers, sessions, and liaisons supporting the process. It was prepared by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry to guide you concerning the requirements and expectations of the Committee that are contained in the Book of Order as well as those specific to the Kiskiminetas Presbytery.

The Presbyterian Church Book of Order, Form of Government contains the requirements which must be fulfilled for ordination to ministry. Reference to the Book of Order is sometimes abbreviated BoO. Specific citations from the Form of Government are noted as “G-00.0000.”

“Committee on Preparation for Ministry” is given the title by BoO to the presbytery group assigned responsibility for inquirers and candidates. In this manual, “Committee on Preparation for Ministry” may be referred to as “the Committee” or as “CPM.”

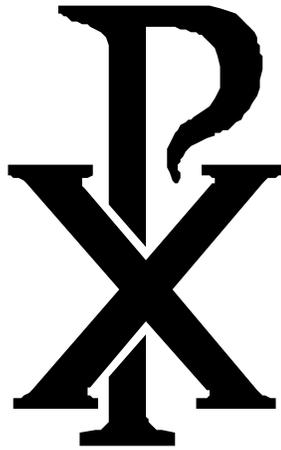
Reference to “Forms” is to those numbers and names in use at the time of writing found in paper and/or electronic format. The denominational office, which supports CPMs, revises “Forms” from time to time. Numbers and names may change.

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## A MESSAGE TO INQUIRERS AND CANDIDATES



*Preparation for the Ministry of Word and Sacrament requires a deep commitment. It requires that you have a love for Jesus Christ and his church. Your preparation will include years of study, with spiritual, practical and professional development.*

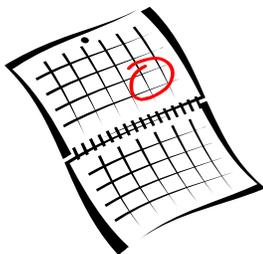
*The Committee on Preparation is here to guide you through this process. Our involvement with you, while required by the governance of the PCUSA, is something each committee member feels called to do as we serve Christ and the Church. Your leadership skills for tomorrow will be strengthened by the work we will do together. Your cooperation with the committee is something that is required. But more than that, we hope that it will be an experience that you will find helpful.*

*The Committee has prepared this manual to supplement the Book of Order and does not replace it or any of the requirements contained within it. In this manual you will find the procedures, timeline and expectations of the committee.*

*We have been charged with helping, guiding, challenging and counseling you as you prepare for ministry. We encourage you to remain in close contact with us and may God bless you as you consider your call to ministry.*

*The Committee on Preparation for Ministry,  
Kiskiminetas Presbytery*

## STEPS IN THE PROCESS



This is an overview of the proposed timeline typically followed by individuals seeking ordination in the PCUSA. There will be variances based upon the individual's needs. Please refer to this manual and the Book of Order for the requirements that are part of each of these steps.

### Before Seminary

- God calls you! (You think!)
- Complete your undergraduate degree at a college or university.
- Notify your pastor or the session moderator of your church of your interest in exploring your sense of call to ministry. Your pastor/moderator should contact the Committee on Preparation for Ministry as soon as possible
- Remain an active member of your home church.
- Contact the chairperson of CPM.
- Participate in a preliminary meeting with CPM.
- Have an official copy of all college transcripts and diplomas sent to the chairperson of the CPM.
- Apply to an approved, accredited Seminary. Enroll in Seminary.
- Get a copy of the current Book of Order and review the process required to enter ministry in the PCUSA. You can access the Book of Order by visiting [www.pcusa.org](http://www.pcusa.org).

### First Academic Year of Seminary

- CPM will meet with the Session and discuss the Session's role and your responsibilities required to become a Minister of Word and Sacrament or for other ministry within the PCUSA. Your Session will appoint a liaison.
- Meet with CPM. CPM will appoint a liaison from the committee.
- Enroll as an Inquirer with the Presbytery.
- Begin preparation for taking your Bible Content Exam
- Participate in a Career Development Center program.
- Participate in an annual consultation with the CPM

## Second Academic Year of Seminary

- Contact your Session and CPM liaison on a regular basis updating them on your progress and needs.
- Apply for and take your Bible Content Exam. (this may be completed your first year)
- You should request to be enrolled as a candidate at least one year prior to your anticipated **graduation date**.
- Complete necessary paperwork, meeting requirements, etc. to be considered for candidacy
- CPM recommends candidacy status to Presbytery at a meeting at which you will be in attendance. If approved, you will be enrolled as a candidate.
- Participate in an annual consultation with the CPM

## Final Academic Year of Seminary

- Complete Supervised Ministry/Field Education requirements
- Apply for and pass all ordination exams
- Request permission from CPM to circulate PIF and complete all tasks associated with the process.

