

Commissioned Pastor Requirements

When a Session determines that an individual in their congregation is called to specialized ministry, or determines that the church is unable to call a Minister of the Word due to financial or other circumstances, the Session may determine to utilize the role of 'Commissioned Pastor.' Such utilization must take place in conjunction with the approval of Presbytery. Our Book of Order provides the following guidelines:

Book of Government 9-11, A—F A Ruling Elder may be temporarily authorized by Presbytery as a Commissioned Pastor for a congregation without a Pastor to preach the Word, evangelize, moderate a Session, administer the sacraments, perform marriages (if civil law allows), preside at funerals and provide pastoral care. Presbyteries may also approve and give appropriate powers to a Ruling Elder to serve as a Commissioned Pastor in mission churches, church planting and church revitalization works, or in chaplaincy positions in hospitals, hospices, prisons or other institutions.

- A. Authorization shall be for a term of up to three years and may be renewed. Such authorization shall specify those powers granted and shall stipulate in which church(es) or ministry contexts those powers are authorized. Such powers shall be exercised only in those contexts.
- B. Potential Commissioned Pastors shall be examined by Presbytery and found to have sufficient knowledge in the areas in which they will be serving.
- C. A Ruling Elder previously commissioned, as a lay pastor by another Reformed body may become a Commissioned Pastor as deemed appropriate by the Presbytery and subject to the same requirements of the EPC Commissioned Pastor.
- D. Presbytery shall assign a Teaching Elder to each Commissioned Pastor as supervisor to act as mentor and to assist the Commissioned Pastor in writing an annual report to Presbytery.
- E. Presbytery may terminate the authorization to serve as a Commissioned Pastor at any time prior to the expiration of the commission.
- F. Upon authorization of a Commissioned Pastor, Presbytery shall administer the vows of commissioning [BoG 9-11F.1-4] either immediately or through an administrative commission at a designated time.

Specific Steps for a Session:

1. Upon the decision to utilize a Commissioned Pastor, the Session shall inform the Ministerial Committee Chair.
2. The Session shall provide the Ministerial Committee with the following information:
 - A. Name, contact information and ordination status of the individual. (i.e. Ruling Elder in good standing.)
 - B. A summary of the specific reasons, which have precipitated the need for a Commissioned Pastor.
 - C. Provide a Job Description for the Commissioned Pastor.
 - D. If compensation and/or benefits are offered, provide a description of said compensation and/or benefits.

Specific steps for the Ministerial Committee:

1. Upon notification by a Session of its desire to have the Presbytery appoint a specific Ruling Elder to be their Commissioned Pastor, the Ministerial Committee Chair/Assistant Chair shall:
 - A. Ask that the candidate for Commissioned Pastor submit to the Stated Clerk and the Ministerial Committee Chair a Personal Information Form (PIF) so that issues regarding the Westminster Confession, administration of the Sacraments, and information necessary for background checks can be duly noted. The candidate must also complete the Statement of Faith Parts 1 and 2.
 - B. Appoint a qualified and conveniently located member of the Presbytery to guide the proposed Commissioned Pastor through a careful study of the entire Leadership Training Guide, and ensure that the proposed CP has basic knowledge in the following areas: Bible, Reformed Theology, Sacraments, and EPC polity.
 - C. Inform the Stated Clerk to plan for this Commissioned Pastor examination at a realistically scheduled future Presbytery Meeting.
2. The Ministerial Committee shall arrange to meet with the potential Commissioned Pastor and conduct an initial interview consisting of the following:
 - A. Personal Relationship with Christ and Journey of Faith.
 - B. Basic Understanding of Scripture, Reformed Theology, Sacraments, EPC Polity.
 - C. Demonstration of sufficient knowledge of those areas to responsibly discharge the powers to be granted. (G 9—11 B)
3. After a successful interview, the Ministerial Committee shall seek out and recommend to Presbytery a Teaching Elder for each Commissioned Pastor as supervisor to act as mentor and to assist in providing an annual report to Presbytery. (G 9—11 D)
4. The Ministerial Committee shall present the candidate to the floor of Presbytery.

Specific Steps by the Presbytery:

The Presbytery shall carry out G 9—11. Presbytery should in the examination ask questions regarding the candidate's Personal Relationship with Christ and Journey of Faith, as well as a basic understanding of Scripture, Reformed Theology, Sacraments, and EPC Polity.

(Adopted by Presbytery 1/27/2018)