

**Manual for Commissioned Pastors (CPs)**  
[Formerly known as Commissioned Lay Pastors (CLPs)  
and Commissioned Ruling Elders (CREs)]

This manual has been prepared to guide Ruling Elders seeking to become Commissioned Pastors and to be a resource for the various committees of the Presbytery in the administration of the CP program. It includes the policies, procedures, and forms developed by the Presbytery of Chicago to carry out the CP program as outlined in the *Book of Order* and the Presbytery of Chicago “Policy for Commissioning Pastors.” A person considering becoming a CP and those responsible for administering the CP program should familiarize themselves with the applicable sections in the *Book of Order* and the policy approved by the Presbytery of Chicago.

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## **Introduction & Overview**

### **Introduction**

The Presbytery of Chicago is committed to providing the best possible leadership to all churches within its bounds. Ministers of Word and Sacraments ordinarily provide this leadership. However, one additional way of providing leadership is through the use of Commissioned Pastors (CPs). The Presbytery of Chicago has developed its CP Program in accordance with the provisions in the *Book of Order* (G-2.10).

The purpose of the CP Program is to prepare and commission Ruling Elders who have been trained for preaching and pastoral commissions at places of need within the Presbytery. The Manual for Commissioned Pastors provides guidelines to attract, discover, train, counsel and support qualified Ruling Elders to provide leadership, nurturing and service to member congregations and other service opportunities within Chicago Presbytery.

The Presbytery has designated the Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) to prepare those called to serve as Commissioned Pastors, and so the CPM shall evaluate the effectiveness of the training.

The CPM is responsible for the selection of applicants and the training and the examination of candidates. The CPM is also responsible for approving the candidate as ready to accept a position as a Commissioned Pastor. The Commission on Ministry (COM) is responsible for authorizing the placement and commissioning.

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

A Commissioned Pastor (CP) is a Ruling Elder who has been a member of a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregation for six months or more and is currently a member of a congregation of the Presbytery of Chicago. This person may serve as a CP in full time or part time, salaried or volunteer positions. 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 Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM). The CP is commissioned by the Presbytery to serve a particular congregation or validated ministry in the Presbytery of Chicago after being deemed certified ready to be commissioned, invited by the session of a congregation or other entity, recommended by the Commission on Ministry (COM), and approved by the Presbytery.

### **Standards for Commissioned Pastors**

Those being considered as CPs 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 CP. (*Book of Order*, W-4.0404)
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 Chicago.

### **Outline of the CP Program**

Those persons seeking to become a CP will follow a different track or program than those seeking ordination as Minister of Word and Sacrament. A CP'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 CP 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 CP candidate will work together to prayerfully discern God's call for the individual.

The program track for a CP is:

1. **Seeking Phase:** The individual seeking to become a CP receives endorsement from the session of his or her own church and is evaluated and received by the CPM.
2. **Learning Phase:** With the authorization, guidance and support of the CPM, the CP candidate will engage in study and preparation for service as a CP.
3. **Commissioning Phase:** After completing the program of training, preparation, and discernment with the CPM, and after the CPM determines the CP 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 CP may be commissioned to a particular congregation or validated ministry.

Each step of the program has 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.*

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

If a CP 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 Chicago, the CPM will evaluate the training program and explore past ministerial experiences of the CP candidate. The CPM will then interview the CP candidate to determine if he or she meets the standards established for training CPs in the Presbytery of Chicago. Any discrepancies of training will be made up at the discretion of the CPM, prior to the recommendation of the CP candidate to COM for recommendation to a congregation or validated ministry for commissioning by the Presbytery of Chicago.

## **The Seeking Phase**

During this phase a Ruling Elder, believing that he or she has been called by God to be a Commissioned Pastor (CP), seeks validation of the call by his or her session and then by the Presbytery through the Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM). (*Book of Order*, G-2.0601).

