



**THE PRESBYTERY OF MINNESOTA VALLEYS
COMMISSION ON LEADERSHIP**

MANUAL AND RESOURCE GUIDE

SECTION 2
PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

**COMMISSION ON LEADERSHIP MANUAL
SECTION 2: PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY**

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PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY: VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT: THE ROLE OF SESSION AND CONGREGATION

The pastoral leader and session are responsible for communicating to all church members what is meant by “the ministry of all believers” and for helping members discern and fulfill their Christian vocation.

1. Developing Vocational Awareness

To ensure that committed, knowledgeable persons continue to be involved in the life and mission of the church and the world, it is essential that the session take seriously its responsibility for developing vocational awareness among members of the congregation. A biblically-grounded, theologically sound understanding of Christian vocation integrated into the church’s program will help members recognize opportunities to fulfill their Christian vocation within the context of their secular occupations.

2. Developing Awareness of the Call to the Ordered Ministry of Minister of the Word and Sacrament

Members of congregations should also be aware that the ordered ministry of Minister of the Word and Sacrament is an occupation through which many dimensions of Christian service can be realized. This opportunity should be emphasized in all church programs, from Christian education classes and youth and young adult groups, to men’s and women’s programs.

It is therefore essential that pastoral leaders, sessions and local congregations:

- challenge all members to become aware of their Christian vocation;
- develop and implement thoughtful and creative means by which highly qualified persons may be challenged to consider a vocation in the ordered ministry of Minister of the Word and Sacrament;
- help potential Inquirers get in touch with the presbytery’s Commission on Leadership as early as possible;
- give high priority to developing and maintaining vital, theologically sound youth programs which are in harmony with the Presbyterian and Reformed traditions;
- assure that youth ministry leaders are carefully selected and trained, theologically competent and appropriate role models.

3. Exploring the Call to the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament

When a member of the congregation approaches the pastor and session to express the possibility that she/he has been called to the ordered ministry of Minister of the Word and Sacrament, the local church is provided with a challenge and an opportunity. It is the session’s responsibility to provide a supportive relationship through which it can explore with the individual the personal implications and suitability of a church vocation.

The process of becoming a Minister of the Word and Sacrament 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, which occurs after the person, the sponsoring Session and the Presbytery affirm the call, is used as a time of deliberate preparation and spiritual growth. The entire process lasts a minimum of two years, with the Candidacy portion lasting at least one year. Acceptance as an Inquirer does not guarantee acceptance as a Candidate nor ordination.

According to the Constitution, the relationship between the session and the individual Inquirer is part of the Inquiry Phase of the preparation for ministry process. As defined in the Book of Order (G-2.0603), the purpose is “to provide an opportunity for the church and those who believe themselves called to ordered ministry as Minister of the Word and Sacraments to explore this call together so that the Presbytery can make an informed decision about the Inquirer’s suitability for ordered ministry.”

From their earliest stages as Inquirers, men and women should be observed, nurtured, encouraged and counseled by their sessions and their presbytery. Sessions select one of their members (Session Liaison) to work on their behalf and to maintain contact with the individual and the Presbytery. The Presbytery’s responsibility is accomplished primarily through its Commission on Leadership (COL).

Important first steps in discerning the individual has been called by the Holy Spirit, through the church, to the ordered ministry of Minister of the Word and Sacrament is to interview the potential Inquirer. Possible areas of consideration are: evidence of personal faith, sense of call and motivation, academic ability and self-discipline, gifts for ministry, participation within the congregation physical and emotional health. It is important to affirm the individual has, “been active in the work and worship of that congregation for at least six months. “(G-2.0602)

A positive recommendation concerning the individual should be reported to the Commission on Leadership (COL). The COL will then interview the person and determine whether to enroll them as an Inquirer and will report that action to the presbytery. If the COL recommendation is negative, it will be explained to the sponsoring Session. The date of acceptance by presbytery begins the Inquirer phase.

