

The Ordination Stages at a Glance

Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM)

Presbytery of the Coastlands

Overview

The ordination process is a time of discernment for students, local congregations, and denominational bodies. During this time, all parties involved seek the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit and attempt to discern the fittedness of ordained ministry for a particular individual. The process breaks down into three stages:

- I. Inquirer (I)
- II. Candidate (C)
- III. Certified Ready to Receive a Call (CRC)

At all stages in the process, CPM requests that inquirers and candidates submit forms and other written submissions to the presbytery office (admin@coastlandspresbytery.org) at least one week prior to the scheduled meeting date, so as to allow commission members time to read and reflect on the materials.

Inquirer

During this phase, which is ordinarily no less than one calendar year, the individual seeks to enter the ordination process and ask (inquire) preliminary questions, seeking God's direction. What can begin as a "hunch" or "passion" for ministry is expected to develop during this stage of the process into a clearer calling to ordained ministry. That ordained ministry can take many forms and vocational contexts, so an openness is encouraged by the individual, home church, and commission as God continues to unveil God's calling for the person. During this phase, it is wise to begin Master of Divinity Studies, take the Bible Content Exam, begin checking off specific course requirements, and undergo a Psychological Examination through a counseling service that is in partnership with the CPM (psych eval is required during Inquirer phase). When the Inquirer feels that the call to ordained ministry is sure, and this has been affirmed by their home church's Session, they may proceed to the second phase of Candidate (see below). To request to become an Inquirer, students (who must be an active member of a congregation in this presbytery, ordinarily for a minimum of six months) must fill out forms 1A, 1B, and 1C-Alt and have endorsement of their home church's Session (form 1D).

Candidate

A Candidate is an individual who has been affirmed by their home church and the presbytery that they are indeed a candidate for ordained ministry. The general questions of the Inquirer phase have been asked and answered to a satisfactory extent, and this Candidacy phase is the agreement between supportive church bodies and the individual that there indeed seems to be a “call” in place. The student still needs to show preparedness, fittedness, follow-through, and competency to be moved to the final phase of CRC. To move to Candidacy, a student must complete forms 5A and 5A-Adnl, prepare a written *draft* Statement of Faith, and have the endorsement of their home church’s Session (form 5B). By the end of the Candidacy phase, which is no less than one calendar year, a student is expected to complete *all* necessary requirements for ordained ministry, including field education, coursework requirements, at least one full unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), successful passing of all five ordination exams, a written Statement of Faith, completion of a Master of Divinity degree (or clear trajectory to do so), and all requirements stated above under “Inquirer”.

Certified Ready to Receive a Call

A Candidate who has satisfactorily completed all ordination requirements can request to become CRC. To become CRC, a Candidate must have completed *all* ordination requirements and come before the CPM for final evaluation. The session liaison, pastor(s), or other leaders from the home church are welcome to attend and show support. This final evaluation includes the submission of an up-to-date transcript, preparation of an exegesis of a Scripture text (including use of original biblical language and work with commentaries/sources), a freshly written sermon on the same Scripture, and a final Statement of Faith. A Candidate will preach the sermon, then be examined on all this material, as well as experience through seminary, field education, and CPE. In short, all lines of examination are fair game. If the commission is satisfied with the Candidate’s competency, materials, and sense of calling, and affirms that calling, the student will become CRC. If more work, time, or discernment is needed, the commission will come alongside the Candidate in their continued preparation and recommend additional time in the Candidacy phase. Once CRC, the commission will support the student as needed as they seek an ordained ministry. Additionally, the commission can move a Candidate to Certified Ready to Negotiate, which allows them to negotiate with churches prior to their completion of the requirements of CRC. This is typically only done when a student has completed all other assigned requirements and is simply waiting on the one-year calendar to run out, and thus it is rare that a student would fall into the CRN category. An

Authoritative Interpretation of the General Assembly (2010, Item 05-17) requires that a candidate meet the following conditions before being approved for CRN status: (1) completed two full years of theological education, (2) had an annual consultation with the liaison team or met with the commission within the last year, and (3) passed all ordination exams or approved alternative assessments.

Annual Consultation

This is a mandatory check-in for any student that has not consulted with commission in more than one calendar year. Form 3 should be completed by the individual going through the ordination process, and an in-person or video conference meeting should take place with the student's liaisons. The liaisons will then report to the larger commission.