### **The CP Candidate**

- Has been a member of a PC(USA) congregation within the Presbytery of Chicago for at least six months.
- Has been ordained a Ruling Elder within the PC(USA) for at least two years.
- After meeting with the Executive Presbyter or his/her designee, the candidate completes the Commissioned Pastor application form and presents this application to his or her Session for endorsement.
- Completes a vocational and psychological assessment at LeaderWise, New Brighton MN, [www.leaderwise.org](http://www.leaderwise.org) (these assessments can be taken remotely via the internet).
- Has a background check completed through the Presbytery of Chicago; ensuring the Executive Presbyter has seen this report.
- Meets with the CPM for a review of his or her application, and approval to enter the process.

### **The Session of the Church of Membership of the CP**

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

### **The CPM**

- Provides materials to congregations to help Ruling Elders consider pursuing CP training and commissioning.
- Receives and reviews applications from CP candidates and, if appropriate, guides them through training and preparation for a CP.
- The CPM will examine the CP candidate regarding his or her personal faith and motives for seeking the commission. (Similar to Inquirers seeking to be Ministers of Word and Sacrament, *Book of Order*, G-2.0603, G-2.1002)
- Confidentially interviews the references included in the application concerning the applicant's qualifications, character, and aptitude for pastoral service. The CPM may also initiate inquiries to others who may be familiar with the candidate.
- The CPM shall help those applying to the CP program secure a background check through the Chicago Presbytery and a vocational and psychological assessment by LeaderWise before the applicant may begin the process.
- The CPM will ask the CP candidate to address inadequacies in any area before recommending further preparation as a CP.

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

## **The Learning Phase**

During this phase, the CP 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 Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) (*Book of Order*, G-2.1002).

The CP candidate, with the approval of the CPM, may take classes offered by the Presbytery and designated for CP candidates; may enroll in a designated CP training program offered by a college, seminary, the Synod of Lincoln Trails, or another governing body 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 CP Candidate**

- **The CP candidate needs to take the initiative through this phase of the process.**
- will explore available training options with the approval of the CPM.
- will enroll and begin his or her program of study.
- may with their CPM liaison find an appropriate internship program.

### **The Session of the Church of Membership of the CP**

- Meets with the CP candidate annually through her/his course of study to review progress and to encourage, support, and pray for the CP.
- May offer to provide financial assistance to the CP candidate for class work or study
- May offer opportunities for service and preparation for ministry through working in the congregation under the supervision of the pastor(s).

### **The CPM**

- Reviews available CP training programs from the Synod of Lincoln Trails, other governing bodies, seminaries, colleges, etc., and provides an authorized list of available programs to CP candidate.
- CPM will review and approve independent study arrangements and other Presbytery-sponsored training programs as requested by a CP candidate.
- Will meet with the CP candidate at least annually through this phase to review his or her progress and determine other needs or future plans.
- May set up an internship or find appropriate internship for the CP candidate. Ordinarily a one-year internship (either paid or volunteer) will be required.
  - The internship cannot be at the candidate's church of membership.

- The candidate must spend on average three Sundays a month with the internship Church.
- The internship responsibilities should include opportunities that will prepare the candidate for serving as a commissioned pastor.
- The CPM shall receive separate written reports from the candidate and her or his internship supervisor at the conclusion of the internship. Also at the conclusion of the internship an interview with the internship supervisor (and others as appropriate) shall take place.
- 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.
- CPM shall schedule the examination a time, place, and location and in a manner determined by the CPM.
  - The examination shall include, but not be limited to, questioning on the following items:
    - a statement of faith
    - an exegesis on a particular biblical passage (selected by CPM)
    - a sermon (preached to the CPM) and a homiletical rationale based on the selected scripture reading.
  - Input may also be offered or requested from the student's mentor or supervisor.
- Based on this discussion and examination:
  - The CPM may request that the material be revisited or rewritten.
  - The CPM may approve the candidate's readiness and preparedness to be a Commissioned Pastor.
- Upon the successful completion of the final exam and interview by the CPM, the CPM will designate that the CP candidate has been certified ready to be considered for commissioning as a CP and will notify the COM.

