

# **Prospect Hill Presbytery Policies and Guidelines Commissioned Ruling Elders**

## **Commissioned Ruling Elders (Or Commissioned Pastors) G-2.01**

A Commissioned Ruling Elder/Commissioned Pastor (hereafter referred to as CRE) is a person ordained to the office of ruling elder who has been trained and commissioned by the Presbytery to temporarily carry out a particular ministerial assignment. Typically this involves a position in a congregation that is currently financially unable to call an ordained pastor. CREs provide a valuable service to these churches and are an important option for the Presbytery to pursue stability and growth within its member congregations.

## **Language and Terms**

**Applicant CRE** – a person who is admitted into a CRE academy and is actively participating in the preparation process.

**Eligible CRE** – a person who has completed all requirements for commissioning set out by the CPM but is not currently commissioned to serve in a CRE role. (G-2.1002)

**Active CRE** – a person who is appointed and commissioned to work within the bounds of the Presbytery of Prospect Hill on a one year, renewable basis.

## **Functions of a CRE (G-2.1001)**

The functions of a particular CRE are determined by the Committee on Ministry of Prospect Hill Presbytery in light of the specific needs of the context in which the commission is issued. These may include, but are not limited to moderating the session, administering sacraments, officiating weddings, and voice and vote in Presbytery meetings. These duties will be in addition to any other necessary functions consistent with the office of Ruling Elder such as worship leadership and planning, home and hospital visitations, teaching ministries, conducting funerals, etc.

## **Terms of Service**

CREs are commissioned by the Presbytery for a stated period of time up to one year in length. This status is temporary, and differs from ordination in that it lasts only the duration of the assignment to which the CRE was commissioned. (G-2.1002) The particular duties within a Commission will be established by the Presbytery and overseen or adjusted by the COM as needed. These commissions will be reviewed annually by the COM. (G-2.1001) If the review is favorable, the commission may be renewed for another year at the request of the congregation and the concurrence of the COM. The Commission and status of a CRE is valid only within the Presbytery and does not automatically transfer when a CRE changes churches or Presbyteries.

## **Application and Preparation**

The Committee on Preparation for Ministry of the Presbytery of Prospect Hill will evaluate all applications of those wishing to serve as a CRE and will have oversight of their training, preparation, and process. The CPM will also evaluate the readiness of those in the process and recommend those who are considered ready to serve to the Committee on Ministry.

## **Admission Requirements:**

1. Have a college degree or equivalent (unless granted an exception by the CPM).
2. The Applicant CRE will be a ruling elder in good standing of the PC(USA) and Prospect Hill Presbytery for one year with faithful, regular, participation in worship and the life of the church prior to admission.
3. The Applicant CRE will have a written recommendation from his or her session of the congregation of their membership.

4. The Applicant CRE will have two additional written recommendations from nonfamily persons (one being from their current or former pastor) who can attest to the applicant's faith journey and sense of call.
5. The Applicant CRE will complete an application to include statements on:
  - a. Personal faith;
  - b. Sense of call;
  - c. What it means to be a Presbyterian; and
  - d. What gifts and skills they bring to the church which reflect on the reformed tradition.

**Process:**

1. The CPM will process all applications from persons desiring to seek commissioning as a CRE.
2. The CPM or approved representative will meet with each applicant prior to admission.
3. The CPM will assign a committee member to be a liaison with the Applicant CRE.
4. The CPM will meet with each Applicant CRE for at least an annual evaluation during his or her training to assist them in discerning and formation for their call.
  - a. All written materials for the annual evaluation must be submitted no later than one week before the Applicant CREs meeting with the CPM.
5. Applicants for CRE will participate in an individual/group session sponsored by CPM to evaluate psychological and leadership issues associated with pastoral roles before consideration by CPM for Eligible CRE.
6. The CPM will meet with each Applicant CRE for a final examination prior to recommending their commissioning to the COM.

