

WHITEWATER VALLEY PRESBYTERY
COMMISSION ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

HANDBOOK
for
THOSE PREPARING FOR THE CALLS OF
Ministers of Word and Sacrament
And Commissioned Ruling Elders



www.pcusa.org

Approved July 2024

All Christians are called to ministry in the Church of Jesus Christ. This *vocation* stands at the center of our faith and practice no matter what our particular occupation. Each among us has different gifts, talents, and abilities, and therefore each Christian's call is different and particular. The responsibility of the church, then, is to assist all in discerning how they are called by God to service.

Along this journey, some in the church find themselves particularly called to ordered ministry as deacons, ruling elders, and pastors or teaching elders. These offices of the church do not indicate status or privilege but mark that some have been set apart for particular service through the voice of the church. The call to ordained ministry begins with an inner urgency, but the church then experiences that call publicly as it affirms that individual's gifts for ministry and confirms God's call through the acts of ordination and installation.

In the Presbytery of Whitewater Valley, the Commission on Preparation for Ministry is responsible for the church's work of discernment with those who are called to be Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Commissioned Ruling Elders. The work of this commission is set out in section G-2.06 of the *Book of Order*.

The care process is a covenant relationship including God, the inquirer/candidate, the Session, and the Presbytery's Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM). The CPM of the Presbytery of Whitewater Valley has a number of particular guidelines and processes that are described in this handbook. In addition to these particular guidelines, we have the following expectations of all involved in the process:

- Candidates and inquirers are to make their process a top priority. CPM expects an inquirer and candidate to complete his/her process within five years. While this may not be possible in a very few extenuating circumstances (and CPM will consider those), the Commission ordinarily expects a five-year process in which there is cohesion, direction, and momentum, with one thing building on another. Should it appear to CPM that any circumstance – whether it is personal, financial, or other – comes between the inquirer/candidate and completion of the process in five years, the Commission will discuss the situation with the inquirer/candidate to help him/her discern what the issues are and to decide how and in what way to move forward.
- CPM, as a keeper of a care process, is a supervisory entity, not merely a consultative one. Decisions about process, goals, achievements, and requirements are made in covenant consultation with inquirer/candidate. CPM needs to be aware and approve of all elements in the process. Inquirers and candidates should take the initiative in maintaining regular and open communication with the Commission regarding experiences, progress in preparation for ministry, and other issues pertaining to educational, spiritual, and personal development.
- Candidates and inquirers are to respond promptly and responsibly to all communications, correspondence, and requests for reports and information by the Commission, including pre-interview annual consultation reports, together with transcripts, signed field education/internship evaluations, and copies of ordination exams and exegesis papers.
- Please refer to the Book of Order W-1.2006 (1) for guidance in the use of inclusive and diverse language: **"Inclusive Language** Since the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is a family of peoples united in Jesus Christ, appropriate language for its worship should display the rich variety of these peoples. To the extent that forms, actions, languages, or settings of worship exclude the expression of diverse cultures represented in the church or deny emerging needs and identities of believers, that worship is not faithful to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. **Diverse Language** The church shall strive in its worship to use language about God which is intentionally as diverse and varied as the Bible and theological traditions. The church is committed to using language in such a way that all members of the community of faith may recognize themselves to be included, addressed, and equally cherished before God. Seeking to bear witness to the whole world, the church struggles to use language which is faithful to biblical truth and which neither purposely nor inadvertently excludes people because of gender, color, or other circumstance in life" (1).

We are grateful to God that you are in this process of discerning your Christian vocation, and we pray God's guidance for all of us as we seek to be faithful together.

In Christ's service, The Commission on Preparation for Ministry of the Presbytery of Whitewater Valley

Table of Contents

Section 1. Introduction	4
Section 2. Understanding the Care Process.....	4
Section 3. Organization of the Commission on Preparation for Ministry	5
Section 4. Becoming an Inquirer	5
Section 5. Psychological Assessment.....	7
Section 6: Field Education: Parish and Clinical	8
Section 7. Annual Consultations.....	8
Section 8. Becoming a Candidate	8
Section 9. Ordination Exams	10
Section 10. The Personal Discernment Profile	11
Section 11. The Final Assessment	11
Section 12. Commissioner Ruling Elders (CREs)	13
Section 13. Candidacy Questions	14
Appendix A: Definitions of Acronyms	15

Definitions of Acronyms

COM:	Commission on Ministry
CPE:	Clinical Pastoral Education
CPM:	Commission on Preparation for Ministry
CRE:	Commissioned Ruling Elder
GA:	General Assembly
GP:	General Presbyterian
MDP:	Ministry Discernment Profile
PCUSA:	Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
PDP:	Personal Discernment Profile
PNC:	Pastor Nominating Commission
SPM:	Supervised Practice in Ministry, also known as Field Education
TLP/EP:	Transitional Lead Presbyterian/Executive Presbyterian

Section 1. Introduction

The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) specifies, in G-2.06, a process for preparation for becoming a Minister of Word and Sacrament (also called a teaching elder) or a Commissioned Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Each person considering the possibility of entering the ministry and every Session sponsoring and supporting such a person should be familiar with this part of the *Book of Order*.

