

So your church has someone considering ministry…

This is an exciting time for your congregation and for the person discerning a call to ministry. Your session and pastor will be working with the presbytery’s Committee on Ministry (CPM) to help him/her thoroughly prepare for the best way to express his/her Christian vocation.

Your congregation can support inquirers and candidates throughout the entire period of preparation. It is important to express concern and support by contacting the individual and his/her family at important times, such as formal consultations with the presbytery’s CPM, appearances before presbytery, academic and standard ordination exam periods, at the time of a candidate’s “final assessment,” when a call is being negotiated, on holidays, anniversaries, etc.

Providing financial support is a very tangible expression of support. Some presbytery policies will require the congregation to contribute to some expenses related to the preparation process, such as fees related to psychological assessment. Direct ongoing support and care of the inquirer / candidate can include, but is not limited to, the provision of financial support.

* Financial support can come in many forms, whether it be offering a book stipend, covering the full fees of the required career assessment, providing a tuition scholarship, or picking up the cost of the ordination exam registrations. These funds can be raised among the congregation at a pancake breakfast, talent show, or any other way your congregation is comfortable inviting free-will offerings.

Other, non-financial support from the congregation can include any of the following expressions of care:

* Learn the background of your inquirer or candidate, if you do not already know it: parents, siblings, school, college, vocational interests and abilities, birthday, name of spouse (if married) or significant other, name(s) of child(ren) (if any), (proposed) seminary, progress toward ordination, financial needs, etc.
* Send a care package, a Starbucks gift card, or a knitted item, like a prayer shawl.
* Take an interest in his/her academic, field education, annual consultation and other activities related to the preparation for the ministry of the teaching elder.
* At the presbytery meeting at which the inquirer is examined to move to candidacy, send a delegation for support.
* And, at the presbytery meeting at which the candidate is examined for ordination, send a delegation for support if the calling presbytery is nearby.
* Be present if at all possible at the service of ordination and/or installation.
* Remember your inquirer or candidate in prayer.
* Write your inquirer or candidate on special occasions (e.g. birthdays or anniversaries) or for no particular occasion!
* The role of the spouse or significant other of the inquirer or candidate is particularly important. Try to be as supportive, sensitive and understanding as you can of the spouse / significant other.
* In a word, be a friend and lend to your inquirer or candidate a sense of your personal, moral and spiritual interest in and support of him/her in training for the ministry of the teaching elder.