## Receiving a Call

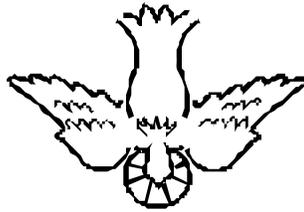
- Remain under care of CPM until you receive a call
- Contact chairperson of CPM and COM when you are negotiating a call
- Appear before Presbytery of Call for examination for ordination
- Presbytery approves call
- Arrange for ordination with officers of the Kiskiminetas Presbytery
- Ordination in your home church

# **I. PRELIMINARIES**

## **A. A WORD ABOUT PRESBYTERIAN PRINCIPLES OF ORDINATION**

In some denominations an individual decides to become a minister, attends seminary, and is ordained by a church. Some seminaries, through their courses and requirements, imply that they, the seminary, determine a person's call, qualifications and readiness for ministry. In our Presbyterian system, the Presbytery determines who will be ordained to ministry of the Word and Sacrament.

The requirements of the Book of Order and the CPM guide all preparations for ministry. These requirements take precedence over seminary requirements. They are not superfluous hurdles or annoying hoops along the way. They are central to the theology of call to ministry in the PC(USA). A call to ministry must be perceived by the individuals and confirmed by the Church through the presbytery.



Some advice to Inquirers and Candidates

- Know the requirements. Refer often to the Book of Order and this manual.
- Plan ahead.
- Keep in contact with the Committee through your liaison.

## **B. GENERAL INFORMATION**

You are 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, the time under care of the presbytery will last for more than two years. During the inquiry and candidacy phases you remain an active member of your home church.

The committee will appoint one of its members to be your liaison. You should discuss with your liaison any concerns you have about your educational and spiritual preparation. It is your responsibility to communicate with the committee on a regular basis through your liaison. You must consult at least once a year with the committee.

During inquiry, and before the committee will act on your application to become a candidate, you must participate in a Career Development Center program.

### **C. ANNUAL CONSULTATION**

In the Spring of each year, the chairperson will send you Form 3, the Pre-Interview Annual Consultation Report. Complete and return Form 3 to the chairperson by May 15th along with transcripts and Field Education Reports.

In April/May, you must contact your liaison to arrange your annual consultation. Ordinarily you will meet with the committee in early June. If you are unable to attend other arrangements may be made through your liaison.

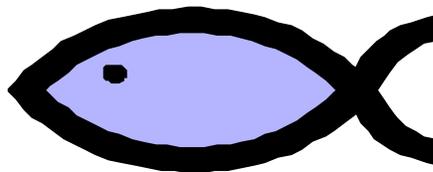
*Note: The Committee is responsible for necessary travel expenses for this annual consultation.*

### **D. USUAL PROCEDURES**

This manual contains the usual procedures required of inquirers and candidates by the CPM of Kiskiminetas Presbytery. Each inquirer or candidate has unique strengths and needs. These procedures are guidelines and may be altered to meet the individual's situations. You should not assume they will be changed. The Committee must function under the mandates of the BoO. You are expected to know the requirements. You must bring to the committee any concern which would require an exemption from the BoO or this manual.

### **E. FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE**

The Committee directs all persons seeking to be inquirers and candidates for the ministry in the PCUSA to the statement on Freedom of Conscience contained in the BoO, G-6.0108.



## II. BECOMING AN INQUIRER

### A. PURPOSE

The purpose of the inquiry phase is to provide an opportunity for the church and for those who believe themselves called to ministry of the Word and Sacrament to explore that call together in such a way that a decision regarding the inquirer's suitability for ministry of the Word and Sacrament will be based on knowledge and experience of one another. (G.14.0302)

### B. STEPS TO ENROLLMENT AS AN INQUIRER

1. Become a member of a church of the Kiskiminetas Presbytery for at least six months. You will talk with your pastor or session moderator about your plans to become an inquirer.
2. Arrange for a preliminary meeting with the chairperson of the CPM.
3. Obtain and complete Form 1 and Form 2A. They are available from the committee chairperson or online. Give a copy of Form 1 to your Clerk of Session and the CPM chairperson.
4. Have copies of transcripts and diplomas from all college work (graduate and undergraduate) sent to the CPM chairperson.
5. Meet with the session of your church. The session must take formal action on your application. If your session endorses your application, the clerk of session will complete page 6 of Form 1 and send it to the CPM. The session will appoint a liaison to work with you and the committee.
6. Meet with the Committee on Preparation for Ministry. The committee will review information you have submitted. Be prepared to discuss:
  - a. your faith journey
  - b. your exploration and testing of your call to ministry
  - c. your educational plans

*Note: The committee must approve your educational plans. Attendance at PCUSA seminaries is endorsed by the CPM of Kiskiminetas Presbytery. Other seminaries that are members of the American Association of Theological Seminaries may be considered.*

The committee will present your name to the presbytery to be enrolled as an inquirer. The committee encourages you to be present at this presbytery meeting so that you may be introduced to the presbytery.



