

Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) Training Plan Revised May 2024

Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to provide a comprehensive overview of requirements and resources for applicants to the Presbytery's Commissioned Ruling Elder preparation program. The intention is for the applicant to meet initially with representatives from COM and CPM to clarify the applicant's intentions, motivations, and goals so that a tailored framework can be put in place using the elements provided in this document.

This process includes the following elements:

- CRE Training Process Requirements (pages 2-5)
- CRE in Training Relationship to the Commission on Ministry (page 6)
- CRE Transcript (pages 7-8)
- CRE Application Form CRET-1A, biographical information, discernment questions, and references
- CRE Application Form CRET-1B, Session Endorsement
- CRE Application Form CRET-1C, completed by references
- CRE CPM/COM Initial Interview Form and Covenant CRET-2A and CRET-2B
- CRE Annual Reflection Form CRET-3
- CRE Report on Consultation Form CRET-4
- CRE Readiness for Commissioning Form CRET-5 – RE must prepare a statement of faith and update their spiritual autobiography as needed

Presbytery of Carlisle Committee on Preparation for Ministry
COMMISSIONED RULING ELDER TRAINING PROCESS REQUIREMENTS

The requirements for Commissioned Ruling Elders (CREs) are found in the PC(USA) *Book of Order*, G-2.10. These requirements govern this policy and all guidelines and procedures established under it. Those who feel called by God to the ministry of being a CRE may have similar desires to serve Christ's church as do Ministers of Word and Sacrament. In the case of a CRE, various circumstances or limiting factors may necessitate a different preparation. Even so, their preparation must align with Ministers of Word and Sacrament, for they ultimately will have most of the same duties. While CREs are not required to complete advanced theological or divinity degrees, or complete PC(USA) ordination exams, they are a gift from God to the connectional church and deserve the presbytery's full support.

BEGINNING THE PROCESS WITH CPM

1. A Ruling Elder (RE) who senses being called by God to become a CRE must be endorsed by the Session of the particular congregation of which he/she is a member.
 - a. **REQUIRED:** Application Form CRET-1A (completed by applicant)
 - b. **REQUIRED:** Session Endorsement Form CRET-1B (completed by Session)
 - c. **REQUIRED:** Three personal references (Form CRET-1C completed by references)
2. The RE will be interviewed by the presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry (CPM) and Commission on Ministry (COM), which have oversight and authority over training and placement/commissioning, respectively.
 - a. **REQUIRED:** CPM's Interview Form (CRET-2A) with candidate's agreement to share all transcripts and feedback with CPM. The form will be completed by the applicant.
 - b. **REQUIRED:** CPM/COM's Interview Form (CRET-2B) once the trainee has been accepted into the program. The form will be completed by CPM/COM.
3. The CPM will assign a Minister of Word and Sacrament (MWS) or Ruling Elder (RE) member of CPM to be a Liaison. The Liaison will make themselves available to answer questions and help the RE navigate the process through the duration of their training. Opportunities for connection may include:
 - Once a month phone calls, Zooms, or meetings
 - Occasional / spontaneous connections to address timely concerns
 - Face-to-face meetings for intentional reflection, review, assessment, affirmation, including an annual consultation

The Liaison is the person in the presbytery who not only is most directly aware of where the Ruling Elder is in the training process, but also is the person most committed to supporting them in prayer until a commission to a congregation is established. If there are particular challenges, conflicts, or new revelations along the way, it is the responsibility of the Liaison to apprise CPM and seek additional support as necessary.

The Liaison can also encourage the *home congregation* to support the Ruling Elder in some or all of the following ways:

- **Commissioning during a service of worship**
- **A Session advocate/liaison**
- **Encouraging cards or other communication at pivotal times**

- **Regular checking in about coursework and field experiences**

The Liaison will also work with 2-3 other members of CPM to support the trainee. The full team (Liaison plus 2-3 others) will meet with the trainee twice per year.

- a. **REQUIRED:** Annual Reflection Form CRET-3 (completed by CRE in training) and Consultation Report Form CRET-4 (completed by CPM liaison and CRE in training).

EDUCATION

4. The RE will register for and successfully complete coursework in these areas:

- a. **REQUIRED:** Completion of courses in the areas of
 - i. Old Testament Bible*
 - ii. New Testament Bible*
 - iii. Reformed Theology*
 - iv. Preaching*
 - v. Reformed Worship and Sacraments
 - vi. Presbyterian Polity
 - vii. Pastoral Care
 - viii. Teaching

Courses are available in person, online and/or in a hybrid format through various theological institutions and certified programs as approved by CPM including, but not limited to: Princeton, Pittsburgh, Dubuque, APCE's Certified Christian Educator Coursework, Redstone Presbytery's IPLF, Huntingdon Presbytery's CLP Training, or Northumberland Presbytery's Commissioned Pastor Training. **Variances to the above-listed courses will be considered on an individual basis.** The education completed by REs trained in other presbyteries will be evaluated case-by-case starting with the Application for Transfer (see Form CRE-T).