The Presbytery of Whitewater Valley has established the Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) to coordinate its work with those wishing to become Ministers of Word and Sacrament or Commissioned Ruling Elder. CPM works as an agent of all persons in the preparation process: the individual inquirer or candidate, the sponsoring Session, and the Presbytery. CPM has considerable latitude in determining the requirements and process for inquirers and candidates that will enable them to complete the requirements of the *Book of Order*. Nevertheless, there are specific points at which the Commission cannot proceed without bringing a recommendation that must be voted by the Presbytery.

By developing this Handbook, the CPM of the Presbytery of Whitewater Valley expresses its intent to:

- Explain the process;
- Be as clear and open as possible about the obligations of all parties involved; and
- Help persons in the care process understand what is, and will be, expected of them.

Section 2. Understanding the Care Process

In its present form and in its antecedents, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has a strong commitment to an educated and qualified ministry. Particular requirements have been established to ensure that members of all congregations are provided quality instruction in the Christian faith, for leadership of worship of God, appropriate nurture toward spiritual growth, and competent leadership in the administrative and programmatic affairs of the church.

It is important to keep in mind that the entire process of preparation for becoming a Minister of Word and Sacrament or Commissioned Ruling Elder, as it involves individuals, Sessions, and CPM, is a “care” process. The responsibility for personal, pastoral care and support of the inquirer or candidate remains with the church of membership during this process of preparation. However, the counsel, guidance, and liaison relationships of the process are designed and intended to be empathetic and supportive even though CPM may impose certain requirements that a person may not be eager to undertake.

Meeting the standards required by the church for its leadership is no easy task. The preparation for ministry process is better seen as a deliberate undertaking than as an easy process with minimal requirements. The work of the Commission on Preparation for Ministry should be seen as a discernment process. It is only at this point in the constitutional process of the Presbyterian Church that responsibility is given for the credentialing of persons who will be Ministers and CREs in the church.

Above all, the care process is a **covenant relationship**. In this relationship, we acknowledge that the primary commitment of the Christian community is to God as everyone involved affirms our mutual responsibility for the ministry of the church. This covenant relationship is formally made with God, the inquirer/candidate, and the Commission on Preparation for Ministry, but the Session and theological institution also participate in this relationship. Through this relationship, the Commission and the inquirer/candidate set goals for development, evaluate progress toward preparation for ministry, and together discern the call of God.

While there are a substantial number of specific requirements that must be completed during the care process, the Presbytery through the Commission on Preparation for Ministry also has wide latitude in determining a person’s readiness for ordered ministry as a Minister of Word and Sacrament or Commissioned Ruling Elder. At the conclusion of this process, the Commission must have evidence of a candidate’s wisdom and maturity of faith, leadership skills, compassionate spirit, honest repute, and sound judgment (G- 2.0607) before certification (Section 11).

Section 3. Organization of the Commission on Preparation for Ministry

There are two key elements in the way CPM is organized that are helpful to understand how the Commission understands and fulfills its responsibilities.

CPM Chair

The CPM Chair schedules, prepares the docket for, and moderates all meetings of the Commission. The Moderator is also responsible for all official correspondence between the Commission and persons under its care or the Sessions of churches in which such persons are members, as well as reporting at Assembly Meetings.

CPM Vice Chair

The CPM Vice Chair assists the Chair, and he/she moderates meetings of the Commission and/or reports to the Assembly when the chair is unable to do so.

CPM Clerk

The Commission Clerk creates and disseminates minutes of the meeting.

CPM Liaison

Every inquirer, candidate or CRE in Training who is under the care of the Commission is assigned a CPM Liaison. The CPM Liaison is the primary contact for the person under care and will provide counsel and advice to the inquirer or candidate.

Section 4. Becoming an Inquirer – Minister of Word and Sacrament

According to the *Book of Order*, “the purpose of the inquiry phase is to provide an opportunity for the church and for those who believe themselves called to ordered ministry as Ministers of Word and Sacrament to explore that call together so that the Presbytery can make an informed decision regarding the inquirer’s suitability for ordered ministry” (G-2.0603).

When to Become an Inquirer

A potential inquirer must be a member of the sponsoring congregation and active in its work and worship for at least six months (G-2.0602).

There are no rigid rules for when in the educational process an individual should become an inquirer, although the ideal time is at the beginning of seminary. Potential inquirers should remember that the inquiry period is just that – a time for inquiry and exploration. Initiating the process does not imply the intent or the need to see the process through until ordination or a promise from CPM or Presbytery that ordination will be the end result.

An inquirer may withdraw from the process at any time after consultation with his/her Session and the CPM. Intention to withdraw must be communicated in writing.

Length of the Inquiry Period

The formal period of preparation for ministry (the inquiry and candidacy phases) should be no less than two years, at least one full year of which shall be as a candidate (G-2.0602). While there is no minimum or maximum duration established by the *Book of Order* for the inquiry period, the Whitewater Valley Presbytery CPM requires that it last ***at least one year***. In certain extenuating circumstances, exceptions to the length of the Inquiry period may be made by a three-fourths vote of those present. The phase of inquiry shall be of sufficient length for the inquirer, the Session, and the Commission on Preparation for Ministry to decide whether the inquirer should apply to become a candidate. During this time, the Commission on Preparation for Ministry will make use of resources such as information provided by the inquirer, personal references, and reports from counseling services, the Session, and the inquirer’s institution of learning, if the inquirer is a student.