4. Supporting Inquirers and Candidates

The pastor, session and congregation communicate with and support Inquirers and Candidates throughout the entire period of preparation. This can be a most meaningful experience for those involved. To facilitate this continuing relationship, the appointment of an elder from the church to serve as a Session Liaison and act as a liaison with the Inquirer/Candidate and with the presbytery’s Commission on Leadership. The Session Liaison is encouraged to accompany the Inquirer/Candidate to each annual consultation, participating as an observer.

Along with its specifically prescribed responsibilities, it is important that the session continue to express its concern and support by contacting the individual and his/her family at important times, such as annual consultations with COL, appearances before presbytery, academic examination periods, Presbyteries’ Cooperative Examination periods, when presbytery makes its final assessment of the Candidate, when a call is being negotiated, on holidays, anniversaries, etc. Providing financial support is a very tangible expression of support.

**PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY:
AN OUTLINE OF STANDARD PRACTICES
RELATED TO WORK WITH INQUIRERS AND CANDIDATES**

✘ **INQUIRY:**

First Steps:

- Application for Inquiry (**Form 1A**) with Session endorsement (**Form 1D**)
- Member of COL meets with the Session
- College Transcript
- Interview with COL
- COL should make requirements (including CPE) and process clear
- Get Inquirer's signature/permission on form about file procedures

Follow-up:

- Start an official file on the Inquirer
- Inform the Stated Clerk that an Inquirer has been enrolled
- Inquirer schedules evaluation by Leader Wise (formerly the North Central Ministry Development Center)
 - (The cost of this evaluation shall normally be shared three ways with: the Inquirer, the Church of membership, and the Presbytery)
- Request written reflection by Inquirer about the Leader Wise evaluation
- COL encourages Inquirer to follow up on Leader Wise recommendations
- COL sends letters to references, requesting written responses to questions
- COL chair sends letter to Session Liaison, stressing role in keeping in contact with Inquirer, holding before congregation, and encouraging local support and encouragement

The Presbytery Meeting:

A brief written autobiographical piece will be prepared for the presbytery packet, including a statement of his/her sense of call to ministry. The Inquirer shall appear before Presbytery to present their statement of sense of call and respond to questions from the floor regarding that sense of call.

Annual Consultations:

- **Form 3** (Pre-consultation Reporting Form) must be completed at least three weeks prior to the consultation and sent to the COL chair who will forward a copy to each COL member
- Written Statement of Faith (this should be revised each year to reflect growth and learning)

Follow Up:

- **Form 4** (Consultation Reporting Form) prepared by liaison/signed by Inquirer during consultation
- Encourage Inquirer to follow up on committee recommendations

Additional Reporting as Available:

- Regular communications with COL Chair and COL Liaison
- Seminary transcript should be sent to COL Chair at end of each academic year
- Written evaluations from field work and CPE supervisors
- Results of ordination exams taken

✘ **CANDIDACY:**

Beginning steps:

- **Form 5A** (Application for Candidacy), with Session Endorsement **Form 5D**
- Statement of Faith
- Preliminary written reflections on the Ordination Questions

Follow up:

- Letter to references, requesting written response to questions
- Letter to Session Liaison, continue to affirm role

The Presbytery Meeting:

- Written materials for packet:
 - Autobiographical statement including sense of call to ministry
 - Statement of Faith
- Appearance before Presbytery:
 - Introduces self (not reading)
 - Reads statement of faith
 - Responds to questions from floor
 - Vote, and if affirmative, service of reception by presbytery Moderator

Follow up:

- Stated Clerk sends signed **Form 5A** to Louisville office
 - Copies for file, Candidate, CPM chair, Session, Liaison

✘ **COMMITTEE CERTIFICATION:**

Minnesota Valleys' candidates:

- Will be asked to provide the following materials
 - Written Statement of Faith
 - Exegesis and Sermon *on same text*
 - Seminary Transcript, Results of Ordination Exams
 - Written Reflections on Ordination Questions
 - First Draft of PIF (Personal Information Form)

Follow up:

Complete PIF and request chairperson's approval before the PIF may be circulated

The Presbytery:

Report that Candidate is Certified Ready to Receive a Call

Candidates coming from another presbytery who have received a call within our presbytery:

- Will be asked for the same written materials
 - Written Statement of Faith
 - Exegesis and Sermon *on same text*
 - Seminary Transcript, Results of Ordination Exams
 - Written Reflections on Ordination Questions
- COL Chair will have phone conversation with CPM Chair in the presbytery of care
- COL representatives will meet with the Candidate and make recommendation to the presbytery

✘ WHEN A CALL HAS BEEN RECEIVED BY A CANDIDATE:**Appearance before the presbytery:**

- Prior to the meeting, the candidate will provide the following:
 - Written Biographical piece
 - Written Statement of Faith
- At the presbytery meeting:
 - Introduce self, read statement of faith, preach sermon
 - Answer Questions from the floor
 - Vote, and if affirmative, service of reception by presbytery Moderator

EXPECTATIONS DURING THE PREPARATION PROCESS . . .**❖ EXPECTATIONS OF COMMISSION ON LEADERSHIP LIAISONS TO INQUIRERS AND CANDIDATES (See pages 212-213):**

Liaisons will keep regular informal correspondence with Inquirer/Candidate throughout the year, especially prior to each commission meeting, so that they can report at commission meetings. Between meetings, liaisons will share with the chairperson any pertinent information as it arises.

Liaison will take notes during annual consultation with their Inquirer/Candidate and fill out **Form 4** (Report of Consultation), send it to the Inquirer/Candidate for their approval and send on to committee chairperson.

- ❖ **EXPECTATIONS OF SESSION LIAISONS TO INQUIRERS AND CANDIDATES (See page 214):**
At the time of endorsement as Inquirer/Candidate, a letter will be sent from the commission chair, with a copy to the Pastor/Clerk of Session, encouraging the Liaison to keep in regular contact with the Inquirer/Candidate, keep the session/congregation informed about the person, and encourage support from the congregation (financial and otherwise). The Liaison will be invited to communicate with the COL chairperson with questions/concerns.

- ❖ **SEMINARY CONTACT PERSONS:**
The commission chairperson will contact the Seminary CPM Contact Person during the first year of seminary and again if the need arises.

PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY: THE PROCESS IN DETAIL

The forms related to the Preparation for Ministry process are numerous and lengthy. They are not included in this document, but may be accessed by using the links that are provided on page 211 of this section of the manual.

1. To be enrolled as an inquirer, the applicant shall be a member of the sponsoring congregation, shall have been active in the work and worship of that congregation for at least six months, and shall have received the endorsement of the session of the sponsoring congregation.

The applicant shall have undergone a criminal background check and clearance under Minnesota Statute 604.20.

The inquiry and candidacy phases shall continue for a period of no less than two years, including at least one year as a candidate. (G-2.0602)

2. The session notifies the Commission on Leadership (COL) Chairperson that it has an applicant.
3. The COL Chairperson sends ***Forms 1A-1C (Application to be enrolled by Presbytery as an Inquirer, Questions for Reflection, and Financial Planning for Theological Education)*** to the Clerk of Session or the applicant, for the applicant to complete, and arranges for a representative of COL to meet with the session for orientation.
4. The session interviews the applicant, makes its recommendation to the presbytery through COL by completing ***Form 1D (Session Evaluation and Recommendation)*** and chooses a Session Liaison.

NOTE: Steps 3 and 4 may be scheduled on the same day dependent upon the timing.

5. COL interviews the applicant and makes a recommendation on enrollment as an Inquirer. A COL Liaison is appointed. A Covenant Agreement is also signed -- ***Form 2A (Report of Consultation Regarding Application) and 2B (Covenant Agreement and Inquirer Release)***.
6. In the Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys, permission has been granted to the Commission on Leadership to enroll Inquirers without prior presbytery approval. The COL is required to report its action at a Stated Meeting of the Presbytery. (When possible, Inquirers will be introduced on the floor of presbytery.)

Also, Inquirers are asked to schedule an assessment with Leader Wise (formerly, the North Central Ministry Development Center). The cost of this assessment is shared three ways between the Inquirer, the home congregation and the Presbytery's Commission on Leadership.

