

Preparation for Ministry

Questions Asked Frequently by Presbytery Committees on Preparation for Ministry

Introduction

Presbytery Committees on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) carry the duty of nurturing inquirers and candidates as well as acting as gatekeepers for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Over the years the Office of Resourcing Committees on Preparation for Ministry has answered questions from your counterparts across the Church. We have compiled many of them into this resource of Frequently Asked Questions.

In seeking answers to questions that arise, we are always conscious that the Church is one. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is governed by three sources of authority: (1) Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), as contained in the Book of Confessions and the Book of Order; (2) authoritative interpretations of the Constitution (G-13.0103r) approved by the General Assembly itself (G-13.0112), and (3) decisions of the Permanent Judicial Commission of the General Assembly. (Both of these forms of authoritative interpretations are found in the Minutes of the General Assembly). The most recent authoritative interpretation of the Constitution is binding (G-13.0103r). If a question can be answered by referring to one or more of these sources, you are obligated to implement the interpretation as so stated. However, if a question is not answered by any of these three sources, the presbytery may answer in accord with its understanding of the spirit of the Constitution (G-9.0103).

Our responses in this resource do not supercede the authority of the presbytery, nor do we claim for them an ultimate or final authority.

Abbreviations used in this document:

ATS	Association of Theological Schools
COM	Committee on Ministry
CPM	Committee on Preparation for Ministry
GAPJC	General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission
PNC	Pastor Nominating Committee

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Questions and Answers

1. At the time of enrollment, may a presbytery make an agreement with an inquirer different from the Covenant Agreement and Inquirer Release Form found in the packet of forms provided for the CPM?

Yes, but....

While use of the Covenant Agreement and Inquirer Release Form is not directed in the Book of Order, and the presbytery is therefore not required to use these particular forms (G-9.0103), it is in the presbytery's interest to adopt a policy specifying that a written form must be used. The presbytery may, of course, specify the form found in the packet, but it may draw up an alternate form of its own choice. Whatever form is specified, it should be signed at the time of enrollment of the inquirer by the presbytery. Enrollment should begin only after the signature of the inquirer is on the form (G-14.0404). Experience has demonstrated the value of such a signed form for the presbytery and, indeed, for the whole Church. In the absence of a clear understanding as contained in such a form, controversy has risen in some cases. This has led to the conclusion that complete disclosure and release of information are essential from the outset.

The General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GAPJC) in its decision of October 2003 in the case of Glenda Hope, *et al.*, v. The Presbytery of San Francisco clarified the handling of documents, that might be covered by the Release Form with respect to issues of confidentiality and candidates.

“The Book of Order does not specifically address the use of confidential documents as a means by which a CPM may equip itself to make ... (a) judgment, nor does it mandate the disclosure of any such documents to a candidate.... The nature of the covenant relationship requires that the CPM communicate in a timely fashion to the candidate the substance of any concerns raised in confidential documents that are of such gravity that these concerns may prompt a CPM to recommend the candidate's removal from the rolls. That communication should be sufficiently detailed to permit the candidate to respond to or rebut any concerns or to undertake any corrective action or further education or training. The CPM is under no obligation to share either the text or the source of the document itself with the candidate.... Therefore, while a CPM has discretion to use and rely on confidential documents in order to perform its gatekeeping function, ‘secrecy’ is inimical to the candor and trust inherent in a covenant relationship.”

If the presbytery's policy is specific, the following two results are possible:

(1) If the presbytery has a policy that a particular form must be used and an applicant

fails to sign the form, the applicant may be considered to have withdrawn from the process.

(2) If the presbytery has a policy that a particular form must be used and an applicant makes a reasonable request that the form be changed, the presbytery can decide to negotiate the changes, taking into account the effect of the proposed changes and accepting any risks to the presbytery that may follow. The applicant's signature then appears on the form alongside the changes agreed upon.

2. What CPMs need to know about Ordination Exams?

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is committed to providing knowledgeable and capable leaders for the Church. In order to be certified as ready for ministry, inquirers and candidates are expected to pass five Standard Ordination Examinations. Application forms for these examinations are mailed to CPM Moderators each spring, and are also available through the PCUSA website at www.pcusa.org/oga/conserv.htm. An application form is to be submitted each time an inquirer/candidate takes (an) exam(s). Payment is due upon application.

