



**THE CANDIDACY PROCESS OF  
PREPARATION AND DISCERNMENT  
for ministries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada**

The Presbyterian Church in Canada  
2000 (updated 2022)

Candidacy Process of Preparation and Discernment for Ministries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada  
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# Candidacy Process

## Overview

The candidacy process provides the framework for the vocational preparation and shared discernment by which members of The Presbyterian Church in Canada become ordained ministers of Word and Sacraments or designated members of the Order of Diaconal Ministry.

### **Central roles:**

- The **candidate** is asking, “Is Christ calling me to ministry?” The candidate engages with the church in discerning whether this is the direction of God’s leading. Through study and service, the candidate strives to develop the gifts and graces for Christian ministry while continuing to grow in faith and maturity as a disciple of Christ.
- The **session** stays alert to identify individuals with gifts and calling for ministry. When concurring with a member’s desire to enter the candidacy process, the session recommends the individual to the presbytery for certification as a candidate for ministry. The session maintains prayerful support for the candidate and the candidate’s family.
- The **presbytery** makes decisions over several years that initiate, and later review and affirm or remove, an individual’s standing in the candidacy process. Reports of the candidate’s guidance conference, psychological assessment and theological college help to inform these decisions. When results are positive, the individual progresses from initial certification as a candidate for ministry, through recertification at least annually as a candidate for ministry, to examination and certification as a candidate for ordination/designation, which is subject to review and possible renewal at least every three years. When the presbytery approves a called position that a certified candidate for ordination or designation wishes to accept, and provided the candidate has graduated with the diploma of the college, the presbytery confirms Christ’s call to the individual by ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacraments or designation to the Order of Diaconal Ministry.
- The **theological colleges** of The Presbyterian Church in Canada guide candidates through their educational preparation in the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) program. Completion of studies with the college diploma, signifying the college assessment that the candidate should be eligible to enter the ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, are prerequisites for ordination or designation.

### **Other contributors:**

- the ministers and elders who serve as counsellors at the candidate’s guidance conference
- the congregation where the candidate is placed for supervised theological field education
- the calling congregation and its presbytery

### **Educational preparation:**

- standard educational pathway is a university undergraduate degree followed by a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree from a theological college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada
- alternative educational pathways are assigned to some candidates by the General Assembly on recommendation of the Committee on Education and Reception

## **Resources:**

- **Appendix J** of the Book of Forms: questions and issues for candidates, sessions and presbyteries
- **Presbytery** chapter in the Book of Forms (BF): certification for ministry (BF 202-204), certification for ordination (BF 205-212), ordination (BF 233-240), designation (BF 174.4-174.4.3); see also Appendix L.
- **Preamble, Ordination/Designation Questions** (BF 447, 451): the church's beliefs about ministry

## **Theological Basis**

The Presbyterian Church in Canada believes that all Christians are called to worship and serve God, sharing the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ with the world. Through the working of God's Word and Spirit within the community of believers, the church is gathered, equipped and sent out to participate in Christ's ministry.

To be ready to respond faithfully to this primary vocation, the church needs pastors and teachers. With the guidance of the Spirit, Christ calls individuals to Christ's pastoral and teaching office. Christ entrusts ministers of Word and Sacraments with a special degree of responsibility for the church's teachings. Christ also calls individuals to specialized diaconal ministries of Christian education, pastoral care and social outreach. The leadership of these individuals finds its purpose when the people of God are equipped for ministry.

Christ intends the task of discerning Christ's call to the leaders Christ has chosen to be shared. While the individual listens for God's voice – the inner dimension of the call – the church listens as well, testing the call's outer dimension. With the guidance of the same Spirit, Christ equips the church in different contexts to engage with these individuals in discernment of their calling and to guide them in preparing for it.

The candidacy process provides the framework for this vocational preparation and shared discernment. What begins with an individual nurtured in Christian faith within a home congregation may culminate, after several years, in a presbytery confirming Christ's call through ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacraments or designation to the Order of Diaconal Ministry.

## **Guiding Principles**

Vocational discernment – listening for God's voice – is spiritual and pastoral work that requires prayer, humility, love, tenderness, and trust in the continual illumination of the Holy Spirit.

Pastoral care, at its best, guides individuals to place themselves in the centre of God's will for their lives. There is no better place to be.

When the individual and the church together perceive that the individual is being called to ministry – when both the inner and outer dimensions of the call point in that direction – the church understands this as confirmation of Christ's call.

When the church's perception of the outer dimension of the call does not align with the individual's inner sense of being called, notwithstanding the disappointment the individual and others may experience, the church understands this to mean that, at least at the present time, the individual is not being called into ordained or diaconal ministry within The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

The faithfulness of the church's engagement in the shared vocational discernment that Christ intends is shaped, in large measure, by its capacity for courage and commitment.

## Goals

The goals of the candidacy process are:

- to assist individuals in discerning and preparing for a call to ministry in The Presbyterian Church in Canada
- to provide the church with the best possible candidates

## Gifts and Graces for Ministry

The gifts and graces required for faithful ministry are many. The following list, while not exhaustive, gives an idea of the range of skills and attributes that candidates are expected to develop while in the candidacy process.

- Mature Christian faith
- Integration of faith and life
- A call to ministry
- Ability to express this faith and call in a way that is real, articulate and integrated
  
- Awareness of having gifts for ministry
- Awareness of qualities or circumstances that may be obstacles to ministry
- Spiritual disciplines and practices
- Ability to create a support system for one's self
  
- Membership and active involvement in a congregation of The Presbyterian Church in Canada
- Tested and affirmed leadership in The Presbyterian Church in Canada
- Acceptance of the Reformed understanding of the faith
- Acceptance of the diversity in The Presbyterian Church in Canada
- Understanding of the task of the church
- Understanding of the role of the minister of Word and Sacraments/diaconal minister
- Integration of faith, view of the church and concept of ministry
- Realistic assessment of one's self
- Mental and emotional health
- Potential for growth
  
- Ability to relate to others and work with others
- Ability to give leadership
- Ability to handle conflict
- Ability to cope with stress
- Compassion
- Healthy attitude toward authority
- Good command of language
  
- Ability to study at a Master's level
- Capacity for critical reflection

## **Church Preparation for the Candidacy Process**

The session, with responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the congregation, ensures the provision of opportunities for nurturing Christian faith, for service in the name of Christ, and for leadership development. It stays alert to identify individuals with gifts and calling for ministry.

The presbytery, with the responsibility to confer ministerial standing, assigns the tasks of the pastoral care and guidance of ministry candidates to a committee or team. In some presbyteries, these tasks comprise the mandate of its Student Certification Committee; in others, they form part of the work of a Personnel or Ministry Committee. For the sake of simplicity in this document, the name “Student Certification Committee” will be used to denote the group assigned this work. The presbytery ensures that the committee is well equipped to engage with the presbytery’s candidates in their vocational preparation and discernment. To the extent that it has opportunity to do so, the presbytery, like the session, seeks to identify individuals with gifts and calling for ministry.

The colleges of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, with the responsibility to provide leadership in theological education, develop their Master of Divinity programs under the direction of their governing boards and with the approval of the General Assembly.

The individuals and communities participating in the candidacy process pray for the candidates and for themselves in relating to them, recognizing that listening for the call of God to the candidates requires spiritual and pastoral work. At the same time, these individuals and communities commit to handle the confidential information they receive with appropriate care.

## **Seeking to Enter the Candidacy Process**

### ***First Steps within the Congregation***

The prospective candidate has been a member of a congregation of The Presbyterian Church in Canada for at least the preceding year.

In the context of the congregation’s shared worship, leadership and service, the individual begins to ask, “Am I being called to ministry?” Sometimes this question is voiced first by people who know the individual, while at other times it arises first as an inner prompting within the individual.

The individual asks the session to consider recommending them to the presbytery for certification. Sessions have different expectations about how formally such a request should be made. In some congregations, the person would be expected to submit a letter addressed to the clerk of session. In other congregations, the person’s conversation with the minister would be sufficient to bring the request to the session.

The session ensures that the one-year congregational membership requirement has been met before proceeding. The session assigns to an interview team the task of meeting with the prospective candidate.

The session’s interview team meets with the prospective candidate, making use of the sections on “Session Recommendation” in Appendix J of the Book of Forms:

J-4: Questions to be asked by sessions

J-5: Questions for sessions to ask themselves when considering a recommendation

The session meets to consider the findings of its interview team. If the session agrees that the individual's name should be forwarded to the presbytery for consideration as a candidate for ministry, the session writes to the presbytery through its clerk with this request. The session includes a written report with comments on the following characteristics of the individual:

- faith and doctrine
- personal suitability for ministry
- academic ability, practical skills, life experiences
- spiritual maturity and leadership potential
- confirmation of the length of time that the individual has been a member of the congregation

The session informs the individual of its decision.

The session maintains prayerful support for the individual, and for the individual's family if any, throughout the individual's time in the candidacy process.

### ***Next Steps within the Presbytery***

The presbytery receives the session's correspondence and assigns it to the Student Certification Committee for follow-up. The Student Certification Committee arranges for an interview team to meet with the prospective candidate.

In preparation for the interview, the interview team reviews the session report and any material the prospective candidate has been asked to prepare and submit ahead of time to the Student Certification Committee. This could include documents such as a description of the individual's faith journey, a sermon the individual preached, a bible study the individual developed, and confidential references.

The interview team meets with the prospective candidate, keeping in mind the gifts and graces required for ministry (page 3) and making use of the sections on "Initial Certification" in Appendix J of the Book of Forms:

J-6: Questions to be asked by presbyteries

J-7: Issues for the presbytery to consider

The prospective candidate brings to the interview the original and one copy of their vulnerable sector police records check, dated within the last five years. If the document is more than one year old, the individual also submits a signed update statement that they have not committed any crime since the volunteer police records check was issued. After verifying the copy against the original, the interview team retains the copy for the file to be held by the Student Certification Committee and returns the original to the individual.

The Student Certification Committee meets to consider the findings of its interview team. The committee prepares a report, including its recommendation about certification, for presentation to the presbytery.

### ***Initial Certification***

The presbytery receives and considers the report of the Student Certification Committee, and decides whether to certify the individual as a candidate for ministry. Probationary or conditional certification is not permitted at the time of initial certification. When the presbytery makes this first decision regarding

the individual's entry into the candidacy process, if the presbytery is uncertain whether to encourage the individual to pursue candidacy, the appropriate action is to decide not to certify.

The Student Certification Committee informs the individual of the decision of the presbytery:

- If the decision is to certify, the committee discusses the various elements of the candidacy process, to ensure that the candidate has a good understanding of it. The committee outlines its plans to interact with the candidate over the course of the next year. This might include participation in a service of worship acknowledging the individual's standing as a certified candidate under the care of the presbytery. (See Book of Common Worship, p. 301.)
- If the decision is not to certify, the Student Certification Committee may discuss with the individual other ways to serve Christ as a faithful disciple. Provided the presbytery wants to leave open the possibility, the Student Certification Committee might outline steps the individual could take to increase the chance of a successful reapplication.

Following a decision to certify, the presbytery clerk sends an extract of the presbytery's minutes:

- to the college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada where the candidate is studying or intends to study
- to Ministry and Church Vocations

Following a decision not to certify, the presbytery clerk sends an extract of the presbytery's minutes by circular letter (BF 203.1):

- to the college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada where the candidate is studying or intends to study
- to the presbyteries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada

### **Standing as a Certified Candidate for Ministry**

A presbytery decision to certify confers standing as a certified candidate for ministry. It places the candidate under the care of the presbytery.

#### ***Care of Candidates***

Presbyteries exercise care for their candidates by ensuring that the Student Certification Committee is well equipped to engage with the candidates in their vocational preparation and discernment. The committee's work entails:

- understanding the candidacy process as a whole and the central role entrusted to the presbytery
- getting to know the candidates, since these relationships form the basis for the presbytery's guidance and pastoral care of the candidates and for its decisions about them
- committing to the spiritual and pastoral work of listening for the call of God to the candidates
- praying for the candidates and for the committee members and the presbytery in relating to them
- being prepared to lead the presbytery in its decisions pertaining to candidacy
- committing to handle all information from or about individuals with appropriate confidentiality

Augmenting their first-hand experience of their candidates, presbyteries are guided by the perspectives of others with central roles in the candidacy process, including the college, guidance conference and psychological testing.

Presbytery support for candidates may include financial assistance, assigning mentors, and finding ways for the candidates to serve within the presbytery.

### ***Transfer of Care***

Candidates remain under the care of the presbytery of first certification throughout the time that they have certified standing. Exceptions may be made at the request of the candidate where the presbytery is far away from the theological college where the candidate studies. Candidates must request transfer of care when appointed to a pastoral charge in another presbytery for more than a summer's duration (BF 204) or when moving the location of their permanent residence to another presbytery (BF 209). A candidate's request for transfer of care, submitted in writing to the certifying presbytery through its clerk, states that the certifying presbytery is authorized to forward the candidate's confidential file to the new presbytery.

### ***Recertification***

Standing as a certified candidate for ministry is reviewed by the presbytery at least annually, or more frequently at its discretion. In its review, the Student Certification Committee keeps in mind the gifts and graces required for ministry (page 3) and makes use of the sections on "Recertification" in Appendix J of the Book of Forms:

J-8: Questions to be asked by presbyteries

J-9: Issues for the presbytery to consider

If the result is positive, the presbytery recertifies the candidate. Conditional or probationary recertification is permitted.

### ***Termination of Standing***

In the same way that a presbytery decision is required to initiate or to maintain a candidate's standing, a presbytery decision is required to terminate it. Standing as a certified candidate for ministry ends when:

- the presbytery certifies the individual as a candidate for ordination/designation
- the presbytery accepts the individual's request, in writing through the presbytery clerk, to withdraw from candidacy
- the presbytery decides not to recertify the individual
- the presbytery removes the individual's standing

Presbyteries are required to inform other presbyteries of their decisions not to certify, not to recertify, or to remove standing (BF 203.1).

### ***Guidance Conference***

Each certified candidate must participate in a guidance conference, a four-day residential program designed to assess both the inner and outer dimensions of the individual's call to ministry. The conference provides candidates with occasions for reflecting on their gifts, growth areas and calling. These begin before the conference as the candidates complete a comprehensive personal information form, continue throughout the conference as the candidates engage in personal interviews, discussions and activities, and culminate on the final day of the conference when each candidate receives a report about themselves. The report is written at the conference by the ministers, diaconal ministers and ruling elders who serve as counsellors and who conduct the interviews, and includes a recommendation about the

suitability of the candidate for recertification. Opportunities for the church to assess the outer dimension of the candidates' calls arise before the conference as individuals selected by the candidates submit confidential references, ensue during the guidance conference as the counsellors interact with the candidates, and continue after the conference through the presbytery Student Certification Committee and the college faculty who receive the guidance conference report, provided the candidate gives signed consent for its release.

Ideally, candidates attend a guidance conference after completing several first-year M.Div. courses but prior to entering the second year of the program. Guidance conferences are managed and financed by the office of Ministry and Church Vocations, which invites the candidates using contact information provided by their certifying presbytery. Repeat attendance at a guidance conference is possible at the request of the certifying presbytery or sometimes at the recommendation of the candidate's previous guidance conference.

### ***Psychological Testing***

Each certified candidate must undergo assessment of their psychological health, interpersonal competency, and intellectual and cognitive functioning by a registered psychologist selected from a list approved by Ministry and Church Vocations. The cost of the testing is shared equally by Ministry and Church Vocations and the certifying presbytery. Candidates make arrangements for their appointments with the psychologist, ideally while studying in the first year of the M.Div. program. The college provides candidates with the list of psychologists and an authorization form to be taken to the first appointment. The authorization form states the church's commitment to pay for the testing, and provides the name and contact information of the two individuals to whom the psychologist sends the report: the convener of the Student Certification Committee of the candidate's presbytery and the appropriate faculty person at the candidate's college. As with the guidance conference, the candidate's signed consent is required for the release of the report.

### ***Annual College Reports***

The theological colleges of The Presbyterian Church in Canada forward reports annually to the Student Certification Committees, providing updates on the academic progress of the presbytery's candidates.

### ***Initial Certification Extended***

Presbyteries are instructed not to consider the first recertification until the presbytery has received reports from the candidate's guidance conference, psychological testing and theological college. When this has not occurred, and provided the presbytery wishes to continue granting the individual standing as a certified candidate for ministry, the appropriate action is for the presbytery to extend the initial certification. Once this prerequisite is met, and provided the presbytery wishes to continue the candidate's standing, the presbytery may adopt a motion for recertification.

### ***Summer Placement Report***

If a candidate has a summer placement in another presbytery, that presbytery shall send a written report to the certifying presbytery. The certifying presbytery must not recertify the candidate until it has considered this report (BF 204).

### ***Vulnerable Sector Police Records Checks***

At annual recertification interviews, candidates are required to present a signed update statement that they have not committed any crime since their vulnerable sector police records check was issued. If the five-year period for the check has elapsed, a new one must be prepared and presented. As at initial certification, the Student Certification Committee verifies the copy against the original, retains the copy, and returns the original to the candidate.

In addition, candidates are required to present a vulnerable sector police records check to the college before participating in a field education placement. If the document is more than one year old, an update statement, signed by the candidate, is also required.

### ***Educational Preparation***

#### ***Standard Educational Pathway***

The standard educational preparation for ministry is a university undergraduate degree followed by a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree from a theological college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Candidates apply for admission to the Presbyterian Church in Canada college of their choice, submitting required documents and observing deadlines as outlined in the college admission procedures.

