



# Preparation for Ministry in the Savannah Presbytery

## RESOURCE GUIDE

COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

### WELCOME

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ! Whether you have just begun considering a call to ordained ministry or have already been enrolled as an inquirer/candidate in the Savannah Presbytery, this “Resource Guide” is designed to provide a step-by-step overview of the preparation for ministry process. We hope that this document along with other referenced resources will provide insight and clarity to the process of becoming an ordained Teaching Elder or Commissioned Ruling Elder in the Savannah Presbytery.

### 🌟 ADVISORY HANDBOOK ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

The Presbyterian Church (USA) has published a comprehensive handbook for all candidates and inquirers. The “Advisory Handbook on Preparation for Ministry in the PCUSA” goes into great detail on topics including the theological underpinnings of the ministry preparation process, detailed content for each step of the process, and in-depth analysis of the roles and responsibilities of all participants (inquirer/candidate, CPM, sponsoring Session, etc.).

**The Advisory Handbook is required reading for all candidates, inquirers, and Sessions, and should be considered a definitive resource for information regarding the ordination process.**

To access the Advisory Handbook:

[https://www.pcusa.org/site\\_media/media/uploads/prep4min/pdfs/p4mah\\_2015\\_rel\\_2.0.pdf](https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/prep4min/pdfs/p4mah_2015_rel_2.0.pdf)

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# INQUIRER/CANDIDATE CHECKLIST

## STEPS FOR SEEKING ORDINATION AS A TEACHING ELDER

The following checklist details each step along with appropriate forms and documentation for proceeding through the process of preparation for ministry in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and Savannah Presbytery.

	INQUIRER/CANDIDATE	CPM	SESSION
<b>Application for Inquiry</b>	<p><b>Form 1A</b> – “Application to be enrolled by Presbytery as an Inquirer”</p> <p><b>Form 1B</b> – “Questions for Reflection”</p> <p>Transcript from an Accredited College or University – Institution and Graduation Date</p> <p>Transcript of Theological Studies To Date – Institution(s) and credits earned sent to CPM Chair</p> <p>Submit one page autobiographical sketch</p> <hr/> <p>NOTE: All forms and documentation due 2-weeks prior to CPM interview</p>	<p><i>To be completed and filed with Presbytery by <b>CPM liaison</b> following interview:</i></p> <p><b>Form 2A</b> – “Report of Consultation Regarding Application”</p> <p><b>Form 2B</b> – “Covenant Agreement and Inquirer Release”</p> <p>Forward all completed paperwork to Sav. Presbytery Office for filing.</p>	<p><i>To be completed and filed with Presbytery by <b>Session liaison</b> following meeting with inquirer applicant:</i></p> <p><b>Form 1D</b> – “Session Evaluation and Recommendation”</p> <p><i>*NOTE: Session only fills out part of Form 1D; must be submitted before candidate applicants meets with CPM.</i></p>
<b>Application for Candidacy</b> <i>After at least one year as an inquirer</i>	<p><b>Form 5A</b> – “Application to be enrolled by Presbytery as a Candidate”</p> <p><b>Form 5B</b> – “Session recommendation for Enrollment as Candidate”</p> <p>Psychological Evaluation – Copy of findings sent to CPM Chair</p> <p>Candidacy Written Responses (<i>see pp. 5-6</i>)</p> <p>Transcript of Theological Studies To Date – Institution(s) and credits earned sent to CPM Chair</p> <p>Evaluations from Field Education/ Internship(s)/CPE To Date (<i>see p.6</i>)</p>	<p><i>To be completed and filed with Presbytery by <b>CPM liaison</b> following interview:</i></p> <p><b>Form 5C</b> – “Report of Consultation to become a Candidate”</p> <p><b>Form 5D</b> – “Covenant Agreement and Candidate Release”</p> <p>Review Psychological Evaluation</p> <p>Forward all completed paperwork to Sav. Presbytery Office for filing.</p>	<p><i>To be completed and filed with Presbytery by <b>Session liaison</b> following meeting with candidate applicant:</i></p> <p><b>Form 5A</b> – “Application to be enrolled by Presbytery as a Candidate”</p> <p><i>*NOTE: Session only fills out part of Form 5A; must be submitted before candidate applicant meets with CPM.</i></p>

