

**PRESBYTERY OF RIVERSIDE  
COMMISSIONED LOCAL PASTORS / COMMISSIONED LOCAL CHAPLAIN  
Procedures Manual**

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**Introduction & Overview**

**Introduction**

The Presbytery of Riverside is committed to providing the best possible leadership to all churches within its bounds. Teaching Elders ordinarily provide this leadership. However, one additional way of providing leadership is through the use of Commissioned Local Pastors as provided in the Book of Order, G-2.1001

**This Manual**

This manual has been prepared to guide ruling elders seeking to become Commissioned Local Pastors/ Commissioned Local Chaplain and to be a resource for the various committees of the Presbytery in the administration of the CLP program. It includes the procedures and forms developed by the Presbytery of Riverside to carry out the CLP program as outlined in the Book of Order and the Presbytery of Riverside "Policy for Commissioning Local Pastors." A person considering becoming a CLP and those responsible for administering the CLP program should familiarize themselves with the applicable sections in the Book of Order and the policy approved by the Presbytery of Riverside

### **Definition of a Commissioned Local Pastor**

A Commissioned Local Pastor (CLP) is a ruling elder who has been an elder of a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregation for two years or more and a current member of a congregation of the Presbytery of Riverside for a minimum of six months. This person may serve as full time or part time, salaried or volunteer position. He or she has been called by God and affirmed by his or her Session and received appropriate training in accordance with the Book of Order, G-2.1002, and under the supervision of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM). The CLP is commissioned by the Presbytery to serve a particular congregation or validated ministry in the Presbytery of Riverside after being deemed certified ready to be commissioned, invited by the session of a congregation or other entity, recommended by the Committee on Ministry (COM), and approved by the Presbytery.

### **Standards for Commissioned Local Pastor**

Those being considered as CLP s shall follow these standards of faith and Christian life:

1. Belief in Jesus Christ as his or her Lord and Savior and acceptance, understanding of, and faithfulness to the questions and vows of a CLP/CLC. (Book of Order, W-4.4003)
2. Membership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and faithful, regular participation in its worship and service.
3. Demonstrated leadership in the church as a ruling elder.
4. Demonstrated pastoral ability.
5. Commitment to personal spiritual growth through prayer, Bible reading and devotions.
6. Acceptance, understanding of, and faithfulness to the ethical standards of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Presbytery of Riverside.

### **Overview of the CLP Program**

Those persons seeking to become a CLP will follow a different track or program than those seeking ordination as teaching elders. A layperson's ability to preach, teach and lead worship may be seen as a gift of the Spirit developed through experience, practice and formal training.

To further develop the gifts for service in a particular field of ministry, the Presbytery, through the CPM and COM, will guide the CLP candidate through a program of training and preparation for the service. For others who wish to attend training, but do not know how they are called to serve, the CPM and the CLP candidate will work together to prayerfully discern God's call for the individual.

The program track for a CLP is:

### **Seeking Phase**

The individual seeking to become a CLP shall receive endorsement from the session of his or her own church and is evaluated and received by the CPM.

## **Learning Phase**

With the authorization, guidance and support of the CPM, the CLP candidate will engage in study and preparation for service as a CLP.

## **Commissioning Phase**

After completing the program of training, preparation, and discernment with the CPM, and after the CPM determines the CLP candidate is ready to receive a commission to a field of service or congregation, he or she will be recommended to the COM. At the recommendation of the COM and with the approval of the Presbytery, the CLP will be commissioned to a particular congregation or validated ministry.

This manual is divided into three sections, and each section highlights the particular responsibilities of the COM, CPM, or persons in the three phases of the above process. **Familiarity with the entire manual by all those involved is strongly recommended.**

## **CLPs Trained or Commissioned by Other Presbyteries**

If a CLP who has been trained or formally commissioned by another Presbytery seeks to be commissioned to a congregation or other validated ministry in the Presbytery of Riverside, the CPM will evaluate the training program and explore past ministerial experiences of the CLP candidate. The CPM will then interview the CLP candidate to determine if he or she meets the standards established for training CLPs in the Presbytery of Riverside. Any discrepancies of training will be made up at the discretion of the CPM, prior to the recommendation of the CLP candidate to COM for recommendation to a congregation or validated ministry for commissioning by the Presbytery of Riverside.

