**Considering transition to the candidacy phase**

- A presbytery’s process should clarify whether inquirers will be expected to initiate an application for candidacy or whether its committee will invite inquirers to a review for candidacy. The policies should state if the session must provide an endorsement specifically recommending whether or not the inquirer should be transitioned to the candidacy phase.

What are the advantages and disadvantages to having inquirers either be invited to be considered for candidacy or to have the responsibility to apply for candidacy?

- If the presbytery has not “delegated authority” to a commission to act on its behalf in making decisions regarding candidacy, it may require inquirers to appear before a plenary session of the presbytery for examination prior to taking action on the recommendation to transition them to candidacy. Traditionally such examinations have been restricted to questions about the individual’s Christian faith, forms of Christian service undertaken, and motives for seeking the ministry.

- The presbytery may conduct a brief service marking the transition to candidacy either as part of its own worship or during a service of the candidate’s home congregation. Suggestions for such services may be found in *Book of Occasional Services* (Louisville: Geneva Press [1990], pp. 270-271; note that while current editions include a section headed, “Constitutional Questions,” those affirmations have not been mandated by the *Book of Order* since 2007).

What are the requirements an inquirer must meet to be transitioned to candidacy?

The only constitutional requirement for an inquirer to be advanced to candidacy is the presbytery’s determination that the person is suitable for ordered ministry as a minister of the Word and Sacrament (G-2.0603). The presbytery will of course have created other requirements through policies established concerning all its inquirers or in the particular covenant agreements with the individual inquirer. In reaching that decision, presbyteries are reminded that becoming a candidate creates an expectation that the person will eventually be
ordained. Consequently, the decision to transition an inquirer to candidacy can be considered one of the most important actions in the whole preparation for ministry process. It should not, then, be considered a pro forma or automatic action after a person has been under care for a certain period of time.

If the presbytery’s committee decides to conclude an inquirer’s involvement in the preparation for ministry process rather than recommend transition to the candidacy phase, is it possible for the inquirer to appeal that decision?

The Book of Order directs that “prior to taking such action” presbyteries are to “make a reasonable attempt to give the ... inquirer an opportunity to be heard concerning the proposed removal” (G-2.0609). Each presbytery will need to establish its own procedures for such hearings, including who may be heard during the meeting and who is charged with determining whether the inquirer should be removed from the process (G-2.0609), continued at inquiry, or transitioned on to candidacy.

When a presbytery decides to remove an inquirer or candidate from, special attention needs to be given to coordinating a response with the session. The goal for all concerned is to help these individuals hear a “no” to service in this ordered ministry as a “yes” to another ministry for which God has gifted and called them.