

**ENTRY INTO THE MINISTRY OF WORD AND SACRAMENTS  
IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA  
FOR ORDAINED MINISTERS AND  
CERTIFIED CANDIDATES FOR ORDINATION FROM OTHER CHURCHES**

**OVERVIEW**

The Presbyterian Church in Canada has a long history of welcoming ordained ministers in good standing in other Christian denominations. For such ministers, entry into the ministry of Word and Sacraments of The Presbyterian Church in Canada is a two-step process. In overview, it involves the following:

The minister ***applies for eligibility for reception*** as a minister of The Presbyterian Church in Canada through the Committee on Education and Reception. If the minister's application is approved, the minister is declared eligible for reception, with or without conditions. Once the minister has fulfilled all conditions, the minister is permitted to move to the second step.

The minister ***seeks a call*** to a ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The minister first completes a personal profile form, which is a standardized resume, and forwards it to interim moderators to indicate interest in particular ministry opportunities in The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The minister may also request the assistance of the office of Ministry and Church Vocations in circulating his or her personal profile. If a congregation extends a call to the minister with the approval of the congregation's presbytery and the minister accepts the call, then the minister is inducted, and the minister's name is placed on the constituent roll of the presbytery.

**REQUIREMENTS OF APPLICATION FOR ELIGIBILITY FOR RECEPTION**

The process of application for eligibility for reception has several requirements. Application is appropriate when **all** the following statements are true. The minister is:

- an ordained minister of Word and Sacraments and able to provide proof of ordination by a Christian denomination recognized by The Presbyterian Church in Canada
- in good standing with a Christian denomination recognized by The Presbyterian Church in Canada and able to provide a current letter attesting the same
- able to provide letters of good standing from all previous denominations
- able to arrange for confidential references
- able to provide academic transcripts
- if living in Canada, able to obtain the endorsement of the appropriate Presbyterian Church in Canada presbytery
- seeking to provide kinds of ministerial service that The Presbyterian Church in Canada needs at the present time or reasonably may be expected to need in the near future
- prepared to fulfill all conditions placed on his or her eligibility for reception before seeking a ministry position in The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
- if seeking to immigrate to Canada, able to meet immigration requirements while fulfilling any conditions placed by the church on the minister's eligibility for reception
- prepared to come to Presbyterian Church in Canada offices in Toronto, Ontario, for a personal interview with the Committee on Education and Reception, and to cover own travel and accommodation expenses
- aware that not all applications are approved and that, in all cases, the committee refrains from giving reasons for its decisions concerning applications

- prepared to apply without any guarantee of eventual reception as a minister of The Presbyterian Church in Canada

## **Reception Not Guaranteed**

There is no guarantee that this two-step process will result in entry into the ordained ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

If an application for eligibility for reception is not approved, the process will halt at the first step. The Committee on Education and Reception does not give reasons for its decisions.

Some ministers who complete the first step successfully nevertheless find that they do not receive a call. Presbyterian Church in Canada congregations choose which ministers to consider, to interview, and to invite to preach for a call. Unlike some denominations, there is no centralized church body with the authority to appoint ministers to congregations. Even for Presbyterian Church in Canada ministers who are well known within this denomination, it can take 9-12 months to receive a call. Ministers wishing to serve in specialized ministries or using particular linguistic or cultural ability are advised to become informed about the church's need for these kinds of leadership.

## **PROCESS FOR APPLICATION FOR ELIGIBILITY FOR RECEPTION**

1. Contact the Committee on Education and Reception requesting information about entering the ordained ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

You will be asked first to provide some details about yourself to equip the committee in forwarding information pertinent to your situation, and if appropriate, an application form.

Requests for information may be made as follows:

Ministry and Church Vocations  
c/o Marjorie Copeland, Administrative Assistant  
Email address: [mcopeland@presbyterian.ca](mailto:mcopeland@presbyterian.ca)  
Telephone: 1-800-619-7301 or 416-441-1111, ext. 263

2. ***For applicants living in Canada***

Write to the Clerk of the presbytery of The Presbyterian Church in Canada where you live requesting endorsement of your application by the presbytery. The contact information for the Clerk will be provided on the committee's covering letter accompanying the application form.

