



BECOMING AND BEING A COMMISSIONED PASTOR

Policy and Handbook

New Harmony Presbytery

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What is a Commissioned Pastor (CP) and what can they do?

G-2.1001 "When the presbytery, in consultation with the session or other responsible committee, determines that its strategy for mission requires it, 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. Presbytery in its commission, may authorize the ruling elder to moderate the session of the congregation to which he or she is commissioned, to administer the Sacraments, and to officiate at marriages where permitted by state law. This commission shall also specify the term of service, which shall not exceed three years but shall be renewable. The presbytery shall review the commission at least annually."

G-2.1002 "A ruling elder who seeks to serve under the terms of G-2.1001 shall receive such preparation and instruction as determined by the presbytery to be appropriate to the particular commission. The ruling elder shall be examined by the presbytery as to personal faith, motives for seeking the commission, and the areas of instruction determined by the presbytery. 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 G-2.1001 until commissioned again to a congregation or ministry by the presbytery."

G-2.1003 "When the presbytery is satisfied with the qualifications of a ruling elder to serve a congregation providing the services described above, it shall commission the ruling elder to pastoral service as designated by the presbytery, employing the questions contained in W-4.4000.

G-2.1004 "The ruling elder commissioned under the terms of G-2.1001 shall work under the supervision of the presbytery. The presbytery may at any time withdraw the commission for reasons it deems good and sufficient. A teaching elder shall be assigned as a mentor and supervisor."

A CP is a Ruling Elder (RE) who is trained and commissioned by the presbytery to provide pastoral services to a particular congregation or congregations (G-2.1001). A RE may be granted a local commission by the presbytery to lead worship and preach the gospel, watch over the people, and provide for their nurture and service for a designated congregation and will be allowed to perform the following functions (moderate the session, administer the Sacraments and officiate at marriages when permitted by state law) for that particular congregation, renewable at the request of the session and upon recommendation of the Committee on Ministry (COM) on an annual basis. Remember that upon completion of the CRE/CP program, candidates are not automatically authorized to perform the above pastoral duties. The presbytery authorizes specific duties for the CP in each specific commission.

AN UNDERLYING PHILOSOPHY

1. The employment of CPs is a partial implementation of New Harmony Presbytery's (NHP) small church strategy. Along with preaching and worship leadership, these services may include ministries of care and compassion as well as leadership in education and community outreach ministries.
2. Normally, CPs will be commissioned to serve small membership congregations having fewer than one hundred active members where alternatives for using minister of the Word and Sacrament are not feasible or available.
3. It is the belief of the NHP that when leadership lacks continuity and when turnover is inordinately high, CPs provide one alternative to assure continuity of leadership.

Step-By-Step Process for Becoming a Commissioned Pastor

1. A RE discerning a call to be a CP shall make application through their respective session to the CPM of NHP, using the application found on page 8.
2. Once the application is approved by the session, the RE shall complete and clear a criminal background check.
3. The RE will then meet with CPM to be approved to enter the program. Throughout the educational portion of the process, the RE shall be supervised by NHP through the CPM. Each RE will be assigned a CPM liaison during this portion of the process.
4. The RE is required to complete a psychological evaluation before registering for a third class.
5. The RE must successfully complete the following courses through the SC presbyteries' School of Theology (They may also receive approval from the CPM to take some classes through Union Seminary's Pathways online courses, or Dubuque Theological Seminary's online courses.):
 1. Old Testament Survey (Spring)
 2. New Testament Survey (Fall)
 3. Reformed Theology (Fall)
 4. Polity (Spring)
 5. Church History (Spring)
 6. Pastoral Care (Fall)
 7. Worship and Sacraments (Spring)
 8. Preaching (Fall)
6. In addition, a copy of the certificate of completion for a two-hour online boundary course on clergy and ministerial ethics: <https://congregationu.com/course-clergy-ministerial-ethics> is required as well as the Acknowledgement Form signed, stating that Policy on Sexual Misconduct and the Code of Ethics has been received, read, understood, and will be abided.

