



National Capital
PRESBYTERY
MISSIONAL · PASTORAL · PROPHETIC

COMMISSIONED RULING ELDER PROGRAM

Approved by COM 04/19/2022

Revised 11/16/22

COMMISSIONED RULING ELDER PROGRAM

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COMMISSIONED RULING ELDER PROGRAM

What is a Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE)?

A CRE is an elder in the Presbyterian Church (USA) who is granted a local commission by the presbytery to limited pastoral service as assigned by the presbytery.

Who commissions the ruling elder?

When the presbytery is satisfied with the qualifications of a ruling elder to serve a congregation, it shall commission the ruling elder to pastoral service as designated by the presbytery,

What is the ruling elder commissioned to do?

A commissioned ruling elder is responsible to watch over the people and provide for their worship and nurture. Permission for specific activities will be included in the approval of the Committee on Ministry.

Why commission Ruling Elders?

We believe that God's Spirit provides opportunities for new forms of ministry to build up Christ's Church. Baptized Christians who are ordained as Ruling Elders may bring particular gifts to share in discernment of God's Spirit and governance of God's people.

What is the CRE application process?

ELIGIBILITY

- Must be a Ruling Elder in the PC(USA);
- Must be endorsed by home church;
- Must submit application for approval by the Committee on Ministry;
- Must complete a psychological evaluation administered by LeaderWise.

Who certifies a CRE candidate as prepared to be and suitable for the role of CRE?

The Committee on Ministry (COM) interviews, reviews application, determines what training is required, and certifies to the presbytery that a candidate is ready to serve as a CRE.

What training is required?

A ruling elder who seeks to serve as a Commissioned Ruling Elder shall receive such preparation and instruction as determined by the presbytery. (G-2.1001-2.1004)

How is a CRE compensated?

A Commissioned Ruling Elder shall receive compensation in accordance with the presbytery's Compensation and Personnel Policy for Pastors. The policy may be found on NCP's website under the Documents tab - Committee on Ministry (COM) Documents.

National Capital Presbytery Committee on Ministry

TRAINING

The Committee on Ministry requires the following areas of training for CRE candidates. The training for each CRE candidate shall be overseen and administered by COM.

- Biblical Studies
- Reformed Theology and Sacraments
- Presbyterian Polity
- Preaching
- Leading Worship (including administering sacraments when authorized)
- Pastoral Care
- Field Internship (a 6-week internship to include attendance at a session meeting, attendance at 1 or 2 worship services that includes the Sacrament of Communion, attendance at a committee meeting, and a meeting with the pastor who will discuss the pastor's ministry and the ministry of the church)
- Healthy Boundary Training

What is the process for examination and eligibility for ministry?

EXAMINATION and COMMISSIONING

- *The Committee on Ministry is charged with conducting a background check and the examination of those it certifies as prepared to be and suitable for the role of Commissioned Ruling Elder.*
- *The Committee on Ministry will present candidates to National Capital Presbytery with a written statement from the candidates concerning their sense of call.*
- *The Committee on Ministry will recommend that the presbytery approve the candidate as eligible to be commissioned to a particular ministry.*
- *Following presbytery approval, the commissioning may take place either within the context of a worship service at a time other than the presbytery meeting or within the context of a presbytery meeting, the choice being made by those about to be commissioned. The commission may be renewed at expiration or terminated at any time at the discretion of the COM.*
- *Within the ministry to which the CRE has been commissioned, the CRE may be authorized by COM to perform one or more of the following services:*
 - Prepare and lead worship
 - ☐ Provide administrative leadership in this ministry
 - ☐ Administer the Lord's Supper only in this ministry
 - ☐ Administer the Sacrament of Baptism only in this ministry
 - ☐ Moderate the session and congregational meetings of the congregation
 - ☐ Have a voice in meetings of presbytery
 - ☐ Have a vote in meetings of the presbytery (such vote to be counted as a ruling elder)

Who supervises the CRE?

The CRE shall work under the supervision of the Committee on Ministry. A minister of the Word and Sacrament shall be assigned as a mentor.