## **THE SEEKING PHASE**

During this phase, a person, believing that he or she has been called by God to be a Commissioned Local Pastor (CLP), seeks validation of the call by his or her session and then by the Presbytery through the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM). The process of examination followed will be similar to that of those seeking status as Inquirers in preparation for ordination as teaching elders. (Book of Order, G-2.0601).

### **The CLP Candidate:**

- After meeting with the Executive Presbyter or his/her designee, completes the Commissioned Ruling Elder application form and presents this application to his or her Session for endorsement.
- Completes a vocational and psychological assessment; has a background check completed by the Executive Presbyter.
- Meets with the CPM for a review and approval to enter the process.

### **The Session of the Home Church of the CLP:**

- Examines the CLP candidate and recommends him or her to the CPM for further evaluation and preparation toward becoming a CLP;
- Encourages, supports, and prays for the CLP candidate throughout his or her time of preparation for service;
- May offer to provide financial assistance to the CLP candidate for class work or study; and
- May offer opportunities for service and preparation for ministry through working in the congregation under the supervision of the pastor(s).

### **The Presbytery CPM:**

- Provides materials to congregations to help ruling elders consider pursuing CLP training and commissioning.
- Receives and reviews applications from CLP candidates and, if appropriate, guides them through training and preparation for a CLP. The CPM will follow the current process through which it receives and examines those seeking to enroll as Inquirers in preparation for ordination as a teaching elder and in accordance with the requirements of the Book of Order, G-2-0601, and the CPM Manual, including examining the CLP candidate regarding his or her personal faith and motives for seeking the commission.
- The CPM shall secure a criminal and financial background check and a vocational and psychological assessment before the applicant may begin the process.
- The CPM will ask the CLP candidate to address inadequacies in any area before recommending further preparation as a CLP.

Upon satisfactory completion of this phase of seeking and exploration, the CLP candidate will be authorized by the CPM to move onto the next phase of learning and preparation.

## **THE LEARNING PHASE**

During this phase, the CLP candidate will acquire competency and skills in biblical exegesis, Reformed theology and sacraments, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) polity, preaching, leading worship, pastoral care, and teaching under the supervision and direction of the Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM).

The CLP candidate, with the approval of the CPM, may take classes offered by the Presbytery and designated for CLP candidates; may enroll in a designated CLP training program offered by a college, seminary, or another mid council as approved and recommended by the CPM.

Competency in the skills will be demonstrated through a comprehensive written exam and the delivery of a sermon as arranged and administered by the CPM.

**The CLP Candidate:**

- will explore available training options with the approval of the CPM.
- will enroll and begin his or her program of study.

The CLP candidate needs to take the initiative through this phase of the process.

**The Presbytery CPM:**

- Reviews available CLP training programs, other mid councils, seminaries, colleges, etc., and provides an authorized list of available programs to CLP candidate. CPM will review and approve independent study arrangements and other Presbytery-sponsored training programs as requested by a CLP candidate.
- Will meet with the CLP candidate at least annually through this phase to review his or her progress and determine other needs or future plans.
- Will provide a written final examination, hear a sermon preached by the candidate, and interview a candidate as to his/her readiness to be commissioned to a field of service or congregation or validated ministry.

Upon the successful completion of the final exam and interview by the CPM, the CPM will designate that the CLP candidate has been certified ready to be considered for commissioning as a CLP and will notify the COM.

## **THE COMMISSIONING PHASE**

Upon recommendation by the CPM to the COM, the ruling elder so certified may complete a Personal Information Form (PIF) and may be considered for commissioning to a specific congregation or validated ministry as a Commissioned Local Pastor.

This commission shall be valid for a period up to three years as designated by the Session, COM, and the CLP and approved by the Presbytery. It may be renewed at expiration or terminated at any time at the discretion of the Session, the CLP, or COM, with approval of the Presbytery.

