
Section 10: Commission on Ministry and Commissioned Ruling Elders

Revised: July 2015

10.1 Preface

The Commissions on Ministry of the Presbytery of the Cascades shall provide for the support of the commissioned ruling elder process as outlined in the *Book of Order*, G-2.10.

10.2 Specific Responsibilities:

1. Each Commission on Ministry (COM) assigns one member to be the primary liaison for training with all active commissioned ruling elders (CREs) and CRE candidates in their region. The Commissioned Ruling Elder Certification Committee (CRE-CC) shall be composed of the following persons: four from the Regional COMs (one each); one from the Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM); and all active CREs. The CRE-CC is staffed by the Advocate for Congregations and Clergy.
2. The COM-CC sets on-going policy and budget.
3. The regional COM is involved with the relationship between the CRE and the particular congregation as it is with other pastoral relationships and it conducts an annual review in accordance with G-2.1001.
4. The moderator of session of the church that the CRE serves shall be the immediate supervisor of the active CRE.

10.3 Steps in Process

1. A completed application form including pastor's statement (Appendix 10A), plus the Statement of Christian Experience, and sexual misconduct policy sign-off is turned in to the CRE-CC. Applicants are also required to undergo a criminal background check.
2. CRE-CC shall have oversight for preliminary screening and psychological testing. The cost of the testing will be borne equally between the presbytery, the applicant, and the local congregation.
3. On the basis of application and screening, CRE-CC decides whether to accept the applicant into the program as a trainee. CRE-CC shall report the names of trainees to the next meeting of the presbytery.
4. Ordinarily, CRE-CC instructs the trainee in the eight areas required by Cascades Presbytery or recognizes competency in any of the areas.

5. The CRE-CC appoints a mentor for the trainee for the purpose of encouragement and spiritual guidance. Ordinarily, the mentor is not the trainee's pastor. The trainee may submit the names of prospective mentors to CRE-CC.
6. At the completion of training, the CRE-CC will determine whether the trainee is qualified to serve. Those who have completed CRE training may be listed as supply preachers and/or as qualified to serve as CREs. CRE-CC shall report the names of those declared qualified to serve as CREs to the next meeting of presbytery.
7. Ordinarily a person qualified to serve may preach up to eight times in a year in any congregation in the presbytery without having been commissioned to serve that congregation.

10.4 Relationship with the Local Congregation

The session shall, in consultation with the regional COM, create a temporary position and write a job description that is acceptable to the COM. The COM is responsible to determine whether a person qualified to serve as a CRE is suitable to the particular situation.

There shall be a written contract between the CRE and the local session, covering remuneration and expected duties (Appendix 10B). The level of remuneration is individually negotiated between the person, the session, and the regional COM, and reported to presbytery by the regional COM. Those who have completed CRE training and are providing Sunday pulpit supply should be remunerated at the same rate as other preachers on the presbytery's pulpit supply list (see Section 7.4). COM shall review the CRE contract annually, and evaluate the effectiveness of the relationship in accordance with G-2.10. COM shall revoke the commission of any CRE who does not abide by the provisions of the job description or whose work is deemed inadequate to meet the needs of the particular congregation or the presbytery.

Ordinarily, a person should not be a CRE in the church of his/her membership, or in a church with which the CRE has had extensive previous contact. When reviewing the job description, the regional COM needs to be aware of potential problems in placing CREs in their own congregations. However, the CRE position has been established, in part, to facilitate service to local congregations where no one else is available. It is strongly recommended that the CRE not be commissioned to serve at a church where the CRE is a member of the session.

10.5 Educational Requirements

The Presbytery of the Cascades strongly recommends that training consist of the following subject matter and the indicated contact hours:

1. Bible: Bible content, principles of Biblical interpretation, use of Biblical reference material, how the Bible relates to Presbyterian Church (USA)'s polity, use of scriptures in ministry, the Bible and spiritual growth, how the Bible came to us. 32 hours.
2. Reformed Theology: history of theology including the theology of Sacrament, the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessional tradition of the Presbyterian Church (USA), prayer and spirituality. 32 hours.
3. Polity: organization of Presbyterian Church (USA), the *Book of Order*, responsibilities of session, small group theory and practice, the appropriate uses of power, role and boundaries of the pastorate, definition of misconduct, principles of Reformed polity, the larger mission of the church. 8 hours.
4. Preaching: constructing a sermon, exegesis for preaching, rhetorical skills (both verbal and non-verbal), oral expression as different from the written word, history and traditions of preaching, preaching in different contexts, preaching through the lectionary. 16 hours.
5. Leading Worship: theology and practice of worship, Directory for Worship, planning of liturgy, funerals, weddings, the church year, the practice of leading worship. 16 hours.
6. Pastoral Care: pre-marital counseling, grief work, home and hospital visitation, crisis intervention and referral. 16 hours.
7. Teaching: varieties of ways that people learn, faith development, self-perception as a teacher, Presbyterian Church (USA) curriculum, integration of learning with worship and preaching. 8 hours.
8. Church Administration: long-range planning, stewardship, and management. 8 hours.

The required contact hours indicate what is relevant to the trainee's preparation for particular areas of performance. The CRE-CC will decide what training is acceptable. Possible formats for training include existing opportunities such as theological education by extension, training by local pastors, seminars in conjunction with presbytery meetings. CRE-CC has the discretion to accept other education and/or life experiences as fulfilling requirements.

In addition, the presbytery requires successful completion of the Sexual Misconduct Prevention Training Workshop.

All active CREs shall participate in continuing education as directed by the CRE-CC and shall report their continuing education activities and plans to the regional COM. Failure to participate in continuing education approved by the CRE-CC shall be grounds for revoking the CREs commission in accordance with G-2.0104.

10.6 Recognition of Competency

CRE-CC will consider previous training and experience in the eight areas of competency. Credit or non-credit courses may qualify, at the discretion of the CRE-CC. Oral or written examination by the CRE-CC can determine if self-study has been adequate. The trainee can “test out of” particular requirements.

10.7 Supervision and Mentoring

The CRE-CC shall designate a mentor for each active CRE. Mentor and CRE will ordinarily meet monthly, and shall meet no less than quarterly, jointly providing an annual report to COM. The CRE-CC is responsible to screen potential mentors and shall keep a list of active and honorably retired pastors who are interested in being mentors. The mentor shall be someone other than the supervisor of the CRE. The CRE may suggest a mentor with whom the CRE would like to work (Appendix 10C for the position description for the Mentoring Pastor and Appendix 10C: Exhibit 1 for a copy of the Annual Report Form of the Mentoring Pastor).

The supervisor shall be the moderator of the session of the congregation being served. The supervisor shall be in regular contact with the CRE and the regional COM. Prior to every session meeting, the supervisor should contact the CRE. If the supervisor invites the CRE to moderate a particular session meeting in accordance with G-2.1001, the supervisor shall make the invitation on each occasion, verbally or in writing (Appendix 10D for the position description for the Supervising Pastor and Appendix 10D: Exhibit 1 for a copy of the Annual Report Form of the Supervising Pastor).

The CRE’s failure to relate appropriately to the supervisor or mentor may be grounds for revoking the commission.

The CRE-CC shall prepare two one-page handouts. One page shall outline expectations of supervisors, and the other page expectations of mentors. The handouts shall include guidance and instructions for reporting abuse, misconduct, or inappropriate behavior by the CRE to the COM.

The regional COM shall review the work of the CRE annually and decide whether to continue the commission, in accordance with G-2.1001. The regional COM having congregations served by CREs is encouraged to report to the CRE-CC what is helpful and not helpful in the policy and training of CREs.

Appendix 10A: Application for Commissioned Ruling Elder Training Program

Revised: July 2015

To those called to exercise special functions in the Church, God gives suitable gifts for their various duties. In addition to possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, natural and acquired, those who undertake ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian Gospel in the Church and in the world. They must have the approval of God's people and the concurring judgment of a council of the church.

Persons aspiring to special service as a commissioned ruling elder should demonstrate characteristics that set them apart for selection by the Church for such service. Applicants should be persons of faith, dedication and good judgment. They should be "persons of wisdom and maturity of faith, having demonstrated skills in leadership and being compassionate in spirit" (G-2.0301).

An applicant for commissioning as a commissioned ruling elder should understand that it is important that such persons receive full preparation for their tasks. Applicants must be willing to accept the care and guidance of the presbytery in their course of study and practical training in preparation for commissioning and in their continuing education. Applicants must also be willing to maintain a Christian character and conduct, and to be diligent and faithful in making full preparation for their special ministry.