#### ***Alternative Educational Pathways***

Certified candidates for ministry may apply for an alternative educational pathway under certain specific circumstances:

- No university undergraduate degree and 35 – 59 years of age:  
The assigned program of study, referred to as a General Assembly Special Course, includes university undergraduate Arts courses, to be completed with a minimum B average, followed by courses in the M.Div. program of a college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
- M.Div. degree and university undergraduate degree:  
The applicant has earned a university undergraduate degree and an M.Div. degree. The M.Div. degree was completed with a minimum B average in a college outside The Presbyterian Church in Canada that is accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (or equivalent outside North America). The candidate has been a member of a congregation of The Presbyterian Church in Canada for at least the two years preceding the application. The assigned program of study includes courses in the M.Div. program of a college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
- Diaconal ministers seeking ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacraments:  
The applicant is a member of the Order of Diaconal Ministries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The assigned program of study includes courses in the M.Div. program of a college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Application for these alternative educational pathways, through the Committee on Education and Reception, requires endorsement of the application by the certifying presbytery. When the committee approves an application, it recommends to the General Assembly a course of study and any other conditions to be met before the presbytery is permitted to examine the candidate for certification for ordination/designation. Adoption of the committee's recommendation by the General Assembly assigns

the course of study and additional conditions as noted. Candidates then choose appropriate courses to fulfill the church's requirements in consultation with the faculty of a college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, after successful application to the college for admission. (For application procedures and guidelines of the Committee on Education and Reception, see Supplement C, page 37, and Supplement D, page 42.)

### ***College Diploma***

Theological education for ministry in The Presbyterian Church in Canada requires more than successful completion of coursework in the M.Div. program at one of this denomination's theological colleges. To become eligible to minister in this denomination, candidates also must receive certification from the governing board of a theological college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada that they have completed the prescribed course of study and have demonstrated that they have the practical gifts and skills and suitable character and conduct for ministry (BF 206.2). While the colleges may use different terminology to indicate this certification of the governing board, for the sake of simplicity, this document will use the "college diploma" for this purpose.

Whenever the Book of Forms refers to certified candidates who have graduated, this denotes students who have obtained the requisite college approval: not only have these candidates completed their course of study, earning an M.Div. degree or a certificate of completion of assigned study, but in addition, the college has granted them the college diploma, signifying the college assessment that they should be eligible to enter the ministry of Word and Sacraments or diaconal ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

For all certified candidates, regardless of the educational pathway they follow, graduation from a college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada with the college diploma, and with an M.Div. degree or a certificate of completion of the assigned studies, is one of the prerequisites for ordination/designation.

### ***Presbytery and College Approval***

Throughout the candidacy process, the presbytery and the college play central roles in the vocational preparation and discernment of candidates. The role of the presbytery is to confer standing: first, as a certified candidate for ministry, with initial certification and annual recertifications; eventually, as a candidate certified for ordination/designation, when the presbytery approves its final and most comprehensive examination of the candidate's suitability for ministry; and ultimately, at a successful conclusion of the candidacy process, as an ordained minister of Word and Sacraments or a designated member of the Order of Diaconal Ministries. For its part, the college provides academic program: the college structures its activities to foster learning, which is assessed through the grading of coursework and periodic wider-scale evaluation of the extent to which students demonstrate the competencies for ministry.

The interdependence of decisions of the presbytery and the college is most apparent in the final stages of candidacy. While the college confers degrees or certificates of completion of assigned studies to all its graduating students, the college diploma is reserved for graduates certified by presbyteries. With it, the college signifies its assessment that the recipient should be eligible to enter the ministry of Word and Sacraments or diaconal ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. While the presbytery certifies candidates for ordination/designation, this standing is conditional upon graduation: only after the candidate receives the college diploma does the standing as a certified candidate for ordination/designation come into effect. A certified candidate who graduated without the college

diploma could not obtain unconditional standing as a certified candidate for ordination/designation. Candidates require the approval of both the presbytery and the college to complete the candidacy process.

### ***Examination for Certification for Ordination/Designation***

Examination for certification for ordination/designation is comprehensive discernment by a presbytery that, when the results are positive, leads to the presbytery's final certification of the candidate – this time, as a certified candidate for ordination/designation (BF 205-212 and Appendix J-10 through J-13).

When certified candidates wish to be so examined, they write to their certifying presbytery through its clerk to make this request.

Candidates may have the option of being examined by a different presbytery – the presbytery in which the college is located or the presbytery of first certification if different from the current presbytery. To make such a request, candidates write to their certifying presbytery through its clerk. In their letter, candidates acknowledge that, provided the certifying presbytery grants its permission, it will forward all relevant documents from the presbytery's confidential file for the candidate to the examining presbytery (BF 205-205.1).

The presbytery may begin examination of a candidate any time after the candidate's request has been received. Typically, examinations for certification/designation are held during the candidate's final year of theological studies. However, since the church has made provision for candidates to begin seeking a call prior to graduation, presbyteries may wish to schedule their examinations with these dates in mind:

- The colleges have the option of granting candidates the permission of the college to seek a call before graduation. Such permission, when granted, begins February 1 or October 1, whichever date occurs in the candidate's final semester.
- If, by these same dates, the candidates have been certified for ordination/designation, conditional upon graduation, they will be free to take advantage of this early permission.
- Any candidates who do not receive permission from the college to seek a call before graduation must wait for graduation before beginning their search.

The Student Certification Committee outlines the requirements of the presbytery's examination, using or modifying the items set out in Appendix J of the Book of Forms:

J-10: Application

The candidate provides the submissions requested by the presbytery.

The presbytery examines the candidate, making use of Book of Forms sections 206 – 206.1 and Appendix J:

J:11: Examination

J-11.3: Issues for the presbytery to consider.

The candidate will be present at the meeting of the presbytery when the report of the examination is considered.

A presbytery decision to sustain a candidate's examination for certification for ordination/designation confers standing as a certified candidate for ordination/designation. If the candidate has not completed their educational program, this standing is conditional upon graduation. Graduation with the college diploma and the M.Div. degree or certificate of completion of studies, which together signify college assessment that the candidate should be eligible for ministry in The Presbyterian Church in Canada, removes the condition on the candidate's standing. The candidate becomes a certified candidate for ordination or designation – now without condition.

A presbytery decision not to sustain the examination for certification for ordination/designation is followed by notification of presbyteries and the candidate's college by circular letter (BF 203.1).

If the examination is not sustained, the presbytery may prescribe a new examination and initiate it after a period of not less than three months has elapsed (BF 207).

### **Standing as a Certified Candidate for Ordination/Designation**

Certification for ordination/designation is a significant landmark in the candidacy process. Once this standing is obtained, it opens the door to being considered for all ministry positions leading to ordination/designation in The Presbyterian Church in Canada. When such a position is accepted, with presbytery approval, ordination or designation follows.

As explained in the preceding section, the church has made provision for candidates who are in their final semester in a Presbyterian Church in Canada college to begin communicating with interim moderators and search committees. To make use of this provision, two criteria must be met: candidates have received the permission of the college and the presbytery has certified them for ordination/designation conditional upon graduation. However, while seeking a position that would lead to ordination/designation is permitted prior to graduation, accepting such a position is not permitted at that time. Candidates may accept such ministry positions only after graduating with the diploma of the college, when the condition placed on their standing as a certified candidate for ordination/designation is lifted. Special procedures for calls to graduating students (page 14) involve suspending the proceedings at a certain point until graduation.

Certified candidates for ordination/designation remain under the care of the certifying presbytery as long as they live, work and/or study within the bounds, or are working or studying abroad with permission of the presbytery (BF 209).

Certified candidates for ordination/designation who leave the bounds of their presbytery to live, work and/or study elsewhere in Canada must request a transfer, in writing through the clerk of their current presbytery, to the jurisdiction of the appropriate presbytery.

The standing of certified candidates for ordination/designation who have not been ordained or designated should be reviewed by the presbytery every three years (BF 211).

In the same way that a presbytery decision is required to initiate or to maintain a candidate's standing, a presbytery decision is required to terminate it. Standing as a certified candidate for ordination /designation ends when:

- a presbytery ordains the individual as a minister of Word and Sacraments or designates the individual as a member of the Order of Diaconal Ministries
- the presbytery accepts the individual's request, in writing through the presbytery clerk, to have their standing removed
- the presbytery decides not to recertify the individual upon review (at three-year intervals) of their standing
- the presbytery removes the individual's standing

Presbyteries are required to inform other presbyteries by circular letter of their decisions not to certify, not to recertify, or to remove standing (BF 203.1).

## **Seeking a Call**

The church's procedures for search, call and induction are detailed in *Calling a Minister: Guidelines for Presbyteries, Interim Moderators and Search Committees* ([presbyterian.ca/calling-a-minister](http://presbyterian.ca/calling-a-minister)). Supplement 5 (p. 46-47) outlines the procedural adaptations that are used when calls are extended to candidates in their final semester of theological study.

## **Qualifying Ministry Positions**

The significant and integral role of the ministry of Word and Sacraments in the life of the church prompted the General Assembly to identify the types of ministry contexts that are suitable for ordination (A&P 2008, p. 353-65; A&P 2021, p. 503-504). While the study recommending these decisions focused on ordained ministry, the same criteria could be held to apply to diaconal ministry.

Christ's call of a certified candidate for ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacraments has been confirmed, and therefore ordination is appropriate, when the ministry position:

- requires the full exercise of the ministry of Word and Sacraments
- permits the name of the minister, after ordination, to be placed on the constituent (active) roll of the presbytery:
  - congregational positions must be half-time, at minimum
  - institutional chaplaincy positions must be half-time and one-year appointments, at minimum
- represents the call of this church:
  - call of a congregation of The Presbyterian Church in Canada
  - appointment by the Life and Mission Agency
  - for institutional chaplains, permission of the Committee on Education and Reception
- meets or exceeds General Assembly or higher presbytery standards with respect to stipends and allowances
- is approved by the presbytery as a gospel call to the candidate, with whom the presbytery is prepared to enter into a relationship of care

Collectively, these criteria for ordination are deemed to confirm Christ's call to the ministry of Word and Sacraments. Presbyteries must ensure that all criteria have been met before moving forward with ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacraments.

## **Graduates**

Certified candidates for ordination who have graduated follow the same call procedures as do ordained or designated ministers. The only difference is the end point: on acceptance of a ministry position with presbytery approval, the candidate is ordained or designated prior to induction into the position. In brief, the normal call procedures require individuals seeking a call to take the following steps:

- Obtain a personal profile form from Ministry and Church Vocations
- Complete and circulate a personal profile, with assistance from Ministry and Church Vocations if desired
- Review the list of pulpit vacancies and interim moderators: [presbyterian.ca/vacancies](http://presbyterian.ca/vacancies)
- Meet with search committees, and prepare and submit materials they request
- Accept a session invitation to meet the congregation, to preach for the call or make other presentation, and to permit your name to be inserted into a call document
- Accept the call when it is “placed in your hands” by your presbytery. When the calling congregation is in a different presbytery, the call must be approved by that presbytery before it is forwarded to your presbytery for review.
- When you anticipate that you will be extended a call that you intend to accept, take steps to obtain a new vulnerable sector police records check. Presbyteries are required to ensure that their ministers have a vulnerable sector police records check conducted at the time of a new call and submit the resulting report to the presbytery. (See *Calling a Minister*, Supplement 3; *Leading with Care Policy*, section 3.10; and A&P 2005, p. 345-46.)

Ministry and Church Vocations assists certified candidates for ordination/designation in using the profile referral service for the first time by sending them the personal profile form, along with instructions for completing and using it, upon presbytery notification of the candidate’s new standing.

## **Graduating Candidates**

Special provisions allow certified candidates in their final semester of theological study in a college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada to seek a call to congregations within this denomination. This shortens the time following graduation that otherwise would be necessary for the certified candidate and the congregation to meet and discern a call to minister together and to secure presbytery approval for the call, and for the newly ordained/designated minister to be settled in the congregation.

These special provisions come into effect on February 1 or October 1, whichever date falls in the candidate’s final semester. They are available to graduating candidates who have obtained two-fold permission: certification for ordination conditional upon graduation by their presbytery and permission of the college.

Interim moderators and congregations are free to approach certified candidates after February 1 or October 1, whichever date falls in the student’s final semester. Provided the student has obtained the requisite permission from the presbytery and the college, those discussions may continue. Graduating students with the requisite permission are also free to approach interim moderators and search committees after those same “early permission” dates.

The graduating student follows the call procedures until the time when, normally, the call would be placed in the candidate’s hands (BF 215.1). At this point, when the call of the congregation has been approved by the congregation’s presbytery and by the student’s certifying presbytery, call procedures are

suspended. The student is given seven days from the suspension to indicate their willingness for the call to proceed: the implication is that the student will not seek other calls at this point nor consent to having their name placed in any other call (BF 221).

Final steps occur after the student graduates. The certifying presbytery places the call in the hands of the candidate, who is now certified for ordination/designation (without condition). After the call is placed in the hands of the candidate, the candidate has seven days, which is the normal length of time, to decide whether to accept or decline the call (BF 230.1).

## **Ordination/Designation**

The church's regulations and practice pertaining to ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacraments are outlined in the Book of Forms, sections 233 – 242, 446 and 447 – 447.4, and Appendix L. The sections pertaining to designation to the Order of Diaconal Ministries are 174.4 – 174.7.1, 446.1 and 451 – 451.4, and Appendix L.

The right to ordain/designate rests with the presbytery issuing the call or confirming the appointment by the Life and Mission Agency. At a service of worship held in the calling congregation, the presbytery first ordains or designates the candidate, and then inducts the new minister into the ministry position and places the individual's name on the constituent roll of the presbytery.

Presbyteries may waive their right to ordain/designate at the request of another presbytery, a common occurrence when the certifying presbytery wishes to conduct the service of ordination/designation in the candidate's home congregation. In these cases, the ordination/designation of the candidate by the certifying presbytery takes place first, at a different place and time than the induction of the new minister by the presbytery issuing the call.

Certifying presbyteries request permission to conduct the ordination/designation when they inform the presbytery issuing the call that they have approved the call and that the candidate has accepted it. Normally, arrangements for the time and location of the two services are worked out by the two presbytery clerks in consultation with the candidate and the interim moderator.

## Tasks and Responsibilities

### Candidate

The candidate is asking, “Is Christ calling me to ministry in the church?” The candidate seeks to discern the direction of God’s leading and remains receptive to the guidance of the church as it tests the outer dimension of the call. Through study and service, the candidate strives to develop the gifts and graces for ministry, while continuing to grow in faith and maturity as a disciple of Christ.

### Seeking to Enter the Candidacy Process

- Ask the session to recommend you to the presbytery for certification as a candidate for ministry. Making this request may require a letter addressed to the clerk of session or simply a conversation with your minister, depending on how formally your session operates. Delay this request until you have been a member of the congregation for at least the preceding year.
- Review Appendix J in the Book of Forms to gain a sense of the questions and issues for discussion that might arise at different stages in the candidacy process. For initial certification, note J-6 (questions to be asked by presbyteries) and J-7 (issues for presbyteries to consider).
- Prepare and submit any materials requested by the session and meet with the individuals conducting the interview for the session.
- If the session recommends you to the presbytery, prepare and submit any materials requested by the presbytery Student Certification Committee and meet with the committee’s interview team.
- Give the interview team the original and one copy of your current vulnerable sector police records check, prepared within the last five years. If the document is more than one year old, submit an update statement attesting that you have not committed any crimes since the police service issued the records check. The original document will be returned to you, after the interview team has verified the copy against it.

### Standing as a Certified Candidate for Ministry

- The Student Certification Committee will inform you what decision the presbytery has made about your certification.
- After initial certification, the presbytery might conduct a service of worship acknowledging your standing as a certified candidate under the care of the presbytery (Book of Common Worship, p. 301).
- Your standing as a certified candidate for ministry ends when:
  - your presbytery certifies you for ordination/designation
  - the presbytery accepts your request, in writing through the presbytery clerk, to withdraw from candidacy
  - the presbytery decides not to recertify you or to remove your standing
- Presbyteries must inform other presbyteries by circular letter of their decisions not to certify, not to recertify, or to remove standing (BF 203.1)

### *Transfer of Care*

- Candidates normally remain under the care of the presbytery of first certification for the whole period of preparation.

- Nevertheless, transfer of care is required in some circumstances and permitted in others.
- Transfer of care is required when the candidate is appointed to a pastoral charge in a different presbytery for longer than a summer, and is permitted when the certifying presbytery is far away from the college (BF 204). Transfer of care is required when the candidate moves to live within the bounds of a different presbytery (BF 209.1).
- If you require or request a transfer of care, write to your current, certifying presbytery through its clerk to make the request. Acknowledge in the letter your understanding that, when a transfer is made, the transferring presbytery will forward to the new presbytery all the documents in your confidential presbytery file. This could include written materials you provided the Student Certification Committee, references, session report requesting initial certification, guidance conference report, psychological assessment report, annual reports from the college, and notes from your interviews with the Student Certification Committee.
- Since internships are not presbytery appointments, these do not require transfer of care.

### ***Guidance Conference***

- Ideally, candidates attend a guidance conference after completing several first-year M.Div. courses but before entering the second year of the program.
- Attend a guidance conference, responding to the invitation from Ministry and Church Vocations and submitting material and observing deadlines as requested.
- When you receive your guidance conference report, decide whether to consent to its release to the presbytery Student Certification Committee and to the college for inclusion in your academic file.