### **III. BECOMING A CANDIDATE**

#### ***A. INTRODUCTION***

Application to become a candidate follows a period of inquiry during which you have explored and tested your call to the ministry for a minimum of one year. The committee strongly recommends you enter the candidacy phase at least one year prior to seminary graduation.

#### ***B. THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER PROGRAM***

Kiskiminetas Presbytery requires all applicants for candidacy to have completed a Career Development Center program. You will chose a development center in consultation with the committee. This program usually consists of two parts: 1) a battery of tests completed by the applicant, and 2) a counseling session based upon the tests. The career counselor prepares an evaluative report and sends it to the committee. The purpose of this program is to help you assess your strengths and weaknesses as they might affect your ministry.

During the inquiry phase, and before the committee will discuss your application for candidacy, you must contact a Career Development Center, complete the program, sign the release, and make a settlement for the services. The costs of the program will be shared as follows: one-third by the Presbytery, one-third by your church and one-third by you. You are responsible for the cost of transportation, lodging, meals and incidental expenses. You may apply to the committee for assistance, if needed.

You should notify the chairperson when an appointment has been made so payment of the presbytery's cost may be arranged. You should do the same with your clerk of session.



### **C. STEPS REQUIRED TO BECOME A CANDIDATE**

1. Participate in an approved Career Development Center Program.
2. Complete Form 5A, Application to Become a Candidate, and submit it to your Session.
3. By the end of the inquiry phase, each inquirer shall demonstrate adequate promise for ministry by presenting to CPM:
  - a. 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;
  - b. a statement of personal faith which demonstrates an understanding of the Reformed tradition;
  - c. an analysis of at least one concept from the personal faith statement regarding what it suggests about God, humanity, and their interrelationship;
  - d. a statement of what it means to be a Presbyterian, indicating how that awareness has grown out of participation in the life of a particular church;
  - e. 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;
  - f. a statement of his or her understanding of the tasks performed by ministers of the Word and Sacrament and of areas in which growth is needed. (G-14.0303g)
4. Meet with the session of your church. The session must take formal action on your application to become a candidate. If your session endorses your application, the clerk of session will complete page 2 of Form 5A and will send it to the Stated Clerk of Kiskiminetas Presbytery and the CPM. The session will also continue to have a liaison to work with you and the committee.
5. Meet with the CPM to discuss your statements and your application. The committee must take formal action on your application and must report this action to the Presbytery. You and the committee will also complete Form 5B concerning "Goals and Responsibilities."
6. Appear before the Presbytery. The committee shall present its recommendation to the presbytery. Under guidance of the chairperson, you will speak to the presbytery concerning your journey of faith and your call to ministry as reflected in your statements. The presbytery will have the opportunity to ask further questions of you.
7. If the presbytery votes affirmatively, you will be enrolled as a candidate under the care of Kiskiminetas Presbytery. A Service of Reception shall normally be held at this time during the presbytery meeting.

## IV. WHILE ENROLLED AS AN INQUIRER OR CANDIDATE



### **A. SERVICE TO THE CHURCH (Supervised Ministry/Field Education)**

The inquirer or candidate shall be encouraged to engage in some form of service to the church with the approval and under the guidance of the inquirer's or candidate's Committee on Preparation for Ministry. Field education assignments that are under the supervision of a theological institution do not require presbytery approval; however, field education assignments that place an inquirer or candidate as the student intern having sole pastoral responsibility for the life of a church require the counsel and oversight of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry having jurisdiction over the church. An inquirer or candidate shall not undertake to serve a church, even as a temporary supply, without approval of the presbytery having jurisdiction over the church as well as the approval of the inquirer's or candidate's presbytery. Under no circumstances may an inquirer or candidate serve as moderator of a session, administer the Sacraments, or perform a marriage ceremony. (G-14.0307)

The committee requires at least two units of supervised ministry of seminary field education. (A unit is defined as part-time service throughout an academic year, or full-time service throughout the summer.)

The committee requires all inquirers/candidates to have at least one unit of supervised ministry of seminary field education in a congregation. This requirement applies equally to persons who are not preparing for parish ministry. The primary place of service for ministers is the local congregation; the committee believes it is essential all persons seeking ordination have some ministry experience in a congregation.



The committee also recommends that one unit be in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). This gives the inquirer/candidate the opportunity to integrate personal, pastoral and professional identities and issues. The committee reserves the right to require a unit in CPE before certifying a candidate ready for examination by the presbytery. A copy of the CPE's supervisor's report must be sent to the committee upon completion of the unit.



