

COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

HUDSON RIVER PRESBYTERY

The Process of Preparation for Ministry

When individuals believe they have received a call to pursue ordination to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament in the PC(USA), the Presbyterian Church has a process to work with you and your congregation to prepare you for ordination.

The process of preparation for ministry involves two phases: **Inquiry and Candidacy**.

The **Inquiry Phase** is for you and your church to explore your call together with the presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) to determine your suitability for ordination through spiritual development, guidance, goal setting, and consultations.

Steps for Inquiry Phase:

1. Talk it out

Talk to your Pastor, Moderator of Session and/or other church officer. You begin the process by telling your call story to this supportive friend/colleague. With this person, you can begin the conversation about appearing before your session for their endorsement for Inquiry.

2. Fill out forms and submit them to your Session

All related forms and documents needed for this part of the process can be found [here](#).

Submit **Forms 1A & 1B** to your Clerk of Session prior to your interview with your session. This is how they will learn about you and your call. Take your time and answer all of the questions thoughtfully and carefully. Computer-generated or typed responses are required throughout the process.

3. Appear before your Session

After you have submitted these forms to your Clerk of Session, set a date when you can meet and interview with the Session members of your church. It is important that they hear your call story.

Upon their endorsement of you for Inquiry, they will need to fill out the Session Evaluation and Recommendation form (**Form 1D**), which includes the selection of an elder to be a liaison between you and your Session.

Both you and the moderator of the Session also need to sign the Covenant Agreement and Inquirer Release form (**Form 2B**).

4. Submit paperwork to the presbytery

After your endorsement by your Session, the following documents must be on file with the presbytery office before your Inquiry interview can be scheduled with CPM. Your file becomes a permanent part of your PC(USA) record.

Forms 1A, 1B, 1C, 2A & 2B – Make sure these forms are completely filled out, and then email them to the presbytery office. The Clerk will fill out Form 1D on behalf of the Session and email it separately to the presbytery.

Criminal Background Check Release Form – In addition, there is a [form](#) that allows the presbytery to conduct a criminal background check. Be advised that if there is a positive hit on your background check, it does not necessarily preclude you from coming under care of Hudson River Presbytery. In such an event, a member of presbytery staff and/or the moderator of CPM will have a conversation with you regarding any past incidents.

Post-high school transcripts – You will need to have every institution of higher learning (community college, college, university, graduate studies, seminary, etc.) send an official transcript to the presbytery office for inclusion in your file.

5. Schedule your interview

After you have submitted all your paperwork, contact the presbytery office to set a date for your CPM Inquiry interview.

Once you become an Inquirer, you will be assigned a CPM liaison who will help you guide you through the rest of the process.

We look forward to hearing your call story and journeying with you through the process of exploring your call.

All forms and reports needed throughout the process shall be sent to either of the following:

Mail:

Hudson River Presbytery
Attn: Jo Anna Tivnan
655 Scarborough Rd.
Scarborough, NY 10510

Email:

joanna@hudrivpres.org

General Requirements:

Psychological Evaluation

All Inquirers under care of Hudson River Presbytery are required to undergo a psychological evaluation. It is up to you to schedule your appointment. You will receive information about the process from the moderator of CPM.

Theological Education

All individuals shall complete all requirements of a Masters of Divinity degree program or its acceptable equivalent, from a theological institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools. The course of study shall include Hebrew and Greek and exegesis of the Old and New Testaments using Hebrew and Greek. These can be taken during the regular school year, in a January intensive, or a summer intensive. A yearly transcript shall be sent in each May, and a final transcript upon graduation shall be sent before Final Assessment.

Clinical Pastoral Education

It is strongly recommended that every Inquirer/Candidate complete at least one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) from an accredited program of the [Association of Clinical Pastoral Education](#) or the [College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy](#).

It is the Inquirer/Candidate's responsibility to be sure that written copies of the supervisor's final evaluation of the Inquirer/Candidate are forwarded to the presbyter to demonstrate that this requirement has been successfully fulfilled.

PC(USA) Standard Ordination Exams

The Bible Content Exam is usually taken during the first year of seminary to help identify areas of scripture which need further study during seminary. It is offered twice a year on the first Friday of February and the Friday before Labor Day, and it is given online at specified testing sites.

The senior ordination exams cover the areas of Biblical Exegesis, Theology, Worship & Sacraments, and Church Polity. These exams will be offered 3 times a year at the end of January, April, and September, usually on the last full weekend of those months. The entire process, including CPM moderator approval, is online.

- For more information and scheduling, visit the Office of the General Assembly [website](#).
- To register for upcoming exams, visit the PC(USA) Exam Registration [website](#).
- For more preparation assistance:
 - [Online Training](#)
 - [Bible Content Prep](#)
 - [Official Exam Handbook 2019](#)

- The [fifth edition](#) of Joan S. Gray and Joyce C. Tucker's Presbyterian Polity for Church Leaders.