When contacted by the appropriate committee of the presbytery, meet with them and discuss the process the presbytery will follow leading to a decision about endorsement. Depending on the presbytery's knowledge and previous experience of a minister, this discernment may be completed in a single interview or may require the minister to participate in the life of the presbytery over several months.

While most of the congregations of The Presbyterian Church in Canada have been placed in presbyteries defined by specific geographic boundaries (without any overlap between them), there are also two Korean-language presbyteries—one covers eastern Canada, and the other, western Canada. Korean-speaking ministers have the option of approaching either the local "geographic" presbytery or the Korean-language (Han-Ca) presbytery where they live.

### ***For applicants living outside Canada***

Endorsement of the application by a presbytery of The Presbyterian Church in Canada is not required.

3. Complete and submit the application form.

4. Arrange for documents to be **prepared and forwarded directly by others**: a current letter of standing, letters of good standing from all previous denominations, confidential references, endorsement by a presbytery of The Presbyterian Church in Canada (for applicants living in Canada), and academic transcripts.

A current letter of good standing is provided by the ecclesial body in the minister's current denomination that "holds" the minister's credentials. For this purpose, credentialing bodies are church structures beyond the level of the local congregation. A letter of standing indicates the applicant is still a minister of the denomination and has no disciplinary notations in his/her file, and states that the minister has good standing with them. A current letter of good standing is dated within 3 months of the minister's application to the Committee on Education and Reception. If the denomination is the same one that ordained the minister, the details of ordination are generally also provided in the letter, though multiple letters or certificates are issued by some denominations. The letter must be sent directly from the issuer to the Ministry and Church Vocations office.

Letters of good standing are required from all previous Christian denominations to which the minister has belonged as an ordained minister of Word and Sacraments. These letters state that the minister was in good standing at the time the minister left the denomination. The letter from the denomination that ordained the minister has the additional requirement of outlining the details of the ordination. The letter must be sent directly from the issuer to the Ministry and Church Vocations office.

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.

Ministers living in Canada are required to obtain the endorsement of their application by the presbytery of The Presbyterian Church in Canada where they live.

Academic transcripts for all post-secondary education are required. These are original documents bearing the school's official seal, signature and/or watermark. Photocopies, scanned, or faxed documents will not be accepted. Transcripts detail the student's academic record: program of study and basis of admission, courses attempted, grades earned, degrees granted, all with appropriate dates. Diplomas or program certificates are not required and will not be accepted. The transcripts must be sent directly from the issuing bodies to the Ministry and Church Vocations office.

5. Observe the application deadlines outlined on the instruction sheet for the application.

***For Consideration at the Committee's Spring Meeting:***

March 30—interviews at Presbyterian Church Offices (Toronto) during committee meetings

February 28—interviews elsewhere in Canada (when possible, for applicants living in Canada)

***For Consideration at the Committee's Fall Meeting:***

September 30—interviews at Presbyterian Church Offices (Toronto) during committee meetings

September 1—interviews elsewhere in Canada (when possible, for applicants living in Canada)

6. When your application file is complete, you will be offered an interview appointment with the Committee on Education and Reception. All applicants have an interview in person with the Committee on Education and Reception, usually at Presbyterian Church in Canada offices in Toronto, Ontario, and cover their own travel and accommodation expenses. Under some circumstances, ministers living in Canada may have the option of an interview closer to home.

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

Confirm your intention to attend the interview.

Make your travel and accommodation arrangements, including obtaining the documents necessary to enter Canada, if applicable. Applicants are responsible for their own arrangements and costs.

7. 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 ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. The interview will be approximately 45-60 minutes in length.

