

RIVERSIDE PRESBYTERY

Policy for Commissioned Local Pastors and Commissioned Local Chaplains

Approved at Presbytery meeting on February 20, 2016

AUTHORITY

The Commissioned Local Pastor (CLP – formerly called a Commissioned Ruling Elder or CRE) Program of the Presbytery of Riverside has been developed in accordance with the provisions in the Book of Order (**G-2.10**). The rationale for calling this position a Commissioned Local Pastor or Commissioned Local Chaplains is that 1) all Ruling Elders are “commissioned” to serve Christ’s church and 2) ordained people are not actually “Lay People”

The purpose of the Program is to prepare and commission ruling elders who have been trained for preaching and pastoral commissions at places of need within the Presbytery. The Policy for Commissioned Local Pastors or Chaplains provides guidelines to attract, discover, train, counsel and support qualified ruling elders to provide leadership, nurturing and service to member congregations and other service opportunities within Riverside Presbytery.

COMMISSIONED LOCAL PASTOR

A Commissioned Local Pastor or a Commissioned Local Chaplain is a full-time or part-time, salaried or volunteer ruling elder interested in lay ministry, affirmed by his or her session, and trained and commissioned by Presbytery to be a preacher or pastor for a particular congregation or validated ministry in the Presbytery. CLPs or CLCs are not ordained separately ministers as are Teaching Elders. They are commissioned only to a particular congregation or a validated ministry in the Presbytery of Riverside for a specific term at the end of which the commission ends. Therefore: 1) They shall follow a separate “track” from those seeking ordination to the Office of Teaching Elder (Ministry of Word and Sacrament). The track presented is Seeker, Learner, and Commissioned. 2) Requirements and preparation are different from ordination, not requiring the same level of knowledge and training. (Once commissioned, CLPs and CLCs may be called :”Pastor” or “Chaplain” by their congregations, institutions, communities and the presbytery. But in the PCUSA usually the honorific “the Reverend” is restricted to what we call the Office of Teaching Elder (Minister of Word and Sacrament).) A CLP’s ability to preach, teach and lead worship is seen as much as gifts of the Spirit developed through experience and practice as academic training. Consequently, we present competency more than credentials as a basis for commissioning. This competency is to be understood in light of the place of local commissioning and not of the whole church. The presbytery through its Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) understands that often the field of ministry is already present.

COMMISSIONED LOCAL PASTOR OR COMMISSIONED LOCAL CHAPLAIN PROGRAM

The Presbytery has designated the Committee on Preparation for Ministry to prepare those called to serve as Commissioned Local Pastors or Commissioned Local Chaplains and shall evaluate the effectiveness of the training. The purpose is to prepare ruling elders who are members of churches in the Presbytery of Riverside to preach, teach, and lead worship as well as to develop skills to serve as a resource for other church and institutional programs.

The CPM is responsible for the selection of applicants and the training and the examination of candidates. The CPM is also responsible for approving the candidate as ready to accept a position as a Commissioned Local Pastor. The Committee on Ministry is responsible for authorizing the placement and commissioning. The CPM and the COM consider the CLP Program a further means of fulfilling its commitment to see that all churches within the bounds of the Presbytery of Riverside have the best possible leadership in ministry.

QUALIFICATIONS

Ordinarily, the qualifications for acceptance into the program shall be that the individual:

- senses that he or she has a call to ministry.
- is a member in good standing of a congregation in the Presbytery of Riverside for a minimum of six months.
- has been an ordained elder in the PC(USA) for at least two years.
- holds a baccalaureate degree or its equivalent, except in certain cases approved by CPM. The CPM shall determine appropriate credit for post high school course work and life experience.
- possesses recognized leadership ability.
- is endorsed by the Session or the Administrative Commission or the Committee on Ministry (in the case of a Chaplain) of the congregation where he or she is a member.
- is recommended by three references, at least one of whom is a teaching elder and a member of the Presbytery of Riverside.
- is willing to accept the care and guidance of a mentor appointed by the presbytery.
- submits a completed application that provides responses to all stated questions.

APPLICATION

Qualified applicants must complete all sections of the "Commissioned Local Pastor or Commissioned Local Chaplain Program Application for Enrollment". The applicant must also obtain the endorsement of their home Session. Each applicant shall be

interviewed and may be recommended by CPM for acceptance into the CLP program.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

All developmental and administrative aspects of the education of Commissioned Local Pastors shall be the responsibility of the CPM. The CLP curriculum shall be designed to prepare Commissioned Local Pastors to lead congregations in all aspects of service to God and each other. The student shall be instructed in Bible, Reformed Theology and Sacraments, Presbyterian Polity, Preaching, leading Worship, Pastoral Care and Teaching.

EXAMINATION

At the successful completion of all the coursework and following the desires of the student, an examination of the student shall be arranged by the CPM. The examination shall be scheduled at a time, place, and location and in a manner determined by the CPM.

The examination shall include, but not be limited to, questioning on the following items:

1. a statement of faith
2. an exegesis on a particular biblical passage (selected by CPM)
3. a sermon and a homiletical rationale based on the selected scripture reading.

The material shall be reviewed by the CPM and discussed with the candidate. In addition, the Scripture will be read and preached to the CPM. Input may also be offered or requested from the student's mentor or supervisor. Based on this discussion and examination:

1. The CPM may request that the material be revisited or rewritten.
2. The CPM may approve the candidate's readiness and preparedness to be a Commissioned Local Pastor.

After the CPM has approved the candidate as ready to be commissioned, the candidate may actively seek a position as a CLP. When commissioned, he/she comes under the supervision of the Presbytery through the COM.

COMMISSIONING

The Presbytery shall do the commissioning of lay pastors and chaplains. Ordinarily, this commissioning shall take place at a stated meeting of the Presbytery. If other circumstances warrant, and if Presbytery approves, the commissioning may take place at another time and place. Refer to the Book of Order (G-2.1003; W-4.4003) for questions asked at the time of commissioning.

RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The Commissioned Local Pastor or Commissioned Local Chaplain shall work under the supervision of a mentor who is assigned by the Committee on Ministry (COM) and is a teaching elder. The CLP shall comply with the polity of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the bylaws of the church(es) being served. The CLP is expected to participate in continuing educational training experiences while commissioned.