

PRESBYTERY OF MILWAUKEE
Policies and Procedures
Commissioned Ruling Elder/Commissioned Pastor Program

The purpose of the Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE)/Commissioned Pastor (CP) Program is to select, train, educate, prepare and equip elders of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to lead worship, preach the Gospel, watch over the people, provide for their nurture and service, and perform duties assigned to them in conjunction with designated local commissions on a temporary basis when no approved Minister of Word and Sacrament is available. The program is also to establish minimum requirements for certification/commissioning of CRE/CPs and to provide certification/commissioning. This commission shall specify the term of service, which shall not exceed three years but shall be renewable.

I. OVERVIEW OF THE POSITION OF CRE

G-2.1001 Functions of Commissioning Ruling Elders to Particular Service

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.

1. A Commissioned Ruling Elder/Commissioned Pastor is an elder of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) who has received the endorsement of the session of the church where he/she is a member, been selected by the Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) and has successfully completed the required training program, been examined by the CPM and received endorsement to appear before Presbytery of Milwaukee for an affirmative vote with regard to the person's readiness to serve as a Commissioned Ruling Elder/Commissioned Pastor within the presbytery, if invited by Presbytery of Milwaukee and a particular church or churches.
2. A Commissioned Ruling Elder/Commissioned Pastor with a commission is one authorized by the presbytery to lead worship and preach the Gospel, watch over the people, and provide nurture and service to a particular congregation. A CRE/CP with a commission serves a local church at the invitation of a particular church with the approval of COM.
3. A local commission is an agreement between a particular session, a CRE/CP and the Presbytery of Milwaukee. It is similar to a "call," for Ministers of the Word and Sacrament, but does not carry any rights, responsibilities, or privileges

outside of the particular church. The commission shall be valid for a period of up to three years, as determined by Presbytery of Milwaukee. It may be renewed at expiration or terminated at any time at the discretion of the presbytery.

4. The Rights and Responsibilities of CRE/CPs are limited and determined by the Presbytery of Milwaukee at the time of commissioning. When the presbytery determines that its strategy for mission in a local church requires it, the presbytery, upon receiving a recommendation from the COM and the session of a particular church, may authorize a CRE/CP who has received the instruction and training necessary to perform any or all of the functions listed below. The Rights and Responsibilities that may be extended to CRE/CPs are:
 - 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 presbytery (such vote to be counted as a ruling elder commissioner for purposes of parity).
 - f) Perform a service of Christian marriage as governed by the Book of Order.
5. Supervision for CRE/CPs will be provided by the COM. Supervision may include such responsibilities as ongoing training and evaluation and support while CRE/CPs await commissioning.

II. REQUIREMENTS FOR CRE/CP APPLICANTS AND APPLICATION PROCESS

1. CRE/CP applicants are required to be ordained elders of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), to have been a member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for two full years, and to have been active within the life of a particular congregation within the bounds of Presbytery of Milwaukee for a period of at least one full year prior to seeking entrance to a CRE/CP Training Program.
2. CRE/CP applicants must complete an application and receive endorsement from the session of the church where the applicant is a member. The session is asked to support the CRE/CP applicant throughout the training process and service to the Church.
 - a) Endorsement by the session means that it has reviewed the CRE/CP applicant's application, examined the person with regard to his/her motives for seeking this ministry and has been made fully aware that the person intends to apply to a CRE/CP Program.
 - b) The session, in its endorsement, agrees to be supportive of the applicant during the training period and agrees to support the applicant's ministry as a CRE/CP. No person may seek CRE/CP

training without the endorsement of the church where he or she is a member. Support may include: praying regularly for the person, providing financial assistance for costs incurred in the CRE/CP Program (books, travel, etc.), and meeting annually with the person for regular assessments.

3. When the CRE/CP applicant has completed the application, it is sent to the Associate for Ministry Vitality at the Presbytery of Milwaukee. Upon receipt of the application CPM will contact the session of the applicant to arrange for a visit to discuss the responsibilities of the session for endorsing the applicant.
4. After approving a CRE/CP's application, CPM will arrange a face-to-face meeting with the individual.
5. Following the meeting with CPM, the CRE/CP applicant will complete an assessment by Midwest Ministry Development Services (MMDS), including tests and evaluations. Before the process continues, the CRE/CP applicant must grant permission for the information gained in the consultation process to be shared with the CPM. Additionally, the applicant must complete the Safe Gatherings certification, which includes a background check.
6. Following a positive MMDS Assessment report and a favorable background check, and endorsement by CPM, applicants will be notified in writing that they have been accepted into the CRE/CP Training Program.

III. THE TRAINING PROGRAM

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.