The CLP may perform pastoral functions not requiring ordination as a teaching elder, in agreement with the Session such as teaching, visitation of members in home or hospital, visitation of prospective members, supervising Sunday School; leading music, choir, prayer meetings, or study groups; or conducting funerals. If commissioned to a congregation, the CLP will ordinarily be the primary leader of a worship and preacher for the congregation.

Upon the written request of the Session to the COM, and with the recommendation of the mentor and supervisor, the CLP may also be authorized by the Presbytery to carry out other functions allowed in the Book of Order, G-2.1001.

- (a) administer the Lord's Supper
- (b) administer the Sacrament of Baptism
- (c) moderate the session of the congregation under the supervision of, and when invited by, the moderator of the Session appointed by the Presbytery;
- (d) have voice in meetings of the Presbytery;
- (e) have a vote in meetings of the Presbytery;
- (f) perform a service of Christian marriage when invited by the Session or other responsible committee of the Presbytery of Riverside;
- (g) may be appointed by the Presbytery as moderator of the Session to the church to which he or she has been commissioned.

If the CLP is to be commissioned to a validated ministry, rather than a congregation of the Presbytery of Riverside, then the CLP will follow the same procedure through the COM for confirmation of that field of service as a validated ministry as followed by teaching elders. (Book of Order, G-2.0503a and the Committee on Ministry Manual)

#### **The CLP Candidate:**

- May complete a Personal Information Form (PIF) for distribution to the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) or Session of the congregation considering a CLP.
- Will only distribute his or her PIF to congregations in the Presbytery of Riverside as recommended and approved by the COM as an authorized PIF to be used by those seeking to serve as CLP s.
- Will be prepared to interview and preach for sessions or PNCs of the congregation that are considering CLP s.
- Once commissioned to a particular congregation or field service, the CLP shall meet regularly with his or her assigned mentor and supervisor. An annual consultation and review between the CLP and the mentor and supervisor will be reported to the COM.
- The CLP shall participate in continuing education. The CLP may consult with his or her mentor and supervisor for particular recommendations.

#### **The Session (and/or the PNC) of a Congregation Employing a CLP:**

- The Session or Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) will consult with the COM considering the appropriateness of seeking a CLP to serve their congregation or the particular field service.
- The session or PNC reviews PIFs, interviews the CLP candidates, checks references, and through the COM arranges for a neutral pulpit for the CLP candidate if COM wishes to consider commissioning that CLP candidate.

- If the Session, at the recommendation of the PNC, invites the CLP candidate to be employed by the congregation, the Session will draw up a Covenant Agreement between the CLP and the congregation specifying duties to perform, the time expectations, and terms of employment including compensation, benefits, vacation, study leave, etc.
- The Session will then request COM to recommend to the Presbytery that the CLP candidate be commissioned to the congregation or validated ministry as specified in the CLP Covenant Agreement. The Agreement will be reviewed annually by the COM including any subsequent adjustments during the term of the commission.
- The session will request the COM to recommend to the Presbytery that the CLP candidate be authorized to perform certain additional designated responsibilities. (Book of Order, G-2.1001).
- The Presbytery will conduct a “Service of Commissioning” at a Presbytery Assembly meeting.
- The Session will conduct a service of recognition welcoming the CLP to their congregation and acknowledging the Presbytery’s “Service of Commissioning.”
  
- At the conclusion of the initial term of the commission, if the Session of the church and the CLP desire to renew the commission, they will make such a request of the COM three (3) to six (6) months prior to the expiration of the current term. A COM representative will review the commission in a meeting with the CLP, the Session, and the moderator of the Session (if not the CLP), and make a recommendation to COM for action by the Presbytery. This is also true for a CLP serving in a validated ministry.