Applicants sometimes ask how to prepare for their interview. Interviews in Toronto are conducted by a small group of members of the Committee on Education and Reception. Discussion focuses on many of the areas covered in the application, such as faith journey, vocation, church and work experience, education, and similarities and differences between the minister's current ministry context and The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Some knowledge of this denomination is helpful. We recommend the following resources on the denominational website:

*Living Faith - A Statement of Christian Faith/ Foi Vivante - Une Declaration de Foi Chretienne:* One of the subordinate standards of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, it outlines beliefs in simple, contemporary language.

<https://presbyterian.ca/downloads/33400/>

*Together in Ministry: The Theology and Practice of Ministry in The Presbyterian Church in Canada*

<https://presbyterian.ca/downloads/36398/>

*Acts and Proceedings of the General Assembly:* the minutes and reports presented to the annual General Assembly, the rolls of presbyteries, and statistics.

<https://presbyterian.ca/downloads/41396/>

Some knowledge of Canadian culture and context is also desirable.

8. After the interview, the committee informs applicants of its decision about their application by mail within two weeks. When the application was endorsed by a Presbyterian Church in Canada presbytery, the presbytery receives this notification as well.

In many cases, 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.)

In some cases, the committee is authorized to make the church's decision about the application without reference to the General Assembly. The outcome of the application is stated in the committee's letter.

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

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

10. For ministers whose application is approved and who wish to proceed with the church's process, the next steps are to fulfill any conditions placed on their eligibility for reception. Such conditions are introduced by the words "subject to" in the statement declaring the minister eligible for reception.
11. For all approved applications, the minister's eligibility for reception is "subject to no competent objections being submitted by a presbytery of this church by (date)." Until this period has elapsed without an objection being lodged by a presbytery, the minister is not eligible for reception.

The names of the ministers 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 minister's personal or professional conduct that might be unknown to the Committee on Education and Reception. Presbyteries are given two months to forward "competent objections" to an application. Until this period has elapsed without an objection being lodged by a presbytery, the minister is not eligible for reception. If an objection is lodged, the committee notifies the applicant (and the endorsing presbytery, if any) that the condition has not been lifted; the possibility then exists that the committee's decision might be changed. When no objection is lodged by the specified date, the condition is deemed to be lifted; in this case, no notification is sent to the applicant (or to the endorsing presbytery, if any).

12. For all approved applications, the declaration of eligibility for reception is valid for three years from the date the decision is made by the General Assembly (or by the Committee on Education and Reception, when applicable). Ministers seeking an extension of this period must apply to the Committee on Education and Reception. Renewal for an additional period is not guaranteed.
13. ***Studies in a theological college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada***

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

The Presbyterian Church in Canada has three theological colleges: Knox College in Toronto, Ontario; Presbyterian College in Montreal, Quebec; and Vancouver School of Theology in Vancouver, British Columbia. Each college has established its own admission 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 minister is declared eligible for reception and assigned educational requirements, this does not serve to enrol the minister in a suitable program, nor does it serve as an application for or a guarantee of admission. Ministers 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, the college provides the minister (and the endorsing presbytery, if any) with a letter to this effect.

14. Once the minister has fulfilled all conditions placed on his or her eligibility for reception, the minister is permitted to seek a call in The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
15. ***For ministers living in Canada***  
Once the minister has fulfilled all conditions placed on his or her eligibility for reception, the presbytery where the minister lives is permitted to receive the minister, placing the minister's name on the Appendix to the Roll.

16. ***Immigration to Canada***

A minister whose application is approved and who seeks to immigrate to Canada will face dual requirements—satisfying Canadian immigration requirements, while fulfilling conditions placed by the church on the minister’s eligibility for reception. When ministers must complete studies before seeking a ministry position, this can have implications for immigration.

