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**Preparation for Ministry in the  
Presbytery of St. Augustine  
(Effective December 15, 2020)**

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## DEFINITIONS

### DEFINITION OF FREQUENTLY USED WORDS IN THE CALL COMMISSION'S DOCUMENT FOR PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

**CALL COMMISSION** This 24-member commission of the Presbytery of St. Augustine is empowered by the presbytery to guide, nurture, and oversee the process of becoming a teaching elder (minister of Word and Sacrament) for persons in the care of the presbytery. It enrolls, guides, and cares for inquirers and candidates. The commission meets monthly and is composed of both teaching elders and ruling elders (elders who are serving or have served on a church session). It has many other responsibilities as well, including receiving new members of the presbytery, approving service to congregations and other ministries such as chaplaincy, and assisting churches who are searching for pastoral leadership.

**BOOK OF ORDER** This is part of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It contains the Foundations of Presbyterian Polity, the Form of Government, the Directory for Worship, and the Rules of Discipline. The Book of Confessions is the other part of the Constitution. These policies include Book of Order requirements as well as their particular application as we care for those preparing for ministry in the Presbytery of St. Augustine.

**INQUIRY** This is the initial phase of being under the care of the Call Commission. The purpose is to provide an opportunity for the church and those who believe themselves called to ordained ministry as teaching elders to explore that call together so that the presbytery can make an informed decision about the inquirer's suitability for ministry. Generally the inquiry phase lasts at least one year.

**CANDIDACY** This phase provides time for the full preparation of persons to serve the church as teaching elders. This shall be accomplished through the presbytery's support, guidance, and evaluation of a candidate's fitness and readiness for a call to ministry requiring ordination. Inquiry and candidacy together must have a timeline of at least two years, with at least one year as a candidate.

# CALL COMMISSION

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Call Commission of the Presbytery of St. Augustine is responsible for the functions placed in the Committee on Preparation for Ministry in other presbyteries. The Call Commission has prepared this information to help everyone understand the preparation process, a person's responsibilities in the process, and the church session's responsibilities. There are policies and particularities of the Call Commission addressed here that are not found in other documents.

It is suggested that inquirers, candidates and those interested in preparation for ministry read the applicable provisions of the Book of Order in G-2.06, and discuss your questions with the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Call Commission or the stated clerk of the presbytery.

### Contact Information:

**Mary Beth Neeley**, Chair of the Call Commission

Email: [amjeffl@gmail.com](mailto:amjeffl@gmail.com) / Phone: (352) 615-9168

**Alexandra (Sandra) Hedrick**, Stated Clerk

Email: [sandra@staugpres.org](mailto:sandra@staugpres.org) / Phone: (904) 612-9766

In all aspects of the preparation for ministry process, there may be reasons for accommodations to the particular circumstances of an individual seeking ordination, including waivers and alternate means. More information about these aspects of preparation for ministry may be found in G-2.0610 of the Book of Order and can be discussed with the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Call Commission and the individual's Call Commission Advisor, once one is assigned.

## II. EXPLORING A SENSE OF CALL

When considering entering the preparation for ministry process and seeking discernment about your call into ministry as a teaching elder (also known as minister

of Word and Sacrament) with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), talk with your pastor to discuss your sense of call. After that conversation, contact the Presbytery of St. Augustine's Call Commission Chair or Vice-Chair to notify them of your interest in coming under care of the presbytery (see contact information above).

Consider taking part in upcoming presbytery events open to individuals interested in learning more about the preparation process. [Click here](#) to learn the date for the next event and to register (if registration is open). Seminaries often offer weekend experiences to help people seeking discernment about a call to ministry. Consider contacting several seminaries and find out from their Admissions Office what programs/experiences they offer to help prospective students discern their call to ministry. Sometimes these are called "Seeker Seminars" or "Exploration into Ministry" experiences.

### **III. INITIAL REQUIREMENTS TO BEGIN PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY PROCESS (BECOMING AN INQUIRER)**

The initial requirements to begin the process of becoming an inquirer are described below. The purpose of the inquiry phase is to provide an opportunity for the church and those who believe themselves called to ordered ministry as teaching elders to explore that call together so that the presbytery can make an informed decision about the inquirer's suitability for ordered ministry.

