

COMMITTEE ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY HANDBOOK

Guide for Ruling Elders to become qualified in Mission Presbytery to receive a commission from the Commission on Ministry

Section One: Purpose

- I. As there were in Old Testament times elders for the government of the people, so the New Testament church provided persons with particular gifts to share in discernment of God's Spirit and governance of God's people. The ministry of Ruling Elders includes strengthening and nurturing the faith and life of God's people in fidelity to the Word of God (*Book of Order*, G-2.0301).

There are circumstances when it is appropriate for a Ruling Elder (RE) to provide pastoral service at the request of the presbytery (*Book of Order*, G-2.1001). In such cases, the CPM provides preparation for a RE to serve a congregation (*Book of Order*, G-2.1002). Upon successful completion of preparation and examination, the RE is ready to receive a commission from the Commission on Ministry (COM) (*Book of Order*, G-2.1002 & G-2.1003).

Section Two: Process for Preparation and Instruction

- I. To begin the process, a RE shall meet with the pastor and/or session of the church in which they are a member to discuss the motives for seeking a commission.
 - a. The session shall determine if an endorsement is appropriate. If so, the session shall complete and submit the endorsement form to the Stated Clerk of Mission Presbytery (see "Checklist for CPM Paperwork" on the website of Mission Presbytery under Committee on Preparation for Ministry).
 - b. Before a meeting with the CPM is scheduled, the RE shall also provide to the Stated Clerk at least one month in advance of the scheduled meeting:
 - A one-page statement of faith.
 - A report of a psychological evaluation taken within the past three years from a CPM approved source. Permission must be given by the RE for the CPM to receive the evaluation.
 - If applicable, documentation of a previous commission.
 - If applicable, all education and training from the institution, instructor or presbytery that provided the education and training including these ten areas: Old Testament, New Testament, Church History, Reformed Theology, PC(USA) polity, Worship and preaching, Pastoral Care, Christian Education, Church management and History/Ethnicity of Mission Presbytery.

- c. At the meeting with the CPM, the committee (or sub-committee) and the RE will discuss all pertinent material along with reasons for seeking a commission. Following discussion, the committee will determine whether to enroll the RE. If so, the CPM will assign a liaison to the RE.
 - d. Because there are various types of pastoral service, it is important for the RE to be knowledgeable and proficient in several areas of ministry. To that end, a RE shall provide satisfactory completion of the following coursework in these ten areas: Old Testament, New Testament, Church History, Reformed Theology, PC(USA) polity, Worship and preaching, Pastoral Care, Christian Education, Church management and History/Ethnicity of Mission Presbytery. Ordinarily, coursework is taken through a CPM approved seminary or program.
- II. The RE shall have an annual consultation with her/his liaison. Failure to have an annual consultation may result in the RE being removed from this CPM process.
 - III. When all necessary requirements are completed, the RE is ready for Final Assessment which is an evaluation of readiness to receive a commission from the COM.
 - a. Before meeting with the CPM for Final Assessment, the RE shall provide to the Stated Clerk of Mission Presbytery **at least one month in advance of the scheduled meeting**:
 - An updated one-page statement of faith.
 - Evidence of satisfactory completion of required coursework.
 - Copy of a sermon to be preached before the committee.
 - Evidence of completion of a workshop/seminar/class on professional boundaries and ethics which includes sexual ethics and standards of conduct for officers in the PC(USA).
 - A resume.
 - A current criminal background check on file with Mission Presbytery (contact the Stated Clerk).
 - b. At Final Assessment, the RE and the committee will discuss all pertinent material. The RE will preach a sermon before the committee.
 - c. Upon successful Final Assessment, the CPM will report to the COM that the RE has met Mission Presbytery's RE requirements and is qualified to receive a commission. Please remember that any commission is authorized by the COM and not the CPM.

Section Three: Miscellaneous

- I. Responsibility of the RE.
 - a. While the CPM will provide oversight and care for the RE, it is the RE who is responsible for their program. This includes taking initiative for all phases of the program including regular conversation with their CPM liaison.

II. Finances.

- a. Ordinarily, the cost of the psychological evaluation is shared equally between the RE, the church where a RE is a member and the CPM (normally one-third for each party).
- b. Ordinarily, the cost of the required coursework is shared between the RE and the church where a RE is a member. The RE may request a scholarship from Mission Presbytery to help with this expense if and when scholarship money is available.