**Preparation; Course of Study**

1. The Applicant CRE will satisfactorily complete the course of study outlined in the CRE Academy by the Presbytery of Prospect Hill or an alternative acceptable to the CPM.
2. The Applicant CRE must select one paper or written project reflective of that year's academic work and submit it to the CPM for consideration at least prior to the annual examination.
3. Requests for equivalency based on prior experience or education will be considered by the CPM.

**Criteria to be Certified as Eligible for Commissioning**

In addition to the completion of requirements listed previously:

1. Eligible CREs will have completed 2 years as an Applicant CRE.
2. Eligible CREs will meet with the CPM for the purpose of a final theological and readiness examination. Prior to this meeting the Applicant CRE will write/preach a sermon and provide a one-page Statement of Faith.
  - a. The Statement of faith should be an exposition of what the candidate believes, incorporating aspects of their faith experience, as well as reflecting their understanding of the Reformed Tradition. The following areas should be included but not limited to in the statement:
    - God
    - Jesus Christ
    - The Holy Spirit
    - Atonement
    - The Sacraments
    - The authority of Scripture
    - The nature and mission of the Church
    - Discipleship

*(The CPM has authority to make exceptions to these procedures and adjust or add to them as necessary.)*

**COM Requirements for Eligible CREs**

Upon satisfactory completion of the preparation process as determined by the CPM, eligible CREs will meet with the COM to present their statement of faith, be examined for readiness to serve as a Commissioned Ruling

Elder and to request certification as an eligible CRE. At this point all active and eligible CREs will be, and continue to be, under the oversight of the Committee on Ministry.

### **Qualifications**

Those expressing a desire to serve the Presbytery as a CRE should demonstrate the following credentials by the end of their preparation period:

1. Show competency in both the content and interpretation of Scripture, particularly as it pertains to preaching and teaching.
2. Demonstrate a working understanding of Presbyterian theology, polity, history, sacraments, doctrine and governance.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the role, functions, and limits of a CRE within the church and Presbytery.

### **Requirements (G-2.1002)**

The following will be required of those wishing to serve within the Presbytery of Prospect Hill as a CRE:

1. Be approved for service by the Committee on Preparation for Ministry and meet any and all requirements of their process.
2. Meet with the Committee on Ministry for an interview/examination. This shall include the presentation of a written statement of faith. This shall take place before any placement can be made.
3. To meet at least quarterly with a liaison or mentor appointed by the COM.
4. Approval of a particular commissioned call by the Presbytery.
5. Examination by Presbytery of Prospect Hill prior to initial commissioning.
6. Preparation of an annual ministry report to be submitted to the COM summarizing the previous 12 months of service.

**Commissioning** A Commissioning Service will take place at a meeting of Prospect Hill Presbytery under the direction of the COM. (G-2.1003)

### **Oversight**

The COM will select/approve a mentor for each Commissioned CRE.

- A. The Mentor shall not be the applicant's pastor.
- B. The Mentor must be an Ordained Minister of the Word and Sacrament in the PCUSA.
- C. The Mentor shall be a member of the Presbytery of Prospect Hill.

The ongoing work of a CRE shall be overseen and evaluated by the COM in conjunction with the CRE, the congregation or organization being served, the CRE's mentor or liaison, and any other parties deemed necessary by the COM. This will happen at least annually and can be scheduled more often if the COM feels a need for more regular or additional oversight. (G-2.1004)

### **Continuing Education**

Because ministry is an endless challenge, no person can ever be fully qualified. Thus it is vital that every person involved in ministry leadership seek to improve their skills, understanding, knowledge, and effectiveness regularly. CREs will be expected to engage in continuing education at least at the level of personal study and preferably by participating in classes or conferences designed to provide growth in ministry. As a part of his or her annual evaluation, a CRE will be required to share a summary of their continuing education over the past year.

*Approved by COM 9/12/2017*

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