

COMMISSIONED RULING ELDER (CRE)
To Particular
PASTORAL SERVICE

PREPARATION MANUAL Rev 3

**For Individuals Under Care of the
Presbytery of San Fernando**

Revised Nov 2022

OPR: Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM)

OCR: Committee on Ministry (COM)

CRE to Particular Pastoral Service

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**Requirements, Preparation Process and Application for
Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE)
Renamed as:
“Ruling Elder Commissioned to Particular Pastoral Service”**

The purpose of these policies is to establish minimum requirements for commissioning lay pastors as Commissioned Ruling Elders for a particular pastoral service, and the continuing education and supervision of CRE's serving in the bounds of this Presbytery as established in the *2019-2021 Book of Order*.

Background

- When the presbytery, in consultation with the session or other responsible committee (Committee on Ministry-COM), determines that its strategy for mission requires it, the presbytery may authorize a ruling elder to be commissioned to limited pastoral service as assigned by the presbytery.
- A ruling elder so designated may be commissioned to serve in a validated ministry of the presbytery. Presbytery, in its commission, may authorize the ruling elder to moderate the session of the congregation to which he or she is commissioned, to administer the Sacraments, and to officiate at marriages where permitted by state law. This commission shall also specify the term of service, which shall not exceed three years but shall be renewable. The presbytery shall review the commission at least annually.
 - Book Of Order Requirement (2019-2021), G-2.10 COMMISSIONING RULING ELDERS TO PARTICULAR PASTORAL SERVICE, G-2.1001 Functions
- A ruling elder who seeks to serve under the terms of G-2.1001 shall receive such preparation and instruction as determined by the presbytery (Committee on Preparation for Ministry-CPM) to be appropriate to the particular commission.
- The ruling elder shall be examined by the presbytery (COM) as to personal faith, motives for seeking the commission, and the areas of instruction determined by presbytery (CPM).

A ruling elder who has been commissioned and later ceases to serve in the specified ministry may continue to be listed as available to serve, but is not authorized to perform the functions specified in G-2.1001 until commissioned again to a congregation or ministry by the presbytery (COM).

- G-2.1002 Training, Examination and Commissioning

When the presbytery is satisfied with the qualifications of a ruling elder to serve a congregation providing the services described above, COM shall commission the ruling elder to pastoral service as designated by the presbytery, employing the questions contained in W-4.04,

- G-2.1003 Commissioning Service

- The ruling elder commissioned under the terms of G-2.1001 shall work under the supervision of the presbytery (COM).
- The presbytery may at any time withdraw the commission for reasons it deems good and sufficient.
- An ordained Teaching Elder of the Word and Sacrament shall be assigned as a mentor and supervisor.
 - G-2.1004 Supervision

Presbyter Process and Requirements

Revisions of PCUSA Books of Order have transferred many criteria for the equipping of CRE's and their ongoing accountability to Presbytery's. The Presbytery of San Fernando has chosen to retain the following functions and preparation criteria generally administered by the COM and CPM.

1. CRE's are Ordained Ruling Elders commissioned to lead worship and to preach. The presbytery, in consultation with the session and COM, determines that its strategy for mission in a local church requires a CRE. After additional instruction deemed necessary by the presbytery has been provided, a presbytery may vote to authorize a CRE to perform any or all of the following functions described in (a) – (e) 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, or when appointed by presbytery as moderator.
- d. Perform a service of Christian marriage when invited by the session or other responsible committee, and when allowed by the state.
- e. Have a voice and vote in meetings of the presbytery (such a vote to be counted as an elder commissioner for purposes of parity).

2. The Presbytery (COM) shall designate the congregation(s) in which CRE's will serve.

3. CRE's selected by COM shall be trained and assessed by the Presbytery's CPM IAW their training plan. Preparation includes:

- a. Biblical Studies
- b. Reformed Theology
- c. Worship & Sacraments
- d. Presbyterian Polity
- e. Preaching
- f. Teaching
- g. Leading Worship
- h. Pastoral Care

The requirements to be a CRE may be fulfilled by attending these classes in a Bible Institute, College or Seminary approved by the CPM or by individual or small group instruction given by a pastor/counselor under the supervision of the CPM.

4. 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.

- BOO 2007-2009 G-14.0720 Certification for Christian Educators

5. Once a CRE Trainee satisfactorily completes the prescribed CPM training and is deemed suitable for commissioning they will be transferred to the care of COM.