## PROCESS FOR SEEKING A CALL

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

Ministry and Church Vocations  
c/o Marjorie Copeland, Administrative Assistant  
Email address: [mcopeland@presbyterian.ca](mailto:mcopeland@presbyterian.ca)  
Telephone: 1-800-619-7301 or 416-441-1111, ext. 263

2. Complete your personal profile and begin to circulate it to interim moderators of congregations that interest you. You may forward a copy to Ministry and Church Vocations for assistance in circulating your profile.

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

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

3. To learn more about the church's procedures for search, call and induction, refer to:  
*Calling a Minister: Guidelines for Presbyteries, Interim Moderators and Search Committees*  
<https://presbyterian.ca/downloads/34185/>
4. When a congregation extends a call to the minister with the approval of the congregation's presbytery and the minister accepts the call, then the minister is inducted, and the minister's name is placed on the constituent roll of the presbytery.

## **SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR REFORMED CHURCH MINISTERS**

The Presbyterian Church in Canada has special provisions for ministers applying for reception from denominations that share its doctrine, discipline and polity. In these cases, the Committee on Education and Reception has the authority to make decisions without reference to the General Assembly (Book of Forms, 248.5 and 248.6). This eliminates any delay waiting for a final decision from the Assembly.

### **Interim Privileges Sometimes Extended**

Some Reformed Church ministers are assigned only examinations in Presbyterian Church in Canada history and Presbyterian Church in Canada polity when their applications are approved, and they are declared eligible for reception. These ministers are extended certain privileges during the interim period between being declared eligible for reception without conditions and passing the examinations. They are expected to complete this educational requirement within the first twelve months after being received into The Presbyterian Church in Canada.

The interim privileges extended to these ministers are as follows. The ministers are permitted to seek a ministry position in one of this denomination's congregations. When a minister finds one, the procedures that normally finalize the call or presbytery appointment are put on hold until the minister completes the examinations. In the meantime, the presbytery places the minister's name on its Appendix to the Roll and permits the minister to begin serving in the congregation, carrying out most but not all the responsibilities of the position. Once the minister completes the examinations—within twelve months—the deferred call or appointment procedures are resumed, and the presbytery installs the minister in the position by a service of induction or recognition (Book of Forms, 248.12 - 248.12.6).

The procedures for reception, call and induction, and presbytery appointment and recognition are detailed below. They apply only to Reformed Church ministers who have been declared eligible for reception and whose additional educational requirements are limited to examinations in Presbyterian Church in Canada history and Presbyterian Church in Canada polity, and who, on that basis, are being extended interim privileges. The interim privileges are in effect as soon as the period for competent objections by presbyteries (a regular part of our process for all ministers) has elapsed without an objection being submitted.

### ***Reception***

For ministers living in Canada, the presbytery where the minister lives may choose to receive the minister, placing the minister's name on the Appendix to the Roll. This confers standing as a minister of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, with restrictions as described below.

Ministers must be living in Canada within the bounds of a presbytery before they may be received.

### ***Call and Induction***

- a. Regardless of country of residence, the minister may seek a call. This involves contacting interim moderators, interviewing with search committees, preaching for a call, and allowing his or her name to be inserted into a call document.
- b. When a call from a congregation comes to its presbytery for approval, the presbytery considers it. If the presbytery approves the call, the presbytery "tables" the call. This defers further action on the call until the minister has completed successfully the assigned examinations.
- c. The presbytery of the calling congregation places the minister's name on the Appendix to the Roll. If a different presbytery has already received the minister, the minister's name is transferred from that presbytery's Appendix to the Roll.