Some of the factors affecting the length of the Inquiry period are:

- The individual’s level of maturity;

- The educational status of the individual; and
- The time needed for the individual to complete any of the requirements that CPM may have defined for the Inquiry period.

Major Steps in Becoming an Inquirer

A person interested in becoming an inquirer should:

- Discuss interest in becoming an inquirer with his/her pastor. The pastor (or Moderator of Session) should then contact the CPM Moderator to schedule a Session Orientation to explain the process and Session's responsibilities **before** the potential inquirer meets with the Session.
- Complete Forms 1A, 1B, and 2B for the Presbytery and forms 1C and 1D for your Session. These are found at pcusa.org; search with word "Form" + number and letter or use links below. Please limit each statement to one page, single-spaced. Number the lines, use size 11 Arial font, use 1" margins, and be certain your name appears on each page. All statements will be reproduced as submitted, so please pay careful attention to typing, spelling and grammar.
- Form 1A: https://pcusa.org/sites/default/files/form1a_o.pdf
 Form 1B: <https://pcusa.org/resource/form-1b-questions-reflection>
 Form 1C: <https://pcusa.org/resource/form-1c-financial-planning-theological-education>
 Form 1D: <https://pcusa.org/resource/form-1d-session-evaluation-and-recommendation>
 Form 2A: <https://pcusa.org/resource/form-2a-report-consultation-regarding-application>
 Form 2B: <https://pcusa.org/resource/form-2b-covenant-agreement-and-inquirer-release>
 Form 2C: <https://pcusa.org/resource/form-2c-report-initial-consultation>
 Form 3: <https://pcusa.org/resource/form-3-pre-consultation-report-development-areas>
 Form 4: <https://pcusa.org/resource/form-4-report-consultation>
- Submit these completed forms to Pastor and/or Moderator of Session so that they may be circulated to all members of the sponsoring Session.
- The person meets with sponsoring Session and then follows up with the appointed Session Liaison.
- If the Session votes to endorse the person to become an inquirer, the Clerk of Session will send the original and appropriately signed copies of Forms 1A, 1B, 1D, and 2B to the CPM Moderator. (Be sure to keep a copy.)
- Submit to the CPM Moderator a certified copy of all transcripts showing graduation from a regionally-accredited college or university.
- The person will receive an email from the CPM Moderator to schedule an interview with CPM. All paperwork must be submitted before an interview will be scheduled.
- The CPM will contact the references listed in the Inquiry application.
- Meet with CPM.
- If the CPM votes to recommend to Presbytery that a person be enrolled as an inquirer, a CPM Liaison will be assigned. He/she should be contacted after the meeting to follow up on any issues that came up during the meeting.
- The person is enrolled as an inquirer on prep4min.

Interview with CPM

The CPM Liaison will contact the Moderator to request an interview for inquiry be added to the docket of the next meeting. The person will be interviewed appropriately by the CPM and vote to enroll the person as an inquirer. If the vote is affirmative, the Moderator will advise the inquirer of the next steps, including scheduling an appointment for psychological and career counseling, and other goals for the coming year. The CPM moderator will then fill out form 2A and submit it to Presbytery. The CPM, at the next presbytery meeting, will recommend the student be officially enrolled as an inquirer. The student officially becomes an inquirer once an affirmative vote takes place at presbytery.

Responsibilities of Inquirers

The responsibilities of an inquirer are:

- Participate in psychological and career counseling. (See section 5.)
- Continue active participation in the life and mission of the Church (G-2.0605).
- Participate responsibly with CPM in the goal-setting, evaluation, and decision-making processes related to preparation for ministry as carried out in preliminary interviews, annual consultations, and other occasions required by the Commission.
- Give diligent attention to educational and developmental tasks involved in preparation for ministry of Word and Sacrament as prescribed by the Constitution, and to such additional requirements as are determined in consultation with CPM. If not already begun, the inquirer should begin studies at an accredited seminary approved by the Presbytery towards completion of a Masters of Divinity degree. Before applying for candidacy, the inquirer should complete or have a plan for completion of the following courses at an accredited seminary:
 - Church History including history of the Reformation
 - Introduction to Hebrew
 - Introduction to Greek
 - Course requiring translation and exegesis of Greek or Hebrew text, with graded final exegesis paper
 - Preaching
 - Ethics
 - Christian Education
 - Pastoral Care

The following courses must be taken at a PC(USA) accredited seminary or a venue approved by CPM.

- Presbyterian Polity
- Reformed Theology
- Reformed Worship and Sacraments

Section 5. Psychological and Career Counseling Assessment – Minister of Word and Sacrament

All candidates are required to complete an in-depth psychological and career counseling assessment, to be arranged soon after becoming a candidate. Candidates are to be evaluated at Leaderwise. Candidates in Whitewater Valley Presbytery who are studying or working in another part of the country may sometimes be given permission by CPM to complete their counseling requirement at another CPM approved counseling center. If you wish to pursue this option, speak to CPM during the initial interview or contact the Moderator. CPM may require more than one Psychological Assessment if your time under care exceeds standard norms.

The cost of the Psychological Assessment at Leaderwise is borne by the Presbytery.