**SECURING COMMISSIONED RULING ELDER PASTOR LEADERSHIP FOR
CONGREGATIONS/IMMIGRANT WORSHIPING COMMUNITIES
National Capital Presbytery – Committee on Ministry**

Step	Responsible Party
1.0 The Ruling Elder (RE) meets with COM Exam Team to discuss application process and meets with his/her home congregation's session to discuss applying to Commissioned Ruling Elder Program. The session endorses the Ruling Elder's application process.	RE COM Exam Team Session of REs Home Congregation
2.0 The RE completes and submits application to COM Exam Team and completes psychological examination	RE Cost shared by RE/Home Church Session/ Presbytery
3.0 The COM Exam Team reviews/approves application	CTC, CRE Exam Team, NCP staff
4.0 The CCRE completes course work with approved seminary and approved Directed Study for polity and Reformed Theology, and completes Healthy Boundaries Training	CCRE
5.0 The CCRE is assigned an internship.	COM/CTC/NCP Staff, Internship Site
6.0 The COM Exam Team examines CCRE and recommends ERE status	COM

CTC = Congregational Transitions Commission **COM** = Committee on Ministry **RE**=Ruling Elder **CRE**=Commissioned Ruling Elder
CCRE= Candidate Commissioned Ruling Elder **ERE**=Eligible Ruling Elder

**SECURING COMMISSIONED RULING ELDER PASTOR LEADERSHIP FOR
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7.0 After sustaining exam, COM sends an introductory letter to the ERE, The letter requests written acknowledgement of the receipt of and willingness to comply with the following documents: • this procedure • <i>NCP Code of Ethics</i> • <i>NCP Sexual Misconduct Policy and Administrative Leave Policy</i> • <i>Healthy Boundaries Certificate</i>	COM/ERE
8.0 COM recommends commissioning to a particular ministry/ approves contract	COM/CTC
9.0 Approval of Commissioning of RE	Presbytery
10.0 Assignment of minister mentor for CRE	Mentor/COM

Authority:

Book of Order: G-2.1001, G-2.1002, G-2.1003, G-4.0301, W-4.0404

NCP Policies: Code of Ethics for Clergy and Other Church Professionals; Sexual Misconduct Policy; Administrative Leave Policy; Examination Policy; Healthy Boundaries

CTC = Congregational Transitions Commission **COM** = Committee on Ministry **RE**=Ruling Elder **CRE**=Commissioned Ruling Elder
CCRE= Candidate Commissioned Ruling Elder **ERE**=Eligible Ruling Elder

**National Capital Presbytery
Committee on Ministry**

APPLICATION FORM FOR CRE PROGRAM

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Telephone: Home _____ Cell _____

Email: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Church Membership: _____

(Name of Church) (City/State)

Describe Your Activities in the Life and Mission of the Church:

(List churches to which you have belonged; dates of active membership; church activities you participated in; positions of responsibility you have held, etc. *Use an additional sheet of paper, if necessary.*)

Describe Your Service and Experience as an Ordained Elder:

Educational Background:

School & Location Year Graduated: Diploma/Degree:

**National Capital Presbytery
Committee on Ministry**

References:

List the name, address, telephone, and occupation of three people (no relatives) who have known you for at least five years. One of these references should be a Minister of the Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

1. _____
Name _____ Relationship to you _____
Mailing Address _____
Phone(s) _____ Email _____
2. _____
Name _____ Relationship to you _____
Mailing Address _____
Phone(s) _____ Email _____
3. _____
Name _____ Relationship to you _____
Mailing Address _____
Phone(s) _____ Email _____

_____ I hereby authorize those inquiring into my suitability to contact my references.
(Initial)

**National Capital Presbytery
Committee on Ministry**

Statement:

“Why I would like to be involved in the Commissioned Ruling Elder Program.”

In your statement, please describe which phases of service as a Commissioned Ruling Elder you believe will be most difficult for you and which will be easiest for you.

Also, please describe your most meaningful religious experience and why it was most meaningful to you.

**National Capital Presbytery
Committee on Ministry**

Session Endorsement of CRE Applicant

Applicant *should take this completed form to the moderator of your session. The minister and session will talk with you about your interest in the Commissioned Ruling Elder Program. The clerk of session will then forward your application form to the Committee on Ministry administrator.*

RECOMMENDATION OF THE SESSION

As the Session considers recommending a person to be enrolled in the Commissioned Ruling Elder Program, the following are among the criteria that should be considered:

☐ Is the person a committed Christian? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments: _____

☐ Is the person an active and effective member of the Congregation? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments: _____

☐ Does the person relate helpfully and positively to others? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments: _____

☐ Is the person loyal to and enthusiastic about the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments: _____

☐ Does the person have strong leadership qualities? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments: _____

☐ Does the person have good communication skills? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments: _____

Also, in considering your recommendation, are the Session and the Congregation willing to affirm and support this person in ministry? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Comments: _____

RECOMMENDATION

The Session of _____ (Church)

met with _____ who is a Ruling Elder in this congregation and after due deliberation recommends this person for the Commissioned Ruling Elder Program.

