During the inquiry phase

- Continue your active membership and participation in a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregation. If you are away from the community where your home congregation is located because of your theological education, find a PC(USA) congregation in that community and keep your home congregation informed about your involvement there.
- Fulfill any requirements your presbytery has for all inquirers along with any specific requirements in your covenant agreement, including possible career counseling, psychological evaluation, and beginning (or continuing) graduate theological education.
- Discuss with your session and presbytery’s committee the seminary options available to you. If you have already begun seminary, discuss with them your course options so that you not only meet your graduation requirements but also maximize your preparation and development of your gifts for ministry specifically within the PC(USA).
- Obtain a copy of the handbook on ordination examinations to familiarize yourself with the Bible Content Exam (BCE) and the exams to be taken during candidacy. Discuss with your presbytery at what point in your inquiry phase you should take the BCE.
- With the approval and under the guidance of the presbytery, engage in some form of service to the church or field education through your seminary. To the degree possible, work to assure that your supervised practice of ministry placements are with PC(USA) congregations or their affiliated ministries.

What factors should shape your choice of seminary beyond being sure it is properly accredited and acceptable to your presbytery (G-2.0607c)?

How might you, your seminary advisor, and your presbytery’s committee use the results of the BCE in thinking about what biblical studies courses to take during your graduate studies?

The Form of Government sets the time requirements for the preparation for ministry process as “a period of no less than two years, including at least one year as candidate” (G-2.0602). So should I expect the inquiry phase to last one year?

The purpose of the inquiry phase is for the presbytery to “make an informed decision about the inquirer’s suitability for ordered ministry” (G-2.0603). There is no set time for the inquiry phase, nor any set expectation that the elements of the initial covenant agreement will provide all the information and insight needed to reach that decision. Be prepared to discuss with your presbytery additional goals for the inquiry phase based upon consultations about what has been learned by working through your initial covenant agreement. It is possible your presbytery will be ready to consider you for candidacy in less than 12 months, but take the time necessary even if it is more than a year.