

**ENTRY INTO THE MINISTRY OF WORD AND SACRAMENTS
OR DIACONAL MINISTRY
OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA
FOR LAY PERSONS**

OVERVIEW

In The Presbyterian Church in Canada, ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacraments and designation to the Order of Diaconal Ministries signify the church's confirmation of Christ's call to the individual to these forms of Christian service. Ordination and designation take place when the individual has completed successfully the church's candidacy process, and has been offered and has accepted a call to a particular ministry.

Lay persons qualify to seek a position as an ordained or diaconal minister through completion of the church's candidacy process. Certified candidates for ministry are members of a congregation of The Presbyterian Church in Canada who engage in preparation for and discernment of their calling under the care of the presbytery to which the congregation belongs.

The booklet outlining the church's candidacy process is available on-line on the denominational website at the following link:

<http://presbyterian.ca/?wpdmdl=57&>

The standard educational pathway for ordained or diaconal ministry in this denomination is a university undergraduate degree followed by a Masters of Divinity (M.Div.) degree from a theological college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Certified candidates for ministry seeking an alternative route apply to the General Assembly through the Committee on Education and Reception. There are two categories of application. Both require the endorsement of the candidate's certifying presbytery, which indicates that the presbytery

approves of the candidate's desire to seek an alternative educational pathway.

- a) Middle-aged candidates lacking the prerequisite university undergraduate degree may apply for a **General Assembly Special Course**. When an application is approved, the General Assembly assigns the candidate 2 or 4 semesters of university Arts studies, to be completed with a minimum B average, followed by 6 semesters of theological study in the M.Div. program of a college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. In some cases, the candidate's previous studies may count towards the Arts requirement.
- b) Certified candidates who are graduates of non-Presbyterian Church in Canada theological colleges may apply for **eligibility for examination for certification for ordination**. When an application is approved, the General Assembly outlines the conditions that the candidate must fulfill before the certifying presbytery is granted permission to examine the candidate for certification for ordination – the last step in the candidacy process before seeking a call. In all cases, the conditions include a specific program of study in a theological college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

REQUIREMENTS OF APPLICATION FOR A GENERAL ASSEMBLY SPECIAL COURSE

The process of application for a General Assembly Special Course has several requirements. Application is appropriate when **ALL** the following statements are true.

The individual:

- is a member of a congregation of The Presbyterian Church in Canada (for at least the previous year)¹
- is a certified candidate for ministry of the presbytery to which the congregation belongs
- has attained the age of 35 years or older at first certification, and is 59 years or younger at the time of application
- lacks a university undergraduate degree²
- is able to provide academic transcripts
- is able to arrange for confidential references
- is prepared to come to Presbyterian Church in Canada offices in Toronto, Ontario, for a personal interview with the Committee on Education and Reception or to participate in an interview in a presbytery closer to home when such arrangements can be made, and in all cases to cover the cost of his or her own travel and accommodation expenses
- has received endorsement of the application by the certifying presbytery (indicating presbytery agreement that the candidate should be permitted to pursue this educational pathway)
- is aware that not all applications are approved and that, in all cases, the committee refrains from giving reasons for its decisions concerning applications
- is prepared to engage in the church's candidacy process without any guarantee of eventual ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacraments or designation to the Order of Diaconal Ministries

REQUIREMENTS OF APPLICATION FOR ELIGIBILITY FOR EXAMINATION FOR CERTIFICATION FOR ORDINATION

The process of application for eligibility for examination for certification for ordination has several requirements. Application is appropriate when **ALL** the following statements are true.

The individual:

- is a member of a congregation of The Presbyterian Church in Canada (for at least the previous two years)³
- is a certified candidate for ministry of the presbytery to which the congregation belongs
- holds a university undergraduate degree⁴
- holds a Masters of Divinity (M.Div.) degree from a North American seminary accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), or from a seminary outside North America with equivalent accreditation
- is able to provide academic transcripts
- is able to arrange for confidential references
- is prepared to come to Presbyterian Church in Canada offices in Toronto, Ontario, for a personal interview with the Committee on Education and Reception or to participate in an interview in a presbytery closer to home when such arrangements can be made, and in all cases to cover the cost of his or her own travel and accommodation expenses
- has received endorsement of the application by the certifying presbytery (indicating presbytery agreement that the candidate should be permitted to pursue this educational pathway)
- is aware that not all applications are approved and that, in all cases, the committee refrains from giving reasons for its decisions concerning applications
- is prepared to engage in the church's candidacy process without any guarantee of eventual ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacraments or designation to the Order of Diaconal Ministries

PROCESS FOR APPLICATION

1. Contact the Committee on Education and Reception requesting an application form.

Since the committee has several categories of application, candidates may be asked first to provide some details about themselves. This will equip the committee to forward information that is pertinent to the candidate's particular situation, and if appropriate, to forward an application form.