The Bible Content Examination is ordinarily taken early in the seminary process, generally during either the first or the second year of theological education, or their equivalents (G-14.0310). It is helpful for candidates to have completed a basic course in Bible Content (Old Testament and New Testament) before taking this examination. The Bible Content is offered once a year, on the first Friday in the month of February. Persons taking the Bible Content exam need not be under the care of a presbytery, and no certification from the CPM is required. The Bible Content Examination is offered in English, Korean, and Spanish.

The other four ASenior Ordination Exams@ are designed for inquirers and candidates who have completed the equivalent of two full-time years of theological education. The purpose of these exams is to assist CPMs and presbyteries in assessing readiness for ministry in both academic preparation and the ability to use one=s knowledge and experience effectively in practical ministry settings. The tests are designed to determine how well an inquirer/candidate understands and can function within the framework of Reformed Theology. Candidates are expected to demonstrate working knowledge of the Book of Confession and the Book of Order. The exams are offered in Spanish and in English. Inquirers/Candidates whose first language is Korean may write their responses to the English-based exam in Korean.

CPMs must give written authorization for inquirers/candidates to take these examinations. The exams are currently offered twice a year, in September and in February. Ordinarily, all four examinations are taken at once. Inquirers/Candidates who are taking these exams for the first time must have written permission from their CPMs to write fewer than four exams.

3. What are the definitions of an “extraordinary candidate” and “extraordinary circumstances”?

Prior to 1993, the Book of Order included the words “extraordinary inquirer or candidate” in connection with possible exemptions from the requirements for ordination. In that year, an amendment was approved that deleted these words and inserted the words “extraordinary circumstances” (G-14.0470; Minutes,

1993, pp. 158, 134; Minutes, 1992, pp. 318, 135, 131). The adjective “extraordinary” had been defined by the General Assembly, while the amendment was under consideration as “rare; exceptional; and exceeding the common degree, limit, or measure” (Minutes 1992, pp. 320, 135, 132).

This definition makes clear that the extraordinary circumstances do not pertain to deficiencies that are commonplace, but rather situations involving compliance with requirements in uncommon ways. For example, a candidate already has earned a Ph.D. in religious studies, or has a relevant Master’s Degree—and in either case lacks only a few courses to have an M.Div. equivalent.

4. Under what circumstances can an exception be made and the requirements on education, or examination, or time be exempted (G-14.0471, G-14.0472, G-14.0473, G-14.0474)?

G-14.0471 refers to “educational requirements” of inquirers or candidates who are deemed to be in “extraordinary circumstances.” These circumstances have often related to language or learning needs identified by either inquirers or candidates and supported by their presbyteries. However, using “extraordinary circumstances” to authorize a broadly based exception to requirements could be tantamount to abandoning educational or institutional requirements altogether. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has always placed a high value on education and an educated ministry, as can be seen by the extremely high majority required to allow exceptions or exemptions. Rather than seeing the exception as *accepting* deficiencies in preparation, the exception is to be perceived as *acknowledging* circumstances in which a person is extraordinarily qualified through some educational or preparation process beyond completing a four year undergraduate degree program.

On the other hand, there may be a particular circumstance that calls for special attention. If so, an alternate means of satisfying the requirement rather than exemption **must** be prescribed.

The presbytery must decide whether it will grant a request by a candidate for approval of alternative to a course of study that would otherwise appear on a transcript from a theological seminary as required by G-14.0450b. (See also Minutes, 1994, p.195)

5. May a candidate be exempted from the study of Hebrew or Greek or both? When and for what reasons?

A candidate cannot be exempted from these language requirements (G-14.0471). The expectation is that the individual will be able to demonstrate a working knowledge of at least one of the primary biblical languages (Greek or Hebrew).

In a situation where a candidate is having difficulty with the biblical languages, s/he should be required to show that a reasonable effort has been made to meet this requirement (e.g. a transcript verifying that the candidate has taken an appropriate course of study to try and learn at least one of these languages).