Name: _____

Address: _____
 street – city – state – zip

Home Phone: _____ Other Phone: _____

Email: _____

Member of which Presbyterian Church: _____

Date ordained as elder: _____ deacon: _____

Describe your present activities in the life and mission of the church:

Present employment, including description of nature of the work:

Educational background, listing school, location, year of graduation, diploma or degree, and areas of study:

Are there factors in your life which limit your ability to receive training, or to serve as a Commissioned Ruling Elder, such as physical or mental disability, family situation, or employment status?

References: Please give the names, addresses, and phone numbers of three different people, other than the pastor of your home church, who are familiar with your potential to serve as a commissioned ruling elder.

Session Recommendation:

We, the session of _____ Presbyterian Church, meeting on _____
date

have interviewed the member of this congregation named above. We recommend that the CRECC train this person in the Commissioned Ruling Elder program of the Presbytery of the Cascades.

Clerk of Session

Christian Experience: Please attach a 300-600 word story of your faith journey that includes how your faith has influenced your life, how you see yourself as being called to participate in this training program, and what gifts or talents you bring into the Commissioned Ruling Elder Program.

Signature: I hereby apply for admission to the Commissioned Ruling Elder Training Program of Cascades Presbytery. I understand that successful completion of the program is a requirement for commissioning as a ruling elder by the Presbytery of the Cascades.

Signature

Date

Pastor's Statement: Please attach the form entitled "Pastor's Statement" with this application.

Pastor's Statement
Commissioned Ruling Elder Training Program

Name of Applicant:

With regard to the above named applicant please furnish comments pertaining to the areas listed below. Use the reverse of this sheet or attach additional pages if more space is needed. Your responses are confidential and will be used by the Commissioned Ruling Elder Certification Commission to consider this application for enrollment in the training program.

Christian commitment and maturity:

Leadership ability:

Ability to work with people:

Openness to ideas and learning:

Your assessment of this person's suitability to serve the church in this way:

Any other comments you wish to add:

Signature

Date

Please return this form to the Commissioned Ruling Elder Certification Committee.

Appendix 10B: Commissioned Ruling Elder Covenant (Sample)

Revised: July 2017

The following covenant between the session of _____ Presbyterian Church of _____ and Elder _____ is for the purpose of defining the terms of the Commissioned Ruling Elder Position.

This covenant is for a period of _____ beginning _____.

This Position Description for this position is attached to this covenant.

The goals for this relationship, approved by the session of _____ Presbyterian Church of _____ and the Commission on Ministry, are (list goals):

The session and regional COM of the presbytery will conduct a review with the Commissioned Ruling Elder before considering renewal of the covenant. Goals and terms may be revised at that time. Renewal of the covenant requires approval by the Commission on Ministry.

This agreement is for _____ (up to three years). This agreement may be ended by the session upon 30 days written notice. The Commissioned Ruling Elder may end the agreement with 30 days written notice and a forfeiture of any payment beyond the 30 day period.

The terms to be reviewed annually are as follows:

The Commissioned Ruling Elder is employed on a 40 hour per week full-time/part time (50%, 75%, etc.) basis, serving approximately _____ hours per week.

Compensation:

Salary		Housing	
Utilities		Social Security Allowance	
Professional Expense		Vacation	Four Weeks
Continuing Education		Study Leave	Two Weeks
Other		Other	
Full pension, medical, disability and death coverage under the Board of Pensions.			
Attendance at the _____ Spring _____ Fall presbytery Discovery Retreat.			

Adopted by the session:

Date: _____

Commissioned Ruling Elder

Clerk of Session

Moderator of Session

Approved by Commission on Ministry:

Region: _____

Date: _____

Signed: COM Chair

Elder _____ is appointed by the presbytery as Commissioned Ruling Elder beginning _____ for _____ and may be considered for renewal.

In accordance with G-2.1001, the Commission on Ministry on behalf of Cascades Presbytery authorizes that the Commissioned Ruling Elder

1. May May Not Moderate the session of the congregation to which he or she is commissioned.
2. May May Not Administer the Sacrament.
3. May May Not Officiate at marriages where permitted by state law.
4. May May Not Have a voice and vote in meetings of presbytery (such vote to be counted as a ruling elder commissioner for purposes of parity).

