

**Policy for Ruling Elders Commissioned to Limited Pastoral Service
Commission on Preparation for Ministry
Transylvania Presbytery**

Purpose

“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.” (Book of Order G-2.1001)

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.” (Book of Order G-2.1002)

Requirements and Process

1. Application and Screening
 - a. To be eligible to be commissioned for pastoral service, a person must be an ordained elder in good standing in the PC(USA) with gifts and graces for pastoral ministry.
 - b. The candidate must complete the Application to be Considered for Commissioned Pastor. This application must be endorsed by the Session where the ruling elder currently is a member, and must include references from others who know the candidate well.
 - c. The application will be reviewed by the Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM).
 - d. References will be checked, and a background check will be performed. If the application is in order, the candidate will meet with the CPM to discuss the candidate’s desires, plans, and sense of call, and to discuss the overall process.
 - e. If both the CPM and the candidate agree, they will be enrolled and brought under care of the CPM, and a member of the CPM will be assigned as their shepherd.
 - f. The candidate will be required to complete a psychological evaluation. The CPM will work with the candidate to arrange for the evaluation and cover the cost of the evaluation.

2. Education - The candidate must receive training/education in the following basic areas. Each class will include an assessment to assure that the candidate has learned and understood the material.
 - a. Introduction to Old Testament
 - b. Introduction to New Testament
 - c. Pastoral care
 - d. PC(USA) polity
 - e. Reformed theology
 - f. Introduction to preaching
 - g. Foundations of Christian education
 - h. Reformed worship and sacraments
 - i. Sexual misconduct prevention
 - j. Boundaries in congregations
 - k. Systems theory as it relates to congregations
 - l. In addition, specific training may be needed depending on the type of ministry service for which the candidate will be commissioned and the regional context and culture in which the candidate will serve.

Transylvania Presbytery offers this education at different times; however, the education may be completed through other means such as on-line and/or in-person courses or certification programs offered through seminaries or other educational institutions approved by the CPM. It may also be acceptable to satisfy the educational requirements through independent study under the supervision of a presbytery mentor. The CPM will work with the candidate to determine a course of study that meets the requirements and is acceptable to both the CPM and the candidate.

3. Final Evaluation

Prior to meeting with the CPM for final evaluation, the candidate must submit a biographical statement and personal statement of faith to the CPM. These documents must be given to the candidate's shepherd no later than one month before the final evaluation with the CPM.

 - a. The candidate will prepare and submit to the CPM a one-page biographical statement discussing their faith journey and their sense of call to ministry.
 - b. The candidate will prepare and submit to the CPM a one-page personal statement of faith to include, but not limited to, statements on the following:
 - i. The Trinity and each person of the Trinity
 - ii. The authority of scripture
 - iii. The sacraments

The statement of faith should be submitted to the candidate's shepherd prior to the final examination for review and feedback no later than one month before the final evaluation with the CPM.

- c. The CPM will attend a worship service led by the candidate. The service must include communion, but may be personalized to the specific situation and call of the candidate. This can be a service specifically scheduled for the CPM, or at a church where the CP is serving or been invited to lead worship. If the service is at a church where the candidate is serving or has been invited to lead worship, the candidate will administer the sacrament under the authority and supervision of the CPM or its representative. The service may be recorded if all of the CPM is not able to attend or for later discussion.
 - d. Upon completion of steps a-c, the CPM will have a discussion with the candidate about their statement of faith, biographical statement, and the worship service. The result of the conversation will be a vote by the CPM on the readiness of the candidate to be commissioned.
4. Exceptions
- The CPM will make necessary accommodations at any step in the process for candidates who have special needs or require special consideration.