

## OVERVIEW OF THE PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY PROCESS

Presbytery of Olympia

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### INTRODUCTION

This document describes the major requirements of the preparation for ministry process within the Presbytery of Olympia. It is designed to provide session, applicants, and those under care with an overview of the whole process and a tool to use throughout. Specific information about the requirements of the process is found in the Book of Order (G-14.0330).

The preparation process generally proceeds over a two to five year period. The Book of Order states that the time period shall be at least two years, at least one year of which shall be as a Candidate (G-14.0303e & G-14.0401).

### INQUIRY

The purpose of Inquiry is to provide an opportunity for the church and for those who believe they may be called to ministry of the Word and Sacrament in the PC(USA) to explore that call together. Having been a member of a particular congregation of the PC (USA) for at least six months, the person seeking to become an Inquirer first discusses this interest with their pastor and session.

1. The pre-inquirer calls or emails the Presbytery of Olympia office and asks for a packet of paperwork to be filled out by the Inquirer and session of the church. These documents can also be found online at [www.olympres.org](http://www.olympres.org) (click link for Preparing for Ministry) or [www.clc.pcusa.org](http://www.clc.pcusa.org). Follow the CPM prompts. The Applicant completes Form #1 and Forms 2A & B and submits them to the Clerk of session at their church.
2. The pre-inquirer meets with their church's session and shares their vision of ministry. Ordinarily, they are taken under the care of the church and given a liaison or representative from the session. The session makes recommendation to CPM/LDT (by completing page 8 of Form 1 and their portion of Form 2B) for enrollment as an Inquirer.
3. The Inquirer application and the Session's paperwork should be scanned, emailed and/or sent to the Presbytery Office no later than 2 weeks prior to the first meeting with the pre-Inquirer.
4. The liaison and pre-Inquirer go to the first meeting with CPM/LDT. This meeting is both an orientation time and an interview to assess the applicant's readiness to become an Inquirer.
5. CPM/LDT meets with the pre-Inquirer and his/her liaison and votes to recommend that Presbytery enroll the applicant as an Inquirer.
6. The recommendation to enroll the applicant is presented on the Consent docket to Presbytery at its next Stated Meeting. Form #2A is completed and submitted by the Presbytery Stated Clerk to the Office of Resourcing Committees on Preparation for Ministry of the General Assembly. Inquirers are not required to be present at the Presbytery Meeting.

7. The Inquirer works with his/her CPM/LDT liaison to build a relationship of trust and to develop a plan for the Inquiry Phase. The focus of this phase is primarily to discern a call to ministry of Word and Sacrament in the PC (USA) and to explore appropriate theological institutions. The Inquirer's choice of theological institutions is required to be accredited by the Assoc. of Theological Schools. If this is not the case, extra course work in an accredited institution will be required.
8. During the Inquiry phase, the Inquirers must make arrangements to undergo a psychological examination/career assessment. The psychological testing center must be approved by CPM/LDT. The cost of this testing is normally shared 1/3 Presbytery of Olympia, 1/3 church session, 1/3 inquirer. Results of the exam are forwarded to the Chair of the CPM/LDT committee, and must be received and evaluated prior to the scheduling for a Candidacy interview. Completion of the exam is required prior to scheduling for a Candidacy interview.

**\*\*NOTE:** It is the custom of the Presbytery of Olympia LDT to pay 1/3 of the costs for the psychological exams, some travel (if necessary) for annual consultations, and the costs of any additional counseling as prescribed in specific cases. It is not the custom of the LDT to pay travel expenses for ordination ceremonies, field education experience, or any other travel of Candidates and Inquirers other than for annual consultations. Since the Presbytery of Olympia has a limited budget, it would be helpful for the Inquirer/Candidate and/or the Session of the sponsoring church to pick up the travel costs for annual consultations.

9. The Bible Content Exam should be taken during the Inquiry Phase.
10. An annual consultation is required each year of the preparation process. This is the time when the Inquirer's/Candidate's progress in the areas of Education for Ministry, Spiritual Development, Interpersonal Relations, Personal Growth, and Professional Development is assessed and goals and objectives for the coming year are stated.
11. It is the responsibility of the Inquirer to schedule an annual consultation. The Administrator of Presbytery may remind the Inquirer of the time coming up, but it is the responsibility of the Inquirer/Candidate to set appointments for annual consultations. The Inquirer shall complete Form #3 and submit it to the Presbytery Administrator at least 2 weeks prior to the annual consultation. During the meeting, Form #4 will be completed as a summary of the consultation.

**NOTE:** the Presbyteries of Olympia, Seattle and North Puget Sound hold a regional retreat for Inquirers and Candidates each spring. This provides an important opportunity to connect with others in the process and to participate in workshops and plenary sessions designed to offer practical insights into ministry. Inquirers and Candidates are encouraged to attend. Some annual consultations are encouraged at that time.

12. Internships and field education experiences may begin during the Inquiry Phase and must be approved by CPM. A unit of Clinical Pastoral Education is strongly recommended as part of the field education.

