



Session Responsibility for Church Members in the Inquiry and Candidacy Process



The process of becoming a Teaching Elder in the Presbyterian Church (USA) is divided into two phases: the Inquiry Phase and the Candidacy Phase. The Inquiry Phase is intended as an exploratory time for individuals as they seek to determine the validity of their calls and the nature of their gifts. The Candidacy Phase occurs after the person, the sponsoring Session, and the Presbytery affirm the call, and is used as a time of deliberate preparation and spiritual growth.

THE INQUIRY AND CANDIDACY PROCESS

In addition to their duties of guidance and nurture, Sessions have specific areas of responsibility:

REGISTRATION

1. Determine that the individual has been an active member of your congregation for a minimum of six months.
2. Consult with the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) for information and forms to be completed.
3. Interview the potential Inquirer and make a positive or negative recommendation. Possible areas of consideration are:
 - Evidence of personal faith
 - Sense of call and motivation
 - Academic ability and self-discipline
 - Participation within the congregation
 - Gifts for ministry
 - Physical and emotional health
4. Report a positive recommendation concerning the individual to Committee on Preparation (CPM). The CPM will then interview the person and determine whether to or not enroll the person as an Inquirer and will report that action to the Presbytery.

The date of acceptance by the committee begins the Inquirer phase. The inquiry and candidacy phases shall continue for a period of no less than two years, including at least one year as a candidate .

SESSION RESPONSIBILITIES DURING THE INQUIRY PHASE

- Be prepared to cover 1/3 of the cost of the individuals' psychological assessment at an approved institution. The Presbytery will pay 1/3 and the Inquirer will pay 1/3.
- Provide financial support for education if possible.
- Appoint a Session Liaison who will keep in regular contact with the Inquirer and keep the Session and Congregation informed about the Inquirer. Session Liaisons are welcome to attend the annual CPM consultation with the Inquirer/Candidate.
- Review the report of each annual consultation and be aware of specific areas of growth as well as areas to receive special attention and efforts for the following year.
- Session should interview the Inquirer concerning the transition to Candidacy phase, using as a basis personal discussions, consultation reports, and the statements of the Book of Order (G-02.0607). Following the interview, Session makes a recommendation to CPM concerning the transition. If CPM concurs with a positive recommendation, the individual will be enrolled as a Candidate and will be presented at the next meeting of the Presbytery. A representative of the Session may be present at the next Presbytery meeting to present the individual.
- Please refer to Book of Order G-2.06 for detailed Information and <https://www.pcusa.org/resource/preparation-ministry-handbook/>.

SESSION RESPONSIBILITIES DURING THE CANDIDACY PHASE

- Continue to offer guidance, support and financial aid as the individual completes the necessary requirements and becomes certified for ordination.
- If the Examination for Ordination occurs in this Presbytery, have a representative present at the Presbytery meeting.
- When an appropriate call for service has been accepted and the person has been ordained, remove his/her name from the membership roll while continuing to pray for this person.



ALWAYS REMEMBER

Be aware that, if it is determined that an individual's gifts and call are not leading toward ordination as a teaching elder, the process has still been a success because the ultimate goal is to find each person's God-chosen place of service, and as Presbyterians we believe we are all called to ministry through our baptism.