May a candidate study Hebrew or Greek or both independently?

Yes, under certain circumstances.

At any time during candidacy, a candidate may ask for exemption from the requirement of presentation of a transcript from an accredited theological institution showing completion of the study of Hebrew and Greek and exegesis of the Old and New Testaments using Hebrew and Greek texts [G-14.0471]. A presbytery may exempt a candidate from this form of proof of competency, if another form of proof is approved. The CPM may recommend such an exemption. The exemption and the alternate means of study must be approved by the presbytery by three-fourths vote of the members of the presbytery present, indicating that with the approved alternate means of study it is satisfied as to the candidate's readiness in this area (G-14.0472).

The alternative means of study approved by the presbytery could include study of Hebrew with a Jewish rabbi or study of Greek with a Greek Orthodox priest or study in a class setting in an institution other than a seminary. Additional reading and writing of papers may also be required.

6. When a presbytery acts to grant exceptions from some of the ordination requirements, what responsibility does the CPM of the presbytery of care have to transmit its information about the candidate to the Committee on Ministry (COM) or the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) in the presbytery to which the inquirer or candidate may be transferred?

This information is to be included in the presbytery's records concerning the inquirer or candidate (G-14.0461). The presbytery is obligated to communicate this information to any presbytery that would receive the records of the inquirer or candidate. There is no requirement to inform other presbyteries or persons.

G-14.0474 states, "A full account of the reasons for such an exception shall be included in the minutes of the presbytery and shall be communicated to the presbytery to which the inquirer or candidate may be transferred." The use of the verb "shall" indicates that this obligation is mandatory.

7. May a presbytery set requirements for service and/or experience apart from those already set by a theological seminary for candidates whom it evaluates as in need of additional experience?

Yes.

May a presbytery exempt a requirement set by a seminary?

No.

Since service to a congregation by an inquirer or a candidate is encouraged, may the presbytery policy require field education?

Yes.

(1) Theological seminaries frequently require field education. The presbytery is not required to approve seminary assignments (G-14.0420). The presbytery learns whether or not this seminary requirement was satisfactorily completed when it receives the transcript mentioned in G-14.0401. If not required by the seminary, the presbytery may recommend

that the candidate participate in service to the church that is equivalent to seminary-sponsored field education.

- (2) Candidates may choose to engage in additional forms of service to the church, either for the experience or for the income. This involves placement in church work that takes place outside the supervision on the seminary. G-14.0420 specifies that the CPM must approve and guide the candidate in this work. The committee on ministry of the fieldwork church's presbytery may also have to be involved.
- (3) G-14.0410 appears to permit a CPM to require additional service of all candidates or of particular candidates whom it evaluates as being in need of additional experience to meet the requirements.

Work done to fulfill (1) above may not require the approval of the presbytery. Work done to fulfill (2) or (3) requires the approval of the presbytery, if the work involves service to a congregation. Sometimes the approval and oversight may involve two presbyteries—the presbytery of care and the presbytery of the assigned task.

8. If a candidate is either from another denomination or from a Formula of Agreement Church (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, United Church of Christ, Reformed Church in America) with different requirements for ordination, can those differences be considered approved exceptions to the candidacy process?

No.

The person must join a congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), be recommended by its session, and be received as an inquirer and then as a candidate. The candidate must meet all of the requirements of candidacy. The presbytery may accept transcripts from non-Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) seminaries and shorten the time or credit work experience just as it may do with any other candidate who can demonstrate substantial compliance with the requirements. After joining a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregation and enrolling as an inquirer, this person will be guided and evaluated by the same standards as any other inquirer or candidate. (See question 8 below.)

9. How is an application to be processed from a person who is a licentiate from another Reformed Church, or a Methodist or Episcopal deacon or a candidate of a presbytery in the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico or the Presbyterian Church in Canada?

The first question for the presbytery is whether this person has permission of the COM, the CPM, or both to circulate a Personal Information Form in order for a PNC to consider the person for a call. This requires the evaluation of a transcript and the process of preparation for ordination of another denomination. The simplest way is for the person to be ordained by the other denomination and then transferred to the calling presbytery. If this is done, the candidate must successfully complete the ordination examinations required of candidates in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). If the other denomination will ordain without a call, this is possible; otherwise, it is important that the COM and CPM of the calling presbytery work together closely.

