

# PRESBYTERY OF MONMOUTH COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

## SUGGESTIONS FOR CPM LIAISONS TO INQUIRERS & CANDIDATES

1. Become familiar with the general operation of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) by—
  - a. Perusing the denomination’s website in support of preparing inquirers and candidates for ministry: <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/>.
  - b. Reading the most recent edition of Advisory Handbook on Preparation for Ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) issued by Mid Council Ministries of the Office of the General Assembly. It is available in our DropBox, on our section of the Presbytery’s website (<http://monmouthpresbytery.com/2018/cpm-links-to-forms-and-important-resources>), and at the main website of the PC (USA) <http://www.pcusa.org/resource/preparation-ministry-handbook/>.
  - c. Studying the CPM’s policies and procedures, which are available both in our DropBox (folders designated below) as well as on the Presbytery’s website: <http://monmouthpresbytery.com/category/committees-councils/cpm>:
    - i. File and Record Retention [Under development]
    - ii. Procedure for Sending Inquirers to Trinity Counseling Service in Princeton, NJ, for Psychological Evaluations (“Policy” folder)
    - iii. Seminary Requirements (“Policy” folder)
    - iv. Set of forms that are used throughout the process (“Forms” folder)
    - v. Policy on Student/Clergy Indebtedness and Seminary Debt Relief Assistance (“Policy” folder)
    - vi. Guidance for Candidates Composing Their Statement of Faith (“Policy folder”)
    - vii. Flow Chart, Preparation for Ministry Process [This is a new document being developing and will be proposed for consideration down the road.]
  - d. Observing how the CPM conducts business and becoming familiar with §§a-c above; absorbing the CPM’s procedures and policies to be prepared to answer questions that inquirers/candidates may pose to you over time.
2. Overall mission:
  - a. “[I]t is the presbytery that has the responsibilities for oversight of the person’s preparation, to make a decision about suitability for ministry, and finally to assess readiness to seek a call to ministry that would require ordination as a minister of the Word and Sacrament.” *Advisory Handbook*, p. 32.
  - b. “In providing pastoral care, guidance and support to inquirers and candidates it is imperative that the presbytery’s committee show sensitivity to each individual’s unique background, experience, level of maturity and personal attributes. If growth is to be effectively nurtured, members of the committee must understand

and accept the individual where he or she is at each stage of the process.” *Ibid.*, p. 82.

3. Helpful guidance from other sources:
  - a. “The advisor [liaison for us] is the key to the effective work of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry. Each advisor should see his or her task as both shepherding and gate-keeping. The advisor is the continuing liaison with the individual Inquirers and Candidates. The primary tasks of the advisor are to explain the process, to act as a contact person, and to serve as an advocate for the advisee. The advisor also communicates the committee’s concerns to the advisee, and when appropriate, to the home church pastor and the elder liaison.” *Materials for Advisors*, Presbytery of Chicago CPM, n.d.; <http://oga.pcusa.org/media/uploads/oga/pdf/midcouncil-resources/cpmmaterials-advisors.pdf>
  - b. “Inquirer and Candidate liaisons exist for four reasons:
    - i. To support the Inquirer/Candidate through prayer and regular contact as he or she encounters the challenges of seminary and preparation for ministry.
    - ii. To help the Inquirer/Candidate understand the care process and its requirements. This includes helping the student anticipate the requirements and deadlines for whichever step in the process may be next.
    - iii. To serve as a point of communication with the rest of the CPM of developments in the life of the Inquirer/Candidate, and to communicate to the student any items of information or action which may be applicable.
    - iv. To serve as a liaison and support person when the Inquirer/Candidate comes before the committee and/or Presbytery.” SEIC/801/xxviii, “Guidelines for CPM Liaisons (Revised 11/90); <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/guidelines-inquirer-candidate-cpm-liaison.pdf>.
4. Establish a relationship with the inquirers and/or candidates for whom you become the Committee’s liaison (depending on the number of CPM members and inquirers/candidates, members can usually expect to serve as liaison to an average of two inquirers/candidates at a time), as well as their session liaison:
  - a. At the first CPM meeting where you and the inquirer/candidate first meet, be prepared to say a prayer focusing on the student’s journey at the conclusion of the consultation before the inquirer/candidate leaves.
  - b. Meet with them in person, face to face, as soon as possible after becoming their liaison, perhaps over lunch, preferably your treat. Explain how the Committee works and what can be expected of the relationship.
  - c. Early in the relationship check in with them periodically by phone, e-mail or otherwise to start nurturing the relationship.
  - d. Probe to see if they have any questions and do your best to provide accurate answers.
  - e. Make an early contact with the session liaison from the student’s home church so you have a basis for future communications with this other key partner in the process.

5. Nurture the relationship throughout the process, keeping them in prayer throughout.
  - a. Touch base with them periodically, preferably monthly, so you keep up with what's going on in their journey and are prepared to provide updates of any significant developments at monthly Committee meetings. Make sure they know they can reach out to you with questions or concerns at any time. Possibly take them to lunch once/year and/or invite them to your home for dinner and fellowship.
  - b. Monitor their progress toward meeting all requirements, reminding them when appropriate of timetables and deadlines as well as with regard to documents they need to supply, especially:
    - i. Field education reports
    - ii. Transcript at the end of each school year (to monitor progress toward completing required courses)
    - iii. CPE final report
    - iv. Bible Content Exam (usually taken during first year of seminary)
    - v. Ordination Exams (usually taken in last year of seminary)
  - c. Unless handled by the moderator, coordinate the arrangements for the psychological assessment.
  - d. Once the psychological assessment has been completed, study it carefully to discern whether there are any concerns or red flags that should be explored by the CPM as a whole (keep in mind that this is a confidential document not to be shared with anyone except the moderator and, when warranted, other CPM members).
  - e. Be the primary contact person from the CPM to the inquirers/candidates for whom you are the liaison, checking with them regarding availability for meetings, addressing issues that come up, etc., and reporting updates, especially any concerns that may arise, at CPM meetings.
  - f. Consider other ways to reach out and support their progress, e.g.:
    - i. Observe them preach in a preaching class at seminary, at a field ed placement, or in their home church-- or ask them for a copy of a sermon they have recently preached from time to time.
    - ii. Send them a card or some other appropriate communication on special occasions such as their birthdays, Christmas, completion of mileposts (e.g., when passing ordination exams, finishing CPE, receiving a call), and in advance of ordination exams.
    - iii. Ask them how their seminary studies are going, which courses they like, whether they are struggling with any, etc.
    - iv. Check in with them before consultations when forms are required to see if they need any guidance and to promote the likelihood that they are submitted in a timely manner.
    - v. Throughout keep your antennae tuned to scan for signs of trouble or distress, especially anything that might trigger concerns about psycho-emotional matters that we may want to address (e.g., when the psychological assessment is arranged), or other factors impeding readiness to become a teaching elder.

- g. Touch base with their session liaison from time to time, especially when concerns or problems arise. Consider copying the session liaison on communications with the student throughout the time they are under care.
- h. Help them prepare for key events, e.g., preparing documents such as the statement of faith and perhaps their PIF.
- i. Accompany them to Presbytery meetings when they are appearing before Presbytery as part of the process.
- j. Attend their service of ordination, if possible (sometimes these occur far away from New Jersey).

Approved by CPM January 8, 2019

Reviewed and endorsed by Mission Council January 10, 2019