

Administrative Manual, Chapter 4—Committee on Preparation for Ministry

Chapter 4 – Committee on Preparation for Ministry

4.0100 Preparation of Teaching Elders. Individuals seeking to become ordained Teaching Elders, and their supporting pastors and Sessions, shall follow the guidelines of the Book of Order and the contents of Appendix F of this manual.

4..0200 CRE Preparation and Commissioning

4.0201 Book of Order Foundations for Commissioned Ruling Elders

G-2.1001 Functions

When the presbytery, in consultation with the session or other responsible committee, 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.

G-2.1002 Training, Examination and Commissioning

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 to be appropriate to the particular commission. The ruling elder shall be examined by the presbytery as to personal faith, motives for seeking the commission, and the areas of instruction determined by presbytery. 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.

G-2.1003 Commissioning Service

When the presbytery is satisfied with the qualifications of a ruling elder to serve a congregation providing the services described above, it shall commission the ruling elder to pastoral service as designated by the presbytery, employing the questions contained in W-4.4000.

G-2.1004 Supervision

The ruling elder commissioned under the terms of G-2.1001 shall work under the supervision of the presbytery. The presbytery may at any time withdraw the commission for reasons it deems good and sufficient. A ruling or teaching elder shall be assigned as a mentor and supervisor.

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4.0202 CRE Discernment Process

All candidates for the Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) program shall be elders in good standing ordained in the Presbyterian Church (USA) with gifts and graces for pastoral ministry and shall be an elder for a period of at least six months. They need not be actively serving on session to qualify. However, if the CRE is seeking a commission in which he/she is authorized to moderate session (G-2.1001), Peace River Presbytery may require previous active service on session. Candidates shall be regular in attendance and active in the life of their congregation. They shall demonstrate leadership ability, pastoral concern and pastoral ability. The candidates shall have a Bachelor of Arts degree from an accredited institution or the equivalent (life experience may be considered).

The candidate should have an extended conversation with their pastor or a presbytery representative from CPM about the sense of call and the gifts and tasks of ministry before approaching CPM.

Candidates complete and submit form CRE 1A to the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) supplying three references as outlined in the application. The three references will each complete a form CRE 1B to be submitted to CPM. The CPM chair shall provide the forms upon request.

Candidates shall meet with their session to be interviewed and receive the session's endorsement for application to the CRE program. If approved, the session shall fill out form CRE 2 and submit it to CPM. They shall receive endorsement from their session on an annual and ongoing basis.

The candidate will meet with the CPM, after having supplied all appropriate forms (CRE 1A, CRE 1B, CRE 2, CRE 3). If the committee approves the candidate to enter the process, they shall vote to receive the candidate for CRE. The candidate for CRE shall then begin training in the CRE process.

Candidates shall meet annually with the CPM to be examined as to personal faith, motives for seeking commission, and the areas of instruction they may have received. The candidate will fill out form CRE 3 for each annual consultation.

When the candidate for CRE has met the educational requirements, he or she shall meet with CPM for final examination as to readiness for ministry. When it is determined by the committee that the candidate is ready for service, CPM shall recommend the candidate for CRE as ready for service to the Committee on Ministry.

4.0203 Presbytery Educational Requirements

The presbytery has the responsibility of determining appropriate educational requirements for Commissioned Ruling Elders. Candidates seeking to become Commissioned Ruling Elders should

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take eight courses through a CPM approved site.

- Introduction to the Old Testament
- Introduction to the New Testament
- Reformed Theology
- Introduction to Preaching and Worship Leading
- Reformed Worship and Sacraments
- Presbyterian Polity
- Pastoral Care
- Foundations of Christian Education and Teaching

The University of Dubuque Theological Seminary, Pittsburg Theological Seminary, and Union Theological Seminary are among the PCUSA seminaries that offer CRE Training approved by CPM. The University of Dubuque offers a fully accredited Distance Learning CRE Training.

Peace River Presbytery may approve a particular local training site and/or trainer for Commissioned Ruling Elders-in-Training pursuing a more limited commission, that is, a commission where the scope of the CRE's commission is limited to specific functions supervised by an installed Ruling Elder. For such limited commissions, Peace River Presbytery may waive some of the educational requirements outlined above or permit training to run concurrently with their service. If any requirements are waived, the presbytery shall ensure that the CRE-in-Training has been properly trained to faithfully perform the functions of the limited commission. CREs who have been commissioned to limited commissions shall seek further education for the presbytery to consider commissioning them to more traditional commissions.

In addition to the educational requirements, the presbytery may require additional preparation if CPM deems it appropriate, including:

- Career counseling
- Supervised Practice of Ministry (SPM)

4.0204 Training Process

The CRE in Training shall

- Meet at least annually with his/her session.
- Meet at least annually with the CPM, supplying a CRE Form 3 for every meeting.
- Demonstrate work towards completing the educational requirements.
- Remain active in the life and work of his/her congregation.
- Receive instruction and practice in all areas of church life.

4.0205 Completion of the Process

- After the educational requirements are met, the CRE in Training shall present to CPM a personal statement of faith.

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- The CRE-in-Training should present to CPM a brief, 5-9-minute sermon. Before preaching the sermon, the committee should be told the context and setting where this sermon would be presented. This may be waived by CPM, if the CRE is being commissioned to a limited commission where preaching is not required.
- The CRE-in-Training shall submit a written self-evaluation of the experience during his/her training and their readiness to be commissioned as a CRE. Please limit your response to no more than three pages.
- CPM shall examine the CRE in Training to determine his/her readiness to enter into ministry.
- After successful completion of the examination, CPM will present the candidate to presbytery for certification for a commission.
- CRE's are commissioned by Peace River Presbytery upon the recommendation of the CPM to one of the following areas:
 - A specific congregation
 - A specific group or cluster of cooperating congregations of a new church development
 - A validated ministry

4.0206 CRE Constitutional Questions

If the examination on the floor of presbytery is approved, the presbytery shall receive the inquirer as a candidate after the following manner. The moderator shall propose the following questions to the inquirer:

1. Do you believe yourself to be called by God to serve as a Commissioned Ruling Elder?
2. Do you promise, with reliance upon the grace of God, to maintain a Christian character and conduct, and to be diligent and faithful in making full preparation for this ministry?
3. Do you accept the proper supervision of the presbytery in matters that concern your preparation for this ministry?