Candidates will be asked to sign a form releasing the report to the Commission on Preparation for Ministry. Failure to sign this release form will result in your being billed for the assessment and in your termination from the preparation process.

Section 6. Annual Consultations – Minister of Word and Sacrament

All inquirers and candidates are required to participate in an annual consultation with the Commission on Preparation for Ministry for the evaluation and nurture of the inquirer or candidate.

As part of the annual consultation, inquirers and candidates will meet with commission members to discuss their progress toward goals for development. To facilitate this conversation and provide a written record of the meeting, all inquirers and candidates attending the retreat must confirm their attendance by submitting Form 3: <https://pcusa.org/resource/form-3-pre-consultation-report-development-areas> 5 days before the meeting.

At the conclusion of the annual consultation, the Commission will complete Form 4, “Report of Annual Consultation,” Form 4: <https://pcusa.org/resource/form-4-report-consultation> discuss it with the student, and send it via email to both the student and the liaison.

In addition to the required information on these forms, inquirers and candidates should also list and describe on them any supply preaching that they have done over the past year.

Annual Consultations continue as long as the student is under care of the CPM—i.e., until ordination or release from the care process.

Section 7. Becoming a Candidate – Minister of Word and Sacrament

According to the *Book of Order*, “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).

When to Become a Candidate

There is no fixed duration for the inquiry period, although it generally lasts for at least a year. As part of their ongoing relationship of care, the CPM Liaison is in a good position to advise the inquirer about when to apply for candidate status.

Length of the Candidacy Period

The candidacy period must be ***at least one full year*** (G-2.0602). It lasts until the candidate receives an approved call and is examined and ordained, or until the candidate’s name is removed from the roll of candidates in accordance with G-2.0609. If CPM votes to recommend to Presbytery that you be enrolled as a candidate, Presbytery will ordinarily act on this recommendation at its next regularly scheduled meeting. The date of your enrollment as a candidate is the date on which Presbytery votes that you should be enrolled as a candidate, not the date on which CPM meets with you and votes to make a recommendation on your behalf.

Major Steps in Becoming a Candidate

When an inquirer believes that he/she is ready to become a candidate, he/she should:

- Have completed, or have a plan for completing, educational requirements.
- Discuss his/her interest in becoming a candidate with the Session and CPM liaisons.
- Complete Forms 5A, 5B, and 5D found at
Form 5A: <https://pcusa.org/resource/form-5a-application-be-enrolled-presbytery-candidate>
Form 5B: <https://pcusa.org/resource/form-5b-session-recommendation-enrollment-candidate>
Form 5D: <https://pcusa.org/resource/form-5d-covenant-agreement-and-candidate-release>
- Submit these completed forms to the pastor or Moderator of Session so that they can be circulated to all members of the sponsoring Session.
- Meet with the Session.
- If the Session votes to recommend that the inquirer be enrolled as a candidate, the Clerk of Session will send the appropriately signed original copies of Forms 5A, 5B, and 5D to the CPM Moderator. The inquirer should also keep a copy.
- The CPM Moderator will contact the inquirer to schedule an interview with the Commission. If there is no contact within two weeks of the forms being sent, the inquirer should contact the

CPM Moderator.

- Meet with CPM. Candidacy interviews with CPM follow the same general format as that of Inquiry interviews. During the candidacy interview, members of CPM will be considering the call to ministry of Word and Sacrament in deciding whether or not to recommend to Presbytery that the inquirer be received as a candidate.
- After the CPM votes enroll the inquirer as a candidate, the moderator will fill out Form 5C: <https://pcusa.org/resource/form-5c-report-consultation-become-candidate> and submit it to Presbytery.
- Appear at the designated meeting of Presbytery, speak for 2-3 minutes on **sense of call**, and answer any questions that come from the floor of Presbytery on the inquirer's **sense of call**.
- If the Presbytery votes to enroll the inquirer as a candidate, he/she will be asked to answer the Constitutional Questions put by the Moderator of Presbytery. Following that, the student's pastor will offer a prayer to conclude the reception of the candidate. (See Section 13 for Constitutional Questions).

Responsibilities of Candidates

The responsibilities of candidates are to:

- Continue active participation in the life and mission of the Church (G-2.0605).
- Participate responsibly with CPM in the goal-setting, evaluation, and decision-making processes related to preparation for the ministry as carried out in preliminary interview(s), annual consultations, and other occasions requested by the Commission.
- Give diligent attention to and complete educational and developmental tasks involved in preparation for ministry of the Word and Sacrament as prescribed by the Constitution, and to such additional requirements as are determined in consultation with CPM (G-2.0607b-d). This includes completion of the Master of Divinity degree at an accredited seminary approved by the Presbytery and completion of field education and CPE requirements.
- Get permission for, register for, and take ordination exams.
- Fulfill the schedules and time requirements prescribed by the Constitution and CPM.
- Take initiative in maintaining regular and open communication with CPM regarding experiences, progress in preparation for ministry, and other issues pertaining to educational, spiritual, and personal development.

A candidate may not enter into negotiation for his or her service as a Minister of Word and Sacrament without approval of the Presbytery through final assessment and certification (Section 11). Candidates may request permission of CPM to be placed on the Presbytery's Pulpit Supply List, but they may not preach more regularly than two Sundays per month.