5. The RE will undergo a full psychological evaluation through an approved testing facility, such as Samaritan Counseling in Lancaster. The cost of this (approximately \$1,800) is covered by the Presbytery.
 - a. **REQUIRED:** Psychological evaluation results (provided by testing facility)
6. The RE will complete Boundary Training, provided by the presbytery (usually offered in February) or another viable entity.
 - a. **REQUIRED:** Documentation signifying completion of Boundary Training

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

7. **FIELD EDUCATION** In coordination with CPM, the RE will participate in field education experiences of roughly 200 hours as tracked by the RE. It will be under the supervision of a congregation's Pastor/Head of Staff or someone from CPM (their Liaison or otherwise). Potential components are listed below in the following areas: Worship Leadership and Preaching; Pastoral Care; and Church Administration/Session Leadership. Please note this list names tasks and functions that are a regular part of ministry as a CRE and is not meant to be a comprehensive to-do list for the CRE in training. As Presbyterians, we understand learning is a lifelong endeavor. The RE shall review the list and identify opportunities for personal growth and bear in mind a needed growth area may not be listed below. The hope is the Supervising Pastor and appropriate Committees will offer the Ruling Elder (RE) opportunities to observe, participate in,

or assume solo responsibility for as appropriate as well as time to reflect upon and discuss with the Supervising Pastor unique ministry tasks and leadership realities. Field Education experiences can be documented using the Annual Reflection Form CRET-3. The congregation(s) benefiting from the labors of the CRE-in-training is(are) required to pay a fair wage. CPM has financial resources available to assist congregations upon request.

Worship Leadership and Preaching		
Explore Liturgical Calendar and RC Lectionary arcs		Preach _____ times
Draft Order of Worship (OOW) w/Lord's Supper (LS)		Prepare sermon
Prepare OOW for special service (i.e. Christmas Eve, Easter, Witness to the Resurrection, etc.)		Review w/TE 2 of the sermons preached by RE including discussion of exegetical and hermeneutical process
Write one Lord's Supper liturgy		Teach and reflect on a 4-6 week Bible Study
Develop seasonal thematic arcs for Advent/Lent		Reflect on 2 preachers' sermons w/attention to exegesis/hermeneutics/theology
Prepare liturgy for Baptism in Worship		Develop age-appropriate Children's message
Pastoral Care		Church Administration/Session Leadership
Prepare a pastoral visitation plan, including logs		Write pastoral article for monthly newsletter
Hospital call		Sit in on Session meetings at other churches
Hospital, hospice, or home visit call – near or at time of death		Discuss w/ a CRE typical administrative challenges
Hospital or home visit call – including Service of Communion		Prepare agenda for and conduct Session meeting
Home visit –regular pastoral care		Prepare and conduct Officer Training
Home visit –lapsed member		Prepare and present annual church budget
<i>Prepare (and role play):</i>		Prepare for and conduct congregational meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • visit with family re: Baptism • wedding ceremony, including a plan for preparatory visits with the couple 		Develop a process for Session's annual review of rolls w/attention to lapsed members
		Discuss typical church conflicts and the CRE role in responses and resolution

- a. **REQUIRED:** Establish learning goals in collaboration with CPM liaison and supervisor
- b. **REQUIRED:** Regular debriefing/reflection conversations between RE and supervisor

8. **PREACHING OPPORTUNITIES** As a way to develop one's pastoral identity as preacher, the RE may be asked to preach at one's home church or field education placement(s). At an appropriate time as determined by preaching experience and coursework (i.e. successful completion of OT, NT, Reformed Theology, and Preaching) the RE will preach for CPM and then be encouraged to seek out preaching opportunities through the Presbytery Pulpit Supply list (administered by COM) or by other means. Ideally, the RE experiences a variety of settings apart

from their home congregation and reflects on those experiences using the guiding questions in the Annual Reflection Form CRET-3.