6. Under COM care, CRE candidates will be evaluated and examined in the areas of:

- a. Personal faith
- b. Motives for seeking the commission
- c. Areas of instruction listed in #3 above

If the trainee is approved by COM for service as a CRE they will be presented to the Presbytery for commissioning.

7. COM will present an annual report to Presbytery of those serving in this capacity.

8. A CRE's commission is valid for three years, but can be terminated at the discretion of the Presbytery at any time.

9. The CRE is supervised by Presbytery through the moderator of the session of the church being served, or through the Committee on Ministry (COM).

- Above processes and requirements are identified in: BOO 2009-2011 G-14.0560 (Commissioned Lay Pastor),

10. Following completion of initial study and preparation as required by CPM, the CRE will follow COM procedures for continuing education and be observed by ordained ministers of the Word and Sacrament. Time and financial support should be granted by their session.

STEP 1– IDENTIFICATION

A Session will identify specific needs for a Ruling Elder who is gifted, competent, willing to serve and be commissioned by the Presbytery as a CRE.

The COM considers the identified needs and proposed Ruling Elder for commissioning. If the COM concurs with the identified needs, and the proposed Ruling Elder, the COM will refer the Ruling Elder to the CPM for specific training and suitability to become a CRE to fulfill the commission.

Step 2 - APPLICATION

1. The applicant gets **CRE Application** form from Presbytery and completes PART I.
2. The applicant meets with home church Session. The session examines the person about motivation and validity of the request to be a Commissioned Ruling Elder. The Session fills out PART 2 of application form.
3. The cost of the **Psychological Assessment** (about \$900) will be shared as:
 - a) The applicant's portion is \$200.
 - b) The remaining \$700 is split between sponsoring church and the Presbytery.
 - c) To make billing simpler for the psychologist, we ask them to bill the church for their share (\$350) plus the applicant's share (\$200) for a combined total of \$550.
 - d) The Presbytery pays the remaining \$350.
- 4) It takes 4-8 weeks for the assessment process to be completed and the final report prepared. The psychologist will review the final report with you.
- 5) A copy of the report will be sent to you and the Presbytery Office for the CPM.
- 6) The CPM will review the Psychological Assessment with you at your first meeting.
- 7) The applicant schedules a meeting with the CPM through their liaison.

STEP 3 – CPM Interview and Training Plan

1. Applicant meets with CPM to:
 - a. DETERMINE SUITABILITY: interview includes discussion of faith journey, ministry experience, sense of call, and psychological profile.
 - b. DETERMINE COURSE OF TRAINING: discussion of previous education and training requirements that have, or need to be met (including Bible, Reformed Theology and Sacraments, Presbyterian Polity, preaching, leading worship, pastoral care, and teaching).
 - c. CPM VOTES whether or not to accept/enroll Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) as **“Trainee”** and develop a **training plan**.
 - d. The CPM Liaison completes a written training plan in coordination with Trainee, and Trainee's home Session and provides regular reports of progress to CPM.
 - e. The training plan shall include the following studies in:
 - Reformed Theology
 - Worship and sacraments
 - Presbyterian Polity
- The requirements to be a CRE may be fulfilled by attending classes in a Bible Institute, College or Seminary approved by the CPM or by individual or small group instruction given by a pastor/counselor under the supervision of the CPM.

f. Exceptions: When a candidate has already received training, or has academic credits in any or all of these areas of study, some or all the requirements may be waived.

g. The CPM will generally require psychological assessment and reports for any or all CRE candidates.

2. When training is complete, Trainee meets with their Session and then with CPM which conducts an Interview of Suitability, review of completed training plan, and Psych Assessment.

3. Following the successful completion of all training requirements and a satisfactory evaluation by CPM that the CRE Trainee will be transferred to the care of Committee on Ministry (COM).

4. COM will engage the Trainee and determine an examination. If the examination is successful, the COM presents the applicant to the presbytery to be a Commissioned Ruling Elder.

STEP 4 – COM Meeting and Examination

THE EXAMINATION BY COM

Candidates to be Commissioned Ruling Elders must present and defend their:

- a. Personal statement of faith
- b. Experiences of Faith in their Statement of Faith
- c. Statement regarding motives for seeking the commission
- d. Summary of study areas prescribed by CPM

The COM, in preparation for the exam, should seek to understand the cultural perspectives of the candidate if the candidate is not of the dominant culture. The knowledge of the English language is limited in some candidates and these candidates may feel insecure when face to face with a large Committee. The COM must show sensitivity in these areas.

The candidates have completed their preparation and have been approved by CPM but they are not seminarians. Therefore, the examination should be focused on determining if the candidates can function properly in their specific place of service.