Requests for applications may be made as follows:

Ministry and Church Vocations

c/o Jackie Czegledi, Administrative Assistant

Email address: jczegledi@presbyterian.ca

Telephone: 1-800-619-7301 or 416-441-1111, ext. 263

2. Complete and submit the application form.
3. Arrange for documents to be prepared and forwarded directly by others: academic transcripts,⁵ confidential references,⁶ and endorsement by the certifying presbytery.
4. Observe the application deadlines outlined on the instruction sheet for the application.⁷
5. Once the application file is complete and you have been offered an interview appointment with the Committee on Education and Reception, let the committee know that you plan to attend the interview.⁸

The committee conducts its work in English. If you require a translator for your interview, be sure to let the committee know early in your application process. The committee will endeavour to provide the services of a translator.

Make your travel and accommodation arrangements. Applicants are responsible for their own arrangements and costs.

6. Attend the interview. Be prepared to discuss the various aspects of your life touched upon in your application materials, and any other matters pertinent to your desire to enter the ordained or diaconal ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The interview will be approximately 45 – 60 minutes in length.
7. After the interview, the committee informs candidates of its decision about their application by mail within two weeks. The certifying presbytery receives this notification as well.

The committee's decision about an application is not considered final until it receives the approval of the General Assembly the following June. Until then, the church's decision about the application cannot be known. (Applicants are not expected to attend the General Assembly.)

8. Endorsing presbyteries with questions or concerns about the outcome of an application may contact the Committee on Education and Reception through its Secretary requesting consultation by teleconference. Although the committee does not give reasons for its decisions at any time, communication with representatives of the presbytery sometimes provides the committee with new information and may lead to a change in the committee's decision.

The Committee on Education and Reception reviews its decision about an application only at the request of the endorsing presbytery. A request from an applicant to the Committee on Education and Reception does not initiate a review.

STEPS 9 – 10 APPLY ONLY TO GRADUATES OF NON-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA COLLEGES

9. *Conditional nature of eligibility for examination for certification for ordination*

For graduates of non-Presbyterian Church in Canada theological colleges whose application for eligibility for examination for certification for ordination is approved and who wish to proceed with the church's process, the next steps are to fulfill any conditions placed on their eligibility. Such conditions are introduced by the words "subject to" in the statement outlining the committee's decision. A candidate is eligible to be examined for certification for ordination when the General Assembly has approved the application and the candidate has fulfilled all assigned conditions.

10. *Period for Competent Objections*

Whenever the committee plans to recommend that the General Assembly approve an application, the recommendation contains the words "subject to no competent objections being submitted by a presbytery of this church by (date)." The names of the candidates and brief details of their educational, church and work history are circulated to the presbyteries in The Presbyterian Church in Canada to solicit information about the individual's personal or professional conduct that might be unknown to the Committee on Education and Reception. Presbyteries are given three months to forward "competent objections" to an application. If an objection is lodged, the committee notifies the candidate and the certifying presbytery that the condition has not been lifted; the possibility then exists that the committee's decision might be changed. When no objection is lodged by the specified date, the condition is deemed to be lifted; in this case, no notification is sent to the candidate and the certifying presbytery.

STEPS 11 – 12 APPLY TO BOTH CATEGORIES OF APPLICATION

11. *Studies in a theological college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada*⁹

When candidates are ready to set up their academic program, they are advised to contact the college of their choice directly to learn how to apply for admission.

Applicants are responsible for all their costs associated with the assigned studies.

On successful completion of the studies assigned by the General Assembly, the college provides the candidate with a certificate to this effect.

12. *Permission to seek a call*

All certified candidates for ministry require permission from their presbytery and their college before they are permitted to seek a call in The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The presbytery examines and, if satisfactory, certifies the candidate for ordination, conditional upon graduation. The college graduates the candidate, awarding the M.Div. degree or a certificate of completion of the program assigned by the General Assembly, along with the college diploma indicating readiness for ministry in The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

In some cases, the college grants its permission early, during the candidate's final semester of study. This is commonly referred to as the "October 1 letter" for December graduates and the "February 1 letter" for May graduates. The college has discretion in each case as to whether granting its early permission to seek a call is appropriate.

PROCESS FOR SEEKING A CALL

1. Contact the office of Ministry and Church Vocations to request a personal profile form, which can be sent electronically as a Word file:

Ministry and Church Vocations
 c/o Jackie Czegledi, Administrative Assistant
 Email address: jczegledi@presbyterian.ca
 Telephone: 1-800-619-7301 or 416-441-1111, ext. 263

2. Complete your personal profile and begin to circulate it to interim moderators of congregations that interest you. Forward a copy to Ministry and Church Vocations for assistance in circulating your profile, if desired.

A list of interim moderators and ministry opportunities, sorted by synod, is maintained on the denominational website at the following link: <http://www.presbyterian.ca/vacancies>.

