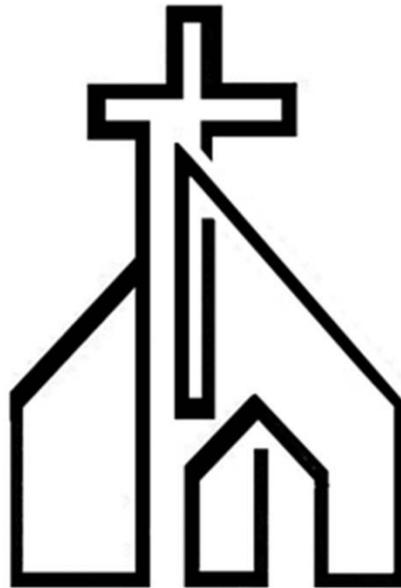


The Presbytery of Huntingdon



Certified Lay Preacher and Commissioned Lay Pastor Program

The Presbytery of Huntingdon

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And Peter said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep." John 21:17

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Becoming a Certified Lay Preacher or a Commissioned Lay Pastor (Commissioned Ruling Elder) in the Presbytery of Huntingdon:

The purpose for the positions of the Commissioned Lay Pastor and Certified Lay Preacher is to provide for the ministry of churches who are without pastoral service for either short term or long-term periods. Commissioned Lay Pastors may perform commissioned duties only in those churches in which they are specifically commissioned to serve. Certified Lay Preachers may fill a pulpit in any church within the Presbytery at the invitation of the pastor and/or session. The purpose of the Certified Lay Preacher/Commissioned Lay Pastor program is to provide leadership in the worshipping communities by training those ruling elders who feel called and whose session believes they are called.

The *Book Of Order* provides for the training, examination, and authorization of persons to exercise a public ministry of the Church as Commissioned Ruling Elders (*known as Commissioned Lay Pastors in the Presbytery of Huntingdon*): to lead worship and preach the gospel, watch over the people, and provide for their nurture and service. “The presbytery may authorize a ruling elder to be commissioned to limited pastoral service as assigned by the presbytery. A ruling elder so designated may be commissioned to serve in a validated ministry of the presbytery.” 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 specified in G-2.1001 until commissioned again to a congregation or ministry by the presbytery. [G-2.1002]

The Book of Order provides that when a congregation does not have a pastor, or while the pastor is unable to perform her or his duties, the session, with the approval of presbytery, may obtain the services of an individual who may be a ruling elder, in a temporary pastoral relationship. Huntingdon Presbytery calls these “Commissioned Lay Pastors,” and shall determine the terms of service for such Temporary Supply relationships. [G-2.0504b; G-2.1001.]

The Book of Order also provides that individuals may be certified and called to service within presbyteries. “These individuals endeavor to reflect their faith through their work and to strengthen the church through their dedication.” [G-2.1102] The Presbytery of Huntingdon trains ruling elders to provide worship leadership, including administration of the Lord’s Supper. These ruling elders shall be authorized to lead worship and to administer or preside at the Lord's Supper, for periods not to exceed one year at a time. In the Presbytery of Huntingdon, they are not Commissioned Lay Pastors, but are termed “Certified Lay Preachers” as designated by Presbytery.

The Manual of the Presbytery of Huntingdon notes that “The Committee on Ministry shall consider any person who has preached more than three times in a month for three consecutive months at the same church to be a Temporary Supply. The committee shall consult with the Session about drafting a specific Temporary Supply agreement.” (A-36.3200; G-2.0504b)

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

“To those called to exercise special functions in the Church...God gives suitable gifts for their various duties...those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian Gospel in the Church and in the world. They must have the approval of God’s people and the concurring judgment of a council of the Church.” (G-2.0104)

Those desiring to serve as Commissioned Lay Pastors or as Certified Lay Preachers should recognize the importance of receiving thorough preparation for their tasks. They must be willing to accept the guidance of the presbytery in their ministry. They should promise reliance upon the grace of God to help them maintain a Christian character and conduct, and to help them be diligent and faithful in this special ministry.