	<b>INQUIRER/CANDIDATE</b>	<b>CPM</b>	<b>SESSION</b>
<p><b>Annual Consultations</b> <i>At least one time per year while under care of the presbytery</i></p>	<p><b>Form 3</b> – “Pre-Consultation Report on Development Areas”</p> <p>Transcript of Theological Studies To Date – Institution(s) and credits earned sent to CPM Chair</p> <p>Evaluations from Field Education/ Internship(s)/CPE To Date</p>	<p><i>To be completed and filed with Presbytery by <b>CPM liaison</b> following interview:</i></p> <p><b>Form 4</b> – “ Report on Consultation”</p> <p>Forward all completed paperwork to Sav. Presbytery Office for filing.</p>	
<p><b>Final Assessment</b> <i>After at least one year as a candidate</i></p>	<p>Presbyteries’ Cooperative Exams <i>*Submit record of dates attempted and passed for each</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Bible Content</li> <li>ii. Bible Exegesis</li> <li>iii. Church Polity</li> <li>iv. Worship and Sacraments</li> <li>v. Theological Competence</li> </ol> <p>Transcript of Theological Studies To Date – Institution(s) and credits earned sent to CPM Chair</p> <p>Plan to complete degree with coursework in Greek, Hebrew, and New and Old Testament Exegesis</p> <p>Evaluations from Field Education/ Internship(s)/CPE To Date</p> <p>Demonstrate Readiness for Ministry of the Word and Sacrament by Providing the Following Work in Writing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. A Statement of Faith;</li> <li>ii. Description of a critical issue and response;</li> <li>iii. Engagement with each of the ordination vows;</li> <li>iv. Presenting a written sermon including:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Description of the contemporary need it addresses</li> <li>– Brief exegetical interpretation of the Biblical passage from which it arose.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p><i>To be completed and filed with Presbytery by <b>CPM liaison</b> following interview:</i></p> <p><b>Form 6</b> - “Summary Report of Final Assessment”</p> <p>Grant Permission to Circulate PIF</p> <p>Forward all completed paperwork to Sav. Presbytery Office for filing.</p>	

	INQUIRER/CANDIDATE	CPM	SESSION
<p><b>Ordination, Transfer, Withdrawal or Removal</b></p>	<p><u>Request for Withdrawal</u> – <b>Form 7B</b></p> <p><u>Request for transfer to another presbytery</u> – <b>Form 7A</b></p>	<p><u>Examination for Ordination</u> – Record calling presbytery and date</p> <p><u>Ordination</u> – Calling presbytery completes and distributes <b>Form 7A&amp;B</b></p> <p><u>Decision to Remove</u> – <b>Form 7B</b></p> <p>Forward all completed paperwork to Sav. Presbytery Office for filing.</p>	

# Forms and Documentation

## *FORMS AND WRITTEN DOCUMENTATION NEEDED FOR INQUIRERS/CANDIDATES*

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Please note that the deadline for receiving written work either at the presbytery office or in the hands of the CPM moderator (preferably in electronic form) is two weeks before a scheduled meeting.

All Forms referred to below are available on the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Office of General Assembly Web site at <https://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/forms-used-preparation-ministry-process/>

### **INQUIRER**

Forms and Documentation:

- a. Forms 1A & 1B submitted by inquirer applicant;
- b. Form 1D submitted by sponsoring Session;
- c. Forms 2A, and 2B completed by CPM liaison following interview;
- d. Permission for criminal background check;
- e. Transcript from an Accredited College or University;
- f. Transcript of Theological Studies to-date;
- g. One page autobiographical sketch.

