

Background Check Policy
(Rev. 10-12; 2018))

The Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley establishes the following background check policy to help in determining the qualifications of those making application to it for professional service in this Presbytery.

Prior to admission to Presbytery or to professional service in the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley, including all employees of the Presbytery, all ministers entering Presbytery, ruling elders before commissioning, inquirers at time of moving to candidacy, and ministers from other denominations seeking to enter into ongoing relationships with congregations of the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley must consent to, and have, background checks performed.

Such background checks will normally include:

1. National Criminal File Search
2. State Sexual Offender Search
3. State Criminal Database Search (for persons who have not resided outside of Alabama)
4. Theological degree verification for ministers of word and sacrament
5. Credit Check

Background checks will be performed upon application for presbytery membership for ministers who will not become called & installed pastors; at the time of commissioning for ruling elders; at the time of application to move from inquirer to candidacy status for ministry; at the time of request by a minister member of another Presbytery or denomination to be approved for a continuing relationship with one of the congregations of the Presbytery; for candidates being considered by congregational Pastoral Nominating Committees (PNC) prior to an invitation to meet with the Pastoral Nominating Committee or to a neutral pulpit; and at the time of interview for applicants for positions on Presbytery staff.

All individuals will be given a written copy of this policy and release form to authorize the Presbytery to perform background checks. Completed release forms shall be sent to the Stated Clerk (SC). Release forms shall be retained in a separate locked file in the Presbytery Office. Background checks will not be performed until the release form has been received by the SC.

No Individual shall be received into membership in the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley or placed in any leadership or ministerial position or on any approved roll or hired for any presbytery staff position covered by this policy until the background checks have been performed and the results reviewed by the Stetd Clerk. Failure to authorize these checks will be treated as withdrawal of the application. Both the individual performing the check and the appropriate

authority reviewing the results shall acknowledge in writing his/her awareness of the confidentiality of the information obtained through this policy.

Those authorized to perform the checks are the SC, and in the absence of the SC checks may be performed by the General Presbyter. If both the General Presbyter and the Stated Clerk are absent, the checks may be performed by the Moderator of the COM.

Costs associated with the background checks shall be borne by the PNC or Session of a congregation wishing to call a minister, or contract an interim, a commissioned ruling elder or any temporary supply who is not a member of the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley; by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) for inquirers moving to candidacy; by the personnel committee of the Presbytery for staff of the Presbytery itself; and by COM for any individual seeking membership in the Presbytery who will not be called to a permanent or temporary relationship with one of the congregations of the Presbytery. The responsible party will be notified by the Presbytery Bookkeeper of the amount of the cost of the background and credit checks.

If the background and credit checks reveal no adverse information, criminal offenses or sexual misconduct, the applicant, PNC or session, and COM will be notified of the clear status, and the report will be kept in the locked file at the Presbytery offices. In the case of Presbytery staff the Personnel Committee will be notified.

In the event that one or more of the background or credit check reports are not clear, the person performing the check will communicate the results to the applicant and request the applicant confirm or deny the accuracy of the report. If the offences are confirmed the results will be referred to the COM, CPM or Presbytery Personnel Committee and a recommendation on the advisability of admitting the individual to Presbytery or other role shall be made. The decision will be reported to the individual and the appropriate entity. If the decision is to deny the individual admission to the Presbytery or other role, the Moderator of the deciding body shall send the applicant, in addition to notice of adverse decision, a copy of the report on which the adverse decision was made. Any individual denied admission or placement in a position may request a hearing by the full COM, CPM or Presbytery Personnel Committee.