### ***Psychological Testing***

- Ideally, candidates undergo psychological testing while in the first year of the M.Div. program.
- To initiate the psychological testing, choose a psychologist from the list provided by the college.
- Make your own arrangements for the testing appointments. Take the authorization form prepared by the college to your first appointment.
- When you receive your psych testing report, decide whether to consent to its release to the presbytery Student Certification Committee and to the college for inclusion in your academic file.

### ***Recertification***

- Your presbytery will review your standing as a certified candidate annually, or more often at its discretion. Often this involves an interview with members of the Student Certification Committee.
- Review recertification sections of Appendix J of the Book of Forms: J-8 (questions to be asked by presbyteries) and J-9 (issues for presbytery to consider).
- The Student Certification Committee will present a recommendation to the presbytery about your standing. If the results are positive, you will be recertified. Conditional/probationary recertification is also an option.
- Since reports from the guidance conference, psychological testing and the college are prerequisites for the first recertification, if these are not available when it is time for your first recertification, your initial certification may be extended.
- If you serve in a summer ministry placement in another presbytery, that presbytery must send a written report about your work to your presbytery. Recertification is not permitted until your presbytery has considered that report.

### ***Vulnerable Sector Police Records Checks***

- To each recertification interview, bring an update statement attesting that you have not committed any crimes since the police service issued the vulnerable sector check in your candidate file.
- If the five-year period for the check has elapsed, get a new one prepared, and give the Student Certification Committee the original and one copy. The original will be returned to you.
- Before participating in a field education placement, you are required to present a vulnerable sector police records check to the college. If the document is more than one year old, a signed update statement is also required.

### ***Education***

- To pursue the standard pathway, apply for admission into the M.Div. program of a Presbyterian Church in Canada college, adhering to the application procedures and deadlines of the college.
- To apply for an alternative educational pathway, contact the Committee on Education and Reception through its Secretary. See Supplement C, page 37, for more information.
- Being assigned an alternative educational program does not enroll you in a suitable program, nor does it accomplish or guarantee college admission. If you are assigned an alternative educational program, your next step is to apply for admission into a college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, adhering to the admission procedures and deadlines of the college.
- Consult with your faculty advisor as you select courses.
- Follow your college's procedures as you enroll for courses, and at the completion of your program, as you apply to graduate.
- Theological education for ministry requires more than completion of M.Div. coursework. The college diploma is one prerequisite for ordination/designation: with it, the governing board of the college certifies that you have completed the prescribed course of study and that you have demonstrated the practical gifts and skills and suitable character and conduct for ministry (BF 206.2).

### ***Examination for Certification for Ordination/Designation***

- Review pertinent sections of Appendix J of the Book of Forms (J-10 through J-13), noting especially J:11 (examination) and J-11.3 (issues for the presbytery to consider) and BF 206 – 206.1.
- Write to the presbytery, through its clerk, to request examination for certification for ordination/designation.
- Discuss with the Student Certification Committee the various requirements that will constitute the presbytery's examination.
- Be sure to discuss the timing of the presbytery's examination. If you would opt to begin seeking a call by February 1 or October 1 (whichever falls in your final semester of theological study), provided the college grants you its permission to do so, then a presbytery decision to certify you as a candidate for ordination/designation conditional upon graduation must precede these dates. This will require advance planning. You may find that you are preparing and submitting documents and leading worship for the presbytery, for instance, some months before your final semester.
- Prepare, submit and complete the presbytery's examination requirements.
- Candidates are present in the meeting of the presbytery when the report of the examination is considered (BF 206.1.1).

- When an examination is not sustained (i.e. approved), the presbytery notifies the other presbyteries and the candidate's college by circular letter (BF 203.1).
- When an examination is not sustained, the presbytery may prescribe a new examination, to begin after a period of at least three months (BF 207).

### **Standing as a Certified Candidate for Ordination/Designation**

- This standing allows you to be considered for all ministry positions leading to ordination/designation in The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
- You will remain under the care of the certifying presbytery as long as you live, work and/or study within the bounds, or are working or studying abroad with permission of the presbytery (BF 209).
- If you leave the bounds of your presbytery to live, work and/or study elsewhere in Canada, you must request a transfer, in writing through the clerk of their current presbytery, to the jurisdiction of the appropriate presbytery (BF 209.1).
- The presbytery will review your standing, until ordination/designation, at least every three years (BF 211).
- Your standing as a certified candidate for ordination/designation ends when:
  - a presbytery ordains or designates you
  - the presbytery accepts your request, in writing through the presbytery clerk, to remove your standing
  - the presbytery decides not to recertify you upon review (three-year intervals) or to remove your standing
- Presbyteries must inform other presbyteries by circular letter of their decisions not to certify, not to recertify, or to remove standing (BF 203.1).

### **Seeking a Call**

- During your final year of theological study, take care not to accept opportunities to preach as Sunday supply in any congregations where you might like to seek a call. (See Supplement J, p. 73 of this document and A&P 1993, p. 288, 52).
- Review the church's procedures for search, call and induction (Calling a Minister: Guidelines for Presbyteries, Interim Moderators and Search Committees)
- [presbyterian.ca/calling-a-minister](http://presbyterian.ca/calling-a-minister)
- Review the kinds of ministry positions that lead to ordination/designation (page 13 of this document).
- When you anticipate that you will be extended a call that you intend to accept, take steps to obtain a new vulnerable sector police records check. Presbyteries are required to ensure that their ministers have a vulnerable sector police records check conducted at the time of a new call and submit the resulting report to the presbytery. (See *Calling a Minister*, Supplement 3; *Leading with Care Policy*, section 3.10; and A&P 2005, p. 345-46.)

### **For Graduates**

- You require two-fold permission before you begin to seek a call:
  - college: graduation with the college diploma and the M.Div. degree or certificate of completion of assigned studies
  - presbytery: certification for ordination/designation

## Candidate

- Call procedures for you are the same as for ordained or designated ministers, except that you will be ordained/designated before being inducted into the position.
- Follow the call procedures for graduates, as summarized on page 14 of this document.

### ***For Graduating Candidates in Final Semester***

- You require two-fold permission before you begin to seek a call:
  - college: the February 1 or October 1 “early permission” letter
  - presbytery: certification for ordination/designation conditional upon graduation
- Once this permission is in place, you may contact interim moderators about ministry positions.
- After February 1 or October 1 (whichever date occurs in your final semester), interim moderators are allowed to approach you about ministry positions. It falls to you to confirm that you have obtained the requisite permission so that the conversation may continue.
- Follow the call procedures for graduates, as summarized on page 14 of this document, up to the point when, normally, the call would be placed in your hands. When the presbytery suspends the call procedures, you are given seven days to indicate your willingness for the call to proceed. If you indicate that you are willing for the call to proceed, you give your commitment not to seek other calls at this point, nor to consent to having your name placed in any other call.
- After graduation, your presbytery will declare you to be certified for ordination/designation – now without condition.
- Your presbytery will place the call in your hands. You will have the normal length of time (seven days) to accept or decline the call (BF 230.1).

### **Ordination/Designation**

- Review the church’s regulations and practice pertaining to ordination (BF 233-242) or designation (BF 174.4-174.7.1); see also Appendix L. Note especially central elements of the ordination/designation service: the preamble and questions you will be asked and the formula you will be asked to sign (BF 447-447.4 and 446 for ordination; BF 451-451.4 and 446.1 for designation).
- If you wish to be ordained/designated in your home congregation, tell your certifying presbytery, so that it can make this request of the presbytery issuing the call.

## Tasks and Responsibilities Session

The session stays alert to identify individuals with gifts and calling for ministry. When concurring with a member's desire to enter the candidacy process, the session recommends the individual to the presbytery for certification as a candidate for ministry. The session maintains prayerful support for the candidate and the candidate's family.

### When a Member Seeks to Enter the Candidacy Process

- Commit to handle all confidential information with appropriate care.
- Ensure that the individual has been a member of your congregation for at least the preceding year. If this is not the case, delay consideration of the member's request until the appropriate time.
- Receive the individual's request for session recommendation to the presbytery. Assign a group of people to interview the individual on behalf of the session, noting in particular the resources in Appendix J of the Book of Forms (J-4, J-5). Sessions may ask the individual to prepare and submit materials ahead of time (e.g., faith journey, confidential references).
- Consider the report of the interviewers and decide whether to recommend the individual to the presbytery. If positive, write to the presbytery, including a report.

### Congregational Support for a Certified Candidate

- Maintain prayerful support for the candidate and the candidate's family.
- Consider other forms of support, such as providing the candidate with opportunities to observe and to experience various aspects of the congregation's ministry, particularly in a leadership role (to the extent that the candidate has time to do so), mentoring, and financial assistance.
- See Supplement H on pages 62 for further suggestions.

## **Tasks and Responsibilities Presbytery**

The presbytery makes decisions over several years that determine an individual's standing in the candidacy process. When a candidate completes the candidacy process successfully and wishes to accept a called ministry position, with presbytery approval, the presbytery proceeds with ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacraments or designation to the Order of Diaconal Ministries.

### **Preparation for the Candidacy Process**

- Assign the pastoral care and guidance of ministry candidates to a committee or team (referred to as the Student Certification Committee in this document).
- Ensure that the committee is well equipped for its important role.
- Receive session correspondence requesting certification of a congregational member, and direct it to the Student Certification Committee for follow-up.
- Commit to handle all confidential information with appropriate care.
- Seek to identify individuals with gifts and calling for ministry, to the extent that you have opportunity to do so.

### **Student Certification Committee**

- Ensure you are well equipped to engage with the presbytery's candidates in their vocational preparation and discernment:
  - understand the candidacy process as a whole and the central role entrusted to the presbytery
  - get to know your candidates, since these relationships form the basis for the presbytery's guidance and pastoral care of its candidates and for its decisions about them
  - commit to the spiritual and pastoral work of listening for the call of God to the candidates
  - pray for the candidates and for yourselves and the presbytery in relating to them
  - be prepared to lead the presbytery in its decisions pertaining to candidacy
  - commit to handle all information from or about an individual with appropriate confidentiality
- Attempt to develop practices that can be used uniformly and consistently by your presbytery in dealing with all prospective candidates and certified candidates.
- Decide what materials you will ask prospective candidates to submit before their first interview with you. This could include documents such as a description of the individual's faith journey, a sermon the individual preached, a bible study the individual developed, and confidential references.
- Become familiar with the church's educational pathways for ministry (page 37). While educational preparation for ministry does not fall under the purview of the presbytery, you may have opportunity to guide candidates in their educational choices before they begin communicating with a college. Note especially the two-year membership rule for M.Div. graduates of other theological colleges, and the requirement of all applications for alternative educational pathways to be endorsed by the presbytery.

- Review and make use of “Presbytery Motions and Follow-up Actions” (page 55). It suggests wording for recommendations you will present to the presbytery at different points in the candidacy process and it outlines follow-up actions required of the presbytery clerk.

### ***Session Letter of Recommendation***

- Review the session letter requesting certification for the individual. Look for confirmation that the individual has been a member of the congregation for at least the preceding year. If the letter does not provide this information, contact the session to obtain it. Unless the one-year membership requirement has been met, the only action the presbytery can take is to advise the session to resubmit its request at the appropriate time.
- Tell the prospective candidate what materials are required before the interview and to bring to the interview a vulnerable sector police records check (original and one copy) that is less than five years old.
- Make arrangements for an interview team to meet with the prospective candidate.

### ***Initial Certification***

- In preparation for the interview, review the session report, the sections on initial certification in Appendix J of the Book of Forms (J-6 and J-7), as well as material submitted by the prospective candidate.
- Meet with the prospective candidate, keeping in mind the gifts and graces required for ministry (page 3).
- Discuss the individual’s educational background and plans. If an alternative educational pathway is appropriate, refer the individual to the application procedures and guidelines of the Committee on Education and Reception (Supplement C, page 37, and Supplement D, page 42). If there is any question about whether study in a particular program meets the church’s standards, advise the individual to consult with Ministry and Church Vocations as soon as possible.
- After the interview, the committee debriefs with the interview team and prepares the report and recommendation for presentation to the presbytery. Probationary or conditional certification is not permitted at initial certification.
- Present your report to the presbytery, at which time it decides whether to certify the individual as a candidate for ministry.
- After a decision to certify:
  - Ensure the candidate understands the candidacy process
  - Outline your committee’s plans to interact with the candidate
  - If presbytery opts to hold a service of worship to acknowledge the candidate’s standing, make the arrangements
  - Touch base with presbytery clerk about notifying the college and Ministry and Church Vocations
- After a decision not to certify:
  - Discuss with the individual other avenues of service within the church
  - Outline steps for a potentially successful reapplication, if the presbytery wishes to encourage this
  - Touch base with the presbytery clerk about notifying the college and the presbyteries

### ***Recertification***

- Presbyteries are required to review and renew or amend the standing of their certified candidates for ministry at least annually.
- Make arrangements for an interview team to meet with the candidate.
- In your review, keep in mind the gifts and graces required for ministry (page 3) and make use of the sections on “Recertification” in Appendix J of the Book of Forms (J-8 and J-9).
- After the interview, the committee debriefs with the interview team and prepares the report and recommendation for presentation to the presbytery. Conditional or probationary recertification is permitted.
- Present your report to the presbytery, at which time it decides whether to recertify the individual as a candidate for ministry.

### ***Termination of Standing***

- A presbytery decision is required to terminate a candidate’s standing.
- Standing as a certified candidate for ministry ends when:
  - the presbytery certifies the individual as a candidate for ordination/designation
  - the presbytery accepts the individual’s request, in writing through the presbytery clerk, to withdraw from candidacy
  - the presbytery decides not to recertify the individual
  - the presbytery removes the individual’s standing

Presbyteries are required to inform other presbyteries of their decisions not to certify, not to recertify, or to remove standing (BF 203.1).

### ***Reports from Others***

- Annual reports from the colleges, and reports from guidance conference and psychological testing when released by the candidates, augment the presbytery’s first-hand experience of its candidates, and provide additional material for your discussions with and about them. These documents should be kept in the presbytery’s confidential file for each candidate.
- When Ministry and Church Vocations invoices the presbytery for its share of the cost of psychological testing, it will send you an evaluation form to invite your feedback on this part of the candidacy process.

### ***Initial Certification Extended***

- Prior to moving forward with the first recertification, presbyteries must have considered reports from the candidate’s guidance conference, psychological testing and college.
- If this has not occurred, and provided you wish to recommend continuing the individual’s standing as a certified candidate for ministry, the appropriate recommendation is for the presbytery to extend the initial certification.
- Once this prerequisite is met, and provided the presbytery wishes to continue the candidate’s standing, the presbytery may adopt a motion for recertification.

### ***Summer Placement Report***

- Do not present a recommendation to recertify a candidate until you have reviewed the report from another presbytery where the candidate served in a summer placement.

### ***Vulnerable Sector Police Records Checks***

- Keep a copy of the candidate's vulnerable sector police records check, after verifying it against the original, which is returned to the candidate.
- At annual recertification interviews and when examined for certification for ordination /designation, candidates are required to present a signed update statement that they have not committed any crime since their vulnerable sector police records check was issued. If the five-year period for the check has elapsed, a new one must be prepared and presented.

### ***Examination for Certification for Ordination/Designation***

- Review Book of Forms sections 205 – 212 and Appendix J-10 through J-13.
- Decide the various requirements that will constitute the presbytery's examination, noting in particular Appendix J-10 (application). Presbyteries typically insert these requirements into their standing orders.
- Consider the timing of the presbytery's examination. If the presbytery would like its graduating candidates to have the option of seeking a call by February 1 or October 1 (whichever falls in the candidate's final semester), provided the college grants its permission to do so, then a presbytery decision to certify the candidate for ordination/designation conditional upon graduation must precede these dates.
- When the presbytery receives a candidate's request for examination, discuss the examination requirements and scheduling with the candidate. Make arrangements as needed.
- As your candidates look towards the time when they will be permitted to seek a call, ensure that they understand the two-fold permission necessary to seek a call during their final semester.
- If the presbytery receives a candidate's request for examination by a different presbytery – the presbytery where the college is located or the presbytery of first certification (if not your presbytery) – consider the merits of such a change. Present a recommendation to the presbytery. If the presbytery grants its permission, you will forward the contents of the presbytery's confidential file for the candidate to the appropriate person in the examining presbytery (BF 205-205.1).
- You may begin examination of a candidate any time after the candidate's request has been received. Examinations typically are held in the candidate's final year of theological studies, with consideration of the "early permission" dates as appropriate.
- Examine the candidate, keeping in mind the details in Appendix J-11 (examination) and J-11.3 (issues for the presbytery to consider).
- Prepare the report of the examination with recommendations:
  - If the result is positive and the candidate has graduated with the college diploma, recommend "that the examination be sustained and the candidate be certified for ordination/designation."
  - If the result is positive and the candidate has not yet graduated with the college diploma, recommend "that the examination be sustained and the candidate be certified for ordination/designation conditional upon graduation."
  - If the result is not positive, recommend "that the examination not be sustained." An additional motion specifying a new examination to be commenced after a period of not less than three months is permitted, if desired (BF 207).
- Present the report of the examination to the presbytery at a meeting of the presbytery when the candidate is present.
- A presbytery decision not to sustain the examination for certification for ordination/designation is followed by notification of presbyteries and the candidate's college by circular letter (BF 203.1).

