

Policy and Program for Commissioned Ruling Elders (CREs) for the Presbytery of San Jose

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the roles, responsibilities, education, and accountability measures for Commissioned Ruling Elders (CREs). This policy aims to ensure that CREs are well-prepared for their ministry and accountable in their service to the church and community.

Scope

This policy applies to all individuals serving as Commissioned Ruling Elders within The Presbytery of San Jose.

Definitions

- **Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE):** A ruling elder who is commissioned by the Presbytery to serve in a specific pastoral role within a congregation or in a validated ministry.

Role and Responsibilities

CREs are commissioned to perform specific pastoral duties which may include:

- Leading worship and preaching.
- Administering sacraments.
- Providing pastoral care.
- Moderating session meetings.
- Engaging in community outreach and mission activities.
- Performing administrative duties as assigned by the session or Presbytery.

Oversight

The CRE policy and program will be under the oversight of a newly established CRE Subcommittee of the Committee on Ministry (COM). The Subcommittee will also have at least two representatives from the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM).

Education Requirements

To ensure that CREs are well-prepared for their ministry, the following educational requirements are recommended. The specific requirements will be determined in consultation with and approved by the CRE Subcommittee.

1. **Theological Education:** CREs should complete a course of study in Reformed theology, Bible, preaching, worship, sacraments, pastoral care, PC(USA) polity, and church history. This can be accomplished through a seminary, approved lay training programs, or other Presbytery-approved educational institutions.
2. **Practical Training:** CREs should participate in practical training opportunities, such as internships, supervised ministry experiences, and workshops on pastoral skills.

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3. **Continuing Education:** CREs are encouraged to engage in ongoing education through attending conferences, seminars, and additional coursework to stay current with theological and pastoral developments.

Procedure

1. **Discernment and Nomination:** Potential CREs are identified and recommended by their session and must undergo a period of discernment. Following discernment, the session may nominate the individual to undertake the CRE process.
2. **Training:** Applicants must complete the required education and training, and pass an examination by the CRE Subcommittee covering theology, Bible, PC(USA) polity, and pastoral skills.
3. **Examination:** When the CRE Subcommittee believes the Applicant is ready to serve in a specific pastoral role within a congregation or in a validated ministry, it shall make a recommendation to the COM. COM shall interview the Applicant and, if it agrees that that the Applicant is prepared for the particular CRE role, it will deem the Applicant ready for commissioning and report this action to the Presbytery.
4. **Commissioning Service:** Upon favorable recommendation by COM, the church or other organization for which the Applicant will be serving as a CRE will conduct a commissioning service to formally commission the individual as a CRE

Accountability

To maintain high standards of accountability, the following measures are implemented:

1. **Supervision and Support:** CREs will be assigned a mentor or supervisor by the CRE Subcommittee, typically a teaching elder or experienced ruling elder, who will provide guidance, support, and supervision.
2. **Regular Reporting:** CREs are required to submit regular reports to the session and Presbytery (through the CRE Subcommittee) on their ministry activities, challenges, and achievements.
3. **Performance Reviews:** The Presbytery (through the CRE Subcommittee) will conduct annual performance reviews to assess the effectiveness of the CRE's ministry and identify areas for growth and development.
4. **Code of Conduct:** CREs must adhere to a code of conduct that includes maintaining confidentiality, demonstrating ethical behavior, and upholding the values and doctrines of the Presbyterian Church (USA).
5. **Conflict Resolution:** A clear process for addressing conflicts, grievances, and disciplinary issues involving CREs will be established by the Presbytery (through the CRE Subcommittee or the COM).

Review and Renewal

1. **Term of Service:** CREs are commissioned for a specific term, typically renewable every three years, subject to a review by the Presbytery.
2. **Recommissioning:** At the end of each term, the Presbytery will conduct a comprehensive review of the CRE's ministry before deciding on recommissioning for another term.

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Role and Status at Presbytery Meetings

The parity of ruling elders and teaching elders in the life and governance of the governing bodies of the Presbyterian Church (USA), specifically, and in the Reformed traditions, generally, is a significant and essential theological expression of what it means to be a church which dignifies the “priesthood of all believers” and the gifts of all of God’s people. It is understood that: (1) only a CRE who is functionally serving in a congregational ministry as pastor/head of staff, or (2) who is a ruling elder commissioner from a session to Presbytery, shall be accorded the right and privilege of voice and vote in Presbytery. For all other CREs, they shall be accorded the privilege of voice only in Presbytery; such privilege shall be accorded for the duration of their active commission.

Conclusion

The role of a Commissioned Ruling Elder/Commissioned Pastor is vital to the ministry and mission of the Presbyterian Church (USA). By adhering to this policy, we ensure that CREs are well-prepared, supported, and held accountable in their service to God and the church community.

**Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) Equipping
Program**