

Presbytery of Utah

Proposed: Updated Commissioned Lay Pastors Policy

INTRODUCTION

The Presbytery of Utah has determined that its mission strategy includes the commissioning of Ruling Elders for service as Commissioned Lay Pastors/Commissioned Ruling Elders (CLP). CLPs are commissioned by the Presbytery for limited pastoral services as specified in their commission. A ruling elder so designated may be commissioned to a validated ministry that may include pastoral care, moderating the session of a particular congregation, administering the sacraments, and/or officiating at marriages. CLPs may be commissioned for service to a particular congregation, a validated ministry within the Presbytery, or to the Presbytery at large.

This policy is divided into two main sections. The first part covers the process of becoming a CLP; the second part focuses on functioning as a CLP once commissioned.

Committee on Commissioned Lay Pastors (the CoCLP)

This is a subcommittee of the Committee on Ministry (COM). The chair of the CoCLP will be a member of the COM. The additional members of the CoCLP will be ordained pastors, Ruling Elders, and Deacons, each of whom may or may not be members of the COM.

It is recommended that the CoCLP be a body of four members. The COM Chair will recruit the four members.

CLP PREPARATION

Requirements for Admission to the Program

All candidates must meet the following criteria for admission to the program:

- must be members of the Presbyterian Church (USA) [PC(USA)] in good standing,
- must be an ordained Ruling Elders in the Presbyterian Church (USA) prior to beginning the program,
- must be actively involved in the life of their current home congregation before applying to become a CLP, and
- must have received the endorsement of their congregation's Session.

To begin the process, each candidate must submit a completed application. The CLP Application is in Appendix A and may also be obtained through the Presbytery Office. Completed applications should be returned to the Presbytery office and to the COCLP email. To be admitted to the program, the candidate must be willing to accept a commission as CLP.

Once the completed application is submitted, the candidate will interview with the CoCLP of the Committee on Ministry (COM). Interview questions will include, but not be limited to: How would you describe your relationship to Jesus Christ? How did you become a Presbyterian? How do you feel called to pursue a commission? What are your strengths for ministry? What are your weaknesses in ministry? Upon giving

satisfactory answers, the applicant will be recommended to COM to be enrolled as a candidate for the CLP program.

Educational Requirements

The Presbytery is responsible for training each candidate according to the Book of Order (G-2.002). Preparation and instruction to become a CLP may vary as appropriate for a particular commission. Training for CLP applicants will typically include eight classes:

- Introduction to the Old Testament,
 - Introduction to the New Testament,
 - Introduction to Preaching,
 - Reformed Worship and Sacraments,
 - Reformed Theology,
 - Presbyterian Polity,
 - Pastoral Care, and
 - Foundations of Christian Education.
- Additionally, if the CLP desires to perform marriages, we request that the candidate/CLP take a course on pre-marital counseling.
- The CLP candidate must undergo a psychological examination (similar to the examination for pastoral candidates. This is a Synod requirement.

Coursework in Presbyterian Polity, Reformed Theology, and Reformed Worship and Sacraments must reflect a PC(USA) perspective. Coursework should be taken at PC(USA) seminaries or seminaries related to other reformed denominations. Courses may be taken through both on-line and in-person seminary settings. Approval of all coursework by CoCLP is required to determine completeness and congruence with service in the PC(USA).

Candidates are required to attend meetings of the Presbytery as part of their CLP formation.

Certification and Commissioning

Acceptance into the CLP program is not a guarantee of commissioning; each CLP candidate must receive a call to a validated area of service prior to commissioning.

Upon completion of requirements, including a recommendation from the COM, and being presented a “commissioning opportunity,” CLP candidates will be examined on the floor of Presbytery. Candidates will provide and read their written statement of faith, and may be asked to preach a sermon. The members of the Presbytery will be given time to ask questions of the candidate. Examinations will cover the candidate's personal faith, motives for seeking the commission, the areas of instruction deemed necessary for the commission being sought, and their faith journey. If the candidate is voted for approval, the Presbytery will move to a commissioning service.

In the case that a CLP would be commissioned to a particular congregation, several other factors would need to be in place.

- The candidate would submit a resume to the church in question. The church would determine its own interview process to be followed.
- The call negotiations would include agreement on compensation, housing, travel, support for continuing education, vacation, and determination of duties (See sample form in APPENDIX B).

A written Memorandum of Agreement detailing these agreements must be submitted to the CoCLP for approval by COM. The CoCLP and COM would recommend to Presbytery a term of commissioned service for an appropriate period of time. The CoCLP and COM will also recommend to the Presbytery those functions that will enable the CLP to effectively serve the congregation. Normally those duties will include the authority to preach and to administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper and the Sacrament of Baptism. The CLP may be authorized to act as Moderator of Session when the CLP's mentor and the CoCLP feel that they are ready for this responsibility.

Candidate Liaisons

Every CLP candidate will have a mentor and a liaison. The Mentor will be an ordained pastor in the Presbytery. They will coach the candidate as the mover through the process of becoming a CLP. The Liaison will normally be a member of COM, and is the person the candidate checks-in with for periodic reporting and to update educational progress with.