An alternative is for the calling presbytery of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to take the person under care as a candidate, making the most favorable use of exception options, and ordain the candidate after one year. Again, successful completion of ordination examinations would be required. If the candidate is an elder, the presbytery might explore the use of the commissioned lay pastor *process*, should the church be ready to extend a call. However, commissioning as a lay pastor does not allow avoidance of either the ordination exams or the time requirement before ordination to the ministry of the word and sacrament.

What about a candidate of A Formula of Agreement Church seeking a call in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?

This action should be discouraged. The second of the ten Principles of Agreement states, “It is important to the faithful and orderly exchange of ordained ministers among the four churches of A Formula of Agreement that one who would serve in a congregation of another church first, be formed and educated for ministry in one’s own tradition, and have experience in serving in that church’s ordained ministry. Such experience and grounding in one’s own tradition are seen to be essential prior to serving in a setting of another tradition; therefore, such service is not intended for a first call.” [See page 2 of *The Orderly Exchange of Ordained Ministers of Word and Sacrament - Principles, Policies, and Procedures, Churches Participating In A Formula Of Agreement*, Copyright and printed by Office of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2000.]

10. In evaluating the qualifications of a minister from another denomination, may a presbytery require additional seminary-level courses of study?

Yes. In reaching this decision, the presbytery should review all of the educational records presented for evidence of academic work equivalent to an M.Div. degree. The presbytery can require the inquirer or candidate to take additional course work if that is necessary to provide equivalent or adequate preparation to become a Presbyterian minister of the Word and Sacrament. It should be understood that the M.Div. degree requires a three-year course of study, rather than the two-year course usually required for the M.A. degree.

How is a presbytery to proceed when the inquirer or candidate has a college or theological degree from an institution that is not regionally accredited, e.g., an independent Christian college in the United States of America or a non-Association of Theological Schools (ATS) accredited seminary?

If the presbytery wishes to accept a degree from an institution that has been accredited by a body other than the usual regional accrediting body, the presbytery could evaluate the candidate’s preparation for theological studies and, if satisfied, use the process provided in G-14.0471 of a three-fourths vote of the member of the presbytery present. However, the presbytery should be aware that ATS accredited seminaries have strict limits on how many such students they may accept in any given class. Thus, acceptance by the presbytery does not ensure the candidate’s acceptance by a seminary.

The possession of an undergraduate degree from a regionally accredited institution (as opposed to a certificate or associate degree for a two-year program) is recognized as fulfilling the minimum requirements for undergraduate preparation for theological studies. However, in 1991,

the General Assembly rejected an amendment that would have specified that a four-year degree is required (Minutes, 1991, pp. 383, 72). It was noted that provisions for alternate preparation exist (G-14.0470). In 1994, the General Assembly clarified issues concerning “extraordinary circumstances” (Minutes, 1994, p.195). (See Questions 2 & 3 above.)

The acceptance of a non-ATS accredited seminary requires the same careful process of evaluation and exceptionally high (75%) vote requirement of the presbytery (G-14.0471) for waiver as noted above.

Rather than seeing such exceptions as accepting deficiencies in preparation, the exception is to be perceived as acknowledging circumstances in which a person is extraordinarily qualified (through some educational or preparation process other than the standard ones).

How does a CPM evaluate the transcript from a foreign college or theological institution?

Assistance can be received by contacting the Partnership in Mission staff of the Worldwide Ministries Division as well as consulting with persons in your community who are familiar with the language and institutions of the country in question. Transcripts from foreign universities and colleges can be evaluated in terms of United States standards by submitting them to the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers, Office of International Education Services, 1 Dupont Circle N.W., Suite 520, Washington, DC 20036-1135; email: oies@aacrao.org; (202) 296-3359. Before evaluating the transcripts, they must be translated into English. The service of translating transcripts into English is available from Corporate Language Services, 15 Maiden Lane, Suite 300, New York, NY 10038-4003; (212) 766-4111 or 1-800-788-0450. Web site: www.legallanguage.com

It is helpful to compare the courses presented with usual course and distribution requirements of Presbyterian seminaries in the U.S.A. and to interview the candidate to understand the content and level of the courses taken in another context. Addresses and phone numbers of Presbyterian seminaries are in the Program Planning Calendar.