7. Upon completion of the preparation coursework requirements, the RE shall compose a one-page faith statement and a one-page faith journey and review it with the pastor of their home church or the moderator of their home congregation's session.
8. The RE will meet with the CPM to determine their readiness to seek a commission. Upon completion of requirements, the trained applicant will receive written approval from CPM that they have successfully completed the initial training and are ready to be evaluated and examined by COM.
9. The RE shall be evaluated and examined by the COM in the areas of personal faith, academics, (specifically Bible, theology, polity, and worship and sacraments), and motives for seeking a commission. If approved, the individual will be recognized as a qualified RE eligible for a commission.
10. When the COM identifies a particular pastoral need that could be met by this qualified RE, the COM will present the RE to NHP for commissioning to a particular pastoral service as outlined in the Book of Order. (G-2.1002)

The COM has the right not to proceed with the commissioning of a participant if the requirements are not met in a satisfactory manner. With the guidance and oversight of the COM, those not recommended for commissioning will be asked to consider prayerfully their place in the program. They may be asked to perform specific tasks and/or address specific areas of concern that need to be pursued, or fulfilled, prior to being re-examined.

ADMINISTRATION AND OVERSIGHT

1. The CPM shall be responsible for the ongoing task of recruiting and supporting CPs. When the initial training classes are completed then the evaluation, examination, and continuing responsibility of oversight and deployment of CPs shall be the responsibility of the COM. While in the training classes, the CP shall meet with the CPM for an annual review and assessment.
2. Applicants for CP classes shall be ordained REs who have served at least three years and shall have a written recommendation from the session of the congregation of which they are a member. The CPM shall examine each applicant and believe that the person is potentially competent to be a CP, willing to undergo training, and amenable to the ongoing supervision of CPM.
3. Upon approval of CPM, the applicant may begin a program of training. CPM shall design and administer a program of education for preparing applicants for commissioning in conformity with the list of training areas described in G-2.1002. A person must complete training before being considered for a commission as a CP. The RE is responsible for the expenses of CP training (class tuition, books, other supplies, travel, housing, etc.).
4. During the first year of training, CPM shall ensure that the NHP office conducts a criminal background check on each applicant. Once the results are in and clear of any concerns, the applicant shall be required to complete a psychological evaluation before registering for the third class at the cost of CPM.

5. Once the training is completed the applicant will meet with the CPM to determine their readiness for commissioning. If the trained applicant is deemed ready, they will receive written approval from CPM that they have successfully completed the initial training and are ready to be evaluated and examined by COM to be placed on the Pulpit Supply list or serve as a CP. Once this approval has been received from CPM, the responsibility of oversight passes from CPM to COM.
6. When an approved COM applicant receives an invitation to serve a local congregation as a CP, the COM shall review the applicant's suitability for that position and make the appropriate recommendation to NHP regarding the applicant's commissioning in consultation with the session in question. NHP will then examine, approve and commission the applicant; thereafter, NHP will only commission to continued or new commissions.
7. The COM shall approve a mentor and supervisor, as required by G-2.1004, for each CP (description of CP mentor/supervisor on page 7 of this document).
8. COM shall annually review the ministry of the CP, the effectiveness of the congregation's ministry and outreach, the adequacy of the financial compensation, and the continued viability of the relationship. Any concerns will be shared with the CP and the session.
9. Sessions utilizing CPs shall address these issues in an annual covenant:
 - a. The covenant shall describe the proportion of work that will be expected of the CP (part time vs. full time).
 - b. Financial compensation shall be negotiated between the session and the CP. The final compensation shall be approved by the COM on an annual basis. Pension and medical benefits are optional. Mileage related to church employment (excluding mileage for commuting) shall be reimbursed at the current IRS rate.
10. Continuing education is a vital part of a CP's service in the larger church. There will be continuing education opportunities arranged through the SC School of Theology as well as other parts of the PC(U.S.A.) and its seminaries. The CP shall pursue continuing education for their own spiritual health and well-being. The cost is ordinarily covered by the congregation/s and/or NHP.