All necessary forms and policies, as amended from time to time, can be found on the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) Preparation for Ministry website: (<https://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/>) AND on the presbytery website: (<https://staugpres.org/committees-ministries/call-commission/>)

#### **A. Requirements**

1. Have been active in a congregation for at least the previous 6 months.
2. Meet with your pastor and contact the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Call Commission to discuss your sense of call to ministry as a teaching elder.

3. Meet with and receive an endorsement from your congregation's session, after completing form 1A (see below) and sharing it with the session. (The Call Commission will send someone to meet with your session to provide an overview of the process and answer questions. The Chair or Vice Chair of the Call Commission will arrange this visit, in coordination with your pastor.)
4. Complete a criminal background check (national in scope) through the presbytery office. Contact the stated clerk for the authorization form, and return it to him/her to begin the search.
5. Complete a ministry assessment through a provider acceptable to the Call Commission (ask the Chair or Vice-Chair for a list), with the cost paid  $\frac{1}{3}$  by the presbytery,  $\frac{1}{3}$  by the congregation, and  $\frac{1}{3}$  by you. A billing statement will be sent directly to you, your church, and the presbytery once the assessment has been completed.
6. Provide the materials described above to the Call Commission Chair or Vice-Chair, who will schedule an interview date/time (he/she may assign an advisor to work with you through this process at this time, or the assignment may be made after your interview).

## **B. Applications/Forms**

Provide these application two (2) weeks prior to your scheduled interview with the Call Commission:

1. **Form 1A – Application to be Enrolled as an Inquirer** (completed by applicant) Website link: [FORM 1A](#)
2. **Form 1B - Questions for Reflection** (completed by applicant) Website link: [FORM 1B](#)
3. **Form 1C – Financial Planning** for Theological Education (completed by applicant) Website link: [FORM 1C](#)
4. **Form 1D – Session Evaluation and Recommendation** (completed by Session) Website link: [FORM 1D](#)
5. **Reference Request form** (completed by applicant): **Form coming soon**

- i. Must have references from your pastor and a professor (or supervisor if not in school)
  - ii. The presbytery office will send your references the required reference forms.
6. **Reference forms** (completed by each reference and sent directly to presbytery office)
7. **Official college transcript(s)** from all schools attended. This must include graduation date and degree awarded.
8. **Official Seminary transcript(s)** from all schools attended. This must include graduation date and degree awarded.

**Note: Form 2B - Covenant Agreement and Inquirer Release** will be completed and signed by inquirer, clerk of session and Call Commission Chair or Vice-Chair after your interview.

### **C. Interview with Call Commission for Enrollment as Inquirer**

You, your pastor and your session liaison will meet with the Call Commission as a group. The Commission will ask questions about your submitted materials, your sense of call, your ministry experience, your church experience, etc. (please see the Resource entitled “Expectations of Inquirers/Candidates”).

Following your interview with the Call Commission, you, your pastor, and your session liaison will leave the room so that the Call Commission can have a chance to deliberate and vote on whether to enroll you as an inquirer.

You will be invited back in the room and provided the vote is in the affirmative the following forms will be completed:

**Form 2A** – Report of Consultation Regarding Application to Inquirer

**Form 2B** – Final Signature by Call Commission Chair or Vice-Chair

### **D. Process after Enrollment as an Inquirer**

1. The Call Commission will report its action of receiving you as an inquirer at the next stated meeting of the presbytery, and you will be enrolled as an inquirer with the Office of General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
2. Inquiry and candidacy must continue for two years, of which at least one year is as a candidate. Individuals move through this process on timetables that fit their particular circumstances. The process includes:
  - a. Completion of sexual misconduct and boundaries training required by the presbytery within a short time of being enrolled as an inquirer (time will be stated in the inquirer's covenant).
  - b. Formation of a covenant (Form 2B), which includes these development goals: Education for ministry; Spiritual development; Interpersonal relations; Personal Growth; Professional Development, including previously mentioned sexual misconduct and boundaries training.

A new covenant will be formulated and approved by the Call Commission by November 1 of each year.

