

## **BACKGROUND CHECK POLICY**

(Approved by COM on 1/31/07)

It has been the policy of Albany Presbytery for the General Presbyter (GP) and Moderator of the Committee on Ministry (COM) to perform reference checks with their equivalents in other presbyteries or judicatories on all Ministers of Word and Sacrament, Commissioned Lay Pastors, and Certified Christian Educators who will be interviewed by Pastor Nominating Committees (PNCs) or Sessions, typically by telephone, for potential enrollment in the membership of Albany Presbytery or for labor within the bounds of Albany Presbytery for a contracted length of time.

Prior to bringing a candidate to the area for an interview, the PNC or Session shall arrange to have criminal background and credit checks performed on that candidate. These expressions of trust and credibility are needed for the protection of the churches, the members of Presbytery, and God's children under our care. These checks could also indicate potential financial concerns that may have to be addressed at some time by a calling congregation and/or the Presbytery. The information derived from these checks may be required as a matter of due diligence under some insurance policies. In special cases, a waiver may be requested by the candidate in writing with rationale and may be granted by the COM in writing.

Performance of checks shall be initiated by the COM liaison to the PNC or by the COM moderator, if no PNC is involved. These checks shall be completed and reports received prior to arranging for COM's clearance interviews of candidates, which normally occur when they are brought here by a PNC for interviews and preaching at a neutral pulpit. Candidates must provide clearance for these checks in writing before they will be performed.

The cost of these checks and reports shall be borne by the church, or if a PNC is not involved, the calling body or individual requesting membership shall be responsible for the costs: Ordinarily, these background and credit checks and reports shall be obtained by the GP using Choice Point through the Covenant Presbyterian Insurance Program at a cost of about \$20 which will be billed to the PNC by the Presbytery. However, reports may also be obtained through other agencies, and churches who wish the GP to use another agency shall get prior approval of their plan to do so from the GP.

All reports shall be sent in confidence to the GP for review. All reports will normally be seen only by the GP and will be kept confidential. Normally these reports will be destroyed after review, although there may be circumstances under which the GP decides it would be prudent to place copies of them in the confidential files of the Presbytery. If the reports indicate no concerns, the GP will indicate to the necessary persons that the candidate may be deemed acceptable to proceed with his or her application for membership. If the reports indicate issues of potential concern, the GP shall immediately counsel with the COM Moderator concerning these and they shall implement and direct whatever process they deem to be appropriate to seek clarification of issues. This process may include meeting with the candidate to discuss and attempt to resolve any perceived issues. The GP and COM Moderator will also discuss and decide what, if any, information will be shared with the PNC or other calling body, but only after receiving permission to do so from the candidate.

*Approved by COM 1/31/07*

## **Background and Credit Check for Albany Presbytery Step By Step Instructions**

Performance of checks shall be initiated by the COM liaison to the PNC or by the COM moderator, if no PNC is involved. These checks shall be completed and reports received prior to arranging for COM's clearance interviews of candidates, which normally occur when they are brought here by a PNC for interviews and preaching at a neutral pulpit.

Candidates must provide clearance for these checks in writing before they will be performed. Release forms can be found in your COM handbook and on Albany Presbytery's website. After a candidate completes this form (or signs a waiver) it must be mailed to the General Presbyter to be processed.

The General Presbytery will inform the candidate, the COM liaison, and the COM chair when the background check has been completed. If further follow up is warranted, the General Presbyter will consult with the COM chair and together they will recommend next steps.