

Washington Presbytery
COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY
PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY POLICIES

Approved: January 20, 2018

INTRODUCTION

The following revised policies have been adopted by the Committee on Preparation for the Ministry [hereinafter referred to as the CPM] to guide its work with inquirers, candidates and churches as they cooperate to develop leaders to serve the church, to the glory of God. These policies were first accepted by Washington Presbytery on May 8, 2007.

These policies supplement those outlined in the prevailing editions of the *Book of Order* and the *Advisory Handbook for Preparation for Ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*. These documents exert primary authority over the preparation for the ministry process.

COMMITTEE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The CPM is concerned with the discernment of an inquirer's call to ministry and with a candidate's preparation to respond to that call. Guidance and support for inquirers and candidates are fostered through responsibilities shared by the committee with seminaries, sessions, and Washington Presbytery.

LIAISON WITH THE SESSION

In accordance with *Book of Order*, the session of the inquirer's or candidate's home church will designate an elder to serve as liaison with the inquirer or candidate. Inquirers or candidates should make contact with their session liaison at least annually, and more often if the situation warrants. It is expected that the session liaison will be supportive of the inquirer or candidate as requested.

BACKGROUND CHECK

The inquirer must pass *PA Act 153 Clearance*. There are three background checks that must be performed in order to receive a PA Act 153 Clearance:

1. Criminal History Record from the PA State Police (PATCH) system.
 2. Child Abuse Clearance obtained through the Department of Public Welfare.
 3. FBI Fingerprint screening (this does not include volunteers with ten year consistent PA residence).
- Inquirers are not considered volunteers.

PA Act 153 Clearance must be renewed every 3 years. CPM resources are available if financial aid proves to be necessary.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

All inquirers must complete a program of psychological assessment in the first year as inquirers, generally during their first year of seminary. Inquirers are responsible for giving the necessary releases to have the results of their consultation sent to the chair of the CPM. Copies of the reports will be shared with the

committee. Confidentiality is assured. Inquirers will not be advanced to the candidacy phase until this process has been completed.

In general practice, Washington Presbytery pays for one-third of the assessment; the inquirers home church pays for a minimum of one-third; and, the inquirer pays the balance.

Assessments may be conducted by the Pittsburgh Pastoral Institute or other such professional centers and individuals approved by the CPM. Assessment center appointments are generally booked months in advance; inquirers are encouraged, therefore, to call an assessment center for an appointment as early as possible.

CHOICE OF SEMINARY

Inquirers and candidates are expected to seek the approval of the CPM concerning their choice of seminary. In order that those preparing for ministry will have the deepest possible acquaintance with the life, mission and ethos of the Presbyterian Church (USA), Washington Presbytery expects inquirers and candidates to attend a Presbyterian Church (USA) accredited seminary. The following seminaries are accredited by the PC (USA):

- Austin Theological Seminary
- Columbia Theological Seminary
- Dubuque Theological Seminary
- Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary
- Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
- McCormick Theological Seminary
- Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
- Princeton Theological Seminary
- San Francisco Theological Seminary
- Union Presbyterian Seminary

Two additional seminaries are related to the PC (USA) by covenant agreements. They are: Auburn Theological Seminary and Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico.

Those desiring to complete their education at non-Presbyterian, accredited seminaries must receive special approval from the CPM based on the guidelines and requirements specified in this document. The Association of Theological Schools' Commission on Accrediting provides a list of accredited seminaries at the following website: www.ats.edu/member-schools/member-school-list. **[See Addendum.]**

Approval of a non-Presbyterian seminary will be considered an exception rather than a general rule by CPM. Exceptions will be made on the basis of the inquirer or candidate, not on the basis of the seminary. That is, approval of attendance at a particular seminary for one inquirer or candidate will not serve precedent or assurance of similar approval for another inquirer or candidate. Each inquirer or candidate will be evaluated by the CPM.

GENERAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS

In addition to the area of study required by the *Book of Order*, the CPM will determine that the following subject areas are represented on the seminary transcripts of candidates under their care; that is, church history, reformed theology, preaching, pastoral care and counseling, Christian education, mission, ethics, and spiritual formation.

Inquirers and candidates are generally expected to maintain a “C” average or better in their course work.

FIELD EDUCATION

The CPM recognizes that every seminary structures its academic year in different ways. Therefore, candidates are expected to complete the equivalent of 10 hours a week of supervised field education for one academic year. Service in the inquirer's or candidate's home church is generally not acceptable to the committee.

Students must arrange to have copies of all evaluations for their field experiences sent to the chair of the CPM.