- d. The minister begins serving in the congregation, carrying out all responsibilities of the ministry position including conducting sacraments and performing weddings, but with the exception of moderating the meetings of the session.
- e. An interim moderator remains in place to moderate session meetings and to provide the newly received minister with informal mentoring while the minister is studying Presbyterian Church in Canada history and polity.
- f. Presbyteries may choose to supervise the minister's study and examinations. Alternatively, they may require the minister to take courses through a college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
- g. Within twelve months of the minister being received into The Presbyterian Church in Canada, the minister completes the study and examinations. The presbytery receives the college letter informing it that the minister has passed the examinations or receives a report to this effect from the presbyters who have supervised the minister's study. The presbytery adopts a motion stating that the minister has passed the assigned examinations.
- h. The presbytery writes to inform the Committee on Education and Reception that the minister has passed the examinations.
- i. If the minister does not complete this assignment within one year, the presbytery writes to the Committee on Education and Reception requesting an extension (Book of Forms, 248.12.5). The presbytery does not take the next steps described below until the minister has passed the examinations and the presbytery has adopted a motion to this effect.
- j. The presbytery "lifts the call from the table" and "places it in the minister's hands." When the minister accepts the call, the presbytery proceeds with the service of induction. The minister is now the called minister of the congregation. The minister's name is moved to the Constituent Roll of the presbytery.

### ***Presbytery Appointment and Recognition***

For ministers living in Canada, there is another route into ministerial service in The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Once they have been received by a presbytery and their name placed on the presbytery's Appendix to the Roll, the ministers may be considered for stated supply positions. These are congregational ministry positions in which the minister is installed by appointment of the presbytery without the call of the congregation. To preserve the right of congregations to call a minister, such positions are limited to a maximum of one year. For newly received ministers who have been assigned only examinations in Presbyterian Church in Canada history and polity, the steps are analogous to those for call and induction.

- a. The minister is considered for a stated supply appointment. When the presbytery resolves to appoint the minister to the position, it "tables" that action. This defers further action on the appointment until the minister has completed successfully the assigned examinations.
- b. The appointing presbytery places the minister's name on the Appendix to the Roll. If a different presbytery has already received the minister, the minister's name is transferred from that presbytery's Appendix to the Roll.
- c. The minister begins serving in the congregation, carrying out all responsibilities of the ministry position including conducting sacraments and performing weddings, but with the exception of moderating the meetings of the session.
- d. An interim moderator remains in place to moderate session meetings and to provide the newly received minister with informal mentoring while the minister is studying Presbyterian Church in Canada history and polity.
- e. Presbyteries may choose to supervise the minister's study and examinations. Alternatively, they may require the minister to take courses through a college of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
- f. Within twelve months of the minister being received into The Presbyterian Church in Canada, the minister completes the study and examinations. The presbytery receives the college letter informing

it that the minister has passed the examinations or receives a report to this effect from the presbyters who have supervised the minister's study. The presbytery adopts a motion stating that the minister has passed the assigned examinations.

- g. The presbytery writes to inform the Committee on Education and Reception that the minister has passed the examinations.
- h. If the minister does not complete this assignment within one year, the presbytery writes to the Committee on Education and Reception requesting an extension (Book of Forms, 248.12.5). The presbytery does not take the next steps described below until the minister has passed the examinations and the presbytery has adopted a motion to this effect.
- i. The presbytery "lifts the appointment from the table" and "places it in the minister's hands." When the minister accepts the appointment, the presbytery proceeds with the service of recognition. The minister is now the appointed stated supply minister of the congregation. The minister's name is moved to the Constituent Roll of the presbytery.

### **Interim Privileges Not Always Extended**

Not all Reformed Church ministers who are declared eligible for reception are extended the interim privileges described above. Interim privileges are not extended to ministers who are declared eligible for reception ***subject to the completion of studies***. In such cases, the assigned studies are more extensive than examinations in Presbyterian Church in Canada history and Presbyterian Church in Canada polity. These ministers must fulfill all conditions placed on their eligibility for reception, completing all assigned studies, before seeking a call or before their name may be placed on the Constituent Roll or the Appendix to the Roll of a presbytery. This applies to all ministers regardless of denominational affiliation.

### **For Further Clarification**

You are welcome to contact the Secretary of the Committee on Education and Reception, Rev. Tim Purvis.

Phone: 1-800-619-7301, ext. 264

Email: [tpurvis@presbyterian.ca](mailto:tpurvis@presbyterian.ca)