

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR COMMISSIONING LAY PASTORS IN THE PRESBYTERY OF SAN FERNANDO**

The purpose of these policies is to establish minimum requirements for commissioning lay pastors and the continuing education and supervision of lay pastors serving in the bounds of this Presbytery.

### BOOK OF ORDER REQUIREMENTS

The *Book of Order* (G-14.0801a) establishes criteria for the equipping of lay pastors and their ongoing accountability to the Presbytery. These are:

1. Lay pastors are commissioned to lead worship and to preach. G-14.0801c The presbytery, in consultation with the session or other responsible committee, determines that its strategy for mission in a local church requires it, and after additional instruction deemed necessary by the presbytery has been provided, a presbytery may authorize a commissioned lay pastor to perform any or all of the following functions described in (1)-(6) below.
  - (a) Administer the Lord's Supper.
  - (b) Administer the Sacrament of Baptism.
  - (c) Moderate the session of the congregation under the supervision of and when invited by the moderator of the session appointed by the presbytery.
  - (d) Have a voice in meetings of presbytery.
  - (e) Have a vote in meetings of the presbytery (such vote to be counted as an elder commissioner for purposes of parity).
  - (f) Perform a service of Christian marriage when invited by the session or other responsible committee, and when allowed by the state.
2. The Presbytery shall designate the congregation(s) in which lay pastors will serve.
3. Lay pastors are selected and trained by the Presbytery. Preparation shall include:
  - a. Biblical Studies
  - b. Reformed Theology and Sacraments
  - c. Presbyterian Polity
  - d. Preaching
  - e. Teaching
  - f. Leading worship
  - g. Pastoral care

4. Candidates for commissioning are examined by a committee of Presbytery regarding:
  - a. Personal faith
  - b. Motives for seeking the commission
  - c. Areas of instruction listed in #3.
5. There will be an annual report to Presbytery of those serving in this capacity.
6. The commission is valid for three years, but can be terminated at the discretion of the Presbytery at any time.
7. The Commissioned Lay Pastor is supervised by Presbytery through the moderator of the session of the church being served, or through the Committee on Ministry..

### THE PROCESS FOR COMMISSIONING

#### PHASE I - APPLICATION

1. The applicant obtains a Commissioned Lay Pastor form from the Presbytery office and fills out Part I.
2. The applicant meets with the home church session. The session examines the person about motivation and validity of the request to be a Commissioned Lay Pastor. Session fills out Part II of the form.
3. The applicant schedules and completes a psychological profile. The church and Presbytery each pay one-half the cost of testing.
4. The applicant schedules a meeting with the Committee on Preparation for Ministry through its chairperson.

#### PHASE II - UNDER CARE OF COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

1. Applicant meets with the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) to determine:
  - a. Suitability: Interview includes discussion of faith journey, experience, sense of call, and psychological profile.
  - b. Course of Training: Discussion of previous education and training requirements which need to be met per G-14.0201a.
  - c. The Committee votes whether or not to accept the applicant as a “Commissioned Lay Pastor Trainee.”
  - d. A Committee liaison is assigned to follow the CLP Trainee during preparation.
2. Follow-up interview with CPM to show:
  - a. Completion of training
  - b. Statement of Faith

3. CPM votes to certify trainee as prepared. (NOTE: If applicant shows sufficient preparation has already been accomplished and has an appropriate Statement of Faith, CPM may combine meetings 1 and 2 into a single interview.)

#### PHASE III — MEET WITH THE COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY

1. The Committee on Ministry (COM) conducts an examination on:
  - a. Motives for seeking certification as a Commissioned Lay Pastor.
  - b. Personal faith.
  - c. Areas of study, per G-14.0801a. (See explanation under *Preparation Requirements*.)
2. COM votes whether or not to approve the applicant as a Commissioned Lay Pastor.

#### PHASE IV — COMMISSIONING BY PRESBYTERY

The Commissioned Lay Pastor shall be guided in his/her work by a job description prepared by the session.

The annual review will include:

1. Evaluation by the supervising session in light of the job description.
2. A meeting of the session with the lay pastor to discuss strengths and weaknesses.
3. If the session finds all to be in order, it shall recommend to Presbytery through COM, with concurrence of CPM in regards to continued education, that the term be continued for another year.
4. If everything is not order, or if the supervising session does not wish to renew the commission, then COM will recommend that Presbytery terminate the commission.

#### PREPARATION REQUIREMENTS

Prior to commissioning, the candidate will complete the following semester hours:

Reformed Theology and Sacraments	(3 hours)
Worship and Sacraments	(3 hours)
Presbyterian Polity	(3 hours)

Following commissioning, the lay pastor will complete at least six semester hours of study per year in the areas listed below until all areas are covered:

Old Testament Studies	(3 hours)
New Testament Studies	(3 hours)
Preaching	(3 hours)

Christian Education	(3 hours)
Evangelism	(3 hours)
Presbyterian Mission	(3 hours)
Cross Cultural Skills	(3 hours)

Following completion of study as required by CPM, the lay pastor will follow established procedures of continuing education as observed by ordained ministers. Time and financial support should be granted by the session for this purpose.

The requirements for commissioning will be met by attending such classes in an approved Bible institute, college or seminary, or by personal tutoring by a mentoring pastor under the supervision of CPM.

### EXCEPTIONS

When a candidate has already received training or holds academic credit in any of the basic areas of study, the transcripts or certificates of achievement shall be reviewed by CPM, and upon its recommendation, some or all requirements may be waived.

### THE EXAMINATION

1. Candidates for commissioning should bring a prepared statement regarding their desire for commissioning and their experience of faith that has lead to this request.
2. COM, in anticipating this examination, should seek resource persons to help understand cultural values and perspectives if this person is not of the dominant culture. Some of these persons will have language limitations in English and may feel awkward or insecure facing a large committee. COM must show sensitivity in these areas.
3. These persons have completed preparation, but they are not seminarians; therefore, the examination needs to focus on their suitability and their commitment.
4. The Committee on Ministry Examination needs to have two parts. This is particularly true for ethnic persons who need the opportunity to form relationships with persons prior to examination of skills or competence. Some sample questions that will assist COM to establish this sense of relationship and gain valuable insight about the person and their cultural perspective are:
  - a. What excites you about being a lay pastor?
  - b. How will you help people find faith--given your culture?
  - c. Tell us your faith story; what has been your experience?
  - d. How will you express your faith within the Presbyterian Church?
  - e. What is the most difficult Christian concept for you to understand?

The second part of the examination needs to include some key questions regarding the various units of preparation. Some sample questions are:

- a. What are some central ideas of Reformed Theology?
- b. Why doesn't the pastor or lay pastor have sole decision making power in the Presbyterian Church?
- c. What are the rights and responsibilities for Commissioned Lay Pastors?
- d. If as a lay pastor you were asked to provide leadership for a Stewardship Campaign, where would you find resources to assist you?

#### THE COMMISSIONING SERVICE

1. The Commissioning Service should be held at a regularly stated meeting of the Presbytery and be part of the regular worship experience of the Presbytery.
2. The pastor and session of the church involved shall participate in the service.
3. If the candidate represents a minority culture, then the service should include persons from that culture and a brief introduction to the perspectives of that culture. The service may need to be bilingual.
4. The commissioning questions are found in G-14.0801e.