Scripture tells us that Jesus called all manner of people to follow him—men and women, from varying stages of life, professions and backgrounds. Some were called to literally follow him as he carried out his ministry. Some were told to return home and tell what they had seen and heard. The names of some of those people have come down to us, like Mary Magdalene and Peter, but others have not. We know them simply as believers. What was common among them, however, is all of them were called to ministry.

The Presbyterian Church recognizes that the church’s ministry is a gift from Jesus Christ and that the ministry is the work of the whole people of God. From the people of God, some are called to ordered ministries, that is, to be ordained as deacons, elders or ministers of the Word and Sacrament.

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) to work with those who sense God’s call to serve the church as Ministers of the Word and Sacrament. Together, along with the Session of their home churches, persons under care and the CPM explore that call. CPM provides support, guidance and evaluation of persons’ fitness and readiness for ordained ministry.

This care process involves two steps--inquiry and candidacy.

The inquiry stage, which is a minimum of one year, is designed to allow and encourage a person to explore whether ordination is the right step, whether ordained ministry is the ministry to which God is calling him/her.  Several things happen.

* The initial step, even before inquiry with CPM begins, is for the person to meet with his/her session, after having been a church member for six months, and discus with them the sense of call and desire to begin this exploration process.  Since the session is closest to the person and knows him/her best, they must feel ready to endorse the person.  If and when, the session does so, they notify CPM.
* Then the person is asked to participate in a session at a career counseling center during which a trained professional, usually a psychologist, administers several assessments to determine interests and psychological well-being.  In other words, the process is designed to determine if there is a good fit between the person and the ministry.
* The person meets with the full CPM and together we explore sense of call and experience and understanding of the church and ministry and the CPM acts to enroll the person as an inquirer.
* If, at the end of that year or at some later time, the session, the inquirer and the committee all have a sense that ordination is likely and that it is God's call, then the next step, candidacy, is taken.

Candidacy also lasts a minimum of one year and during that time, several more things take place.

* The person is examined by the presbytery regarding sense of call, ordination exams are taken, and academic course work is completed.  In addition, the candidate is expected to complete a quarter of Clinical Pastoral Education and an internship at a PC(USA) congregation.
* When all the requirements are completed, CPM receives a statement of faith, a sermon with underlying exegesis from the candidate, and carries out its final examination to determine the candidate’s readiness for ministry.
* Once a call to a specific ministry is received by the candidate, then he/she is examined on the floor of the calling presbytery, with the final decision for ordination made by that presbytery.

This is a simple summary of the care process required for ordination to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. For greater detail, interested persons should review the *Book of Order*, G-2.06 and the *Advisory Handbook on Preparation for Ministry* found at <http://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/prep4min/advisory-handbook-preparing-ministry/>. The handbook contains helpful information for those seeking ordination as well as sessions.

The CPM of the Presbytery of Southern New England meets four times a year. Information for contacting the chairperson of the committee can be requested from the Presbytery website <http://www.psne.org>. Use the “Contact Us” email.

As you ponder your own calling to ministry, remember Paul’s advice, “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you….The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” [I Thessalonians 5:16-18, 28]