The CLP remains a member of their local church and should maintain a relationship with their pastor. However, the mentor provides special support as a resource for professional development, encouragement, advice, and a source of new ideas. Liaisons are expected to have an annual face-to-face meeting with the CLP candidate. At this meeting they can review and sign reports and consult with the CLP about their training and experience. Between these meetings liaisons will also be available for advice as needed.

Training Progress

Each CPL candidate will maintain an accounting of their educational progress, and provide a report to their liaison of the training status at the end of each calendar year.

FUNCTIONING AS A CLP

Term

CLPs are approved for three-year terms. This is independent of commissions. A CLP can anticipate moving into and out of commissions during their service as a CLP. At the end of each three-year term, the COM will vote on whether to approve another three-year term for the CLP. Demonstrated commitment to the CLP program will be a significant factor in achieving re-approval.

Commissions

The CLP will be serving needs of the Presbytery. A commission opportunity will be presented to the CLP by the COM. The CLP has a choice of whether to accept the

commission. A repeated declination of proposed commissions will reflect poorly on a CLP's commitment to the program.

Commissions may be for a variety of purposes as outlined in the Introduction. A CLP will not be commissioned to be purely a pulpit supply. The Presbyterian polity recognizes the priesthood of all believers, and one does not have to become a CLP to preach. Any session, worship committee, or pastor can invite someone to preach.

When a CLP is commissioned they become a member of the Presbytery of Utah for the duration of that validated ministry. This does not dissolve their membership with their local congregation, but serves to acknowledge their service to the Presbytery.

A CLP will not be commissioned to serve as the moderator of a church in which the CLP is also a member of its session.

Congregations will be notified of an anticipated commissioning of a CLP to serve their church. Should any congregation have concerns about the CLP at this time, or in the future, they should address their concerns to the chair of the CoCLP.

Voice and Vote at Presbytery Meetings

At Presbytery of Utah meetings, all CLPs, whether currently serving in a validated ministry or not, will have a voice and a vote.

Continuing Education

CLPs are expected to continue their study and faith development, as would any Christian, though this is especially important for those who lead others. Presbytery may provide resources for the CLPs' spiritual and intellectual development by meetings, retreats, classes, and/or conferences; however, the CLP is free to engage in other continuing education opportunities. It is recommended that the CLP review outside continuing education programs being considered with their mentor prior to attending such training. The CLP should participate in at least two continuing education courses during each of their three-year terms.

A CLP is expected to be active in the life of the Presbytery of Utah. This includes attending Presbytery meetings. CLPs are strongly encouraged to attend at least one of the two Pastors' Retreats each year. The Pastors' Retreat can count as continuing education. A CLP is encouraged to participate in other Presbyter-wide activities as well.

CoCLP mentors may recommend training and/or continuing education to further a CLP's development.

Reporting

CLPs are to keep a log of their service for submission to the Presbytery office annually on the form provided (Appendix C). These reports are due the first month of the year for

the previous year's activities. The reports should include continuing education efforts, commissioned work, their mental and relationship status.

The mentor will review and endorse it and forward it to the Presbytery office for distribution by the end of the first quarter.

End of Commission

The commission of a CLP is for a stated period of time. At the end of that period, the commission expires unless the CLP:

1. Requests and is granted a renewed commission to the same service; or
2. Receives another commission to a different validated ministry.

If neither of these actions takes place, the CLP will be placed on the list of inactive CLPs. The commission may be resigned by the CLP when they feel that their service in the Presbytery is complete. Under this circumstance, the CLP will be placed on the list of inactive CLPs. A ruling elder who has been commissioned and later ceases to serve in the specified ministry to which they have been commissioned may be placed on the list of inactive CLPs. Ruling elders on the list of inactive CLPs are not authorized to perform the functions of a CLP until commissioned again to a validated ministry by the Presbytery. A change in commission may require additional instruction and/or preparation as determined by the CoCLP and COM.

Additionally, the CoCLP may recommend to Presbytery through the COM that a commission be withdrawn. Presbytery may withdraw a commission for reasons it deems good and sufficient. In such a case, it is possible that the CoCLP would recommend that the CLP not be considered for any future commission. In cases that warrant immediate action, COM may suspend the CLP's assignment to a validated ministry pending appropriate action by the Presbytery in its next meeting.

Receiving CLPS from other Presbyteries within the Synod of the Rocky Mountains (SRM)

The SRM is working towards a standardized set of CLP requirements across the Synod. Once completed and adopted, this will enable CLP to readily serve outside their Presbytery's boundaries with other SRM Presbyteries.

Receiving CLPs from other Presbyteries

It should be noted that there is no national portability of the commissioning to CLP status between Presbyteries. However, should a CLP, or a candidate in training for that position, apply for status in the Presbytery of Utah after active membership in a congregation in this Presbytery, they will be sent an application and asked for it to be completed, along with a description of prior training completed. The CoCLP may contact trainers to review their qualifications and to review the training that was provided. Should an applicant be deemed acceptable, they will be interviewed by the CoCLP, and a recommendation will be made to COM and Presbytery. That recommendation will include specific class and training that will be accepted. CoCLP may also require additional training, may reject coursework or training, and may reject the application.