Candidate once approved by CPM are invited to the next Presbytery Assembly Meeting to be introduced and asked the following covenant promises:

- Do you believe yourself to be called by God to the ministry of Word and Sacrament also known as a teaching elder?
- 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 the ministry of the Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?

In addition to the requirements of the Book of Order (1) there are certain opportunities which will enrich and enhance your preparation for the ministry of the Word and Sacrament.

Candidates must complete one field education placement (G-2.0606) or Supervised Practice of Ministry (SPM) and one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). This is an essential step in the discernment process before candidacy.

To provide for parish experience, greater understanding of the workings, theology and polity of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and for continued growth into the role as a professional in ministry, the CPM requires that the inquirer complete field education in a Presbyterian church *other than and different from his or her home congregation*. The Commission must review and approve the field education placement **before** such service begins to give its permission (G-2.0606).

In this experience the inquirer must engage in theological reflection with the pastor of the congregation on a regular and frequent basis. In addition, CPM expects all inquirers to gain a wide range of experiences in the congregation with various age groups. The inquirer should gain a deeper understanding of preaching, worship leadership, polity, pastoral care, and teaching throughout the field education experience.

The assignment of a field education placement often coincides with field education done through and arranged by the inquirer's seminary. Confirmation of a placement through an inquirer's seminary does not guarantee CPM's acceptance of it under the *Book of Order* requirements (G-2.0606). The choice of field education must be discussed with the CPM as a part of setting goals for professional development during the inquiry interview and/or annual consultations. CPM reserves the right to discern if these goals have been met in order to move to candidacy.

If the inquirer comes to CPM with field education previously completed, CPM will discuss whether the earlier experience is acceptable or if an additional placement is necessary.

Inquirers and candidates must submit a copy of midpoint and final evaluations of their field education placement to the Commission.

The Presbytery also requires at least one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) in a setting certified by the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE; www.ACPE.edu.) CPM must pre-approve the proposed location. Exceptions to this requirement must be approved by the full Commission. A copy of the supervisor's evaluation must be submitted to CPM.

Section 9. Ordination Exams – Minister of Word and Sacrament

(ADMINISTERED BY THE PRESBYTERIES' COOPERATIVE COMMISSION ON EXAMINATIONS FOR CANDIDATES)

Before final assessment and certification of readiness for examination for ordination, a candidate must submit "satisfactory grades, together with the examination papers in the areas covered by any standard ordination examination approved by the General Assembly" (G-2.0607d).

These examinations are:

1. Bible Content Examination
2. Open Book Bible Exegesis
3. Theological Competence
4. Worship and Sacraments
5. Church Polity

Timing of Examinations

Inquirers or candidates are encouraged to take the Bible Content Examination in their first year of seminary. Candidates or Inquirers are expected to take all four "senior" ordination examinations at the first examination date of the final year of seminary (see Book of Order G-14.0431) (1). CPM has the responsibility to determine whether a student is deemed ready to take these exams. The CPM moderator will sign the exam application form after receiving approval from the CPM. CPM's permission is not

needed to take the Bible Content Examination.

The Bible Content Examination is offered twice a year, in early February and early September. This examination assesses the candidate's knowledge of the form and content of the Old and New Testaments. It is a 100-item, multiple-choice examination.

The other four examinations are offered twice a year, in January and August. These examinations are provided in the form of essay questions. Candidates or inquirers are expected to take all four "senior" ordination examinations at the first examination date of the final year of seminary (see Book of Order G-14.0431) (1). CPM has the responsibility to determine whether a student is deemed ready to take these exams. The CPM must grant permission to third-year seminary students or candidates to take the four other ordination exams. Contact the Moderator to gain permission.

Examination information, dates, deadlines, and registration are available online at <https://pcusa.org/about-pcusa/agencies-entities/interim-unified-agency/ministry-areas/ministry-preparation-support/standard-ordination-exams>. The CPM moderator will be asked to give permission to take the exams as part of the registration process.

When you receive your graded exams, whether passing or failing, it is your responsibility to forward these exams to the Presbytery office to include in your file. Be sure to keep a copy.

Ordinarily, three failures of any exam will mean termination of the preparation process and removal from the roll of Inquirers and Candidates.

Permission to make a fourth and final attempt to pass may be granted by the CPM if:

- it is determined that the Inquirer/Candidate shows very high potential for ministry,
- the Inquirer/Candidate has passed three of the four exams, and
- the Inquirer/Candidate can clearly demonstrate that he or she has taken advantage of all appropriate study resources and reviewed these options with the CPM Advisor.

In order to be fair to all Inquirers and Candidates, CPM seeks to be responsive to diverse concerns from Inquirers and Candidates, including those concerning Ordination Exams. Inquirers or Candidates with concerns, should contact the CPM.

Section 10. The Personal Discernment Profile – Minister of Word and Sacrament

The Personal Discernment Profile

The Personal Discernment Profile (PDP) is distributed by Call Referral Services of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The purpose of the PDP is to give persons seeking a call the opportunity:

- To provide information about themselves, their sense of call, capabilities and training, experience, personal/professional style, hopes, and spiritual aspirations.
- To obtain an interview with Pastor Nominating Committees (PNCs) or other groups entrusted with the responsibility of extending a call.
- To help them prepare for the interview.

