



PRESBYTERY OF NEVADA

GUIDELINES GOVERNING COMMISSIONED RULING ELDERS

The Presbytery of Nevada is committed to providing the best possible leadership in the areas of worship and preaching to all churches within our bounds. This leadership is best provided when pulpits are filled with Teaching Elders. However, when this is not feasible, one way of seeking to meet this need is through the Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) program.

A CRE is a full time or part time, salaried or volunteer, elder Called by God and affirmed by his/her session. Such elders are approved and commissioned by the presbytery to be the primary preacher/pastor for a particular ministry where it is not feasible to place an ordained minister.

The purpose of these policies and standards is to establish minimum requirements for commissioning elders to serve as CRE Pastors and the continuing education and supervision of these elders in the bounds of the presbytery.

COMMISSIONED RULING ELDER (CRE) PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

The administration of the Commissioned Ruling Elder program shall be carried out by a CRE Committee reporting to the Committee on Ministry, in accordance with the Bylaws of the Presbytery of Nevada. The CRE committee should be composed of six members, elders and clergy, who are sensitive to the needs and culture of smaller churches and ethnic congregations. The Executive Presbyter and the Stated Clerk shall be seated on the CRE Committee as ex officio members. The CRE Committee shall be an ecclesiastical committee.

The CRE Committee will be responsible for receiving elders into the CRE program, approval of training, oversight, encouragement and examination of elders, and making recommendations for deployment to the Committee on Ministry. It shall also provide for the CRE candidate's continuing intellectual and spiritual development. It shall act for the presbytery according to provisions of the Book of Order G-4.0403

A member of the Committee on Ministry will be appointed to serve as a liaison between the two committees.

OVERVIEW

1. The purpose of the CRE Pastor program is to prepare and commission elders in the Presbytery of Nevada for preaching and pastoral commissions at places of need within the presbytery.
2. The Book of Order (G-2.10) and this policy establish criteria for the equipping of CRE Pastors and their ongoing accountability to the presbytery. These are:
 - A. CRE Pastors as elders of the Presbyterian Church, USA who are granted a local commission to lead worship and preach the gospel, watch over the people and provide for their nurture and service.
 - B. Elders are selected by and receive training approved by the presbytery. The CRE Pastor shall demonstrate sensitivity to cultural, racial and ethnic diversity in the recruitment, training, examination and placement of candidates. The elder shall be instructed in:
 1. Bible
 2. Reformed theology and sacraments
 3. Presbyterian polity
 4. Preaching
 5. Leading worship
 6. Pastoral care
 7. Teaching
 - C. Elders are examined by the CRE Committee and presbytery regarding:
 1. their personal faith
 2. their motives for seeking the commission, and
 3. the areas of instruction listed above in B.
 - D. The presbytery, through the Committee on Ministry, shall designate the congregation or ministry in which a particular elder may serve. An elder may serve as a CRE in his/her own congregation subject to Presbytery approval.
 - E. When the presbytery, in consultation with the session or other responsible committee, determines that its strategy for mission in a local church requires it, and after additional instruction deemed necessary by the presbytery has been provided, a CRE Pastor may be authorized to perform any or all of the following ministries:
 - 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 a voice in meetings of presbytery,
 - e. Have a vote in meetings of presbytery (vote shall be counted as Minister vote for the purposes of parity).
 - f. Perform a service of Christian marriage when invited by the session or other responsible committee, and when allowed by the state.
 - g. The Presbytery may appoint a CRE Pastor as moderator of a session to which he or she is commissioned.
- F.** The commission may be valid for up to three years, and may be renewable.
- G.** The CRE Pastor shall work under the supervision of the Presbytery through the moderator of the session of the church being served or through the Committee on Ministry until such time as it is deemed unnecessary.
- H.** The Committee on Ministry, in consultation with the CRE Committee, shall assign a Teaching Elder as mentor and supervisor. Ordinarily the mentor and supervisor would be the same person, but in cases where a CRE Pastor was called to a position where there was a “head of staff”, that person would be the supervisor and another minister would be selected as moderator.
- I.** During the term of the commission the CRE Pastor shall be required to fulfill a CRE Pastors approved continuing education and spiritual development program.
- J.** The elder will meet annually for a joint review with the Committee on Ministry and the CRE Committee. The Committee recommends that the CRE Pastor submit monthly reports to the mentoring pastor in the first year of appointment and that there be regular meetings between the CRE Pastor and mentoring pastor. The Committee on Ministry will evaluate the commission and the ministry of the CRE Pastor. The CRE Committee will monitor the CRE Pastors’ continuing education and spiritual growth.
- K.** The Committee on Ministry must annually make a recommendation to the presbytery regarding the continuation of the CRE Pastors commission.
- L.** An elder who has been commissioned and later ceases to serve in a particular congregation may continue to be listed as available to serve, but is not authorized to perform the functions of a CRE Pastor until appointed again to a particular congregation by the presbytery.

PROCESS FOR COMMISSIONING

1. CRE Pastors are not ordained ministers. They are elders commissioned only to a particular ministry. Therefore:

(a) They will follow a separate track from those seeking ordination. The track presented is Seeker, Learner, Applicant, Commissioned.