7. ANNUAL CONSULTATION: Each year there will be a consultation held with the Inquirer/Candidate, to discuss his/her preparation process and progress, and to develop a covenant agreement with guidance, goals, consultations and reports. When possible, these consultations will be held at an annual retreat for all Inquirers/Candidates. Inquirers/Candidates will complete ***Form 3 (Pre-Consultation Report on Development Areas)*** and submit it to the COL Chairperson at least

three weeks prior to the consultation. The Chairperson will forward a copy to each COL member. Following the consultation, the COL Liaison will complete **Form 4 (Report of Consultation)** and send it to the Inquirer/Candidate for their signature.

NOTE: Discernment of Call to Ministry is the purpose of the Inquiry Phase. Inquirer, Session Liaisons, Seminary Contacts, and COL commission members are all important to this Discernment process. (G-2.0603) When the Inquirer feels their sense of Call to Ministry is being confirmed by others and by their experience in seminary, they are invited to apply to become a Candidate for Ministry. (G-2.0604).

8. The Inquirer makes application to become a Candidate through the session – **Form 5A (Application to be Enrolled by Presbytery as a Candidate)**. The session confers with Inquirer, reviews evidence of Inquiry phase and makes its recommendation to the Presbytery via COL regarding candidacy, using **Form 5B (Session Recommendation for Enrollment as Candidate)**.
9. COL confers with Inquirer and reviews evidence of Inquiry phase. No Inquirer will be considered for Candidacy until the evaluation of Leader Wise is complete and the evaluation report has been received. Confident all requirements have been met, the COL makes its recommendation to the presbytery regarding candidacy. **Form 5C (Report of Consultation to become a Candidate)**.
10. The presbytery receives the COL recommendation and examines the Inquirer as to their sense of call at the next Stated Meeting. An affirmative vote by the presbytery enrolls the Inquirer as a Candidate. A covenant agreement is also signed - **Form 5D (Covenant Agreement and Candidate Release)**.
11. The Commission on Leadership of the Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys has a requirement that each Candidate complete at least one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) through an accredited institution. (G-2.0606) and participate in a “Fiscal Fitness” workshop sponsored by the Board of Pensions with the presbytery covering the cost of travel and accommodations for that workshop from the presbytery’s Candidates Fund.
12. Each Inquirer/Candidate will take the five Presbyterian Cooperative Examinations. Bible Content Exam is ordinarily taken during the first year of seminary. Bible Exegesis, Church Polity, Worship and Theology are taken during the Candidate’s senior year of seminary. (G-2.0607)
13. Upon successful completion of all Cooperative Exams and affirming no less than two years of Inquiry/Candidacy phase, including at least one year as a Candidate, COL may approve the circulation of the Personal Information Form (PIF) to explore the obtaining of a call. (G-2.0607) (COL may choose to wait until the final assessment to give this approval.)
14. The COL shall conduct a final assessment of the Candidate’s readiness to begin ministry by examining the Candidate in person. The COL of the Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys requires that Candidates prepare the following for their final assessment: an exegesis and sermon (on the same text), an updated statement of faith, and a written document which outlines their understanding of each of the ordination questions. Upon successful completion of this final assessment, the commission shall certify the Candidate as “ready for ordination, pending a call” and shall report results of that assessment to the presbytery. **Form 6 (Summary Report of Final Assessment)**
15. Candidates who receive a call to a church in Minnesota Valleys – either those who have been under care of another presbytery or the Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys – shall appear before the

presbytery at a stated or called meeting, make a brief statement of personal faith and commitment to the ordered ministry of Minister of the Word and Sacrament and preach a sermon.

With the recommendation of the COL, the presbytery shall then conduct an oral examination of the Candidate regarding his/her Christian faith and views in theology, the Bible, the sacraments and the Presbyterian polity. Upon an affirmative vote of the presbytery, a service of Ordination will be scheduled, ordinarily in the presence of the congregation in which the candidate is a member.

