During candidacy

The covenant relationship between the candidate and the presbytery continues to be expressed through the regular pattern of consultations begun during inquiry, but with specific attention given to the “support, guidance, and evaluation” of the candidate’s progress in the developmental areas of preparation for ministry (see the section on “Inquiry, candidacy, and beyond,” in the Advisory Handbook). During these consultations, previously established goals will be assessed and appropriate new goals negotiated. The presbytery will likely include in these consultations reports from the candidate’s session, seminary or institution of theological education, and any persons involved in overseeing the candidate in supervised practice of ministry. Such reports might be submitted in writing, but are especially helpful when presented personally so that follow-up questions may be considered. As during inquiry, the presbytery may ask that candidates also prepare written reports for distribution in advance of consultations as part of the candidate’s own and the presbytery committee’s preparation. Presbyteries may wish to use a mixture of consultations conducted in person or by means of telephone or video conferencing in order to keep the relationship fresh. During each consultation an explicit decision should be made regarding whether to continue the candidacy, especially if it becomes clear that adequate growth is not taking place.

Notice that the Book of Order specifically states that presbyteries are to provide “support, guidance, and evaluation” of candidates under their care (G-2.0604). Evaluation tends to come easy through determinations about candidates’ “fitness and readiness,” but how about “support” and “guidance”? Some ways that a presbytery might support candidates could include:

- Continue relationship building through regular and frequent consultations
- Financial assistance with expenses related to educational requirements (seminary, clinical pastoral education programs, etc.) and standard ordination exams
- Mentoring through the presbytery, field education supervisors, or home congregation

Specific examples of guidance might be:

- Academic advising and course selection from the presbytery as well as the seminary
- Field education site selections that both test and stretch the candidate’s sense of call
- Extra-curricular requirements such as clinical pastoral education, personal counseling, spiritual direction, etc.

The point is that candidates are much more likely to be open to receiving the presbytery’s evaluation if they believe they have been supported and guided throughout the process.
What practical ways have your presbytery found to support and guide candidates under care?

How can support and guidance also be “customized” to the needs of particular candidates?