Field Education

In addition to meeting the academic requirements for the Master of Divinity degree or its equivalent, in collaboration with seminary and presbytery, every Inquirer/Candidate shall complete a field education internship in a congregation other than that of their home church. Ordinarily, the internship will be an intensive, full-time experience for a period of three months OR an extended, part-time experience (10 or more hours per week) for nine months. It is the Inquirer/Candidate's responsibility to be sure that written copies of the supervisor's final evaluation of the Inquirer/Candidate are forwarded to the presbyter to demonstrate that this requirement has been successfully fulfilled.

Annual Consultations

Every Inquirer/Candidate shall check in with the CPM annually throughout the process. Before the consultation, fill out and send **Form 3** to the presbytery. Then schedule your annual consultation with the CPM chair. For **Form 3**, following the second year of theological education, replace the final question with the following:

C. If this consultation covers the period of the second year of theological education, write a preliminary statement of faith, which incorporates an understanding of the Reformed tradition. Also provide an analysis of at least one concept from the personal faith statement regarding what it suggests about God, Humanity, and their interrelationships.

*See "Final Assessment" section for Statement of Faith format.

Steps for Candidacy Phase:

1. Fill out forms and submit them to your Session

All related forms and documents needed for this part of the process can be found [here](#).

After at least one year as an Inquirer, submit **Forms 5A** and **5D** to your Clerk of Session prior to your meeting with your session.

Additional Questions for Form 5A:

By the end of the inquiry phase, each inquirer shall demonstrate adequate promise for ministry by presenting:

- 1) a statement of their understanding of Christian vocation in the reformed tradition and how it relates to their sense of call;
- 2) a statement of what it means to be Presbyterian, indicating how that awareness grows out of participation in the life of a particular church;
- 3) 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;
- 4) a statement of their understanding of the task ministers of the word and sacrament perform, including an awareness of their specific gifts for ministry of the word and sacrament and of the areas in which growth is needed.

These statements will help you and your session discern together your suitability for service as a minister of the Word and Sacrament. Take your time and answer all of the questions thoughtfully and carefully. Computer-generated or typed responses are required throughout the process.

2. Appear before your Session

After you have submitted these forms to your Clerk of Session, set a date when you can meet with the Session members of your church and discuss your statements.

Upon their endorsement of you for Inquiry, they will need to fill out the Session Evaluation and Recommendation Regarding Enrollment as Candidate form (**Form 5B**), which includes the selection of an elder to be a liaison between you and your Session.

Both you and the moderator of the Session also need to sign the Covenant Agreement and Candidate Release form (**Form 5D**).

3. Submit paperwork to the presbytery

After your endorsement by your Session, the following documents must be on file with the presbytery office before your candidacy interview can be scheduled with CPM. Your file becomes a permanent part of your PC(USA) record.

Forms 5A, 5B, & 5D – Make sure these forms are completely filled out, and then email them to the presbytery office. The Clerk will fill out Form 5D on behalf of the Session and email it separately to the presbytery.

4. Schedule your interview

After you have submitted all your paperwork, contact your CPM liaison or the CPM chair to set a date for your CPM Candidacy interview. This meeting may coincide with an annual consultation.

5. Appear before the Presbytery

Once you have been approved by CPM for Candidacy, you will be asked to appear at the next presbytery meeting to discuss your sense of call and have your enrollment as a candidate be voted on. A short candidacy service will follow the vote, which includes a 2-3 minute charge given by the pastor of your home congregation.

Final Assessment:

After at least one more year, and provided all examinations have been passed and all other requirements (M.Div. Degree completed, or in the last semester), the Candidate must provide the following:

1. Form 3 (Annual Consultation Form)

2. Statement of Faith

Rather than a theological treatise, write this for someone who is interested, but who has not had seminary training. The Committee will not dictate the beliefs included in the **one-page Statement of Faith**. However, it should include something about each of the following: *God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, Scriptures, Sin, Sacraments, and Church* (mission within the congregation, and mission beyond the congregation).

3. Brief Sermon

You will be asked to preach a brief sermon before the CPM on the date of your final assessment. Submit a copy of your sermon via email beforehand.

4. Exegetical Interpretation of Scripture

In addition to your sermon, provide a complete exegetical interpretation of the passage (**minimum four pages**) showing the journey from Scripture to sermon. Feel free to use an exegesis paper from seminary.

With the successful meeting of all requirements, you will be certified ready for examination for ordination, pending a call. Upon approval by CPM, your completed PIF may be submitted to the Church Leadership Connection (CLC) and may be circulated.