Forms 7A and 7B (Certificate of Approval of Transfer/Report of Ordination of Candidate of Withdrawal or Removal of Inquirer or Candidate) will be completed and appropriately filed by the Stated Clerk.

16. Upon completion of all seminary work, and if the Candidate receives a call to a presbytery other than Minnesota Valleys, they shall ordinarily be examined, ordained and installed by that presbytery (G-2.0702). At the request of the calling presbytery, the ordination may take place in the Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys. **Forms 7A and 7B (Certification of Approval of Transfer/Report of Ordination of Candidate of Withdrawal or Removal of Inquirer or Candidate)** will be completed and appropriately filed by the Stated Clerk.

Links to all of the Forms in the Preparation for Ministry process

APPLICATION FORMS

<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/application-forms/>

FORMS FOR ENROLLING AN INQUIRER

<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/forms-enrolling-inquirer/>

FORMS FOR ANNUAL CONSULTATIONS

<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/forms-annual-consultations/>

FORMS FOR ADVANCING TO CANDIDACY

<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/forms-advancing-candidacy/>

FORMS REPORTING ACTIONS TO OTHERS:

<http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/forms-complete-cpm/>

**PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY:
GUIDELINES FOR COMMISSION ON LEADERSHIP (COL) INQUIRY/CANDIDACY LIAISONS**

PURPOSE:

Inquirer and Candidate Liaisons exist for four reasons:

1. To support the Inquirer/Candidate through prayer and regular contact as he/she encounters the challenges of seminary and preparation for ministry.
2. To help the Inquirer/Candidate understand the care process and its requirements. This includes helping the student anticipate the requirements and deadlines for whichever step in the process may be next.
3. To serve as a point of communication with the rest of the COL of developments in the life of the Inquirer/Candidate, and to communicate to the student any items of information or action which may be applicable.
4. To serve as a liaison and support person when the Inquirer/Candidate comes before COL and/or presbytery.

EXPECTATIONS:

Considering these areas of responsibility, each liaison is asked to do the following:

1. To pray for the Inquirer/Candidate regularly.
2. To share a meal with, or in some other way, to meet with the Inquirer/Candidate as soon as possible after the liaison assignment has been made, in order to build a relationship with him/her, clarify with the Inquirer/Candidate the Care Process and answer any questions.
3. To be in contact with the Inquirer/Candidate regularly.
4. To be familiar with the Inquirer and Candidacy process and to guide the Inquirer/Candidate through it.
5. To maintain a file for the Inquirer/Candidate, including a record of where he/she is in the process, which requirements have been met, and copies of any correspondence or contact with the Inquirer/Candidate. This file will be submitted to COL either upon the completion of the final assessment by the Candidate or at the end of the liaison's term on COL.
6. One month prior to annual consultations contact the Inquirer/Candidate reminding them of forms necessary to be completed prior to consultation. Request Inquirer/Candidates to submit such forms to the Chair of COL at least three weeks prior to the annual consultation. If such forms are not received, an immediate contact must be made.
7. To be in touch with the Inquirer/Candidate's session following each annual consultation relaying a brief report of the results.

8. To encourage the Session Liaison in their continued contact with the student. This would include knowing who has been selected on the session as the Inquirer/Candidate's session liaison, and making yourself available as a resource.

PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY: GUIDELINES FOR THE SESSION LIAISON

Book of Order, G-2.0605 – Oversight:

“During the phases of inquiry and candidacy the individual continues to be an active member of his or her congregation and subject to the concern and discipline of the session. In matters relating to preparation for ministry, the individual is subject to the oversight of the presbytery within the context of their covenant relationship.”