COMMISSIONED PASTOR – COVENANT

There may be variety in the covenant of a CP; however, these basic responsibilities may be included in a CP covenant:

1. Have regular contact with mentor/liaison or COM representatives to ensure honest and open dialogue that will build the body of Christ.
2. Preach the Gospel (consistent with the basic tenets of the Reformed faith) at services of worship approved by the session. It is expected these services will be consistent with the Directory for Worship.
3. Administer the Sacraments.
4. Moderate session meetings.
5. Moderate congregational meetings.

6. Actively engage the congregation in considering their outreach and relationship to the surrounding community.
7. Promote the mission and ministry of the whole church.
8. During the course of their commission engage in a planned program of continuing education to enhance skills. COM may strongly recommend certain training to increase the likelihood of maintaining the commission to that particular congregation.
9. Provide ministries of care and compassion: hospital visitation, home visitation, funerals, and new member visitation.
10. Lead Bible studies and teach in the Christian Education program of the congregation.
11. Engage in community ministries in consultation with the session.
12. Refer parishioners to pastoral care providers or counselors.
13. Participate in the life and work of NHP, attend NHP stated meetings where the CP has voice, vote and serve on committees when asked and able.

ANNUAL REVIEW OF COMMISSIONED PASTORS

The COM shall review the commission at least annually that includes:

- A. submission of the Annual CP Ministry Report;
- B. fulfillment of the continuing education requirement;
- C. attendance at CP meetings; and
- D. participation in NHP.

Continuing Education

Ten hours of continuing education of the CP's choosing are required each year. Conferences, workshops and courses should enhance pastoral development. Continuing education events are offered through PC(U.S.A.) seminaries, conferences and conference centers, and other organizations highlighted in NHP's newsletter. Grants to fund continuing education may be available through NHP.

CP Gatherings

Two CP meetings will be scheduled per year by the COM. At least one of the meetings will be held via ZOOM. It is expected that all CPs will attend the meetings unless otherwise excused by the COM Moderator or the EP. These meetings are for prayers, support, and sharing of ideas.

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. The service of the CP is a contractual relationship between the particular ministry or session, the COM, and the CP. The covenant will utilize the form provided by the COM and will be valid for up to one year and may be renewed. The services the CP provides can be done only at the ministry to which the CP is commissioned. CPs will be commissioned only to congregations with a pastoral vacancy or a validated specialized ministry in accordance with G-2.1001.
2. The COM will maintain a list of REs who have completed the training and have been examined as ready to receive a commission. This list will be available to sessions of congregations with a pastoral vacancy.

3. REs who completed the training and have been examined but not commissioned or whose commission has expired may request to be added to the Pulpit Supply list but are not approved to administer the sacraments or perform weddings.
4. REs who completed the training and have been examined and approved, whether they have been commissioned or not, must fulfill the continuing education to remain eligible for consideration for a commission.
5. Any judicial case that might arise against a CP shall be overseen by NHP and not by the session of the congregation served or the session of the CP's membership.
6. During their service to a particular congregation, the CP should continue participating in the life and work of his/her own congregation to the extent possible. The session of the home congregation should find ways to support CPs as much as possible.

MINISTER MENTOR/SUPERVISOR for a COMMISSIONED PASTOR

Responsibilities of the Minister Mentor/Supervisor:

1. Meet together face-to-face with CP at least every 6 months and report to COM-CP subgroup.
2. Be a prayer partner and friend to the CP.
3. Be available by phone, text, email...to be a listening ear to the CP.
4. Be an advisor to the CP.
5. Share your experiences and resources with the CP.