## **Standing as a Certified Candidate for Ordination/Designation**

- Your presbytery's certified candidates for ordination/designation remain under its care while living, working and/or studying within the bounds, or while working or studying abroad with permission of the presbytery (BF 209).
- When your presbytery's certified candidates for ordination/designation leave the bounds to live, work and/or study elsewhere in Canada, they must ask your presbytery, in writing through the presbytery clerk, to transfer them to the jurisdiction of the appropriate presbytery.
- Review the standing of your presbytery's certified candidates for ordination/designation who have not been ordained or designated every three years (BF 211).
- In the same way that a presbytery decision is required to initiate or to maintain a candidate's standing, a presbytery decision is required to terminate it. Standing as a certified candidate for ordination/designation ends when:
  - a presbytery ordains the individual as a minister of Word and Sacraments or designates the individual as a member of the Order of Diaconal Ministries
  - the presbytery accepts the individual's request, in writing through the presbytery clerk, to have their standing removed
  - the presbytery decides not to recertify the individual upon review (at three-year intervals) of their standing
  - the presbytery removes the individual's standing
- Presbyteries are required to inform other presbyteries by circular letter of their decisions not to certify, not to recertify, or to remove standing (BF 203.1).

## **Seeking a Call**

- Advise your candidates in their final year of theological study to take care not to accept opportunities to preach as Sunday supply in any congregations where you might like to seek a call. Ensure that your interim moderators are aware of these same restrictions as they make arrangements to fill Sunday pulpits. (See Supplement J, p. 73 of this document and A&P 1993, p. 288, 52).
- As your candidates look towards the time when they will be permitted to seek a call, ensure that they understand the two-fold permission necessary to seek a call during their final semester.
- Ensure that your candidates are familiar with the church's procedures for search, call and induction, and the kinds of ministry positions that will lead to ordination/designation, as summarized on pages 13 – 15 of this document.

## **Ordination/Designation**

- Review the church's regulations and practice pertaining to ordination (BF 233-242, 446, 447-447.4) and designation (BF 174.4-174.7.1, 446.1, 451-451.4); see also Appendix L.
- Be aware that the right to ordain/designate rests with the presbytery issuing the call, but that presbyteries normally waive this right whenever requested by the certifying presbytery – a common occurrence that allows the ordination/designation to be held in the candidate's home congregation.

## **Tasks and Responsibilities College**

The theological colleges of The Presbyterian Church in Canada guide candidates through their educational preparation in the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) program. The M.Div. degree or a certificate of the completion of assigned studies and the college diploma together signify the assessment of the college governing board that the candidate should be eligible to enter the ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. This positive assessment is a prerequisite for ordination or designation.

### **M.Div. (Master of Divinity) Program**

- Provide leadership to the church in theological education by administering the college's M.Div. program. In addition to the core functions associated with teaching students, this work entails establishing and implementing admissions procedures; developing and reviewing the structure and goals of the program and of the individual courses, in cooperation with ecumenical partners; and employing, developing and reviewing college faculty and staff.
- To equip the governing board of the college for its role in granting the college diploma to certified candidates for ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, identify the competencies for ministry and the levels of achievement in them that these students must demonstrate. Publish materials that explain these standards to the students.

### **Care and Guidance of Certified Candidates**

- Assign faculty advisors to students, to provide them with guidance and support as they study and to assist them in course selection.
- Commit to handle all confidential information with appropriate care.

### ***Candidate Files***

- Maintain an academic file for each candidate.
- Receive reports from presbyteries detailing their decisions about their candidates.

### ***Reports to Presbyteries***

- Report annually and as necessary to presbyteries about their candidates
- Remain open to collaboration with certifying presbyteries in guiding and supporting candidates who are experiencing difficulty in the candidacy process.

### ***Guidance Conference***

- Receive the report of each candidate's guidance conference and keep it in the candidate's file
- Discuss the report with the candidate, and with the faculty in the context of their evaluation of the candidate's progress, as appropriate.

### ***Psychological Testing***

- Receive documents pertaining to psychological testing from Ministry and Church Vocations: the list of approved psychologists, information describing this program, authorization forms, and evaluation forms.
- Distribute the list of approved psychologists and information about psychological testing to certified candidates in their first semester of study.
- Complete an authorization form for your students who are certified candidates for ministry to take to their first appointment with the psychologist. The form indicates the church's commitment to pay the psychologist for the testing, and provides the names and contact information of the intended recipients of the report, in the event that the candidate gives signed consent for its release: the candidate, the convener of the Student Certification Committee of the certifying presbytery, and the principal or designate at the college.
- Receive psychological testing reports for each candidate and keep it in the candidate's file.
- Discuss the report with the candidate, and with the faculty in the context of their evaluation of the candidate's progress, as appropriate.
- Complete and return to Ministry and Church Vocations the evaluation form to provide feedback about the psychological testing program and about the particular psychologist who conducted the testing.

### ***Vulnerable Sector Police Records Checks***

- Candidates are required to present a vulnerable sector police records check to the college before participating in a field education placement. If the document is more than one year old, candidates are also required to present a signed update statement that they have not committed any crime since their vulnerable sector police records check was issued.
- Colleges may require certified candidates to present signed update statements annually.

### ***During a Candidate's Final Semester***

- The college governing board decides whether to give the candidate its permission to seek a call beginning February 1 or October 1, whichever date falls in the candidate's final semester.
- When permission is granted, the college notifies the candidate and Ministry and Church Vocations.

### ***Graduation***

- For each certified candidate for ministry who applies to graduate, the college governing board decides whether to confer the M.Div. degree or a certificate of completion of assigned studies and the college diploma. Graduates who are not granted the college diploma remain ineligible for ordination/designation in The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
- Confer the degrees or certificates of completion of assigned studies and college diplomas at convocation.

## **Tasks and Responsibilities Ministry and Church Vocations**

Ministry and Church Vocations is a department of the Life and Mission Agency with a mandate to help the church discern, prepare and support ministerial leaders. The department has several responsibilities pertaining to the church's development and implementation of the candidacy process.

### **Candidacy Process Use and Review**

- Provide educational materials and confidential sounding board to candidates, presbytery Student Certification Committees, colleges and others as they seek to fulfill their roles in the candidacy process.
- Monitor a feedback loop on the church's use of the candidacy process and conduct periodic reviews of the process with church-wide consultation, presenting recommendations to the General Assembly as appropriate.
- Maintain files of candidate data
- Commit to handle all confidential information with appropriate care.

### **Guidance Conference**

- Administer, finance and review guidance conference program.
- Communicate with candidates upon notification of their certification by the presbytery; invite candidates to attend guidance conference at the appropriate time, and handle all logistics with respect to their travel and accommodation, and submission and copying of their personal information forms and confidential references.
- Keep original copy of guidance conference report and forward copies when released by the candidates.

### **Psychological Testing**

- Make contractual arrangements with psychologists approved to conduct testing of candidates.
- Provide colleges with the list of approved psychologists and information about psychological testing, for distribution to certified candidates in their first year of theological study.
- Provide colleges with the authorization forms they will complete for each student who is a certified candidate for ministry. The form indicates the church's commitment to pay the psychologist for the testing, and provides the names and contact information of the intended recipients of the report, in the event that the candidate gives signed consent for its release: the candidate, the convener of the Student Certification Committee of the certifying presbytery, and the principal or designate at the college. Candidates take the completed authorization form to their first appointment with the psychologist.
- Pay psychologists in full on receipt of their invoices, and invoice certifying presbyteries for their share (50%) of the cost for testing of their candidates.
- Upon notification from the psychologist that the testing is completed and the candidate has released the report (this information generally accompanies the psychologist's invoice), send feedback forms to the recipients. Based on their comments, review the psychological testing program and the particular psychologist who conducted the testing.

**Profile Referral Service**

- Administer the profile referral service to facilitate connections between congregations seeking a minister and ministers seeking a call.
- Assist certified candidates for ordination/designation in their search for a first called position leading to their ordination/designation.

## **Supplements**

### **A – Guidance Conference**

#### **Goals:**

- To provide the church with the best possible candidates for the ministries of the church.
- To help the candidates towards the fulfillment of their calling

#### **By:**

- providing supportive counselling
- making recommendations to the presbyteries regarding recertification of the candidates

#### **Objectives:**

- To produce a report on each candidate that comments on the candidate's moral and religious character, motives, and general fitness to study for the ministries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and that recommends to the certifying presbytery whether the candidate should be recertified
- To help candidates recognize and understand their abilities, strengths, and weaknesses that hold the potential to enhance or detract from their ministry
- To have candidates begin to develop a plan for growth that uses their strengths and accepts, compensates for, or overcomes their weaknesses
- To present good models for ministry through the conference leadership

#### **Before the Conference:**

- Candidates complete information forms and send them to the Ministry and Church Vocations office.
- Each candidate requests four letters of reference.
- Counsellors are chosen by Ministry and Church Vocations for their experience in ministry and in interviewing and counselling.
- The counsellors meet to prepare for the conference.
- Each counsellor is given a copy of the information forms of the candidates assigned to their group.

#### **The Conference:**

- The four-day conference consists of interviews, written exercises, discussions and group exercises.
- Normally, 16 candidates attend a conference. The ratio of counsellors to candidates is 1:2.
- Smaller groups of 6 to 8 candidates and their counsellors form the basic unit of the conference.
- Each candidate in the group has three interviews of 40-45 minutes. One counsellor conducts an interview on "Education, Journey of Faith and Call to Ministry". Another counsellor focuses on "Work, Other Activities and Family". In the third interview, one of these counsellors is joined by a third counsellor and together they interview the candidate on "Concept of Ministry/Diaconal Ministry, Self as Minister/Diaconal Minister, and Growth."
- The counsellors meet to decide on the contents of the written report.

## Guidance Conference

- On the last day, the candidate has a feedback interview with one or more counsellors to find out and discuss what the written report says.
- Reports are typed at the conference and made available to candidates before they leave.

### **The Report:**

- The candidate's report will contain some hard data from the information form, the observations and assessments of the counsellors, and a recommendation to the presbytery regarding recertification.
- It is the presbytery's decision whether to recertify a candidate.
- The report is prepared at the conference and signed by 3 counsellors.
- The recommendations of the report are approved by all the counsellors at the conference or, if the conference is larger, by all the counsellors in the candidate's group.
- The report is given to the candidate with a copy to keep.
- Types of recommendations:
  - **Yes** – e.g., that (name of candidate) be recertified as a suitable candidate for the ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
  - **Yes with certain conditions** – The candidate might be advised to take a particular course or some counselling or to gain some practical experience in the church or to reflect on some aspect of ministry or work on some particular aspect of development.
  - **Not at this time** – The candidate might be asked to meet certain conditions before being considered for recertification by the presbytery or before returning to another guidance conference. The kinds of conditions are similar to the ones listed for the previous type of recommendation.
  - **No** – e.g., that (name of candidate) not be recertified as a candidate for the ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

### **Candidate Options:**

- To sign the original and return it to Ministry and Church Vocations.
- To sign the report after negotiating with the counsellors through the Ministry and Church Vocations office for some re-wording of the report.
- To sign and add a statement to be circulated with the report. A copy of the statement will be sent to the counsellors who signed the report.
- Not to sign and thus withhold the report from circulation.

### **Circulation of the Report:**

#### ***If the report is signed (as in the first 3 options):***

- One copy each is sent to:
  - the convener of the Student Certification Committee of the candidate's presbytery
  - the principal of the college or the principal's designate
  - if applicable, the secretary of the Committee on Education and Reception
  - the presbytery that examines the candidate for certification for ordination/designation (when different than the certifying presbytery), if requested
- Instructions with the release of the report: All parts of this report (narrative sections and recommendations) may be shared with the presbytery Student Certification Committee /theological college faculty **as long as hard copies of the report are not made.** Within the context

of the committee's/faculty's confidential discussions about this candidate, the report may be summarized orally, read aloud, or passed around the committee/faculty table for individual reading. This copy may be kept until the candidate is ordained or designated/has graduated or left the college. Then it should be destroyed.

- The original copy of the report that is kept in the office of Ministry and Church Vocations will be destroyed when the candidate is ordained/designated.
- The report of a person who has ceased to pursue studies or graduated but has not been ordained or designated will be retained for five years after ceasing to pursue studies.

***If the report is not signed (as in the fourth option):***

Ministry and Church Vocations will:

- Withhold the report from circulation.
- Inform the two parties to whom the report is normally sent that the candidate has attended the guidance conference but has not signed the report.
- Send the recommendation from the conference to the candidate's presbytery. If the presbytery wishes to consult with the candidate to discuss the refusal to sign the report, the presbytery shall also consult with the Associate Secretary of Ministry and Church Vocations with the candidate present where possible. The Associate Secretary will keep the report and refer to it when such a consultation is necessary. The report will be destroyed when the candidate is ordained /designated or has chosen another vocation.

***Delays in Returning the Report:***

If the candidate has not returned the signed report within one month of receiving it, Ministry and Church Vocations will give the recommendation of the report to the convener of the presbytery Student Certification Committee. Ministry and Church Vocations will also inform the certifying presbytery and the college that the candidate attended the guidance conference and has not signed the report, but that the report will be sent later if it is released.

## **Supplement B – Psychological Testing**

### **Purpose**

- To encourage and aid growth and facilitate increased self-awareness in the candidate.
- To serve as a resource to those entrusted with the responsibility of counselling and guiding those who will continue to proceed to ministry and those who need to be redirected in their choice of vocation.

### **Value of Psychological Testing**

The report of the psychological assessment is advisory and not determinative. It forms one element in the church's preparation and discernment process for candidates for ministry.

#### ***Principal Values for the Assessors:***

- To provide clues to qualities and characteristics that should be explored in interviews;
- To confirm or question the validity of conclusions derived from interviews, other information and impressions;
- To indicate the degree of correspondence of the candidate's personal characteristics with those considered desirable, or otherwise, of persons in ministry; and
- To assist presbyteries in their responsibility for making strong nominations, and certifying capable persons who seem, in their judgment, to have real potential for ministry.

#### ***Values for the Assessed:***

- To assist candidates in self-assessment and self-understanding by increasing their awareness of their psychological and social strengths and weaknesses and their potential for growth, and for creative and wise decision-making in life and vocation; and
- To aid in finding alternate ways that people can respond to a call when it is indicated that they are not suitable for ministry.

### **Areas to be Tested**

A registered psychologist will conduct a comprehensive set of tests to assess and to provide comments on the following aspects of the candidate's psychological health:

- Mental Health: the quality of the candidate's mental health, identifying any specific concerns
- Personality Problems: the candidate's personality structure and organization, the ways in which this structure is adaptive or maladaptive, and any core conflicts
- Interpersonal Competency: the quality of the candidate's interpersonal relationship style and interactions
- Selfhood: the candidate's self-image, self-experience and self-esteem
- Role in Community/Leadership Style: the candidate's style of operating within groups, including the ways the candidate provides leadership
- Intelligence and Cognitive Functioning: the candidate's cognitive functioning and the impact this has on the candidate's processing of information and decision-making; the candidate's

intellectual gifts and limitations, and the impact this has on the candidate's ability to prepare for and carry out the responsibilities of ministry

- Religious Health: the extent to which the candidate's faith and sense of vocation to ministry are healthy and integrative

## **Psychological Testing Procedures**

### ***List of Psychologists***

- Ministry and Church Vocations will provide to the colleges a list of approved psychologists within the vicinity of each college. Ministry and Church Vocations will review the list annually in June and will provide an updated list to the colleges by September.

### ***Certification a Prerequisite***

- When a candidate has been certified, the presbytery will notify the college in writing. The college must receive this document before a candidate may be tested psychologically.
- At the time of certification, the presbytery will ask the candidate to provide the psychologist's name, address and phone number, once the arrangements have been made and before the assessment takes place.

### ***Arranging for the Assessment***

- The candidate obtains the list of psychologists from the college and arranges for a psychological assessment with one of the approved psychologists.
- When the candidate has arranged for the psychological assessment and before the assessment takes place, the candidate informs the presbytery and provides the presbytery with the name, address and phone number of the approved psychologist.
- The candidate obtains a signed authorization form from the college indicating that the individual is a certified candidate and listing the names and addresses of the people who will receive a copy of the report if the candidate consents to its release. (At the same time, the candidate also should receive an evaluation form for use at the end of the process.) The candidate provides the signed authorization form to the psychologist before the psychologist begins the assessment.

### ***The Assessment***

- The psychologist may choose to talk to the convener of the presbytery Student Certification Committee and/or the college representative before administering the tests.
- The convener of the presbytery Student Certification Committee and/or the college representative may choose to talk with the psychologist before the tests are administered.
- The candidate completes a series of tests and interviews with the psychologist.
- The psychologist interprets the tests and prepares a written report.
- The psychologist meets with the candidate to explain the written report.
- The psychologist gives the candidate a copy of the report.

### ***Release of the Report***

- The candidate is asked to sign a form to release the report to the convener of the presbytery Student Certification Committee and the designated person at the college.

## Psychological Testing

- When the release form has been signed by the candidate, the psychologist sends the report to the designated people.
- The convener of the presbytery Student Certification Committee and/or the designated person at the college may choose to consult with the psychologist about the report.