“It is necessary to the integrity and health of the Church that the persons who serve in it...shall adhere to the essentials of the Reformed faith and polity, as expressed in The Book of Confessions and the Form of Government. So far as may be possible without serious departure from these standards, without infringing on the rights and views of others, and without obstructing the constitutional governance of the Church, freedom of conscience with respect to the interpretation of scripture is to be maintained.” (G-2.0105)

It is to be recognized that in becoming a candidate or officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds. The decision as to whether a person has departed from essentials of the Reformed faith and polity is made initially by the individual concerned but ultimately becomes the responsibility of the governing body in which he or she serves. (G-2.0105)

PROFESSIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

A. Standards

1. Faith, as expressed by trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and belief in the one true God, the Holy One of Israel, whom alone we worship and serve: acceptance of the Old and New Testaments as the unique and authoritative witness to that faith; receiving and adopting the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of the Church.
2. Maturity as expressed by membership in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), faithful, regular participation in its worship and service; demonstrated leadership in the Church; ability to develop facility in the craft of preaching; demonstrated pastoral ability.
3. Christian life expressed by moral standards acceptable to the Christian community; commitment to personal spiritual growth through prayer, Bible reading and devotions.
4. Constitutional fidelity as expressed by affirmative answers to the constitutional questions in (W-4.0404).

B. Qualifications

1. High School diploma
2. Currently a member for at least 2 years in the sponsoring PC(USA) congregation
3. Ordained a ruling elder and have served at least one year as a ruling elder on session before entering the program.
4. Endorsement by the local session where membership is held
5. Three personal references
6. A demonstrated basic knowledge of the content of Scripture
7. Ability to speak publicly, with a clear voice and in good English
8. Demonstrated leadership in the church
9. Reliability
10. Compassion
11. Skills in personal relationships such as: listening skills, ability to relate to various age groups
12. Ability to keep confidentiality
13. Completion of an agreement to abide by the Sexual Conduct Policy of The Presbytery of Huntingdon, and criminal background checks as required by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

C. Covenant with the Presbytery

1. Agree to complete appropriate level of training before being qualified:
 - a. Serve as a Certified Lay Preacher for the Presbytery
 - b. Serve as a Commissioned Lay Pastor.
2. Continue active participation in the life and mission of the current local church.
3. Participate responsibly with the local session, mentor and the Commissioned Lay Pastor program administrators in the goal setting, evaluation and decision-making processes related to preparation for service as a Certified Lay Preacher or Commissioned Lay Pastor.
4. Give diligent attention to the educational and developmental tasks involved in the training programs.
5. Adhere to the schedules, deadlines, and time requirements of the Subcommittee on Preparation for Ministry.
6. Take initiative in maintaining regular communication with mentor and the Subcommittee on Preparation for Ministry regarding experiences, progress, and other issues pertaining to educational, spiritual, and personal development.

7. Respond promptly and responsibly to all communications, correspondence, and requests for information, consultations, and reports.
8. Understand that completion of training does not guarantee being qualified to preach as a Certified Lay Preacher or to be commissioned as a Commissioned Lay Pastor, nor does commissionability as a Commissioned Lay Pastor guarantee that a position as a Commissioned Lay Pastor will be available.
9. Agree to attend regular continuing education provided by and through the presbytery.
10. Submit annual report to and participate in reviews by the SubCommittee on Preparation for Ministry
11. If any of these covenants are not maintained, the Commissioned Lay Pastor or Certified Lay Preacher may **not** have his or her commission or certification renewed.

GUIDELINES FOR THE CERTIFIED LAY PREACHER

The *Book of Order* provides that individuals may be certified and called to service within presbyteries. “These individuals endeavor to reflect their faith through their work and to strengthen the church through their dedication.” [G-2.1102] The Presbytery of Huntingdon trains ruling elders to provide worship leadership, including administration of the Lord’s Supper. These ruling elders shall be authorized to lead worship and to administer or preside at the Lord’s Supper, for periods not to exceed one year at a time. In the Presbytery of Huntingdon, they are not Commissioned Lay Pastors, but are termed “Certified Lay Preachers” as designated by presbytery.