#### **IV. CANDIDACY PHASE (MINIMUM OF ONE YEAR)**

The purpose of the candidacy phase is to provide for the full preparation of persons to serve the church as teaching elders (ministers of Word and Sacrament). This is accomplished through the presbytery's support, guidance, and evaluation of a candidate's fitness and readiness for a call to ministry requiring ordination. (Book of Order G-2.0604).

Here are the steps in the candidacy phase:

1. The Call Commission will not normally receive an application for candidacy prior to the second full term of the second year.



2. After at least a year, an inquirer may apply to become a candidate. The inquirer approaches his or her session, fills out the necessary paperwork (**Form 5A**) and meets with the sponsoring congregation's session.  
Website link: [FORM 5A](#)
3. Upon session approval, the session will complete **Form 5B**. Forms 5A and 5B will be submitted to the stated clerk of the presbytery and must be received at least two weeks prior to the scheduled interview with the Call Commission.  
Website link: [FORM 5B](#)
4. Other documents required at least two weeks prior to the scheduled interview include your "Statement of Faith," an updated seminary transcript, and reports of any supervised ministry or clinical pastoral education (CPE) that have occurred prior to the interview.
5. The Call Commission will interview you before enrolling you as a candidate. You would normally be accompanied at the interview by your pastor and session liaison. The interview will include questions regarding your faith journey, the submitted materials, discernment and progress as an inquirer, and other information that will inform the Call Commission in its decision, including a commitment to diversity and inclusion consistent with the principles set forth in the constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
6. Following your interview with the Call Commission, you, your pastor, and your session liaison will leave the room so that the Call Commission can have a chance to deliberate and vote on whether to enroll you as a candidate.
7. If the vote is in the affirmative, you will be enrolled as a candidate and be introduced at the next presbytery meeting, where there will be a "charge" and prayer for your continued journey in the preparation for ministry process. If it is not in the affirmative, the Call Commission will discuss with you the next steps that are needed for the candidacy to be reconsidered.

The next section describes the requirements to be completed during the candidacy phase and before the interview for final assessment.

## **V. FINAL ASSESSMENT AND NEGOTIATION FOR SERVICE (COMPLETE DURING CANDIDACY PHASE)**

According to G-2.0607 of the Book of Order, a candidate may not enter into negotiation for his/her service as a teaching elder (minister of Word and Sacrament) without the presbytery's approval. The final assessment interview will take place after the requirements above have been met. If the candidate has not yet graduated, final assessment may still occur if the candidate is in proximity to graduation. These additional items (required by the Book of Order as supplemented by our presbytery's requirements) will be reviewed at that time:

### **A. From the Book of Order**

1. A candidate's wisdom and maturity of faith, leadership skills, compassionate spirit, honest repute, and sound judgment;
2. A transcript showing graduation, with satisfactory grades, at a regionally accredited college or university;
3. A transcript from a theological institution accredited by the Association of Theological Schools acceptable to the presbytery, showing a course of study including Hebrew and Greek, exegesis of the Old and New Testaments using Hebrew and Greek, satisfactory grades in all areas of study, and graduation or proximity to graduation.
4. Examination materials, together with evaluations that declare those materials satisfactory in the areas covered by any standard ordination examination approved by the General Assembly.

### **B. Supplemental Requirements of the Presbytery of St. Augustine**

1. Completion of an equivalent of four semesters of one-day-per-week supervised field education or its alternative if approved by the Call Commission, with all or a portion being in a parish context (normally service

in one's home church is not acceptable regardless of whether the seminary grants credit for the experience).

2. Completion of a basic unit of clinical pastoral education or its alternative if approved by the Call Commission (CPE).
3. Completion of a draft of the Personal Information Form (PIF) in the form provided by the Church Leadership Connection (not to be distributed beyond the Call Commission before approval).
4. An updated Statement of Faith (for Call Commission interview).
5. A Journey of Faith Statement (for Call Commission interview).
6. Presentation of a written sermon and exegesis for the sermon (for Call Commission interview).
7. Any other requirements of the Call Commission as defined during the preparation for ministry process.

### **C. Interview with Call Commission for Final Assessment**

Contact the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Call Commission to set up the date and time of your interview for final assessment. All documents and evidence of the fulfillment of requirements must be provided to the stated clerk at least two (2) weeks before the interview. At the conclusion of the interview, the Call Commission will deliberate and vote on your request to be certified as ready for examination for ordination, pending a call.