COMMISSIONED PASTOR (CP) TRAINING PROGRAM APPLICATION

Name: _____

Mailing Address : _____

Email: _____

Cell: _____ Home: _____ Work: _____

Congregational Membership: _____

Year you joined this Congregation: _____

Year you were ordained a RE: _____

Describe your present activities in the life and mission of the church:

Past and Present Employment (title, nature of work):

Educational background: School and Location /Year Graduated /Degree Major/Minor

Limits: What factors may place limits on your ability to receive training, and to serve as a CP (such as physical disability, family situation, employment status, etc.)?

Please attach to this form to your response to the following question: "WHY WOULD I LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CP PROGRAM?"

NOTE: You should take this completed form, together with your "statement" (attached to this form) to your pastoral leader, or, if your congregation is without a pastoral leader, to your Moderator of Session. That person will talk with you about your interest in the CP Program, and with the help of the Clerk of Session, schedule a time for you to present your request to and be examined by your session. Following session approval, the pastor will then forward your application form and statement, along with a letter of reference to the CPM Moderator.

SESSION RECOMMENDATION

We, the session of the _____ Presbyterian Church, have examined, and approved, Ruling Elder _____ for the Commissioned Pastor Program of NHP.

Date: _____

Clerk of Session

Moderator of Session

Covenant for Commissioned Pastor Applicant

I _____ agree to function within the requirements so stated above and further understand and agree to:

1. There is no guarantee that I will be commissioned to a particular congregation or other mission once all training and other requirements have been met.
2. I am expected to participate in at least 10- hour annual continuing education required and sponsored by the Presbytery and that I must pay a minimum tuition for this training. If I cannot attend the Presbytery sponsored training, I am responsible for securing other training which must be approved, in writing, by the Moderator of COM. I further understand that I must pay my own tuition and if I fail to meet this requirement, the COM may remove me from the Presbytery Supply list and I am no longer available for commissioning.
3. Once I am a CP, I am expected to provide a written annual report to the COM ordinarily by November 1st of each year detailing my ministry activity and other missional service and my annual continuing education.
4. If I am commissioned, I will attend NHP Stated Meetings or otherwise seek an excuse from the Stated Clerk. I understand that only if I am commissioned to a particular church or other validated ministry that I am given voice and vote.
5. I understand that if I am commissioned to a particular church or ministry, I can perform the functions listed in G-2.1001 for only that particular congregation or ministry in accordance with G-2.1002. I agree not to overstep the authority granted to me by my commissioning.
6. I understand that I have no standing beyond the boundaries of the NHP.

CP Candidate Annual Consultation for CPM
To Be Completed Before Annual Consultation

Date _____ Name _____

Reflections

- A. Courses Taken and Date Completed:

- B. Spiritual Development: Briefly describe your spiritual disciplines, including your participation in the worship and mission of a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) congregation.

- C. Interpersonal Relationships: Describe your relationship with your peers, authority figures, your family, and others who are significant to you. What are the implications of those relationships for your ministry?

- D. Personal Growth: Describe recent experiences of emotional impact, if any, and how you dealt with them. Comment on areas that you believe you are growing and identify areas in which you feel the need for progress.

CP Candidate Annual Consultation

To Be Completed by CPM during the Annual Consultation

Date_____ **Name**_____

Suggested goals and areas of growth:

A. Spiritual Development

B. Interpersonal Relationships

C. Personal Growth

Moderator of CPM

**Presbytery of New Harmony
Commissioned Pastor's Annual Report
Due November 1**

Name _____ *Home Church* _____

Church of *Service* _____ Dates: (from _____ to _____)

Do you wish to continue to serve this congregation? ___ yes; ___ no; ___ with some changes to terms.

Briefly answer the questions listed below. Additional comments may be written of the back of this form.