**The Presbytery COM:**

- Consults with congregations considering the appropriateness of seeking a CLP to serve their congregation and advises congregations calling a CLP on appropriate levels and forms of compensation and benefits.
- Maintains a listing of CLP candidates available to be commissioned by the Presbytery and, when appropriate with a congregation, recommends particular available CLP candidates to the congregation. (Book of Order, G-2.1001).
- Upon request of the Session of the congregation, the COM recommends to the Presbytery that the CLP candidate be commissioned by the Presbytery to the particular congregation or validated ministry, based on the approved Covenant Agreement with the Commissioned Local Pastor.
- Annually reviews the covenant agreement between the CLP and the congregation.
- At the request of the Session, the COM may recommend that the Presbytery authorize a CLP to perform particular additional responsibilities. (Book of Order, G-2.1001). The COM may require some additional training of the CLP prior to recommending the granting of these additional responsibilities.

- Recommends to the Presbytery at the request of the Session that a CLP commission be terminated or renewed when appropriate (Book of Order, G-2.1001)
- Assigns a mentor and supervisor to the CLP and through the mentor and supervisor annually reviews the work of the CLP. (Book of Order, G-2.1001).
- Provides for regular periodic gathering of CLP s serving in congregations for support, education and spiritual enrichment.
- Provides a model Covenant Agreement for use by congregations calling CLP s.
- Provides resources to congregations for services of recognition of the CLP and the commissioning by Presbytery.
- At the conclusion of the initial term of the commission, if the Session of the church and the CLP desires to renew the commission, they will make a request to the COM three (3) to six (6) months prior to expiration for renewal. A COM representative will review the commission in a meeting with the Session, its moderator and the CLP and will make a recommendation to the COM for action by the Presbytery. This is also true for a CLP serving in a validated ministry.

#### **The Presbytery of Riverside:**

- Will act upon the recommendation of the COM to commission or terminate a commission of any CLP to a particular congregation.
- Will provide a “Service of Commissioning” at a meeting of the Presbytery to commission the CLP to that congregation. (Book of Order, G-2.1003; W-4.4003). A “Service of Recognition” will be held at the commissioning church without undue delay.

#### **The Session of the CLP 's Sponsoring Church**

- It is recommended that the session of the sponsoring or home church of the CLP recognize the CLP during a worship service by means of a “Service of Recognition” at a time when his or her congregation is gathered for worship.

#### **The Mentor and Supervisor**

- The mentor and supervisor will be a teaching elder who is a member in good standing of the Presbytery of Riverside and who is appointed by the COM to be in a relationship with the CLP. The mentor and supervisor may be the pastor serving as moderator of the session of the commissioning congregation. When the moderator of the session is not an installed pastor of the commissioning congregation or when the CLP is serving as moderator of the session as approved by the Presbytery, the mentor and supervisor may be another pastor assigned by COM.
- The mentor and supervisor will meet regularly with the CLP, at least annually with the CLP and members of the session of the commissioning congregation to conduct the annual review of the work of the CLP. The results of this annual

review will be communicated to the CLP, the commissioning congregation, and the COM.

### **APPENDIX A: The CLP Training Program**

The training curriculum is arranged under five marks of the church drawn from Scripture. These five marks are worship, service, discipleship, belonging and witnessing. Each of these marks is necessary for the church to fulfill its calling to be the Church of Jesus Christ and the body of God's believers. In addition, the category of "pastoring" has been added to cover administrative and ethical issues of serving as a CLP in a congregation. The five categories and the courses that shall help lead a potential CLP to an understanding of the role of the church are:

Worship	-	Preaching and Liturgy, Worship and Sacraments
Service	-	PC (U.S.A.) Mission, Pastoral Care, Stewardship
Discipleship	-	Teaching, Faith Development
Belonging	-	Old Testament, New Testament, Church History
Witnessing	-	Reformed Theology, Evangelism
Pastoring	-	Polity, Pastoral and Personal Boundaries, Internship

CPM will provide resources (seminaries, on-line programs leading to what's often called a Certificate of Ministry Studies, internship, etc.) for completing the educational requirements. We will work with the candidate for tailoring their learning and study program based on their educational and ministry needs.

The CLP and CLC shall take the Sexual Misconduct Prevention Training of the presbytery during the Learning Phase and that training shall be renewed every three years.

Before starting the CLP training process and the first year of study, each student shall participate in career counseling. The cost will ordinarily be shared by the student, the congregation of membership and the presbytery. Upon completion, the results of this experience are to be released to the CPM.