### **CANDIDACY**

Forms and Documentation:

- a. Forms 5A & 5B submitted by candidate applicant;
- b. Forms 5C & 5D completed by CPM liaison following interview;
- c. Each candidate applicant shall demonstrate adequate promise for ministry by presenting written responses to the following:
  - i. Statement of Understanding of Christian Vocation: A statement of understanding of Christian vocation in the Reformed Tradition and how it relates to his/her sense of call;
  - ii. Statement of Personal Faith: A statement of personal faith which incorporates an understanding of the Reformed tradition;
  - iii. Analysis of Concept from Faith Statement: An analysis of at least one concept from the personal faith statement regarding what it suggests about God, humanity, and the interrelationships between each;
  - iv. Statement of What it Means to be Presbyterian: A statement of what it means to be Presbyterian, indicating how that awareness grows out of participation in the life of a particular church;
  - v. Statement of Self Understanding: A statement of self-understanding that reflects the inquirer's personal and cultural background and includes a concern for maintaining spiritual, physical, and mental health;
  - vi. Statement of Understanding Regarding the Tasks of a Teaching Elder: A statement of his/her understanding of the tasks Teaching Elders

perform, including an awareness of his/her specific gifts for Ministry of the Word and Sacrament and of areas in which growth is needed.

- d. Psychological Evaluation
  - vii. Each candidate applicant must submit to psychological evaluation with counselor approved by Savannah Presbytery CPM;
  - viii. A copy of findings should be sent to CPM Chair
  - ix. Findings may be shared with CPM Chair, CPM Liaison, General Presbytery with an understanding that strict confidentiality will be maintained at all times.
- e. Transcript of Theological Studies to-date;
- f. Evaluations from Field Education/ Internship(s)/CPE To Date

## **ANNUAL CONSULTATION**

Forms and Documentation:

- a. Form 3 submitted by inquirer/candidate;
- b. Transcript of Theological Studies to-date;
- c. Evaluations from Field Education/ Internship(s)/CPE To Date

## **FINAL ASSESSMENT**

Forms and Documentation

- a. One page personal statement of faith;
- b. Description of a critical issue faced by candidate in ministry and response;
- c. Engagement with each of the ordination vows (i.e., a brief statement of understanding and explanation relating to each of the ordination vows outlined in the Book of Order, W-4.4003);
- d. 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,
- e. Transcript of Theological Studies to-date;
- f. Plan to complete degree with coursework in Greek, Hebrew, and New and Old Testament Exegesis
- g. Evaluations from Field Education/ Internship(s)/CPE To Date

Final assessment and certification of readiness to receive a call will be conducted by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) once the candidate has completed and submitted all the above material. Action to grant “certification of readiness” to a candidate(s) will be reported to the presbytery at the next stated meeting.

## **CLINICAL PASTORAL EDUCATION (CPE) AND SUPERVISED MINISTRY**

Savannah Presbytery ordinarily requires all candidates to receive at minimum one unit of both Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) and supervised ministry in order to be finally assessed as ready to receive a call in the Presbyterian Church (USA). Candidates may appeal to the Committee on Preparation for Ministry for a waiver of this requirement; however, exceptions will ordinarily only be made in extraordinary cases.

# COMMISSIONED RULING ELDER (CRE) GUIDELINES

## *OVERVIEW OF SAVANNAH PRESBYTERY CRE PROGRAM*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The Presbytery of Savannah utilizes Commissioned Ruling Elders (CREs, formerly Commissioned Lay Pastors) to help supply the ministry needs of our churches and validated ministries. CREs are commissioned by the presbytery for limited pastoral service as specified in their commission. A ruling elder so designated may be commissioned to validated ministry that may include pastoral care, moderating the session of a particular congregation, administering the sacraments, and/or officiating at marriages. CREs may be commissioned for service to a particular congregation, a validated ministry within the presbytery (such as prison or homeless ministry), or to the presbytery at large (such as an evangelist, pulpit supply, or General Presbyter).