COMPLETING THE PREPARATION PROCESS

9. Upon successful completion of coursework, psychological evaluation, boundary training, and field education, the CPM will examine the CRE-in-training and ascertain his or her readiness for commissioning. Upon approval, the CPM will report to the Commission on Ministry (COM) that the CRE candidate is “ready to be considered for commissioning.”
 - a. **REQUIRED:** CPM examination and CPM Endorsement Form for COM (CRET-5 completed by CPM liaison/moderator)
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CRE TRANSFER FROM ANOTHER PRESBYTERY

10. If a CRE has been trained in another presbytery and wishes to transfer to the Presbytery of Carlisle for service within its bounds, the Ruling Elder can submit a Transfer Application (CRE-T). CPM would interview the CRE, and determine what, if any, additional work needs to be completed prior to meeting with COM. As with CREs under the care of Carlisle Presbytery, a transfer CRE would need to have a Statement of Faith and Spiritual Autobiography prepared for COM.

Presbytery of Carlisle Committee on Preparation for Ministry
CRE in Training RELATIONSHIP TO COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

1. The Commission on Ministry (COM) will participate in the initial interview with the applicant to get a sense of the applicant's intentions and how they fit with the needs of the Presbytery.
2. COM shall assess an RE's readiness to be placed on the Authorized Pulpit Supply list.
3. COM shall act on behalf of the presbytery to determine the **suitability of a trained Ruling Elder** for commissioning as a CRE of a particular congregation and will authorize the work of the CRE as outlined in this policy and the PC(USA) *Book of Order* (G-2.10). The CRE will provide a **Statement of Faith and Spiritual Autobiography** to COM for this assessment.
4. If the candidate is found to be acceptable, **COM commissions** him/her/them to a congregation that needs and will accept a CRE as their pastoral leader.
5. A **Covenant of Agreement** will be negotiated among the Session of the particular congregation, the CRE, and the COM, including a clear understanding of duties of the CRE, the number of hours per week to be worked, and financial terms. The CRE may be authorized by the COM to perform any or all of the following functions:
 - a. Administer the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper
 - b. Administer the Sacrament of Baptism
 - c. Provide pastoral visitation
 - d. Work with committees
 - e. Moderate the Session of the congregation with accountability to the COM
 - f. Moderate Meetings of the Congregation with accountability to the COM
 - g. Have voice and vote at meetings of presbytery
 - h. Officiate a service of Christian marriage when invited by the Session or other responsible committee, and when allowed by the state.
 - i. Officiate a service of Witness to the Resurrection on the occasion of death.
6. The COM shall make it clear to the CRE and the congregation that the CRE is commissioned to function as a CRE **in that particular congregation only**, and only in the areas authorized by COM.
7. When the COM is satisfied with the qualifications of a RE to serve the congregation providing the services described above, **the presbytery shall commission the RE to pastoral service** as designated, employing the questions contained in W-4.0404.
8. COM shall assign a Minister of Word and Sacrament who is a member of Carlisle Presbytery in the geographic vicinity of the congregation the CRE is serving, as **supervisor** of and mentor for the CRE. COM shall provide resources for the CRE as requested and shall review the commission annually.

Presbytery of Carlisle Committee on Preparation for Ministry
COMMISSIONED RULING ELDER TRAINING TRANSCRIPT

COM Approved Assignment to

 Presbyterian Church
 COM Assigned Mentor / Date

Ruling Elder Name _____

Cell Phone _____ Home Phone _____

E-mail _____

Home Address _____

Home Church Name and Pastor Name _____

CPM CRE Coordinator _____ CPM Endorsement Date _____

FORMS	Date
RE Application Received w/Session Endorsement, References	
CPM Initial Interview (CRET-2 Part 1)	
CPM/COM Initial Conversation (CRET-2 Part 2)	
CPM Liaison:	
CPM Annual Reflection Form (CRET-3)	
Full Psychological Evaluation through _____	
Boundary Training through _____	
RE Learning goals on four Field Education areas Worship / Pastoral Care / Preaching / Church Administration	
Field Education supervisor(s): Field Education location(s):	
Additional experience such as Clinical Pastoral Education	
Released for Pulpit Supply	
CPM Final Exam results and Endorsement Form for COM "ready to be considered for commissioning"	
Continuing Education Plan Form	

REQUIRED COURSES*	DATE	PASS/FAIL
Old Testament Bible (Seminary)		
New Testament Bible (Seminary)		

Reformed Theology		
Preaching		
Reformed Worship and Sacraments		
Presbyterian Polity		
Pastoral Care		
Teaching		

***Variances to the above-listed courses will be considered on an individual basis.**

ELECTIVES / WORKSHOPS	DATE	ELECTIVES / WORKSHOPS	DATE
Family systems		Stages of faith development	
Conflict management		Self-care	
Grief counseling		Church administration	
Praying in public		Church history	