Some of the ways in which a liaison can be of assistance:

1. Remember your Inquirer or Candidate in prayer and ask your congregation to do the same.
2. Learn the background of your Inquirer/Candidate, if you do not already know it: Parents, siblings, school, college, interests and abilities, birthday, name of spouse (if married), name(s) of children, if any, seminary, progress toward ordination, financial needs, etc. Contact your Inquirer/Candidate on special occasions (birthdays, anniversaries, etc.) Be conscious of the needs of an Inquirer/Candidate’s spouse- (if married).
3. Become acquainted in ways that seem natural to you and the Inquirer/Candidate. Visit, write or phone to introduce yourself. Remain aware of when the Inquirer/ Candidate will be home and try to make some contact at that time, even if only a phone call.
4. Take an interest in his/her academic, field education, annual consultation and other activities related to preparation for the ordered ministry of Minister of the Word and Sacrament (Minister of Word and Sacrament).
5. Share with the Commission on Leadership (COL), especially at the time of annual consultation, any areas of particular need for Inquirer/Candidate - financial or personal.
6. Identify ways to keep the congregation aware of the name/s of its Inquirers/Candidates (away at Seminary or at home) who have entered a covenant relationship with the Presbytery and are preparing for the Ministry of the Word and Sacrament.
7. Initiate conversation with your session regarding the possibility of providing financial assistance or other tangible support to your Inquirer or Candidate.
8. Be present, if possible, at the times of examination before presbytery, service of ordination and/or installation.
9. Become acquainted with the “Preparation for Ministry” manual so you are aware of requirements and procedures and can provide timely support (appearances before Presbytery, Annual Consultations, Presbyteries’ Cooperative Examinations, Final Assessment, etc.)
10. Share with the session the results of the annual consultation and any requests made.
11. In general, be a friend and as supportive as possible of the Inquirer/Candidate.

PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY: INQUIRER/CANDIDATE FILES MAINTENANCE POLICY

The official file for each Inquirer and Candidate will be kept in a fire proof, locked safe at the presbytery office. Responsibility for maintaining these official Commission on Leadership (COL) files rests with the COL chairperson, who may enlist the assistance of the presbytery office staff.

Due to the confidential nature of some items in this file, access to the official file will be limited to the following persons: COL chairperson, COL members, the Executive Director of Presbytery Mission (Presbytery Leader), Stated Clerk, and presbytery office staff. A copy of this policy must be provided to the Inquirer/Candidate and a signed release must be included in the person's official file.

The official file will contain original documents for the Inquirer/Candidate, including:

1. Release form for the policy on Inquirer/Candidate files (a copy of these two pages), signed and dated by the Inquirer/Candidate
2. All the completed forms provided by the Office on Preparation for Ministry
3. A sealed envelope containing the Inquirer/Candidate's assessment from Leader Wise (formerly the North Central Ministry Development Center)
4. A record of completion of the Minnesota Statute 604.20 and criminal background checks
5. Transcripts from college and seminary
6. Report of results of the five standard ordination exams
7. The actual exams (except Bible Content)
8. Official reports related to such things as CPE programs, field work assignments, Internships
9. Chairperson's summary of Inquirer/Candidate's preparation for ministry (updated annually)

When new materials for an Inquirer/Candidate are received, they will ordinarily be distributed as follows: originals listed above will be placed in the official file, copies of all materials will be made for files kept by the COL chairperson, and copies of most materials will be made for members of the committee.

It is REQUIRED that Inquirers/Candidates keep a copy, for their own records, any and all materials they submit to COL; they may also request copies of items from their files.

Any other materials or correspondence related to an Inquirer/Candidate will be kept in the COL chairperson's files at his/her discretion. When a chairperson's term is completed, the chairperson's file should be passed on to the new chairperson. When a committee member's term is completed, they should turn their file over to the COL chairperson to pass on to new committee members.

Assessments from Leader Wise (formerly the North Central Ministry Development Center) are of a highly confidential nature and should not be shared with anyone outside the committee. The original report will be placed in a sealed envelope and kept in the official office file. A copy will be kept in the COL chairperson's file. Copies of the assessment may be made and distributed to COL members. When the Inquirer/Candidate is no longer under the care of the Presbytery, the original assessment will remain in the official file and all other copies shall be destroyed.

When a person withdraws or is removed from Inquiry/Candidacy, the COL chairperson will write a final summary statement of their preparation for ministry to include in the file. The file will be kept in the presbytery office for five years, after which it will be destroyed.