THE AUTHORIZATION TO PREACH AND LEAD SERVICES OF WORSHIP AS A CERTIFIED LAY PREACHER

1. Is granted by the presbytery, upon completion of all requirements and examination.
2. Is recognized by the presbytery at a regular meeting of the presbytery.
3. Is valid for a period of up to twelve months as determined by the presbytery.
4. The authorization may be renewed or terminated at any time at the discretion of the presbytery.
5. There will be an annual report from the Committee on Ministry of the status of those serving in this capacity to the presbytery.
6. Certified Lay Preachers may be authorized to serve the Lord’s Supper, and then may do so when invited by a local church Session. G-3.0301b; W-2.0303)
7. The Compensation Policy of the Presbytery of Huntingdon notes that “The Committee on Ministry shall consider any person who has preached more than three times in a month for

three consecutive months at the same church to be a Temporary Supply. The committee shall consult with the Session about drafting a specific Temporary Supply agreement.” (Compensation in the Presbytery of Huntingdon Pulpit Supplies, #3; G-2.0504b).

THE TRAINING

1. The person shall be ruling elder recommended by the session of his or her local church.
2. The person shall make application to the SubCommittee on Preparation for Ministry. If accepted, the person shall then participate in the training program.
3. The person shall receive instruction in:
 - Old Testament
 - New Testament
 - Reformed Theology
 - Creeds and Confessions
 - Christian Education
 - Polity & Robert’s Rules
 - Teaching about Preaching
 - Worship and Sacraments
 - Leadership Training, Time Management
4. Attendance is considered either being present in person or via video conference.
 - Electives may be taken if the core/basic class has been taken within the past two years.
 - Individuals who have already been certified may take either the core class or the advanced class.

Each course listed above is required for certification and/or commission, and all assignments must be completed. The Lay Preacher/Pastor program will also provide optional courses as needed: Weddings and Funerals, Grief Counseling, Conflict Resolution, Church History, Clergy Ethics, Mandated Reporter Training, Moderating a Session, Pastoral Care, Praying in Public.

Each candidate and certified lay preacher and commissioned lay pastor is required to attend a minimum of four of the six classes offered each year and encouraged to attend all of them.

The Presbyterian Church seeks leadership that will uphold its ordination vows to fulfil its ministry in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions. Just as the presbytery expects and requires teaching elders to continually educate themselves, the presbytery expects and requires its certified and commissioned lay pastors to continually educate themselves and to meet together to hold each other accountable.

COURSE PARTICIPATION

1. Courses may be offered in person or by video conference. Individuals may participate in person or by ZOOM as they choose. Zoom participation will count as attendance.
2. Many basic/core level courses will be recorded as well as live streamed. If a course is to be recorded, the instructor will be so notified in advance. The host of a meeting that is being recorded will announce that fact in the beginning of a meeting.
3. For privacy concerns and to encourage discussion, advanced level/second or third tier classes should not be recorded.

REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATION

1. After successfully completing the training, the person shall be examined by two persons from or designated by COM on personal faith, motives/sense of call for seeking to serve as Lay Preacher, special gifts for ministry, and the successful completion of the areas of instruction outlined above. This will include a brief statement of personal faith.
2. The person must conduct a full worship service at which a representative lay person and pastor are present. At least one of these persons must be a current member of the Committee on Ministry.
3. Upon successful completion of all requirements, the SubCommittee on Preparation for Ministry will recommend to Committee on Ministry who will recommend to the Presbytery that the person be certified during a special service.
4. Once the person is certified, the Presbytery shall continue to provide oversight for the person's on-going spiritual and professional development.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CERTIFIED LAY PREACHER

1. Lead worship and preach the Gospel as, requested by a session and officiate at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, when invited by a session.
2. May perform any of those duties specifically outlined by the presbytery for Certified Lay Preachers.
3. Acknowledge the authority of presbytery, which is responsible for all certified lay preachers and commissioned lay pastors.
4. Agree to complete appropriate level of training before being certified to serve as a Certified Lay Preacher for the presbytery
5. As duties allow, continue active participation in the life and mission of the church of membership.

