

**Committee on Preparation for Ministry
of
HEARTLAND PRESBYTERY**

MANUAL FOR INQUIRERS AND CANDIDATES

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**Heartland Presbytery adopted the 2005-7 Book of Order Chapter 14
as its “Handbook”. References from that are so noted.**

COMMITTEE MANUAL for HEARTLAND PRESBYERY

INQUIRY PHASE OF PREPARATION

Inquirer Application

1. Applicant must have been a member of local Presbyterian Church for at least six months. The process of inquiry/candidacy will be at least two years in length. (G-14.0403)
2. The moderator of the session or pastor of the applicant's local church will contact the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM). (Handbook G-14.0303c)
3. Applicant completes Forms #1 and #2 and returns to the clerk of session. Applicant, clerk, pastor, and CPM representative arrange a time to meet with the session.
4. Applicant and CPM representative meet with the session. Session will complete Form #2. The session appoints its own liaison to the CPM on behalf of the inquirer. The clerk will send forms #1 and #2 to the CPM moderator.
5. After session endorsement, the CPM representative will present the inquirer to the CPM along with Form #1.
6. The CPM interviews the applicant to make a preliminary assessment of the motives, seriousness of intent and general suitability for ministry. Normally, this interview will not exceed 30 minutes. The CPM decides whether or not to recommend the candidate as an inquirer and takes the appropriated action.
7. If declined by the CPM, the process ends at this point and the file is returned to the applicant and the session is so informed. If accepted, the office sends Form #2 to the national office and the inquirer signs Form #2a (Covenant Agreement).
8. The CPM reports the inquirer's enrollment to the presbytery.
9. The committee requires each of its inquirers, prior to becoming a candidate, to participate in the Midwest Ministry career assessment program. The assessment fee will be covered by the CPM, but sessions must be scheduled by the inquirer. (Handbook G-14.0303f) It is recommended that this assessment be done early in the inquirer process.
10. Annual consultations are required and arranged by the inquirer or the CPM liaison. The inquirer completes Form #3 and updates a one-page Statement of Faith. The completed Form #3 is sent via email to the CPM moderator at least 10 days prior to the consultation. (G-14.0421). The consultation with the CPM or its appointed subcommittee focuses on goals for growth and development in these areas:
 - a. Education For Ministry—which includes evaluation of the individuals academic potential and progress and reflection on the purpose of education experienced and on his or her relation to the preparation for ministry of the Word and Sacrament.
 - b. Spiritual Development—which provides a framework for individuals to reflect on their personal faith journey.

- c. Interpersonal Relations—which provides opportunities to reflect on how an individual relates to others and what this means in terms of the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament.
- d. Personal Growth—through which persons reflect on who they are, what areas they need to develop, how to understand their call, and how to develop personal stewardship.
- e. Professional Development—which helps an individual develop specific skills to enhance effectiveness as Minister of the Word and Sacrament and as presbyters. At each consultation, previous goals and progress in completing them are reviewed, and new goals are established as appropriate. Recommendations may be made to the inquirer regarding the growth and development of the inquirer. These are summarized on Form #4. The original form #4 is filed at the presbytery office and copies are sent to the inquirer, their session liaison, their pastor and their seminary.

The committee's purpose in this process is both to support the inquirer, and to consider the person's suitability for ministry. The CPM must take action to continue the inquirer at the conclusion of each annual consultation.

- 11. The Inquirer Phase lasts at least one year. (G-14.0403)
- 12. Inquirers enrolled in seminary must provide a seminary transcript at least annually to the CPM.

Transition To Candidacy

- 13. If an inquirer decides to become a candidate, he/she completes Form #5a and sends it to the clerk of session. The clerk, inquirer, pastor, and CPM liaison arrange a meeting with the session to review evidence of readiness to proceed to candidacy. The session makes the appropriate recommendation to the committee (Handbook G-14.0303g[1-6]).