## The Commissioning Phase

Upon recommendation by the Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) to the Commission on Ministry (COM), the Ruling Elder so certified to be a CP may complete a Personal Information Form (PIF) and may be considered for commissioning to a specific congregation or validated ministry as a Commissioned Pastor. **It is the Presbytery of Chicago's practice not to assign CP's to their congregation of current membership.**

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

The CP may perform pastoral functions not requiring ordination as a Minister of Word and Sacrament, in agreement with the Session such as teaching, visitation of members in home or hospital, visitation of prospective members, supervising Sunday school, leading music, prayer meetings, or study groups or conducting funerals. If commissioned to a congregation, the CP 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 CP 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 Chicago;

If the CP is to be commissioned to a validated ministry, rather than a congregation of the Presbytery of Chicago, then the CP will follow the same procedure through the COM for confirmation of that field of service as a validated ministry as followed by Ministers of the Word and Sacrament. (*Book of Order*, G-2.0503a and the *Commission on Ministry Manual*)

### The CP Candidate

- May complete a Personal Information Form (PIF) for distribution to the Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) or Session of the congregation considering a CP.
- Will only distribute his or her PIF to congregations in the Presbytery of Chicago as recommended and approved by the COM as an authorized PIF to be used by those seeking to serve as CPs.
- Will be prepared to interview and preach for Sessions or PNCs of the congregations that are considering CPs.
- Once commissioned to a particular congregation or field service, the CP shall meet regularly with his or her assigned mentor (assigned to him or her by the COM) and

supervisor (*Book of Order*, G-2.1004). An annual consultation and review between the CP and the mentor and supervisor will be reported to the COM.

- The CP shall participate in continuing education. The CP may consult with his or her mentor and supervisor for particular recommendations.

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

- The Session or Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) will consult with the COM considering the appropriateness of seeking a CP to serve their congregation and or the particular validated ministry.
- The Session or PNC reviews PIFs, interviews the CP candidates, checks references, and through the COM arranges for a neutral pulpit for the CP candidate if COM wishes to consider commissioning that CP candidate.
- If the Session, at the recommendation of the PNC, invites the CP candidate to be employed by the congregation, the Session will draw up a Covenant Agreement between the CP 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 CP candidate be commissioned to the congregation or validated ministry as specified in the CP 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 CP 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 (*Book of Order*, G-2.1003).
- The Session will conduct a service of recognition welcoming the CP 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 CP 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 CP, the Session, and the moderator of the Session (if not the CP), and make a recommendation to COM for action by the Presbytery. This is also true for a CP serving in a validated ministry.

### **The Presbytery COM**

- Consults with congregations considering the appropriateness of seeking a CP to serve their congregation and advises congregations calling a CP on appropriate levels and forms of compensation and benefits.
- Maintains a listing of CP candidates available to be commissioned by the Presbytery and, when appropriate with a congregation, recommends particular available CP candidates to the congregation.
- Upon request of the Session of the congregation, the COM recommends to the Presbytery that the CP candidate be commissioned by the Presbytery to the particular congregation or validated ministry, based on the approved Covenant Agreement with the Commissioned Pastor.
- Annually reviews the covenant agreement between the CP and the congregation.

- At the request of the Session, the COM may recommend that the Presbytery authorize a CP to perform particular additional responsibilities. (*Book of Order*, G-2.1001). The COM may require some additional training of the CP prior to recommending the granting of these additional responsibilities.
- Recommends to the Presbytery at the request of the Session that a CP commission be terminated or renewed when appropriate (*Book of Order*, G-2.1002, G-2.1004)
- Assigns a mentor and supervisor to the CP and through the mentor and supervisor annually reviews the work of the CP. (*Book of Order*, G-2.1004)
- Provides for regular periodic gathering of CPs serving in congregations for support, education and spiritual enrichment.
- Provides a model Covenant Agreement for use by congregations calling CPs.
- Provides resources to congregations for services of recognition of the CP and the commissioning by Presbytery.
- At the conclusion of the initial term of the commission, if the Session of the church and the CP 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 CP and will make a recommendation to the COM for action by the Presbytery. This is also true for a CP serving in a validated ministry.

#### **The Presbytery of Chicago**

- Will act upon the recommendation of the COM to commission or terminate a commission of any CP to a particular congregation.
- Will provide a “Service of Commissioning” at a meeting of the Presbytery to commission the CP to that congregation. (*Book of Order*, G-2.1003; W-4.04.). A “Service of Recognition” will be held at the commissioning church without undue delay.