## **VI. SEEKING A CALL AFTER FINAL ASSESSMENT**

After the final assessment and the candidate has met all the other requirements for ordination (i.e., passing standard ordination exams, receiving a degree from seminary, etc.) the Call Commission will shift the emphasis of the annual consultation to focus on the process for seeking and receiving a call.

The Call Commission and the candidate will discuss issues such as geographic limitations, occupation limitations, education limitations, salary limitations, etc. that might be hindering the call process and might be interfering with the discernment of God's will. Under appropriate circumstances, consideration may be given to removing the candidate from the roll of the Call Commission as a candidate under preparation for ministry.

If the candidate receives a call in the Presbytery of St. Augustine, the presbytery will conduct the ordination examination. Contact the Call Commission Chair or Vice-Chair for further information.

If the candidate receives a call in another presbytery, normally that presbytery would conduct the ordination examination.

## **VII. SEMINARY AND OTHER EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS**

It is our presbytery's expectation that inquirers and candidates will seek the wisdom of the Call Commission on the choice of seminary as they discern the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Chair or Vice-Chair of the Call Commission and your advisor can discuss with you the pros and cons of attending a seminary of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) or another seminary. The Call Commission may require additional courses at other seminaries to ensure understanding of particular subjects, e.g. Reformed Theology and Presbyterian Polity.

Special consideration and support can be made for persons who have documented learning disabilities, and differing abilities that make testing/coursework more difficult with the established testing methodologies. (See Resource listing.)

All field education reports (CPE and supervised ministry) shall be forwarded to the Call Commission Chair or Vice Chair and the stated clerk in a timely manner, soon after they are completed.

Inquirers/candidates are encouraged to consider with their advisor whether a full-year internship, either as part of their seminary field education, or following graduation,

would be appropriate as a part of their preparation for ministry. The Call Commission must give its approval to any internship and its length.

### VIII. ORDINATION EXAMS

- A. **Bible Content Exam** Inquirer/candidates are encouraged to take the Bible Content Examination within the first year of seminary. Since it is only offered twice a year, this gives a student multiple opportunities to retake it if necessary before graduation.

It is the inquirer/candidate's responsibility to register to take the exam, to pay any exam fees, and to see that the results of the exam are sent to the Call Commission Chair or Vice-Chair. Some congregations are willing to assist with these fees if requested. The stated clerk will receive a notice as a part of the registration process and will confirm the registration on behalf of the presbytery.

- B. **All Other Exams** The examinations on Bible Exegesis, Theological Competence, Worship and Sacrament, and Church Polity are normally taken during the final year of seminary. The Call Commission will allow inquirers/candidates to sit for the Bible Exegesis examination as early as the second full term of the second year. Contact your advisor to seek approval to take the ordination examinations. (Ordinarily approval will be given as part of the annual consultation prior to the final year of seminary.)

It is the inquirer/candidate's responsibility to apply to take the examinations and to pay any examination fees. Some congregations are willing to assist with these fees if requested. The inquirer/candidate will ensure that the results of the examinations are sent to the stated clerk and the Call Commission Chair or Vice-Chair.

- C. **Alternate Means** Alternate means for demonstrating competency in the areas of the standard ordination examinations are available to inquirers/ candidates with documented learning disabilities that interfere with normal testing procedures.

## **IX. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARTIES TO PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY PROCESS**

### **A. Inquirers/Candidates**

The responsibilities of persons under our presbytery's care are to:

1. Be constant in prayer to keep spiritual formation as a central focus during this long and sometimes arduous process.
2. Complete all paperwork and submit it at appropriate times.
3. Keep your advisor and session liaison informed of any life changes that affect the process.
4. Be faithful in following through on the five-fold covenant agreed upon during annual consultations.
5. Remain committed to diversity and inclusivity consistent with the principles of the constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).
6. Complete the sexual misconduct and boundaries training in a timely manner.
7. Know what is expected of you during the preparation process. Anticipate the need for your annual consultation by November 1st of each year, and appearances at presbytery meetings. Help the Call Commission arrange locations for consultations that are mutually agreeable, either in person or online.