THE FOLLOWING BOOK OF ORDER QUESTIONS ARE REQUIRED TO BE COMPLETED WITH FORM #5a (Handbook G-14.0303g [1-6]):

- a. A statement of her or his understanding of Christian vocation in the Reformed tradition and how it relates to her or his sense of call.
- b. A statement of personal faith which incorporates an understanding of the Reformed tradition.
- c. A written analysis of at least one concept from the personal faith statement regarding what it suggests about God, humanity, and their relationship.
- d. A statement of what it means to be Presbyterian, indicating how that awareness grows 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 task Ministers of the Word and Sacrament perform, including an awareness of his or her specific gifts for Ministry of the Word and Sacrament and of areas in which growth is needed.
 - g. Complete the background check packet available through the presbytery office.
14. The CPM liaison then arranges for a candidacy interview with the CPM. The CPM liaison will participate in this interview. (Handbook G-14.0305c)
 15. The CPM liaison then presents the inquirer to the committee. If the recommendation is positive, minimal committee discussion is needed. If the recommendation is negative, further discussion and an in-depth interview by the committee is needed. The committee votes on the recommendation. (Handbook G-14.0305d)
 16. If the committee recommends that the inquirer proceed with candidacy, the CPM liaison assists the candidate in preparing a brief biographical sketch of the candidate for inclusion in the presbytery packet at least 14 days prior to the presbytery meeting. (Handbook G-14.0305d)
 17. The committee forwards its recommendation regarding the inquirer to presbytery. Presbytery then examines the inquirer with respect to Christian faith, forms of Christian service undertaken and motives for ministry. (Handbook G-14.0305e) If the examination is approved, the inquirer will answer the constitutional questions (Handbook G-14.0305f[1-4]), and is enrolled as a candidate.
 18. A service of reception, composed of a brief charge and closing prayer, will be held at presbytery and, if the candidate and his or her session requests, by a commission at the inquirer's church. (Handbook G-14.0305h)
 19. The stated clerk of presbytery completes Form #5a and sends it to the General Assembly with copies to the presbytery file, the candidate, their session liaison, their pastor, and their seminary.
 20. The candidate, the moderator of session and the CPM chairperson complete the Covenant Agreement (Form 5b) and submit it to the moderator of CPM. Copies are sent to the candidate and their seminary.
 21. The committee considers and makes recommendations for alternative forms of Christian service for those inquirers who are declined candidacy.

CANDIDACY PHASE OF PREPARATION

1. A candidate must complete course requirements including Hebrew and Greek and exegesis of the Old and New Testaments using Hebrew and Greek texts. These courses

must be recorded on an Association of Theological Schools accredited seminary transcript. (G-14.0450c).

2. Exams to be taken:

Bible Content—This exam may be taken at any time. Ordinarily, it is taken during the first year of seminary. It is offered once a year on the first Friday of February. It can be taken either at the seminary or by special proctor in Heartland Presbytery.

Senior Ordination Exams—The following exams are offered twice a year (late summer and early winter): Biblical Exegesis, Church Polity, Theology, and Worship and Sacraments. These exams may be taken by inquirers or candidates with the CPM's approval after completing two full years of theological education. (G-14.0450d)

NOTE—It is the candidate's responsibility to register for these exams. Registration forms are available from the CPM moderator, on the PC (USA) website, or their seminary. These applications require the signature of the CPM moderator. Heartland Presbytery pays the candidate's first attempt on each exam. Subsequent re-takes are the candidate's financial responsibility.

Graded ordination exams and grading sheets (originals) shall be sent to the moderator of CPM within two weeks of the student receiving them. The student may keep photocopies for their reference. (General Assembly Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee on Examinations)

3. An annual consultation with CPM is required of the candidate regarding the goals previously stated (See 10.a. above). Each consultation requires a decision by the CPM whether or not to continue candidacy. A written report by the CPM is required from each of the consultations, with copies sent to the session, the presbytery, and the theological institution.

The following items shall be considered in the consultation:

- a. Prior to entering seminary or divinity school—Discuss preparation for theological education and personal growth;
 - b. In the first year of theological education—Assess the first year experience and any implications for future professional ministry. Exemptions from the formal educational requirement may be discussed at this time (see Handbook G-14.0310b,c; G14.0313b; G-14.0303a);
 - c. In the second year of theological education—Assess the second year experience and discuss preparation for ordination; review grades, field education reports and see to the Bible Content Exam.
4. Final Assessment (Readiness to Begin Ministry): This assessment can begin anytime during the last year of seminary. The following areas will be covered in this assessment. This assessment is done at a meeting of the full CPM. This assessment includes:

- a. Evidence of competence in the fields of theology, Bible, polity, and worship and sacraments, ordinarily attested by completion of the requirements of G-14.0450d; and evidence of ministerial skill attested by the supervised practice of ministry;
- b. Evidence of readiness to participate in a calling presbytery's plan of transition and of plans for continuing study and growth;
- c. Theological views compatible with the confessional documents of the church;
- d. Understanding of the meaning of the constitutional questions required for ordination (W-4.4003), informed by knowledge of the church in diverse settings;
- e. Commitment to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament within the discipline of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) with personal maturity, spiritual depth, and a capacity to respond to the needs of others, including colleagues in ministry;
- f. A written sermon, together with a description of the contemporary need to which it was addressed and an exegetical interpretation of the biblical material out of which the sermon arose; this sermon shall be preached before the CPM as a part of the appearance of the candidate as set forth in Handbook G-14.0402;
- g. A transcript showing satisfactory grades at a regionally accredited college or university, together with a diploma (G-14.0450b);
- h. A transcript from a theological institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools acceptable to the presbytery. This transcript must show satisfactory grades, including courses in Hebrew and Greek and exegesis of the Old and New Testament using Hebrew and Greek texts (G-14.0450c).

The Committee will present a summary of this assessment to presbytery or to the calling presbytery.

5. If negotiation with a church is desired by a candidate before the second year consultation, prior to the successful completion of all ordination exams or to the presbytery's certification of readiness (G-14.0450), a three-fourths vote of presbytery is required. (G-14-.0472)
6. Candidacy with appropriate oversight continues until it is terminated by action of presbytery by:
 - a. Withdrawal by the candidate;
 - b. Removal by presbytery;
 - c. Acceptance of a call.

7. A Candidate must receive approval from the CPM to circulate his or her Personal Information Form (PIF) or any resume. Generally, this is after successful completion of the final assessment.
8. The Candidate's file will include:
 - a. Transcripts from an accredited college or university documenting a bachelor's degree.
 - b. Transcripts of seminary training from schools accredited by the Association of Theological Schools. The transcripts must show satisfactory grades in Greek, Hebrew, and exegesis and completion of the Master of Divinity degree.
 - c. Evidence of passing the required ordination examinations.
 - d. Report of the Midwest Ministry Career Assessment process.
 - e. A completed background check.
 - f. All required PC (U.S.A) Forms (1-6 or 7).
9. In order that the process of undergoing trials of ordination might be completed with fairness to the candidate, the CPM, Heartland Presbytery, the calling congregation and the church as a whole:
 - a. No candidate shall be presented for action on the floor of presbytery unless the committee has met and made a recommendation regarding the candidate at a meeting held at least 14 days prior to the presbytery meeting. Under extraordinary circumstances, the CPM can waive this policy with a 2/3 vote of the CPM.
 - b. If so desired, the calling congregation may provide representatives to be present during the committee's examination of candidates.
10. The candidate shall prepare a biographical sketch and a Statement of Faith for the electronic presbytery packet.
11. The candidate shall appear before Presbytery and make a brief statement of personal faith and commitment to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. The presbytery, having heard the recommendation of the CPM, will conduct any further examination of the candidate's Christian faith, views in theology, the sacraments, and government in the church as it deems necessary. (G-14.0482)
12. Ordinarily, the calling presbytery will examine and ordain. However, the home presbytery may do this as outlined in G-14.0483.
13. Form #7b will be completed by the CPM moderator and the stated clerk of presbytery regarding the final outcome of candidacy. This form is sent to the national office.

14. The candidate's file shall be cleared by the CPM moderator and sent to the former candidate after ordination.

SEMINARY DEBT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Guidelines

The Seminary Debt Assistance Program is a program of the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The funds for the program are available through the generosity of church member gifts, bequests, as well as investment earnings. The Seminary Debt Assistance Program is being coordinated with other entities of the Church and was initiated in May 2001.

The grants will be made to Ministers of the Word and Sacrament to assist them to repay educational debt incurred while they were seeking a Master of Divinity degree.

A limited number of grants will be awarded each year. Grants will be in the sole discretion of the Board of Pensions. The Board will consider the means available to the applicant, the nature and amount of debt and any other factors the Board deems appropriate.

Applicants may apply for up to \$2,500 each year for a total of four (4) years. (The maximum amount given to one individual over four (4) years not to exceed \$10,000.) (see <http://www.pensions.org/library/forms/forms/arh-004.pdf>)

The grants will be awarded to Ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are serving churches with fewer than 150 members and a budget of less than \$250,000. The minister should be in his or her first seven years of ministry and serving a full time called position.

All applicants must attend a financial planning seminar offered by the Board of Pensions prior to application for a Seminary Debt Assistance grant.