Removal from Process

Removal from the ordination process typically takes place at the student's request, but can also be decided by vote of the commission. Adequate reasoning must be detailed, and explained to both the student and their home church and pastor(s).

The Mission & Work of the CPM

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The Work of the Presbytery

The most obvious mission of the CPM is to fulfill the work and ministry of the presbytery on the presbytery's behalf and as representatives of it. Presbyteries are charged with guiding and preparing individuals for the ordained ministry of Word and Sacrament. The CPM does this work and acts on behalf of the presbytery to ensure this ministry is accomplished for the sake of its churches and ministry candidates. The presbytery has placed a large amount of authority in the commission's hands, allowing the commission to take full action on candidates. This means candidates will not come before the entire presbytery for any examination or stage of the process (with the potential exception of disciplinary action). Students will be invited to lead the worship of the presbytery upon occasion, introducing them to the presbytery and its larger work. For CPM's purposes, a quorum is met with at least three (3) commission members present. The commission may divide into smaller subcommittees due to time constraints when necessary and meet with multiple individuals simultaneously.

Care of the Individual

Individuals going through the ordination process are doing so "under care" of their home church and the presbytery's CPM. This clear call to *care* for the candidates is the priority in this ministry. Guiding, checking in, listening, advising, connecting, praying with and for students, encouraging, delivering "tough truth", and more are all expected ministries of the CPM, and are mostly carried out by the liaisons of the student. The commission acts as a shepherd of the student.

Gatekeeper

The CPM also has the responsibility of ensuring that only candidates who have completed their preparation and are fully ready for ministry move on to ordained positions. This requires that the CPM also function as a gatekeeper, making sure standards have been met, requirements completed, and readiness is affirmed. Students who do not show readiness to move on, spiritual maturity to lead, or have failed to complete assigned requirements must be "held back" in the process and given time for continued growth under the guidance of the commission.

Requirements for Individuals Seeking Ordination

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Overview

There are three components to a student's preparation for ministry. All requirements must be fulfilled in order for a student to become CRC, and some are required before a student may become a Candidate. Refer to the *Flow Chart* in subsequent pages for a walk-through of stage-appropriate requirements. The three components to preparedness are Academic, Experiential, and Denominational. These include:

- I. Academic
 - A. Completion of a Master of Divinity degree
 - B. Completion of all required coursework
 - C. The submission of a final, updated transcript for CRC

- II. Experiential
 - A. Completion of a full unit of supervised field education in a congregational setting
 - B. Completion of a full unit of supervised CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) at a certified site
 - C. *RECOMMENDED BUT NOT REQUIRED*: Completion of one additional unit of a supervised field education or CPE

- III. Denominational
 - A. Completion of a Psychological Evaluation at an approved site during the Inquirer phase of the process
 - B. Completion of the Bible Content Examination during the Inquirer (recommended) or Candidate phase
 - C. Completion of the Worship & Sacraments, Theology, Exegesis, and Polity exams during the Candidate phase of the process
 - D. The writing of a Statement of Faith at the time of Candidacy evaluation, and examination on the Statement at CRC evaluation
 - E. Exegesis & Sermon for CRC evaluation

Academic Requirements in Detail

- A. A student must complete a Master of Divinity degree at an accredited seminary or divinity school. If a Candidate is in the final stages of completion of the

degree and have met all other requirements (and have had at least one year since becoming a Candidate, and two years in the ordination process), they may come before the commission to become CRC prior to their degree completion. An up-to-date transcript must be provided, and all required coursework must be completed or in process. If the commission feels the student will graduate imminently, it can move a student to CRC. This movement can be rescinded if the student fails to complete as expected the degree or coursework.

B. REQUIRED coursework for the Coastlands CPM includes:

- Biblical Greek
- Biblical Hebrew
- Greek Exegesis or a Greek-based exegetical class on a New Testament book(s)
- Hebrew Exegesis or a Hebrew-based exegetical class on an Old Testament book(s)
- Reformed Worship (the commission will typically accept classes that are theology/worship/history that include extensive work in Reformed worship, but students are encouraged to clear ideas with liaisons)
- Church History Survey
- Old Testament Survey
- New Testament Survey
- Presbyterian Polity
- Reformed Theology/Reformed Theologian/Reformation History (an upper-level course offered specifically on Reformed doctrine, a specific Reformed theologian, or the Reformation era)
- Christian Preaching

The following classes are RECOMMENDED for students but not required:

- Justice/Mission Elective
- Systematic Theology Survey
- Worship Practicum (a class that focuses on experiential learning in Sacraments, Weddings, Funerals, etc.)
- Christian Education elective (especially for students going into parish or academic vocations)
- Pastoral Care elective (especially for students going into parish or chaplaincy vocations)

- Students who are exempted from classes by a seminary will have said course considered fulfilled by CPM (Example: A biblical studies undergraduate is exempted by PTS for OT and NT surveys – these boxes are “checked off” for our purposes as well)
- Any class can be fulfilled through individual study with a professor. Some classes may be fulfilled through individual work with an ordained minister. Any exception to a traditional classroom format should receive commission’s approval prior to the student’s enrollment.
- Students should plan ahead for coursework. Many institutions do not offer denominationally required courses every year. Knowing the availability of a course and completing in a timely fashion is the student’s responsibility.
- In general, the commission seeks to avoid “replacement” courses or making exceptions to requirements. Exceptions/substitutions can be heard on a case-by-case basis, but a student’s failure to take a class in time for graduation does not necessitate the commission’s bending of its requirements and goals. Most exceptions are voted down. Coursework can always be completed post-graduation through individual study with a professor or post-degree registration for class.
- The student must pass and receive credit for all courses. There is no grade or GPA requirement, but a student’s academic performance can certainly be questioned in an evaluation if there are concerns. Any required class may be taken Pass/Fail if the institution offers it in P/F format. A passing mark will fulfill the requirement for ordination purposes.
- **The commission always reserves the right to require additional work/classes for any individual in the process if it is believed said work would be indispensably beneficial to the student’s preparation for ordained ministry. As a student considers different vocations within ordained ministry, planning ahead and taking classes that help discern/affirm that sense of vocational calling, as well as train and prepare for it, is a wise course of action.**

Experiential Requirements in Detail

- A. A full field education unit (approximately 300 hours) in a congregational context is required for all students. If a student did not grow up in a PC(USA) context, this field education must take place at a PC(USA) church with a PC(USA) supervisor. This field education must include written evaluation by

the supervisor, and this evaluation must be released to the presbytery by the candidate and supervisor to fulfill the requirement.

- B. A full Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) unit (approximately 400 hours) is required for all students. This must take place at an accredited site with a supervisor. Hospital settings are the norm (and usually preferred by the commission) but other chaplaincies will be considered (example: prison ministry) if there is accreditation and supervision.
- C. An additional full unit (approximately 300 hours) of another field education/CPE experience is recommended but not required. There is significant flexibility with this final one, and students are encouraged to do something related to where they may be feeling called vocationally in ministry.
- Students are discouraged from doing field education work at their home church except in rare circumstances. Students wanting an exception need to request permission from the commission in advance.
 - Students are encouraged to use field education opportunities to experience things not yet experienced. The experience should also help to discern where God might be calling them to ministry.
 - Students may complete a field education part-time for an academic year, or full-time for a summer unit. Full-time, year-long residencies, while certainly fulfilling more than enough hours, only count as *one* fulfilled requirement.
 - **The commission always reserves the right to require additional experience if it is believed said experience would be indispensably beneficial to the student's preparation for ministry. This could include a third (or more) experience in field education or CPE.**

Denominational Requirements in Detail

- A. Psychological Evaluation – must be completed during the Inquirer year. The presbytery will pay 1/3 of the cost, while 1/3 is to be paid by the home church of the student, and 1/3 by the student themselves. This must be completed at an accredited institution that is familiar with evaluations for the ordination process. The presbytery recommends the use of one site in particular: Liaisons will review psychological evaluations and report to the commission if any concerns arise from it. Though the evaluation is released to the commission, the student's confidentiality will be respected as much as possible, limiting the number of individuals involved in the reading of it unless circumstances require

more (example: if serious concerns about health/maturity arise from the evaluation).