## **B. EXAMINATIONS**

Every candidate for Ministry of Word and Sacrament is required to pass the four ordination exams and the Bible Content exam. When you take your examination, you must send the original graded examination to the chairperson of the committee within ten days of receiving it. Please make and retain copies for your records. You must do this whether you pass or fail an examination.

Authorization to (re)write ordination examinations must be obtained through the chairperson of the committee. Receiving the signed form will authorize you to take the examinations. You must file the application.

The Bible Content Exam is normally taken during the first or second year in seminary. This exam requires detailed knowledge of the Bible. You should begin a careful program of reading the Bible as soon as possible. You do not need the Committee's permission to take the Bible content exam. An application can be obtained from the chairperson of the committee. (G.14.0310c and G.14.0310d).



Standard Ordination Examinations, Church Polity, Theological Competence, Worship and Sacraments and Open Book Exegesis are normally taken during the Fall of your final year of Seminary. If you receive an unsatisfactory grade on any of the standard exams, you should consult with a faculty advisor and the committee. Usually positive steps can be taken to improve performance on a second try. If you fail an exam a second time, the committee will carefully review the steps you are taking before granting permission to retake the exam.



## **C. SCHOLARSHIPS AND GRANTS**

Kiskiminetas Presbytery has limited scholarship funds to aid inquirers and candidates during your seminary career. The amount varies from year to year according to the number of applicants and the amount of money available. You may apply through your liaison or chairperson.

## V. READINESS FOR MINISTRY – FINAL ASSESSMENT

### A. GENERAL

During your final year of Seminary you will begin the process outlined in this section.

### B. PERSONAL INFORMATION FORM (PIF)

During your final year of Seminary you should begin to prepare your Personal Information Form (PIF). The committee, or your liaison, may be consulted for guidance. A copy of your PIF must be sent to the chairperson. Prior to circulating your PIF you must have passed the Bible Content Exam and the four ordination exams. You must also have permission from the committee.

### C. STEPS TO BECOMING READY TO RECEIVE A CALL

Please review and complete all “Requirements to Be Certified Ready for Examination” as detailed in G-14.0310 and G-14.0305.

It is important to remember that **you must** be a candidate for the ministry of Word and Sacrament for at least one year prior to ordination.

As part of the process, you will present to the committee:

- a. sermon, accompanied by a statement of the contemporary need to which it is addressed and an 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.
- b. a Statement of Faith that has been prepared in double space format with each line numbered. The statement should not exceed two pages and your font should not be less than twelve. This statement should contain your 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.

You will also be required to meet with the Committee to discuss all aspects of your preparation and readiness for ministry. At this meeting discussion may include:

- a. a review of documents required by the committee
- b. your understanding of the ordination questions
- c. your plans for fulfilling your commitment to Ministry of Word and Sacrament with the PCUSA.

You are required to submit to the committee your final transcript, field education reports and certification of a diploma from a theological institution as soon as possible after graduation. CPM will determine your readiness for examination and ordination pending a call. Certification of the validity of a particular call is the responsibility of the presbytery in which the calling body or church is located. This usually comes through their Committee on Ministry.



#### ***D. AFTER YOU HAVE BEEN APPROVED FOR ORDINATION***

You are still responsible to the Committee and under its care until you receive a call and are ordained. It is not uncommon for a period of time to elapse between the completion of all the requirements for ordination and receiving a call. The Committee continues to have care and concern for you and will carry you in its prayers. The Committee will continue to meet with you annually until such time that you have received a call. This meeting is usually less structured than what is done while you are going through the inquirer and candidate processes. It is essential that the Committee stay in contact with you and your cooperation is expected.

When you are negotiating for a call with a church or other calling body, be sure you are in contact with the chairperson of the Committee on Ministry and the Presbytery Executive.

When you have received a call for service, you will appear before the presbytery of call to be examined for ordination. G.14.0402

The Committee encourages you to seek a call in service to our Lord. Should a significant period of time elapse following your completion of the requirements the Committee will ask to meet with you to discuss your status. The committee may encourage you to seek career counseling, or direct you in other avenues to help you determine where it is your ministry will be shared. If it is determined that a call to serving a PCUSA church or other church body is no longer something you seek, then the committee may recommend to the Presbytery the termination of your candidacy. In the future, should you desire to seek a call, you would have to begin as an inquirer, progressing through the stages. G-14.0312



## ***E. ORDINATION PLANS***

The ordination of candidates to the ministry of Word and Sacrament shall ordinarily take place in the presence of the congregation in which the candidate is a member, and in the place for the regular worship of that congregation.

G-14.0404

You will make arrangements for your ordination with the appropriate officers of the presbytery. Be sure to give attention to the proper make-up of the administrative commission appointed to conduct your ordination. G-9.0503a and G-9.0504b(3).



*God bless... and good luck!!!*