6. Understand that completion of training does not guarantee being qualified to preach or that an assignment will be available when certified.
7. Agree to attend **required**, regular continuing education approved by the SubCommittee on Preparation for Ministry.
8. Complete an annual end of year report and/or review as required by the SubCommittee on Preparation for Ministry.

SUPERVISION

1. Certified Lay Preachers shall work under the supervision of the SubCommittee on Preparation for Ministry. Certified Lay Preachers serving as Temporary Supply shall have a mentor assigned by the Committee on Ministry, usually the pastor/moderator of the church of membership.
2. Certified Lay Preachers will be evaluated annually by the SubCommittee on Preparation for Ministry.

GUIDELINES FOR THE COMMISSIONED LAY PASTOR

The *Book of Order* provides for the training, examination and authorization of persons to exercise a public ministry of the Church as *Commissioned Ruling Elders (CRE)*: known in the Presbytery of Huntingdon as Commissioned Lay Pastors [G-2.1002]

THE COMMISSION

1. The commission is granted by the presbytery to lead worship, preach the gospel and perform other duties as granted to individual Commissioned Lay Pastors by the presbytery.
2. The commission is valid in one or more congregations designated by the presbytery.
3. The requesting congregation, the candidate, and representatives of the Committee on Ministry will complete the Covenant for Services of a Commissioned Ruling Elder worksheet. The proposed terms of call shall meet the minimums determined by the presbytery. [See Appendix A, for Covenant for Services worksheet....]
4. The commission is valid for a period of up to twelve months as determined by the presbytery, with the terms of call reviewed annually.
5. The commission may be renewed at expiration or terminated at any time at the discretion of the presbytery.
6. There will be an annual report from the SubCommittee on Preparation for Ministry, of the status of those serving in this capacity to the presbytery.

THE TRAINING: Additional training for commissioning

1. The person shall be a ruling elder endorsed by the session of his or her local church. The ruling elder must have two full years of experience as a certified lay preacher before becoming eligible to be commissionable as a commissioned pastor.
2. The person shall receive additional instruction in:
 - a. Leadership Training, Time Management
 - b. Old Testament
 - c. New Testament
 - d. Weddings, Funerals and Baptism,
 - e. Church History
 - f. Moderating a Session
 - g. Pastoral Care
 - h. Conflict Management
 - i. Mandated Reporter training (every five years or as determined by the Commonwealth of PA.)
 - j. Small church sociology

Each course is required and all assignments must be completed. The SubCommittee on Preparation for Ministry will certify the successful completion of all courses.

A person may be excused from a course/requirement by

- a. Having taken and successfully passed the course elsewhere, or
- b. Other reasons as approved by the SubCommittee on Preparation for Ministry

REQUIREMENTS FOR COMMISSIONING

1. After successfully completing the training, and serving as a certified lay preacher for two years, the person shall be examined by two representatives designated by SubCommittee on Preparation for Ministry on personal faith, motives/sense of call for seeking to serve as Commissioned Lay Pastor, special gifts for ministry and the successful completion of the areas of instruction outlined above.
2. Upon successful completion of all requirements, the SubCommittee on Preparation for Ministry will recommend to Committee on Ministry who will recommend to the Presbytery that the person be designated commissionable. Being designated commissionable enables the individual to be considered for commissions, but does not guarantee that opportunities for commissioning will be available, nor that the individual will be selected for any particular commission.
3. When the presbytery is satisfied with the qualifications of a ruling elder to serve a particular congregation, the presbytery, upon the request of a session, and upon approval of the terms of service for the relationship, may commission a ruling elder to such service. The candidate must submit a statement of personal faith to the presbytery. The commission shall be valid for a specific time period of no more than twelve months and shall be reviewed annually. The commission shall specify the functions authorized by the commission and shall assign a teaching elder as mentor and supervisor of the Commissioned Lay Pastor. [G-2.1001]
4. When a commission has been approved, the presbytery shall appoint an administrative commission to commission the ruling elder to his or her service in a service of worship, employing the questions contained in W-4.0404. The affirmation of the vows shall be recorded in presbytery minutes. [G-2.1003]
5. The commissioned lay pastor remains a member of her or his home congregation so that he or she continues to have a pastor him- or herself. If the Commissioned Lay Pastor is commissioned to his or her home congregation, their assigned mentor should provide pastoral care.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMMISSIONED LAY PASTOR