#### **The Session of the CP's Church of Membership**

- It is recommended that the Session of current church of membership of the CP recognize the CP 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 Minister of Word and Sacrament who is a member in good standing of the Presbytery of Chicago and who is appointed by the COM to be in a relationship with the CP. 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 CP 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 CP, and at least annually with the CP and members of the Session of the commissioning congregation to conduct the annual review of the work of the CP. The results of this annual review will be communicated to the CP, the commissioning congregation, and the COM.

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

The CP training program is provided by and in conjunction with the Synod of Lincoln Trails. However, other programs may also be approved. We recognize that the shape of the program is fluid and changing as new or improved teaching techniques are added.

In general, the training curriculum is arranged under five marks of the church drawn from scripture. These five marks are worship, service, discipline, 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 CP in a congregation. The six categories and the courses that shall help lead a potential CP to an understanding of the role of the church are:

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

Other learning experiences, such as those found in Synod events, conferences, and training workshops are encouraged.

Before starting the CP training process and the first year of study, each student shall participate in an evaluation done by LeaderWise based in Minnesota. This assessment can be done remotely. **The cost will ordinarily be shared by the student and the congregation of which they are a member.** Upon completion, the results of this experience are to be released to the CPM.

## **Appendix B: Application for Enrollment**

### **Note to Applicant**

The purpose of the questions in this application is to provide the Session and the Presbytery's Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) with background information that will help them get to know you. Because there is great variety in age and experience of persons making application, this questionnaire is purposely broad in scope. Be as accurate and candid as you can. Please type or write legibly, using extra paper as needed to provide information you feel will give the most complete representation of yourself. This information will be used as a basis for mutual discussion.

After completing the application, make a copy for yourself and submit the original to the Clerk or Moderator of the Session of your home church. Additionally, forward a copy of the reference questions to each of your references asking them to attach their responses (using more paper as needed) and submit to the Commission on Preparation for Ministry.

Once the Session endorses the Elder, the original copy of all paperwork must be forwarded to:

The Presbytery of Chicago  
Attn: CPM, Commissioned Pastors Program  
815 W. Van Buren, Suite #500, Chicago, IL 60607-3506

**Application for Enrollment**  
**Background Information for Session**  
**and Commission on Preparation for Ministry (CPM)**

Applicant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: Home \_\_\_\_\_

Work \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation/Place of Employment: \_\_\_\_\_

**Academic Background**

List the academic institutions you have attended, beginning with high school and complete the information requested:

<u>Institution</u>	<u>Dates Attended</u>	<u>Program or Major</u>	<u>Diploma or Degree</u>
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Describe any previous experience in preaching or Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) Training:

**Occupational History**

List the three most recent full-time or part-time positions in which you have been employed and also provide the following information: job title, dates of employment, aspect most enjoyed, aspect most disliked.

1. Current employment:

2. Next most recent:

3. Second most recent:

**Church History**

Date and place of baptism:

Date and place of profession of faith:

Church Membership:

Date joined:

Date ordained an elder:

List other churches where you have been a member.

List areas of involvement in your local church both as a participant and leader. Indicate areas of leadership.

List areas of involvement in Presbytery, Synod or General Assembly.

List voluntary services, civic or social organizations of which you are or have been a member. Indicate your extent of participation and your role.

Have you ever resigned from a congregation or as a member of a session? If so, what were the circumstances?

List any factors that may place limits on your ability to receive training or to serve as a Commissioned Pastor:

**Questions for Reflection**

Write a response to each of the following. These responses should be attached to this application.

1. In one or two paragraphs, describe yourself as a person.
2. Describe briefly what it means to you to be a Commissioned Pastor. What has motivated you to consider this program?
3. Write a brief statement of your personal faith (approximately 300-500 words). Your statement should describe (at minimum) what you believe about God as the Trinity and your relationship to each person of the Trinity.
4. What does it mean to you to be a Presbyterian?
5. Describe your current spiritual journey, spiritual practices, prayer life, and disciplines.
6. Comment on your interests, hobbies and stress-relieving activities.

