

You have been an inquirer for more than two years, and your Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) has not moved you forward. Or you have been a candidate for quite some time, or you have been certified ready to seek a call ... and nothing's happened. What should be done? Maybe it is time for some new spiritual discernment, time to consider a new reality: that God may be calling you to a different path than ordained ministry.

Remember, *There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone (I Corinthians 12:4-6).*

Here is a reality checklist for you and your CPM:

Individual reality

Take time to discern God's call for you. Attend a silent retreat so that you may listen to the still, small voice of God. Have conversations with your pastor, trusted friends and colleagues, family members, or a spiritual director.

Ask your CPM to plan a group discernment experience using the denominational resource, "the Presbytery Discernment Team – the process of discovering God's call for inquirers and candidates." Contact the Office of Preparation for Ministry for a copy at 1-888-728-7228, ext. 5708.

Make an appointment with one of the Ministry Development Council Centers or contact the career/vocation counseling service you have used before to look again at your gifts for a variety of ministries.

Cultivate your gifts – and explore other options – by serving in a variety of ways. Volunteer at your local church, serving on a committee, as an elder or deacon if elected, or as a Sunday school teacher.

Broaden your horizons. Prayerfully consider that God may be calling you to a path different from ordination to parish ministry, such as teaching, counseling, social services ministries, or spiritual direction.

CPM reality

Sometimes the answer to a pursuit of the ordained ministry is "no." But "no" in one direction can mean "yes" to a different path. Committees on Preparation for Ministry must ask hard questions: Is another path more appropriate? A brave CPM takes its gatekeeping responsibilities seriously. There is a natural tension between supporting and nurturing a person under care, and keeping the broader picture of the health of the person and the church in mind.

CPM reality cont...

Perhaps the question of being “stuck” in the process is one that needs to be asked sooner, with guidance to another path by all supporting parties. Can your committee guide inquirers and candidates earlier in the process if they (and you) know that their life or family situations will not allow them to seek a call and be ordained?

Perhaps the answer to an inquirer’s or a candidate’s quest is “maybe” or “later.” If someone seems “stuck” in the process, some hard questions must be asked, such as whether there is a withdrawal process that will allow reentry at the same stage of preparation with some additional requirements from the presbytery.



Preparation for Ministry Office Leadership and Vocation

100 Witherspoon St., Mezzanine
Louisville, KY 40202-1396
1-888-728-7228 x-5708
fax: 502-569-5870
www.pcusa.org/prep4min

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Consider Your Calling

Consider . . .

The Reality of Other Paths

*Consider your own call, sisters and brothers.
(1 Corinthians 1:26)*