11. What is the duty of the CPM when counseling inquirers and candidates, when certifying readiness for ordination, or for examining for ordination under the denomination’s policy on eligibility of self-acknowledged, practicing homosexual persons for ordination to church office?

The CPM should explain to each inquirer or candidate the church’s policy on the gifts and requirements for leadership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) as set forth in G-6.0106a that “those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and the world.” and in G-6.0106b that “Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001), or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elder, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament.”

While the requirements of G-6.0106a and b apply to every person seeking ordained office, issues relating to this have usually involved persons whose sexual orientation is homosexual in nature.

In 1976, the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. received two separate overtures, one from the Presbytery of New York City and the other from the Presbytery of Palisades, each requesting “definitive guidance” concerning the ordination of persons who may be well qualified for ordination, but who affirm their own homosexual identify and practice. That Assembly authorized appointment of a Task Force to Study Homosexuality. This task force presented its report to the General Assembly in 1978. The report was considered by a committee of commissioners that made its own report to the Assembly, which adopted a policy statement and “definitive guidance” that self-affirming, practicing homosexual persons are ineligible for ordination to offices of minister of the Word and Sacrament, elder, or deacon (Minutes, UPCUSA, 1978, pp. 261 *et seq.*, 48). The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. took similar action (Minutes, PCUS, 1979, pp.201-209), and General Assembly and Permanent Judicial Commissions of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have on several occasions affirmed the “definitive guidance” as an “authoritative interpretation” of the Constitution (Minutes, 1993, pp.76-77).

In 1993, the General Assembly received the final decision of the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GAPJC) in *LeTourneau, et al., v. Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area* (Minutes, 1993, pp. 163 *et seq.*, 138, 134). This case concerned the certification of a candidate as ready to receive a call. The candidate had informed the presbytery’s CPM that she is a “lesbian woman.” The CPM recommended that she be certified as ready to receive a call and the presbytery adopted this recommendation. On appeal, the GAPJC set aside the presbytery’s certification as ready to receive a call. The Commission stated that it would be inappropriate to make any inquiry regarding a candidate’s sexual orientation unless self-acknowledged by the candidate. If there is self-acknowledgment of either a homosexual orientation or practice, however, further inquiry must be made. If the person is celibate, they are eligible for ordination. If the person is practicing, the candidate is ineligible for ordination. This holding in this case has been modified by decisions of the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission in two more recent cases.

In 2002, the GAPJC decided the case of *Wier v. Session, Second Presbyterian Church of Fort Lauderdale, FL* (Minutes, 2002, pp. 214-5). A remedial case was commenced against the session of Second Presbyterian Church alleging that it had committed an irregularity in ordaining a person as an elder who was alleged to be a “practicing homosexual.” The GAPJC determined that no inquiry shall be made of a person’s sexual orientation or practice unless self-acknowledgment is “plain, palpable, and obvious.” In this case, the elder affirmed his ability to be compliant with G-6.0106b and there was no basis upon which to do any further inquiry. However, if the ordaining governing body has reasonable cause for inquiry based on its knowledge of the life and character of the candidate, it has a positive obligation to make due inquiry and uphold the standards for ordination and installation. If a governing body makes inquiry without reasonable cause, all candidates currently before that governing body must undergo the same inquiry.

In 2003, in *Presbytery of San Joaquin v. The Presbytery of the Redwoods* (Minutes, 2003, pp. 215-8, 277-281), the GAPJC further determined that “if a person does not self-acknowledge a practice that the confessions call sin, then a governing body has a positive obligation to make

further inquiry only if it has direct and specific knowledge that said person is in violation of the ordination and installation standards of the Constitution....A hunch, gossip, or stereotype is not a sufficient ground to compel a governing body to make further inquiry. Reasonable grounds must include factual allegations of how, when, where, and under what circumstances the individual was self-acknowledging a practice which the confessions call a sin.”