13. The CPM of Olympia requires all Inquirers/Candidates to take courses in Presbyterian Polity, Reformed Theology, worship and Sacraments, Greek and Hebrew; and to do field education in a CPM approved Presbyterian Church with a minimum of either 10 hours per week for an academic year, or 40 hours per week for a semester.
14. When ready to apply for Candidacy, the Inquirer completes the front side of Form #5A and a preliminary Statement of Faith. The Inquirer arranges to have transcripts of seminary work sent to the Presbytery Office. The Inquirer sets an appointment with their session and the paperwork is sent to the Clerk of Session for their review before meeting with the Inquirer.
15. The session is given orientation to the CPM. The Inquirer meets with the Session and is interviewed. Session decides at this time to either recommend to CPM that the Inquirer be enrolled as a Candidate or that he/she remain in the inquiry phase for an additional period of time.
16. The Clerk of Session completes Form #5A and Form #5B and forwards these forms to the Presbytery office to the attention of the CPM staff person. The CPM will not meet with the Inquirer unless these materials (including the results of the psychological exam) are received at least two weeks prior to the meeting.
17. The Inquirer calls the Presbytery Administrator to set up a Candidacy Meeting.
18. The CPM meets with the Inquirer and the session liaison to review the evidence that the Inquirer is ready to become a Candidate. The psychological evaluation, academic transcripts, field education/internship evaluations are reviewed at this time.
19. CPM votes to recommend that the Presbytery examine the Inquirer for Candidacy. The examination shall include a brief synopsis of biographical information, and response to Christian faith, Christian service, and motives for seeking the ministry.
20. The Inquirer appears before the Presbytery of Olympia to be examined regarding his/her Christian faith. Presbytery votes to receive the Inquirer as a Candidate, and upon affirmatively answering the questions in the Book of Order 9G-14.0305f), the Candidate is enrolled.

### CANDIDACY PHASE

21. Throughout the Candidacy phase, annual consultations are required. It is the responsibility of the Candidate to schedule an annual consultation. The Presbytery Administrator will remind the Candidate as to when they are due for a consultation. Form #3 should be received in the Presbytery office no later than 2 weeks ahead of the scheduled meeting. Following the meeting, Form #4 will be completed as a summary of the consultation. Form #4 will be copied to the Candidate.

22. During Candidacy, CPM will take an active interest in the Candidate's personal, spiritual and profession development. As mentioned in #13 above, the CPM of Olympia requires all Candidates to take courses in Presbyterian Polity, Reformed Theology, Worship and Sacraments, Greek and Hebrew; and to do either 10 hours a week for 9 months or 40 hours per week per semester of field education in a CPM approved Presbyterian Church. The CPM requires at least one unit of clinical pastoral education. The CPM may recommend psychotherapy, counseling, or spiritual direction.
23. It is the responsibility of the Candidate, when ready, to take the Presbyteries Cooperative Examination for Ordination. These examinations are ordinarily offered twice a year in September and February. The exam fee includes one retake of any failed exam. If a person fails three times they must seek an alternative form of taking the exam as prescribed by the Book of Order.
24. When the Candidate has passed all five of the Examinations and has shown proof of graduating from an accredited seminary in a timely manner, (including Bible Content), he/she may apply to the CPM/LDT for permission to circulate a Personal Information Form (PIF). To obtain such permission the Candidate must refine their Statement of Faith and prepare a PIF, submitting these to the Presbytery Administrator at least 2 weeks prior to the CPM/LDT meeting at which it is to be considered. The Statement of Faith shall reflect the Candidate's theology. It shall fit on one typed, single-spaced page and demonstrate a working knowledge of the Reformed Faith. The Candidate should be prepared to defend the statement and apply its precepts to situation in pastoral ministry.
25. The Candidacy Phase shall last for a period of at least one year. When the steps above have all been accomplished, and prior to accepting a Call, the Candidate shall present him/her self for final assessment, the Certification Exam. The Certification Exam demonstrates the readiness of the Candidate to begin ministry of the Word and Sacrament. This demonstration includes:
  - a. A presentation of transcripts from an accredited theological institution showing satisfactory grades and meeting all other educational requirements listed in the Book of Order, including Hebrew and Greek language study.
  - b. Preparation and delivery of a sermon.
  - c. Presentation of a personal Statement of Faith.
26. When the CPM is satisfied as to the Candidate's readiness for ministry of Word and Sacrament, the CPM will vote to certify the Candidate as ready to be examined for ordination pending the receipt of a Call. Form 6 is completed at this time. Candidates who have been certified will continue to be under care with their CPM and will be required to have an annual consultation until such times as a call is received.

## RECEIVING A CALL

27. The Presbytery of Olympia is dedicated to open searches for all ministerial positions. The Committee on Ministry will implement policy by requiring that no one in an official relationship with a church engaged in a pastoral nominating process, including Inquirers and Candidates, may be called to be the pastor or associate pastor in that church, unless six months have elapsed since the end of the official relationship.
28. When the Candidate receives a Call for ministerial services, the Committee on Ministry of the calling presbytery manages the approval process. Floor Ordination exams are usually conducted by the Presbytery of Call. The Certified Candidate should work closely with the Stated Clerk's office in Olympia Presbytery to coordinate the details of the calling process, scheduling of the ordination exam, and/or dismissal to the calling presbytery.
29. When a call is received, the CPM/LDT will work with the Candidate on establishing an Ordination Commission if so desired.