- B. Bible Content Exam – can be completed as soon as an individual is accepted by CPM as an Inquirer. This exam is only offered twice in a year, and students often find this one challenging, so planning ahead is important.
- C. Worship & Sacraments, Theology, Bible Exegesis, Polity Exams – These four exams are ordinarily taken during the year of Candidacy. An Inquirer may take them WITH PRIOR APPROVAL from the commission. These exams are typically offered three times per year.
- D. Statement of Faith – This is a statement of the individual’s belief, but surely ought to reflect the beliefs of the Reformed tradition and Presbyterian (USA) community. While there is a creed-like quality to the statement, students are encouraged to make it their own and speak from their own voice within the tradition. While it cannot be exhaustive, students should be reminded that a good statement will adequately show a reformed understanding of **God, Christ’s person and work (including atonement), the Holy Spirit, both sacraments, Scripture, the church, the mission of the church, the life of discipleship, and the hope of new creation in Jesus Christ (eschatology)**. While an eventual Personal Information Form (PIF) that the student will create and circulate will have strict space requirements, the commission will allow slightly longer statements (up to two pages) for the purposes of becoming CRC, in order for the student to have adequate space to show theological, biblical, and vocational preparedness. The student may then have to make edits/cuts to the document to fit it into the space requirements of a PIF. The statement prepared for the CPM should be no longer than two pages single-spaced, normal font.
- E. Exegesis & Sermon – A fresh exegesis and sermon prepared for the CRC evaluation. Exegesis should show work in the original biblical language, as well as relevant textual issues and insights. It should also show work with commentaries and other sources, which must be cited/footnoted. The exegesis must also show interpretation of key concepts, and clearly show the movement from text to sermon. This is an academic paper with a focused direction toward the practical ministry application of sermon delivery. The sermon should be about ten minutes in length (give or take). The student can choose/create the context for the sermon (example: the church where they had a field ed. placement). The sermon should display the student’s competency in delivery and style, intelligence in navigating the text, creativity in composition and illustration, and a pastoral sensitivity to their context.

Flow Chart for Requirements

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Inquirer Year

Required:

- Psychological Evaluation
- Statement of Faith DRAFT (end of year at time of Candidacy evaluation)
- Meet with home church's Session prior to CPM's Candidacy evaluation

Recommended (to avoid time crunches later):

- Bible Content Exam
- Preliminary coursework, especially survey courses
- One (or possibly both) biblical language(s)
- One (or possibly two) field education/CPE unit(s)

Candidate Year

Required:

- Worship & Sacraments, Theology, Bible Exegesis, & Polity ordination exams
- Bible Content Exam (if not already completed)
- All remaining coursework
- Completion of Master of Divinity degree
- All remaining field education/CPE units (totaling minimum of one each)
- Statement of Faith, Exegesis, Sermon, & Transcript for CRC evaluation

Quick Checklist for Requirements

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Presbytery of the Coastlands

- ___ All forms beginning with a “1” (for I evaluation)
- ___ Psychological Evaluation (I)
- ___ Statement of Faith (for C evaluation)
- ___ All forms beginning with a “5” (for C evaluation)
- ___ Bible Content Ordination Exam (I or C)
- ___ Worship & Sacraments Ordination Exam (C)
- ___ Theology Ordination Exam (C)
- ___ Biblical Exegesis Ordination Exam (C)
- ___ Presbyterian Polity Ordination Exam (C)
- ___ Field Education #1 – congregational context (I or C)
- ___ Field Education #2 – CPE (I or C)
- ___ Exegesis and Sermon (for CRC evaluation)
- ___ Transcript sent to Presbytery Office (for CRC evaluation)
- ___ Master of Divinity degree
- ___ All required coursework:
 - ___ Biblical Hebrew
 - ___ Biblical Greek
 - ___ OT Exegesis
 - ___ NT Exegesis
 - ___ OT Survey
 - ___ NT Survey
 - ___ Reformed Worship
 - ___ Preaching
 - ___ Church History Survey
 - ___ Presbyterian Polity
 - ___ Reformed Theology/Theologian (upper level)

The Presbytery's Fund for Individuals in the Process

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The presbytery has a designated candidates' fund, replenished by offerings taken at ordination and installation services, to provide financial support to students going through the process. Each student entering the process as an Inquirer (or transferring in as an Inquirer or Candidate) will be allotted \$1,000 to use for expenses related to becoming ordained. This can include their portion (1/3) of the psychological evaluation, ordination exam registration fees, seminary expenses, books for classes, CPE tuition, travel to/from CPM meetings, and more. Students wishing to receive reimbursement from their account must submit receipts/invoices to their liaisons and a commission co-moderator. The co-moderator will submit a remittance request to the presbytery treasurer (treasurer@coastlandspresbytery.org) and finance manager (finance@coastlandspresbytery.org) and retain a copy in the inquirer/candidate's file.

Any remaining financial support an active inquirer/candidate would have received from the former presbytery in which they were enrolled as an inquirer shall be carried over to Coastlands.

Inquirers and candidates who have additional financial needs are encouraged to consult with their liaisons regarding additional resources that may be available.