12. How should a candidate proceed when he or she has been out of seminary for several years and has found a call within the bounds of a presbytery other than the presbytery of care, but the presbytery of care declines to approve the call although the calling presbytery has indicated it will receive the candidates?

Because this involves a call to a congregation or institution, the action will involve the COM of the calling presbytery as well as the CPM of each presbytery. The candidate may ask to be dismissed as a candidate to the calling presbytery. However, this must be done with care. It requires the approval of the CPM of the calling presbytery and a coordinated transfer of church membership to a congregation in that presbytery where the session will support or endorse the candidacy. If the call is to a congregation, that congregation might act as sponsor of the candidacy, if the calling CPM, COM, and presbytery approve. The COM, therefore, should discuss with the PNC and the session of the calling congregation whether the congregation or a different congregation should act as sponsor.

If the call is to an institution, the candidate must find a congregation in the calling presbytery whose session is willing to accept the candidate as a member, and then to covenant with and sponsor that candidate for ordination while the call to the institutional setting is being prosecuted. In addition, the COM (acting for the presbytery) and the candidate need to be assured of the willingness of the institution to act as the calling body.

Because of the involvement of two presbyteries and as many as four committees of those presbyteries, one or two churches, and possibly an institutional calling body, all such transfers require thorough discussion by all parties. Done in a coordinated way, the calling presbytery accepts all the preparation completed in the presbytery of care, including prior fulfillment of the time requirement (G-14.0403).

13. A candidate has received a call to a congregation in the same presbytery in which the candidate is under care. May the final assessment of readiness (G-14.0450) and the examination for ordination (G-14.0482) be treated as one examination?

Not really. Final assessment should precede circulation of the Personal Information Form, so there should be no possibility of overlap. If the calling presbytery is the same as the presbytery of care, there will still be two examinations because the first will be in the CPM and the second in the presbytery or perhaps the COM. Before a candidate begins negotiation for a call, the CPM should do the final assessment and certify the candidate ready to receive a call. If the call then comes in the same presbytery, the second examination may not take long, but it should be done and should focus on the candidate’s fitness for this particular call.

CPM’s examination is for readiness for ordination. COM’s examination is for suitability for a specific position and for membership in the presbytery.

14. Is a candidate who has been working as an intern eligible to be called to be the associate pastor or pastor in the same congregation?

Yes, but....

The question poses two different questions: (1) Should you? (2) Can you? In principle, the Constitution discourages congregations from choosing a candidate without an open search process. Making the candidate a favorite daughter or son, training the candidate in the way the congregation wants her or him trained, and then promoting the candidate to an associate or pastor position without an open search process might be possible, but is not within the spirit of the Constitution. Ultimately, however, it is left to the discretion of the presbytery for decision (G-9.0103).

Now, can you? The short answer is yes, and the way it might be done is the following:

The inquirer or candidate might work in the congregation, doing no more than a seminarian usually does, and leave her or his inquirer or candidate relationship unchanged. When a candidate is ready to seek a call and the congregation is ready to begin a search for the associate pastor or the pastor, the candidate is eligible to be considered, but not as the only candidate for the position. The General Assembly considered a similar situation in an interpretation in 1989 (Minutes, 1989, pp. 229, 64). If the candidate has been named a temporary supply, six months must elapse after the temporary service has ended prior to the call (G-14.0550). In the interest of fairness, the same time away from the congregation might also be applied in the intern relationship.

15. In view of the contrast between G-14.0482 and G-14.0450, before which presbytery is a candidate to preach the sermon that is part of the examination for ordination?

The use of the term “ordinarily” appears twice in G-14.0481 and thereby allows for flexibility. The sermon is to be preached before the presbytery that examines, or a committee of that presbytery, as part of the process of approving the examination for ordination, regardless of whether the examining presbytery is the calling presbytery or the presbytery of care. Of course, this does not preclude each of the presbyteries from requesting that a sermon be preached.

