

The Presbytery of Elizabeth
Committee on Preparation for Ministry

Guidelines of the Care Process for Sessions

Dear Session,

As you begin to embark on this exciting journey with a member of your church family, please keep in mind, that this is a care process and it will require you to continue to care for your inquirer/ candidate through out the process. It is especially important for you to maintain regular contact with your inquirer/ candidate if they will be attending seminary that requires them to move away from the area where your church is located. Your support will be needed over the 2+ years of the care process and you will have the privilege of walking beside someone and encouraging them to grow in both faith and in their sense of call. May God bless you all as you journey together.

A call to seminary and ordained ministry can present numerous challenges to individuals and families. Often those called to the ministry are called, “to go where they do not want to go,” and the stress can be greater than they imagine. With this in mind, please recognize that the care process can be blessed by the support of the session and the entire church family. As a part of the care process, the session is expected to support the inquirer/ candidate with the gifts of prayer, encouragement, presence, and financial support.

Prayer:

The session and the congregation should provide the gift of regular prayer for their inquirer/ candidate. It can be helpful to place the person under care on the monthly session docket, to add them to your prayer list or bulletin and to pray for them regularly in worship. This will keep the congregation mindful of the inquirer and candidate.

Encouragement:

The session and the congregation should provide the gift of encourage to the person under care a minimum of 4 times a year. The impact of letters, emails, care packages and phone calls cannot be underestimated. Just letting the inquirer/ candidate know that you are thinking of them, praying for them, and offering them any support they need, can help the journey to be less intense.

Presence:

The session and the congregation should offer the gift of presence to the inquirer/candidate. Feeding the inquirer/ candidate physically or spiritually with a visit can provide tremendous care. The session liaison should make an appointment to take the individual under care out to dinner to get to know them, to assess ways they and the church can be supportive and to learn more about their hopes for the care process. The session liaison or other session member, should also plan to escort the inquirer or candidate to both CPM and Presbytery meetings that they are required to attend.

Financial Support:

The session and the congregation should offer the gift of financial support to the inquirer or candidate. Preparing for the ministry is expensive with the cost of seminary, books, ordination exams and sometimes those under care will give up stable income and will incur the cost of moving in order to follow God's call. Congregations are encouraged to offer financial support as they are able. In addition, the Elizabeth Presbytery requires all inquirers to undergo Profession counseling at an approved facility. The Cost of the counseling will be paid as follows: **40% from congregation, 40% from Presbytery, and 20% from candidate, with scholarships available as needed.** The cost varies from the different counseling centers.

As the journey continues, please keep in mind that you are not alone. The Committee on Preparation for Ministry will be journeying with you and we are happy to answer any questions or provide whatever support you need. Even more importantly, God, will be with you as you journey as well. God bless you and keep you in the months and years ahead.