**References**

Please list three people who will serve as references. One should be your pastor or a pastor within the Presbytery of Chicago:

1. Name:  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Name  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Name  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Please ask your references to complete the “Reference Form for Applicant to Commissioned Pastor Program” (see next page).

**Reference Form for Applicant to Commissioned Pastor Program**

Background Information for (applicant's name) \_\_\_\_\_

Reference Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of time you have known the applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

The person named above is seeking admission to the Commissioned Pastor Program. The Commission on Preparation for Ministry would appreciate your candid response to the following questions:

1. To what extent does the applicant adhere to Christ's teachings?
2. What is your experience of the applicant's commitment to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?
3. What special gifts, talents and skills does the applicant exhibit for service as a Commissioned Pastor?
4. What is the most recent example of the applicant's service to the church?
5. If the applicant were your Commissioned Pastor, what specific areas would you wish him or her to improve?
6. If you are a Minister of the Word and Sacrament and a member of the Presbytery of Chicago, would you be willing to serve as the applicant's mentor, if asked?

Please write your responses using the amount of space you feel necessary. Send your responses directly to the Committee on Preparation for Ministry at the following address:

The Presbytery of Chicago  
Attn: CPM, Commissioned Pastors Program  
815 W. Van Buren, Suite #500, Chicago, IL 60607-3506

**Session Evaluation and Recommendation**

The Session of \_\_\_\_\_ Presbyterian Church of \_\_\_\_\_,

met with \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_, and submits  
the following report:

The Session

\_\_\_\_\_ **endorses** the applicant to be trained by the Presbytery as a Commissioned Pastor  
\_\_\_\_\_ **does not endorse** the applicant to be trained as a Commissioned Pastor

This report was prepared for the Session by the Clerk:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name Phone Date

Attested by the Moderator:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name Phone Date

The Session will copy and mail completed application and attachments to the Commission on  
Preparation for Ministry at the following address:

The Presbytery of Chicago  
Attn: CPM, Commissioned Pastors Program  
815 W. Van Buren, Suite #500, Chicago, IL 60607-3506

## **Appendix C: Policy for Commissioned Pastors**

### **CHICAGO PRESBYTERY Policy for Commissioned Pastors**

#### **AUTHORITY**

The Commissioned Pastor (CP) Program of the Presbytery of Chicago has been developed in accordance with the provisions in the Book of Order (G-2.10). The purpose of the Program is to prepare and commission Ruling Elders for preaching and pastoral commissions at places of need within the Presbytery. The Policy for Commissioned Pastors provides guidelines to attract, discover, train, counsel and support qualified individuals to provide leadership, nurturing and service to member congregations.

#### **COMMISSIONED PASTOR**

A Commissioned Pastor is a full-time or part-time, salaried or volunteer person interested in ministry, affirmed by his or her Session, and trained and commissioned by Presbytery to be a preacher or pastor for a particular parish or congregation. CPs are not ordained ministers. They are commissioned only to a particular congregation for a specific term at the end of which the commission ends. Therefore: 1) They shall follow a separate “track” from those seeking ordination. The track presented is Seeker, Learner, and Commissioned. 2) Requirements and preparation are different from ordination, not requiring the same level of knowledge and training. A person’s ability to preach, teach and lead worship is seen as much as gifts of the Spirit developed through experience and practice as academic training. Consequently, we present competency more than credentials as a basis for commissioning. This competency is to be understood in light of the place of local commissioning and not of the whole church.

#### **COMMISSIONED PASTOR PROGRAM**

The Presbytery has designated the CPM to prepare those called to serve as Commissioned Pastors and shall evaluate the effectiveness of the training. The purpose is to prepare lay members of the Presbytery to preach, teach and lead worship as well as to develop skills to serve as a resource for other church programs.

The CPM is responsible for the selection of applicants and the training and the examination of candidates. The CPM is also responsible for approving the candidate ready to accept a position as a Commissioned Pastor. The Committee on Ministry is responsible for authorizing the placement and commissioning. The CPM and the COM consider the CP Program a further means of fulfilling its commitment to see that all churches within the bounds of the Presbytery of Chicago have the best possible leadership in ministry.