### ***Confidentiality***

- The report of the psychological assessment is a confidential document. All parts of the report may be shared with the presbytery Student Certification Committee or the theological college faculty as long as hard copies of the report are not made. Within the context of the committee's/faculty's confidential discussions about this candidate, the report may be summarized orally, read aloud or passed around the committee/faculty table for individual reading.

### ***Evaluation of the Psychological Testing Process***

- The college representative gives an evaluation form to the candidate when providing the candidate with an authorization form.
- The college will have evaluation forms to give feedback to Ministry and Church Vocations.
- Upon receipt of the psychologist's invoice, Ministry and Church Vocations will send an evaluation form to the convener of the presbytery Student Certification Committee.
- Ministry and Church Vocations will review this feedback.

### ***Payment***

- The psychologist sends the bill to Ministry and Church Vocations.
- Ministry and Church Vocations pays the total bill.
- Ministry and Church Vocations invoices the certifying presbytery for its portion.
- The presbytery pays the requested amount to Ministry and Church Vocations.

### ***When a Candidate Takes Extra Time to Decide about the Release of the Report***

- The psychologist informs Ministry and Church Vocations when a candidate takes extra time to decide to release the report.
- When this occurs, Ministry and Church Vocations will inform the presbytery when it sends the invoice.
- The psychologist informs Ministry and Church Vocations when the report is signed.
- When Ministry and Church Vocations learns that the report has been signed, Ministry and Church Vocations sends evaluation forms to the presbytery and college.

## Supplement

### C – Educational Pathways for Certified Candidates for Ministry

#### Overview

The standard educational preparation for ministry is a university undergraduate degree followed by a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree from a theological college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Candidates apply for admission to the Presbyterian Church in Canada college of their choice, submitting required documents and observing deadlines as outlined in the college admission procedures.

Certified candidates for ministry may apply for an alternative educational pathway under certain specific circumstances:

- No university undergraduate degree and 35 – 59 years of age:  
The assigned program of study, referred to as a General Assembly Special Course, includes university undergraduate Arts courses, to be completed with a minimum B average, followed by courses in the M.Div. program of a college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
- M.Div. degree and university undergraduate degree:  
The applicant has earned a university undergraduate degree and an M.Div. degree. The M.Div. degree was completed with a minimum B average in a college outside The Presbyterian Church in Canada that is accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (or equivalent outside North America). The candidate has been a member of a congregation of The Presbyterian Church in Canada for at least the two years preceding the application. The assigned program of study includes courses in the M.Div. program of a college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
- Diaconal ministers seeking ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacraments:  
The applicant is a member of the Order of Diaconal Ministries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The assigned program of study includes courses in the M.Div. program of a college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Application for these alternative educational pathways, through the Committee on Education and Reception, requires endorsement of the application by the certifying presbytery. When the committee approves an application, it recommends to the General Assembly a course of study and any other conditions to be met before the presbytery is permitted to examine the candidate for certification for ordination/designation. Adoption of the committee’s recommendation by the General Assembly assigns the course of study and additional conditions as noted. Candidates then choose appropriate courses to fulfill the church’s requirements in consultation with the faculty of a college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, after successful application to the college for admission.

#### About University Undergraduate Degrees

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.

## Educational Pathways

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 school or program of study are advised to consult with the Committee on Education and Reception before enrolment.

### **For Candidates (35 – 59 years) with No University Undergraduate Degree**

These candidates apply for a General Assembly Special Course. 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)
- 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
- has not earned a university undergraduate degree
- provides academic transcripts
- arranges 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 their 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

### **For M.Div. Graduates of Other Theological Colleges**

These candidates apply for eligibility to be examined for certification for ordination/designation. When an application is approved, the General Assembly specifies the conditions that the candidate must fulfill, including completion of studies assigned in a college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, before the presbytery is permitted to examine the candidate for certification for ordination/designation. 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)
- is a certified candidate for ministry of the presbytery to which the congregation belongs
- holds a university undergraduate degree
- holds a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree, with a minimum B average, from a North American seminary accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), or from a seminary outside North America with equivalent accreditation

- provides academic transcripts
- arranges 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 their 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

### Application Procedures

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

To communicate with the committee through its secretary, contact Ministry and Church Vocations, the department of the Life and Mission Agency that administers the committee's work. You will be asked first to complete a short enquirer form providing personal details. This equips the committee to forward information that is pertinent to the candidate's situation, and if appropriate, to forward an application form.

2. Complete and submit the application form.

3. Observe the application deadlines.

These deadlines depend on whether the Committee on Education and Reception will review the application at its spring or autumn meeting and the location of the applicant's personal interview with the committee. Most interviews take place at Presbyterian Church in Canada offices in Toronto, Ontario, during the committee's meetings. Under some circumstances, applicants living in Canada may have the option of an interview closer to home.

For the Committee's Spring Meeting:

**March 30:** for interviews at Presbyterian Church Offices in Toronto, Ontario  
**February 28:** for interviews at other locations (when arrangements can be made)

For the Committee's Autumn Meeting:

**September 30:** for interviews at Presbyterian Church Offices in Toronto, Ontario,  
**September 1:** for interviews at other locations (when arrangements can be made)

4. Arrange for documents to be prepared and forwarded directly by others.

**Academic transcripts** for all post-secondary education are required. These are original documents bearing the school's official seal, signature and/or watermark – photocopies, emailed, scanned or faxed

## Educational Pathways

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 are not required and will not be accepted.

Three **confidential 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 be used also for the guidance conference, with the permission of the reference authors. Candidates are advised to ask their reference writers to indicate their permission on the reference form.

**Presbytery endorsement** of an application conveys presbytery agreement that the candidate should be permitted to pursue this educational pathway. Typically, presbytery clerks forward an extract of the presbytery's minutes, along with the report of the Student Certification Committee supporting the recommendation for presbytery endorsement.

### 5. Confirm your interview appointment.

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.

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. Await the committee's response.

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. Presbyteries with questions or concerns.

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 or videoconference. 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.

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

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

The Presbyterian Church in Canada has three theological colleges: Presbyterian College in Montreal, Quebec; Knox College in Toronto, Ontario; 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 General Assembly assigns educational studies in a college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, this does not serve to enroll the candidate in a suitable program, nor does it accomplish or guarantee college admission. Candidates must apply to the college of their choice 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.

#### ***For M.Div. Graduates of Other Theological Colleges***

#### 10. Conditional nature of eligibility for examination for certification for ordination/designation

For M.Div. graduates of theological colleges outside The Presbyterian Church in Canada whose application for eligibility for examination for certification for ordination/designation 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 committee's recommendation to the General Assembly. A candidate is eligible to be examined for certification for ordination or designation when the General Assembly has approved the application and the candidate has fulfilled all assigned conditions.

#### 11. 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 outcome of the application 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.

## **Supplement**

### **D – Committee on Education and Reception**

The mandate of the Committee on Education and Reception is to equip the General Assembly for its decisions concerning the applications of individuals seeking to enter the ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada by non-standard pathways. To fulfill this purpose, the committee uses the guidelines established for its work by the General Assembly to review applications of certified candidates for ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada with specific characteristics:

- No university undergraduate degree and 35 – 59 years of age
- M.Div. degree from a seminary outside The Presbyterian Church in Canada and university undergraduate degree
- Diaconal ministers of The Presbyterian Church in Canada seeking ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacraments

When the committee approves an application, it recommends to the General Assembly a course of study and any other conditions to be met before the presbytery is permitted to examine the candidate for certification for ordination/designation. Adoption of the committee's recommendation by the General Assembly assigns the course of study and additional conditions as noted. Candidates then choose appropriate courses to fulfill the church's requirements in consultation with the faculty of a college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, after successful application to the college for admission.

The committee also reviews the applications of ministers of other denominations seeking to enter the ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

### **Guidelines Pertaining to Candidacy**

#### ***Applicants for a General Assembly Special Course***

1. No application for a special General Assembly course may be recommended unless the applicant has attained at the time of first certification, the age of 35 years, and not attained the age of 60 years as of June 1st of the year in which the application is to be considered.
  - a) Applicants for a special General Assembly course will be required to attend a guidance conference.
  - b) Applicants are also required to have a psychological assessment.
  - c) A synopsis of a candidate's responses to certification questions in Appendix J of the Book of Forms will be forwarded to the Committee on Education and Reception by presbytery as part of the candidate's application.
2. Requirements for special General Assembly programs shall be:
  - a) Age 35-40. The equivalent of two full years (20 semester courses) of arts at the university level, three years intramural study (30 semester courses) in theology; one biblical language may be assigned at the discretion of the committee.

- b) Age 41-59. The equivalent of one full year (10 semester courses) of arts at the university level, three years intramural study (30 semester courses) in theology, with exemption from the biblical language requirement if desired by the applicant. These age guidelines shall come into effect at the time of application for a General Assembly course, or at the time a person begins the process of preparation for ministry, whichever is the earlier.
  - c) Prerequisite course work for any special course must achieve a B average or above. A program will not be recommended based on a lesser academic standard.
3. In January of the final year of study of a General Assembly Special Course students, the appropriate presbytery is permitted to examine them for certification for ordination. Approval, however, must be subject to the certification by the college that prescribed studies have been satisfactorily completed and with affirmation, comparable to the college diploma, that the candidates have demonstrated fitness for ministry. The examining presbytery shall inform Ministry and Church Vocations of the Life and Mission Agency of its action.

#### ***M.Div. Graduates of Other Theological Colleges***

1. All certified candidates for ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada must complete the entire candidacy process of preparation and discernment before ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacraments or designation to the Order of Diaconal Ministries. This process assigns significant roles in listening to the direction of God's calling of the candidate to the session of the home congregation, the certifying presbytery, the college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada where the candidate studies, and eventually, the calling congregation and its presbytery.
2. The purpose of the guidelines for graduates of "other" theological colleges is two-fold:
- a) to provide the church and the candidate with sufficient time and development of relationships to discern the candidate's readiness to serve in the ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada
  - b) to ensure that candidates are equipped with the knowledge, understanding and experience necessary to serve in the ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
3. Membership requirements:

Candidates for the ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada are members of a congregation of The Presbyterian Church in Canada for at least one year before certification by a presbytery. Although this initial time span is short, the candidate's three years (or more) of study in a Presbyterian Church in Canada college normally extend this period considerably.

In the case of certified candidates for ministry who apply for a course of study as graduates of "other" theological colleges, they must have completed a minimum of two years of membership in a congregation of The Presbyterian Church in Canada in the period immediately preceding their application. Such candidates, with the guidance of their presbytery and in consultation with their session, are directed to seek active participation and leadership, as appropriate to their interests and abilities and the needs of the church.

Presbyteries are required to ensure that the candidate's application, which comes before the Committee on Education and Reception only with the endorsement of the presbytery, details fully the nature and extent of the candidate's experience in The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

4. Educational requirements:

Candidates for the ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada are normally required to earn a B.A. degree, or equivalent, from an accredited university, plus an M.Div. degree, and diploma, or equivalent, from a theological college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Candidates for ministry who are graduates of “other” theological colleges are assigned additional theological studies in a college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The goals of these courses of study include the following:

- a) to build upon the candidate’s previous theological education
- b) to provide competent instruction on the Reformed view of scripture that enables students to develop sound principles of biblical interpretation
- c) to ensure strong emphasis on the preaching of the Word in Reformed practice
- d) to provide clear instruction on Reformed theology, sacramental theology and worship
- e) to provide instruction on Presbyterian Church in Canada history and polity, recognizing that understanding this denomination’s history and the Canadian context is essential for ministerial service in The Presbyterian Church in Canada
- f) to ensure knowledge and understanding of the theology and practice of The Presbyterian Church in Canada
- g) to facilitate strengthening and sharpening of skills for ministry in the context of congregational practice in The Presbyterian Church in Canada
- h) to facilitate the development of significant friendships and relationships among those who will be colleagues in ministry

Graduates of theological colleges not affiliated with The Presbyterian Church in Canada will be required to be formally examined under the auspices of the Committee on Education and Reception as to their readiness for ministry in The Presbyterian Church in Canada, and to determine the length of additional study required at one of our theological colleges. All applicants must have a B.A., or equivalent, from an accredited university, followed by an M.Div. degree from a Christian theological college accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (or equivalent, outside North America). No applicant will be considered without at least a B average, or its equivalent, in the M.Div. studies.

- a) Graduates of theological colleges not affiliated with member churches of the World Communion of Reformed Churches will normally be required to complete 2 semesters of theological study (10 semester courses) under the care of the governing board of one of the colleges of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. This study will include supervised theological field education in a congregation of The Presbyterian Church in Canada throughout the assigned academic year.
- b) Graduates of theological colleges affiliated with member churches of the World Communion of Reformed Churches whose academic requirements are the equivalent of those of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, namely a B.A. degree, or equivalent, from an accredited university, plus an M.Div. degree, and diploma, or equivalent, will normally be required to complete 1 semester of theological study (5 semester courses) under the care

## Committee on Education and Reception

of the governing board of one of the colleges of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and a supervised theological field education placement in a congregation of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The semester's study will be focused in such areas as: Presbyterian Church in Canada history, Presbyterian Church in Canada polity (including policies), preaching and worship, sacraments and the doctrine of the church, and Reformed confessions.

- c) Colleges are expected to work with each candidate to map out a program of study that, to the fullest extent possible, avoids duplication of the candidate's previous studies. Colleges may use such means as comparison of detailed course outlines to determine areas of overlap.
- d) Significant length of time and breadth of leadership experience within The Presbyterian Church in Canada may be reflected in the educational requirements assigned to a particular candidate. Normally both factors – length and breadth – are required for an adjustment in the usual educational requirements. Length of time normally denotes continuous leadership experience in The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Breadth of leadership experience normally denotes service outside the local congregation, such as presbytery representative elder; giving leadership in presbytery, synod or national programs; or serving on presbytery, synod or national committees.

### **General**

1. In cases where the General Assembly does not approve a recommendation of the Committee on Education and Reception with regard to a particular candidate, the matter will be referred back to the Committee on Education and Reception for further consideration and report (BF 302.1 and 302.2).
2. All candidates who have English as a second language and who are applying for a special course of studies in English will be required to pass an English language examination under the supervision of the college the candidate proposes to attend.
3. Travel Costs: The policy of the committee is that applicants are responsible for any travel costs involved in appearing before the committee.
4. In the case of persons who apply for permission to be examined for certification for ordination, the committee will send a circular letter to all the presbyteries of the church, which will be given three months to lodge any competent objection with the Secretary of the Committee (BF 205.2).  
All recommendations for permission to be examined for certification for ordination are subject to no valid objections being received from the presbyteries in response to circular letters.
5. The assignment of a course of study does not guarantee admission to one of the colleges of the church. Each college sets its own admission criteria.
6. The financial obligations for travel and an assigned course of study are the responsibility of the candidates and their presbytery of care.

## **Supplement**

### **E – Appendix J (Book of Forms): Pastoral Care of Candidates**

Appendix J of the Book of Forms outlines questions and issues for candidates, sessions and presbyteries as they proceed through the candidacy process.

#### **Goals**

J-1 The goals in the process of pastoral care of candidates are:

1. To provide genuine continuing pastoral care, oversight, testing and appropriate encouragement to persons entering and pursuing the process of candidacy for the ministries of the church.
2. To guide candidates through the process from certification to ordination or designation so that they can derive the most benefits from the opportunities.
3. To ensure that the process has no surprises. Nevertheless, candidates will be aware that there is the possibility of approval, approval with conditions (probationary approval), or non-approval at any stage in the process.
4. To provide the church with the best possible candidates.

#### **Caring and Mutual Trust**

J-2 In order to foster a relationship of caring and mutual trust, the following are recommended:

1. The ministry committee (or candidates' committee) of presbytery meets at least annually with candidates.
2. An annual dinner with candidates.
3. Candidates be presented annually to the presbytery.
4. If there is a group of candidates, the use of role play and other group activities be used as a means of addressing issues in ministry.
5. Each presbytery which is at some distance from the college should be responsible for ensuring that students under their care are commended to the presbyteries in which the colleges they are attending are situated, and requesting those presbyteries to assume a role of pastoral care during the academic year.

#### **Human and Practical Issues**

J-3 While theological and practice of ministry issues are key components in any relationship with candidates for ministry, sessions and presbyteries are encouraged also to pay appropriate attention to human and practical issues, e.g.:

## Appendix J

1. Family situation.
2. Financial plans, and ability to handle finances.
3. Ability to type, use a word processor.
4. Organizational and time management skills.
5. Hobbies and other leisure time activities.
6. Public speaking skills, ability to articulate, personal presence.

### **Recommendation by Session**

#### ***J-4 Questions to be asked by sessions – Initial Recommendation***

1. What does it mean for you to call Jesus “Saviour and Lord”?
2. Why do you think you should be preparing yourself for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments? Or for Diaconal Ministry?
3. Please outline your history and experience in the church and how this relates to your faith journey.
4. Please articulate your experience and sense of call to service in the church.
5. Have you ever previously begun a discernment process for the ministries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada or another church? If so, how far did you proceed in this process and why did you discontinue it?
6. At this point in your journey, what is your understanding of the gospel and the task of the church?
7. Are you able to identify particular gifts which you have been given for ministry?
8. What are your concerns/fears/apprehensions as you prepare to enter the process of candidature for ministry?
9. What is your plan for meeting the financial costs of preparation for ministry (including support for your spouse and family)?

#### ***J-5 Questions for sessions to ask themselves when considering a recommendation***

1. How do we recognize the likelihood of God calling this person?
2. How do we recognize gifts for ministry in the candidate?

