Deciding whether to enroll an inquirer

- When notified by a session that a member of their church has indicated a desire to explore the personal implications of becoming a minister of the Word and Sacrament, members of the presbytery’s committee may conduct an orientation with that member and the session to review the various roles and responsibilities during the preparation for ministry process. Orientations help to familiarize everyone with the particular procedures used in that presbytery and ways the session and the presbytery can work together most effectively (G-2.0601 and G-2.0605).

- As presbyteries prepare to meet with applicants, they will probably want to have some basic information about their personal backgrounds and their reasons for desiring to enter the discernment and preparation process. Standard application forms, whether those provided on the Preparation for Ministry website (see the “Resources” section) or developed by the presbytery to meet its particular needs, can be very helpful in this regard.

- After the applicant has received the session’s endorsement for enrollment as an inquirer, the presbytery’s committee should interview him or her. The purpose of this initial interview is to make a preliminary assessment of the applicant’s motives, seriousness of intent, and general suitability for service as a minister of the Word and Sacrament before deciding to recommend to presbytery that he or she be enrolled as an inquirer.

- If the presbytery’s committee acts to recommend enrollment as an inquirer (or acts on behalf of the presbytery to take that action through a “delegated authority”), it is critically important that the roles, expectations and responsibilities of the inquirer, session, and presbytery representatives be clarified and a covenant relationship be negotiated at the first interview or consultation. This covenant relationship should focus on goals for growth in each of the five key developmental areas: education for ministry, spiritual development, interpersonal relationships, personal growth, and professional development. (See “Error! Reference source not found.,” section in the Advisory Handbook, for a fuller description of these areas and their goals.)

Be sure that applicants and their sessions can easily locate any application forms or information about any assessments you require before an initial consultation.

Covenant agreements need to be written both for inclusion in the person’s file and to be clear about expectations. You might consider the standard Forms 3 and 4 as one model for crafting and reporting progress in these covenants.