### **B. The Session**

#### **1. During the Inquiry Phase**

- a. Maintain an awareness of potential applicants and encourage them to consider ministry as a vocation.

- b. Review the applicant's Form 1A before meeting with the applicant to consider endorsement and completion of Form 1D.
- c. Meet with the applicant during a session meeting to:
  - i. Consult with the applicant about that individual's sense of call and awareness of ministry as vocation, and their understanding of the challenges inherent in inquiry and candidacy.
  - ii. Formally decide whether to endorse the applicant as an inquirer and complete the covenant with inquirer on Form 2B; welcome the presbytery visitor from the Call Commission to your session to discuss the process and answer questions; and commit to paying your portion of the ministry assessment fee as described above.
- d. Commit the church to support the applicant in specific ways throughout the Inquiry and Candidacy phases of their preparation, including financial support during the inquirer/candidate's enrollment in seminary.
- e. Appoint a session liaison to keep in contact with the inquirer/candidate and with the Call Commission and see that the Call Commission has the contact information of that Session liaison. Share reports with Session.

## **2. During Candidacy Phase**

- a. Review inquirer's Form 5A prior to meeting with the inquirer.
- b. Meet with the inquirer during a session meeting to:
  - i. Consult with the inquirer about their growth in faith, vocation and call, about their developing skills as a minister, and about their readiness to be considered a candidate for ordination.
  - ii. Formally decide whether or not to endorse the inquirer as a candidate for ordained ministry and record that endorsement on Form 5B.

- iii. Review and adjust the church's support for the candidate as necessary.
- iv. Maintain close contact with advisor (bi-monthly) with the Call Commission during this phase.

### **C. Call Commission**

The responsibilities of the Call Commission are to:

1. Provide support and guidance to all individuals involved in the preparation for ministry process.
2. Help schedule necessary meetings with the Call Commission and the candidate's meeting with the presbytery.
3. Assign each inquirer or candidate an advisor who will contact the inquirer/candidate monthly and provide a written report to the Call Commission every other month.
4. The purpose of the advisor is to ensure that the Call Commission has at least one member who is very familiar with the situation of each inquirer/candidate. The primary activity is to offer personal support, communication and guidance in the preparation process. Normally the official communications of the Call Commission shall come through office of the presbytery (stated clerk)
5. When an advisor completes his/her term of service with the Call Commission, the advisor is responsible for updating the next member of the Call Commission appointed to serve as advisor.

### **X. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND OVERSIGHT**

Contact the Call Commission Chair, Vice-Chair, or your advisor for more information about these aspects of financial assistance and oversight:



- A. The Call Commission encourages the sponsoring church of an inquirer/candidate to support that person financially (books, exam fees, tuition, etc.).
- B. The Call Commission will budget its available funds each year to assist those inquirers/candidates under their care who are attending seminaries. (Funds are also available to persons who are enrolled in full-time training at a Presbyterian School of Christian Education).
- C. Funding sources include funds contained in the annual Call Commission budget, funds maintained in a special account that is replenished with offerings and donations, and funds maintained in other special designated accounts of the presbytery.
- D. Funds should be available to students in theological seminaries so they may have assistance toward their tuition. Money is usually divided by a specific amount per credit hour and distributed each semester after each student completes an information form online distributed by the Presbytery's office. (Example: If available funds allow for \$100 per credit hour, a student enrolled for nine credits will receive \$900 and a student with twelve credit hours will receive \$1200). Credit hour amounts may vary in different years depending on the available budget funds.
- E. Funds should be available (with a cap) for travel expenses to requested presbytery and Call Commission meetings.
- F. Funds should be available for the Call Commission to pay their share of requested investigation and training (example: ministry assessment).
- G. Emergency assistance funds for students should have approval of the Call Commission and only if there are available funds.
- H. The Call Commission will make information available on a regular basis concerning scholarships from other sources to inquirers/candidates (for example: the Haile Fund, the scholarship of the Presbyterian Women of St. Augustine Presbytery, Synod of South Atlantic and General Assembly scholarships).

- I. The Call Commission (through the advisor) shall make regular inquiry into the level of debt that an inquirer/candidate is incurring. If the debt becomes too great, the Call Commission shall counsel that person about options available to them.