Note that a commission is not general. It is to a particular role in a particular ministry. If the CRE resigns from the position to which the commission is given, the CRE status is immediately terminated.

The candidates COM examination shall consist of two parts. This is especially true for people of ethnic minorities who need the opportunity to interact with people before the examination to determine their competence. Some examples of questions that may

assist COM in establishing this sense of relationship and seek valuable knowledge about the person and their cultural perspective are:

1. Why are you excited about being a CRE?
2. Tell us about your personal experience in faith.
3. Why did you chose the PC(USA) as your community of faith?
4. How are you currently serving in ministry?
5. What theological issue or practice is the greatest blessing to you in ministry and what issue or practice causes you the most difficulty.

The second part of the examination must include some key questions in relation to several aspects of the preparation. For example, these are some of the questions that can be:

1. What are some of the central distinctive ideas of Reformed Theology?
2. What do you believe to be the rights and responsibilities of a CRE?
3. What do you see as the proper relationship between Pastors, Ruling Elder and Commissioned Ruling Elders in the PC(USA).

If the candidate is approved for service as a CRE, he or she will complete the current training in sexual misconduct and child and youth protection required by the COM for Teaching Elders/Pastors in the Presbytery. Following the completion of this training, the COM will present him or her to the Presbytery for examination for commissioning in the areas of personal faith and prospective service as a CRE.

STEP 5 – COMMISSIONING BY PRESBYTERY

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 Constitutional Questions are as follows: (BOO 2019-2021, W-4.0404)
 - a. Do you trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?
 - b. Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal, and God's Word to you?
 - c. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what

Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?

d. Will you fulfill your ministry in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions?

e. Will you be governed by our church's polity, and will you abide by its discipline? Will you be a friend among your colleagues in ministry, working with them, subject to the ordering of God's Word and Spirit?

f. Will you in your own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world?

g. Do you promise to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church?

h. Will you pray for and seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?

i. Will you be a faithful ruling elder in this Commission serving the people by proclaiming the good news, teaching faith and caring for the people, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

A job description

The CRE shall be guided by a job description, that describes their roles and responsibilities, prepared by their session and supervised by a Minister of the Word and Sacrament.

Continuing Education

Following commissioning, the CRE will complete study in at least one course per year in the following areas, until all areas are covered:

- Old Testament Studies
- New Testament Studies
- Preaching
- Christian Education
- Evangelism
- Presbyterian Mission
- Cross Cultural Skills

Annual Review: The COM shall conduct an annual review which shall include:

1. Evaluation by the supervising session in light of the job description.
2. A meeting of the session with the Commissioned Ruling Elder 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 in order, or if the supervising session does not wish to renew the commission, the COM will recommend that Presbytery terminate the commission.

Sources:

The Presbytery of San Fernando has chosen to follow the guidelines of the 2007-2009 Book of Order G-14.0560-.0562, Ordination, Certification and Commissioning, 2009-2011 Book of Order G-14.0560 Commissioned Lay Pastor and 2019 Book of Order G-2.10 "Commissioning Ruling Elders to Particular Pastoral Service".

BOOK OF ORDER REQUIREMENTS (2007-2009)

The Book of Order (G-14.0560) establishes criteria for the equipping of CRE's (lay pastors) and their ongoing accountability to the Presbytery. These are: Courses on polity, reform theology, worship, etc.

BOO 2009-2011: G-14.0720 Certification for Christian Educators

In order to provide effective guidance for educational ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the General Assembly shall offer a handbook containing the training and continuing education process for Christian Educators, which shall be administered and certification granted by the Educator Certification Council on behalf of the General Assembly Mission Council. The handbook shall also provide suggested models for support and accountability that synods and presbyteries may adopt for their own use or modify to fit local circumstances.

G-14.0721 Accrediting Process

The handbook shall provide an accrediting process that evaluates the educator's academic preparation and work experience and examines competency in the following knowledge and skill areas:

Biblical Interpretation

Reformed Theology

Human Development

Religious Education Theory and Practice

Polity of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Program and Mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Worship and Sacraments

G-14.0722 Educator Certification Council

The Educator Certification Council shall establish certification standards, designate Educator Certification Advisors in consultation with presbyteries, evaluate certification

examinations, and grant certificates and report to the General Assembly Mission Council.

G-14.0730 Presbytery and Certified Christian Educators

The presbytery shall

a. support the certification process by encouraging educators to seek certification, providing guidance through the Educator Certification Advisor, and encouraging sessions to make continuing education funds and time available to educators seeking certification; an

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