## Appendix J

3. What are our experiences of the candidate in our midst? How long has the candidate been a member of our congregation? Have they been active in the life of our congregation?
4. Are there obvious personality problems? (These may not be reason to say “No”, but may be problems to be indicated to others who will continue the process).
5. Does the candidate have a realistic and responsible financial plan? Would we be willing to provide financial support to them?
6. If this person were graduating today, would we be willing to consider them as a candidate for a position in your congregation?
7. Married persons should be asked to address the issue of two career couples and how that will be handled in their case. Spouses should be involved in interviews at this level. If both partners in a marriage intend to be ministers, discuss their expectations of the church re employment. The counselling and on-going pastoral care of clergy couples is important. Elders might share some of their positive perceptions with respect to the impact of family life on one’s ministry.

### **Initial Certification**

#### ***J-6 Questions to be asked by presbyteries***

1. The same questions outlined for sessions.
2. Please share with us something of your present practice of spirituality: i.e., your practice of prayer, devotions, reading of scripture. Have you read the entire Bible?
3. When you complete your preparation for ministry and seek ordination or designation, may there be some limitations on where you would be able to go as the church calls or has needs? What are your aspirations vis-a-vis ministry?
4. What role do you understand/expect the church to fulfill in your call to ministry?
5. Who are your role models? What do you understand to be essential in ministry?
6. How do you understand authority in the church? How do you understand the authority of presbytery in the candidacy process?
7. Do you know, understand and appreciate this church’s position on the baptism of children, and the ordination of women?

#### ***J-7 Issues for the presbytery to consider***

1. Has the candidate been a member of The Presbyterian Church in Canada for at least a year, as required by the General Assembly? (A&P 1984, p. 403, 31)
2. If this person were graduating today, would we be willing to employ them?

## Appendix J

3. From our experience, do we perceive this person to have gifts for leadership in the Church of Jesus Christ?
4. How do we assess the candidate's potential for growth, i.e., willing to learn, open to new ideas and approaches, eager for new experiences?
5. Is the candidate able to cope with the stress involved in theological study in which their faith and ideas will be examined, questioned, probed and stretched?
6. How do we assess their potential for pastoral ministry? How does the candidate handle tension and conflict? Are they a caring person?
7. Are there obvious personality problems? What are they? Can they be described for the benefit of the candidate and of the college to which they will be certified?
8. What factors in the candidate's personal life will affect their training for service in the church? (financial, family, medical, emotional, academic, etc.). For example, does the candidate have a realistic and responsible financial plan?
9. What kind of liaison with this presbytery would be most helpful during the candidate's preparation for ministry?
10. Are there specific courses, interventions, experiences which we think would be helpful during the candidate's preparation for ministry? These recommendations should be designed as much to nurture specific gifts already identified as to address problems.

### *Re candidates with English as second language:*

1. Such candidates should be given truthful feedback regarding their ability with oral English, and encouraged to take appropriate remedial courses.
  2. The desirability of immersion courses should be considered.
  3. Such candidates should be helped to face the realities of employment prospects.
11. Candidates should be helped to develop a clear picture of the church into which they are to be ordained or designated, including theological and ecclesiological distinctives.
  12. Reviewing the candidate's academic transcripts from their preparatory education, how do we rate the candidate's ability to handle the required academic program?
  13. Presbyteries should discuss the following academic issues with candidates (where appropriate):
    1. The implications of choosing to study at non-accredited universities, and/or theological colleges other than those of this church.
    2. Plans for transfer credits.
    3. The wisdom of choosing liberal arts courses rather than a heavy emphasis on religious studies at the under-graduate level.
    4. The study of a biblical language before entering upon theological study.

## Re-certification

### ***J-8 Questions to be asked by presbyteries***

1. How has your faith changed? How has theological study challenged and informed your faith? What are the indicators that you are maturing in Christian faith and life?
2. What are the most important issues or insights being raised for you in theological study? How are you integrating these into your own life and into your view of the church and ministry?
3. In what ways do you consider that your faith lies generally with the Reformed tradition?
4. The presbytery may ask candidates for a written personal statement of faith.
5. Where do you expect to place emphasis in ministry? What form of service do you project for yourself after graduation? Are there particular kinds of ministry in the church to which you react negatively? Positively?
6. What is your understanding of, and can you generally accept the standards for ordination or designation set down by The Presbyterian Church in Canada?
7. What do you expect to happen as a result of Sunday worship?
8. What is your understanding of Christmas? Of Easter? What, for you, are the theological and practical issues?
9. Responses to current issues: e.g., baptism of children; children at the Lord's table; ordination of women; inclusive language; liberation theology.
10. How would you go about making changes in the practices, customs, traditions of a congregation? How do you usually respond to change that affects you personally?
11. Describe your ability to relate to others in work and social situations.
12. Where do you find your support systems?
13. Where are you worshipping during your theological studies? What role does worship play in your preparation for ministry? (These questions are not found in Appendix J, but have been added here as suitable additions.)
14. Are you attending presbytery meetings? What are the benefits of your attendance? (These questions are not found in Appendix J, but have been added here as suitable additions.)

### ***J-9 Issues to be considered by presbyteries***

1. Candidates who are married or engaged to be married:

**Note:** The concern of the presbytery in this area is primarily pastoral, and not evaluative.

## Appendix J

1. Candidates and spouses (or engaged couples) should probably be conferred with as early in the process as possible out of pastoral concern, and perhaps annually thereafter.
  2. Two career couples: Whose career will take priority? Have you thought through the consequences?
  3. Clergy couples: Explore relationships/dynamics.
  4. What provision for your spouse to grow with you?
  5. Where do you find your support systems?
2. Look at reports from summer mission appointments (from Canada Ministries – Life and Mission Agency, the presbytery involved, and the candidate), from field education placements, and from the follow-up counsellor, and reports on academic progress, and explore issues raised in these reports.
  3. Re-certification in the year immediately prior to entering the final year of theological study is the most critical point in the candidacy process. Re-certification should be granted at this point, only if there is little doubt about the successful completion of the candidacy.
  4. Presbyteries may wish to grant probationary re-certification to certain candidates. This would be done when the presbytery has identified areas of concern on which the candidate is expected to concentrate with intentionality. Candidates who are thus “on probation” should receive a carefully documented explanation of the concern and the time in which the concern must be addressed before probation is removed.

Some reasons for probationary re-certification might be:

1. A rigid, or too open theological stance, or an eclecticism which contains contradictory approaches.
2. Concern over a specific doctrine (scripture, baptism, church, etc.)
3. Concerns related to skills and practice of ministry.

Note: Probation or conditional certification is not an option at the time of first certification. Candidates for first certification about whom there is serious concern as to their capability or suitability should be informed of the concern, and of the possibility of re-considering their request at some future time.

5. Francophone candidates: Presbyteries who have Francophone candidates under their care will naturally apply the above guidelines in terms of the language in which the students are preparing to minister.
6. English Second Language candidates: At the point of re-certification in the second year of theological studies, particular attention should be paid to the candidate’s ability in oral English. Would it be better at this point to ask the candidate to withdraw from studies in order to improve the ability to speak English?

## **Procedures re Examination for Certification as a Candidate for Ordination**

### ***J-10 Application***

1. A person who is completing the required course of study and is desirous of proceeding to ministry will make application to the presbytery in accordance with present regulations, to be examined as to suitability for ministry.
2. The candidate will provide to the presbytery the following submissions. (The candidate would be informed that the presbytery, in the course of its examination, would use the submissions as a means of exploring theological and relational issues.)
  1. Personal Report:
    - A written statement of intent to proceed to ordination in The Presbyterian Church in Canada, and the intent to accept the Preamble on Ordination and the Subordinate Standards of The Presbyterian Church in Canada through appropriate responses to the ordination questions at the time of a call or appointment.
    - A written statement by the candidate of their faith journey.
    - A case study report that would address some issue of ministry in the candidate's experience. (The format and directions for the development of the case study would be available from the Life and Mission Agency's Ministry and Church Vocations office.)
    - An exegetical paper and a sermon based on it.
    - The candidate will conduct a service of public worship, arranged by the presbytery or its examining committee, and provide a copy of the manuscript of the sermon to the presbytery.
    - One or more papers on theology.
    - The Diploma of the College, or its equivalent. (If a candidate has applied prior to graduation, such a statement would be provisional only.)
  2. Supervised Field Report:

Such evaluative statements as may be forthcoming from supervisors or agencies with whom the applicant has had work assignments.

### ***J-11 Examination***

1. The presbytery, or its examining committee, will be familiar with the candidate's written submissions prior to an interview.
2. The examination by the presbytery should be seen as the final step in the process of candidacy. In normal circumstances, the candidate will already have been under the care of the presbytery. Therefore, the examination will take into account the knowledge of the candidate gained from previous certification interviews.

If the candidate has not been under the care of presbytery prior to making the request to be examined for certification as a candidate for ordination, the presbytery should ascertain if the candidate has previously requested examination for certification for ordination in any other presbytery of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and the outcome of that process.

If the candidate is applying to enter the church from another denomination, the presbytery should ascertain how far the candidate proceeded in that denomination's discernment process and the outcome.

3. Issues for the presbytery to consider:
  1. Will the candidate make a useful contribution to the ministry of the church?
  2. Does the candidate have the necessary spiritual and personal resources to endure the pressures of the ministerial office?
  3. Does the candidate show ability to express their faith in a way that is real, articulate, and integrated?
  4. Is there evidence of growth and continuing personal development?
  5. Does the candidate's theology lie within the Reformed tradition?
  6. Is there evidence of sensitivity to the process of group decision-making?
  7. Does the candidate exhibit good skills in interpersonal relationships?
  8. Does the candidate show recognition of diversities of opinion and practice within The Presbyterian Church in Canada?
4. The interview may take the form of questions, discussion, case studies, hypothetical situations, in order to elicit information.

***J-12 Presbytery Action***

1. The candidate will be present at the meeting of the presbytery when the report of the examination is considered.
  1. If this takes place while the candidate is still in course, the presbytery sustains the examination conditional on graduation, and the moderator will formally inform the candidate that permission is granted to be presented to a congregation by an interim-moderator, in accordance with Book of Forms section 215.1.
  2. When certification from the senate of a college has been received in accordance with section 206.2, and the presbytery examination is sustained, the moderator shall declare to the candidate, being present, that they are now a certified candidate for ordination, and therefore eligible to receive a call or an appointment.
2. The clerk will issue an extract of certification to the candidate.
3. The presbytery will inform the Life and Mission Agency's Ministry and Church Vocations staff of the names of all certified candidates for ordination, with the date of certification.
4. The Life and Mission Agency will report annually to the General Assembly the names of all certified candidates for ordination, to be included in the Acts and Proceedings.

**J-13 Standing and Accountability**

1. Certified candidates for ordination will continue under the jurisdiction of the presbytery which certified them, as long as they live, work and/or study within the bounds of the presbytery which certified them, or are working or studying abroad with the permission of the said presbytery.
2. Candidates must request a transfer to the jurisdiction of the appropriate presbytery if they leave the bounds of the presbytery which certified them, to live, work and/or study elsewhere in Canada.
3. Candidates may receive notice of meetings of the presbytery of the bounds.
4. Candidates will have their standing reviewed by the presbytery at the end of a three-year period, if they have not been ordained.
5. Candidates may request to have their standing removed as a certified candidate for ordination.

## **Supplement**

### **F – Presbytery Checklist: Motions and Follow-up Actions**

The sections below outline presbytery motions and follow-up tasks required at various points in the candidacy process.

#### **A. Initial certification**

- The individual has been a member of a PCC congregation for at least the previous 12 months.
- The session of the individual's congregation has written the presbytery requesting certification of the member as candidate for ministry.
- The presbytery Student Certification Committee recommends certification.

When these criteria have been met, the appropriate motion is:

"To certify (name of individual) as a candidate for ministry"

Presbytery clerk follow-up actions:

- Send extract of minutes to Ministry and Church Vocations, providing contact information for the new candidate.
- Send extract of minutes to the PCC college where the candidate is enrolled or intends to enroll.

Probationary or conditional standing is not permitted at initial certification.

#### **B. First recertification**

- The presbytery Student Certification Committee has reviewed reports from the candidate's guidance conference and psychological testing.
- The committee recommends recertification.

When these criteria have been met, the appropriate motion is:

"To recertify (name of individual) as a candidate for ministry"

Presbytery clerk follow-up actions:

- Send extract of minutes to Ministry and Church Vocations.
- Send extract of minutes to the PCC college where the candidate is enrolled.

#### **C. Extension of initial certification**

- The presbytery Student Certification Committee has not yet received and reviewed reports from the candidate's guidance conference and psychological testing.
- The committee recommends recertification.

## Presbytery Motions

When these criteria have been met, the appropriate motion is:

“To extend initial certification of (name of individual) as a candidate for ministry, pending review of (list reports outstanding)”

Presbytery clerk follow-up actions:

- Send extract of minutes to Ministry and Church Vocations.
- Send extract of minutes to the PCC college where the candidate is enrolled.

### **D. Second and subsequent recertification**

- The presbytery Student Certification Committee recommends recertification.

The appropriate motion is:

“To recertify (name of individual) as a candidate for ministry”

Presbytery clerk follow-up actions:

- Send extract of minutes to Ministry and Church Vocations.
- Send extract of minutes to the PCC college where the candidate is enrolled.

Probationary or conditional recertification is permitted.

### **E. Endorsement of application for a General Assembly Special Course**

- The applicant is a certified candidate for ministry of the presbytery.
- The candidate does not have a university undergraduate degree and is 35 – 59 years of age.
- The presbytery Student Certification Committee recommends that the presbytery support the candidate in seeking to pursue this educational pathway.

When these criteria have been met, the appropriate motion is:

“To endorse the application of (name of individual) for a General Assembly Special Course”

If the individual is not a certified candidate for ministry of the presbytery, but the Student Certification Committee wishes to recommend certification, the appropriate motion is:

“To certify (name of individual) as a candidate for ministry and to endorse the application of (name of individual) for a General Assembly Special Course”

Presbytery clerk follow-up actions:

- Send extract of minutes to the Committee on Education and Reception, along with the report of the Student Certification Committee.

### **F. Endorsement of application of an M.Div. graduate**

- The applicant is a certified candidate for ministry of the presbytery.
- The candidate has been a member of a PCC congregation for at least the previous two years.
- The candidate holds a university undergraduate degree.

## Presbytery Motions

- The candidate holds an M.Div. degree, with a minimum B average, from a North American seminary accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS), or from a seminary outside North America with equivalent accreditation
- The presbytery Student Certification Committee recommends that the presbytery support the candidate in seeking to pursue this educational pathway.

When these criteria have been met, the appropriate motion is:

“To endorse the application of (name of individual), as an M.Div. graduate from a non-PCC theological college, for eligibility for certification for ordination”

If the individual is not a certified candidate for ministry of the presbytery, but the Student Certification Committee wishes to recommend certification, the appropriate motion is:

“To certify (name of individual) as a candidate for ministry and to endorse the application of (name of individual), as an M.Div. graduate from a non-PCC theological college, for eligibility for certification for ordination”

Presbytery clerk follow-up actions:

- Send extract of minutes to the Committee on Education and Reception, along with the report of the Student Certification Committee.

### **G. Certification for ordination/designation**

- The individual is a certified candidate for ministry of the presbytery.
- The candidate is present at the meeting of the presbytery when the report of the examination is considered (BF 206.1.1).
- The presbytery has sustained the examination.
- The candidate has graduated from a PCC college with the college diploma, which signifies the certification of the governing board of the college that the candidate has completed an M.Div. degree or the studies assigned by the General Assembly and has demonstrated the practical gifts and skills and suitable character and conduct for ministry (BF 206.2).

When these criteria have been met, the appropriate motion is:

“To certify (name of individual) as a candidate for ordination/designation”

Presbytery clerk follow-up actions:

- Issue an extract of certification to the candidate.
- Send extract of minutes to Ministry and Church Vocations.

### **H. Certification for ordination/designation conditional upon graduation**

- The individual is a certified candidate for ministry of the presbytery.
- The candidate is present at the meeting of the presbytery when the report of the examination is considered (BF 206.1.1).
- The presbytery has sustained the examination.
- The candidate has not yet graduated from a PCC college with the college diploma.

## Presbytery Motions

When these criteria have been met, the appropriate motion is:

“To certify (name of individual) as a candidate for ordination/designation conditional upon graduation”

After the candidate graduates with the diploma of the college, which signifies the certification of the governing board of the college that the candidate has completed an M.Div. degree or the studies assigned by the General Assembly and has demonstrated the practical gifts and skills and suitable character and conduct for ministry (BF 206.2), the appropriate motion is:

“To acknowledge that the condition placed on the candidate’s standing has been lifted, with the result that the candidate is now certified for ordination/designation”

Presbytery clerk follow-up actions:

- Issue an extract of certification to the candidate.
- Send extract of minutes to Ministry and Church Vocations.

## Supplement

### G – Vocation: Am I Being Called?

To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7).

Every single one of us has a good work to do in life. The good work not only accomplishes something needed in the world, but completes something in us. When it is finished, a new work emerges that will help us to make green a desert place, as well as to scale another mountain in ourselves. The work we do in the world when it is true vocation always corresponds in some mysterious way to the work that goes on within us (O'Connor, p. 14).<sup>1</sup>

God calls you to the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet (Buechner, p. 95).<sup>2</sup>

Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received (1 Peter 4:10).