When to Submit the Personal Discernment Profile (PDP)

The *Book of Order* requires that a candidate have the approval of the Presbytery before entering into negotiation for his or her service as a Minister of Word and Sacrament (G-2.0607). CPM completes this process on behalf of the Presbytery.

Once those conditions have been met, the candidate may approach the CPM Moderator to schedule his/her final assessment and to receive permission to be "certified ready to receive a call" and therefore to circulate his/her PDP (see Section 11). Once the request to circulate the PDP has been approved by CPM, and the candidate has submitted their PDP online, the Call Referral Services will contact the proper judicatory to attest to their certification.

Obtaining a Blank Personal Discernment Profile

A blank PDP can also be downloaded from here: <https://pcusa.org/resource/clc-personal-discernment-form>. More information can be found here: <https://pcusa.org/resource/clc-personal-discernment-profile-user-guide>

Section II. The Final Assessment – Minister of Word and Sacrament

Before a candidate can receive a call or begin negotiation for service as a Minister of Word and Sacrament, the Presbytery must certify that the candidate is ready for examination for ordination, pending a call (G-2.0607). CPM completes this certification on behalf of the Presbytery in a process known as the **final assessment** and reports its completion to the Presbytery.

The final assessment may be scheduled at any time after the candidate has been a candidate for at least six months, if the following items are in the candidate's file:

- Papers showing satisfactory grades in the areas covered by the standard ordination examinations (G-2.0607d).
- A transcript showing graduation, with satisfactory grades, at a regionally accredited college or university (G-2.0607b).
- A transcript from a theological institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools acceptable to the Presbytery, showing satisfactory grades in a course of study including Hebrew and Greek and exegesis of the Old and New Testaments using Hebrew and Greek texts, and graduation or proximity to graduation (G-2.0607c).
- The final evaluations from any and all field education and Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) placements completed by the candidate before or during his/her preparation process.

At the final assessment, the Commission reviews the candidate's preparation for ministry and seeks to determine if he/she is

ready for examination for ordination, pending a call. Four particular elements of this determination include:

- Theological views compatible with Reformed theology as expressed in the *Book of Confessions*.
An understanding of the meaning of the questions required for ordination (W-4.4003) informed by knowledge of the church in various settings.
- A commitment to service as a Minister of Word and Sacrament within the discipline of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) with wisdom and maturity of faith, leadership skills, compassionate spirit, honest repute, and sound judgment (G-2.0607a).
- Sound exegetical skill and preaching ability, as evidenced in the sermon submitted to and preached before the Commission.

The documents necessary to submit to the CPM for the Final Assessment are:

- A one page, single-spaced statement of faith. Number the lines, use size 11 Arial font, use 1" margins, and be certain your name appears on the top of the page. All statements will be reproduced as submitted, so please pay careful attention to typing, spelling and grammar.
- A written sermon, with a description of the congregation to which it is to be preached.
- A draft of the candidate's PDP.

All documents are to be submitted to the CPM Moderator no later than *30 days* prior to the date of the assessment.

At the Assessment itself:

- The Candidate will be asked to spend five minutes or less updating the Commission on his/her

education, experience, faith journey, and discernment since the last meeting.

- The Candidate will preach the sermon they have submitted.
- Following discussion of the sermon, any other questions can be asked by commission members in ascertaining the readiness of the candidate for ministry.
- The Moderator will then direct the interview to the PDP. Commission members will be invited to comment on the PDP, asking questions for clarification and giving advice to the candidate.
- The Moderator will direct the interview to the Statement of Faith. Questions may be asked and clarifications sought. Commission members will express his or her opinion as to its strengths, weaknesses, and omissions. Any specific requirements for alterations will be made by the Commission after the candidate has been excused.
- After the candidate is excused from the room, each member is invited to present his/her assessment and propose any further actions that should be required of the candidate. These various suggestions will be discussed by the Commission and voted on or adopted by consensus. Examples include re-working an element of the Statement of Faith, reworking the PDP, expanding the exegetical paper, re-writing parts of the sermon for clarification.
- A vote is then taken as to whether to sustain the Final Assessment or stop the Assessment until the candidate meets further requirements.
- When the candidate returns to the room and the Commission's decision is shared, he/she may request clarification of any additional requirements.
- If the Final Assessment is sustained, the CPM Moderator will complete Form 6 <https://pcusa.org/resource/form-6-summary-report-final-assessment> and submit it to Presbytery. The newly-certified candidate closes the interview with prayer.

The candidate is now able to contact PNCs and to search for a call. He/she may be placed on the Presbytery's Pulpit Supply list without further consultation with the CPM. The candidate remains under care of the CPM until ordination and must continue the annual consultation process. The examination for ordination is conducted by the Commission on Ministry and Presbytery of the calling Presbytery.

Section 12. Commissioned Ruling Elders

The Commission on Ministry (COM) delegated the responsibility for the enrollment and training of Commissioned Ruling Elders to the Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM), effective December 2023.