COM may refine the CoCLP recommendation on appeal. Presbytery will take action upon the CoCLP recommendation at its next stated meeting.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Application for Commissioned Lay Pastor / Commissioned Ruling Elder Candidacy

Name: _____

Date: _____

Address: _____

Preferred Phone: _____

Alternate Phone Numbers: _____

Work History (include starting and ending dates as well as brief description of tasks)

Formal Education:

Continuing Education/ Professional Development:

Service to local church, Presbytery or higher judicatories (include dates)

**Ecclesiastical Status:
Ordination as Elder**

Church _____

—

Date: _____

—

Current Church
Membership: _____

List three references, including your current pastor, and provide contact information:

I hereby authorize those inquiring into my suitability to contact the persons listed.

Signed: _____

Please append to this report the following items:

- A description of why you believe you are called to pursue this position.
- A letter from your Clerk of Session indicating the Session's action of endorsement.

Please return this application to:

Presbytery of Utah
P.O. Box 25394
Salt Lake City, UT 84125

Revised xxxx, 2025

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Appendix B

SAMPLE COMMISSIONED LAY PASTOR AGREEMENT

Terms of Call for _____ by _____
Church of _____, Utah. _____
agrees to serve pending appointment as Commissioned Lay Pastor (G-14.0801) by the
Presbytery of Utah.

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_____ agrees to be available ____ days spread over three (3) weekends per month. A typical weekend will start either at noon on Friday or Saturday, and end at noon on Monday.

This agreement starts with an initial period of _____ months, starting _____ and ending _____. At that time Presbytery's Committee on Ministry and the Session of _____ will mutually assess how this agreement has worked for both the Church and CLP. Depending on the assessment, this agreement may be terminated, or extended for additional time (a standard Commission term is 3 years). If at any time, the Session decides that the needs of the congregation are not being met by this arrangement, they may give 30 days notice, and the CLP may do likewise if he/she has similar concerns, or if health or family circumstances so require. The Session may similarly notify the commissioned CLP in the event that the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) achieves a successful call of a Minister of Word and Sacrament.

Tasks expected of _____ include:

- Conducting Worship and preaching the sermon
- Serving Communion once a month (as authorized by Presbytery)
- Serving home communion for members unable to participate with the congregation
- Moderating Session meetings (as authorized by Presbytery)
- Providing pastoral care and counseling to the congregation, including hospital and home
- visitations
- Serving as a resource for Sunday School, Bible Study and training of church officers
- Conducting Confirmation classes for persons desiring to become active members
- Presbytery has agreed to provide resources for the instruction required by the Book of Order for
- Commissioned Lay Pastor and to appoint a Minister of Word and Sacrament as mentor and supervisor.
- Upon commissioning, _____ may be authorized by Presbytery to perform any and all of the functions specified by G-14.0801c (Baptism, Marriage, etc.) as requested by the Session.
- The Session agrees to support _____ with:
Salary \$ _____ per month.
- Travel and meal expenses: Up to \$ _____ per month and submitted mileage at IRS rate
- _____ per mile.
- Housing and utilities \$ _____ (or provided directly by the church).
- Continuing Education \$ _____ and _____ weekends per year.
- Vacation: _____ weekends per year.
- Use of church office with desk, files, computer, internet access, telephone, as available.

Signed:

122Session _____
Committee on Ministry _____
Stated Clerk of Presbytery _____
CLP _____

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Appendix C

COMMISSIONED LAY PASTOR ANNUAL REPORT FORM

This form is to be completed by the CLP within 30 days following the end of the calendar year and submitted to the CLP's mentor. Mentors should review the form with the CLP, then inform the Presbytery Office that the form should be accepted. The form may be submitted electronically or by US mail. (An electronic submission will constitute your signature.) Please be sure the signed form is submitted within the quarter following the year.

Name:

Home Address:

Phone Number:

Email Address:

Year: _____

PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING FOR THE PAST CALENDAR YEAR:

(Complete prior to the end of the first month in the new year)

1. Number of worship services led and/or sermons preached:
For which congregation/s?
2. Number of times you have celebrated the Sacrament of Communion:
For which congregation/s?
3. Number of people served home communion:
4. Number of Session Meetings moderated:
5. Number of Congregational Meetings moderated:
6. Number of baptisms performed:
Number of children: Number of adults:

7. Number of Pastoral Calls made:

8. Number of weddings presided over:
Date and location of wedding:
Name of spouses:

9. Number of funerals or memorial services presided over:
Date and location of service:
Name of deceased:

10. Have you assumed expanded pastoral responsibilities for a congregation while its pastor was ill or on vacation?
If so, which congregation/s and for how long:

REFLECTIONS:

1. What training (classes, seminars, workshops, etc.) have you taken during the quarter? *(please indicate subject, date, leader & hours)*

2. What has been most challenging for you during this quarter? Most rewarding?

3. How would you describe your mental state of being and the status of your relationships?

4. Please note any recommendations, areas of concern, or areas in which you would like assistance.

Please send this completed form to your mentor.

CLP Signature: _____

Mentor Signature: _____