### **REQUIREMENTS FOR ADMISSION TO THE PROGRAM**

All candidates must meet the following criteria for admission to the program:

- A member in good standings of the Presbyterian Church (USA) [PC(USA)] for at least two years.
- An ordained Ruling Elders in the PC (USA)
- A member of a congregation within the Presbytery of Savannah
- Session endorsement as a CRE candidate

To begin the process, each candidate must submit a cover letter describing his/her interest in becoming a CRE and a brief description of their faith journey along with a resume or Curriculum Vitae and three references. At the same time, the Session of the potential candidate's church should submit their endorsement. The candidate must agree to undergo a background check and be willing to accept a commission once completing the training.

Once the completed application is submitted, the candidate will be interviewed by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM). Interview questions will include, but not be limited to: How would you describe your relationship to Jesus Christ? How did you become a Presbyterian? How do you feel called to pursue a commission? What are your strengths for ministry? What are your weaknesses in ministry? Upon giving satisfactory answers, the applicant will be recommended to the Presbytery to be enrolled as candidate for CRE.

### **EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

The Presbytery is responsible for training each candidate according to the Book of Order (G-2.002). Preparation and instruction to become a CRE may vary as appropriate for a particular commission. Training for CRE applicants will typically include completion of the Savannah Presbytery's J. Richard Bass School of the Laity and an additional five classes total, choosing from the following areas: Preaching, Christian Education, Pastoral Care,

Presbyterian Polity, Reformed Theology, Reformed Worship and Sacraments, and Biblical Studies. In addition, each candidate must receive approved abuse prevention training.

All classes in the CRE process must be approved by the CPM and should be approved before the candidate begins the class in order to insure its suitability for their prospective call as a CRE.

Teaching Elders in the presbytery may be authorized by the CPM for the Ministry to teach or supplement for any or all of these courses. Coursework should be taken at PC(USA) colleges or colleges related to other reformed denominations, if possible. Approval of all coursework by CPM is required to determine completeness and congruence with service in the PC(USA).

Candidates are encouraged to attend meetings of the Presbytery.

## **EXPECTATIONS FOR SERVICE**

CRE is not an honorary title. Once a candidate has completed the course of study, he or she will be expected to provide service as CRE. Such service varies depending on the mission of a congregation, presbytery or validated ministry. The candidate will be commissioned once a mode of service is determined.

Commissioned CREs are expected to attend meetings of the Presbytery of Savannah where they will be granted voice and vote. CREs serving a congregation should be reimbursed by the congregation for travel expenses to attend Presbytery meetings.

While some requests may be refused, frequent refusals or lack of service would be reasons to re-examine the CREs fitness for continuation in such a leadership position.

## **CERTIFICATION AND COMMISSIONING**

Acceptance into the CRE program is not a guarantee of commissioning; each CRE candidate must have a call to a validated area of service prior to commissioning. In the case that a CRE would be commissioned to a particular congregation, several other factors would need to be in place:

- The candidate would submit a resume to the church in question.
- The church would determine its own interview process to be followed.
- The call negotiations would include agreement on compensation, housing, travel, continuing education, time expectations and vacation.
- A written memorandum of understanding (MOU) detailing these agreements along with a position description must be submitted to the Committee on Ministry (COM) for approval. COM does not use MOU language- call agreement is a contract stipulating compensation etc. and Covenant is the understanding the responsibilities of the candidate to the church & church to candidate.

The CPM and COM would recommend to Presbytery a term of commissioned services from one to three years. The CPM and COM will also recommend to Presbytery those functions that will enable the CRE to effectively serve the congregation. Normally those duties will



include the authority to preach and to administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper and the Sacrament of Baptism. The CRE may be authorized to act as Moderator of Session when the CRE's mentor and the COM feel that he or she is ready for this responsibility. Upon completion of an approved course in pre-marital counseling, a CRE may be authorized by COM to perform services of Christian marriage.