Do you know someone who is excited about the work they do and attributes their response to the fact that they have been called by God to that particular vocation? Or perhaps you have met someone who has a very clear sense of where God is calling them and pursues their path with confidence and without anxiety. We perceive such people to be special people with a special call. But The Presbyterian Church in Canada doesn't believe that only certain people are called. In fact, it believes the opposite – that all Christians are called.

The **primary vocation** of all Christians is to be in relationship with God through Christ. We delight in God's gracious love and respond in praise and gratitude. As the Shorter Catechism says: Our chief end is to glorify and enjoy God forever.

In the context of this relationship, God gives each of us a vocation that involves our total selves, who we are and our God-given gifts. Our **secondary vocation** is the exercise of these gifts in service to God.

All Christians are called to participate in the ministry of Christ. As Christ's body on earth we all have gifts to use in the church and in the world to the glory of Christ, our King and Head. (Living Faith 7.2.1)

#### How does one recognize a call?

A call has two elements – a sense of inner rightness and outer confirmation. Inner rightness is hard to define because different people experience it in different ways. One may try to describe it by using such words as restlessness, yearning, urging, or prompting that is answered by accepting this vocation. The outcome is a conviction in one's heart and mind that God is extending this invitation or a sense of God's leading and a willingness to be open to where God will lead.

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<sup>1</sup>Elizabeth O'Connor, *Cry Pain, Cry Hope*. (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987). Used with permission.

<sup>2</sup>Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking. A Theological ABC*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1973). Used with permission.

## Vocation

Outer confirmation means that one's sense of call and one's gifts for this vocation are recognized and affirmed by others.

### **Could my Christian vocation be in secular employment?**

For most Christians, the answer is affirmative. For most Christians, their primary arena for exercising their vocation is in the world and the exercise of their vocation in the church is in a voluntary capacity.

### **How will my call differ if I am called to ordained or diaconal ministry?**

The call to the ministry of Word and Sacraments or diaconal ministry has some distinguishing features. First, the primary arena for exercising these vocations is in the church in a full-time or part-time capacity rather than in a voluntary capacity.

Secondly, for those who are testing a calling to ministry of Word and Sacraments or diaconal ministry, our church has specified where the outer confirmation must be found. The call must be validated by the session of the home congregation, the presbytery and one of the church's colleges. The final confirmation of the call comes when a congregation or other agency of this church issues a call to a particular ministry position, with the approval of the presbytery.

### **How can I be sure of a call to ordained or diaconal ministry?**

The exercise of the ministry of Word and Sacraments and diaconal ministry uses the following gifts, qualities or characteristics. How well do these describe you? You don't need to have a full measure of all these characteristics, but the more you have, the stronger is the likelihood that ministry in the church is your calling. Some characteristics are considered essential; others are beneficial. A candidate might not possess all these qualities at the beginning of the process but should show potential for developing them or have developed them by the end of the process.

- Mature Christian faith
- Integration of faith and life
- A call to ministry
- Ability to express this faith and call in a way that is real, articulate and integrated
  
- Awareness of having gifts for ministry
- Awareness of qualities or circumstances that may be obstacles to ministry
- Spiritual disciplines and practices
- Ability to create a support system for one's self
  
- Membership and active involvement in a congregation of The Presbyterian Church in Canada
- Tested and affirmed leadership in The Presbyterian Church in Canada
- Acceptance of the Reformed understanding of the faith
- Acceptance of the diversity in The Presbyterian Church in Canada
- Understanding of the task of the church
- Understanding of the role of the minister of Word and Sacraments/diaconal minister
- Integration of faith, view of the church and concept of ministry
- Realistic assessment of one's self
- Mental and emotional health
- Potential for growth

## Vocation

- Ability to relate to others and work with others
- Ability to give leadership
- Ability to handle conflict
- Ability to cope with stress
- Compassion
- Healthy attitude toward authority
- Good command of language
  
- Ability to study at a Master's level
- Capacity for critical reflection

Am I being called to a ministry in the church? During the candidacy process of preparation and discernment for ministry in The Presbyterian Church in Canada, this is the central question you and the church will be seeking to answer.

## **Supplement**

### **H – Congregational Support for Candidates**

By John-Peter and Tori Smit

In our congregation, we are fortunate to have four students for the ministry. Throughout their years at seminary (and even before) we have made it a priority to support them in their calling.

#### **At the Time of Initial Certification**

This is a very exciting time in the life of a potential minister. This individual has heard God's call and desires to serve God and the church as a minister of Word and Sacraments (or as a diaconal minister.) The first affirmation of the call comes from the session. We take this role very seriously. Because our session is large, we formed a committee to interview each candidate, and used the guidelines in the Book of Forms to prepare for the interview. Our congregation is delighted when a candidate steps forward, but the session realizes that it must consider very carefully whether the candidate is suitable. It does a candidate no favour if a recommendation to presbytery is made inappropriately. If the session does not truly believe an individual is called to diaconal ministry or ministry of Word and Sacraments, we should not recommend that person.

In some situations, the session may say "not yet," or ask that certain requirements be fulfilled. We have conducted second interviews with suggestions for development before the individual went to the presbytery for initial certification.

Once the presbytery certifies the candidate, the congregation celebrates the certification in worship. This marks an important change in our relationship. Prior to the initial certification by presbytery, the session's role has been primarily evaluative but once the presbytery has certified the candidate the role of the session, and particularly the minister, moves from evaluation to support.

#### **Through the Years of Study**

We have an annual Student Appreciation Sunday that gives us the opportunity to celebrate our students. The candidates and their families are presented to the congregation. The candidates and their spouses receive a corsage or boutonniere, while any children are given fun buttons that say something like, "Future P.K." or "P.K. in the Making." The candidates take part in the service and a gift is presented to each of them. In our situation we have presented a commentary each year. (We keep track of what they have.) At coffee hour following the service, we have a cake and take lots of photos. These mementos of their student days are being saved in photo albums that we will present to them at their ordination.

Each year we take up a special offering for our student bursary fund. Trustees administer the fund and the students receive a cheque two times a year. They are invited to use this gift in any way that they see fit.

Throughout the year during worship, we pray for our students. Each month we pray for them at our session meeting and include their names in our congregational prayer calendar. Our prayer group prays for them weekly. Along with other members of the congregation, we have opened our libraries to the

## Congregational Support

students, and have proofread papers as necessary. Others have provided babysitting if needed. We make opportunities for coffee and a chat about the coming year, course selection, successes and concerns and let them know our doors are always open for them.

Our congregation uses our students for pulpit supply and pays them according to the ordained rate. We also include students in session committees, continuing education events and workshops and make them aware of such things as sales at theological bookstores. We encourage them to observe or participate in special services outside the church (memorials etc.) and invite them to observe such things as wedding rehearsals, funerals.

## **Graduation and Ordination/Designation**

This year, two of our students will graduate. We expect that they will be ordained at our church. This will be another opportunity for our whole church family to rejoice. We plan to uphold the tradition followed by other congregations and purchase a gown for each candidate in celebration of their ordination.

Pastoral support is vital at this time of tremendous change, excitement, and apprehension. The minister and members of the congregation need to be available as sounding boards, not just for the candidates, but for their families also. What is exciting to the candidate may mean upheaval and change to another member of the family. It is important to honour all concerns and help everyone through this time of transition.

The purpose of our plan for our students is simple. While they are certified candidates, we wish to keep them as much an integral part of our church community as any other member. When they leave our congregation to serve in other congregations, we hope that we have done all we can to provide them with a base of knowledge, love and support that will continue to enrich them throughout their ministry.

## **Supplement I – Book of Forms**

The Book of Forms ([presbyterian.ca/gao](http://presbyterian.ca/gao)) contains the rules and procedures with which The Presbyterian Church in Canada regulates its life and practice. References to the Book of Forms in this document will use the short form “BF” followed by the section number. Whenever the section number begins with a letter, the section is found in one of several appendices, all identified by a letter. For instance, section J-1, “goals in the process of pastoral care of candidates,” is found in Appendix J.

The sections of the Book of Forms referred to in this document are printed here.

### **Diaconal Ministers**

174.3 A person who desires to become a candidate for the Order of Diaconal Ministries in The Presbyterian Church in Canada shall apply for certification through the session of the congregation wherein membership is held to the presbytery of the bounds which, after examination, makes a recommendation to the governing board of a college that offers the approved course of study and where the candidate proposes to attend.

174.3.1 The presbytery of first certification shall examine students annually and if satisfied certify them to the college’s governing board. Exceptions may be made in cases where the presbytery is far removed from the college, in which case the certification procedure may be undertaken by the presbytery within whose bounds the college is located, or wherein the candidate resides.

174.4 A person shall be designated as a member of the Order of Diaconal Ministries in The Presbyterian Church in Canada:

174.4.1 On completion of the prescribed course to the satisfaction of the governing board of the college, and

174.4.2 Having received certification from the governing board of the college as to suitable character and conduct and the possession of the necessary gifts and skills, and

174.4.3 Upon accepting an appointment for at least one year by a court, agency or society of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. (Declaratory Act: A&P 1989, p. 269–70, 73)

174.5 Persons who have received similar education for the office of member of the Order of Diaconal Ministries may be admitted to the Order of Diaconal Ministries of this church upon acceptance by the General Assembly on application of a presbytery through the Life and Mission Agency’s Committee on Education and Reception in consultation with the executive of the Order of Diaconal Ministries.

174.6 After an appropriate examination by a presbytery, the presbytery shall then proceed to designate the candidate as a member of the Order of Diaconal Ministries. If the candidate is not designated within a three-year period, the standing of the candidate should be reviewed by presbytery. This examination should consider the candidate’s present educational qualifications.

174.7 Authority to make and terminate appointments of members of the Order of Diaconal Ministries resides in the presbytery and in higher courts or their agencies.

174.7.1 Presbytery shall conduct a service of installation for every appointment.

## **Candidates for the Ministry**

202. Sessions and presbyteries are enjoined to make diligent and careful inquiry whether any individuals are to be found within their bounds whose attention should be specially directed to the claims of Christ upon them with respect to the ministry of his church, to aid and encourage in all proper ways suitable people who may declare their purpose to consecrate themselves to this sacred vocation, and watchfully to keep their eyes upon any who are prosecuting a liberal education and whose piety and abilities make it desirable that their thoughts should be turned towards the ministerial office.

202.1 Presbyteries should exercise a kind and faithful supervision over students and intending students resident within their bounds, should endeavour to impress upon them worthy views of the office to which they aspire, and should encourage them in the course of study by which the church has wisely determined that the ministry shall be reached.

202.2 Presbyteries are enjoined to see that every student takes the prescribed course, specially to enquire into the age and fitness of candidates, and where acquirements and ability are not specially marked, that they seek to prevent applications from being made to the Assembly for special courses. (A&P 1895)

203. It is the duty of presbyteries to examine all who present themselves as wishing to enter on the study of theology respecting their moral and religious character, their motives, and their general fitness to study for the ministry. If satisfied, the presbytery certifies them to the governing board of the college they propose to attend.

203.1 In case of refusal by a presbytery to grant to any student under its care a certificate of standing, or in case of refusal on moral grounds to receive any student as a student for the ministry, the presbytery is instructed to intimate the fact of such refusal to other presbyteries and to the colleges' governing board by circular letter. (A&P 1901) (see BF Appendix A-66)

204. A candidate for the ministry shall remain under the care of the presbytery of first certification for the whole period of preparation. Exceptions may be made in cases where the presbytery is far removed from the college and must be made in cases where the candidate is appointed to a charge for more than a summer's duration. The presbytery within whose bounds a candidate may labour during a summer only may require a written exercise to be read to the presbytery. The presbytery shall send a written report on the candidate to the presbytery of first certification. That report shall refer to the person's deportment and suitability as a candidate for the office of ministry. The presbytery of first certification shall determine the certification of the candidate only after consideration of this report.

## **Certification as a Candidate for Ordination**

### ***Application***

205. Any student in theology and candidate for the ministry of this church studying in one of the church's theological colleges and who is completing the required course of study may, on application in writing to the clerk of the presbytery of most recent certification, request examination for certification as

a candidate for ordination. The candidate may request for good and sufficient reason the permission of the presbytery for the examination to be conducted by: (1) the presbytery in which the college is situated; or (2) the presbytery of first certification if it be different from the presbytery of most recent certification. Such application should normally be made by the end of the first term of the graduating year. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the application or request is initiated in accordance with the above regulation.

205.1 Upon reception of such application or request, the presbytery of most recent certification shall determine to conduct the examination for certification as a candidate for ordination or grant the request if it deems it expedient and good cause is shown, and all relevant documents shall be transferred to the competent presbytery named in the request. The candidate at the time of application will, among other things, provide the presbytery with such documentation as is laid down from time to time by the Assembly.

### ***Through Committee on Education and Reception***

205.2 If the applicant has studied wholly in a theological college other than one of this church's theological colleges or is currently in the final year in such a college, application shall be made by the presbytery through the Life and Mission Agency's Committee on Education and Reception to the General Assembly for permission to conduct the examination for certification as a candidate for ordination. The applicant will submit official transcripts of courses taken with the application and the committee will satisfy itself through reference of these to the governing board of one of this church's theological colleges that the course of studies meets the theological prescription and perspective of this church. In cases of such applicants, when the secretary of the committee has in hand the application and all required documentation, the presbyteries will be circularized and given three full months from the sending out of the circular letters to lodge with the secretary of the committee any competent objection.

### ***The Examination***

206. The presbytery may begin examination of applicants at any time after application is received. In the examination, the presbytery shall make careful enquiry as to the candidate's suitability to minister in this church, seeking to determine spiritual and personal resources sufficient for the task; ability to express their faith in a way that is real, articulate and integrated; continued growth and personal development; theological stance in respect to Reformed tradition; sensitivity to the process of group decision-making; skills in interpersonal relationships; recognition of the diversities of opinion and practice within this church. It may, with the applicant's permission, avail itself of such evaluative statements as are forthcoming from other agencies and bodies of the church. Presbyteries may conduct the examination for certification as a candidate for ordination, if desired, through a committee, but members of the court may state their views at any stage before the vote to sustain the examination is taken.

206.1 The examination for certification as a candidate for ordination shall embrace the elected biblical language and the core subjects outlined in the report of the Committee on the Structure of Theological Education (A&P 1969, p. 352, 44), as well as the applicant's practical skills. But the presbytery may accept the testamur of the college as proof of proficiency in these matters and dispense with examination in any or all of these subjects. It may assign primary responsibility for examination in each area to particular members of the court.

### ***Sustaining Examination with or without Condition***

206.1.1 The candidate shall be present at the meeting of presbytery when the report of the examination is considered. If this takes place while the candidate is still in course and the presbytery sustains the examination conditional on graduation, the moderator will inform the candidate that permission is granted to be presented to a congregation by an interim moderator in accordance with section 215.1. If this takes place after certification from the governing board of one of the church's colleges has been received (see section 206.2) and the presbytery's examination is sustained, the moderator shall declare to the candidate that they are now a certified candidate for ordination and, therefore, eligible to receive a call or an appointment.

### ***College Certification***

206.2 Certification as a candidate for ordination shall take place only after certification from the governing board of one of this church's theological colleges that: (1) the applicant has completed the course prescribed or assigned or approved by this church; (2) the applicant has given satisfactory evidence of the requisite practical gifts and skills of the ministry; and (3) the applicant's character and conduct are suitable to the position of a candidate for the ministry. An applicant having completed studies in a college other than one of this church shall present an equivalent certificate from that theological college.

### ***Examination Not Sustained***

207. If the examination is not sustained, presbytery may prescribe a new examination and initiate it after a period of not less than three months has elapsed, or otherwise dispose of the case as it sees fit. The applicant remains under the care of the presbytery unless transferred to another presbytery for examination.

### ***Certified Candidate for Ordination***

208. The clerk will issue an extract of certification to the candidate.

208.1 The presbytery will inform the Ministry and Church Vocations Office of the Life and Mission Agency of the names of all certified candidates for ordination, with the date of certification.

208.2 The Life and Mission Agency shall report annually to Assembly the names of all certified candidates for ordination who have not yet been ordained, for inclusion in the Acts and Proceedings.

209. Certified candidates for ordination are under the jurisdiction of the presbytery that certified them, as long as they live, work and/or study within the bounds, or are working or studying abroad with permission of the said presbytery, and may receive notice of meetings of presbytery.

209.1 Certified candidates who leave the bounds of their presbytery to live, work and/or study elsewhere in Canada, must request a transfer to the jurisdiction of the appropriate presbytery.

210. In the event of an appointment under the Life and Mission Agency having been received and accepted, the applicant may, on being certified as a candidate for ordination, also be ordained as a minister of The Presbyterian Church in Canada by the presbytery to which the applicant is appointed, or

the certifying presbytery or another presbytery may ordain the candidate provided permission is granted by the presbytery of primary jurisdiction. (Declaratory Act: A&P 1995, p. 229, 38)

211. The standing of certified candidates for ordination, who have not been ordained, should be reviewed by presbytery at the end of a three year period.

212. Certified candidates for ordination may request to have their standing removed.

### ***The Call to Candidates Certified for Ordination***

215.1 Presbyteries and moderators are enjoined to take care that none others are permitted to appear as candidates. However, certified students of this church's theological colleges, or a theological college associated with this church, in the semester in which they expect to graduate, may, with the permission of their certifying presbytery after the examination for certification as a candidate for ordination is sustained conditional on graduation, and with the permission of the governing board of their college, be presented by an interim moderator or by the Life and Mission Agency, through the interim moderator, to a vacancy. In the event of the charge deciding to call, or receive the appointment, of the graduating student, procedures shall be suspended immediately prior to the call being placed in the hands of the graduating student. Procedures resume after the candidate has graduated and is certified as a candidate for ordination.