1. CPM is the acting agent of the presbytery of Milwaukee and requires the following for CRE/CP certification:

- a) Becoming knowledgeable in the areas of:
 - Old and New Testament Study
 - Reformed Theology
 - Worship and Sacraments

- Presbyterian Polity
- Preaching
- Pastoral Care
- Christian Education

b) Ordinarily completing a minimum of two full years of preparation, followed by an examination. All training programs shall be approved by the CPM. Training is available through several Presbyterian seminaries – online and/or in person. There are also presbytery- and synod-based opportunities such as “The Academy” (co-sponsored by the Synod of Lakes and Prairies).

2. It is the responsibility of each student to enroll in approved courses as required by CPM. The presbytery office must receive validation of successful completion of required courses.
3. CRE/CP students shall be allowed to preach as pulpit supply in local churches when invited by the session. No prior approval needs to be given by the COM or the presbytery.
4. CRE/CP students will be assigned a liaison by CPM for the duration of their training.
5. Mid-term evaluations will be scheduled with CPM when at least half of the required courses are completed. At this point, it will be determined whether the student continues in the program.
6. When all class work has been completed, CPM will schedule a final evaluation. Final evaluation may include a faith statement and biographical information, a sermon manuscript, and a worship bulletin designed around the sermon.
7. Upon CPM approval, the CRE/CP will be recognized by the Presbytery, and responsibility for all future oversight of the CRE/CP transfers to the COM.

IV. COMMISSIONING

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-4.04.

1. The COM will be responsible for providing continuing education opportunities and support for CRE/CPs. The COM will have the right and responsibility to make sure that CRE/CPs continue to receive support and will annually review the status of all CRE/CPs.

2. An annual written report shall be submitted to COM by the CRE/CP and included in the minutes of the presbytery. Forms will be provided by COM.

V. CRE/CPs WITH A COMMISSION

G-2.1004 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 seems good and sufficient. A minister of the Word and Sacrament shall be assigned as a mentor and supervisor.

1. The COM shall determine whether a CRE/CP is eligible for a commission. Prior to any commissioning, the COM must examine the CRE/CP in person and report to the presbytery its recommendation.
2. The COM shall report its local commission recommendations to the Presbytery of Milwaukee. The following shall be included in the recommendation to the presbytery:
 - a) The terms of the contract negotiated by the COM, the CRE/CP, and the session of the particular church/es using the presbytery's contract guidelines and may include any or all of the rights and responsibilities outlined on page 2 of this document.
 - b) The minimum salary for a full-time CRE/CP will ordinarily be at least 75% of the presbytery's minimum effective full-time salary of an ordained Minister in a similar call. Effective salary guidelines and minimums can be found on the presbytery's website under COM -- Terms of Call and Compensation. Also required are auto/travel reimbursement at IRS allowable rate, continuing education and other agreed upon allowances. Eligibility for Pension Plan participation may be considered.
3. The presbytery shall ask the church or churches of the local commission to conduct a Service of Commissioning.
4. It shall be the responsibility of the COM to oversee the work of any CRE/CP and provide the proper support during the CRE/CP's tenure in a local commission. The COM shall assign a mentor to the CRE/CP.
5. During the tenure of the local commission,
 - a) The CRE/CP shall ordinarily attend all session meetings.
 - b) The CRE/CP shall ordinarily attend all meetings of the presbytery, being seated as an elder with voice and vote.
 - c) The CRE/CP will remain a member of the church where his or her membership is held. While serving as a CRE/CP with a commission, he/she may not serve as an active elder of their local congregation.

6. Opportunities for continuing education will be provided. CRE/CPs will be considered for presbytery continuing education funds administered by COM.

7. Dissolution of a local commission will be based on an agreement reached by the COM, the church of the local commission and the CRE/CP.

VI. CRE/CPs WITHOUT A LOCAL COMMISSION

1. Those not assigned a local commission shall not have the rights, responsibilities and privileges of a CRE/CP with a Commission. The presbytery must approve all commissions.

2. Have no formal responsibilities as a CRE/CP in their home church. They are free to be active elders in their church and represent their congregation at presbytery as a commissioner. Their gifts and abilities should be continually fostered by providing them opportunities to preach in churches as needed.

3. Will be provided with opportunities for continuing education. They will be considered for presbytery continuing education funds administered by COM.

4. CRE/CPs are encouraged to maintain an on-going relationship with their assigned mentor to review work and continued study. While CRE/CPs are not serving in churches, this does not excuse them from an annual evaluation conducted by the assigned mentor with the results reported to the COM as necessary.

VII. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES: Elders receiving training in other contexts.

1. A person may submit a letter of request to be considered as a CRE/CP in the Presbytery of Milwaukee. The request must include verification of all classes taken, a letter of recommendation if you have been previously commissioned from the previous certifying body, and a personal interview with COM.

2. All requirements for CRE/CP acceptance and training will need to be met. (See Roman numeral II).

3. If COM approves, see section IV for procedures.