When a candidate has been certified “ready to receive a call”, the COL chairperson will write a final summary statement of the person’s preparation for ministry to include in the official file. The COL chairperson will also assure that all documents are in order.

When a certified candidate received a call from another presbytery, copies will be made of all appropriate documents and sent by certified mail to the CPM chairperson of the presbytery of call. The original file will be kept at the presbytery office for five years, after which it will be destroyed.

Following the service of ordination, former candidates will be given their original ordination exams. The rest of the original file will be kept in the presbytery office for five years, after which it will be destroyed.

RELEASE FORM
Policy on Inquirer/Candidate Files

I, _____, have read the Commission on Leadership’s POLICY ON INQUIRER/CANDIDATE FILES. I understand the policy and agree to the distribution of documents pertaining to my preparation for ministry as outline in the policy.

Signed _____

Date _____

CANDIDATE/INQUIRER INDEBTEDNESS POLICY
The Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys
Approved May 2013

When the Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys is the Presbytery of Care

1. Require an Inquirer to meet with the Commission on Leadership (COL) during the Inquiry year, in order to assess net worth, and make a plan for financing the cost of seminary; and,
2. Require the Inquirer to participate in a “Fiscal Fitness” workshop sponsored by the Board of Pensions of the PC(USA), with the presbytery covering the cost of travel and accommodations of that workshop from the Presbytery’s Candidates Fund (2550)
3. The presbytery, through the COL, will share the cost of attending Leader Wise (formerly known as North Central Ministry Development Center), with the Inquirer and their home congregation. This assessment is required prior to moving to the Candidacy Phase and is essential for career guidance in pursuit of ordination in PC(USA).
4. COL will work with each Inquirer and Candidate towards using his/her available assets to pay for the cost of seminary tuition, room and board rather than incurring indebtedness.
5. COL will make available on an annual basis to each Inquirer or Candidate, a list of options for pursuing grants, interest free loans, and funding that may be available through PC(USA) and PC(USA) seminaries and any other sources that COL may be aware of as funding options (i.e.: Omaha Seminary Foundation, etc.) Candidates are expected to inquire at their seminary for possible grants, scholarships, and fieldwork opportunities.
6. COL will be an additional advocate (along with the Session Liaison) with the congregation of which the Inquirer or Candidate is a member and with other congregations of the presbytery as appropriate, in order to generate financial support for the Inquirer and Candidate in the form of grants and either low or no interest loans.

When Minnesota Valleys Presbytery is the Presbytery of Call

1. Any Minister of the Word and Sacrament who is serving a first call following graduation from seminary and comes with any educational indebtedness, shall be required to show evidence of having attended a financial planning workshop such as a “Fiscal Fitness” workshop sponsored by the Board of Pensions or another financial planning workshop. If the Minister of the Word and Sacrament has not attended such a workshop, he/she shall be required to do so within twelve months of startup. The cost of the registration fee, accommodation and travel shall be considered legitimate reimbursable expense from study leave allowance.
2. The Commission on Leadership shall encourage calling congregations to utilize further educational debt reduction as a point in negotiating salary with a prospective Minister of the Word and Sacrament who is a recent seminary graduate.

**PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY:
ALTERNATE ORDINATION EXAM POLICY
The Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys**

G-2.0610 Accommodations to Particular Circumstances

When a presbytery concludes there are good and sufficient reasons for accommodations to the particular circumstances of an individual seeking ordination, it may, by a three-fourths vote, waive any of the requirements for ordination in G-2.06, except for those of G-2.0607d. If a presbytery judges that there are good and sufficient reasons why a candidate should not be required to satisfy the requirements of G-2.0607d, it shall approve by three-fourths vote some alternate means by which to ascertain the readiness of the candidate for ministry in the areas covered by the standard ordination examinations. A full account of the reasons for **any waiver or alternate means to ascertain readiness** shall be included in the minutes of the presbytery and communicated to the presbytery to which an inquirer or candidate may be transferred.