Upon completion of requirements including a recommendation from the CPM and COM, CRE candidates will be examined on the floor of Presbytery. Candidates will provide and read their written statement of faith, and may be asked to preach a sermon. The members of Presbytery will be given time to ask questions of the candidate. Examinations will cover the candidate's personal faith, motives for seeking the commission, the areas of instruction determined necessary for the commission being sought, and his or her faith journey. If the candidate is voted approval, the presbytery will move to a commissioning service.

## **CONTINUING EDUCATION**

CREs are expected to continue their study and faith development, as would any Christian, though this is especially important for those who lead others. The Presbytery shall provide resources for the CREs' spiritual and intellectual development by meetings, retreats, classes and conferences such as the annual Leadership Conference and the School of the Laity. CREs will record and submit their continuing education activities and time involved in their yearly report to the Committee on Ministry (COM).

## **MENTOR RELATIONSHIPS**

Every CRE will have a mentor assigned by the COM. Normally the mentor will be a teaching elder within the Savannah Presbytery. The CRE remains a member of his or her local church, and should stay in relationship to his or her pastor. However, the mentor provides special support as a resource for professional development, encouragement, advice, and a source of new ideas. Mentors are expected to have a quarterly face-to-face meeting with the CRE. At this meeting they can review and sign quarterly reports and consult with the CRE about his or her experience. Between these meetings mentors will also be available for advice as needed.

## **REPORTING**

CREs are to submit a yearly written report to the Committee on Ministry (COM). Reports should include information such as number of times preaching, number of times administering the sacraments, overview of participation in continuing education opportunities, and any other reflections/observations from the year of ministry. The CRE's mentor should help the CRE prepare such reports, which should be ready to review before the winter meeting of Presbytery.

## **RECEIVING CREs FROM OTHER PRESBYTERIES**

It should be noted that there is no portability of the commissioning to CRE status between Presbyteries. However, those who have served as a CRE (or have begun training to serve as a CRE in another Presbytery), moves into the boundaries of the Presbytery of Savannah, the

CPM should review the candidate’s work and determine what more would be needed for commissioning within the Presbytery of Savannah. Should an applicant be deemed acceptable, he or she will be interviewed by the CPM and a recommendation made to COM and Presbytery. That recommendation will include specific class and training that will be accepted. CPM may also require additional training, may reject coursework or training, and may reject the application

## END OF COMMISSION

The commission of a CRE is for a stated period of time, not to exceed three years. At the end of that time, the commission expires unless the CRE:

1. Requests and is granted a renewed commission; or
2. Receives another commission to a different validated ministry.

If neither of these actions take place, the CRE will be placed on the list of inactive CREs. The commission may be resigned by the CRE when he or she feels that his or her service in the presbytery is complete. Under this circumstance, the CRE will be placed on the list of inactive CREs. A ruling elder who has been commissioned and later ceases to serve in the specified ministry to which his or she has been commissioned may be placed on the list of inactive CREs. Ruling elders on the list of inactive CREs are not authorized to perform the functions of a CRE until commissioned again to a validated ministry by the presbytery. A change in commission may require additional instruction and/or preparation as determined by the CPM and COM.

Additionally, the COM may recommend to presbytery that a commission be withdrawn. Presbytery may withdraw a commission for reasons it deems good and sufficient. In such a case, it is possible that the COM would recommend that the CRE not be considered for any future commission. In cases that warrant immediate action, COM may suspend the CRE’s assignment to a validated ministry pending appropriate action by the presbytery in its next meeting.

Education requirements: **BOOK of ORDER:**  
G-2.1103 for Christian Educators:

1. Biblical Studies
2. Reformed Theology
3. Worship & Sacraments
4. Human & Faith Development
5. Religious Ed & practice
6. Polity, Programs & Mission

Current School of the Laity program provides:

1. Intro to Bible + OT Survey + NT Survey
2. Intro to Reformed Theology
3. Essential Elements of Worship (Baptism & Communion)
- 4.
5. Practical Ministries
6. History, Mission & Polity

Additional course needed for CRE education:

1. Preaching
2. Pastoral Care
3. Intro to Christian Education (Human & Faith Development)