HEARTLAND PRESBYTERY CANDIDATE INDEBTEDNESS POLICY

In order to be eligible for the BOP Seminary Debt Assistance Program, the following policy must be adhered to:

1. Require the inquirer/candidate, before graduating from seminary, to participate in a "Fiscal Fitness" workshop being sponsored by the Board of Pensions of the PC(USA), with the presbytery assisting with the travel and accommodations costs of that workshop when funds are available.
2. The Committee on Preparation for Ministry will make available on an annual basis to each candidate or inquirer a list of options for pursuing grants and interest free loans and funding that may be available through the Financial Aid for Studies Office of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and PC(USA) seminaries.

3. The Committee on Preparation for Ministry will be an advocate with the congregation of which the candidate is a member, and with other congregations of the presbytery as appropriate, in order to generate financial support for the candidate in the form of grants.

SPECIAL CONCERNS & REQUIREMENTS

1. It is the responsibility of the inquirer/candidate to keep in touch with his/her CPM liaison regarding any changes in address, changes in plans, and other important matters.
2. (For candidates at non-PCUSA seminaries) All candidates are required to take courses in Presbyterian polity, history, and reformed theology to satisfy our course requirements. Courses are available online or on campus at PC (USA) seminaries. Occasionally, a local seminary will offer these courses.
3. Candidates are required by Heartland Presbytery to have two field education experiences (see appendix A, *Field Education Standards*).
4. Limited financial aid is available. Contact your CPM liaison.
5. A candidate who fails any of the standard examinations twice must present a course of study for the CPM's approval which will prepare him or her for retaking the examination prior to the CPM's approval of a third attempt. (G-14.0472)
6. Annual consultation for candidates not residing within the bounds of Heartland Presbytery may occasionally be held by conference calls. The committee will bear the expenses of these calls. On occasion, CPM may provide transportation for a candidate to attend an annual consultation.
7. Persons who anticipate applying for inquiry status with Heartland Presbytery are requested to be in contact with the CPM before enrolling in any seminary course. Pastors and sessions are reminded of their responsibility to advise persons considering ordained ministry that they need to be in relationship with the CPM from the earliest possible time.
8. Persons who take courses in non-PCUSA seminaries without prior approval by the CPM cannot be assured that such courses will be recognized by the CPM as appropriate preparation for ordination in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
9. The CPM strongly recommends all inquirers and candidates attend a presbytery meeting at least annually whether it is in Heartland Presbytery or the presbytery in which their seminary is located. Volunteering for any committee service is encouraged.
10. The Sexual Misconduct Prevention Policy of Heartland Presbytery requires that prior to being ordained, each candidate under care must attend one sexual misconduct prevention seminar either sponsored by this presbytery or the presbytery in which the student is residing while attending seminary. Written confirmation of attendance from the presbytery's stated clerk should be in the candidate's file.

APPENDIX A
Field Education Standards
Heartland Presbytery Committee On Preparation For Ministry

This statement is to clarify The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Book of Order section G-14.0420, “Service in Covenant Relationship.”

The field education program is an integral part of the theological preparation for Presbyterian clergy persons. Candidates under the supervision/instruction of pastors and specialists work at a variety of approved assignments in particular teaching churches, institutions, and judicatories in the interest of developing the following:

1. A habit of working in the context of disciplined theological reflection.
2. A growing understanding of the church and its ministry.
3. A life-style congruent with the gospel.
4. Experiencing practical ways of relating to person of differing cultural, socioeconomic, age and theological backgrounds.
5. Competencies which are professional in the sense of including mastery of skills with knowledge of the theoretical bases of each.

An approved program of field education, which in the judgment of the Heartland Presbytery Committee on Preparation for Ministry meets the need of both the individual candidate under care and guidance AND the requirement of the denomination is required in preparation for ordination.

A minimum program shall consist of two field instructional experiences in separate settings with different approved instructors. At least one of these settings and instructors shall be under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church, (U.S.A.), in a church other than the student’s home church. One of these placements shall be in a nine month field work experience concurrent with seminary studies. This shall include some worship leadership responsibilities.

The second placement shall include one of the following options with the prior approval of both the CPM and the related seminary:

1. A field work experience concurrent with seminary studies to last at least two semesters.
2. A ten-week summer internship either in a parish or institutional field education setting for 40 hours per week, undertaken either during or after completion of seminary studies.
3. A clinical pastoral education (CPE) program lasting at least one extended quarter concurrent with related seminary studies.
4. A clinical pastoral education internship to last ten weeks for 40 hours per week.

Candidates who have completed two years of theological education may negotiate full time in-service training internships before completing their academic course. Internship positions might include student pastorates, assistantships, teaching posts, and other responsibilities in the United States or foreign mission field.

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