1. Lead worship, preach the Gospel and perform other duties as granted to individual Commissioned Lay Pastors by the presbytery.
2. May be assigned pastoral oversight of a local church.
3. Attend at least three presbytery meetings a year, acting as a communicator between presbytery and the session.
4. Agree to complete appropriate level of training before being qualified to serve as a Commissioned Lay Pastor.
5. As duties allow, continue active participation in the life and mission of the church of membership.
6. Take initiative in maintaining regular communication with the assigned mentor.
7. Attend **required**, regular continuing education approved by the SubCommittee on Preparation for Ministry.

Six classes will be offered per year. After commissioning, the lay pastor is required to take four classes per year and may choose entry or advanced level classes as they wish.

8. The commission may include one or more of the following responsibilities within the boundaries of the congregation:
 - a. Administer the Lord's Supper.
 - b. Have voice and vote in meetings of presbytery.
 - c. Administer Baptism.
 - d. Moderate meetings of session.
 - e. Officiate at a service of Christian marriage of members of the congregation or of the local community when invited by the session. Such service may only be performed within the geographical bounds of the presbytery. In performing such service of Christian marriage, the commissioner ruling elder shall follow all provisions of the Directory for Worship regarding marriage.
10. Complete an annual end of year report and/or review as required by SubCommittee on Preparation for Ministry

SUPERVISION

1. Commissioned Lay Pastors shall work under the supervision of a mentor assigned by the Committee on Ministry.
2. Commissioned Lay Pastors serve under the authority and at the will of presbytery.

COMPLETION OF A COMMISSION

1. The commission shall be renewable upon the concurrence of all parties (session, commissioned lay pastor, and presbytery).
2. A ruling elder who has been commissioned and later ceases to serve in the specified ministry may continue to be listed as available to serve, but is not authorized to perform the functions specified in “Responsibilities 9” and G-2.1002 until commissioned again to a congregation or ministry by the presbytery.
3. A former Commissioned Lay Pastor is subject to the requirement of the Code of Conduct of Former Pastors of the Presbytery of Huntingdon. [See presbytery website for Code of Conduct for Former Pastors of the Presbytery of Huntingdon.]

PROCEDURES FOR ENTERING THE CERTIFIED LAY PREACHER OR COMMISSIONED LAY PASTOR PROGRAM

1. Meet with your pastor or moderator of session.
2. Request a Certified Lay Preacher/Commissioned Lay Pastor application from the presbytery office.
3. Complete the application (Form A) and meet with your Session for their review. [See Appendix for application Form A] [See presbytery website for Code of Conduct for Former Pastors of the Presbytery of Huntingdon.]
4. The session will complete the session endorsement (Form B) and will return it to the presbytery office. [See Appendix for Application Form B.]
5. Return your completed application (Form A) to the presbytery office.
6. Distribute 3 Personal reference forms - one to your pastor/moderator (Form C) and two to references of your choice (Form D). Include a self-addressed envelope for each form so that these may be returned directly to the Presbytery office when they are completed.

The completed application (Forms A, B, C, and D) will be directed by the presbytery office to the SubCommittee on Preparation for Ministry.

7. You will be scheduled for an interview with the representatives from the SubCommittee on Preparation for Ministry. The interview will include, but may not be limited to, seeking elaboration of the materials from your Application.
8. The SubCommittee on Preparation for Ministry will make a recommendation on your application to the Committee on Ministry, which will determine your acceptance into the program and report those so enrolled to presbytery.
9. Read the Sexual Conduct Policy of the presbytery and submit a signoff agreeing to abide by its provisions; submit copies of all Commonwealth of Pennsylvania background checks and clearances. [See presbytery website for the Sexual Conduct Policy of the Presbytery of Huntingdon.]