Discernment Process

- All candidates for the Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) program shall be elders in good standing ordained in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and shall be an elder for a period of at least six months. They need not be actively serving on Session to qualify. They shall be regular in attendance and active in the life of their congregation. They shall demonstrate leadership ability, pastoral concern, and pastoral ability. The Candidates shall have a Bachelor of Arts degree or the equivalent (life experience may be considered).
- The Candidate should have an extended conversation with their pastor about the sense of call and the gifts and tasks of ministry before approaching CPM.
- The Candidate shall fill out and submit Form 1A to the Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) supplying three references as outlined in the application. The three references will each fill out a Form 1B to be submitted to CPM. The CPM chair shall provide the forms upon request. They are also available on the Whitewater Valley website.
- The Candidate shall meet with their Session to be interviewed to receive the Session's endorsement for application to the CRE program. If approved, the Session shall fill out Form 2 and submit it to

CPM. The candidate shall receive endorsement from their Session on an annual and ongoing basis.

- The Candidate will meet with the CPM having supplied all appropriate Forms (1A, 1B, 2, 3). If the Commission approves the Candidate to enter the process, they shall vote to receive the Candidate as a “CRE in Training.” The CRE in Training shall then begin their courses.
- The CRE in Training shall meet annually with the CPM to be examined as to personal faith, motives for seeking commission, and the areas of instruction they may have already received. The CRE in Training will fill out Form 3 for each annual consultation.

Educational Requirements

There are eight courses that are required that shall be taken through a CPM approved site:

- Introduction to the Old Testament
- Introduction to the New Testament
- Reformed Theology
- Introduction to Preaching
- Reformed Worship and Sacraments
- Presbyterian Polity
- Pastoral Care
- Foundations of Christian Education

The University of Dubuque Theological Seminary is one example that offers a distance learning program. Wabash Valley Presbytery also offers a Ministry Formation Program through Columbia Theological Seminary, including geographically near cohorts.

In addition to class requirements, there are other requirements that the Commission may require:

- A Psychological and Career Counseling Assessment. (See Section 5 for more information.)
- The CPM may also require a Supervised Practice of Ministry (SPM) or Field Education if it feels it is appropriate to help prepare the CRE in Training for commissioning.
- Boundaries Training as approved by the Presbytery.
- A Background check.

The CRE Process

The CRE in Training shall:

- Meet at least annually with their Session.
- Meet at least annually with the CPM, supplying Form 3 for every meeting.
- Demonstrate work towards completing the class requirements.
- Remain active in the life and work of their congregation.
- Receive instruction and practice in all areas of church life.

CRE's may be commissioned as a pastoral leader by the Presbytery of Whitewater Valley upon the recommendation of the CPM to one of the following areas:

- A specific congregation
- A specific group or cluster of cooperating congregations
- A new church development
- A validated ministry

Additionally, CREs may be commissioned to the Presbytery:

- To celebrate the Lord's Supper in the absence of a pastoral leader
- To moderate a session in the absence of a pastoral leader
- To be placed on the pulpit supply list

Completion of the Process

- The CRE in Training shall present to CPM a personal statement of faith.
- The CRE in Training shall present to CPM a brief sermon (5-9 minutes, preferably orally). Before preaching the sermon, the Commission shall be told the context and setting where this sermon would be presented.
- The CRE in Training shall submit a written self-evaluation about their experience during their training and their readiness to be ordained as a CRE. Please limit your response to no more than three pages.
- CPM shall examine the CRE in Training.
- After successful completion of the examination, CPM will present the CRE in Training to Presbytery for certification for a commission or partial commission.

CPM FORM 1 A

**Whitewater Valley Presbytery Commission on Preparation for Ministry Application for
Certification Program for Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE)**

Applicant's Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

(Street or PO Box)

(City)

(State)

(Zip)

Phone (Home): _____ Phone (Cell): _____

Email Address: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Occupation/Place of Employment: _____

Church of Membership: _____

(Name of Church)

(City, State)

What church occupation (Pastor, Youth Leader, etc.) are you interested in at this time?

Academic Background

List the academic institutions you have attended, beginning with high school, and complete the information requested:

Institution

Dates Attended

Program/Major

Diploma/Degree

Describe any previous experience in lay preaching or lay pastor training:

Occupational History

List the three most recent full-time or part-time positions in which you have been employed and attach it to this application. Provide the following information: job title, dates of employment, aspect most enjoyed, aspect most disliked.

Church History

Date and place of baptism:

Date and place of profession of faith:

Church membership:

Date joined:

Date ordained a ruling elder:

Date ordained a deacon:

List other churches where you have been a member.

List areas of involvement in your local church, both as a participant and as a leader. Indicate areas of leadership.

List areas of involvement in Presbytery, Synod, or General Assembly.

List voluntary services, civic or social organizations of which you are or have been a member. Indicate your extent of participation and your role.

List any factors that may place limits on your ability to receive training or to serve as a Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE).

Questions for Reflection

Write a response to each of the following questions and attach to this application.

1. In one or two paragraphs, describe yourself as a person.
2. Describe briefly what it means to you to be a Commissioned Ruling Elder? What has motivated you to consider this program?
3. Write a brief statement of your personal faith (approximately 300-500 words). Your statement should describe (at minimum) what you believe about God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and your relationship to them.
4. What does it mean to you to be a Presbyterian?
5. Describe your current spiritual journey, spiritual practices, prayer life, and disciplines.
6. Comment on your interests, hobbies, and stress-relieving activities.