221. If the court is satisfied, the call is sustained. In the case of a certified candidate for ordination, it is presented through the presbytery of care, after due consideration, and the candidate is required to give decision to presbytery within seven days. When the call is not sustained, or is declined, the congregation is permitted again to take steps toward settlement (see A&P 1980, p. 218–221).

222. If the person called is present and under the care of said presbytery, and, when the call is put in their hand, accepts it, then, in the case of a certified candidate for ordination the presbytery, if it deems it expedient, may prescribe a lecture, a popular sermon, and a Greek or Hebrew critical exercise. At a subsequent meeting these discourses are heard, and the candidate is examined in Biblical Greek or Hebrew, theology and church history. If these examinations are sustained, the presbytery fixes the time for ordination and induction, appoints the edict to be served (see BF Appendix A–17), and arranges for the ordination and induction service.

### ***Care for Candidates***

249.1 Candidates for the ministry are under the primary jurisdiction of the session of the congregation to which they belong; but as in training for the gospel ministry, they are under the care of the presbytery, and in certain aspects become immediately responsible to it.

319.2 The presbytery has primary jurisdiction over ministers whether on the constituent roll or the appendix to the roll, or on the roll of a congregation, and certified candidates for ordination.

## **Ordination**

### ***Preamble and Ordination Questions***

447. Preamble and Ordination Questions: (A&P 1992, p. 272 and A&P 1998, p. 42)

All ministries of the church proceed from and are sustained by the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our Prophet, Priest and King, the Minister of the covenant of grace.

By the operation of God's Word and Spirit the church is gathered, equipped, and sent out to participate in this ministry. All members of the church are called to share the Gospel with the world, and to offer to the Father the worship and service that are due to the Creator from the creation, through Christ, the only Mediator, until he comes again. That the church may be continually renewed and nurtured for ministry, Christ furnishes the church with pastors and teachers. He requires and enables the church to discern and to confirm by ordination those whom he calls to his pastoral and teaching office. The standards of his church he entrusts in a special degree of responsibility to their care.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada is bound only to Jesus Christ, the Church's King and Head. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as the written Word of God, testifying to Christ the living Word, are the canon of all doctrine, by which Christ rules our faith and life. We acknowledge our historic continuity with the Holy Catholic Church and our doctrinal heritage in the ecumenical creeds, and the confessions of the Reformation. Our subordinate standards are the Westminster Confession of Faith as adopted in 1875 and 1889, the Declaration of Faith concerning Church and Nation of 1954, Living Faith (Foi Vivante) as adopted in 1998, and such doctrine as the church, in obedience to Scripture and under the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, may yet confess in the church's continuing function of reformulating the faith.

All these things you have examined and are ready to accept. Being assured of your faith in Christ and your love for people, the presbytery is prepared to ordain you in the name of the Triune God to the ministry of Word and Sacraments. That your faith may appear in the presence of God and the people of God, we now ask you the appointed questions in terms of this preamble:

447.1 Do you believe in God the Father, made known in his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom the Holy Spirit witnesses in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments?

447.2 Do you accept the subordinate standards of this church, promising to uphold its doctrine under the continual illumination and correction of the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures?

447.3 Do you accept the government of this church by sessions, presbyteries, synods and General Assemblies, and do you promise to share in and submit yourself to all lawful oversight therein, and to follow no divisive course but to seek the peace and unity of Christ among your people and throughout the Holy Catholic Church?

447.4 Do you promise in the strength and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to conduct yourself in your private and public life as becomes his gospel, and do you give yourself diligently and cheerfully to the service of Christ's word, sacraments and discipline, for the furtherance of his reconciling mission in the world?

## **Designation**

### ***Designation Questions***

451. The Presbyterian Church in Canada is bound only to Jesus Christ, the Church's King and Head. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as the written Word of God, testifying to Christ the living Word, are the canon of all doctrine, by which Christ rules our faith and life. We acknowledge our historic continuity with the Holy Catholic Church and our doctrinal heritage in the ecumenical creeds and the

confessions of the Reformation. Our subordinate standards are the Westminster Confession of Faith, as adopted in 1875 and 1889, the Declaration of Faith concerning Church and Nation of 1954, Living Faith (Foi Vivante) as adopted in 1998, and such doctrine as the church, in obedience to Scripture and under the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, may yet confess in the church's function of re-formulating the faith.

The church is one. It is one family under God whose purpose is to unite all people in Jesus Christ. The church is holy. It is set apart by God through the Holy Spirit to be a chosen people in the world. The church is catholic. It is universal, including all people of all time who affirm the Christian Faith. The church is apostolic. It is founded on Christ and the apostles and is in continuity with their teachings. The church is in constant need of reform because of the failure and sin that mark its life in every age. The church is present when the Word is truly preached, the sacraments rightly administered, and as it orders its life according to the word of God.

Through the church God orders this ministry by calling some to special tasks in the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. Specialized ministries are recognized as through the designation of people to the Order of Diaconal Ministries. Those designated to the Order of Diaconal Ministries join with the ordained and the laity to enable the whole people of God to participate in the reconciling ministry of Jesus Christ.

God has called you by the voice of the church to serve Jesus Christ. You know who we are and what we believe, and you understand the work for which you have been chosen.

Being assured of your faith in Christ and your love for people, the presbytery is prepared to designate you in the name of the Triune God, to the Order of Diaconal Ministries of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. We now ask you to declare your faith in the presence of God and the people of God.

451.1 Do you believe in God, the Father, made known in his son, Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom the Holy Spirit witnesses in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments?

451.2 Do you accept the subordinate standards of this church, promising to uphold its doctrine under the continual illumination and correction of the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures, and to be guided by them as you lead the people of God?

451.3 Do you accept the government of this church by sessions, presbyteries, synods and General Assemblies, and do you promise to share in and submit yourself to all lawful oversight therein, and to follow no divisive course but to seek the peace and unity of Christ among your people and throughout the Holy Catholic Church?

451.4 Do you promise, in the strength and grace of the Lord, Jesus Christ, to govern the way you live as becomes the gospel, and do you promise to serve the people with compassion, energy, intelligence, imagination and love for the furtherance of God's reconciling mission in the world?

## **Appendix L**

### **Policy Regarding Same-Sex Marriage and the Ordination of LGBTQI Persons**

The 2021 General Assembly approved the following remits under the Barrier Act:

#### **Remit B, 2019 – Definition of Marriage**

The Presbyterian Church in Canada holds two parallel definitions of marriage and recognizes that faithful, Holy Spirit filled, Christ centered, God honouring people can understand marriage as a covenant relationship between a man and a woman or as a covenant relationship between two adult persons.

That congregations, sessions, ruling and teaching elders be granted liberty of conscience and action on marriage.

#### **Remit C, 2019 – Ordination of LGBTQI Persons**

That congregations and presbyteries may call and ordain as ministers and elect and ordain as ruling elders LGBTQI persons (married or single) with the provision that liberty of conscience and action regarding participation in ordinations, inductions and installations be granted to ministers and ruling elders.

## **Supplement J – General Assembly Regulations**

This section provides references to decisions pertaining to candidacy made by General Assembly over the years. Such decisions are recorded in the Acts and Proceedings, which are the official minutes of General Assembly. References to an Acts and Proceedings use the short form “A&P,” followed by the year.  
[presbyterian.ca/acts-and-proceedings](http://presbyterian.ca/acts-and-proceedings)

### **Candidacy Process as a Whole**

The candidacy process provides the framework for the vocational preparation and discernment required of lay members of The Presbyterian Church in Canada who seek ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacraments or designation to the Order of Diaconal Ministries.

Guidelines for presbyteries in certifying students were first approved by the General Assembly in 1981. These have been in regular use since then, with revisions adopted from time to time by General Assembly and periodic review of the candidacy process including church-wide consultation.

At the time of the last review (2016-2017), no revisions were made to the candidacy process. The sole recommendation adopted by the General Assembly was that the Life and Mission Agency (Ministry and Church Vocations) review the process again in ten years (2027). The candidacy booklet was rewritten in 2019 for improved clarity and brevity.

- A&P 1981, p. 375-81, 46-7
- A&P 1999, p. 329-36, 18
- A&P 2007, p. 340-49, 39
- A&P 2017, p. 392-400, 21

### **Guidance Conference**

Guidance conferences have been a mandatory part of the candidacy process since 1981, after an initial trial period that began in 1977. References in the Acts and Proceedings with particular significance for guidance conferences include the following:

- A&P 1976, p. 351-355, 49
- A&P 1981, p. 375, 46
- A&P 1984, p. 402-403, 31
- A&P 1988, p. 383-384, 21
- A&P 1991, p. 340

### **Psychological Testing**

Psychological testing has been a mandatory part of the candidacy process since September 1993. References in the Acts and Proceedings with particular significance to psychological testing include the following:

- A&P 1992, p. 379-382, 63
- A&P 1994, p. 379-383, 32
- A&P 1999, p. 336, 18

### **Vulnerable Sector Police Records Checks**

Certified candidates are required to obtain and submit to their presbytery a new vulnerable sector police records check every five years. In the intervening years, they must submit annually a signed update statement attesting that they have not committed a crime since their vulnerable sector police records check was issued.

In addition, a vulnerable sector police records check must be presented at two points in the candidacy process: by prospective candidates prior to the first certification and by certified candidates prior to participating in a field education placement. If the vulnerable sector police records check is more than one year old, a signed update statement is also required. If the five-year period for the vulnerable sector police records check has elapsed, a new document must be obtained and presented.

At other points in the candidacy process, certified candidates are required to submit to their presbytery a signed update statement: annually at recertification and at the time of examination for certification for ordination. If the five-year period for the vulnerable sector police records check has elapsed, a new document must be obtained and presented.

A&P 2007, p. 339-340, 39

### **Supply Preaching During Final Year of Theological Study**

Candidates taking Sunday supply in the year in which they are to graduate should decline such supply in vacant charges in which they have an interest in seeking a call or appointment. Interim moderators of vacant charges should not approve as Sunday Supply students in the graduating year who are likely to have an interest in seeking a call or appointment to that charge.

A&P 1993, p. 288, 52

### **Seeking Calls**

The complete set of guidelines governing the calling of graduating students:

A&P 1987, p. 414 – 417, 34

## **Supplement**

### **K – Colleges of The Presbyterian Church in Canada**

#### **Knox College**

59 St. George Street, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 2E6  
Phone: 416-978-4500 Fax: 416-971-2133  
Email: [knox.college@utoronto.ca](mailto:knox.college@utoronto.ca)  
Webpage: [knox.utoronto.ca](http://knox.utoronto.ca)

Knox College is a member of the Toronto School of Theology, a federation of seven theological colleges (two Anglican, Presbyterian, three Roman Catholic, and United) with the University of Toronto. The program includes both academic studies and the practice of ministry. The theological field education program allows students the option of an eight-month internship.

#### **Presbyterian College**

3495 University Street, Montreal, Quebec, H3A 2A8  
Phone: 514-288-5256 Fax: 514-288-8072  
Email: [info@presbyteriancollege.ca](mailto:info@presbyteriancollege.ca)  
Webpage: [presbyteriancollege.ca](http://presbyteriancollege.ca)

Presbyterian College is a member of the Montreal School of Theology consisting of three theological colleges (Anglican, Presbyterian and United). Students at Presbyterian College spend most of their time in the first two years of the M.Div. program taking academic courses in theology at McGill. The 3rd year of the program, the In-Ministry Year, is an intensive integration of pastoral theology at the college and pastoral practice in a congregation.

#### **Vancouver School of Theology**

6000 Iona Drive, Vancouver, British Columbia, V6T 1L4  
Phone: 604-822-9031 Fax: 604-822-9212  
Email: [possibilities@vst.edu](mailto:possibilities@vst.edu)  
Web page: [vst.edu](http://vst.edu)

#### **St. Andrew's Hall**

6040 Iona Drive, Vancouver, British Columbia, V6T 2E8  
Phone: 604-822-9720 Fax: 604-822 – 9718  
Webpage: [standrews.edu](http://standrews.edu)

The Presbyterian Church in Canada is associated with Vancouver School of Theology through St. Andrew's Hall. The school also prepares candidates for ministry in the United and Anglican churches. VST uses an integrated competence-based curriculum. This model of education invites adult learners to engage in the task of theological education in ways most suited to their own learning goals and the needs of the church in the context from which they come. The Denominational Studies component of the curriculum and liaison with The Presbyterian Church in Canada is coordinated through the Director of Presbyterian Formation.

## Supplement L – Resources

### Preparation and Discernment

Fairchild, Roy W. *Discerning Your Call and Your Gifts for Ministry*  
([oga.pcusa.org/resource/discerning-your-call-and-your-gifts-ministry-word](http://oga.pcusa.org/resource/discerning-your-call-and-your-gifts-ministry-word))

A discussion of God's call to the ministry of all believers and of the call to the ministry of Word and Sacraments, with guidance on how to discern the ministry for which God has equipped a person.

Stotts, Jack L. *A Theology of Vocation*  
([presbyterianmission.org/resource/theology-vocation](http://presbyterianmission.org/resource/theology-vocation))

This booklet addresses the questions "Who is called? Who mediates the call? What characterizes the leader?" An exceptional resource to stimulate dialogue on the subject of vocation and call to ministry.

### Other Books

Aveyard, Ian, and David Muir. *Fit for the Purpose*. Nottingham: St. John's College Extension Studies, 1998.

Badcock, Gary D. *The Way of Life: A Theology of Christian Vocation*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002.

Chatham, James O. *Is It I, Lord? Discerning God's Call to Be a Pastor*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.

Dawn, Marva J, Eugene H. Peterson, and Peter Santucci. *The Unnecessary Pastor: Rediscovering the Call*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000.

Farnham, Suzanne G, and Parker J. Palmer. *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community*. Anniversary ed. New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2011.

Imbler, John M, and Linda K. Plengemeier. *Discerning the Call: Advancing the Quality of Ordained Leadership*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1992.

Johnson, Ben C. *Hearing God's Call: Ways of Discernment for Laity and Clergy*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002.

Messer, Donald E. *Contemporary Images of Christian Ministry*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989.

Nouwen, Henri J. M. *The Road to Daybreak: A Spiritual Journey*. Revised ed. New York: Image, 2013.

Nouwen, Henri J. M. *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership with Study Guide for Groups and Individuals*. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2002.

## Resources

Holderness, Ginny W, and Forrest C. Palmer. *Career and Calling: A Guide for Counselors, Youth, and Young Adults*. Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 2001.

O'Connor, Elizabeth. *Cry Pain, Cry Hope: Thresholds to Purpose*. Dallas, TX: Word Pub, 1987.

Oswald, Roy M, and Otto Kroeger. *Personality Type and Religious Leadership*. Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1998.

Palmer, Parker J. *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2015.

Parker, Ronald E. *Do I Belong in Seminary?* Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1998.

Preston, Terry-Anne. *Your Call Is Waiting: How to Recognize God's Purpose for Your Life*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001.

Snow, John H. *The Impossible Vocation: Ministry in the Meantime*. Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 1988.

Zikmund, Barbara B, Adair T. Lummis, and Patricia M. Y. Chang. *Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998.

## First Years of Ministry

Clayton, Paul C. *Letters to Lee: Mentoring the New Minister*. Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1999.

Clayton has a deep love for the congregation and pastoral ministry but doesn't pull any punches about the realities of church life.

Dittes, James E, and Donald Capps. *Re-calling Ministry*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1999.

A gripping and engaging book on the integration of life and ministry. Dittes explores the pastoral aspects of ministry while inviting the minister — the reflexive practitioner — to probe its everyday experiences and deeper meanings. He explores four multi-faceted and interrelated experiences in ministry: The Predicament of Ministry, The Pressure of Ministry, Particularity of Ministry, Presence of Ministry.

Harbaugh, Gary L. *Beyond the Boundary: Meeting the Challenge of the First Years of Ministry*. Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1998.

This report presents representative models of Episcopal, United Methodist, Presbyterian and Lutheran support systems, analyzing strengths and weaknesses.

Oswald, Roy M. *Crossing the Boundary between Seminary and Parish*. Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1993.

Discover the culture shock, issues, concerns and unpreparedness pastors can encounter one to three years into their first parish.

## Resources

Oswald, Roy M. *New Beginnings: A Pastorate Start Up Workbook*. Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1989.

This book will help you to understand your entry style, respect and understand your new congregation's history and system, assess your leadership style, know when to make changes, get through first "pinches" etc.

Oswald, Roy M. *Running Through the Thistles: Terminating a Ministerial Relationship with a Parish*. Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1998

Gain insight into termination styles and how they affect both the minister and the parishioners.

Scalise, Charles J. *Bridging the Gap: Connecting What You Learned in Seminary with What You Find in the Congregation*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003.

By acknowledging various theological models of integration, the author argues for a "wise eclecticism," thus enabling the reader to explore possibilities for their own tailor-made approaches to ministry.

Ware, Corinne. *Ministry Specialties Test*. Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1998.

A self-scoring test designed for those in and considering ministry, intended to help discern aptitudes and strengths. This test is a tool to assist in discernment and makes no claim to being a scientific reading of aptitudes.