When a candidate has fulfilled all requirements for the final assessment in accordance with G-2.0607, except a satisfactory grade on one or more of the standard ordination exams, and has failed one of the standard ordination exam on three (3) separate occasions, the candidate may petition the Commission on Leadership, using the form on page 220 of this manual, for permission to take an alternative exam using the following procedure. The Commission on Leadership will assure the requirements for ordination exams as dictated by Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are followed.

Alternate Ordination Exam Procedure:

The candidate will be examined in the area(s) of difficulty by an examination panel consisting of five (5) members of the Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys. The panel shall be composed of the following:

- Two current members of Commission on Leadership
- The remaining three members shall be drawn from the following:
 - Persons who have previously read Standard Ordination Exams
 - Present or past Committee on Ministry or Commission on Leadership members
 - Former Presbytery Moderators.

The panel, appointed by the Moderator of COL, shall consist, as nearly as possible, of equal numbers of clergy and laypersons and be gender inclusive. The Moderator of COL will appoint one member of the Panel as Moderator.

In the case of Church Polity, Worship and Sacraments, or Theological Competence, the exam shall consist of three (3) questions selected by COL from previous ordination exams. The three (3) hour examination shall include ninety (90) minutes for the candidate to prepare written responses to the questions and ninety (90) minutes for the candidate's oral defense of his/her written responses in a face to face meeting with the panel.

The written responses to the questions may be completed under the supervision of a proctor approved by the COL chair.

- The COL Moderator will send the proctor the three exam questions five (5) days prior to the date the test is to be written.
- The candidate will then have 90 minutes to write his/her responses to the questions.

- The proctor shall mail the completed responses to the Moderator of the Examination Panel within five (5) days of the test having been written. The Panel members shall receive copies of the responses no less than fifteen (15) days prior to the scheduled face to face meeting with the candidate.

In the case of Biblical Exegesis, the COL will select an Old Testament and a New Testament scripture passage and set a date for a face to face meeting. The candidate shall receive the proposed scriptures and be advised of the meeting date. The candidate shall have seven (7) days from time of receipt to choose a passage and complete the following assignment:

- Prepare an exegesis paper on the chosen passage, including identification of the exegetical method, translation, and exegesis of the assigned text with attention to pertinent exegetical issues.
- Prepare an outline of a sermon or Bible Study informed by and emerging from the preceding exegetical work.

The completed assignment shall be postmarked no later than seven (7) days from the receipt of the assigned texts and received by the examination panel no less than fifteen (15) days prior to the scheduled face to face meeting. On the date of the meeting with the panel, the candidate shall be prepared to orally defend her/his exegetical work and the sermon or Bible study.

There shall be no alternative for the Bible Content ordination exam.

After meeting with the Examination Panel, the candidate shall be excused. Each member of the Panel shall then independently render a grade of pass or fail for the candidate, considering the whole of the proceedings. The Panel shall then render a collective grade of pass or fail for the candidate based on majority vote. The decision of the panel shall be final. **Should the Panel judge the candidate still deficient in the area(s) of the examination, the COL may consider such failure as grounds for removal from the process of preparation for the ordered ministry of Minister of the Word and Sacrament.** The candidate may not be permitted to retake standard or alternate ordination exams after having performed unsatisfactorily on this examination, *unless* the candidate has a clinically defined and documented disability attested by a professional of the presbytery's choosing, in which case the COL shall have discretion over the number of times an alternative exam may be attempted.

**COMMISSION ON LEADERSHIP
ALTERNATIVE ORDINATION EXAMINATION REQUEST
The Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys
*Approved May 2013***

I, _____, request that the Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys grant permission for me to take the _____ Standard Ordination Exam using the Presbytery approved alternative examination format.

(Name)

(Date)

Reason for requesting an alternate examination: (be specific including dates of failed exams)

COL use only:

Alternative Exam(s) scheduled for: _____

Alternative Examination Committee Members:

_____ (COL) _____ (COL)

_____ (Presbytery) _____ (Presbytery)

_____ (Presbytery)

(Please circle the name of the COL member serving as committee moderator.)