References

Please list three people who will serve as references. One should be your pastor or a pastor within Whitewater Valley Presbytery.

Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____
Relationship: _____

Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____
Relationship: _____

Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____
Relationship: _____

Please ask your references to complete Reference for Commissioned Ruling Elder Applicant, including the questions for reflection, and send their responses under separate cover directly to the Commission on Preparation for Ministry at the following address:

Whitewater Valley Presbytery
Attn: CPM
1100 W 42 St
Suite 210
Indianapolis, IN 46203
OR dwest@whitewatervalley.org

I promise, in reliance upon the grace of God, to participate diligently and wholeheartedly with the Session and the Presbytery's Commission on Preparation on Ministry/Commission of Ministry in exploring my vocation.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

After completing the application, make a copy for yourself and submit the original to the Clerk of Session or Moderator of the Session of your home church.

CPM Form 1B

**Whitewater Valley Presbytery Commission on Preparation for Ministry
Reference for Commissioned Ruling Elder Applicant**

Background information for (applicant's name): _____

Reference Name: _____

Relationship to Applicant: _____

Length of time known person: _____

Date: _____

The person named above is seeking admission to the program. The Commission on Preparation for Ministry would appreciate your candid response to the following questions:

1. To what extent does the applicant adhere to Christ's teachings?
2. What is your experience of the applicant's commitment to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?
3. What special gifts, talents and skills does the applicant exhibit for service as a Commissioned Pastor?
4. What is the most recent example of the applicant's service to the church?
5. If the applicant were your Commissioned Ruling Elder, in what specific areas would you wish him/her to improve?
6. If you are a Minister of Word and Sacrament and a member of Whitewater Valley Presbytery, would you be willing to serve as the applicant's mentor if asked?

Please use a separate sheet(s) for your response, attach it to this form, and send your response directly to the Commission on Preparation for Ministry at the following address:

**Whitewater Valley Presbytery
Attn: CPM
1100 W 42 St
Suite 210
Indianapolis, IN 46203
OR dwest@whitewatervalley.or**

CPM Form 2

**Whitewater Valley Presbytery Commission on Preparation for Ministry
Application for Certification Program for Commissioned Ruling Elder
Session Evaluation and Recommendation**

The Session of _____ Presbyterian Church of _____ met
with _____ on _____ and
submits the following report:

_____ The Session **endorses** the applicant to be trained by the Presbytery to become a
Commissioned Pastor.

_____ The Session **does not endorse** the applicant to be trained by the Presbytery to
become a Commissioned Pastor.

This report was prepared for the Session by the Clerk:

Name Phone Date

Attested by the Moderator of the Session:

Name Phone Date

The Session will copy and mail the completed application and attachments to the
Commission on Preparation for Ministry at the following address:

**Whitewater Valley Presbytery
Attn: CPM
1100 W 42 St
Suite 210
Indianapolis, IN 46203
OR dwest@whitewatervalley**

CPM Form 3
Whitewater Valley Presbytery Commission on Preparation for Ministry
Application for Certification Program for Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE)
Questions for Annual
Consultation

Name: _____

Please return form by: _____ to _____

For your annual consultation at _____ AM/PM on _____

At _____

1. Attachments
 - i. Certification of Training completed, grades if applicable
2. Information Update
3. Reflect on and respond briefly in the following areas of your training?
 - Old Testament
 - New Testament
 - Church History
 - Practice of Ministry
 - Other
4. Briefly describe your spiritual disciplines, including your participation in the worship and mission of a Presbyterian congregation.
5. Describe your relationship with your peers, authority figures, family, and others who are significant to you. What are the implications of those relationships in your ministry?
6. Describe recent experiences of emotional impact, if any, and how you dealt with them.
7. Comment on areas in which you believe you are growing and identify areas in which you feel the need for progress.
8. List other areas which you wish to discuss with the Commission including financial needs, family concerns, etc.

CPM Form 4

Whitewater Valley Presbytery Commission on Preparation for Ministry

**Applicant for Certification Program for Commissioned Ruling Elder
CRE Evaluation/Recommendation**

The Commission on Preparation for Ministry of Whitewater Valley Presbytery met with _____ On _____ and submits the following report:

The Commission on Preparation for Ministry

_____ **Endorses** the applicant to be trained by the Presbytery to become a Commissioned Pastor.

_____ **Does not endorse** the applicant to be trained by the Presbytery to become a Commissioned Pastor.

Signed: _____
Moderator, CPM

Signed: _____
Applicant

CPM Form 5

**Whitewater Valley Presbytery Commission on Preparation for Ministry
Certification Notice for CRE Candidates**

The Commission on Preparation for Ministry of Whitewater Valley Presbytery met with _____

On _____ and submits the following

report: The Commission on Preparation for Ministry

_____ **Certifies** that the candidate has been properly trained and is ready to receive a commission to a validated ministry within the bounds of Whitewater Valley Presbytery.

_____ **Does not certify** the candidate as ready to receive a commission. The Commission on Preparation for Ministry believes that the candidate has the following deficiencies regarding their readiness to serve as a Commissioned Pastor. The CPM would be willing to reconsider certification once these deficiencies have been corrected.

Deficiencies that need to be corrected:

Signed: _____
Moderator, CPM

Signed: _____
Applicant