## **QUALIFICATIONS**

Normally, the qualifications for acceptance into the program shall be that the individual:

- senses that he or she has a call to ministry
- is a member in good standing of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- is an ordained elder for at least two years
- holds a baccalaureate degree or its equivalent. The CPM shall determine appropriate credit for post high school course work and life experience.
- possesses recognized leadership ability
- is endorsed by his or her local Session
- is recommended by three references, at least one of whom is an ordained minister of the Word and Sacrament and a member of the Presbytery of Chicago
- is willing to accept the care and guidance of a mentor appointed by the presbytery
- submits a completed application that provides responses to all stated questions.

## **APPLICATION**

Qualified applicants must complete all sections of the “Commissioned Pastor Program Application for Enrollment”. The applicant must also obtain the endorsement of their home Session. Each applicant shall be interviewed and recommended by CPM for acceptance into the CP program.

## **EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

All developmental and administrative aspects of the education of Commissioned Pastors shall be the responsibility of the CPM. The CP curriculum shall be designed to prepare pastors to lead congregations in all aspects of service to God and each other. The student shall be instructed in Bible, Reformed Theology and Sacraments, Presbyterian Polity, preaching, leading worship, pastoral care and teaching (G-2.1002).

## **EXAMINATION**

At the successful completion of all the coursework and following the desires of the student, an examination of the student shall be arranged by the CPM. The examination shall be scheduled at a time, place, and location and in a manner determined by the CPM. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, questioning on the following items:

1. a statement of faith
2. an exegesis on a particular biblical passage (selected by CPM)
3. a sermon and a homiletical rationale based on the selected scripture reading.

The material shall be reviewed by the CPM and discussed with the candidate. In addition, the scripture will be read and preached to the CPM. Input may also be offered or requested from the student’s mentor or supervisor. Based on this discussion and examination:

1. The CPM may request that the material be revisited or rewritten.
2. The CPM may approve the candidate’s readiness and preparedness to be a Commissioned Pastors.

After the CPM has approved the candidate as ready to be commissioned, the candidate may actively seek a position as a Commissioned Pastor. If commissioned, the Commissioned Pastor comes under the supervision of the Presbytery through the COM, as provided for in the Book of Order (G-2.1004).

### **COMMISSIONING**

The Presbytery shall do the commissioning of Commissioned Pastors. Ordinarily, this commissioning shall take place at a stated meeting of the Presbytery. If other circumstances warrant, and if Presbytery approves, the commissioning may take place at another time and place. Refer to the Book of Order (W-4.0404) for questions asked at the time of commissioning.

### **RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

The Commissioned Pastor shall work under the supervision of a mentor assigned by the COM and who is an ordained Minister of the Word and Sacrament. The Commissioned Pastor shall comply with the polity of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the by-laws of the church(s) being served. The Commissioned Pastor is expected to participate in continuing educational training experiences while commissioned. (Book of Order, G-2.1004)

## **Appendix D: Quick Reference CP Process Step by Step**

Note: This is not a complete list, and anyone going through the process should always reference the full steps in the CP Manual. This is merely guidance for a quick overview of the process.

1. A person who has been an ordained Ruling Elder for at least two years and who is currently actively involved as a member in a congregation that is part of the Presbytery of Chicago (for longer than 6 months) feels the call to serve the church in a more pastoral way.
2. The person discusses this with their pastor, and discerns God's calling.
3. With the blessing of their pastor, the person sets up a meeting with the Executive Director of the Chicago Presbytery to discuss the CP process.
4. The person fills out the Application for Enrollment for the CP process.
5. The person shares the Application for Enrollment with the Session of their home church and receives their approval.
6. The person shares the Application for Enrollment with CPM of the Chicago Presbytery and receives their approval. They are assigned an advisor and a small group.
7. The advisor and the person develop a training schedule and education plan.
8. Until the plan is done, the person has annual meetings with the small group of the CPM to check in on their process.
9. Once the education plan is complete, the CPM schedules and plans a final examination.
10. After the exam and the approval of the CPM, the person is referred to the COM to find a congregation or validated ministry setting that would be appropriate.