16. May a candidate who is going to continue to pursue additional graduate study be ordained to that work as a call?

The Book of Order is currently silent on this question. G-9.0103 provides that powers not mentioned in the Constitution are “reserved to the presbyteries.” An analysis of G-6.0203, describing duties of ministers of the Word and Sacrament who are not in pastoral services, particularly the words, “in other specific tasks appropriate to the ministry of the church,” would appear to leave the way clear. In 1988, the Book of Order was amended in G-14.0480 by deleting the words, “Further graduate study, beyond that required for ordination....,” This removed the specific authorization for ordination to further graduate study (Minutes, 1987, pp.615, 73; Minutes, 1988, p.33). Applying G-6.0203 in the case of a particular candidate must be done in reference to the rules for completion of the candidacy process established by the presbytery of care in the light of G-

9.0103.

The ordination of a candidate for further graduate study may be partially justified by including part-time work in a congregation. This would require that the calling presbytery conduct the ordination. Not all presbyteries ordain to part-time or temporary calls, but there are some that do so.

17. Does a presbytery have authority to terminate a candidacy over the candidate's objection?

Yes, the process is described in G-14.0463, third sentence and following.

If a candidate disagrees with the decision of the CPM and the presbytery to discontinue candidacy, to whom and how may the candidate complain to secure review of the decision?

The presbytery has authority to terminate candidacy over a candidate's objection. There are three reported cases where the removal of a candidate from the roll of candidates led to a decision of the GAPJC. These are Bedford-Central Presbyterian Church v. Presbytery of New York City, Minutes, 1987, p. 119; Donna Bevansee v. Presbytery of New Brunswick, Minutes, 1998, p. 134; and Glenda Hope, *et al.*, v. Presbytery of San Francisco, decided October 13, 2003. The CPM should review steps it has taken to properly carry out its responsibilities to the candidate with reasonable consideration of any special circumstances. If the CPM has done this and in addition the candidate has not responded when asked, the presbytery is within its discretion to terminate the candidacy.

However, there must be a "reasonable attempt" to give the inquirer or candidate "an opportunity to be heard by that committee," i.e., CPM.

If this action is taken by the presbytery, G-14.0463 requires the presbytery to have "sufficient reasons," and to report its action and those reasons to the "session, the individual, and, if appropriate, to the educational institution in which the individual is enrolled."

The most effective way for a candidate to persuade a presbytery to reconsider and change a decision to remove a person from candidacy is to enlist the help of the session that has sponsored and endorsed the candidate.

18. What happens to candidates who have been certified to seek a call, but have not received or sought one for more than five years?

Candidates who have passed final assessment and been certified "ready to receive a call" continue to be under care of the CPM until they receive a call and are ordained. As candidates under care, they are to make an annual written report and consultation with their CPM (G-14.0421). The purpose of the consultation shall be for the valuation and nurture of candidates, to discuss such issues as sense of call, current participation in a local church, efforts to pursue a call, and personal circumstances that might be affecting pursuit of a call. Each consultation shall include a decision, made by the whole committee, whether to continue or terminate the period of candidacy. This decision shall be reported to presbytery. If a CPM wants to terminate a candidacy, see Question 17 above.

19. Should the CPM be included in the directors and officers liability insurance of the

presbytery?

The Constitution at G-11.0308 mandates the presbytery to “obtain property and liability insurance coverage to protect its facilities, programs, staff, and elected and appointed officers.” The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) does not carry insurance for officers or volunteers of particular churches or presbyteries. If the presbytery does not obtain insurance as required, it becomes self-insured and places at risk all of its property and may leave the individual members of the CPM undefended. The corporation formed by the presbytery as required by G-8.0202 may include in its articles of incorporation or bylaws a provision indemnifying members of the CPM from personal liability for acts performed in carrying out the work of the presbytery as a member of the CPM. The CPM should determine whether this is true in its presbytery. It should also determine whether any insurance obtained by the presbytery covers members of the committee. To be confident of such coverage, the description of the “insured” in the policy should include specific reference to “the members of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry.”

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its current decisions or future ones. Any opinions expressed by this resource are subject to change as the law changes through General Assembly actions, Constitutional amendment or GAPJC decisions.

Office of Resourcing Committees
on Preparation for Ministry
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

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