(Clerk of Session)

Date

**National Capital Presbytery
Committee on Ministry**

Internship Report for Commissioned Ruling Elders (CREs)

CRE Candidate's Name:

Minister's Name:

Church Address:

Please answer the following questions. Additional comments may be written on the back.

How would you characterize this candidate's participation in the Internship?

What are the major strengths of this Commissioned Ruling Elder's ministry?

In what areas of ministry would you encourage this Commissioned Ruling Elder to make improvements?

What areas of continuing education would you recommend for this Commissioned Ruling Elder?

Minister's Signature _____ Date: _____

Please return this form to comadmin@thepresbytery.org, the COM Administrator

**National Capital Presbytery
Committee on Ministry**

Mentor for Commissioned Ruling Elder(s)

The Committee on Ministry will assign a mentor to support and supervise the Commissioned Ruling Elder's ministry. The mentor and the CRE will determine a schedule for meeting. The mentor will submit an annual report (form on next page) to the Committee on Ministry.

**National Capital Presbytery
Committee on Ministry**

Mentor's Annual Report for Commissioned Ruling Elders (CREs)

CRE's Name: _____

Commissioned to _____ (Church) until _____

Mentor's Name and email: _____

Briefly answer the following questions. Additional comments may be written on the back.

How would you characterize your relationship with this Commissioned Ruling Elder?

Are you generally satisfied with the ministry of this Commissioned Ruling Elder?

What are the major strengths of this Commissioned Ruling Elder's ministry?

In what areas of ministry would you encourage this Commissioned Ruling Elder to make improvements?

What areas of continuing education would you recommend for this Commissioned Ruling Elder?

Mentor's Signature _____ Date: _____

Please return this form to comadmin@thepresbytery.org, the COM Administrator.

**National Capital Presbytery
Committee on Ministry**

EXAMINATION

(Four Parts)

- 1) Complete a one-page **Statement of Faith** which outlines your views on the Trinity, salvation, the church, and the sacraments.
- 2) Complete a one-page **Biographical Sketch** which traces your faith journey and call to and/or service in ministry.
- 3) Complete a one-page (total) paper with answers to the **Ordination Questions** asked of all presbyters at ordination, installation, and/or commissioning as listed below:

Ordination Questions

*Please **select 2 of the 9** following questions and write a half-page response to each question (total - one page). Use the question-bullets as a guide to your answer. It is not necessary to answer each bullet point.*

1. Do you trust in Jesus Christ your Savior, acknowledge him Lord of all and Head of the Church, and through him believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?
 - What does it mean to you to trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior?
 - What does it mean to you that Jesus Christ is Lord of all? Head of the Church?
 - What does it mean to you to say that God is one yet made up of three persons?
 - What is the relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?
2. Do you accept the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be, by the Holy Spirit, the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the Church universal, and God's Word to you?
 - What role does the Holy Spirit play in our interpretation of the Scriptures?
 - In what way are the Scriptures the "unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ"?
 - How are the Scriptures "God's Word to you"?
3. Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?
 - List some of what you understand to be the "essential tenets" of the Reformed faith.
 - Do you find any of them in conflict with what you think that "Scripture leads us to believe and do"?
4. Will you fulfill your ministry in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions?
 - What does it mean to you to be obedient to Jesus Christ?
 - What does it mean to you to be under the authority of Scripture?
 - What does it mean to you to be guided by our confessions?

**National Capital Presbytery
Committee on Ministry**

5. Will you be governed by our church's polity, and will you abide by its discipline?
 - What does it mean to you "to be guided by our church's polity"?
 - What does it mean to you "to abide by our church's discipline"?
 - How does the church "discern the will of Christ"?
6. Will you in our own life seek to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, love your neighbors, and work for the reconciliation of the world?
 - What is the hardest part of keeping this vow for you?
7. Do you promise to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church? What is your role as an elder to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church? Is that role different from that of any other member of the church?
 - What do you do when these three (peace, unity, and purity) are in tension?
8. Will you pray for and seek to serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love?
 - What does it mean to you to "serve the people"?
9. Will you be a faithful ruling elder in this commission, serving the people by proclaiming the good news, teaching faith and caring for the people, and in your ministry will you try to show the love and justice of Jesus Christ?
 - How do you see your role as commissioned ruling elder in this particular church?
 - If appropriate, how will you balance your service to the larger church to that of the congregation?
 - How do you balance showing "the love and justice of Jesus Christ"? (Adapted from CRE manual from Coastal Carolina Presbytery)