Appendix 10C: The Mentoring Pastor

Revised: July 2015

The mentoring pastor is the primary resource for the ongoing study of a person interested in becoming a Commissioned Ruling Elder, and for the CRE working in a commissioned position. Individuals, those in training or commissioned, encounter situations and circumstances which require consultation with a pastor who has more extensive preparation and experience. Mentoring pastors must be willing to share of themselves to help the individual realize his/her call to ministry as a CRE. Consequently, the mentoring pastor must be a person who can develop collegial relationships and establish trust and confidence with the CRE.

The mentoring pastor will be chosen by the CRE with the assistance and approval of the Commissioned Ruling Elder Certification Committee (CRECC). Information will be provided for the mentoring pastor regarding all components and requirements of the CRE process, including the requirements of the mentoring pastor position.

Job Description

The mentoring pastor will:

1. Meet with the individual on a regular, consistent, continuous, mutually agreed upon basis. A minimum of monthly is suggested.
2. Provide spiritual, emotional, and practical support to the CRE.
3. Be involved in making recommendations for education and training of an individual in the CRE process, or for continuing education for the commissioned.
4. Observe the CRE in areas of commissioned responsibilities, for example preaching, teaching, visitations, and administration of the Sacrament.
5. Be part of a yearly evaluation: reviewing meeting times, mentor/CRE relationship, work accomplished, goals and objectives, continuing education and relationship with congregation and session. For the CRE this would be the COM's meeting for the annual renewal of the CRE's contract.
6. Complete the Annual Report for the CRECC following the yearly evaluation and mail to the CRECC.
7. Contact the CRECC liaison when and if there are any concerns regarding the CRE.

Appendix 10C: Exhibit 1: Mentoring Pastor Annual Report*Revised: July 2015*

Date: _____

Commissioned Ruling Elder: _____

Church or Project being served: _____

Mentoring Pastor: _____

Supervisor: _____

Liaison to CRECC: _____

1. Did the arranged meetings and communications happen as planned? Why or why not? When are the agreed upon meetings to take place? For what duration?
2. Did the relationship meet the needs (emotional, spiritual, practical) of the CRE? Why or why not?
3. What work has been accomplished during the past year?
4. What goals and objectives were met and which ones were not? Explain.
5. Was the prescribed education completed? Why or why not?
6. Describe the relationship with the CRE and the congregation and session.
7. List the strengths and weaknesses of the CRE.
8. What goals and objectives have been selected for the coming year?
9. What continuing education is planned for the coming year?

Other comments:

Mentoring Pastor

Commissioned Ruling Elder

Appendix 10D: The Supervising Pastor*Revised: July 2015*

The Commission on Ministry (COM) shall appoint a supervisor who is an ordained minister of the Word and Sacrament for the purpose of supervising a Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) in the ministry of the congregation they are commissioned to serve.

Job Description

The Supervising Pastor shall:

1. Serve as moderator of the session of the congregation being served for a minimum of one year, or longer, as determined by the COM. During that first year of service, the supervisor may invite the CRE to moderate a session meeting in accordance to G-2.1001. The invitation shall be noted in the session's minutes each time the CRE moderates.
2. Be in regular contact with the CRE, making appropriate time for communication. Ordinarily they shall meet once a month. Meeting in person is preferred.
3. Be part of the yearly review of the CRE meeting with the session, regional COM, mentor and CRE (G-2.1001).
4. Complete a yearly evaluation of the CRE, mailing a copy to the COM, and one to the Commissioned Ruling Elder Certification Commission (CRECC).

Appendix 10D: Exhibit 1: Supervising Pastor Annual Report*Revised: July 2015*

Date: _____

Commissioned Ruling Elder: _____

Church or Project being served: _____

Supervisor: _____

Mentor: _____

Liaison to CRECC: _____

1. Did you have ongoing contact with the CRE during the year? Describe.

2. Describe the CRE's grasp of ministry, listing strengths and weaknesses.

3. Briefly describe the CRE's relationship with the session and church.

4. Would you recommend this person to be appointed to serve as session moderator in the future? Why or why not?

5. Do you have any recommendations for the continuing education of CRE?

6. Please share other comments or concerns.