Candidates living more than easy driving distance from the congregations where they intend to apply are advised to prepare a CD or DVD of themselves leading a service of worship.

3. To learn more about the church's procedures for search, call and induction, refer to *Calling a Minister: Guidelines for Presbyteries, Interim Moderators and Search Committees*. This booklet is available on-line at the following link: http://www.presbyterian.ca/files/webfm/ourresources/mcv/calling_a_minister.pdf
4. When a congregation extends a call to the candidate with the approval of the congregation's presbytery, and when the candidate's presbytery also approves the call and the candidate accepts it, then the candidate is ordained and inducted (or designated and recognized, for diaconal candidates). The new

minister's name is placed on the constituent roll of the presbytery.

FOR FURTHER CLARIFICATION

You are welcome to contact the Secretary of the Committee on Education and Reception, Rev. Susan Shaffer, at:

Toll-free: 1-800-619-7301, ext. 264
 Email: sshaffer@presbyterian.ca

NOTES ABOUT APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES

¹ Individuals must have been members of a congregation of The Presbyterian Church in Canada for at least the previous year before the presbytery may certify them as a candidate for ministry.

Once certified, if appropriate, the candidate may apply for a General Assembly Special Course. The application requires endorsement by the presbytery.

² In Canada, a university undergraduate degree is a baccalaureate degree from an institution approved by a Canadian provincial quality assurance agency. The educational programs of all Canadian universities are subject to the provincially-mandated quality assurance mechanisms, and the school is permitted to use the word “university” in its name.

In Canada, theology degrees are generally exempt from the provincially-mandated quality assurance mechanisms and degrees from many bible colleges do not qualify as university undergraduate degrees. Candidates and certifying presbyteries uncertain about the status of a particular school or program of study are advised to consult with the Committee on Education and Reception before enrolment.

³ Individuals must have been members of a congregation of The Presbyterian Church in Canada for at least the previous year before the presbytery may certify them as a candidate for ministry.

Once certified, if appropriate, the candidate may apply for eligibility for examination for certification for ordination, provided he or she has been a member of a congregation of The Presbyterian Church in Canada for at least the previous two years. The application requires endorsement by the presbytery.

⁴ Please see note 2 above.

⁵ Academic transcripts for all post-secondary education are required. These are original documents bearing the school’s official seal, signature and/or watermark – photocopies, scanned or faxed documents will not be accepted. Transcripts detail the student’s academic record: program of study and basis of admission, courses attempted, grades earned, degrees granted, all with appropriate dates. Diplomas or program certificates (the kinds of documents that are normally framed and displayed on a wall) are not required or accepted.

⁶ Three references are required. Applicants are advised to choose reference authors who can write knowledgeably about them and their work over the years. Reference writers are asked to complete the form provided and forward it directly to the Committee on Education and Reception. Information from references will not be disclosed to the applicant.

The same references submitted to the Committee on Education and Reception can also be used for the guidance conference (a discernment event in the candidacy process), with the permission of the reference authors. Candidates are advised to ask their reference writers to indicate their permission on the reference form.

⁷ The Committee on Education and Reception meets in April and October each year, with the following application deadlines:

For the Committee's April Meeting:

Most personal interviews with the Committee on Education and Reception are held at Presbyterian Church Offices in Toronto, Ontario during the committee's meetings. For interviews to be held at the committee's April meeting, the deadline for application documents is **March 30th**.

Applicants living in Canada a distance from Toronto sometimes have the option of an interview closer to home. For interviews to take place away from Toronto in time for the committee's April meeting, the deadline for application documents is **February 28th**.

For the Committee's October Meeting:

Most personal interviews with the Committee on Education and Reception are held at Presbyterian Church Offices in Toronto, Ontario during the committee's meetings. For interviews to be held at the committee's October meeting, the deadline for application documents is **September 30th**.

Applicants living in Canada a distance from Toronto sometimes have the option of an interview closer to home. For interviews to take place away from Toronto in time for the committee's October meeting, the deadline for application documents is **September 1st**.

⁸ All applicants have an interview in person with the Committee on Education and Reception, usually at Presbyterian Church in Canada offices in Toronto, Ontario, and cover their own travel and accommodation expenses. Under some circumstances, applicants may have the option of an interview closer to home.

⁹ The Presbyterian Church in Canada has three theological colleges: Knox College in Toronto, Ontario; Presbyterian College in Montreal, Quebec; and Vancouver School of Theology in Vancouver, British Columbia. Each college has established its own admissions requirements, procedures and timelines, and makes decisions about admission of students on those terms, quite apart from the application process through the Committee on Education and Reception. When a candidate's application is approved and the candidate is assigned educational requirements in a college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, this does not serve to enrol the candidate in a suitable program, nor does it serve as an application for or a guarantee of admission. Candidates must apply to the college of their choice for admission.