(Adapted from CRE Manual from Coastal Carolina Presbytery)

- 4) Complete the **Five Examination Interview Essays** (revised 11/16/22). Please limit each essay to a half of page.
1. The Fourth Ordination Question asks, "Will you fulfill your ministry in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scriptures, and be continually guided by our Confessions?" Given that the Confessions are Part I of the Constitution of the PC(USA), what does it mean to you to be guided by our Confessions? List which of the Confessions speak to you the most deeply and why? Is there something in our Confessions that you no longer believe to be true?
 2. What led you to be a part of the Reformed tradition of the PC(USA) and what do you understand to be the "essential tenets" of the Reformed faith?
 3. The Fifth Ordination Question asks, "Will you be governed by our church's polity, and will you abide by its discipline? What does it mean to you to be governed by the polity of the PC(USA)?"
 4. The Seventh Ordination Question asks, "Do you promise to further the peace, unity, and purity of the church?" What do you do when these three (i.e., peace, unity, and purity) are in tension?
 5. With respect to Section G-2.0104 of the Book of Order (Gifts and Qualifications), which of your gifts best serves you in your ministry in the PC(USA)? Which one or two gifts would you be looking for in potential Elders and Deacons to aid in their ministry in the church?

**National Capital Presbytery
Committee on Ministry
Agreement for Commissioned Ruling Elder Relationship for Qualified
Ruling Elders of the PC(USA)**

The following agreement is between _____ and the Session of _____ Presbyterian Church of National Capital Presbytery for the purpose of providing pastoral services for a period beginning _____ and ending on _____. (*Cannot be for more than three years at a time.*)

Accountability

A Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) will continue to be accountable to his/her home session and to National Capital Presbytery through the Committee on Ministry of the Presbytery and will be accountable to the Session of this congregation as concerns his/her ministry within this congregation.

Expectations of the Pastor (*please ☐ check all that apply*)

- ☐ Will lead worship and preach on a regular basis but with the option to have guest ministers on occasion and the session will be responsible for obtaining any supply pastor when this occurs.
- ☐ Will visit sick, shut-ins, new members, and the congregation as is appropriate and as is able with regular work schedule.
- ☐ Will provide leadership and guidance to committees as requested and time permitting.
- ☐ Will enhance spiritual life of the church through pastoral leadership.
- ☐ Will conduct funerals and weddings when called upon.
- ☐ Will administer the sacraments (with COM approval)
- ☐ Will moderate Session and Congregational meetings (with COM approval)
- ☐ Other: (explain) _____

This agreement is for an estimated _____ hours per week including the time to prepare sermons.

Expectations of the Session:

1. Will work collegially with the CRE in the shared ministry of the congregation (*Book of Order*, G-2.0301).
2. Will review the CRE work and compensation annually (*Book of Order*, G-2.0804).

Termination or Extension Provisions/Considerations

1. This agreement may be terminated at any time by the Session or Pastor with 30 days written notice or by action of the Commission on Ministry.
2. This agreement may be extended at the end the agreement for a period of one to three years as agreed upon by both parties. These extensions *must* be approved by the Commission on Ministry.

CRE Agreement

**National Capital Presbytery
Committee on Ministry**

Financial Terms

A Commissioned Ruling Elder shall receive compensation in accordance with the presbytery's Compensation and Personnel Policy for Pastors. The policy may be found on NCP's website under the Documents tab - Committee on Ministry (COM) Documents.

We will provide the following remuneration

Salary _____

Other Benefits/Insurance/SECA _____

Travel (not to exceed) _____ (paid on reimbursement basis)

Vouchered Professional Expenses _____ (paid on reimbursement basis)

TOTAL _____

Sick Leave (explain) _____

Paid Vacation _____
(Must be proportional to the number of Sundays preached/scheduled per month)

Continuing Education Time _____
(Must be proportional to the number of Sundays preached/scheduled per month)

Background Check/Boundary Training

National Capital Presbytery requires the successful completion of the Healthy Boundaries Training course and a background check run by them for all persons serving in a pastoral relationship with one or more of our congregations.

Certification of This Agreement

The compensation and position description shown here was reviewed and approved by the session on _____. (date)

Clerk of Session _____ Date: _____

I have reviewed and am agreeable to the terms of this agreement.

Commissioned Ruling Elder _____ Date: _____

The COM approves this agreement and authorizes _____

☐ Yes ☐ No To Administer the Sacraments

☐ Yes ☐ No To Moderate the Session

beginning _____ (date) until _____ (date)

Commission on Ministry _____ Date: _____

Signed by Chair of appropriate COM