TRANSCRIPTS

At the conclusion of each year of seminary study, students are required to send a copy of their seminary transcripts to the chair of the CPM. An unofficial transcript (“student copy” or photocopy) is acceptable for this purpose, with the exception of the final transcript—which must be an official transcript, indicating receipt of the M. Div. Degree.

ORDINATION EXAMINATIONS

Bible Content Examination

Inquirers and candidates are strongly encouraged to take the Bible Content Examination in their second year of seminary. CPM will pay the examination fee for the first effort. It is the inquirer's or candidate's responsibility to apply to take this examination; request payment from the CPM; and, see that the results are sent to the chair of the CPM. A possible resource to prepare for this exam is *Bible Basics: Mastering the Contents of the Bible* by Duncan Ferguson, published by Westminster/John Knox, 1995.

Final Year Examinations

The committee expects candidates to take the examinations in Bible Exegesis, Theology, Worship and Sacraments, and Polity during their senior year of seminary or shortly thereafter. CPM will pay the examination fees for the first efforts.

PERSONAL INFORMATION FORM CIRCULATION

Candidates are encouraged to begin writing their Personal Information Form (PIF) no later than the beginning of their final semester of their senior year. The candidate should confer with his/her CPM liaison for feedback about the PIF.

The committee chair will not ordinarily permit candidates to circulate dossiers until the candidate has passed all five standard examinations; exceptions may be granted only by vote of the full committee.

FINAL CONSULTATION/READINESS TO RECEIVE A CALL

Candidates under care of Washington Presbytery will have a final interview with the CPM, during which time the candidates will be assessed for their readiness of ministry.

Statement of Faith

The statement of faith submitted at the end of the candidacy phase must be typed with a font no smaller than 12-point, and no longer than one side of an 8 ½" x 11" sheet of paper. It should be single-spaced, and double-spaced between paragraphs. The candidate is responsible for getting a copy of the final version to the chair of the CPM.

The statement of faith should be an authentic expression of the candidate's beliefs concerning the essential doctrines of the faith, including God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit; humanity; sin and forgiveness; sacraments; salvation; the authority of scripture; the nature, mission and polity of the church; discipleship; and, eschatology.

Candidate's Sermon

A CPM representative needs to hear a sermon by the candidate. The candidate needs to make arrangements for this activity to occur.

Waivers and Exceptions

The CPM will consider exceptions to the above policies only in the the most exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. Candidates who need to have accommodations or exceptions are urged to direct these inquiries to their session liaison or the chair of the CPM.

ADDENDUM

REQUIREMENTS FOR THOSE SEEKING APPROVAL TO ATTEND A NON-PRESBYTERIAN SEMINARY

I. Inquirers and candidates desiring to pursue their ministerial training at a seminary not affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (USA) must present a statement (not to exceed ten double-spaced pages) to the CPM specifying the seminary training desired and presenting evidence and rationale for that selection. After a review of the case, the CPM will allow or disallow such study. In the case of disallowance, the inquirer or candidate will have the right of appeal to the Washington Presbytery.

II. The CPM's evaluation will include (but not be limited) to consideration of the following factors:

A. The inquirer's or candidate's personal background, faith journey, previous preparation, past church affiliations, personal strengths and weaknesses, and experience of call.

B. The validity of the reasons and rationale presented.

C. Membership of the seminary in the Association of Theological Schools.

D. Whether the theological position and orientation of the seminary is within the Reformed tradition.

E. How the seminary offers adequate education in PC (USA) policy and program.

F. How the seminary encourages the student's loyalty and support of the PC (USA).

G. The extent to which the seminary provides for the building of relationships and experience that promote the student's identity with the PC (USA) denomination.

III. In the case of inquirers or candidates who are not in seminary, approval of an exception must be secured from the CPM *before* matriculation in a non-PC (USA) seminary.

IV. Inquirers and candidates currently enrolled in non-PC (USA) seminaries at the time they come under care of Washington Presbytery, and who desire to complete their ministerial training in such locations must make application for approval immediately after they are accepted as an inquirer or candidate by the presbytery.

V. All inquirers and candidates in non-PC (USA) seminaries must submit to the CPM prior to the beginning of the second seminary year, a written statement interpreting their experience in the seminary and field assignments and discussing how these experiences equip them for ministry within the denominational framework of the PC (USA).

VI. Any applicant who has already finished work in a non-PC (USA) seminary prior to being received as an inquirer or candidate must submit to the CPM both of the papers described above in paragraphs I and V. These papers will form the basis of dialogue between the applicant and the CPM in evaluating the adequacy of the education, training, and fieldwork undertaken and in taking subsequent action on the application.