(b) Requirements and preparation are different from ordination, not requiring the same level of knowledge and training. An elder's ability to preach, teach, and lead worship is seen as much a gift of the Spirit developed through experience and practice as formal training. Consequently competency is to be understood in light of the place of local commissioning. To further the development of these gifts for service in a particular field, the CRE Pastors will provide required training as outlined in Phase 2, Learner, of the commissioning process.

2. Elders with previous CRE Pastor experience, who become members of a church in the Nevada Presbytery and wish to serve as a CRE Pastor, need to apply to the CRE Committee.

3. Elders shall proceed through the following phases:

PHASE 1, SEEKER.

During this phase an elder, believing that he/she has been called by God to be a Commissioned Lay Pastor, seeks validation of the call by his/her pastor, session, and then by the presbytery through the CRE Committee.

A. The Seeker completes the "Presbytery of Nevada *Certified Ruling Elder*" application (Form1) .

B. The Seeker takes the application to the moderator of his/her session, who will discuss with the Seeker his/her interest in the program. The moderator will inform the session of the Seeker's application.

C. The session will invite the Seeker and a member of the Committee on Commissioned Lay Pastors to meet with them and discuss the process and requirements for commissioning. Following their discussion the session will act to endorse or not endorse the Seeker, indicating this on the Seeker's application.

D. The moderator completes the "Moderator's Statement of Evaluation and Recommendation" (see Form 2).

E. The moderator will then forward the Seeker's application with the session's endorsement and the moderator's statement to the Committee on Commissioned Lay Pastors through the Presbytery Office.

F. The CRE Committee will invite the Seeker to meet with them for an interview regarding his/her personal faith, and readiness to enter the training program and intended course of study.

G. The Seeker will agree to a CRE Committee approved psychological evaluation. ???

H. The CRE Committee will make a decision based on their interview and the psychological evaluation and the course of study, regarding the Seeker's suitability for the CRE Pastor program. If approved the Seeker then becomes a Learner, Phase 2.

PHASE 2, LEARNER.

During this phase the Learner will successfully complete training previously approved by the CRE Committee in:

- Bible
- Reformed Theology and Sacraments
- Presbyterian Polity
- Preaching
- Leading worship
- Pastoral Care
- Teaching.

When a Learner has already received training or holds academic credit in any of the basic areas of study, the transcripts or certificates of achievement shall be reviewed by the CRE Committee and upon their recommendation, some requirements may be waived. In some cases, alternate study programs or additional study may be required. Upon completion of the prescribed studies the Learner shall meet with the CRE Committee for a final conference and appropriate examination. If the Learner satisfactorily passes the examination, the CRE Committee will recommend the Learner to the presbytery for examination, and if that is passed, to the Committee on Ministry for commissioning. The Learner will be notified by the CRE Committee if he/she is found not to be ready and recommendation will not proceed until the CRE Committee is satisfied of the Learner's readiness.

The Examination

a. Learners should bring a record of their training, a personal statement of faith, and a written sermon to be preached.

- b. The Learner shall be examined by the CRE Committee as to personal faith, motives for seeking the commission, and the areas of instruction which includes Bible, Reformed theology and sacraments, Presbyterian polity, preaching, leading worship, pastoral care and teaching.
- c. The Learner will preach a sermon before the CRE Committee.
- d. The CRE Committee may invite resource persons of the Learner's culture and language to assist in the examination when it is appropriate.

PHASE 3, APPLICANT.

- A.** The CRE Committee shall forward to the Committee on Ministry names of elders who have passed the CRE examination and are now available for commissioning. Included with every name shall be a Prevention of Sexual Misconduct Training statement signed by the Applicant elder.
- B.** The Committee on Ministry may match Applicants with churches needing pastoral services and arrange an interview between the Applicant and seeking church. The Committee on Ministry will be involved in negotiating a contract between the Applicant and session. The contract shall be guided by Committee on Ministry standards related to salary, vacation and study leave. When all parties agree, the Applicant will be recommended by the Committee on Ministry to the presbytery for commissioning.

PHASE 4, CERTIFIED RULING ELDER.

The Commissioning Service

- a. The commissioning service should be held at a regularly stated meeting of the Presbytery (commission to be appointed by Presbytery), or,
- b. If the service is held in the congregation to be served, the Moderators of Session shall appoint a five-member commission for the commissioning service.
- c. The commissioning questions are in G-4-4003, and i., (4)

TERMINATION OF THE COMMISSION.

Following its annual evaluation, the Committee on Ministry is responsible for recommending to the presbytery the commission's continuation or termination. The commission is not transferable from one location to another, but must be reestablished by the presbytery in each new location for a specific purpose and length of time. Any action proposed to revoke a commission shall be initiated by the Committee on Ministry informing the CRE Pastor, and if the CRE Pastor wishes, establishing a date for a meeting with the Committee on Ministry. The CRE Pastor shall always have the opportunity to state his/her case for continuing the commission.

Est. April 2015; Rev. April 2016.