

## **The Ordination Stages at a Glance**

*Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM)*

*Presbytery of New Brunswick*

### 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)

### Inquirer

During this phase, which is 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 more clear 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 committee as God continues to unveil God's calling for the person. During this phase, it is wise to begin Masters 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. 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 must fill out all forms beginning with a "1", and have endorsement of their home church's Session and pastor.

### Candidate

A Candidate is an individual who has been affirmed by 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. 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 experiences, specific coursework requirements, at least one full unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), passing all five ordination exams, a written Statement of Faith, completion of a Masters of Divinity (or clear trajectory to do so), and all requirements stated above under “Inquirer”. To move to Candidacy, student must complete all forms beginning with a “5”, prepare a written Statement of Faith, and have the endorsement of their home church’s Session and pastor.

### 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 receive the endorsement of their home church and pastor, have completed *all* ordination requirements, and come before the CPM for final evaluation. 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 sermon on the same Scripture, and a final Statement of Faith. A Candidate will be examined on all this material, as well as experience through seminary, field education, and CPE. In short, all lines of inquiry are fair game. If the committee 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 committee will come alongside the Candidate in their continued preparation. Once CRC, the committee will support the student as needed as they seek an ordained ministry. Additionally, the committee 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 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.

### Annual Consultation

This is a mandatory check-in for any student that has not consulted with committee 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 (when necessary) meeting should take place with the committee.

### 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 committee. 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. This committee 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 committee's hands, allowing the committee to take full action on candidates. This means candidates no longer come before the entirety of the presbytery for any meeting or stage of the process (with the potential exception of disciplinary action). For CPM's purposes, a quorum is met with at least three (3) committee members present. The committee may divide into smaller numbers due to time constraints when necessary and meet with multiple individuals simultaneously, with the exception of moving an individual to Candidacy (C), when the committee must conduct both the examination and the vote as a whole body.

### 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 a 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 committee 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 committee.

## **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 for stage-appropriate requirements. The three components to preparedness are Academic, Experiential, and Denominational. These include:

- I. Academic
  - A. Completion of a Masters of Divinity
  - 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. Completion of a third 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 Masters of Divinity 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), they may come before the committee 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 committee 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 New Brunswick 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 committee has typically accepted classes that are theology/worship/history that include extensive work in Reformed worship)
  - Church History Survey
  - Systematic Theology/Theology Survey
  - Old Testament Survey
  - New Testament Survey
  - Presbyterian Polity (no exceptions)
  - Reformed Theology/Reformed Theologian (an upper-level course offered specifically on Reformed doctrine, or a specific Reformed theologian – typically a class on Calvin, Barth, Moltmann, or the like)
  - Christian Preaching
  - Word & Act in Christian Worship Parts I & II (or a similar practical class on sacraments, weddings, and funerals)
- 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. Word & Act can be completed through individual study with an ordained minister with the pre-approval of the committee.

- 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 committee 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 committee'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.

### 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 300 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 committee) but other chaplaincies will be considered (example: prison ministry) if there is accreditation and supervision.
  - C. A full unit (approximately 300 hours) of another field education/CPE experience. There is more freedom with this final one, and students are encouraged to do something related to where they may be feeling called in ministry. This final unit may not be at the same site as one of the previous two units.
- Students are discouraged from doing any field education work at their home church except in very rare circumstances
  - Students are encouraged to use field education opportunities as both a time to open their minds and to experience things not yet experienced. It should also help to hone in on 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, due to the requirement that all three experiences must be at different sites with different supervisors.

### 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. Students can use their Presbytery Fund (see below) to pay for their share. This must be completed at an accredited institution that is familiar with evaluations for the ordination process. The presbytery recommends the use of two sites in particular: Liaisons will review psychological evaluations and report to the committee if any concerns arise from it. Though the evaluation is released to the committee, 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 seem to struggle with this one, so planning ahead is important.
- C. Worship & Sacraments, Theology, Bible Exegesis, Polity Exams – These four exams can only be taken during the year of Candidacy. They are typically offered four 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 statement must adequately show a reformed understanding of God, Christ's person and work (including atonement), both sacraments, Scripture, the church, the mission of the church, the life of discipleship, and the hope of 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 committee has recently opted to allow slightly longer statements for the purposes of becoming CRC, in order for the student to show adequate theological 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 1.5 pages single-spaced, normal font.

- E. Exegesis & 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 they did a field ed. at). The sermon should display the student's competency in delivery and style, intelligence in navigating the text, and a pastoral sensitivity to their context.

## Flow Chart for Requirements

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## Inquirer Year

Required:

- Psychological Evaluation
- Statement of Faith (at time of Candidacy evaluation)
- Meet with home church's Session prior to 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 Masters of Divinity
- All remaining field education/CPE units (totaling three)
- Statement of Faith, Exegesis, Sermon, & Transcript for CRC evaluation
- Meet with home church's Session prior to CRC evaluation

## **Quick Checklist for Requirements**

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- \_\_\_ 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 only)
- \_\_\_ Theology Ordination Exam (C only)
- \_\_\_ Biblical Exegesis Ordination Exam (C only)
- \_\_\_ Presbyterian Polity Ordination Exam (C only)
- \_\_\_ Field Education #1 – congregational context (I or C)
- \_\_\_ Field Education #2 – CPE (I or C)
- \_\_\_ Field Education #3 – variable context (I or C)
- \_\_\_ Exegesis and Sermon (for CRC evaluation)
- \_\_\_ Transcript sent to Presbytery Office (for CRC evaluation)
- \_\_\_ Masters of Divinity
- \_\_\_ All required coursework:
  - \_\_\_ Biblical Hebrew
  - \_\_\_ Biblical Greek
  - \_\_\_ OT Exegesis
  - \_\_\_ NT Exegesis
  - \_\_\_ OT Survey
  - \_\_\_ NT Survey
  - \_\_\_ Church History Survey
  - \_\_\_ Systematic Theology
  - \_\_\_ Reformed Worship
  - \_\_\_ Preaching
  - \_\_\_ Word & Act Parts I & II
  - \_\_\_ Presbyterian Polity
  - \_\_\_ Reformed Theology/Theologian (upper level)

## **The Presbytery's Fund for Individuals in the Process**

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The presbytery has two funds for supporting students going through the process.

The first is a fund that pays for the presbytery's share of psychological evaluations. Students do not have "access" to this fund, it is there only for the specific purpose of paying this share of evaluations.

The second fund functions as an expense account for students. 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 Ilene Black at the presbytery office. She keeps record of students' withdrawals from their fund, and disperses payment from it after receiving permission from CPM liaisons or chairs.