1. What are your major responsibilities in this congregation? _____

2. What are the key ministry strengths you bring to this commission?

3. What are the key accomplishments of this pastoral relationship?

4. What have been some of the challenges in this pastoral relationship?

5. What have you done with your Continuing Education time?

6. In what areas of ministry could you use additional training and support?

Note: Be sure to attach your **Continuing Education Report** to this form when you send it to the Presbytery Office. Also, be sure that your Mentor submits their report.

Signature _____ Date _____

2025 Covenant for Commissioned Pastor (CP)

Committee on Ministry (COM), New Harmony Presbytery (NHP). (10-15-24)

At the end of each year, the ministry of the congregation and covenant of the CP shall be reviewed by the **Session (which includes the CP)** and a renewal decision made then and reported to **COM**; COM will act on the 2nd Tuesday of January.

Termination of this covenant shall not occur without prior communication with the COM Liaison, COM Moderator and/or EP, and only then with a minimum of 30-day notice by either party.

Name of Church: _____

Name of CP: _____

Congregation of Membership of the CP: _____

Service from _____ to _____ (Ordinarily 1/1/XX to 12/31/XX)

Name of CP's "Mentor and Supervisor" (G-2.1004): _____

How often will/does the CP and the "Mentor and Supervisor" confer? _____

How do/will they ordinarily meet (in person, by phone, ZOOM, etc.)? _____

Has the ministry of the congregation, Session and CP been reviewed by the Session?

YES or NO If YES, date: _____ If NO, when: _____

- Circle the Stated Meetings the CP attended in the past 12 months (attendance required unless excused): February May August November
- Which CP Gatherings did you attend (1 of 2 required): _____
- If you serve on an NHP entity, which one: _____
- If none of above, what was/were the reason/s: _____

Responsibilities of the Commissioned Pastor (check those which apply)

___ Lead worship and preach

___ Administer the Sacraments

___ Moderate the session and congregational meetings

___ Provide pastoral care

___ Officiate, upon request, at Services of Witness to the Resurrection and Weddings

____ Other _____
____ Other _____
____ Other _____

Approximate Time Expectation (per week): _____ Hourly Pay Rate: \$ _____

(Please note, sermon and bulletin preparation usually take at least 12-15 hours; this time can be cut in half, if the CP serves two congregations.)

Compensation: Cash Salary Annually \$ _____ Cash Salary Weekly \$ _____

How much of Cash Salary is Designated for Housing \$ _____ or Use of manse: Yes _____
No _____

(Note, CPs have the same benefits of Housing Allowance as Ministers of the Word and Sacrament; COM or the EP can provide more information. The IRS bases this on performing “*sacerdotal services*.” “Ordained, commissioned, or licensed ministers of the gospel may be able to exclude from in-come tax the rental allowance or fair rental value of a parsonage that is provided to them as pay for their services.” (IRS Publication 517 <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p517.pdf>) If the house or condo is owned and paid for, then Housing is the Fair Market Value (FMV) of the furnished house plus utilities. A CP's Housing can be set as high as 100% of your cash salary, if you can indeed, and in truth, account for that amount! Please consult with a realtor in your area and a knowledgeable tax accountant.)

Ministry expenses reimbursed including travel, at IRS approved rate for that year, not to exceed \$ _____

REQUIRED: Beginning in 2025, four (4) weeks of paid Vacation and two (2) weeks of paid Continuing Education is now required by NHP for ALL pastor Covenants where the pastor is there at least four Sundays a month. If the pastor is there two times per month, then it is prorated, meaning two (2) weeks of paid Vacation and one (1) of paid Continuing Education is required. The pastoral leader does NOT pay for the pulpit supply on those Sundays of Vacation or Continuing Education!

Vacation - 4 weeks annually prorated; how many used this past year? _____

Continuing Education - 2 wks annually prorated; how many used this past year? _____

How was Con. Ed. used this past year? _____

Commissioned Pastor: _____ Date: _____

Clerk of Session: _____ Date of Session Action: _____

COM Representative: _____ Date of COM Action: _____